

St. Cloud VA

# UPDATE

May 17, 2019



*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).*

## Acting Director at St. Cloud VA announced



In a statement released to employees on April 26, VA Midwest Health Care Network Director Robert P. McDivitt announced the appointment of Martina Malek to the role of Acting Director for the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, effective May 6, 2019.

Malek currently serves as the Associate Director/Chief Experience Officer of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System.

Malek began her VA career at the Minneapolis VA in 2007 and has worked in various positions to include Director,

Prosthetic Treatment Center and Director, Health Administration Service before appointment as the Associate Director/Chief Experience Officer in 2017.

Malek has a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Maryland University College and a Master of Public and Non-Profit Administration from Metropolitan State University. She is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE), board-certified in Healthcare Management and a graduate of the VA's Healthcare Leadership Development Program. She is also a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Before Malek's appointment, Heath J. Streck served in the role of Acting Health Care System Director for the St. Cloud VA, from Jan. 14 to May 5, 2019.

## St. Cloud VA is going Smoke-Free!

VHA Directive 1085, published in March 2019, directs that all VA health care facilities will be smoke-free for patients,

visitors, contractors, volunteers and vendors. Accordingly, all St. Cloud VA HCS facilities and properties are smoke-free starting July 15, 2019.

Smoking areas for patients, visitors, contractors, vendors and volunteers are being eliminated to be consistent with medical requirements and limitations and to prevent the creation of hazards to persons.

The smoke-free designation applies to all forms of cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and other combustion of tobacco and non-Federal Drug Administration (FDA) approved electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

Achieving a smoke-free environment demonstrates VA's strong commitment to ensuring the health and safety of patients, visitors, contractors, vendors, and volunteers.

Your care team is available to assist you in quitting tobacco. Ask about Nicotine Replacement Therapy at your next appointment!

Be tobacco free! Don't use tobacco in any form. If you are using tobacco, the VA can help you quit. Avoid secondhand smoke. If you are pregnant, both you and your baby will benefit when you quit using tobacco.

### **What's Important to Know?**

Quitting tobacco is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and protect your family's health. If you quit smoking or other forms of tobacco, you and your family will experience short and long-term health benefits. It's never

too late to quit—your health will improve at any age after quitting tobacco!

All forms of tobacco use—cigarettes, cigars, pipes, snuff, snus, chewing tobacco and other tobacco products—are harmful. Tobacco use harms nearly every organ of the body and causes:

- Cancers
- Heart disease and stroke
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and other lung/breathing problems
- Complications in those who are pregnant

Secondhand smoke is the smoke released from a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe, and the smoke exhaled by the smoker. There is no safe level of secondhand smoke. It can have immediate harmful effects on non-smokers' health and can increase their risk of heart disease, lung cancer, and other health problems by 20-30%.

Tobacco use is the largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United States. Tobacco and secondhand smoke kill approximately 480,000 people in the U.S. each year.



Many good things happen as soon as you quit. You'll breathe easier, save money, smell better, and have more energy. If you're pregnant, your baby will be healthier. You'll also be protecting your health and protecting your family and friends from secondhand smoke.

### Want to Know More?

Talk with your VA health care team about help with quitting tobacco. Your team can help you in several different ways. They can provide medications, tips, tools, behavioral counseling and support. They can also help you join other Veterans in a class led by your hospital's expert in quitting smoking.

### Resources

- VHA tobacco cessation resources:
  - <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/>
  - [smokefree.gov/veterans](http://smokefree.gov/veterans)
- VHA National Tobacco Cessation Quitline for Veterans: 1-855-QUIT VET (1-855-784-8838). Counseling is available Monday through Friday from 9 am to 9 pm ET.
- SmokefreeVET: Text the word 'VET' to 47848 from your mobile phone or visit [www.Smokefree.gov/VET](http://www.Smokefree.gov/VET) for the SmokefreeVET text messaging system. For Spanish, text VETesp to 47848 or visit [www.smokefree.gov/VETespanol](http://www.smokefree.gov/VETespanol).
- Veterans Health Library: [www.veteranshealthlibrary.org](http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org)
- Stay Quit Coach—a free mobile app to support quitting smoking and staying quit. Available at: <https://mobilehealth.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach>

## Getting care when you need it

The St. Cloud VA is committed to ensuring that Veterans get the right kind of care in the right setting when needed.

