

McGuire

Serving Our
Nation's Heroes

Monthly



WHAT'S INSIDE:

Charlottesville Opens
New Clinic

National Salute to
Veteran Patients



Cardiothoracic Surgery Program at Richmond VAMC Celebrates 20 Years

Before the LVAD celebration began, the conference room in the medical center was packed—filled with people, voices, and excitement. People moved around the room like pollinating bees, moving from one group to the next, and on to another person. Guests traveled from various points along the east coast to participate in the “VAD-Iversary.” New Hampshire, District of Columbia, North Carolina and Florida. In addition to being a celebration of successful surgical care, this gathering of Veterans, family members, and medical center staff mirrored a family reunion.

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On February 9, the cardiothoracic surgery program at Richmond VA Medical Center (VAMC) celebrated its 20th year of Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) surgery. The LVAD was first developed in 1966 and the first successful long-term implant was completed in 1988 in Boston,

Massachusetts. The Richmond VAMC completed its first successful LVAD surgery in the summer of 1995. Since that time, the surgery team has implanted nearly 200 devices.

Richmond VAMC is the only comprehensive LVAD program in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and fewer than six hospitals perform LVADs in Virginia. As a result, Veterans travel from all over the country to receive care from Richmond's unique program. The cardiothoracic team at Richmond VAMC, led by Dr. Gundars Katlaps, consists of specialized medical and administrative staff who work together to ensure the program runs like a well-oiled machine.

LVAD is a battery operated pump that ensures oxygen-rich blood reaches vital organs. The small LVAD connects to a power source outside of the patient's body. Patients wear the external power source contained in a carrier bag that must be worn at all times. The device extends the life of failing hearts until a heart transplant becomes available.

According to Toni Chase, cardiothoracic surgery administrative officer, following the procedure, most patients are discharged home, where they wait for a heart transplant. Due to its technological advancements, most of the patients live on the device for years. One patient has survived on the same device for more than 7 years now (and still going). Many patients live full and productive lives. According to Dr. Katlaps, “With the success of this technology the indications to use it have broadened. It serves not only as a bridge to transplantation now. For patients who are not heart transplant candidates this device can serve as



On February 9, patients, family, and staff gathered in Richmond, Virginia to celebrate 20 years of successful Left Ventricle Assistive Device (LVAD) surgeries. Pictured are Jim King, perfusionist (in scrubs), and both LVAD and heart transplanted patients.

destination therapy adding years to their life.”

One couple, Mike and Carole Wheeler, traveled to be a part of this event. Mike, a 66 year-old Navy Veteran, initially had an LVAD implanted following a major heart attack in Fairfax, Virginia. Three years ago, on April Fool's Day, he received a new heart at Richmond VAMC. When asked how he currently felt, he replied, “Fantastic!” While discussing his care at the Richmond VAMC, he added, “Everyone was top notch. I really can't say enough—cleaning staff, food services, nurses, doctors—everyone.” Carole chimed in and shared her experience. “Without them, he wouldn't be here. You [the medical center] are lucky to have them,” she stated.

While her husband recovered from his heart transplant, Carole stayed at the Richmond Fisher House, co-located with the medical center. “They treated me every bit as good as my husband,” she said while squeezing her husband's arm. Mr. Wheeler concluded, “It was a life-changing experience.”

Last year, the Cleveland VAMC implemented a new LVAD program. Dr. Katlaps and his team have been influential in helping Cleveland duplicate the success already established in Richmond. At the time of the story, Cleveland VAMC had completed two successful LVAD surgeries.

Twenty years and 200 LVAD procedures later, the cardiothoracic team at Richmond VAMC has added “years to life and life to years” for the Veterans and families they have touched. The future holds no promises, but if past successes are a good predictor of future outcomes, when the Richmond VAMC cardiothoracic team hosts its 30th “VAD-Iversary,” they will need a larger venue. ●

McGuire Cuts Ribbon on New Clinic, Services Expand

Representatives from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Commonwealth of Virginia cut the ribbon on the latest VA medical clinic in Charlottesville, Virginia, during a ceremony, Feb. 4.

The new Charlottesville Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) opened its doors officially on Dec. 7, and the recent ceremony offered a chance for Veterans, guests and community partners to see firsthand all areas of the clinic and to meet many of its staff members.

Veterans who use this clinic will know it is an extension of the quality care from the McGuire VAMC, said Joe Edger, deputy network director, VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network.

Edger spoke about the rich history of Charlottesville, and how the new clinic brings great, new services to Veterans of the area.

The new clinic is double the size—approximately 10,000 square feet. The extra space allows for a 4th primary care team, additional mental health provider, full-time audiology services, and surgical pre-operative and post-operative clinics.

Dr. Adam Holmes, medical director of the Charlottesville CBOC, said the new larger clinic aims to deliver care to a place where Veterans can find healing.

Phil Grimm said he thinks the new clinic is fabulous. Grimm, commander of the local American Legion Post 74, relayed how excited he was to see full-time audiology being offered.

Grimm explained how the addition of full-time audiology services is a real benefit due to the number of Veterans in the local community who experience hearing issues.

From Grimm's perspective as the leader of a local Veterans organization, he said he believes Veterans most often experience trouble with the VA when making the initial steps to receive care and benefits.

"But, once they get to see a doctor, the care is fantastic," Grimm said.

