

St. Cloud VA

# UPDATE

July 17, 2020



*A monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve them. 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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## A Letter from the Director

Dear Veteran:

The St. Cloud VA team is honored to serve you. As you are aware, the coronavirus pandemic is real and ongoing. I want to offer a view on what the next few months will look like to our Veterans and families.

We are poised to meet your needs either through scheduled face-to-face visits or through virtual appointments. Safe care is our goal as we gradually increase face-to-face health care visits. The increase will be slow, and some services may take longer to expand. If COVID-19 surges in the area, we will adjust along the way. We will keep you informed as we move forward.

Scheduled appointments are required. There are no walk-in services except for urgent needs. If you need care, call 320-252-1670 Option 2 to schedule appointments or to speak to a nurse. Telephone care is available 24 hours a day when you need health care advice. Call 320-252-1670 Option 3, 24 hours a day. You can

also send your care team a secure message through MyHealtheVet.

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms **call us**. We'll guide you through the process of getting tested and treated.

For many concerns, we will offer you access to VA care from home by phone or using VA virtual care options. Virtual appointments allow you to receive the care you need at home, either by phone or via video on your computer, smartphone, or tablet, while minimizing risk of exposure. If you need help learning how to use or set up your device for telehealth, Connected Care apps or MyHealtheVet, call the Health Hub at 320-252-1670, Ext. 7271.

For urgent needs, the Urgent Care Clinic is open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week. Mental Health Triage is available in Bldg. 111 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mon. – Fri., or through the Urgent Care Clinic. You may also use the new urgent care benefit in your local community.

In support of safe care, anyone entering our campus must use a cloth face covering (*e.g., reusable cloth masks, including homemade masks*), undergo screening for COVID-19, and keep a safe distance from others. Cloth face coverings are available at our entry points at no charge. Please limit additional visitors to a single personal assistant.

Thank you for your service. Elsewhere in this issue are reminders on how to access care given your level of need, as well as brief descriptions of available virtual care options.

Sincerely,

BRENT A. THELEN, PhD  
Health Care System Director

### **Get the Right Care, at the Right Place, at the Right Time**

If you have **symptoms of COVID-19** (most often fever, cough, and shortness of breath), have been near someone with the virus, or suspect you may be infected,

- Call your primary care or PACT Team before going to the clinic at 320-252-1670, Option 2
- After hours, call the 24-hour Nurse Advice Line at 320-252-1670, Option 3
- If it is very hard to breathe, you look blue, or you have a life-threatening emergency, call 911.  
Routine Care Needs: To schedule an appointment or talk to your VA PACT Team.
- Call 320-252-1670, Option 2, or

- Use Secure Messaging in My HealtheVet for nonurgent questions or requests

**For Urgent Needs** (Minor illnesses and injuries that are not life-threatening, but which need immediate care, or concerned about mental health issues)

- The St. Cloud VA Urgent Care Center in Bldg. 1 is open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day, including weekends and national holidays.
- Mental Health Triage is available in Bldg. 111 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, closed on national holidays.

- Eligible Veterans can also receive urgent care from an in-network community urgent care provider. To find an in-network location nearby visit:  
<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>. Verify your eligibility and that the provider is in-network prior to visiting. Co-pays may apply.

To talk to a VA Nurse 24 hours a day call 320-252-1670, Option 3

**For Emergency Needs** (A life-threatening medical emergency. Delay may lead to death, serious or permanent injury, or thoughts of suicide or harming yourself or others)

- In an emergency, Veterans do not need to check with VA before calling 911 or going to an emergency room.
- The St. Cloud VA does not have an emergency department.

- Thoughts of suicide or harming yourself or others? Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, text to 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net, or call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.
- In most instances, Veterans are eligible to receive VA-authorized emergency care at an in-network community facility if VA is notified of the emergent event within 72 hours.
- VA has established a single national location, the Community Care Centralized Call Center, to accept reports of Veteran visits to an emergency department. Veterans and family members should remind community hospitals and providers to report emergency visits to VA either by email at: VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov or by phone at 1-844-72HRVHA or (844-724-7842). Reporting emergency admissions helps your VA team arrange additional care or transfer to a VA facility.