The St. Cloud VA does **not** have an emergency department, acute medical care services, or after-hours outpatient services at any of our locations, including St. Cloud, Brainerd, Montevideo and Alexandria.

In emergencies, Veterans should Call 911 or go to the closest community hospital with an emergency department for serious and possibly life-threatening conditions or emergency mental health needs. Veterans do not need to check with VA before calling for an ambulance or going to an emergency room.

In emergencies, get the care needed first, then the Veteran, a family member, friend, or hospital staff member should contact the nearest VA medical facility as soon as possible (preferably, within 72-hours). Once notified, VA staff can assist Veterans in ensuring any additional care is provided without interruption and, when necessary, transferring Veterans to a VA medical facility for care after stabilization.

For other non-routine care needs our goal is that if you need care right away, you get services the same day, or if after-hours, by the next day.

*For Primary Care Needs:* If you have non-routine needs, we will try and work you into your provider's schedule on the day the care is needed. Call 320-252-1670, press option 2 and ask for a same day appointment with your assigned PACT. Additional options for how care can be

provided include via telephone, smart phone, through video care, secure messaging or other options. Care may be delivered by your provider or another clinical staff member based on availability and care needs.

Veterans needing care right away can access the Urgent Care Clinic, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 365 days a year. Additionally, under the VA MISSION Act of 2018, on June 6, 2019, a new benefit will provide eligible Veterans with access to non-emergency care for certain conditions in the VA network of community providers without prior authorization from VA. Details about the new urgent care benefit are not yet final.

*For Mental Health needs:* VA provides same-day 24/7 access to mental health crisis intervention and support for Veterans using a variety of means:

--Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 and press 1, send a text message to 838255 or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net, 24 hours a day.

--St. Cloud VA Mental Health Triage (walk-in) in Bldg. 111 is available 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; the Urgent Care Clinic in Bldg. 1 is open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., every day.

--After 6 p.m., Veterans should **Call 911** or go to the closest community hospital with an emergency department for emergency mental health needs. Additionally, many communities have crisis centers available without regard to Veteran status. After assessment, medical clearance and referral, the St. Cloud VAMC Acute Psychiatry Unit

can take admissions 24 hours a day from community hospitals.

--Additionally, Veterans may contact a VA Nurse at 320-252-1670, and press 3, 24 hours a day.

## **MISSION ACT**

At the St. Cloud VA HCS, our Community Care Service Line and a multi-discipline working group are increasing readiness in anticipation of beginning to implement the MISSION Act on June 6. As we approach this date we'll share information with you as it becomes available.

The MISSION Act is a far-reaching law with over 50 different sections. Implementing the entirety of the Act will take several years.

Here are some key points:

**On June 6, the new Veteran Community Care program is among the most prominent parts of the law being implemented.** The new Veteran Community Care program:

- Establishes a single community care program. All existing programs will be combined into one program. The Veterans Choice Program ends but some of its elements are being adopted into the new program.
- Establishes a new Community Care Network (CCN) that is set-up and ran by third-party administrators. VA and/or the Veteran will make community care appointments thru the CCN.

- Establishes expanded eligibility guidelines for Veterans to access Community Care.
- Provides for a new Urgent Care benefit for Veterans. Veterans will be able to use in-network Urgent Care centers without prior authorization from VA. There may be co-payments depending on the Veteran's assigned priority group. Final rules for the new benefit have not been published.

Another prominent section of the law expands Caregiver Support Program eligibility, **but this section of the law is not being implemented on June 6.**

- Currently, the stipend offered under the Caregiver program is only available to eligible post 9-11 Veterans.
- The expansion of the stipend will occur in two phases: the first starts with those who were injured on or before May 7, 1975, while the second phase will include eligible Veterans from all eras of service.

