



# UPDATE

January/February 2013

*A bi-monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve Veterans. Send news items and comments to St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, 4801 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303, or via email to [Barry.Venable@va.gov](mailto:Barry.Venable@va.gov)*



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**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

## Calendar of Events

Tuesday, Jan. 15—**St. Cloud Area Veterans' Law Clinic**, noon to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

Wednesday, Jan. 16—**Voices for Veterans** radio show on WJON, AM 1240. Program begins at 8:10

Friday, Jan. 18—**Southwestern Minnesota Veterans' Law Clinic**, 12 noon to 2 p.m., at the Montevideo CBOC. FREE legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer Law, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal issues will be discussed. Please call 320-430-1051 to schedule an appointment.

Monday, Jan. 21— **Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr Federal Holiday**, Outpatient Clinics and Services closed for the federal holiday. Urgent Care Clinic in St. Cloud open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 22— **St. Cloud Area Veterans' Walk-In Clinic** , 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Building 8. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. Some criminal law issues may be discussed. Please call (651) 224-0292 for more information.

Tuesday, Feb. 5— **St. Cloud Area Veterans' Law Clinic**, Noon to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

### Quotation of the day:

**"I always wanted to be somebody...but I should have been more specific."**  
— Lily Tomlin

## Calendar of Events, cont.

Friday, Feb. 15—**Southwestern Minnesota Veterans' Law Clinic**, Noon to 2 p.m., at the Montevideo CBOC. FREE legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer Law, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal issues will be discussed. Please call 320-430-1051 to schedule an appointment.

Monday, Feb. 18—**Washington's Birthday Federal Holiday**, Outpatient Clinics and Services closed for the federal holiday. Urgent Care Clinic in St. Cloud open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 19—**St. Cloud Area Veterans' Law Clinic**, Noon to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

Wednesday, Feb. 20—**Voices for Veterans radio show** on WJON, AM 1240. Program begins at 8:10 a.m.

### USELESS FACT

The first letter of five continents' names is the same as the last: Antarctica, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa.



**Veterans**  
Eligible for VA Health Care?  
**Find Out. Apply.**  
320.255.6340 • [www.1010ez.med.va.gov](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov)

**You Served.**  
Now Let Us Serve You.

**St. Cloud VA**  
Health Care System  
Brainerd | Montevideo | Alexandria



## Health Care System Updates

### **New Clinic Coordinator at Alexandria CBOC-**

Kristin T. Wilson, of Alexandria, is the new Clinic Coordinator at the Max J. Beilke Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Alexandria.

In this new role, Wilson is responsible for overseeing the clinical and administrative operations of the clinic, which provides primary care and other health services to over 2200 Veterans per year.

Wilson is a Registered Nurse, and earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Maryland and a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas. She is also a Veteran, serving in the Army Nurse Corps for 22 years.

### **New Veteran Service Officer at the VA Medical Center in St. Cloud**

The VA Medical Center in St. Cloud now has a full time Veterans Service Officer from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Brad Thom is on site Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30p.m.

Appointments are recommended and can be made by calling (320) 255-6353. Walk-ins are seen on a stand-by basis. The VSO is located in building T-100.

**Flu Shots are still available**— Flu shots are still available at all St. Cloud VA HCS locations. Ask your provider about a flu shot today.

