

VETERANS'

healthy living

A Safe Haven for All

New Project Helps ALS Patients

A Place of Healing and Remembrance





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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VA Mission:

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.



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.”



Framingham Save 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 or by phone at 781-983-9207.

VA MEDICAL CENTERS

CONNECTICUT

VA Connecticut Healthcare System

Newington Campus
555 Willard Avenue
Newington, CT 06111
(860) 666-6951

West Haven Campus
950 Campbell Avenue
West Haven, CT 06516
(203) 932-5711

MAINE

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(207) 623-8411
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MASSACHUSETTS

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200 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730
(781) 687-2000

VA Boston Healthcare System

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Brockton, MA 02301
(508) 583-4500

Jamaica Plain Campus
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Boston, MA 02130
(617) 232-9500

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1400 VFW Parkway
West Roxbury, MA 02132
(617) 323-7700

VA Central Western MA Healthcare System

421 North Main Street
Leeds, MA 01053
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NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Manchester, NH 03104
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(800) 892-8384

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830 Chalkstone Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
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(866) 590-2976

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White River Junction VAMC
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White River Junction,
VT 05009
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Stamford Health System
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Stamford, CT 06905
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95 Scovill Street
Waterbury, CT 06706
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Willimantic, CT 06226
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(860) 738-6985

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(207) 561-3600

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(207) 403-2000

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Calais, ME 04619
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163 Van Buren Road, Ste. 6
Caribou, ME 04736
(207) 493-3800

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3 Mountain View Drive
Fort Kent, ME 04743
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Houlton Outreach Clinic
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Houlton, ME 04730
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Lewiston, ME 04240
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Worcester, MA 01605
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(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

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640 Marlboro Street
Keene, NH 03543
(802) 295-4900

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Littleton, NH 03561
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Somersworth, NH 03878
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

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Tilton, NH 03276
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