The expansion timeline is still under development and will be announced later. **Again, this section of the law is not being implemented on June 6.**

## St. Cloud Area Metropolitan Veterans Council to host Memorial Day Observance on May 27



Memorial Day will be observed at the St. Cloud VA on May 27 with an outdoor ceremony at 10:30 a.m. The event will be held in front of Bldg. 92, immediately southeast of the main facility entrance.

This year's keynote speaker will be retired Major John Donovan, Minnesota Army National Guard.

The St. Cloud Municipal Band will provide music. The ceremony is free, and the public is encouraged to attend. Attendees are encouraged to bring lawn chairs as seating is limited.

Volunteers are needed to escort Veterans to the program and enjoy the morning together. To volunteer, contact Voluntary Service at (320) 255-6365.

The observance is coordinated by the St. Cloud Area Metropolitan Veterans Council (Metro Vets), who encourage all citizens to pause for a moment on Memorial Day, to honor those who have died in their nation's defense and to keep the true meaning and spirit of Memorial Day alive.

Attendees may park in the lot to the west of the main drive in front of Building 1 (Main Entrance) or the Apollo High School parking lot immediately adjacent to the 44th Ave. N. / 12th St. N. entrance to the VA Medical Center.

## **New text feature available through VA's Women Veterans Call Center**

Women Veterans can now text 855-829-6636 to receive answers and guidance about VA services.

The Women Veterans Call Center is staffed by trained, compassionate female VA employees, who can provide and link callers to available resources, such as health care, benefits and cemetery information via phone, chat and now text. The new texting feature aligns this service with other VA call centers that provide information and assistance to Veterans who are in crisis, at risk for suicide and becoming homeless.

VA works to meet the unique requirements of women, while offering privacy, dignity and sensitivity to gender-specific needs. Since April 2013, the call center has received nearly 83,000 inbound calls and has initiated almost 1.3 million outbound calls. As the number of women Veterans continues to grow, VA is expanding its outreach to ensure they receive enrollment and benefit information through means that are user-friendly and responsive.

Women are among the fastest-growing Veteran demographics, accounting for more than 30% of the increase in Veterans who served between 2014 and 2018. The number of women using VA health care

services has tripled since 2000, growing from about 160,000 to over 500,000 today. This continued growth underscores VA's commitment to enhancing communication and outreach to the growing population of women Veterans.

For more information about the Women Veterans Call Center, visit <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/programoverview/wvcc.asp>

## **Recovery Night at St. Cloud VA**

Recovery Night is scheduled for May 23, from 6 to 7:30 p.m., at Bldg. 8 (Auditorium), St. Cloud VA Medical Center, located at 4801 Veterans Drive, in St. Cloud.

Recovery Night is a Veteran Peer-led effort to share success and inspire hope in others and features a resource fair as well as an inspiring Veteran sharing his story of healing.

Veterans, family members, VA staff and community members and organizations with an interest in VA mental health recovery and programs or who want to support someone in their recovery are invited to attend.

For Veterans, recovery is about staying in control of their life despite experiencing a mental health problem and emphasizes that people with mental illness can gain or regain the capacity to live a meaningful and self-determined life and thrive in their communities.

In support of rehabilitation and recovery of every Veteran with a mental illness, VA has identified recovery as a guiding principle for

its entire mental health service delivery system. Recovery is a journey that involves developing hope, self-direction, empowerment, respect and peer support.

## **“Superfood” or Just “Food?”**

By Joseph Buchman, MPH, RD, CPH

Whether it be from random internet advertisements or plastered on the covers of magazines in the checkout at the grocery store, odds are that we’ve all encountered the term “superfood.” Lists of these miracle, health-promoting foods and beverages are plentiful and the health claims are more abundant yet, but what does the current body of research say about “superfoods?”

First it is important to understand that “superfood” is not a term with a standardized definition; anyone can create a catalog of foods of their choosing and label them “super.” However, after scanning a few of these lists, there are some common items throughout these inventories: berries (acai berries, blueberries, or otherwise), fish, nuts and seeds, various vegetables and vegetables, and yogurt or other probiotic-rich foods.