*One Number....One Mission  
To get you help when you need it most.*

**Veterans  
Crisis Line**



**1-800-273-8255  
PRESS 1**

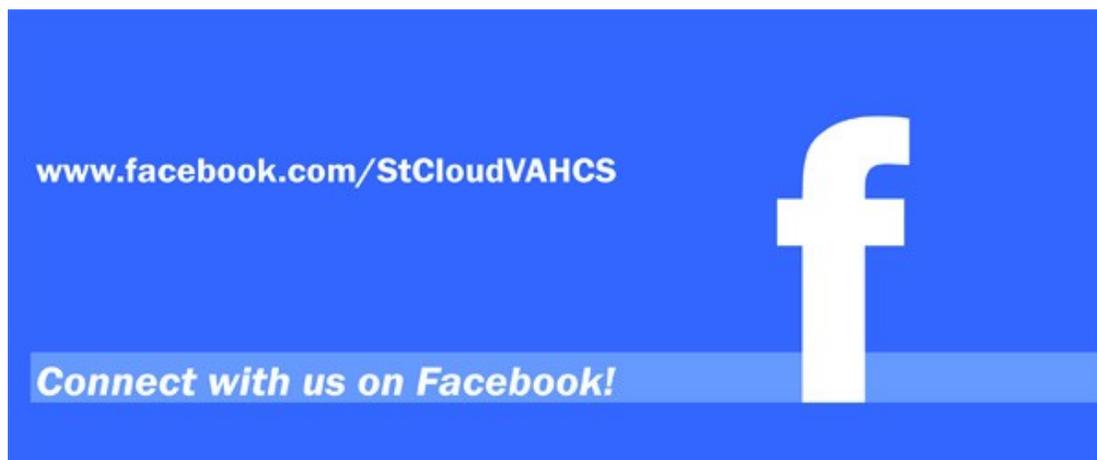
## Health Care System Updates, cont.

**New Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator**– Joy Finkelson LICSW is the St. Cloud VA's new Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Coordinator.

The MST Coordinator is responsible to:

- monitor and ensure that national and VISN-level policies related to military sexual trauma are implemented at our facility
- serve as a point person/source of information for military sexual trauma-related issues at the facility
- monitor mechanisms to ensure that enrolled Veterans with MST are screened and have access to appropriate treatment

Finkelson has been with the St. Cloud VA HCS since July of 2011. She has experience and passion for working with Veterans who have experienced trauma. She received her master of social work from the University of Minnesota and is also a graduate of the VISN 23 Leadership program. She can be reached at: (320) 252-1670 extension 6398.



# Black History Month Forum



**Ret LTC Hiram Mann  
Ret Col Nathan Thomas  
Col David Hamlar**



Join the National Guard in celebrating  
**Black History Month!**  
Hear the experiences of past and present  
African American leaders in the military.  
Learn about the struggles they faced and  
how they overcame them to become  
historical leaders and key figures in  
today's military.



**What:** An opportunity to hear from  
key African American leaders in  
the military & gain insight into  
success!

**Who's Invited:** Army, Air, Civilians, &  
families/friends (valid driver's  
license may be required for  
security purposes)

**Date:** *17 Feb 2013*

**Time:** *1300-1400*

**Location:** *Camp Ripley TACC  
Theater, 15000 Hwy 115, Camp  
Ripley, Little Falls MN*

**Contact:**  
Theresa Mensinger  
Special Emphasis Program  
Manager  
Office of Equal Employment  
Management  
Ph: 651-282-4733  
E-mail:  
theresa.a.mensinger@us.army.  
mil

Follow us at: <https://www.facebook.com/GuardDiversity>



## **What is eBenefits?**

eBenefits is a joint VA/DoD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to Veterans, Service members, and their families to research, access and manage VA and military benefits and personal information. It also provides a list of links to other sites that provide information about military and Veteran benefits. It is an essential way for Veterans, Service members, and their families to receive access to and service from VA and DoD.

## **What can I do in eBenefits?**

Some of the features within eBenefits allow Veterans and Service members to access official military personnel documents, view the status of their disability compensation claim, transfer entitlement of Post-9/11 GI Bill to eligible dependents (Service members only), and register for and update direct deposit information for certain benefits. New features are being added regularly.

Log on to: [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) to get started.

## No More EVRs

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced it is cutting red tape for Veterans by eliminating the need for them to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR).

VA will implement a new process for confirming eligibility for benefits, and staff that had been responsible for processing the old form will instead focus on eliminating the compensation claims backlog.

Historically, beneficiaries receiving pension benefits have been required to complete an EVR each year. Under the new initiative, VA will work with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify continued eligibility for pension benefits.

