Acting Director at St. Cloud VA announced

In a statement released to employees on Jan. 11, 2019, VA Midwest Health Care Network Director Robert P. McDivitt announced the appointment of Heath J. Streck, as Acting Health Care System Director for the St. Cloud VA, effective Jan. 20, 2019.

Since 2014, Streck has served as the Associate Director for Operations, Iowa City VA Health Care System, in Iowa City, Iowa.

Streck’s VA service began as the Chief Financial Officer for the VA Central Iowa Health Care System in 2009. During his tenure in VHA, he has had the opportunity to conduct interim assignments in various capacities to include: Associate Director at the Montana VA HCS; and, Associate Director, Chief of Human Relations, Chief of Logistics, Chief of Prosthetics, Chief of Nutrition and Food Service and Administrative Assistant to the Director at the VA Central Iowa HCS.

Before joining the VA in 2009, Streck served over 29 years combined in the U.S. Army, U.S. Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve.

Streck holds a Master’s of Science in Strategic Studies through the U.S. Army War College and has achieved the VHA Fellow Mentor status. He is a graduate of the VHA Healthcare Leadership Development Program (HCLDP) 2011 class and the Leadership VA (LVA) 2017 class. He also holds a Master’s of Business Administration and a Bachelor’s of Science in Business Administration with an emphasis in Accounting from the University of South Dakota.
#BeThere

Year-round, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) empowers communities to take action to support our nation’s Veterans. Each community across the country plays a role in supporting Veterans, but as an individual you may not know what to do or where to start.

You don’t need to have special training to support the Veterans in your life, and we can all do something to help a Veteran who is going through a difficult time. Even seemingly small actions can have a huge impact: Preventing suicide begins with just the willingness to Be There.

Showing your support can be as simple as sending a Veteran a text message — inviting someone over to catch up or sharing a positive thought are both great ways to communicate that you care. Your words could be exactly what a Veteran in crisis needs to hear, and could be a reminder of the many people out there who are willing to listen.

Here are some sample text messages:

- “Hey Tom, haven’t seen you around in a while! We should grab coffee this week. How about tomorrow?”
- “Just letting you know I’m here for you if you need anything. Call me anytime!”
- “Hey Amy, hope all is well with you! Been thinking about you today. I miss you!”

When you sense that a Veteran is not doing well, your words can help. You can make a difference by just starting a conversation.

Although it can seem challenging, it is important to talk about difficult feelings and experiences. Keep in mind: Asking questions about thoughts of suicide does not increase a person’s suicide risk. Instead, an open conversation can help someone feel less alone and let others into the Veteran’s experience — and feeling connected is shown to reduce suicide risk.

- **Show that you are really listening.** Remember to maintain eye contact and turn in toward the Veteran while they are speaking.

- **Validate the Veteran’s experience.** Even if you can’t relate to what a Veteran is experiencing, you can tell them you understand that they went through something difficult, and show that you respect their feelings about it.

- **Let them decide how much information to share.** Supportive and encouraging comments, rather than invasive personal questions, will create a space for open communication and avoid putting a Veteran on the defensive.

- **Don’t be afraid to ask the question.** When you are concerned about suicide risk, it’s OK to ask people if they have ever thought about hurting themselves or taken action to prepare for suicide. The answers can help you consider next steps to take.

Simply reaching out to a Veteran in need and opening the door for a discussion could make all the difference. Learn more ways to show your support.
If you believe a Veteran is in crisis — or you’re concerned about one — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, send a text message to 838255, or chat online. Qualified and compassionate VA responders are on call 24-7-365 to provide guidance on how to connect Veterans with support and help keep them from harm.

**Mental Health Resources for Transitioning Service Members**

Regardless of where you served, how long you served, your discharge status, or your Service branch, VA is here for you. We know the first year of transition is critical for service members and Veterans moving from the military to civilian life. To address these transition-related challenges, President Trump signed Executive Order 13822, “Supporting our Veterans During Their Transition from Uniformed Service to Civilian Life” on January 9, 2018. As part of the Mental Health Executive Order, VA is providing seamless mental health resources to all eligible Service members and Veterans for at least one year after their discharge from military service. We are partnering with the Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security, Veterans Service Organizations, Congress, and community organizations to make sure you have the right resources and the support you need, whenever and wherever you need it.

