

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare-VISN 4

VISION

for Excellence

Newsletter for Veterans and Stakeholders in VISN 4

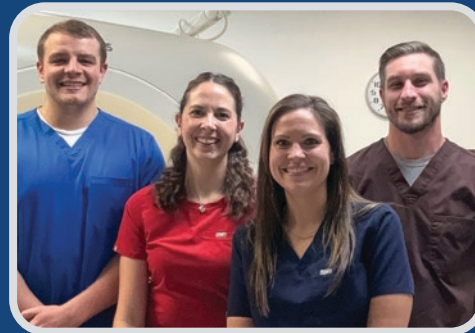
Issue 37



Earning Your Trust

VISN 4 employees work hard every day to provide Veterans with outstanding health care and services. VISN 4 continues to have the highest trust score across VA at 95.0%, and we also have the highest number of compliments at 79.4% and the lowest number of concerns at 10.3%.

It is our honor and privilege to serve you!



Dear Veterans, fellow employees, volunteers and friends of VISN 4:

It is my honor and pleasure to have been appointed to serve as the VISN 4 Interim Network Director. Tim Liezert, our VISN 4 Network Director since September 2019, retired on March 28 after 38 years of dedicated service with VA.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize our dedicated staff across VISN 4 who work hard every day to put our Veterans first and provide the best possible care. This issue highlights a few of our VISN 4 employees who work tirelessly to serve our Veterans. We are featuring several recipients of our quarterly I CARE award which recognizes employees who not only demonstrate our I CARE values (Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence), but who go the extra mile to live by our I CARE ideals. We also feature staff from the intensive care unit at VA Lebanon Healthcare System who were recently awarded the Gold-Level Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence from the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN).

I am also very proud to announce that VISN 4 continues to receive the highest trust score across VA at 95%. Our network also has the highest number of compliments at 79.4% and the lowest number of concerns at 10.3%. The top 5 compliments recently are cleanliness of facility, quality of care, interactions with staff, satisfaction with Specialty Care, and courtesy of health care providers.

Earlier this year, VA partnered with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to improve access to health care for Veterans traveling through Pennsylvania. Due to the state's size and rurality, VA selected Pennsylvania to expand an initiative to connect Veterans in rural areas with telehealth and mental health resources. VISN 4 worked closely with the PA Turnpike to provide informational flyers (see page 9) now posted at its 17 service plazas located along the turnpike that provide round-the-clock food, fuel, restrooms, and other amenities.

On behalf of our leadership team and staff across VISN 4, I thank all Veterans and their families for entrusting us to provide your health care. It is our honor and privilege to serve you.

Sincerely,

Denise Boehm
Interim Network Director, VISN 4



VA Healthcare-VISN 4 Leadership Team

Denise Boehm
Interim Network Director

David DiGiacomo
Interim Deputy Network Director

Timothy Burke, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer

Kelly O'Connell
Quality Management Officer

Teresa Waksmonski-Frye
Chief Financial Officer

Amber Mesoras
Chief Human Resources Officer

David E. Cowgill
Communications Manager

Kristy Kralik
Executive Assistant

AROUND the NETWORK

ICU Staff in Lebanon Receive Gold-Level Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) recently conferred the Gold-Level Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence upon the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at VA Lebanon Healthcare System.

VA Lebanon is one of a handful of VA medical centers in the nation to achieve such a distinction. The award highlights Lebanon's ICU's accomplishments in fostering the highest standards of quality patient care as well as healthy work environments.

The Beacon Award for Critical Care Excellence recognizes the nation's top critical care units. It signifies exceptional patient care leading to positive patient outcomes. It recognizes superior unit quality, safety, and nursing competencies. Additionally, it shows a positive and

supportive work environment with greater collaboration, higher morale, and lower turnover.

The Beacon Award program comprises three distinct modules: Patient Outcomes, Work Environment, and Nursing Workforce.

Criteria for the award include creating and promoting healing environments, patient outcomes, evidence-based practice and research, innovation/excellence in recruitment and retention, education, training and mentoring and leadership and organizational ethics.

The award has three levels of achievement: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. It is an independent third-party validation of a unit's care, quality and safety.



The Beacon Award program modules reflect the areas in which nurses have the most significant influence on health care: Patient Outcomes, Work Environment and Nursing Workforce.



I CARE represents the core values that define the basic elements of how we go about our work—"who we are"—and form the underlying principles we use every day in our service to Veterans.

VISN 4 established a new, quarterly I CARE award to recognize employees who not only demonstrate our I CARE values, but who go the extra mile to live by our I CARE ideals. There are many wonderful examples of employees demonstrating these values in their day-to-day work.

