

New VA Clinic for OEF/OIF Veterans at Fort Indiantown Gap

FT. INDIANTOWN GAP - On January 29, 2010, Lebanon VA Medical Center, in continued partnership with Fort Indiantown Gap (FTIG), opened a VA Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Outreach Clinic at FTIG.

The Outreach Clinic eliminates travel time for Pennsylvania's rural OEF/OIF Veterans by providing health care services concurrent with their tour of duty at FTIG. "The main objective of this clinic is to increase accessibility and visibility of VA services for our Pennsylvania National Guardsmen that served in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Robert Callahan, Jr., Director, Lebanon VA Medical Center.

Lebanon VA Medical Center will be sharing space with the FTIG Medical Clinic. It will operate two days per week and be supported by five new VA employees, which include a primary care provider, social worker, enrollment specialist, and nurses. Veterans will be able to enroll at the Outreach Clinic, receive their initial health screening and receive primary care and social work services.

"Lebanon VA wants to ensure that all OEF/OIF Veterans are well informed of their VA health care benefits, including their ability to access five years of VA health care benefits for any possible deploy-



From left to right the Fort Indiantown Gap Rural Health Outreach VA Clinic Team is Keith Bender, Medical Support Assistant; Angel Fouz, Licensed Practical Nurse; Ricky Hoffman, Physician Assistant. The clinic became operational in January 2010.

ment-related injury or illness, along with a number of other services upon their return home," said Gretchen Roberts, OEF/OIF Program Manager, Lebanon VA Medical Center.

To date, approximately 4,000 "new Veterans" from the Pennsylvania National Guard have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and over 97,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen passed through FTIG as part of their annual training in 2009. Many are eligible for VA health care and Lebanon VA Medical Center is ready to provide care for all who enroll.

State Veterans Task Force: Creation of Veterans' Courts a Priority

HARRISBURG - On Wednesday, February 3, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court partnered with the U.S. Veterans Administration to host the first Veterans' Task Force Meeting to coordinate efforts among state courts, the Department of Veterans Affairs and criminal justice agencies to assist veterans who are struggling with substance abuse or mental health problems and who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

The task force is co-chaired by Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Seamus P. McCaffery—a retired United States Air Force colonel, former U. S. Marine and Philadelphia police officer—and Director Michael E. Moreland, Veterans Integrated Services Network for Pennsylvania, Delaware and portions of West Virginia and Ohio. Additional task force members include congressmen, state legislators and representatives from State Department of Corrections, Pennsylvania State Police, State Probation and Parole Board, Pennsylvania Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, the County Commissioners Association, the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association and Pennsylvania Association of Drug Court Professionals.

Justice McCaffery said, “The wounds of war are not always visible. They are often invisible, manifesting themselves months or even years later causing many veterans to turn to drugs and alcohol in attempts

to self-medicate. This often leads to unlawful behavior and/or sudden outbursts of violence, preventing some veterans from successfully reentering our communities.”

The task force plans to meet bi-annually, initially focusing on creating “veterans’ courts” to assist veterans involved in the criminal courts. “With a focus on resource coordination and guided rehabilitation,” Justice McCaffery said, “veterans’ courts offer a chance for the veteran to conquer problems and get his or her life back on track.”

Currently Pennsylvania has veterans’ courts in Allegheny, Lackawanna and Philadelphia.

Problem-solving or specialty courts such as DUI, drug and veterans’ courts also help curb overall costs by serving as alternatives to costly taxpayer-funded incarceration, directing eligible, nonviolent defendants into treatment programs. Defendants in these programs receive intense supervision from probation officers and are required to appear at frequent intervals before a judge.

According to the Pennsylvania State Data Center, there were approximately one million veterans in the state in 2007. Allegheny County has the largest population with 142,638, followed by Philadelphia County with 123,365, and Montgomery County with 70,232.

Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home Establishes Partnership with Altoona Regional Health Care System

HOLLIDAYSBURG - The Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home (HVH) has established a working partnership with the Altoona Regional Health Care System to develop a residency program for resident doctors in the Family Practice section. The focus is on long term care and the doctors in the residency program will gain insight and experience managing patients in a nursing home environment.

Rich Adams, Commandant of HVH, is pleased with the agreement between the HVH and the Altoona Family Practice Residency Training program.

“[I hope that] this ongoing agreement will offer many opportunities not only for their resident physicians in training to learn about our long term care facility, but for our Veterans as well wherein they will have the opportunity to experience hands on, up-to-date care from resident physicians fresh out of medical

school. Providing this learning experience can only help both facilities move into the future in a positive manner.”

The new program is being run under the supervision of HVH's Medical Director, Dr. Csaba Mihaly. Each Family Practice Resident Physician (FPR) will be assigned two residents from Arnold Hall. FPRs will be able to gain hands-on experience with interesting and challenging cases in a long term care setting.

FPRs will be required to see their patients every 30 to 60 days during scheduled appointments. They will also be in communication with Dr. Mihaly during this process. Dr. Mihaly's primary goal in establishing this program is to assist new doctors in complying with the residency program's Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) requirements. These requirements cover competencies in

Patient Care, Medical Knowledge, Practice-Based Learning and Improvement, Interpersonal and Communications Skills, Professionalism, and System-Based Practice which is the ability to utilize the internal health care network resources to the best advantage of the patient's needs.

“Altoona Family Practice Residency Training program needs a skilled nursing facility, so their resident physicians can have experience in a long term care setting,” Dr. Mihaly explains.

The HVH staff are looking forward to providing a meaningful educational opportunity for the FPRs to experience managing patients in a nursing home setting. HVH is the largest

U.S. Census Bureau is Recruiting Workers for 2010 Census

With Census Day on April 1, 2010, less than two months away, the United States Census Bureau is recruiting workers to fill various positions.

Thousands of clerks, census takers, crew leaders, supervisors and crew assistants will be needed this spring to complete the final operation for the decennial census. The part-time, temporary jobs offer good pay, flexible hours, paid training and the ability to work close to home. The pay ranges from \$8.75 to \$19.25 per hour depending on the area and the position. Approximately 28,000 people will be hired across Pennsylvania.

Applicants are required to take and pass a test, must be 18 or older, and pass a background check. Preference is given to veterans and U.S. citizens.

VA Facilities Open Doors for Iraq Veterans

PHILADELPHIA - Veterans Affairs medical centers in Coatesville and Philadelphia are preparing to open their doors and welcome hundreds of recently returned combat Veterans to the VA health care system.

These Soldiers from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard will be at their local VA medical

New LVAMC Womens' Clinic Opens



Lebanon VA Medical Center recently hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the renovated Primary Care and the new Women Veterans' Health Clinics. Female Veterans will now have available to them “one stop shopping.” They will be able to receive acute medical care, chronic medical management, and health maintenance including gender specific care (breast exams, pelvic exams and pap smears) done in one clinic by one provider. From left to right: William Mills (Assoc. Director), Dr. Mary Averill (Assoc. Chief of Staff, Primary Care), Robert Callahan, Jr. (Director), Meri Mallard (Deputy Field Director for Women Veteran's Group), Elizabeth Miller (Program Manager, Women's Health), and Congressman Tim Holden.

of the six veterans' home in the state veterans' home system.

More information, including a practice test, is available at www.2010censusjobs.gov or by calling the toll-free jobs number at: 1-866-861-2010. Interested parties should call the toll-free number to learn about the testing schedules in their area.

The U.S. Constitution requires a population and housing count every 10 years. The effort employs some of the most sophisticated technical and operational tools available, as well as a workforce of 1.4 million temporary employees to count every man, woman and child. Census results are the basis for congressional representation as well as the distribution of federal, state and local funds totaling more than \$400 billion annually. Census Day is April 1, 2010.

centers February 27 and 28 for a Post-Deployment Health Reassessment Activity, or PDHRA, during their scheduled drill weekend. The Department of Defense requires service men and women to complete this program three to six months after returning from deployment, and these Soldiers returned from Iraq in August and September.