**Fact Sheet: Improving Access to Mental Health Care for Transitioning Service Members**

If you are a Veteran in crisis — or you’re concerned about one — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, send a text message to 838255, or chat online.

**FAQs: Improving Access to Mental Health Care for Transitioning Service Members**

Registeration is now open for the 2019 National Veterans Wheelchair Games

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that Veterans interested in registering for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games can now do so online Jan. 7 through April 15.

**Basic Training Classes are Now Underway**

Pre-registration is not required. All courses are free with no co-pay required. *Intro to Whole Health* is a prerequisite course that is to be taken prior to attending the *Taking Charge of My Life and Health* courses.

All courses are held in the Patriot Café (Canteen) west side dining room at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center at 2 p.m. on the dates specified in the schedule below. Spouses and Caregivers may attend all sessions except the *Taking Charge of My Life and Health* group courses. Participants attending the Connected Care class are asked to bring their smart device, or laptop.
2019 Basic Training Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Intro to Whole Health</th>
<th>Coffee Talk (how to use VA)</th>
<th>Connected Care</th>
<th>Taking Charge of Your Life &amp; Health</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1st Friday &amp; 3rd Monday (2 hours)</td>
<td>2d Friday (1.5 hours)</td>
<td>2d &amp; 4th Monday (1.5 hours)</td>
<td>3d &amp; 4th Wednesdays (2 hours)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14 &amp; 28</td>
<td>No classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb.</td>
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<td>11 &amp; 25</td>
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<td>Mar.</td>
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<td>Apr.</td>
<td>5 &amp; 15</td>
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<td>8 &amp; 22</td>
<td>17 &amp; 24</td>
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<td>May</td>
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<td>5 &amp; 15</td>
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<td>17 &amp; 24</td>
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<td>Aug.</td>
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<td>12 &amp; 26</td>
<td>21 &amp; 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept.</td>
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<td>9 &amp; 23</td>
<td>18 &amp; 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct.</td>
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<td>16 &amp; 23</td>
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<td>Nov.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>6 &amp; 16</td>
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<td>No classes</td>
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St. Cloud VA named Virtual Health Center of Excellence

The St. Cloud VA Health Care system was recently named as a Virtual Health Implementation Center for Excellence by the VHA’s Office of Connected Care.

As a Center of Excellence, the St. Cloud VA is committed to improving Veterans’ access to care and health outcomes using virtual care tools. The St. Cloud VA will play a key role in informing how VHA can successfully implement virtual care methods and shape the evolution of virtual health tools and their implementation to ensure their safe and effective use and broader adoption across the VA health system.

Entries sought for St. Cloud VA Veterans Art Competition and Show

Artwork by Veterans will be on display at the Veterans Art Show on Wednesday, February 13, from 12:30 to 6:30 p.m., and Thursday, February 14, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., in the Auditorium (Building 8) on the St. Cloud VA Medical Center campus. The show is open to the public. The art show is part of the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition, which is an opportunity for Veterans to express themselves through various artistic mediums and to gain recognition for their creative accomplishments. Winning entries at the local show move on to the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition. Entries in numerous art categories will be accepted through Friday, Feb. 8, 2019. For more information on categories and rules or to learn how to enter the competition, contact Madge Scherer at 320-252-1670, Ext. 7336.

St. Cloud VA Goes Red for Women

Every February, the Women Veterans Program at the St. Cloud VA joins the American Heart Association’s efforts to raise awareness and provide education about heart disease and stroke among women Veterans.

Women Veterans are invited to join the effort by wearing red on Feb. 1, and by learning more about heart disease in women while helping paint a heart themed canvas in support of heart disease prevention, on February 13, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the Good Earth Food Co-op, located at 2010 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud.

For more information or to confirm attendance on Feb. 13, contact Amber Willert, Women Veterans Program Manager.
at amber.willard@va.gov, or call (320) 252-1670 Ext. 6655.

Heart Disease in Women

One in three women die from cardiovascular diseases and stroke each year, killing about one woman every 80 seconds. An estimated 44 million women in the U.S. are affected by cardiovascular diseases.

