VA Valentines for Veterans

Country music artist, Aaron Tippin, will perform in a FREE CONCERT at the Salem Civic Center as part of the Salem VAMC 2012 National Salute to Veterans on Thursday, February 9, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. The concert is being sponsored by the Salem VAMC, Help Hospitalized Veterans Organization (HHV), and others throughout the community.

This concert is part of the annual weeklong National Salute to Veterans celebration, specifically connected to Valentine’s Day, and is an ideal opportunity for the community to express its respect and appreciation of all Veterans who have served and protected our great Nation.

We are very excited to be able to host one of the national concerts in our area for Veterans residing in southwest Virginia. This complimentary concert is being held to honor the men and women who have bravely served our Nation, welcome them home to their community and families, and promote volunteerism at VA medical centers and outpatient clinics throughout the country. We know that the community will want to take part to demonstrate their ongoing appreciation and support to the men and women who have proudly worn a uniform in service to our country.

Aaron Tippin is well known as a country artist who strongly crusades for the working man and woman. With his 1990 release of “You’ve Got to Stand for Something,” Tippin was invited to appear with Bob Hope on tours to the Mideast to entertain...
troops of Desert Storm. Following his tour, Tippin has been a favorite of America’s fighting forces and has traveled back to entertain troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. His other recording credits include, “Where the Stars and Stripes and The Eagle Fly,” “I Wouldn’t Have It Any Other Way,” “My Blue Angel,” and many others.

**Miss Virginia, Elizabeth Crot** (bottom right photo), will also be appearing and welcoming Veterans to the event.

In addition to this honorary concert to recognize returning service members and Veterans of all conflicts, members of the Salem VAMC staff will be available at the venue to provide information about eligibility, enrollment, VA benefits and other services available to Veterans. Voluntary Service staff will provide volunteer information to members of the community who are interested in volunteering.

**Tickets are required for admission** and must be obtained prior to the date of the concert. Beginning January 9, 2012, Veterans, active military, and their families may obtain tickets at the Salem Civic Center Box Office, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10am-6pm and Saturdays from 10am-2pm. Tickets for the general public will then be released beginning January 16, 2012 and available at the Salem Civic Center. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m.

To make a donation to support the 2012 Valentines for Veterans Concert or for additional information, please call our toll free number at 1-888-982-2463. When the auto attendant answers, please dial extension 5096.

We are looking forward to seeing you there!

*Miguel H. LaPuz, MD, MBA*
*Director*
Salem VAMC has a Rural Health Team to provide information and education to Veterans in our catchment areas. The team is under Salem VAMC’s Primary Care Service Line, and works closely with Home Based Primary Care, Tele-medicine, Women’s Health, Mental Health, OEF/OIF/OND Coordinator, and other services.

Recently the Team shared information about VA health care services at the: Clifton Forge Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), Covington VEC, Galax VEC, Lexington VEC, and the Roanoke Annual Career and Lifestyle Fair.

**Upcoming Rural Health Outreach Events:**
- Every Tuesday from 9a-3:30p—Staunton CBOC
- Covington VFW — January 5 and February 2
- Hillsville VFW — January 10 and February 14

More information and upcoming events open to the public are posted on our website at [www.salem.va.gov](http://www.salem.va.gov) in the events calendar. If you would like to invite the Rural Health Team to an event or to speak with your organization, please contact Marian McConnell at (540) 855-3460 or email at marian.mcconnell@va.gov.

**FLU SHOTS AND PREVENTION**  
*Submitted by Dr. Shannon Cohen, Photos by Dr. Sarah Hartley*

Dr. Shannon Cohen, Dr. Sarah Hartley, Tammy Kendrick, Carolyn Paige, Tequita Akers, Cindy Stephens-Pugh, and volunteer Tessa Davis provided information on influenza (the flu) and its prevention on November 29th and December 1st in the main lobby. Employees were given the opportunity to receive their influenza vaccine. All who attended the promotion received free popcorn provided by the canteen and voluntary services.

As a reminder, the influenza vaccine is recommended for all personnel to keep our staff, patients, and families well. Salem employees may obtain their influenza vaccine between the hours of 7:30-9:30 am and 1-3 p.m. Monday through Friday in employee health. Veterans are encouraged to walk in to their primary care clinic for their influenza vaccine during normal business hours.