Philadelphia VA Medical Center

VA planners expect about 400 troops at each medical center, where they will work with health care providers to identify potential health issues – and treat known health problems before they affect a person’s future deployment status or career. According to DOD officials, many deployment-related health problems may not arise until three to six months after someone returns from deployment.

“This is a great opportunity to partner with the VA and help these soldiers with their transition,”

said Lt. Col. Chris Cleaver, a Pennsylvania National Guard spokesman. “It’s all about doing the right thing for them and linking them up with the support agencies they may need.”



Coatesville VA Medical Center

The program is also an opportunity for these men and women to learn about and take charge of their VA health care benefits. Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are entitled to five years of VA health care for conditions which may be related to their deployments. VA staff will provide information on VA benefits, help schedule follow-up appointments, and enroll troops for VA health care.

“We welcome the opportunity to support the Guard and help these young men and women take advantage of the benefits they have earned,” said Richard S. Citron, Philadelphia VA Medical Center Director. “America has made a promise to this new generation of Veterans, and the VA has every intention of keeping it.”

These soldiers are part of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard’s 56th Stryker Brigade, which has elements in Philadelphia and at armories across the Commonwealth, from Harrisburg to Huntingdon and Altoona to Erie. Of the seven U.S. Army units assigned the Stryker mission, the 56th is the only one in the National Guard.

The Iraq mission marked the largest Pennsylvania National Guard deployment since World War II, and VA facilities across the state are ready for the Soldiers’ return.

More information on benefits and support available for returning combat Veterans is available at www.philadelphia.va.gov and www.coatesville.va.gov.

Reaching Out to Veteran-Owned Businesses



Department of General Services Secretary James Creedon welcomes veteran business owners during the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Veterans Business Outreach Seminar at the Forum building in Harrisburg. Secretary Creedon urged the business owners to “look beyond the Commonwealth to cities” in search of business opportunities. He also suggested they consider sub-contracting for jobs that have already been awarded as another source of business. Thirty people attended the seminar. Three more seminars are scheduled in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Erie. Creedon is the Chief Implementation Officer for ARRA.

State Veterans' Homes Exceed National Satisfaction Levels Again

The Pennsylvania state veterans homes again exceeded the national average in December with 93% of veterans' home residents surveyed being satisfied with their current home. The national average is 85%.

These surveys are conducted annually to determine how residents feel about the home they're currently living. A survey of the residents' family members is also conducted on a bi-annual basis. Those results also beat the national averages by 10%.

The homes have consistently exceeded national averages since the state began tracking this information in 2007. In fact, both the homes' resident and family satisfaction levels have steadily increased since 2007.

"This is the most significant factor," said Jeff Backer, who conducts the Quality Assurance program for the Bureau of Veterans' Homes. "If residents who are currently at one of our homes are willing to recommend their home to someone else, that says a lot for what that home is doing for them."

The reason for this is the staff at each of the six veterans' homes is motivated to care for their veterans. In many cases, it becomes a calling for the caregivers with monetary rewards being secondary.

Nicholas G. Castle, PhD, cited in his report "Measuring Staff Turnover in Nursing Homes," that nursing homes experience a high degree of staff turnover with the national average 110% for nurse aides, 89% for Licensed Practical Nurses, and 87% for Registered Nurses. Here again the state veterans' homes are the exception with staff turnover rates of 4.11% for Nurse Aides, 3.09% for Licensed Practical Nurses, and 6.16% for Registered Nurses.