## Virtual Care Tools

VA virtual care options can make it easier and safer for Veterans to receive care from their providers while helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by accessing VA care virtually.

St. Cloud VA Central Minnesota Veterans needing help with virtual care tools or assistance with setting up a device can call the **St. Cloud VA Health Hub at 320-252-1670, Ext. 7271.**

There are several ways for Veterans to keep in touch with their care team to include:

Telephone or Video Appointments – Veterans can receive care at home — either over the phone or via video using VA Video Connect on their computers, smartphones, or tablets. To set up telephone or video appointments, Veterans can send their provider a secure message on My HealtheVet by visiting [myhealth.va.gov](http://myhealth.va.gov). To learn more about VA Video Connect, visit [mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect](http://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect).

Secure Messaging – With My HealtheVet, (see reverse side) VA’s online patient portal, Veterans can send online secure messages to their VA health care team to ask them nonurgent health questions. Register at [myhealth.va.gov](http://myhealth.va.gov).

Prescription Refills – Veterans can request prescription refills and order and ship medications to their homes using My HealtheVet or the Rx Refill mobile app. Download the app at [mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill](http://mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill).

Text Message Reminders – Veterans can use Annie’s Coronavirus Precautions protocol to send automated text messages with information about COVID-19. This application helps Veterans monitor for symptoms and can assist if they need to contact a VA facility for care. Enroll at [mobile.va.gov/annie](http://mobile.va.gov/annie).

VA Health Chat: The VA Health Chat app provides easy, online access to chat with VA staff when Veterans have minor health questions and more, including getting help figuring where to access care. VA team members are available to chat Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. local time, excluding federal holidays. Learn more and get the VA Health Chat app at [mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat](http://mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat).

For more information about VA's Connected Care technologies, visit [connectedcare.va.gov](https://connectedcare.va.gov).

Stay up to date with the St. Cloud VA at [stcloud.va.gov](https://stcloud.va.gov), where you can subscribe to receive email updates, or on Facebook [facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS](https://facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS).

## Protect Yourself From COVID-19

Get a My HealtheVet Premium Account Online!



You can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by connecting with your VA care team virtually through My HealtheVet. Sign up online for a My HealtheVet Premium account to access tools that let you manage your VA care remotely.

With a My HealtheVet Premium account, you can:

-  Contact your VA care team through Secure Messaging for nonurgent health questions and to reschedule appointments.
-  Manage your VA appointments and join VA Video Connect appointments.
-  Order VA prescription refills to get your medications delivered by mail and avoid trips to the pharmacy.

You can get a My HealtheVet Premium account online for free with a secure sign-in partner.

- ✓ DS Logon is the U.S. Department of Defense's secure identification system. Create a DS Logon account at [myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil](https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil).
- ✓ ID.me is a trusted VA partner that provides secure identity verification online. Create an ID.me account at [id.me/registration/new](https://id.me/registration/new).
- ✓ Video Visit with VA staff to verify your ID. Call 1-320-252-1670 Ext. 7271.

Once you have a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) or ID.me account, go to [myhealth.va.gov](https://myhealth.va.gov) to get your My HealtheVet Premium account.

- If you don't have a My HealtheVet account, select **Register** to create an account. Indicate you are a VA Patient.
- If you have a My HealtheVet account, select **Sign in** and then select either **Sign in with DS Logon** or **Sign in with ID.me**.
- To upgrade to a Premium account, *follow these steps*.

Protect yourself from COVID-19 with the latest information and guidelines.

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus) | [va.gov/coronavirus](https://va.gov/coronavirus)



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Office of Connected Care

## 2020 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition

Judging for the 2020 National Veterans Creative Arts Competition is now complete and six Veterans from the St. Cloud VA have placed first in this national competition. In the visual arts division, Jack Wimmer's wooden mosaic "Red Sky in the Morning" Curtis Sannerud's suncatcher kit "Perfect View of Summer in Bloom" received first place awards.