(Left to Right) Dr. Azanaw Tassew and Cindy Stephens-Pugh; Susan Camper, and Cindy Stephens-Pugh; Carolyn Paige, Tessa Davis, and Tequita Akers.
VETERANS JUSTICE OUTREACH (VJO) PROGRAM

Under a new VA initiative, Salem VAMC now works in partnership with local law enforcement and courts to connect with eligible Veterans who may need treatment.

The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) specialist, Kristin Pugh, LCSW, works with local courts, jails, probation offices, and law enforcement to identify Veterans who are involved with the local legal system. Once determined eligible for VA care, the VJO works to coordinate the scheduling of medical, mental health, and/or substance abuse treatment programs. If the court imposes supervised treatment rather than jail time, the VJO will determine what health care services might be provided at the Salem VAMC.

The court is currently run by the Honorable Judge Robert Ballou, and three Veterans are currently participating in the program. Two Veterans will graduate on December 21, 2011, after completing more than six months of intensive treatment.

On December 13, 2011, Salem VAMC hosted a Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony to celebrate the signing of a document that will insure this program will serve these Veterans.

Salem VAMC Director, Dr. Miguel LaPuz, thanked all involved for implementing the VJO program at Salem VAMC; one of only three VAMCs in the nation with Federal Treatment Courts. “Clear eyes + full heart = can’t lose…” Judge Urbanski had the clear eyes and vision, and Ms. Pugh had the heart, resulting in Veterans being the winners,” said LaPuz.

Timothy Heaphy, United States Attorney, and Philip Williams, Chief United States Probation Officer, also expressed their support and thanks for all involved in creating and the VJO.

The Honorable Judge Michael Urbanski thanked all present for their collaboration and stressed the importance of treating underlying issues that these Veterans often experience, especially mental health issues and substance abuse. He shared a success story of a Veteran who recently benefited from the program who has now been sober for 6 months, has a job and an apartment, and is now a productive member of society. “Although this is a small program it has a huge individual impact,” said Urbanski.

The Honorable Judge Ballou said the VJO makes a difference in the lives of the Veterans who successfully complete it by “commending and encouraging them, and correcting them along the way.” A special Challenge Coin is presented to each Veteran who graduates. Each person signing the Memorandum of Understanding was also presented a Challenge Coin as a memento of this special occasion.

Veterans Justice Outreach Program Memorandum of Understanding signed at Salem VAMC. Left to right: The Honorable Judge Michael Urbanski; Timothy Heaphy, US Attorney; Dr. Miguel LaPuz, Salem VAMC Director; and Philip Williams, US Probation Officer.
26th ANNUAL HOLIDAY EXTRAVAGANZA
Submitted by Beth Woodward, Photos by Jim Markey

Holiday music and performances gave joy to all at Music Therapy’s Annual Holiday Extravaganza on December 15th. About 25 Veterans and 54 employees performed for an audience of around 300 Veterans, volunteers, visitors, and staff in the artfully decorated Auditorium. Bravo!
DENTAL PATIENTS NOW OFFERED NEW WHEELCHAIR TILT
Submitted by Dr. Joseph T. Abate, DMD

In November 2011, Dental Service received a Diaco Wheelchair Tilt, through the Safe Patient Handling Program, to assist in positioning patients who can no longer transfer from their own wheelchair to the dental operatory chair. This allows the patient to remain in the comfort and security of their own wheelchair for the dental procedure. The motorized tilt is on wheels and can be driven into position by a joystick. The patient then backs their own wheelchair into the tilt. The wheelchair is locked and the platform of the tilt raises up to position the patient for dental care.

Prior to receiving the tilt the dental provider would have to kneel on the floor to access the oral cavity or torque themselves into odd contorted positions to access the oral cavity.

The tilt can accommodate most manual wheelchairs and 4-wheeled motorized wheelchairs, however, it cannot accommodate the ‘scooter’ 3-wheeled motorized wheelchairs. The tilt will accommodate a total patient/wheelchair weight of up to 1,000 pounds.

Mr. Michael Odum, Veteran, gives a “thumbs up” for the new wheelchair tilt. Ms. Robin Gibson, Senior Dental Assistant (left), and Dr. Joseph Abate (right) are proud to offer this option to patients. (Photo by Marian McConnell).