Why the disparity? In many cases, it comes down to working environment. One factor is the amount the state pays its nursing home employees. The U.S. Bureau of Statistics' "Occupational Outlook Handbook" cites the pay range for Nurse Aides at between

\$17,000 and \$33,000 where the state is paying their Nurse Aides between \$27,000 and \$46,000. Nurse aides are the lowest-paid of the caregivers in the nursing home industry.

Despite low pay, however, nursing home staff members consider what they do to be important. Dr. Carrie Leana, Professor of Organization and Management at University of Pittsburgh conducted a study along with Dr. Jules Rosen, also of Pitt on staff turnover rates in nursing homes. What they found is that among those who stayed, most of those saw their job

as a calling. They consider themselves patient advocates, with a strong sense of obligation to patients and their families.

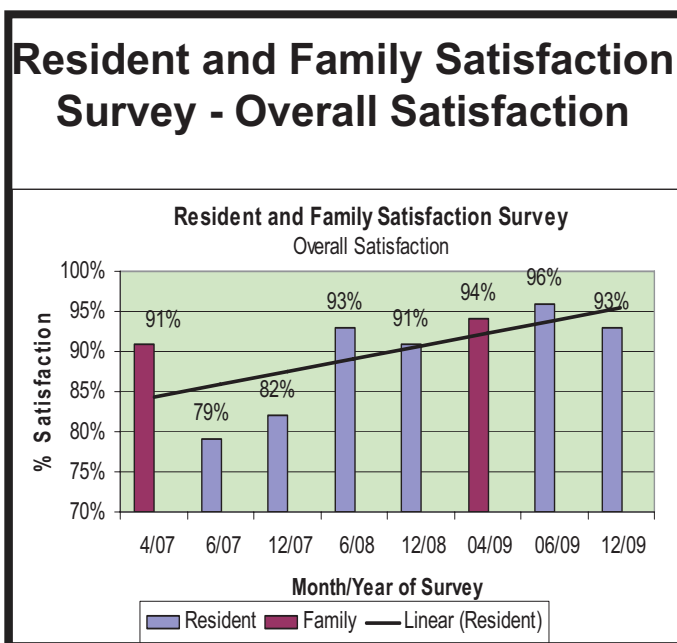
"What we found," Leana says, "is that people with more stable work histories in this profession are people who, on their own, imbued their jobs with more meaning."

More on their research and findings can be found at the Center for Health and Care Work web site, www.business.pitt.edu/chcw/.

One Licensed Practical Nurse at Hollidaysburg was a resident in the domiciliary program as a result of being homeless who ultimately went on to earn a degree and join the veterans' home staff.

The staff at the six state veterans homes are proud to work with the veteran residents and show a genuine concern for their well being. Residents, family members, and the veterans' home staff all agree that the Pennsylvania Veterans' Home System is a great place to live or work.

Pennsylvania operates six veterans' homes: Delaware Valley Veterans' Home in Philadelphia; Southeastern Veterans' Center in Spring City; the Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center in Scranton; Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home in Hollidaysburg; Southwestern Veterans' Center in Pittsburgh; and the Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home in Erie. More information on these homes can be found by visiting www.paveterans.state.pa.us.



March 2010 Community Events

If you know of an upcoming event that you'd like to see on our calendar, email cnelson@state.pa.us or call (717) 861- 6979 and we'll add it to the Community Calendar section. Newsletters are published at the beginning of each month, so be sure to get the dates to us as soon as possible.