Integrity • Commitment • Advocacy • Respect • Excellence



FY24 2nd Quarter Awardees

**Kevin Elwell, MD; Brian Becker, RN;
Eric Lundborg, RN; Heather Lucero, RN;
Cheryl Fisher, PSA*; Joni Gross, RN Manager*
Urgent Care Center
Erie VA Medical Center**

When you see billboards touting "Life Saving Medicine," they should put the Urgent Care Center at the Erie VA at the top of the list. One morning, a fellow VA employee came to work after having been absent for a couple of days. The employee wasn't feeling well and went to the Urgent Care Center (UCC). Joni, the nurse manager, confirmed that he was indeed having cardiac problems and the UCC team quickly began taking care of him. His wife had been called and she was on her way.

The UCC team led by Dr. Elwell worked on the employee to address his immediate medical needs while simultaneously

having EMS arrive to take him to UPMC Hamot. Once he was en route, Dr. Elwell contacted a colleague at UPMC Hamot and confirmed that the patient was going straight to the catheterization lab.

Thanks to the terrific team in the UCC including Heather, the primary nurse who expediently triaged the employee and completed an EKG, Eric and Brian who provided rapid care, and Cheryl who got EMS on site very quickly. Thanks also to Dr. Elwell for managing the care and clearing a direct path to a community cath lab without delay. Dr. Elwell was able to speak to colleagues at UPMC Hamot and make things happen in a rapid and efficient way.

The actions of this team provided the best chance for a good outcome, minimizing tissue death and possible death. Joni, the nurse manager, and her team have championed making a difference. This type of scenario doesn't play out like this everywhere...our UCC team is top notch.

**photo not available*

Lauren Williams and Kristine Jordan
Amputee Clinic
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Because of their care, compassion and commitment to Veterans, Lauren Williams and Kristine Jordan may have saved a Veteran's life.

A Veteran has been seen in amputee clinic for at least the last year, receiving treatment and rehabilitation for an amputation. He is seen regularly by physical therapy in the clinic each week. In addition to dealing with a recent amputation, this Veteran has had many life stressors. This Veteran was completely overwhelmed by all the challenges on his plate. He felt hopeless and depressed and stated that he "just can't go on". He stated he was crying at home and

felt like he didn't have any support. It was getting the best of him.

That's when this Veteran showed up at HJ Heinz and sat outside the amputee clinic on a day when he didn't have a scheduled appointment. When he saw AMSA Kristine Jordan, he found the courage to ask for help. She spoke with him and assured him that she cared and would help him. She even got his physical therapist Lauren Williams involved as well. Together, the two of them spoke with the Veteran, and upon understanding the gravity of his situation, they sought out an assessment with a social worker to connect him to appropriate mental health support.

Kris and Lauren never left the Veteran alone. This meant staying with him for at least 90 minutes while he was assessed and eventually transferred to the emergency department for evaluation.

As they spoke with him while he waited, it was clear that he trusted them and that they knew him personally. They knew about the struggles that he was having, and they helped remind him that it was OK to get help even when he admitted that his pride sometimes gets in the way of doing so. And most importantly, they made sure his needs were heard. He was able to be evaluated that same day in the VA emergency department and was admitted for inpatient mental health treatment.

He was in real need of help and may not have had sought care if he did not have such trusting, caring providers like Lauren and Kristine. They clearly demonstrated the values of commitment, advocacy, and respect when helping this Veteran, and VA and our Veterans are lucky to have them.



Lauren Williams

Kristine Jordan



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Integrity • Commitment • Advocacy • Respect • Excellence

FY24 4th Quarter Awardee

Corporal Joseph Rodriguez

VA Police

VA Lebanon Healthcare System

Corporal Joseph Rodriguez responded to the emergency department waiting area for a Veteran in crisis. Corporal Rodriguez attempted to connect with the Veteran and convince him to seek treatment. The Veteran related he didn't want anyone to help him and then left the ED waiting area. Corporal Rodriguez followed him and pleading for him to return. The Veteran continued to display a great deal of emotions but refused to return to the ED.

The Veteran then crossed Veterans Blvd. and continued toward State Drive while sobbing, yelling, and cursing at Corporal Rodriguez pleading to be left alone. At State Drive, the Veteran observed a school bus quickly approaching. He then ran onto the road and into the path of the school bus.

Corporal Rodriguez, without hesitation or regard for his own safety, grabbed the Veteran and pulled him off the roadway and out of the path of the bus. Corporal Rodriguez then restrained the Veteran and called for assistance and then transported him back to the ED for evaluation and treatment.