SUCCESSFUL CFC — THANKS TO YOUR GENEROSITY!
Submitted by Kristy Suhr and Sonya Stokes

We are privileged to serve as federal employees. The good work that we do touches and improves the lives of so many in our community, throughout our country, and throughout the world. It is not surprising that this spirit of service tends to carry outside of the workplace and into our personal lives as well. Although many of us have been challenged by the economy, we continue to reach out to find ways to help those who are less fortunate. This is truly remarkable. The support offered in CFC Campaign 2011 by Salem VAMC employees demonstrated one way in which we gathered together to care; share; and change lives.

It is with sincere excitement and gratitude that we reveal to you that we were able to collect $71,938.08 in donations for CFC Campaign 2011 this year!!! This exceeded our goal of $67,000 (107% of goal). Your commitment to helping families, children, and citizens locally, nationally, and internationally is sincerely appreciated.

Each year CFC/United Way continues to advance its mission of “improving the quality of life for all.” Our donations continue to support organizations which strive to fight hunger and poverty, protect wildlife and the environment, help find cures and combat diseases, respond to natural disasters, and many, many other noble causes. Although the causes are diverse, one thing remains true….they continue to need OUR support. Every dollar makes a difference.

Thank you to all of the contributors and to the key workers who made this year such a successful campaign. We look forward to your continued support next year. Thank you also to VCS/Canteen, AFGE, Employee Association, and Salem VA Credit Union for their donations.
INPATIENT PTSD PROGRAMS FOR FEMALE VETERANS
Submitted by Kay Montgomery, MSW

Hope — Integrative — Holistic — Empowering — Creative!
Two 6.5-week recovery-oriented PTSD programs for female Veterans are being offered in 2012. The first session is April 9—May 23; the second session is October 8—November 20.
This program is open to female Veterans who are experiencing PTSD related to combat or military sexual trauma (MST). The Salem VAMC PTSD program is holistic and addresses both physical and psychological well-being. All treatment takes place in a closed group setting and consists of community building, education, acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), and exposure therapy. Thirteen (13) spaces are available. Submitting an application, meeting criteria, and participating in an evaluation process is required prior to acceptance in the program. Veterans must be in outpatient treatment for PTSD prior to participating in this program, and willing to return to outpatient treatment upon completion of the program. For more information please call (540) 982-2463, ext. 2548.

NEW HEALTH ELIGIBILITY CENTER HEALTH BENEFITS WEBSITE

VHA Health Eligibility Center (HEC) is enhancing its ability to communicate with the Veteran community by launching a new Health Benefits website at www.va.gov/healthbenefits. This site replaced the old website (www.va.gov/healtheligibility/), and is designed for easier navigation and is more interactive to enhance the user’s experience. The new site is an online portal for Veterans, family members and care givers to learn about eligibility, enrollment options and benefits offered by VHA. It also provides detailed information about how to apply for VHA health services, cost of care, accessing VA health care and VA’s Medical Benefits Package. The Health Benefits website provides the following new features:
- Simple, easy instructions on how to obtain and access health benefits
- Organized informational flow
- Medical benefits package and priority group information
- Income threshold determination widget
- Copay mapping

Check it out!
You can even apply for VA health benefits online...
CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM
Submitted by Rhonda Fletcher

On November 16th, the 3rd Annual Caregiver Awareness Day Event was held in the main lobby. During this event, information and educational materials about the Caregiver Support Program and related resources were provided to Veterans and their caregivers. Additionally, caregiver items were donated by VA Voluntary Service, the Canteen, and some of our community home health agency partners. Door prizes were donated by the Canteen and others funded through the Caregiver Support Program.

We had a great turn out and want to thank those that supported our event by volunteering their time, knowledge, resources and moral support. We would like to thank FMS for helping with the set up and the greenhouse for the lovely floral arrangements. If you missed it, we have future events and welcome everyone to join us.

For more information about the Caregiver Support Program, please call (540) 982-2463, ext. 1372.

Top Photo: (Left to Right:) Ocie Fidler, Donna Angle, and Rhonda Fletcher. Bottom Photo: (Left to Right:) Paul Keith and Rhonda Fletcher.

JANUARY—KEEP UP WITH YOUR SCREENING TESTS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Did you know it is important to keep up with your screening tests and immunizations? To prevent certain kinds of illness, talk with your health care team about the ones you may need. Most Veterans should be screened for alcohol use, depression, high blood pressure, obesity, PTSD, and tobacco use. Most Veterans should receive a flu shot every year. VA recommends other immunizations based on age, gender, and health status. Talk with your health care team about what is right for you.