- **March 2** - 5th Annual American Legion Small Business Task Force; A gathering of lawmakers, leaders, and veteran entrepreneurs. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Marriott Renaissance Hotel, 999 Ninth Street NW, Washington D.C.
- **March 3-7** - Hunts For Healing Bird/Coyote Hunt; Hunts for Healing has these events available for wounded soldiers returning from mission in Iraq and Afghanistan and veterans who have successfully completed the Wounded Warrior Program at the Military Advanced Training Center, allowing them to participate in outdoor programs. If you are interested in applying for any event please contact Mindy Piccotti HFH Director of Events at (570) 869-1233 (day) or (570) 760-5525 (cell). Hunts for Healing, 1479 Coburn Hill Road, Laceyville, PA
- **March 8** - PA 7th Congressional District Veterans' Summit; Direct access for veterans, active duty, military members and their families to the Department of Veterans Affairs and other agencies, organizations and companies that serve them. Contact Chip Ridewood at (610) 892-8623 or email chip.ridewood@mail.house.gov for more information. 6:15 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. at Ridley High School, 901 Morton Avenue, Folsom, PA
- **March 11** - Coatesville VA Medical Center Mini-Advisory Council Meeting; Please contact Ms. Kate Nash at (610) 380-4348 for more information. 9 a.m. at Coatesville VA Medical Center, Building 5, Room 3, 1400 Blackhorse Hill Rd, Coatesville, PA
- **March 13** - AMVETS Testimonial Dinner; Honoring Dept. of PA Commander Gerard Gurnari, Ladies Auxiliary President Teresa Hockenberry, and Sons of AMVETS Commander Joseph Stopyra. \$35 per person. Reservations due by March 3. 6 p.m. at Holiday Inn Harrisburg, 5401 Carlisle Pike, Mechanicsburg, PA
- **March 16** - Professional and Executive Diversity Job Fair; Register online at <http://psijobfair.com>. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Sheraton Suites Hotel Philadelphia Airport, 4101 Island Avenue, Philadelphia, PA
- **March 17** - PhillyHires King of Prussia Job Fair; Register online at <http://nationalcareerfaairs.com> or <http://philly.localhires.com>. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Crowne Plaza Hotel Valley Forge, 260 Mall Boulevard, King of Prussia, PA
- **March 24** - Celebrate Diversity Career Fair; Register online at <http://jobcircle.com>. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Kimmel Center, 300 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA
- **March 26 to 28** - TBI Family Retreat; Frontline Ministries' TBI Family Retreat is free of charge for all veterans. Network, meet new friends, spend time with others facing similar issues, and relax. Contact George Palmer for registration or more information at (814) 684-1515. Camp Little J, Spruce Creek, PA

- **March 26** - Combat Stress: Working Effectively with Military Clients; For Psychologists, Social Workers, Counselors, Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Other Medical Practitioners, and Veteran Advocates. Registration is \$65 and is due March 12. 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Southpointe Golf Club, 360 Southpointe Boulevard, Canonsburg, PA
- **March 29** - Vietnam Veterans Day; State-recognized day of observance

FIRST NATIONAL VIETNAM ERA VETERAN'S HOMECOMING

APRIL 17, 21-25 COLUMBIA, SC

Schedule of Events (Subject to change)

Saturday, April 17th
Ho Chi Minh Trail Ride (Poker Run)

Wednesday, April 21th
Honor Flight
(1st time for a few Vietnam and Korean Vets)

Thursday, April 22nd
CFF Golf Tournament, TBD

Friday, April 23rd
Battalion Graduation 0900hrs
Hilton Field, Ft. Jackson.
"Welcome Home to Ft. Jackson, SC"
Weston Lake Rec Center (BBQ)

Medallion Center
Welcome Home Banquet
Bobbie "The Weather Girl"
Master of Ceremonies
Jack Van Loan, RVN POW Keynote
War Story Contest, mini-reunions

Saturday, April 24th 1200hrs
Spouse Shopping
Gold Star Families Luncheon
Botanical Gardens, Riverbanks Zoo
Four Corps USO Hangar Dance 1900hrs
State Aeronautics, Metropolitan Airport

Sunday, April 25th
Patriotic Worship Service
First Baptist Church

www.celebratefreedomfoundation.org

It takes the courage and strength of a warrior to ask for help

If you or someone you know is in an emotional crisis

call 1-800-273-TALK Press 1 for Veterans

Pennsylvania Office of the Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs

Main Office: 1-800-547-2838
Philadelphia Field Office: 1-866-754-8637
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