

VA New England Healthcare System

SUMMER 2012

# VETERANS'

*healthy living*

**A Safe  
Haven  
for All**

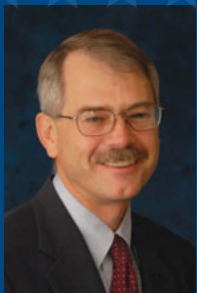
**New Project Helps  
ALS Patients**

**A Place of Healing  
and Remembrance**



**VA  
HEALTH  
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Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century



# Dear Veterans

## A Message from the Network Director

Michael F. Mayo-Smith, M.D., M.P.H.  
Network Director

### Have you considered that there are three holidays that recognize and honor Veterans?

They are Memorial Day, Fourth of July, and Veterans Day. Our leaders understood the sacrifices made for our freedoms and set aside days to acknowledge and give honor to you, our nation's service men and women.

Page 3 has an inspiring story about the new and improved "ALS Redesign System of Care" at the Providence VAMC for patients diagnosed with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease. Many Veterans and VA staff members were involved in streamlining the care and equipment process at this facility. We are here for you every step of the way!

The feature story for this issue of *Veterans Healthy Living* focuses on the Memorial Wall at the Manchester VAMC. The story behind its design is a humbling one and gives proper attention to some of those who have gone before us in service and sacrifice to our nation. I encourage you to read "A Place of Healing and Remembrance" on page 4.

At the Bedford VA, a new program called "Safe Haven" was recently established to ensure that Veterans who have fallen on hard times will not "fall through the cracks" of VA housing programs. You'll find that story on page 6.

Finally, on page 7 you can read about the research being performed and the strides made on Palliative Care at White River Junction VAMC and how they are partnering with a well-known medical school in this effort.

At this mid-year mark, we celebrate our freedom, and we pause to remember our fallen. Thank you for your service. Now let us serve you!

Michael F. Mayo-Smith, M.D., M.P.H.  
Network Director



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Healthcare System | Summer 2012

The ALS System of  
Care redesign team,  
from left to right:  
William Luderer, PT,  
Stephen Mernoff, MD,  
Marie Sullivan, LICSW,  
Erinn Raimondi, OTR/L,  
Laurie Wilson, NP,  
Ellen Tragar, PT, Diane  
Blier, NP, and Maureen  
Hebert, MSW

## New Project Helps ALS Patients

The plan is for this project to serve as a VA best practice that is another “gold standard of care” for the VA.



# A Place of Healing and Remembrance

In honor of the fallen service members of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND), a Memorial Wall has been constructed at the Manchester VAMC for the families and friends of these brave heroes.

Debra Krinsky, Chief of Voluntary Services said, “When you first walk through the memorial, it is overwhelming. As you walk the hall and pass the portraits of the fallen, over time you feel as though you get to know them. It is very powerful.”

The Memorial Wall began as a way for Gold Star Parents to honor their fallen soldiers from recent wars. In 2009, Krinsky met a Vietnam Veteran who was passionately committed to honoring the fallen from OEF, OIF, and OND, and posted a picture of each in the hallway that leads to primary care. “It took two

and a half years to research and reach out to the families of these fallen heroes, and it was truly a labor of love,” Krinsky said. “Although just a few volunteers made this happen, it was a collaborative effort of Gold Star Families, volunteer support, and donations.”

The Memorial Wall currently consists of two rows of framed photographs, one of each of the 54 fallen warriors. According to Tammy Follensbee, Associate Director of the Medical Center, “There is a purpose and plan for the way they are presented, matted, and framed.” She said, “All portraits are colored in sepia tone in order for them to stand united as brothers on the Memorial Wall. For this reason, we did not include their branch of the military or their rank. The portraits are arranged in chronological order by the date of death. The Wall’s location, in the quiet central core hallway, just off

the main lobby of the Medical Center, provides a place for peaceful remembrance and a place of healing for family members and friends of those who were lost.”

Krinsky said, “The VAMC made every effort to be inclusive rather than exclusive in honoring our heroes. For example, not all of the Veterans pictured were killed in action. The bottom line for us was that it was a loss. We are helping their families process that loss.”

Stella Lareau, Public Affairs Office for VAMC said, “The best thing about the Wall is that people aren’t forgetting. The mother of one Veteran whose picture is on the Wall works at the hospital. Every day she goes to her son’s picture and tells him, ‘Good morning.’ She knows her son won’t be forgotten.”