VA estimates it would have sent nearly 150,000 EVRs to beneficiaries in January 2013. Eliminating these annual reports reduces the burden on Veterans, their families, and survivors because they will not have to return these routine reports to VA each year in order to avoid suspension of benefits.

It also allows VA to redirect more than 100 employees that usually process EVRs to work on eliminating the claims backlog. *(cont. next page)*

(Cont.)

All beneficiaries currently receiving VA pension benefits will receive a letter from VA explaining these changes and providing instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.

More information about VA pension benefits is available at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/pension> and other VA benefit programs on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal **eBenefits** at: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>



## Pension Benefits

VA offers two broad categories of Pension benefit programs:

**Veterans Pension:** Tax-free monetary benefit payable to low-income wartime Veterans

**Survivors' Pension:** Tax-free monetary benefit payable to a low-income, un-remarried surviving spouse and/or unmarried child(ren) of a deceased Veteran with wartime service.

Veterans and survivors who are eligible for Pension benefits and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person may be eligible to receive additional monetary amounts, for more information visit:

[http://www.benefits.va.gov/PENSIONANDFIDUCIARY/pension/aid\\_attendance\\_housebound.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/PENSIONANDFIDUCIARY/pension/aid_attendance_housebound.asp)

## VA's Vietnam Ship List Updated



The VA has updated the list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that operated in Vietnam, adding more vessels and expanding information for others.

There are now 244 ships on the list. The list can help Vietnam-era Veterans find out if they qualify for VA health care benefits and/or presumption of Agent Orange exposure when seeking VA disability compensation for related diseases.

A complete listing of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships can be found on the Department of Veterans Affairs Website: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/list.asp>

Here is an example of what the ship listing looks like:

Ship Name	Activities in Vietnam
Ajax (AR-6)	Anchored in Vung Tau area for repair duties with evidence of shore-based repairs during June 1968, September to October 1969, April to May 1970, and August to November 1971



## A Better Way to **LIVE**

*Talk with your  
health care team  
about your goals.*



### Be Involved in Your Health Care

- Take an active role.
- Work with your health care team to improve your health.



### Be Tobacco Free

- Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and protect the health of your family members.
- Don't use tobacco in any form.



### Eat Wisely

- Eat a variety of foods including vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- Limit salt, fat, sugar, and alcohol.



### Be Physically Active

- Avoid inactivity.
- Aim for at least 2½ hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week.



### Strive for a Healthy Weight

- If you need to lose weight, losing even a little will help.
- If you are of normal weight, maintain it.



### Limit Alcohol

- If you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation (women no more than 1 drink a day; men no more than 2 drinks a day).
- Avoid "binge drinking."



### Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations

- Recommendations for preventive services depend on your age, gender, health status, and family history.
- Ask which screening tests and immunizations are recommended for you.



### Manage Stress

- Pay attention to stress.
- Learn about ways to help you manage and reduce your stress.



### Be Safe

- Find out how to prevent sexually transmitted infections, falls, and motor vehicle crashes.
- Take action to protect yourself and those you love from harm.

## Where Did the Files Go?



The St. Cloud VA now has a paperless file room. Patient medical and administrative paper records are no longer housed on site. The final shipment of paper records was sent to the Federal Records Storage Center in Chicago on December 19<sup>th</sup>.

The facility shipped a total of 2,295 boxes, which equals 3 to 4 truckloads of 12-14 pallets each.

The file room/scanning staff consists of 12 staff and one volunteer. With some extra help, it took them a little more than four weeks to box up and ship all the files.

The paper files that were stored on site were from patient visits prior to 1996. According to regulations, the facility is required to keep records of active patients. After a patient becomes inactive, we are required to keep the records for an additional three years. *(cont. next page)*

(Cont.)

All inactive records are then sent to the Federal Records Storage Center and kept for seventy five years.

The Federal Records Storage Center is now storing all physical copies of active and inactive medical records.