The symptoms of heart attack can be different in women versus men, and are often misunderstood—even by some physicians. Fewer women than men survive their first heart attack. Women also have a higher lifetime risk of stroke than men.

Ninety percent of women have one or more risk factors for heart disease or stroke. However, 80 percent of heart disease and stroke events may be prevented by lifestyle changes and education, and it all starts with knowing your numbers.

AHA recommends that women are aware of five key numbers: Total Cholesterol, HDL (good) Cholesterol, Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar and Body Mass Index (BMI). These numbers are important because they help providers determine your risk for developing cardiovascular diseases.

Join the Conversation

Learn more about women Veterans and heart health, and help VA spread awareness about heart disease and stroke in women by using hashtags #KnowYourNumbers and #Every80Seconds in social media.

Caregiver Support

There have been recent changes to the VA Caregiver Support Program. Most notably in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), which provides expanded resources to Caregivers of Veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty after 9/11/2001. Below is a glimpse of these changes.

Expansion of the PCAFC to pre-9/11 Veterans through the MISSION Act:
Currently, VA is in the process of developing an implementation plan for expansion. This process is expected to take several months as VA works with Congress to develop a timeline and determine resource needs. Currently, VA is not able to accept applications for the PCAFC from pre-9/11 Veterans, but will continue to process applications from eligible post-9/11 Veterans as usual. We will ensure you are aware when a decision has been made regarding the rollout date. In the meantime, please be aware that VA does have a wide range of support and education resources for Caregivers of Veterans of all eras, such as an online workshop and peer mentoring. All Caregivers of Veterans can also access the VA Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.

Suspension of clinical discharges and dependence level changes for Veterans currently enrolled in the PCAFC: VA announced on December 21, 2018, that discharges and decreases in levels of support through the PCAFC based on clinical assessment will be temporarily suspended. Discharges by request of the
Veteran or Caregiver, death, long-term institutionalization or hospitalization of Veteran, or noncompliance with Program requirements are exempted from this suspension. We will continue to process new applications as usual.

Please contact Jess Behrends, MSSW, LICSW, Caregiver Support Coordinator at 320-252-1670 ext. 7283 if you have any questions.

**Effective & Positive New Year’s Resolutions**

Join us LIVE on our Facebook page for a three-part series on behavior change and drive your New Year’s resolutions to success!

**Time change for Optometry**

Beginning March 4, the hours for the St. Cloud VA walk-in Optical department will change from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. to 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

**Coffee Talk in Alexandria**

Coffee Talks are informal conversations intended to provide Veterans an opportunity to have their questions about VA health care answered.

Non-enrolled Veterans, Veterans new to the VA health care system, and enrolled Veterans who want to learn how to most effectively use VA systems of care are encouraged to attend a Coffee Talk at the Max J. Beilke VA Clinic, located at 515 22nd Ave. E., in Alexandria on February 2 from 9 to 11 a.m.

Enrollment opportunities will also be available. Call (320) 255-6340 for more information about VA health care.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Outpatient Clinics Closed for Federal Holiday**

Monday, Jan. 21

Outpatient clinics and administrative offices, including VA Clinics in Brainerd, Montevideo and Alexandria will be closed. Urgent Care at the St. Cloud VA will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Veterans Health Care Enrollment Fair in Isanti**

Thursday, Jan. 24 3-6 p.m.

Rum river Events Center, 410 Railroad Ave SE, Isanti, MN.

Military service is valuable to the nation, and in return VA health care enrollment can provide a lifetime of valuable benefits to eligible Veterans and their families. Veterans living near Isanti are invited to take advantage of this opportunity to apply for or learn more about VA health care benefits.

**Connected Care Class**

Monday, Jan. 28 2-3:30 p.m.

St. Cloud VA, Patriot Café (Bldg. 95, Canteen)

Veterans enrolled at St. Cloud VA HCS are invited to attend hands-on training for all things connected care, including
MyHealtheVet, VA Video Connect, Annie App and more!

**Veterans Health Care Enrollment Fair in Litchfield**
Tuesday, Jan. 29 3-6 p.m.
Litchfield Public Library, 216 N. Marshall Avenue, Litchfield, MN.