Debra Krinsky, Chief of Voluntary Services, and New Hampshire Governor John Lynch.

The Wall is open 24/7 so it is accessible to family at any time. It is very honoring and speaks to what these Veterans have sacrificed."

“We still have 13 portraits that we’re missing,” Lareau added. “They’ll come, but they’ll depend upon where the family is in the grief process. If more names come to light, we will add them. We pray we don’t need to add any more, but there’s room if we have to.”

Last December, during a private viewing, Krinsky said she was showing the Memorial Wall to a Veteran. There was an empty place for a fallen soldier named George Rowell. She said they had researched him but were unable to get any information or pictures. The Veteran said, "I believe I have a picture of George Rowell in my truck." He explained that the home George's mother lived in

was vacant, but someone had come across all the letters on George after his death — letters from dignitaries to his mother along with George's military photo. "The Veteran brought all of George's belongings to us," Krinsky said. "I believe George wanted to be on the Wall with his brothers. We are proud to have him there."

The public dedication of the Memorial Wall was held during the National Salute to Veterans on February 14, 2011. Local media, politicians, Gold Star Family members, Governor Lynch, dignitaries from other service organizations, Veterans, VA employees, and the general public attended.

A quote by New Hampshire native Daniel Webster hangs above the portraits, as moving as their service and sacrifice. It reads, *"...yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored."*

*“The mother of one Veteran whose picture on is on the wall works at the hospital. Every day she goes to her son’s picture and tells him, ‘Good morning.’ She knows her son won’t be forgotten.”*



Secretary of Veterans Affairs,  
Eric Shinsecki.



Framingham Safe Haven

# A “Safe Haven” for All

A new pilot program through the Bedford VA called Safe Haven was recently established to ensure that Veterans who have fallen on hard times will not “fall through the cracks” of VA housing programs.

The Veterans who participate in the program are mainly “chronically homeless and actively experiencing issues with substance abuse or mental health disorders,” says Jim Chaplin, LICSW, VA liaison for the Safe Haven program. Many have not had success in traditional treatment programs where, if a Veteran returns to substance abuse, they are immediately discharged from the program. Once released, they often have no place else to

go and end up sleeping in cars, on the street, or at area shelters.

The primary goal of Safe Haven is simply to shelter these Veterans who are at great risk. The program has two separate houses – one in Boston and one in Framingham – and each have 10 rooms with one bed per room. Although Veterans have minimal requirements to remain in the program, there are still guidelines that must be followed. For example, drug or alcohol possession and use on the premises is prohibited. Residents are also required to meet with a case manager every week to discuss future housing goals.

“Safety is paramount and Safe Haven is tasked with providing a safe and healthy environment

for its residents so the Veterans staying at the house can start making better decisions about their care and their lives,” said Chaplin. Improving the quality of life for these Veterans by encouraging them to take advantage of available VA programs, as well as the resources within the community, is yet another key component of Safe Haven.

While the goal for VA is to eliminate homelessness for our country’s Veterans by 2015, Chaplin said, “It’s a success to plant the seed and get them to think about making changes.”

For more information contact Jim Chaplin by email at [James.Chaplin@va.gov](mailto:James.Chaplin@va.gov) or by phone at 781-983-9207.



When a patient receives the diagnosis of a chronic and/or serious condition, the impact can be overwhelming and even devastating. Palliative care serves as a means to help cope with these emotionally distressing challenges.

According to Dr. Lisa Lambert, Primary Investigator on Palliative Care Research at White River Junction Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), “Palliative care is part of good care. A whole team of doctors, nurses, nutritionists, social workers, and chaplains are all involved, and they provide an extra layer of support.” She added, “In recent years there has been a movement toward palliative care; as people get

White River Junction VAMC is under the umbrella of the Dartmouth Medical School (now called Geisel School of Medicine), and has been a part of multiple research efforts on the effects and benefits of palliative care in conjunction with Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center.

“What’s exciting,” Dr. Lambert says, “is that our research proves we have the ability and the tools through palliative care to care for the whole person and to improve the quality of life for both the patient and their caregiver.”

**For more information on  
palliative care at VISN 1, contact  
your local VAMC.**

***“Palliative care is part of good care. A whole team of doctors, nurses, nutritionists, social workers, and chaplains are all involved, and they provide an extra layer of support.”***

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