Corporal Rodriguez's tenacity and dedication to duty caused him to follow the Veteran when he left the ED. Corporal Rodriguez's bravery and selfless service caused him to endanger himself by

running out onto State Drive to pull the Veteran from harm's way. Corporal Rodriguez's commitment to Veterans and his passion to serve likely saved this Veteran's life. His actions reflect great credit upon himself, the VA Lebanon Police Service, and the VA Lebanon Healthcare System.





Ryan Davies, PA-C
York VA Clinic
VA Lebanon Healthcare System

Every day, Ryan follows through with his I CARE values with his patients. One day in particular, a new patient arrived at the clinic about 27 minutes late, thinking her appointment was at 10:30 a.m. instead of 10 a.m. The MSA notified Ryan of her arrival to see if she could still be seen. Instead of Ryan telling the MSA to inform the Veteran they will need to reschedule, Ryan came out to speak with the Veteran directly. He explained why a full 60-minute appointment is necessary and that the appointment will need to be rescheduled, however, he would reschedule sooner than the next regularly available slot later in the year.

Upon hearing this, the Veteran became very emotional and distressed, stating that she doesn't know how she can hold on any longer and needed to speak to someone. Instead of turning her away, Ryan asked if she wanted to come back to talk about her emotions. After calming her down, Ryan walked her out and instructed the MSAs to add her back to his schedule during his lunch hour so that he could complete the full intake and new consult.

Ryan displayed each of the I CARE values throughout this whole interaction:

Integrity and Respect – Ryan addressing the Veteran directly instead of passing it on to the MSA to inform them of the need to reschedule shows integrity and respect, not only to the MSA staff but also to the Veteran.

Commitment and Advocacy – Ryan showed commitment and advocacy to his brand-new patient without even knowing her. The dedication to his work shows that he loves what he does and overall loves helping people. He is always an amazing advocate for our Veterans. He wants to ensure that they feel safe, heard, and taken care of.

Excellence – Ryan's commitment to his patients and his work here at VA show every day, but especially in these special moments of helping those in tough times. Whether it's a patient or a coworker, Ryan is always being observant, asking questions, and checking up on everyone to make sure they are doing okay.

Send photos or videos to your VA provider anytime from anywhere

The My VA Images web app enables you to send photos and videos safely and securely to your VA providers and receive expert health care without leaving home.



With My VA Images, you can upload new or stored photos or videos that your VA provider requests to better understand your health care concern. You can use My VA Images on any smartphone or tablet with a camera or even a personal computer.

How can I use My VA Images?

You can use My VA Images to get medical advice on topics such as:

- Skin conditions
- Managing wound care
- Foot care

- Reviewing the use of rehabilitation and medical equipment
- Diet and Nutrition
- Capturing symptoms or behaviors at home

Am I eligible to use My VA Images?

You may be eligible to use My VA Images if you answer 'Yes' to the questions below:

- Do you have a Login.gov or ID.me secure credential account?
- Do you have a smartphone, tablet, or computer with a built-in camera?
- Do you have an email account that can be accessed on your device?
- Are you comfortable using your device?
- Can you read and follow instructions on your device's screen?
- Can you photograph or video yourself, or do you have someone who can help you with this?

What's next?

After you and your VA provider agree to use My VA Images, your provider will send you an email with a direct link to login to My VA Images. The app will guide you through taking and sending photos or videos requested by your VA provider. After you submit the requested photos or videos, your VA provider will message you through the app with his or her clinical advice.

Have questions?

If you have questions about My VA Images or need step-by-step instructions, feel free to visit the My VA Images page on the VA App Store at mobile.va.gov/app/my-va-images or view the overview video at <https://youtu.be/Spawv2SJozE>.

We're here for you!

If you need help with My VA Images, call the Office of Connected Care Help Desk at 866-651-3180. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



VETERANS

Need Care That Travels With You?

VA Telehealth



Live appointments with your care team are available with any smart device using the **VA Video Connect app**. It provides a secure, private video connection allowing you to stay on top of your health even when traveling.

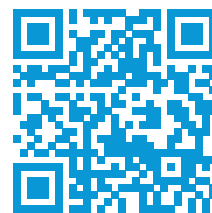
How do I get started with VA Video Connect?

1. **Talk with your VA provider** to see if telehealth is a good fit for your care.
2. **Learn more at:** mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect.
3. **For help setting up VA Video connect on your device**, call the office of Connected Care Help Desk at 866-651-3180.
4. To test your mobile device with VVC Chatbot, text 'V' to 83293 or 323-621-3589.

Find the closest VA location with your Smartphone.

va.gov/find-locations

1. Open the Camera app from the Home Screen, Control Center, or Lock Screen.
2. Select the rear facing camera. Hold your device so that the **QR code** appears in the viewfinder in the Camera app. Your device recognizes the QR code and shows a notification.
3. Tap the notification to open the link associated with the QR code.



