Director’s Briefing

St. Cloud VA employees were recently recognized for their involvement with the Eyeglass systems redesign project. Featured in the first photo is St. Cloud VA Chief of Staff Scott Bartley with Connie Powell, Deb Doeden, Michelle George, and Dr. Amber Scharnweber. Team member Luke Steinbach is pictured in the second photo with Associate Director Cheryl Thieschafer. Not pictured is Chad Hirsch.

Prior to the redesign project, eyeglasses consults were taking an average of 7.8 days from the date a consult was generated until completion, and only 9.6% of the consults were completed within 3 days. Veterans received eyeglasses with errors, leading to increased optician workload. In a full workweek, an average of 4.36 lab errors were reported to the Optometry clinic.

Through the systems redesign project, vendor errors were reduced by 15%, the amount of paper used to process consults decreased by 15,000 pages annually, one hour of Optician time was saved daily, and consult completion decreased to an average of 1.2 days from 7.8 days prior to the process improvement.
Last Roll Call

Since March 3, 1865, when Abraham Lincoln signed legislation establishing the first National Homes for disabled volunteer soldiers, chaplains have been providing Veterans' families with care and support during their time of pain and bereavement following the death of a Veteran.

The St. Cloud VA HCS has offered quarterly Services of Remembrance for nearly 20 years to remember Veterans who pass away at the medical center, and will continue to offer these ceremonies using a new designation, Last Roll Call Ceremony of Remembrance.

Please join us for the Last Roll Call Ceremony of Remembrance on April 18 at 1:30 p.m. at the St. Cloud VA Chapel.

Career Fair at the St. Cloud VA

To meet increasing demand for services by Veterans the St. Cloud VA needs to fill numerous job openings, and is hosting a career fair for nursing, clinical social work and medical clerk occupations at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Bldg. 1, on Saturday, Apr. 28, from 9 a.m. until noon. The fair features an introductory session designed to educate applicants on the federal hiring process, and VA staff will be available to assist people with understanding the process.

Pre-registration is not required. Attendees are encouraged to bring a copy of their resume or CV, and a laptop computer or tablet so they can set up an account in the electronic hiring system during the event. MSW (or 2018 MSW Candidate) required for Clinical Social Workers.

Information on benefits, advancements, pay scales, and the VA boarding process will be available at the career fair.

On the spot interviews will be held for various positions. Visit www.usajobs.gov for a list of current job openings.

For more information on the career fair contact Sarah Garrett at 320-252-1670, ext. 6002, or Elaine Eckstrom, at 320-252-1670, ext. 7276.

Patient Orientation Coffee Talks

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 invited to attend a Patient Orientation Coffee Talk. Not enrolled? Bring your DD214 and learn how to apply for VA health care.

In St. Cloud: Join us for Coffee Talk on Friday, April 13, at 2 p.m., in Building 4,
Room 114, at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center (enter via Bldg. 1 entrance). Can’t make the Talk in person? Dial-in via telephone at: 800-767-1750, participant code 11242#.

In Montevideo: Attend Coffee Talk and check out the Montevideo VA Clinic on Saturday, April 28, from 9 to 11 a.m. and learn what it has to offer Veterans. The Montevideo VA Clinic is located at 1025 North 13th Street, Montevideo.

Revision of Payment Authorities for Emergency Care for Non-Service-Connected (NSC) Conditions

On January 9, 2018, VA published regulations (Title 38 CFR Part 17, Reimbursement for Emergency Treatment) that change how the presence of other health insurance (OHI) or other liable third party affects VA’s ability to pay for emergency care for a Veteran’s non-service-connected condition. Under the previous regulations, the presence of OHI or other liable third party prevented VA from paying for this care.

Under the amended regulations, VA may be able to pay for emergency care for a NSC condition in certain circumstances (see previous section above). The regulations apply to claims that were pending on, or submitted after, April 8, 2016, and allow VA to act as secondary payer to OHI or other third party in limited circumstances where a Veteran faces remaining liability for emergency care or transportation received after their OHI or other liable third party has made a payment to the provider.

Important: VA payment under these circumstances is limited, and does not include payment for deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance because payment for these types of costs are prohibited by Federal law (38 U.S.C. 1725 (c)(4)(D)).

For questions about this topic, please call 1-877-466-7124, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Central Standard Time, to speak with a customer service representative.