In the Vocal Group – Spiritual category, Rick Stang, Steve Buley, and John Jordan are The Choir Boys trio and placed first with their version of "Why Me, Lord". The Choir Boys foursome includes the addition of Art Ruzanic and this group also placed first with "An Honor to Serve", their Patriotic Vocal Group entry.

Also receiving national honors, Ray Hollerman's woodworking entry "Keys to Your Heart", and Cynthia Christopher's beadwork entry "From Darkness to Light" each placed second in their categories. The 2020 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, hosted by the Bay Pines VA, will be held in St. Petersburg, FL, from November 30 through December 5, 2020.



*Curtis Sannerud, "Perfect View of Summer in Bloom"*



*Cynthia Christopher's entry "From Darkness to Light"*



*Jack Wimmer "Red Sky in the Morning"*



*Ray Hollerman's entry "Keys to Your Heart"*

## **VA releases new COVID Coach mobile app**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the launch of the COVID Coach app, a new mobile app designed to help both Veterans and civilians cope with feelings of stress and anxiety they may be experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The app includes practical tools, information and resources that can all be used from the safety of one's home to track well-being, mood swings and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

A personal goal setting tracker can help users work toward achieving small victories. The mindfulness and sleep tools can be helpful for improving mental health and well-being. The indoor activities tool and staying healthy recommendations have been specifically tailored to the current COVID-19 situation.

Direct links to resources are available within the app for those who may need additional professional support. The COVID Coach can be used independently or while engaged in mental health treatment but is not intended to replace needed professional care.

[Download](#) the app on iOS and Android devices or from [VA's Mobile App Store](#). Contact [MobileMentalHealth@va.gov](mailto:MobileMentalHealth@va.gov) regarding questions about COVID Coach.

## **Recreation Therapy Staff keep Residents Engaged**

COVID-19 has changed the lives of every staff and Veteran at the St. Cloud VA Health Care System. While the Veterans in the Community Living Center are staying safe on their units, the Recreation Therapy department is offering numerous creative and flexible recreation and leisure activities to enhance and normalize their lives as much as possible. With the main goal of improving their quality of life, activities are offered to both inpatient and outpatient Veterans.

Residential activities include:

- Virtual video visits with the Veteran's families and loved ones
- Individualized visits with each Veteran once a week
- Custom canteen runs with specific orders that are delivered to the Veterans
- Helping Veterans write letters to send home to their families
- Bringing stationary exercise equipment up to the unit for Veterans to exercise on such as hand cycles, ski machine, and cardio equipment
- TV Broadcasting programs from the Chapel channel is transmitted to all Community Living Centers and Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program TV's such as Bingo, Exercise, Trivia, and sing-a-longs
- Preparing the garden area for planting flowers and tomatoes by tilling, pulling weeds, and loosening up the dirt
- Television virtual chair yoga Veterans can do from their room
- Painting, varnishing, and staining projects including ceramics, boxes, and ornaments.

Outpatient Veteran activities available include:

- Virtual chair yoga and tai chi classes through videos that are sent to Veterans
- Staff send craft kits to Adult Day Health Care Veterans who are at home, and signing them up for subscriptions for kits to be delivered via mail



*Pictured are buddies Otto and Harry who met two years ago in Bldg. 50 and have made over 50 custom bird houses during the last few weeks on their ward.*



*With some social limitations, Veterans can enjoy assembling a model car their room.*

## **VA offers debt relief to Veterans through year's end**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced its commitment to extend debt relief to Veterans adversely impacted by COVID-19 to the end of 2020 by suspending certain debt collection actions.

The department recognizes Veterans and beneficiaries are still being greatly impacted by the coronavirus prompting the extension of financial relief.

“Veterans and their families should be focused on their health and safety during the pandemic,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA is taking action to give those with pending debts greater flexibility during these challenging times.”

VA is suspending all actions on Veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Treasury Department. This includes the suspension of collection action or extending repayment terms on preexisting VA debts, whichever the Veteran prefers.

For benefit debts, Veterans should contact the VA Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648.