So, what’s the verdict after all? Many of these aforementioned “superfoods” are extraordinarily nutrient-dense—meaning that they are chalked full of various vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, and other compounds which are highly touted for their health-promoting and potential disease-preventing properties. For example, seafood that is rich in omega-3 fatty acids may be able to promote reduced chronic inflammation and promote heart health. Also, berries, which often gain their

rich colors from their phytochemical content, may help prevent cardiovascular disease, certain types of cancer, and promote preservation of cognitive function.

However, although these foods may be rich in desirable nutrients, it should be noted that no foods are inherently good for our health—just as essentially no foods are inherently detrimental to our wellbeing. Certainly, it is important to incorporate nutrient-dense foods when possible, but, in isolation, they are not the end-all be-all of a healthy dietary pattern. These “superfoods” are only one component of a well-balanced diet; consumed on their own, they would leave significant gaps in nutrient intake.

When it comes to eating in a manner to promote one’s overall health, it is most important to think about our intake as a whole—a combination of all parts—without placing too much emphasis on singular foods or nutrients.

If you have any questions or are interested in receiving additional information regarding eating a well-balanced diet, please contact the St. Cloud VA Health Care System’s Nutrition Clinic at (320) 255 – 6376.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Introduction to Whole Health**

Monday, May 20                      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 Law Clinic (by appointment only)**

Tuesday, May 21                      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.

**Taking Charge of My Life & Health**

Wednesday, May 22                      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.

**Recovery Night**

Thursday, May 23                      6-7:30 p.m.  
St. Cloud VA, Auditorium (Bldg. 8)  
Recovery Night features a resource fair as well as an inspiring Veteran sharing his story of healing and hope.

**Outpatient Clinics Closed for Federal Holiday**

Monday, May 27  
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.

**Memorial Day Observance**

Monday, May 27                      10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.  
St. Cloud VA, in front of Bldg. 92  
The observance is coordinated by the St. Cloud Area Metropolitan Veterans Council (Metro Vets), who encourage all citizens to pause for a moment on Memorial Day, to honor those who have died in their nation's defense and to keep the true meaning and spirit of Memorial Day alive.

**Health Care Enrollment Fair**

Thursday, May 30                      10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.  
Renville County Government Center, 105 s 5th St., Room 117. Olivia, 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. Are you a Veteran or family member still wondering what benefits you or your loved one may be eligible to receive? Hosted by County Veteran Service Officers and the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, this Health Care Enrollment Fair provides direct information and personal assistance to Veterans in applying for VA health care benefits.  
The fair is a walk-in event and an appointment is not required. For most Veterans entry into the VA health care system begins with a simple application and submission of a copy of the Veteran's DD 214 and 2018 annual household income.



**Veterans Affairs Radio Show**

Monday, June 3 8:10-8:30 a.m.  
KNSI AM 1450/FM103.3

**Veterans Law Clinic (by appointment only)**

Tuesday, June 4 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.

**Introduction to Whole Health**

Friday, June 7 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.

**Connected Care Class**

Monday, June 10 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!

**Coffee Talk**

Friday, June 14 2-3 p.m.  
St. Cloud VA, Patriot Cafe (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.

**Introduction to Whole Health**

Monday, June 17 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 Law Clinic (by appointment only)**

Tuesday, June 18 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.

**Voices for Veterans Radio Show**

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

**Taking Charge of My Life & Health**

Wednesday, June 19 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, June 24 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 MyHealthVet, VA Video Connect, Annie App and more!

**Taking Charge of My Life & Health**

Wednesday, June 26 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.

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

**DID YOU KNOW**

- In 1963, baseball pitcher Gaylord Perry remarked, "They'll put a man on the moon before I hit a home run." On July 20, 1969, a few hours after Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon, Gaylord Perry hit his first, and only, home run.
- The national anthem of Greece has 158 verses.
- There are 293 ways to make change for a dollar.

## 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

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](http://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.