STRIVE FOR HEALTHY WEIGHT EVENTS
Submitted by Dr. Shannon Cohen, Photos by Dr. Sarah Hartley

The Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP) and MOVE Programs promoted "strive for a healthy weight" month on November 22, 2011 in the main lobby with Veterans, visitors, employees, and volunteers. We enjoyed playing Wii bowling and magnetic darts and discussed ways to reach and maintain a healthy weight. Information on increasing physical activity and improving dietary intake was provided and we enrolled Veterans in the MOVE and MOVE telehealth national weight management programs.

Top photo: Harold Andrews, Bottom: Gerald Killian
? ASK ETHEL?

The Integrated Ethics Committee will pose a question each month in Just the Facts. Questions and answers will address resource allocation and other ethical issues in the workplace. Answers will appear in the following month’s issue. Employees are encouraged to submit questions to Ethics (122). Please include your name and extension if you want a personal response (all responses are confidential).

November’s Question: Why do we provide heaters and air conditioners for individual employees when patients are too hot or cold?

Answer: As you have probably noticed our medical center is in the process of numerous Non-Recurring Maintenance (NRM) projects that should eliminate the need for space heaters and/or window AC units. Additional HVAC projects are planned to upgrade our older buildings with modern, more efficient HVAC systems. In the meantime, to maintain comfortable temperatures in these areas, a temporary solution is to provide small portable heaters and/or window AC units. Recently we had to purchase some portable AC units for an inpatient unit on Building 12-2, as well as for some other spaces, to keep our Veteran patients, visitors, volunteers, and staff comfortable. These temporary solutions should be a thing of the past once all of our HVAC related projects are funded and completed.

January’s Question: Why were some positions at GS 6 and lower grades downgraded in certain departments?

LAB TEAM MEMBERS ARE “TOUGH MUDDERS”
Submitted by Vickie Wilson, Photos by Tom Hrinya

On a chilly October 22, 2011 morning, Salem VAMC Lab employees — Thomas Hrinya, Ferris Booth, Edward Harper, Stephan Jones, (and family member Michael Jones), ran the “Tough Mudder” obstacle race in Wintergreen, Virginia; a ski resort. The course consisted of 9 miles of hills, walls, electric shocks, fire, and icy water challenges. The course was designed to test toughness, fitness, strength, stamina, and mental grit. With teamwork and camaraderie, they successfully completed all the obstacles and officially earned the right to call themselves “Tough Mudders.”

The event raised over $2 million that helps thousands of warriors with programs that aid in the healing of mind, body, and spirit.
SAFE PATIENT HANDLING—UNIT PEER LEADER
Submitted by Sonya Stokes, BSN, RN

“Hello. My name is Lori Bishop. I have worked at Salem VAMC for 2 years. I currently work in the Primary Care Clinics as an LPN. I am also the Safe Patient Handling (SPH) Unit Peer Leader for my area. I collaborate with various facility disciplines and the Safe Patient Handling Program Coordinator as we strive for creating a culture of safety for our employees as well as our patient population. Our shared goal is substantially reducing the on the job injury rates that occur while performing daily patient care tasks. We have made available to our staff a variety of innovative equipment that enables recruitment and retention of staff by decreasing time away from work from injury, and exhaustion from the normal wear and tear of push-pull effort used to care for many of our Veterans. I also maintain competencies of my peers regarding SPH equipment.

I am available to assist you with any questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding SPH and can be reached at ext. 1445, or contact the SPH&M Coordinator, Sonya Stokes, RN at ext. 3013.”

DIABETES HEALTH FAIR
Submitted by Pamela Moreland, RD, CDE

“I Raise my Hand to Stop Diabetes,” National Diabetes Month theme, was also the theme of the Diabetes Health Fair at Salem VAMC. Diabetes is increasing with nearly 26 million children and adults afflicted in the US and an additional 79 million are at risk for type 2 diabetes: many don’t know that they have it or that they are at risk. The health fair provided information about diabetes management as well as diabetes prevention.

