Director’s Briefing

As I write this, I am four days from the greatest eating holiday of the year, Thanksgiving. As I am nearly eight months into my role, I cannot help but to think of all that I am thankful for this year:

Our Staff: We have 1800+ staff, fully dedicated to serving the needs of Veterans throughout Central Minnesota and beyond. Many of them (over 30%) are Veterans themselves, and care deeply for our mission. It is the greatest calling in healthcare.

Our Volunteers: Last year, our 580+ volunteers provided over $2.3 million in time, finances and goods. It goes without saying, the St. Cloud VA could not be excellent without our Volunteers. Most hospitals long to have the level of commitment from a team of Volunteers like we have here.

Our Veterans: This is obvious, but it needs to be said. Daily, I grow in my awareness of the sacrifice our Veterans made and the freedom afforded to me and my family because of those sacrifices. With every Veteran I meet, I am further humbled to serve in this capacity and be called to serve those who sacrificed so much. And it’s not just the freedom, it’s the example. We live in a day and age where it’s easy to provide an opinion for the whole world to see (i.e. Facebook). However, to actually do something, to run toward the battle, to sacrifice for a cause...that is something else entirely. And our Veterans provide that example to all of us, our kids, our staff, our country. For that example, I am entirely grateful.

Because of the individuals above, the St. Cloud VA is a pretty special place. I frankly feel blessed to be here, to be a part of something wonderful, and there is so much more to come. Thank you all for supporting us as we support and serve those who gave so much. I hope you had a Happy Thanksgiving. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

STEPHEN D. BLACK, FACHE
Health Care System Director
National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Five St. Cloud Veterans recently traveled to Buffalo, New York, to participate in the 2017 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The attendees were selected from the gold-medal winning entries submitted during the competition earlier in the year in Dance, Music, Art, Creative Writing, and Drama. Veterans must place first in their local competition in order to advance to the national stage of judging.

Representing the St. Cloud VA: Artist Michael Bray, Creative Writer Robert White, and Musicians Steve Buley, Rick Stang, and John Jordan.

Honorably Discharged Vets Now Have Online Exchange Shopping Privileges

Some 18.5 million honorably discharged Veterans now have a lifetime benefit enabling them to shop online at ShopMyExchange.com, marking the first expansion of military exchange privileges since 1990.

"The Exchange is honored to open its virtual doors to millions of deserving Veterans," said Tom Shull, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service’s director and CEO, a Vietnam-era Army veteran.

Purchases Improve Quality of Military Life

Every purchase Veterans make online will help to improve the quality of life for those who wear the uniform today, Shull noted, as exchange earnings support programs such as combat uniforms below cost, fitness centers, child development centers and youth programs on Army garrisons, Air Force outdoor recreation programs, school lunches for warfighters’ children overseas and more.

"This is a virtuous cycle," he said. "As a Veteran myself, it is an honor to pay forward support to active-duty service members and their families."

To verify eligibility and begin shopping, Veterans can visit ShopMyExchange.com.
Town Hall Meeting

Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System are invited to participate in a town hall meeting on December 18, at 5 p.m., in the Auditorium (Bldg. 8), St. Cloud VA Medical Center, located at 4801 Veterans Drive in St. Cloud.

The town hall meeting is a public forum focusing on improving VA health care services and programs.

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

Max’s Flag

A new display in the lobby at the Max J. Beilke VA Clinic showcases a flag that honors the memory of MSgt. Max J. Beilke, for whom the Alexandria VA Clinic is named.

MSgt. Beilke was a 1950 graduate of Alexandria’s Central High School and was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1952 to serve in the Korean War; his honorable service extended 22 years. He was officially documented as the last U.S. combat solider to depart Vietnam on March 29, 1973. After his active duty service, Mr. Beilke continued to serve our nation’s Veterans. He was killed on September 11, 2001, while performing his duties at the Pentagon.

The flag has flown over the Pentagon and the Max J. Beilke Clinic flies it every year on September 11 to honor his service.

Veterans ID Card Available

The application process for the national Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is now available for Veterans.

Only those Veterans with honorable service will be able to apply for the ID card, which will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form to obtain promotional discounts and other services where offered to Veterans.

To request a VIC, Veterans must visit vets.gov, click on “Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card” on the bottom left of the page and sign in or create an account.

Veterans who apply for a card should receive it within 60 days and can check delivery status of their cards at vets.gov. A digital version of the VIC will be available online by mid-December.