For health care debts, Veterans should contact the Health Resource Center at 1-866-400-1238 or <https://www.pay.gov> for payments.

## **Community Care Billing and Claims**

As part of the VA MISSION Act overhaul of community care, the VHA Office of Community Care (OCC) now features centralized Community Care (Non-VA Care) billing and claims staff. ALL Community Care claims are processed centrally. Community Care billing questions, to include filing claims for reimbursement, cannot be addressed or processed by the St. Cloud VA HCS Community Care Department—please do not refer billing questions to the local Community Care Department.

Again, the St. Cloud VA Community Care Department handles referrals and authorizations for care (the front end of the CC process), while the centralized VHA Office of Community Care, Payment and Operations Management Branch (POM), stationed in Ft. Harrison, Montana, handles all billing issues (the back end of the CC process). Don't be confused—some POM personnel actually have workspace on our campus, however there is no local billing contact center--all customer inquiries are routed through the centralized phone center.

For best customer service, the single point-of-contact for MOST community care claims and billing issues is 877-881-7618. If the claim involves TriWest as the TPA, TriWest claims concerns can be reached at 855-722-2838.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Appointments by phone only: Veteran's Law Clinic**

Tuesday, July 21      Noon -2 p.m.  
Free legal consultation for Veterans by appointment only. This clinic is not for criminal issues. For more information or to schedule an appointment please contact Central Minnesota Legal Services at 320-257-4855 or 800-622-7773.

### **Veterans Affairs Radio Show**

Monday, August 3      8:10 -8:30 a.m.  
KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3

### **Appointments by phone only: Veteran's Law Clinic**

Tuesday, August 4      Noon -2 p.m.  
Free legal consultation for Veterans by appointment only. This clinic is not for criminal issues. For more information or to schedule an appointment please contact Central Minnesota Legal Services at 320-257-4855 or 800-622-7773.

### **Appointments by phone only: Veteran's Law Clinic**

Tuesday, August 18      Noon -2 p.m.  
Free legal consultation for Veterans by appointment only. This clinic is not for criminal issues. For more information or to schedule an appointment please contact Central Minnesota Legal Services at 320-257-4855 or 800-622-7773.

### **Voices for Veterans Radio Show**

Wednesday, August 19      8:10-8:30 a.m.  
WJON AM 1240

*For a complete Calendar of Events, go to <https://www.stcloud.va.gov/calendar.asp>*

# Quick Reference Phone List

<b>Main St. Cloud VA HCS Phone Number</b>	<b>320-252-1670 or 800-247-1739</b>
TDD User	320-255-6450
<b>Max J. Beilke VA Clinic, Alexandria</b>	320-759-2640
<b>Brainerd VA Clinic</b>	218-855-1115
<b>Montevideo VA Clinic</b>	320-269-2222
<b>Veterans Crisis Line</b>	<b>800-273-8255 Press 1</b>
<b>Homeless Veteran Hotline</b>	877- 424-3838

## Billing:

• VA Care	866-347-2352
• Care in the Community (non-VA care)	877-881-7618
Caregiver Support Team	Ext. 7283
Chaplain Service	Ext. 6386
Community Care Referrals	Ext. 6401
Discrimination Complaints	Ext. 6304
Eligibility	Ext. 6340
Nutrition Clinic	Ext. 6376
Transition & Care Management Program	Ext. 6453
Patient Advocate	Ext. 6353
Pharmacy Refill Line	855-560-1724
Privacy Officer	Ext. 6408
Public Affairs Office	Ext. 6353
Release of Information (Medical Records)	Ext. 6336
Transportation	Ext. 7622
TRICARE	844-866-9378
Voluntary Service	Ext. 6365
VA Police	Ext. 6355

## Stay in Touch

Visit our Website: [www.stcloud.va.gov](http://www.stcloud.va.gov)

Like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS](https://www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS)

Visit us on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/stcloudvahcs/>

Sign up for our automated email service. Visit the St. Cloud VA Website at: <http://www.stcloud.va.gov> and on the right-hand side of the page is a request to sign up for email updates. Enter your email address and you are automatically signed up to receive email updates from our web page.