Keeping Up with Your Appointments

Making appointments, and when you can’t keep them, cancelling them are important ways we work together to take care of you and fellow Veterans.

• Keep contact information, including addresses, home and cell phone numbers and email addresses up to date. Check in with the clerk or at one of the self-service kiosks.

• Life happens. If you can’t make an appointment that’s OK, but please let us know so we can fit another Veteran into that slot.

Here’s a quick look at the more common ways we work together to manage your appointments:
Appointment Reminder Letters

For established patients, we don’t automatically schedule routine appointments, like annual exams. You have the option to schedule a future appointment during check-out or we’ll send you a letter reminding you to schedule these appointments. Once an appointment is made we send you a letter with appointment details.

Telephone

Call 320-252-1670, press 2, and then select the appropriate option for the appointment type you want to make or cancel:

- Option 2--Primary Care
- Option 3--Mental Health
- Option 4--Surgical and Specialty Care

Automated Phone Service System

This system automatically calls to remind you of upcoming appointments.

- You can also use it to find out the dates and times of your future appointments and to order prescription refills 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- You may also cancel or request rescheduling of appointments.

To use the system, call 320-252-1670, and press option 1.

MyHealtheVet (MHV) and Online Scheduling

You can use Online Scheduling to:

- Self-schedule primary care appointments for your assigned primary care provider
- View or cancel existing primary care and mental health clinic appointments
- Make requests for help scheduling primary care and mental health appointments

To use Online Scheduling, you will need a DS Logon Level 2 Premium Account. For personal assistance establishing an account, stop by the St. Cloud VA Health Hub in Bldg. 29, Room 20, during your next visit.

Text Message Reminders

Our convenient text message system sends VA appointment reminders via a text message.

- You can confirm or cancel out of an appointment with an easy text message reply.
- Reminder messages go out seven days and two days before the appointment.
• Veterans with multiple appointments on the same day will receive multiple reminders.

• All appointment reminder messages contain instructions on how to end messages.

• Text messaging rates may apply according to individual phone plans.

Veterans are automatically enrolled. If you opt out and want to restart text message appointment reminders, text “START” to a previous reminder message and service will resume, or text “START” to 909-954-0651.

Bringing Care Closer to You in a Virtual Medical Room

“Beam me up, Scotty!” was a catchphrase popularized on the Star Trek television show anytime Captain Kirk needed to be teleported back to the Starship Enterprise.

VA hasn’t yet developed a teleportation machine, but we can now allow you and your provider to “beam in” to a virtual medical room using everyday technology, via a computer application, or app, called VA Video Connect. To start using this service, simply tell a member of your care team.

In the virtual medical room, you participate in video health care visits where a hands-on physical examination is not required. You access your provider on a scheduled date and time – just like a face-to-face appointment in an exam room. In the virtual medical room, you communicate with your provider over the Internet using a microphone and web camera. Text messaging is also included in a virtual medical room visit.

To use the virtual medical room, you need an electronic device, such as a personal computer or laptop equipped with microphone and web camera, a smart phone or a tablet computer. A personal email account is also required.

If you need help establishing a personal email account, stop by the Health Hub in Bldg. 29, Room 20, for assistance.

Once a virtual medical room session is scheduled, you will receive an email with a link to join the virtual medical room. At the time of your appointment, you simply click on the link, enter your name, and launch the session.

Apple (iOS) device users will need to download a new and enhanced app developed specifically for VA. Previously, Apple (iOS) users used the Pexip app to access medical rooms. After March 23, the Pexip app no longer works for VA video visits. Tap here to download the iOS app. The searchable name for the new app to be used with Apple (iOS) devices is called “VA Video Connect.”

No download is needed for non-iOS/Apple devices.

Virtual medical rooms provide you with access and convenience when:

• You live far away from your VA facility.
• You’re dealing with health conditions that make it difficult to travel to the specialist...
• You have a few minor questions for your doctor that can be answered over live video.
• You lack time to attend an in-person appointment.
• A hands-on physical examination is not required.

Video appointments are secure and respect your privacy. Only invited participants can join a virtual medical room for a visit. Participants can always see who has joined. And further, the VA provider can lock the room once all invited participants have arrived.

That’s it! If interested in using this service, tell a member of your care team!

To learn more about the virtual medical room, check out this short video.

**Whole Health for Life**

VA is committed to implementing a Whole Health System at VA medical centers throughout the country.