Did You Know

- An adult golden eagle’s claw has 9 times the grip of an adult human male’s hand.
- Lincoln Logs were invented by Frank Lloyd Wright’s son.
Veteran Job Fair

December 11, 2017
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
St. Cloud VA Auditorium (Bldg.8)
4801 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud

ALL VETERANS WELCOME

No pre-registration needed

Numerous local businesses that are looking to fill job openings with Veterans will be available at the job fair

Sponsored by the St. Cloud Area Veteran Employment Connection Group

Questions?
Contact Brad Steele at 320-333-0222 or Bradley.Steele@va.gov

Why Some Veterans Are Charged Copayments for Health Care

The VHA Office of Community Care (OCC) has release a new video, “Veteran Copayments,” designed to clarify the topic of Veteran copayments.

The video walks through the three main reasons why a Veteran is charged a copayment, how a copayment can be paid, and why paying the copayment in a timely manner is important. Learn more about this topic, and read a blog post on VA Insider about the video.

Camp Lejeune Veteran or Family Member?

From the 1950s through the 1980s, people living or working at the U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, were potentially exposed to drinking water contaminated with industrial solvents, benzene, and other chemicals.

You may be eligible for VA health benefits if you lived at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between Aug. 1, 1953 and Dec. 31, 1987.

Veterans:

- You are eligible to receive VA health care
for qualifying health conditions associated with drinking water contamination at no cost (including copayments).

**Family Members:**

- You may request reimbursement for out-of-pocket medical expenses incurred from treatment of qualifying health conditions associated with drinking water contamination.

For more information, visit http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Veterans Affairs Radio Show**
Monday, Dec. 4 8-8:25 a.m.
KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3

**VA Health Care 101**
Tuesday, Dec. 5 9-11 a.m.
Friday, Dec. 8 2-4 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 16 9-11 a.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 4 – enter via Bldg. 1
Choose one session. Learn how to effectively use the VA. Pre-registration is not required.

**Veterans Law Clinic (by appointment only)**
Tuesday, Dec. 5 & 19 Noon-2 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 28, Rm. 126

Free legal counsel for Veterans. Call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

**Veterans Job Fair**
Monday, Dec. 11 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Auditorium (Bldg. 8)
Local businesses looking to fill job openings with Veterans will be on site. All Veterans welcome. No pre-registration required.

**Town Hall Meeting**
Monday, Dec. 18 5-6 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Auditorium (Bldg. 8)
A public forum focusing on improving VA health care services and programs.

**Voices for Veterans Radio Show**
Wednesday, Dec. 20 8:10-8:45 a.m.
WJON AM 1240

**Outpatient Clinics Closed**
Monday, Dec. 25
In observance of Christmas, a federal holiday, St. Cloud VA Health Care System outpatient clinics will be closed. Urgent Care at St. Cloud VA Medical Center will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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

**Quotation of the Day**

“When people go through something rough in life, they say, ‘I’m taking it one day at a time.’ Yes, so is everybody. Because that’s how time works.” —Hannibal Buress
### Quick Reference Phone List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main St. Cloud VA HCS Phone Number</td>
<td>320-252-1670 or 800-247-1739</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDD User</td>
<td>320-255-6450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max J. Beilke VA Clinic, Alexandria</td>
<td>320-759-2640</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brainerd VA Clinic</td>
<td>218-855-1115</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montevideo VA Clinic</td>
<td>320-269-2222</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veterans Crisis Line</td>
<td>800-273-8255 Press 1</td>
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<td>Homeless Veteran Hotline</td>
<td>877-424-3838</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billing</td>
<td>866-347-2352</td>
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<td>Chaplain Service</td>
<td>Ext. 6386</td>
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<td>Discrimination Complaints</td>
<td>Ext. 6304</td>
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<td>Eligibility</td>
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<td>Non-VA Medical Care Billing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-VA Medical Care Referrals/Choice</td>
<td>Ext. 6401</td>
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<td>Nutrition Clinic</td>
<td>Ext. 6376</td>
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<td>Transition &amp; Care Management Program</td>
<td>Ext. 6453</td>
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<td>Patient Advocate</td>
<td>Ext. 6353</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pharmacy Refill Line</td>
<td>855-560-1724</td>
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<td>Privacy Officer</td>
<td>Ext. 6408</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Affairs Office</td>
<td>Ext. 6353</td>
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<tr>
<td>Release of Information (Medical Records)</td>
<td>Ext. 6336</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Ext. 7622</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRICARE</td>
<td>877-988-9378</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary Service</td>
<td>Ext. 6365</td>
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<tr>
<td>VA Police</td>
<td>Ext. 6355</td>
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### 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.