Military service is valuable to the nation, and in return VA health care enrollment can provide a lifetime of valuable benefits to eligible Veterans and their families.

Veterans living near Litchfield are invited to take advantage of this opportunity to apply for or learn more about VA health care benefits.

**Introduction to Whole Health**
Friday, Feb. 1 2-4 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Patriot Café (Bldg. 95, Canteen)

An education class taught by Veteran peers that equips you to take charge of your health by emphasizing a self-focus on body, mind, spirit and soul, surroundings and other factors that help you create a personal system of life care. Pre-registration is not required.

**Veterans Affairs Radio Show**
Monday, Feb. 4 8:10 -8:30 a.m.
KNSI AM 1450/FM103.3

**Veterans Law Clinic (by appointment only)**
Tuesday, Feb. 5 Noon-2 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 28, Room 34
Free legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security law, housing, child support, family law, employment and expungement. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call (320) 253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

**Coffee Talk**
Friday, Feb. 8 2-3 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Patriot Café (Bldg. 95, Canteen)
Veterans are invited to attend Coffee Talk to learn "How to use" the VA effectively, services overview, Q & A and a tour. Spouses and caregivers are welcome. Dial-in to Coffee Talk via telephone at 800-767-1750, and enter participant code number 11242. Pre-registration is not required.

**Connected Care Class**
Monday, Feb. 11 2-3:30 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Patriot Café (Bldg. 95, Canteen)
Veterans enrolled at St. Cloud VA HCS are invited to attend hands-on training for all things connected care, including MyHealtheVet, VA Video Connect, Annie App and more!

**Outpatient Clinics Closed for Federal Holiday**
Monday, Feb. 18
Outpatient clinics and administrative offices, including VA Clinics in Brainerd, Montevideo and Alexandria will be closed. Urgent Care at the St. Cloud VA will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Voices for Veterans Radio Show**
Wednesday, Feb. 20 8:10-8:30 a.m.
WJON AM 1240

**Talking Charge of My Life & Health**
Wednesday, Feb. 20 2-4 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Patriot Cafe (Bldg. 95, Canteen)
Completion of Intro to Whole Health is a prerequisite.
Veterans may also choose to participate in an expanded Whole Health Pathway learning program referred to as Taking
Charge of My Life and Health. These courses are designed to provide a group-based experience in camaraderie with other Veterans, and in the interests of privacy and respect for others, are limited to Veterans enrolled for care.

**Connected Care Class**
Monday, Feb. 25  2-3:30 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Patriot Café (Bldg. 95, Canteen)
Veterans enrolled at St. Cloud VA HCS are invited to attend hands-on training for all things connected care, including My HealtheVet, VA Video Connect, Annie App and more!

**Talking Charge of My Life & Health**
Wednesday, Feb. 27   2-4 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Patriot Café (Bldg. 95, Canteen)
Completion of Intro to Whole Health is a prerequisite.
Veterans may also choose to participate in an expanded Whole Health Pathway learning program referred to as Taking Charge of My Life and Health. These courses are designed to provide a group-based experience in camaraderie with other Veterans, and in the interests of privacy and respect for others, are limited to Veterans enrolled for care.

For a complete Calendar of Events, go to [https://www.stcloud.va.gov/calendar.asp](https://www.stcloud.va.gov/calendar.asp)

**DID YOU KNOW**

- In 1915, a telephone call from New York to San Francisco cost $20.70 for the first three minutes.
- The “Delicious” variety of apples were originally known as “Hawkeyes.”
- Queen Anne of England (1665 – 1714) outlived all 17 of her children.
- The tallest man in the world, Robert Wadlow, was 8 feet eleven inches tall. He died at the age of 22, in 1949, due to an infection caused by leg braces he needed to be able to stand on his feet.
- Squirrels live to be about nine years old.

**QUOTATION OF THE DAY**

“I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.”
- *Thomas Jefferson* (1743 - 1826)
Quick Reference Phone List

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

Billing:  
- VA Care 866-347-2352  
- Care in the Community (non-VA care) 877-881-7618

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

Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.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. There are also options presented to sign up for updates from other government sites.