Whole health is an approach to health care that empowers, equips, and treats Veterans so they can take charge of their health and well-being and live their lives to the fullest. The whole health approach starts with Veterans thinking about their health in a new way. Many Veterans connect with programs and practices through referrals from VA care providers or counselors, but they can also engage with whole health by asking VA staff for more information or through several online resources.

Veterans can learn more about whole health and find resources, onsite programs, clinical tools, and other materials through the [Whole Health for Life website](#).

Veterans can watch the [Whole Health System Video Series](#) to learn more about whole health from other Veterans, VA leaders, and clinicians across VA.

Complete a [Personal Health Inventory](#) to identify areas of focus to help you achieve your goals, and start your Whole health journey today!
Understanding Your Health Insurance and Care at VA Health Facilities

The impact and benefits of sharing health insurance coverage held by you or your spouse

VA Copayment Out-of-Pocket Responsibility

✓ Patients are not responsible to pay for any unpaid balance the third-party health insurance carrier does not cover.

✓ Depending on Veteran’s Priority Group, you may be required to pay a VA copayment for non-service connected care.

✓ Payments made to VA by health insurance carrier may allow VA to reduce your balance and offset part or all of this VA copayment.

✓ Many carriers apply VA healthcare charges toward the annual deductible even though VA does NOT bill a Veteran for the third-party deductible balance.

➢ All VHA patients (Veterans, Dependents and Active-duty) are required by law to provide health insurance coverage information, including coverage provided under policies of their spouses.

➢ VA does NOT seek reimbursement for treatment or medications related to service-connected conditions.

➢ Insurance coverage or lack of coverages does not determine eligibility for treatment at a VA health care facility.

➢ Health insurance information held by patient or patient’s spouse is captured by VA solely for the purpose of billing medical care, supplies and prescriptions associated with non-service-connected conditions as required by law.

➢ VA does not bill Medicaid or Medicare, but can bill Medicare supplemental health insurance for covered services; therefore, Medicare information is captured as well.

Always bring your insurance and Medicare cards with you when visiting your local VA medical facility to provide the facility with your current information. Money collected from health insurance reimbursements is returned directly to the medical centers and used to enhance health care services provided to Veterans, Dependents and Active-duty.
St. Cloud VA Nurse Executive Mark Aberle and Chief of Staff Dr. Scott Bartley joined Vietnam Veterans of America Region 6 National Director Robert Grabinski, Bob Behrens, President of Vietnam Veterans of America Central Minnesota Chapter 290, and Chapter 290 member Clyde Lewandowski to add the first Vietnam-era Veteran photo collage to the Vietnam War Commemoration exhibit at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, on National Vietnam War Veterans Day, Thursday, March 29, 2018.

The exhibit in the medical center recognizes, honors and thanks Vietnam Veterans for their service and was established as part of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War Commemoration. To learn more about the Vietnam War Commemoration, go to: www.vietnamwar50th.com.

The photo collages of individual Veterans being added to our Vietnam War Commemoration exhibit helps us identify with our Veterans by seeing them as they served, and to remind us of the reason why VA serves them today. We'd like to add more photos to the exhibit.

Here's how to participate:

If you served in the military any time during the period of November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, make and send a copy of a photo from the time you were in the service, or a current photo if desired. St. Cloud VA does not want original photos and cannot return photos to donors. When having the photo copied, ask the photo professional to make it the highest quality possible. The photo submission form and the photo consent are provided below:

Photo Submission Form

Photo Consent Form

Veterans with a digital copy of the photograph can simply fill out and email the signed forms and photograph to Jackie.Stevenson@va.gov.

Photographs can also be submitted by mail. Mail the forms and photo to:

St. Cloud VA Health Care System

Attn: Public Affairs Office CD00-1A

4801 Veterans Drive

St. Cloud, MN 56303

Vietnam Veterans
Vietnam Veteran Recognition & Veterans Town Hall Meeting

A ceremony honoring Vietnam-era Veterans living in the Brainerd Lakes area and a Veterans town hall meeting focused on improving VA health care services and programs are scheduled on May 1, starting at 5 p.m., at the Brainerd VA Clinic, located at 722 NW Seventh St., in Brainerd.

The Vietnam Veteran recognition ceremony is the first item on the agenda and the town hall meeting will take place immediately afterwards.

Beginning at 4 p.m., County Veteran Services and VA staff will be available to discuss enrollment in VA health care and provide information on the full range of Veterans benefit programs.

Clothesline Project

The St. Cloud VA is hosting a Clothesline Project to raise awareness of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) (unwanted sexual attention, uninvited sexual advances, or forced sex while in the military) and support survivors of MST.

The Clothesline Project is a way for male and female veterans who have experienced MST to express their emotions by decorating a shirt. These shirts are then hung on a clothesline as testimony to the problem of MST.

The Clothesline Project is free and open to the public.

Tuesday, April 24, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Wednesday, April 25, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.*
Thursday, April 26, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

All events are being held at Bldg. 8 (Auditorium), St. Cloud VA Medical Center.

*Special Presentation on April 25, at 5 p.m., Understanding the Neurobiology of Trauma, with Dr. John Ross

For more information on the Clothesline Project or to decorate a shirt please contact Joy Finkelson, MST Coordinator, at 320-252-1670, Ext. 6398, or Julie Wolf, Program Support Assistant, at 320-252-1670, Ext. 7511.

Recovery Night at the St. Cloud VA

The St. Cloud VA HCS Veterans Mental Health Advocacy Council is hosting a Recovery Night on Tuesday, May 1, from 6-7:30 p.m., in the Auditorium (Bldg. 8), on the St. Cloud VA campus. Veterans, family members, community partners and the public are encouraged to attend.

Come hear stories of hope, success, resilience and recovery. A Recovery Resource Fair with information that
supports Mental Health recovery will also be available.

For more information contact Voni Hovland, Local Recovery Coordinator, at 320-252-1670, Ext. 7729.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Veterans Affairs Radio Show**
Monday, Apr. 2  8:10-8:30 a.m.
KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.

**Veterans Law Clinic (by appointment only)**
Tuesday, Apr. 3  Noon-2 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 28, Room 126
Free legal consultation for Veterans. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

**Mental Health Recovery Outreach Group**
Wednesday, Apr. 4  5-6 p.m.
Good Earth Co-Op
2010 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud
Hosted by the St. Cloud VA, Veterans and family members are welcome to attend. VA enrollment or pre-registration is not required to attend the meeting.

**Coffee Talk-St. Cloud**
Friday, Apr. 13  2-4 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 4, Room 114
Learn how to most effectively use VA systems of care. If you can’t come in person, dial-in via telephone at: 800-767-1750, participant code 11242#. All Veterans are welcome.

**Veterans Law Clinic (drop-in)**
Tuesday, Apr. 17  10 a.m.-3 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Auditorium (Bldg. 8)
Free legal consultation for Veterans.

Questions? Call MACV at 651-200-4750.

**Voices for Veterans Radio Show**
Wednesday, Apr. 18  8:10-8:30 a.m.
WJON AM 1240.

**Last Roll Call Ceremony of Remembrance**
Wednesday, Apr. 18  1:30-2:30 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Chapel
Please join us as we remember Veterans who have recently passed away.

**The Clothesline Project**
Tuesday, Apr. 24  10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Wednesday, Apr. 25  10 a.m.-6 p.m.
Thursday, Apr. 26  10 a.m.-2 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Auditorium (Bldg. 8)
The Clothesline Project is a way for male and female Veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma (MST) to express their emotions by decorating a shirt and hanging it on a clothesline as testimony to the problem of MST. Public is invited.

**Coffee Talk-Montevideo**
Saturday, Apr. 28  9-11 a.m.
Montevideo VA Clinic
1025 North 13th Street, Montevideo
Learn how to most effectively use VA systems of care. All Veterans are welcome.

**Nursing, Clinical Social Work & Medical Clerk Career Fair**
Saturday, Apr. 28  9 a.m.-Noon
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 1
Pre-registration is not required. Attendees are encouraged to bring a copy of their resume or CV, and a laptop computer or tablet. MSW (or 2018 MSW Candidate) required for Clinical Social Workers.

*For a complete Calendar of Events, go to [https://www.stcloud.va.gov/calendar.asp](https://www.stcloud.va.gov/calendar.asp)*
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 866-347-2352
Chaplain Service Ext. 6386
Discrimination Complaints Ext. 6304
Eligibility Ext. 6340
Non-VA Medical Care Billing Ext. 6483
Non-VA Medical Care Referrals/Choice Ext. 6401
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](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.