If you are having a Medical OR Mental Health Emergency, please dial 911.



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Create a Login.gov or ID.me account now

VA removed the My HealtheVet user ID and password on March 4. To sign in to My HealtheVet, VA.gov, the VA Health and Benefits app, or VA web and mobile apps, you need to use a Login.gov or ID.me account.

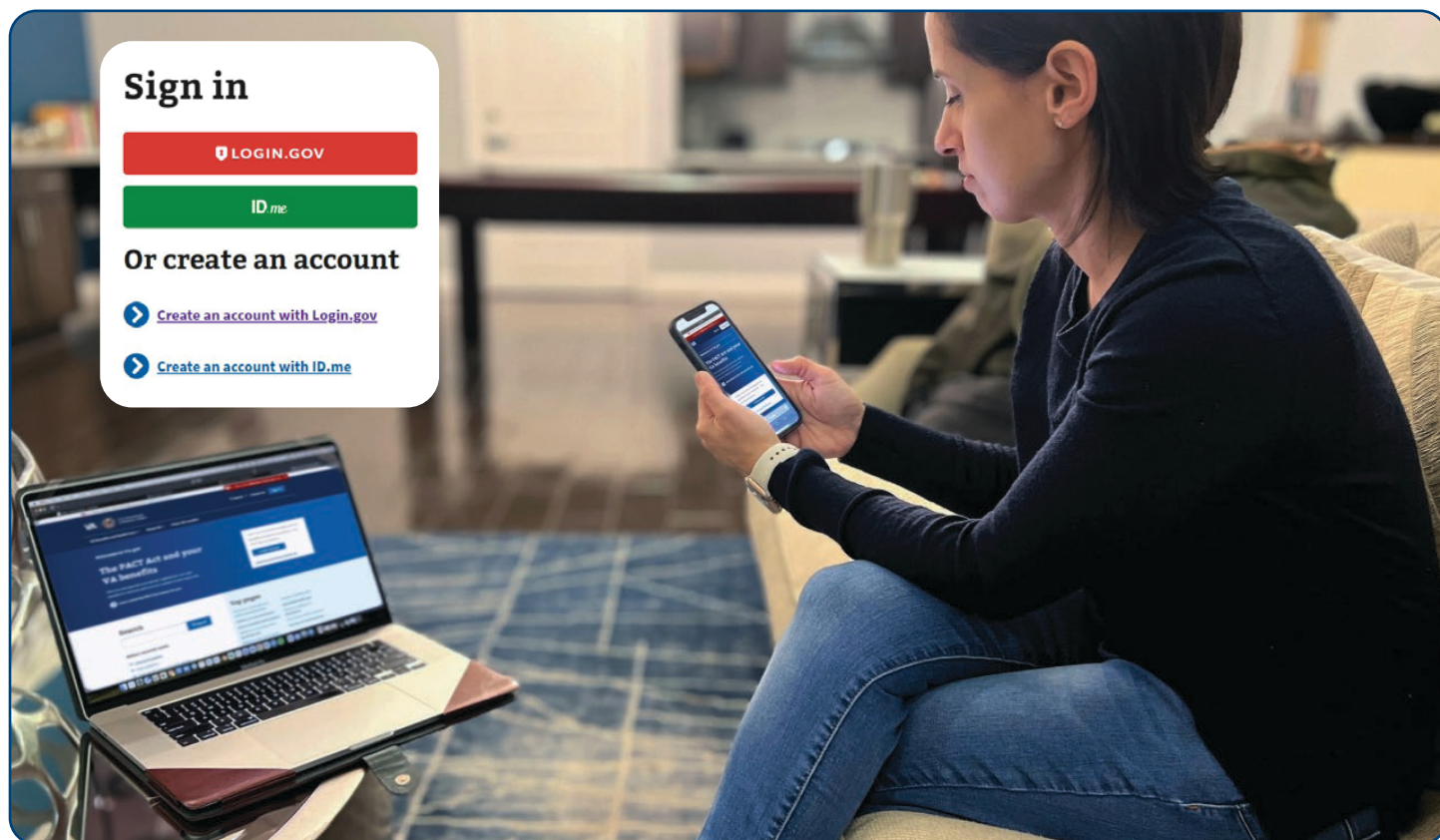
You can create one of these accounts now if you don't already have one. DS Logon for VA sign-in will also be removed on September 30, 2025.

**My HealtheVet user
ID and password
have been retired**



CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE

Learn more at www.va.gov/initiatives/prepare-for-vas-secure-sign-in-changes/.



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Administration
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We'd Like to Hear from You

Vision for Excellence is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare-VISN 4. For more information about this publication, contact David Cowgill at david.cowgill@va.gov.