The file room staff will continue to scan records from outside providers, images from Surgical & Specialty Care, Release of Information forms, and other necessary documents into the patient's electronic medical record.



If a physical medical record is needed, staff will initiate a request to retrieve medical records from the Chicago location.

Veterans have a right to their medical records. All records requests should be sent through the Release of Information (ROI) office at: (320) 255-6470 or Bldg 29, Room 14



# Veterans Canteen Service



## JANUARY SPECIALS



Cold & Flu Sale starts January 3rd!



WOW Sale Jan. 17-21



Red Days Sale Jan. 31- Feb. 10



## Also on Special

Off the grill—Sesame Chicken Stir Fry a la cart for \$4.49 from January 7—February 15

Subs & Wraps—.99 cent coupon (Buy any 6" Sub & 8oz. Bowl of soup & get any sized fountain drink for only .99 cents)

## Helping Hospitalized Veterans



The Christmas Gift Shop Program makes a huge difference for our hospitalized Veterans!

Because of the generous donations and fund raising projects held throughout the year by members of the American Legion Auxiliary, our hospitalized Veterans were able to give their families presents for Christmas.

“It means a lot to these Veterans who would otherwise be unable to give gifts to their loved ones”, said Karen Foss, American Legion Auxiliary representative.

The gift shop works by allowing Veterans to pick out gifts for their families ranging from toys to clothing, jewelry, and much more. The Veterans do not pay anything for the gifts or wrapping.

Thank you American Legion Auxiliary!

# Minnesota Trivia

Minnesotan baseball commentator Halsey Hal was the first to say 'Holy Cow' during a baseball broadcast.

The Mall of America in Bloomington is the size of 78 football fields --- 9.5 million square feet.

Minnesota Inventions: Masking and Scotch tape, Wheaties cereal, Bisquick, HMOs, the Bundt pan, Aveda beauty products, and Green Giant vegetables.

The St. Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959 allowing oceangoing ships to reach Duluth.

Minneapolis is home to the oldest continuously running theater (Old Log Theater) and the largest dinner theater (Chanhasen Dinner Theater) in the country.

The original name of the settlement that became St. Paul was Pig's Eye. It was named for the French-Canadian whiskey trader, Pierre "Pig's Eye" Parrant, who had led squatters to the settlement.

The world's largest pelican stands at the base of the Mill Pond dam on the Pelican River, right in downtown Pelican Rapids. The 15 1/2 feet tall concrete statue was built in 1957.

The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is the largest urban sculpture garden in the country.

# *A Recipe for Health*

## *Sunshine Fish Steaks*

### *Ingredients*

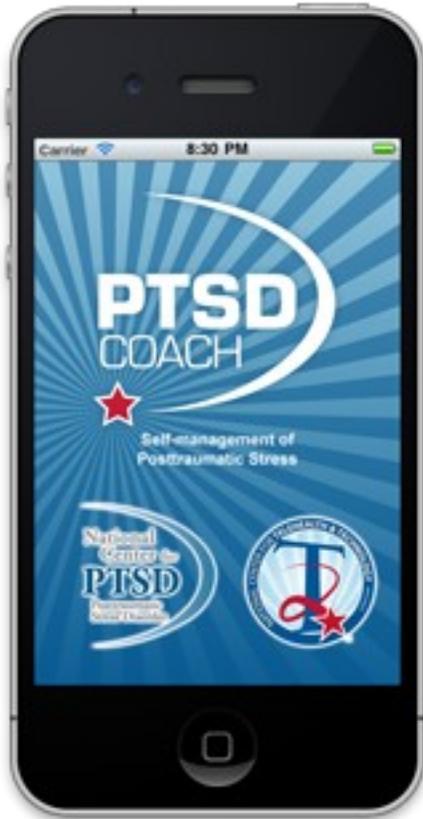
4 fresh fish steaks, tuna, swordfish or halibut  
1 bunch green onions, finely sliced  
1 lg. finger fresh gingerroot, peeled and chopped into  
1/8-inch cubes  
5-6oz. Orange juice  
1-2 capfuls lime juice  
1-2 cloves finely chopped fresh garlic

### *Directions*

Preheat oven to 350°. Rinse fish steaks and place into glass ovenproof pan. Cover top of fish steaks with onions, garlic and ginger. Add pepper to taste. Mix lime and orange juice and spoon over fish until it drips over the edge of the fish into the pan. Reserve excess juice to baste fish while baking. Bake for 20-40 minutes, depending on the thickness of the steaks.