The new facility is located at 590 Peter Jefferson Pkwy, Suite 250, 2nd Floor, and is co-located with several other community specialty clinics. ●



From left: Scott Leake, Director of Outreach for U.S. Rep. Robert Hurt (Va.-05); Dr. Adam Holmes, Medical Director for the Charlottesville CBOC; Joe Edger, Deputy Network Director, VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network; Chaplain Oscar Stone, Chief of Chaplain Service, McGuire VA Medical Center (VAMC); Commissioner John Newby, Virginia Department of Veterans Services; and John A. Brandecker, Director, McGuire VAMC.

MONUMENT AVE. 10K



The McGuire VAMC is looking for participants for the upcoming Monument Ave. 10K run/walk held April 9, at Broad St. and Harrison St., in Richmond. This unique, high energy event is projected to have 40,000 participants and will feature over 30 plus bands and DJs. Registration for the event [here](#). Also, we have a training group for both the upcoming race and for employees that just want to work out. For more information, contact [Ryan Ballon](#). For more information on the Monument 10K, visit the Sportsbackers website.



FEBRUARY 5 • WEAR RED DAY



RICHMOND VAMC CELEBRATES VETERANS WITH NATIONAL SALUTE



Each year, the Department of Veterans Affairs holds a week-long event to honor Veterans' service and sacrifices called the National Salute to Veteran Patients Week. The event's origin in the VA began in 1978 when VA took over sponsorship of the program from a humanitarian organization named No Greater Love, Inc.

This year, employees of the Richmond VA Medical Center (VAMC), along with local community members and volunteers, expressed their gratitude through various activities involving the facility's Veterans. Some of the activities included balloon and flower distribution, parties and games, musical acts, special meals for inpatients, and other events.

"Salute Week provides the community an opportunity to express their appreciation, and pay tribute to the many men and women who've served our country," said Janell Giles, Richmond VAMC Voluntary Service.

Salute Week is one of the biggest events for VA Voluntary Service (VAVS), said Giles, who has worked for VA for 29 years and the past seven years in VAVS. Activities during the week are scheduled by VAVS and the facility's recreation therapists. Many Veterans received Valentine's Day cards, snacks or a simple "thank you for your service."

"I enjoy witnessing the joy and appreciation shown by our patients for the acts of kindness shown to them by everyone in their honor," Giles stated.

Richmond began this year's activities on Friday, Feb. 12, due to President's Day, so activities lasted for 10 days. It began with

seven local news personalities, who joined hospital employees and volunteers, to distribute 300 bright red, heart-shaped balloons to inpatients throughout the facility.

Two other local news personalities made their way through outpatient waiting areas, Feb. 17, giving approximately 200 colorful carnations to Veterans and spouses. During this event, CBS reporter Melissa Hipolit handed Veteran Bill McGlaufflin a purple carnation and thanked him for his service. McGlaufflin, a 17-year Navy Veteran, recently had his knee replaced at Richmond and was visiting for a checkup.

"It's been a complete surprise," McGlaufflin said. "When I first got out, there wasn't a whole lot going on for Vets. So, it's nice to see this kind of appreciation for the Veterans."

McGlaufflin, an ocean systems tech for the Navy, said he's had nothing but good care since he started at Richmond VAMC about a year ago.

National Salute to Veteran Patients Week ended Friday with two local organizations—Franklin Military Academy and Centura College. The group from Franklin Military Academy handed out gift bags with blankets and commemorative pins to inpatients, and Centura staffed the facility's hospitality cart for Veterans across the hospital.

VAVS recently celebrated its 70th Anniversary as a VA program. Throughout the years many people have volunteered their time to assist Veterans, family members, and caregivers here at Richmond VAMC. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at Richmond, visit www.richmond.va.gov/giving. •



Students from the Franklin Military Academy in Richmond, Virginia, handed out gift bags full of blankets, commemorative pins, and other goodies, as part of the Richmond VA Medical Center's National Salute to Veteran Patients Week activities.



Veteran Bill McGlaufflin receives a purple carnation from Melissa Hipolit, a local CBS news personality, Feb. 17, at the Richmond VA Medical Center. Nearly 200 colorful carnations were given to Veterans and family members in outpatient waiting areas as part of the VA's National Salute to Veteran Patients Week activities. McGlaufflin is a 17-year Navy Veteran.

Richmond VA Medical Center staff members Marian Baxter (left) and Iesha Adams deliver heart-shaped balloons to inpatients as part of National Salute to Veteran Patients Week. In total, approximately 300 balloons were distributed by employees and local news personalities.



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mary McLeod Bethune
Council House, Washington, DC

National Mall
Washington, DC

U.S. Supreme Court
Washington, DC

Mother Bethel
African Methodist
Episcopal Church
Philadelphia, PA

Little Rock
Central High School
Little Rock, AR

Edmund Pettus Bridge
Selma, AL

Freedom Riders
Bus Museum
Montgomery, AL

Tuskegee Airfield
Tuskegee, AL

Jamestown Settlement
Jamestown, VA

Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable's
Settlement, Chicago, IL

Kingsley Plantation
Fort George Island
Jacksonville, FL

Fort Mose Settlement
St. Augustine, FL

Tanners Alley
Harrisburg, PA

Frederick Douglass Home
Washington, DC

Bluberry Row at Monticello
Charlottesville, VA

Seeca Village
Central Park, NY

HALLOWED GROUNDS: Sites of African American Memories

Observance Program
February 25, 2016 | 12:00 PM | MPR



**LEADERSHIP FORUM
SERVICE AWARDS**

Clockwise from top left:

- William Dorman - 35 years**
- Nancy Forrest - 35 years**
- Cynthia Taylor - 35 years**
- Lloyd Moore - 30 years**
- Belinda Swecker - 30 years**