Healthy eating is often the most challenging part of managing diabetes and a essential part of diabetes whether a person is on medicine for lowering blood sugars or not. A food demonstration that featured a diabetes friendly comfort soup was presented by Pamela Moreland, registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator assisted by Virginia Tech dietetic interns Stephanie Org and Korie Lown. Soups are comfort foods as they are satisfying, a tasty way to eat more healthy vegetables, economical, and a good way to use leftovers. The sodium and fat content can be better controlled with making homemade soup and it can be made in a small amount of time. Fiber can be added with dried beans and peas, whole grain rice and pasta, and barley. The fiber is not fully digested and turned into sugar; fiber slows down digestion so a person doesn’t get so hungry later. Samples of a well seasoned 3 bean vegetarian chili were provided with very favorable comments from those tasting.

While diet has a major role in blood sugar management, other factors are: stress, illness, medication, physical activity, tobacco use, and adequate sleep. Representatives from the Sleep Clinic, Podiatry, Physical therapy, Smoking Cessation, Women’s Health clinic, Stress Management, Eye Clinic, Cardiology Clinic, MOVE Weight Management, Rural Health, Telehealth, My HealtheVet, Nutrition, and Diabetes Education & Management provided very informative displays.

For more information about Diabetes, visit www.diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES.

Photos: Top—Korie Lown, VT Dietetic Intern; and Pamela Moreland, RD, CDE. Bottom—Stephanie Org and Korie Lown, VT Dietetic Interns
“MAKE THE CONNECTION”: SHARED EXPERIENCES AND SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Make the Connection, a new campaign launched by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is creating ways for Veterans and their family members to connect with the experiences of other Veterans—and ultimately to connect with information and resources to help them confront the challenges of transitioning from service, face health issues, or navigate the complexities of daily life as a civilian.

“I have seen over and over again how important it can be for a Veteran to hear a message from another Veteran. This type of communication will be especially useful in helping to break down the stigma associated with mental health issues and treatment,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “VA is leveraging this powerful connection using an approachable online resource that links Veterans to personal stories from their peers, to VA resources and support, and to reliable information about mental health and resilience.”

The campaign’s central focus is a website, www.MakeTheConnection.net, featuring numerous Veterans who have shared their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. It offers a place where Veterans and their families can view the candid, personal testimonials of other Veterans who have dealt with and are working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, and mental health conditions. The Web site also connects Veterans and their family members with services and resources that may help them live more fulfilling lives.

“VA is heartened by the tremendous commitment of Veterans of all service eras, genders and backgrounds who are stepping up to share their stories,” said Shinseki. “Just as they would never leave a fellow Servicemember behind on the field of battle, they are once again reaching out to support their fellow Veterans with their compelling examples of successful treatment and recovery.”

At MakeTheConnection.net, Veterans and their family members can explore information on mental health issues and treatment—and easily access support—in comfort and privacy, anywhere, anytime. Visitors to the Web site can customize and filter their online experience, directly connecting with content that is the most relevant to their own lives and situations.

VA’s Make the Connection campaign is raising awareness through public service announcements, advertising and partnerships with Veteran Service Organizations and mental health service providers nationwide. For more information, visit MakeTheConnection.net or VA’s mental health services website at www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

PORTABLE HEATERS - RESTRICTED USE

Submitted by Robert Rossbacher

This type (top diagram) of radiant type heater is not allowed at the Salem VAMC because of the fire hazard of placing the heater too close to an object or wooden door thereby possibly starting a fire. This prohibition is stated in the NATIONAL FIRE PREVENTION ASSOCIATION (NFPA 101) not allowing any appliance to be above 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

The second sketch depicts a portable electric oil-filled heater which operates at lower temperatures than the radiant heaters. At times this type oil-filled heater is used when the heating system is not producing enough heat to provide comfortable temperatures. Please call Engineering at ext. 2238 to allow adjustments to the heating system before resorting to a portable heater. These portable heaters use a considerable amount of electrical energy and therefore raise the cost of our electric bill. Most of the portable heaters have two levels of heat (two switches). If it becomes necessary to use a heater, turn on only one switch. This lower level of heat draws only half of the electrical power and will be less likely to overload an electrical circuit and cause an electrician to come and correct the problem. Also one half of the power helps us meet our energy saving goals. Please turn off all heaters at the end of the day and especially on weekends.

Any personal appliance (heaters, lamps, radios, coffee makers, etc.) must have an electrical check (green tag) before being put into operation. Please place an electronic work order in VISTA to accomplish this before using the appliance.

Salem VAMC “Just the Facts”
PACT  
Submitted by Kirsten Funk

The Salem VAMC’s Education Department is experiencing an exciting time with new health care initiatives and is taking the forefront in the national health care transformation of Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) training.

In FY11, Salem was selected as a Transformation Learning Center (TILC)/ Center of Excellence (COE) along with Salisbury VAMC for the PACT initiative in 2011. The Salem PACT TILC contributed significantly to PACT TILC objectives by training over 1,500 participants (16% of TILC total) during 26 trainings for VISNs 5, 6, 7, and 8. Within VISN 6, the Salem PACT TILC has been responsible for training over 65 PACT teams.

It is also noteworthy that the Salem PACT COE/TILC has made significant contributions to the PACT TILC curriculum over the past year, including the addition of motivational interviewing within the curriculum and significant changes to the flow of the curriculum. This has resulted in participant evaluation outcomes above that of VISN 6 COE totals, as the Salem COE/TILC ranked first or second in every category assessed for by EES at the conclusion of each PACT TILC training.

This endeavor is the result of a collaborative team effort and the desire to improve health care for our Veterans. Dr. Mehdi Kazemi serves as the Salem VAMC PACT TILC Director and Dr. Joe Gieck serves as the PACT Lead.

SCAN

Salem VAMC was selected as one of four VA Specialty Care Access Networks-Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (SCAN-ECHO) centers during FY12. VA SCAN-ECHO is an innovative healthcare program that is designed to treat chronic and complex diseases in rural and medically underserved areas. This innovative model leverages telehealth, specifically the use of clinical videoconferencing equipment and/or telephone lines, to allow healthcare specialists the opportunity to provide expert advice to Primary Care Providers in rural and remote settings.

This program will allow Veterans to receive healthcare from their local providers without the inconvenience of traveling to the main tertiary or secondary VA facility.

Dr. Mehdi Kazemi, M.D. serves as Director, Dr. Joe Gieck, Ph.D. serves as Co-Director and Stephanie Baynton, RN, MSN serves as the Project Manager for Salem’s SCAN.

THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE—Thanks to all who made it great!
Although winter weather has delayed some construction work, interior projects such as renovation of Building 7 and the 2nd floor for Mental Health Service Line (MHSL) continue to progress well. The contract for Building 8 Addition for MHSL has been awarded, and the design effort will resume shortly. The remaining contracted roof work (completion of Building 143 re-roofing and re-roofing of the Chapel) was delayed by slate supply shortages and by winter weather, but this work will resume in the spring of 2012.

The following projects will progress during the January/February timeframe or as noted:

- **New Education Center in Building 75**: Work continues, but was slowed by a required contract modification. Progress to date includes completion of offices and restrooms. Construction will be followed by installation of furnishings, architectural features, and audio visual equipment.
- **Energy Saving Improvements**: Project is nearing completion. This work included re-commissioning of Building 143 HVAC systems for more energy efficient operation.
- **HVAC System Replacement in Buildings 11 and 12**: Building 11 installation is essentially complete and similar work is on-going in Building 12.
- **SPD Renovation for Scope Processing**: Project is essentially complete, with some final work dependent on completion of a contract modification.
- **Front Accessible Entrance for Women’s Health Clinic**: Construction continues to progress.
- **Building 76 Renovations for Relocation of Research**: Construction continues to progress.
- **Emergency Water Storage Project**: March, 2012 initiation of construction is anticipated.
- **Replace HVAC System in Building 74**: Design/construction procurement is in progress.
- **Buildings 74/75 basement corridor floor finish**: Awaiting decision between two floor samples.
- **Additional energy conservation measures (light replacement, corridor roll-up doors, water heaters)**: Design and procurement in progress.
- **Community Living Center Dining Room Addition for Building 2**: Design effort should be completed during the January/February timeframe.
- **Upgrades to Emergency Electrical System**: Design effort will continue.
- **Replacement of Primary Electrical Feeders**: Design effort will continue.
- **Installation of perimeter fence for security**: Design is in progress.
- **Upgrade underground water distribution system**: Design is in progress.
- **Upgrade and Modernize Utility Plant**: Design procurement will continue.

Projects completed within the last two months include:

- **HVAC Humidification Corrections in Building 143**.
- **High Efficiency Heating Systems for Buildings 17, 18, 19, and 25**: Project completed eliminating the need for use of the old leaking steam distribution system to these buildings.

There are other projects in process for Fiscal Year 12, and these will be added to the construction update as their schedules become better defined.

Once again, we appreciate your patience with this heavy construction workload and your help in maintaining a safe environment by reporting any unsafe conditions. If you see unsafe actions or conditions, please immediately report details of the situation to Safety (Ext. 2292) or FMS (Ext. 2700).
WOMEN’S RIGHT TO VOTE
Submitted by Charlene Scott

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, but never supports nor opposes any political party or candidates. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League of Women Voters was founded on Feb. 14, 1920 by suffragists who fought for voting rights for women, resulting in the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. Since the 1920's the League has grown and changed based on the needs of society and critical issues of concern. The League now includes men and women and remains rooted in its principles of democracy in action.

Are you registered to vote? Do you want to change your address, your name?

WHERE: You may pick up a Voter Registration Application at the following sites: Public libraries; Department of Motor Vehicles Offices; Public Assistance Agency offices, i.e., offering food stamps, aid to dependent children and/or aid to persons with disabilities, etc.; Military Recruitment Offices, or District Governmental Centers. For other locations and for more information contact your General Registrar.

WHEN: You may register year-round except during the 21 days prior to a general or primary election or the 13 days prior to a special election. Registration will be permanent under most circumstances. To remain a qualified voter, you must notify your local voter registration office of any change in your name or address. For information, contact your General Registrar.

ABSENTEE VOTING: Any registered voter who expects to be away or otherwise physically unable to go to the polls on election day, may request an absentee ballot.

BY MAIL: Application forms may be requested from the General Registrar’s Office beginning ten months before the general election and are also available at registration sites and governmental centers. Mail applications must be received by the General Registrar by the Tuesday before an election. Voted ballots must be received in the office by 7 p.m. Election Day to be counted.

IN PERSON: Registered voters may apply for and vote an absentee ballot in person at the Registrar's Office beginning 45 days before an election. In-person absentee votes may be cast through 5 p.m. the Saturday before each election day.

PROSTHETICS DAY
Submitted by Adam Damewood

The Prosthetics staff thanks Voluntary Service, the Veterans Canteen Service, and all employees who helped make National Prosthetic’s Day a successful event.

This year Prosthetic Services was able to share their knowledge and enthusiasm for Prosthetics with Veterans as well as their families, caregivers, and staff. Representatives from Prosthetic and Sensory Aid Services provided information about their programs and answered questions about the services they provide to our Veterans. The event included product displays, games, popcorn, ice cream, and other treats for table visitors to enjoy.

Photo (left to right): Tony Calloway, Prosthetics Representative; Annette Davidson, Prosthetics Representative; Wes Chisom, Contract Specialist; Adam Damewood, Prosthetics TCF Intern. Photo by Marian McConnell
COMPLIMENTS CORNER

♥ “I want to express my feelings on how extremely well I was taken care of by members of the Salem VAMC; especially by Dr. Tonya Weed and Dr. Rizk in Group Practice 3.”

♥ “Thanks to Shelby Mallory-Price for being so nice to me. She listens.”

♥ “Please let your staff know that they still remain the BEST in the State of Virginia. Their unprecedented compassion and love for our Veterans is unmatched. The staff at Salem VAMC is superior to any of the medical centers we at AMVETS deal with by far, which in my humble opinion has a lot to do with who does the hiring process. They must stick to what works and know the type of medical staff they want in place. It has produced a #1 team. Congratulations! But more importantly, thank you. Please thank your staff from AMVETS. Our Veterans do talk... and they are telling us... at Salem they could not ask for better care, and they appreciate more than anything the compassion and respect they are shown there.”

♥ “To the Ward of 4H, I would like to take time to personally thank you for your polite smiles, professional attitudes and genuine patient care. I’ve found each and every one of you to be very compassionate caregivers. Lord knows your patience and tolerance are tested daily. Your ‘above and beyond’ attitude shows through. Having Nurses, Doctors, and CNA’s such as yourselves makes me proud to be a Veteran. Being a former Corpsman myself... you seldom get the appreciation you deserve. But, I am very grateful for all the wonderful care I received here. I would like to mention you all. If I missed anyone, my apologies. God bless each and all of you for your warm hearts and kind spirits. I’d also like to compliment the Lab department as well, and the staff in the galley. The food was always on time and tasty. Thanks to: Dr. Gordon; Dr. Alemu; Dr. Carter; Monica Coles, RN; Pam Purcel, RN; Carrol Griffin, RN; Linda Thompson, RN; Darsha Stevens, RN; Cindy Abbott, RN; Gayle Taylor, LPN; Debbie Markley, LPN; Brenda Lee Millner, CNA; Paulette Beatty, CNA; Patience Odupelu, RN; Norma Santana, RN; Debbie Seay, RN; Marsha Voudren, RN; Margaret Semple, RN; and Melissa Penrod, RN.”

♥ “Imaging: Helen and Adron from the CT Department, were great. They took my husband in and made time to do his test the same day that the doctor ordered it. This is great because he needed to take his treatment as soon as possible. He was unable to do this until the test was done.”

♥ “Imaging: Mandy Childs and Shellie Bryant went to do a portable x-ray on a patient on 4H. When they arrived, the patient was soiled. They patiently waited until a nurse arrived, then helped the nurse clean the patient up before doing the x-ray. The nurse, Debbie Jordan, was appreciative of their help and willingness to go the extra mile.”

♥ “To the Salem VAMC Rural Health Team: On behalf of American Armoured Foundation, Inc., Tank Museum, we would like to thank you for your continued support of the museum and its 8th Annual Indoor Car & Bike Show. The show, as you know, was a great success, with over 172 vehicles entered and 850 people in attendance.”

♥ “Thank you for the opportunity to respond concerning an excellent facility, helping the Veterans of our Armed Services.”

Veterans and Visitors: Do you have a compliment or suggestion to help us exceed your expectations? Our goal is to provide excellent service. Please ask to speak to the STAR (Service Level Patient Advocate) in the area to share your feedback. You may receive a survey in the mail; please complete it and return it to us with your feedback.
**EVENTS CALENDAR—2012**  
(Also see on Intranet and Internet Calendars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 1</td>
<td>New Year’s Day—Happy 2012!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 2</td>
<td>New Year’s Day Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 2-8</td>
<td>National Folic Acid Awareness Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 3</td>
<td>MOVE Weight Management Info from 10-11:30a in the Main Lobby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 5</td>
<td>Flu Shots and Smoking Cessation Info from 10a-12p in the Main Lobby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 8-14</td>
<td>Home Office Safety &amp; Security Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 10</td>
<td>National Cut Your Energy Costs Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 11</td>
<td>Get Recommended Screenings &amp; Immunizations Info from 12:30-1:30p in the Main Lobby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 15-21</td>
<td>Healthy Weight Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 16</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>Employee Education Fair from 7a-4:40p in the Auditorium—Building 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 19</td>
<td>Employee Town Hall Meeting from 11:30-12:30p in the Auditorium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 22-28</td>
<td>National Certified Nurse Anesthetists Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>National IV Nurse Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 9</td>
<td>Valentines for Veterans Concert with Country Music Star Aaron Tippin at the Salem Civic Center at 7pm (see pages 1 and 2 for more information)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Healthy Ways to Manage Stress—from 11a-12p in the Main Lobby</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 1</td>
<td>“Everyday People” Musical Performance from 2-4p in the Auditorium</td>
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**REPORTING SAFETY & QUALITY ISSUES**  
Submitted by Quality Management

Any employee of Salem VAMC may report safety and quality-of-care issues directly to the Joint Commission, our accrediting agency. Concerns may be reported without retaliation or disciplinary action against the reporting employee. Reports may be reported to the Joint Commission through several means:

Mail:  
Division of Accreditation Operations  
The Joint Commission  
One Renaissance Blvd.  
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60180

Phone: 1-800-994-6610

Fax: 1-630-792-5636

Email: complaint@jointcommission.org

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Be sure to check out our website  
[www.salem.va.gov](http://www.salem.va.gov)  
For events, articles, photos, this newsletter, and more!

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**JUST THE FACTS**  
The newsletter is published around the 1st of each month.  
If you have ideas for *Just the Facts* articles (250 words or less), photos, or suggestions, please contact Marian McConnell at (540) 982-2463, Ext. 1400; or email vhasampublicaffairs@va.gov at least 10 days before the first of the month.  
Remember, you can read current and past issues on the Salem VAMC Intranet homepage.  
*Disclaimer: We reserve the right to edit/condense articles and information as appropriate. We will make every attempt to notify the author(s) first.*  
Posted online under “Resources” at:  
[www.salem.va.gov](http://www.salem.va.gov)