Nutritional Information: 188 calories, 3.5g fat, 31.2g protein, 83mg sodium, 6.7 carbohydrates.

# Mobile App: PTSD Coach



The PTSD Coach app can help you learn about and manage symptoms that commonly occur after trauma. Features include:

- Reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work.
- Tools for screening and tracking your symptoms.
- Convenient, easy-to-use skills to help you handle stress symptoms.
- Direct links to support and help.
- Always with you when you need it.

To learn more about the mobile app for PTSD go to the following website:

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/ptsdcoach.asp>

**Download the mobile app**

**Free PTSD Coach download from:**

**[iTunes \(iOS\)](#) and [Google Play \(Android\)](#)**

# Guide to Services

The Guide to Services is a publication that provides information on services at the St. Cloud VA HCS. You can access the Guide to Services on the St. Cloud VA website at:

[http://www.stcloud.va.gov/docs/Guide\\_DEC\\_2012.pdf](http://www.stcloud.va.gov/docs/Guide_DEC_2012.pdf)



## GUIDE TO SERVICES



**VA Medical Center - St. Cloud**



**Brainerd Clinic**



**Montevideo Clinic**



**Max J. Beilke Clinic  
Alexandria**



# Construction Update



Bldg 49, a Community Living Center building originally constructed in 1937, is getting a much needed makeover. Starting from just the framework, the two-plus year renovation project will modernize the living environment and result in more private rooms for Veterans.

Located just to the northeast of Bldg. 1, the MRI project adds new construction to house a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) system, adding a new diagnostic tool to our inventory of imaging services.



A new Mental Health building was recently approved for a spring 2013 construction start. Located to the north of Bldg. 111 (shown) the new 18,000 square foot building will increase space to meet the growing demand for Mental Health services.



## *Just think - no more phone tag!*

With Secure Messaging thru My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet, you can contact your VA Healthcare team without waiting on hold or playing phone tag. Secure Messaging is as easy to use as email, but completely safe and secure. It's great for non-urgent communication and general healthcare-related questions.

**No Waiting on Hold!**  
**No Waiting for a Call Back!**  
***Don't Delay, Opt-in Today!***

### How to use Secure Messaging:

- 1) Log into your My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet account at: [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)  
(Forgot your User ID or Password? Simply click on the 'Forgot User ID' or 'Forgot Password' link directly below the sign in box. Note, you only need to answer one of the two security questions that will appear.)
- 2) Select "Secure Messaging" on the top navigation bar, then click on the orange "Open Secure Messaging" tab in the middle of the screen.
- 3) If it's the first time you're accessing your Secure Messaging inbox, you will need to read the terms and conditions and select 'Opt In'.



- 4) Click 'New Message' and your provider's name will automatically be in the 'To' line of the message.

We hope you take advantage of Secure Messaging. If you have any questions about Secure Messaging or My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet, please contact me via phone or email. I'll be happy to explain this time-saving tool.

You can also stop by my office during your next visit to the St. Cloud VA and I'll help you get on-track with Secure Messaging and many of the other great tools and features of My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet.



Brian Vetter  
My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet Coordinator  
St. Cloud VA Healthcare System  
Phone: 320-252-1670, dial 9 then ext: 7335





*Take care of your buddy!*

Help a fellow Veteran enroll  
for VA healthcare.

Contact your County Veteran  
Service Officer, call the St.  
Cloud VA at 320-255-6340,

or apply online at

[www.1010ez.med.va.gov](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov)