

# VETERANS' health *matters*

VOLUME 3, 2011

## RECLAIM Your Life through LEISURE

Vietnam Veterans Howie Slater, Jim Wyatt, Antone Sousa and Louis Workman get together to workout at the Presidio YMCA in San Francisco. They are enrolled in the Presidio Fitness Program for Veterans, a form of recreation therapy provided by the San Francisco VA Medical Center in partnership with the Presidio YMCA.

Chris Geronimo, Recreation Therapist in the PTSD Outpatient Clinic at the San Francisco VA Medical Center and Director of the Presidio Fitness Program states, "In a nutshell, recreation therapy is a gateway toward better health and wellness. It uses a holistic approach to augment a Veteran's existing treatment plan and allows the Veteran to practice the coping and

interpersonal skills they've learned. Veterans can reclaim their life through leisure and recreation."

"I really look forward to going to the Y," said Veteran Wyatt. "Of all the therapy I have received from the VA, this program ranks at the top. It takes care of many needs. You can see and feel the positive results in a short period of time. Chris was very tuned in to our individual needs. He would tailor each individual program for maximum results."

*Cont. on page 6*



*Veterans Howie Slater, Jim Wyatt, Antone Sousa and Louis Workman | SFVAMC Fitness Program*

## VA Creates Women Veterans Call Center



VA has embarked on a major initiative to reach out to women Veterans in order to solicit their input on ways to enhance the health care services VA provides to women Veterans.

“We are taking a proactive approach to enhancing VA health care for women Veterans,” said Secretary Shinseki. “We are seeking the input of women Veterans so that VA can continue to provide high quality health care to the growing numbers of women Veterans.”

Representatives at VA’s Health Resource Center are placing calls to women Veterans nationwide, asking them to share their experiences with VA and suggest potential enhancements that will further VA’s mission to provide the best care anywhere.

## VA Reaches Out to Veterans to Explain Upcoming Changes to GI Bill

Encourages Veterans to Visit VA Web Site to Learn More

VA is reaching out to inform Veterans of recent changes made by Congress to the Post 9/11 GI Bill that took effect in 2011.

General Allison Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits, said “The

Post 9/11 GI Bill is incredibly important because it reduces the financial burdens of higher education so that Veterans have an opportunity to achieve their education goals. VA believes it is important for Veterans to be aware of changes to the GI Bill this year and learn more about how these changes may affect them.”

“It’s hard to believe how far we have all come with the Post-9/11 GI Bill the past two years,” stated General Hickey. “Today, more than 537,000 students have received over \$11.5 billion in GI Bill benefits to help them take charge of their future.”

Changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill effective Aug. 1, 2011, include paying the actual net cost of all public in-state tuition and fees, rather than basing payments upon the highest in-state tuition and fee rates for every state; capping private and foreign tuition at \$17,500 per academic year; and ending payments during certain school breaks, to preserve Veterans’ entitlement for future academic semesters. Also, certain students attending private schools in select states can now continue to receive benefits at the same rate payable during the previous academic year.

Beginning Oct. 1, 2011, eligible individuals will be able to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill for programs such as non-college degrees, on-the-job training, and correspondence courses, and they will be eligible to receive a portion of the national monthly housing allowance rate when enrolled only in distance learning courses.

Complete information on the Post-9/11 GI Bill is available at: [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov). VA’s education information phone number is: 1-888-GIBILL-1 (442-4551).



## VA Launches New Prevention Initiative to Serve 22,000 Veteran Families at Risk of Homelessness



### Nearly \$60 Million in Homeless Prevention Grants Awarded Nationwide

On July 26, 2011, Secretary Shinseki announced the award of nearly \$60 million in homeless prevention grants that will serve approximately 22,000 homeless and at-risk Veteran families as part of the new Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. This initial \$60 million award will serve Veteran families at 85 non-profit community agencies in 40 states and the District of Columbia under VA's new homeless prevention initiative.

"This new homeless prevention program will provide additional comprehensive support to Veterans who have served honorably, and now find themselves in a downward spiral toward despair and homelessness," said Secretary Shinseki. "This program expands our capacity to act before a Veteran becomes homeless and to target the problem of family homelessness. These grants would not have been possible without the extraordinary partnerships forged with community organizers who are firmly committed to making a positive difference in lives of Veterans and their families."

More information about VA's homeless programs is available online at [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless). A list of award recipients and details about the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program are available online at [www1.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp](http://www1.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp).

## HUD, VA To Provide Permanent Housing and Support to Thousands of Homeless Vets

Funding part of Obama Administration plan to end Veteran homelessness

U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan and Secretary Shinseki announced that HUD will provide \$46.2 million to public housing agencies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to supply permanent housing and case management for 6,790 homeless Veterans in America.

This funding, from HUD's Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH), is a coordinated effort by HUD, VA, and local housing agencies to provide permanent housing for homeless Veterans.

"Over the past three years, HUD helped thousands of homeless Veterans find a permanent place to call home while VA provided medical treatment, case management and other services to address their specific needs," said HUD Secretary Donovan. "We have no greater mission than to prevent and end homelessness, especially for those brave men and women who risked their lives to protect our nation."

Find out about HUD-VASH at [www.va.gov/HOMELESS/HUD-VASH.asp](http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/HUD-VASH.asp)

# VA FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS

## VA CENTRAL CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

### Salute to VACCHS

On Aug. 5, VA Central California Health Care System hosted a gala ribbon cutting to reopen the front entrance of the Fresno Medical Center. The event featured combat decorated Veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan, including two women Veterans, as VIP ribbon cutters. Congressmen Jim Costa (D, CA-20) and Jeff Denham (R, CA-19) spoke about the quality of care and compassionate treatment given to Veterans by VACCHS staff.

The highlight of the ribbon cutting was a flyover of a Vintage World War II T-34 Beechcraft airplane piloted by retired Marine aviator Vince Nastro. Wounded Warrior and VACCHS patient Sgt. Devin Mathis was a ride along.

This project took six months to complete and increased patient access to VA services. Thickly insulated awnings now completely cover the front of the hospital, a wheelchair lift assists disabled patients into the hospital, and a new sign is over the door which says “The Price of Freedom is Visible Here.”

Improvements at the front entrance are part of \$40 million of construction projects currently underway at VACCHS.

## VA NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

### Solar Power Up and Running in VANCHCS

The VA Northern California Health Care System is going green with Eco-Friendly Solar Power that uses clean, renewable energy from sunlight. Medical facilities use a huge amount of energy. Solar power is being widely adopted as part of the solution to that problem.

McClellan Outpatient Clinic recently completed installation of 172 KW-AC photovoltaic power systems to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 3 percent a year, for a total of 30 percent by the end of 2015. The solar power system at McClellan utilizes 920 photovoltaic modules and includes a mix of rooftop and carport solar panels. In addition to using solar power, the carports also create shaded parking spaces.

McClellan was the first solar photovoltaic project in Veteran Integrated Service Network 21 and generates about 300,000 kwh per year. This is expected to save the facility more than \$37,000 in annual electricity costs.

Solar power at Mare Island Outpatient Clinic has been running for ten weeks. Sacramento Medical Center’s project is complete and will come on line shortly. The project for Martinez Outpatient Clinic is scheduled to begin construction in the first quarter of fiscal year 12.

## VA SIERRA PACIFIC HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

### VASNHCS Veterans are introduced to Tai Chi

A weekly Tai Chi class is now offered at the VA Sierra Nevada Healthcare System. Current participants include Veterans and staff members from all walks of life and age ranges. All Veterans and staff members are invited to take part and learn more about this wonderful program.



Tai Chi is a gentle exercise method of slow, effortless and relaxed movements. Its slow, fluid and weight-shifting motions improve bone strength, leg strength and balance. The purpose of Tai Chi is to help the body return to a pattern of moving freely, calmly and effortlessly.

Several of the participants praise the benefits of the program. One Vietnam Veteran patient, who suffers from PTSD, explained how the rhythmic exercises of Tai Chi have dramatically helped him reduce his own stress.

The VASNHCS Tai Chi group meets with the instructor, Yi Chen, in the PERC classroom every Wednesday morning at 7:15 a.m.

## VA PALO ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

### VAPAHCS Named Most Wired Hospital for the 6th Time

For the sixth time, Hospitals and Health Networks, a publication of the American Hospital Association, has named VA Palo Alto Health Care System as one of the Nation's Most Wired Hospitals. This is the 13th year the magazine has recognized hospitals and health systems for excellence in IT.



“We are fortunate to have staff who readily embrace change and actively seek cutting edge technologies to enhance our health care delivery,” said Lisa Freeman, VAPAHCS director. “We know automation and technology improve our ability to provide safe, effective and efficient care to our Veterans.”

Even with additional and more stringent requirements than in the past, VAPAHCS ranked among the top, along with such institutions as Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Mayo Clinic, Memorial Sloan Treatment Center, and Yale, Harvard and Stanford Hospitals.

## SAN FRANCISCO VA MEDICAL CENTER

### Pets for Vets

The San Francisco VA Medical Center is celebrating its 11th year of operating “Pets for Vets,” a program that provides pets to Veterans at no cost. To date, Veterans have adopted 169 cats and dogs into their homes and have gained the love and companionship that pets bring.



“The elderly, who often experience disproportionate loneliness and loss, are especially well served by pets,” said Russell Lemle, Ph.D., Chief Psychologist at the San Francisco VA Medical Center and founder of Pets for Vets. “Studies have suggested that pet owners have fewer annual visits to physicians, take less medication, recuperate better from certain surgeries and take more walks,” stated Dr. Lemle.

A permanent gallery of portraits of Veterans with their pets, titled “Dog Tags,” is displayed in the halls of the Medical Center. These black and white portraits were all shot by Don Crowe, PhD, a Bay Area psychologist who is one of the leading pet photographers in the country.

To learn more about Pets for Vets, contact Russell Lemle at [russell.lemle@va.gov](mailto:russell.lemle@va.gov) or Alexandra Harrison at [Alexandra.harrison@va.gov](mailto:Alexandra.harrison@va.gov).

## VA PACIFIC ISLANDS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

### VIPHCS is Reaching Out to End Veteran Homelessness

The VAPIHCS has a successful Health Care for Homeless Program that strives to go where the Veteran physically is and makes the effort to learn about the Veteran's individual story. The program also creates a circle of support, friendship, teamwork, community, action and accountability.

Veterans become homeless or are at risk of homelessness due to sudden employment loss, illness, untreated medical conditions and countless other reasons. To meet the various needs of Veterans, federal, state and non-profit support agencies need to work together and maximize the use of available resources. Several VA staff and local non-profit partners, such as U.S. Vets, once walked in the shoes of their Veteran clients and can relate to the challenges these Veterans face.

On Sept. 7, Oahu hosted the first Stand Down in years. At this event, Veterans who wore homeless and at risk of becoming homeless received help with VA registration, health screenings, VA claims support, housing and job search assistance, as well as many other services. Another Stand Down event will be held this October on the island of Kauai.

# RECLAIM YOUR LIFE THROUGH LEISURE

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The goal of recreation therapy is to help Veterans who have illnesses, disabilities and other conditions use activities in ways that improve or maintain physical, emotional, social, and cognitive functioning for a better quality of life and increased independence. Recreation therapy also enhances morale, self esteem and life satisfaction.



*Veteran Joe Gallardo  
SFVAMC Fitness Program*

Veteran Joe Gallardo, speaks highly of his experience with the Presidio Y's fitness program for Veterans. "Before coming into the program," stated Veteran Gallardo, "I was unemployed, broke and struggling, feeling down on my luck and maybe even depressed. I felt lost, wandering aimlessly through a San Francisco fog, a ghost of a soldier with no purpose or direction, a shell of my former self. The program allowed me to focus on my mind through my body to create a mental and at the same time physical calm and well-being. Because of VA recreation therapist Chris Geronimo, I am even looking at schooling and starting a career in recreation therapy so I may give back and pay it forward to my fellow Vets."

VA partners with community organizations to provide a variety of recreation therapy programs. These include:

- Community outings
  - Adaptive sports and fitness programs, such as adapted archery, sit volleyball, quad rugby and adapted Yoga
  - Aquatic, art, music and dance therapies. VA Palo Alto Health Care System's Women's Prevention, Outreach and Education Center offers a six-week Zumba program.
  - Pet therapy
  - Strength conditioning, weight lifting and hand cycling
  - Gaming technologies, such as Wii Fitness and Xbox 360
  - National VA Special Events: Summer Sports Clinic, Winter Sports Clinic, Wheelchair Games, Golden Age Games, Training, Exposure and Experience (TEE) Tournament and Creative Arts Festival.
- Find out about these from your VA facility and [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

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A full daily schedule of rehabilitation therapy is available Monday through Friday at the Western Blind Rehabilitation Center residential facility at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. It also offers evening and weekend outings which provide an opportunity for Veterans to gain confidence, reclaim old interests and develop new ones.

**"Leisure is at least one third of a healthy lifestyle; therefore it is critical for visually impaired Veterans to acknowledge a range of possibilities for their free time."**

## **New Paralympic Program Web Site**

VA has launched a new Web site ([www.va.gov/adaptivesports](http://www.va.gov/adaptivesports)) to motivate and support disabled Veterans to take part in adaptive sports. Click on "Sports Club Finder" to locate local sports programs and clinics. Read articles on the "Success Stories" page to find out how participating and competing in sports has changed the lives of disabled Veterans.

(Cont. from page 6)

Recreation therapists also find innovative ways to enhance the lives of Veterans. Jocelyn Reyes-Pagsoligan, Recreation Therapist at VA Palo Alto Health Care System's Hospice Unit uses an electronic tablet when she engages in bedside visits with Veterans. The device has helped her make memories of special people and places come alive and vivid for these Veterans, bringing them joy and making their days less monotonous. Jack Mattle, a 92-year old World War II Veteran who took part in of the Battle of Saipan was able to see clear images of historical accounts of the battle. Another Veteran and former boxer saw an old six-minute clip of Jack Dempsey, his favorite boxer and role model, on YouTube. After watching this, he fell asleep with a noticeable smile on his face.

Recreation therapy improves a Veteran's overall health and wellbeing. Programs, services and activities are tailored into a treatment plan specific to the needs of each Veteran.

Work with your VA health care provider and your family to find programs and services that best meet your needs. Do it for the fun of it. Do it for your health.



*Veteran Alex Vargas  
SFVAMC Fitness Program*

## WORD SEARCH

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| <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY | <input type="checkbox"/> PROGRAMS     | <input type="checkbox"/> THERAPEUTIC |
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 V L S N O I T A E R C E R A L

## VETERANS CRISIS LINE SAME NUMBER, NEW NAME

The National Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline is now called the Veterans Crisis Line. Veterans and their families and friends are encouraged to call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 or access [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net) and click on Confidential LIVE CHAT to talk to a qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responder 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The Veteran Crisis Line and online chat is not just for suicide prevention. It's for whatever's got you down – chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, or even homelessness. A Veterans Crisis Line responder can provide support, day or night.



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# Where to find us! \* OPC = Outpatient Clinic

## VA Central California Health Care System

### VA Central California Health Care System

2615 E. Clinton Avenue  
 Fresno, CA 93703-2286  
 (559) 225-6100

### VA South Valley OPC

1050 North Cherry Street  
 Tulare, CA 93274  
 (559) 684-8703

### NEW Merced OPC

340 E. Yosemite Avenue  
 Merced, CA 95340  
 (209) 381-0105

### NEW VA Oakhurst CBOC

40597 Westlake Drive  
 Oakhurst, CA 93644  
 (559) 683-5300

## VA Northern California Health Care System

### VA Sacramento Medical Center

10535 Hospital Way  
 Mather, CA 95655  
 (916) 843-7000

### VA Martinez OPC

150 Muir Road  
 Martinez, CA 94553  
 (925) 372-2000

### VA Redding OPC

351 Hartnell Avenue  
 Redding, CA 95926  
 (530) 226-7555

### VA McClellan OPC

5342 Dudley Blvd.  
 McClellan Park, CA 95652-1074  
 (916) 561-7400

### VA Mare Island OPC

201 Walnut Ave.  
 Mare Island, CA 94592  
 (707) 562-8200

### Oakland Behavioral Health Clinic

525 21st Street  
 Oakland, CA 94612  
 (510) 587-3400

### VA Oakland OPC

2221 Martin Luther King Jr. Way  
 Oakland, CA 94612  
 (510) 267-7800

### VA Fairfield OPC

103 Bodin Circle, BLDG. 778  
 Travis AFB, CA 94535  
 (707) 437-1800

### VA Chico OPC

280 Cohasset Road  
 Chico, CA 95926  
 (530) 879-5000

### NEW VA Yreka Rural Clinic

101 E. Oberlin Road  
 Yreka, CA 96097  
 (530) 841-8500

### NEW Yuba City Outreach Clinic

1231 Plumas Street  
 Yuba City, CA 95991  
 (530) 751-8455

## VA Palo Alto Health Care System

### VA Palo Alto Division

3801 Miranda Avenue  
 Palo Alto, CA 94304-1290  
 (650) 493-5000

### VA Menlo Park Division

795 Willow Road  
 Menlo Park, CA 94025  
 (650) 493-5000

### VA Livermore Division

4951 Arroyo Road  
 Livermore, CA 94550  
 (925) 373-4700

### VA Capitola OPC

1350 N. 41st Street Suite 102  
 Capitola, CA 95010  
 (831) 464-5519

### VA Stockton OPC

500 W Hospital Road  
 Stockton, CA 95231  
 (209) 946-3400

### VA Modesto OPC

1524 McHenry Ave. Suite 315  
 Modesto, CA 95350  
 (209) 557-6200

### VA Monterey OPC

3401 Engineer Lane  
 Seaside, CA 93955  
 (831) 883-3800

### VA San Jose OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard  
 San Jose, CA 95119  
 (408) 363-3011

### VA Sonora OPC

13663 Mono Way  
 Sonora, CA 95370  
 (209) 588-2600

### VA Fremont OPC

39199 Liberty Street  
 Fremont, CA 94538  
 (510) 791-4001

## San Francisco VA Medical Center

4150 Clement Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94121-1598  
 (415) 221-4810

### Downtown S.F. VA OPC

401 3rd Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94107  
 (415) 281-5100

### VA Eureka OPC

714 F Street  
 Eureka, CA 95501  
 (707) 442-5335

### VA San Bruno OPC

1001 Sneath Lane  
 San Bruno, CA 94066  
 (650) 615-6000

### VA Santa Rosa OPC

3841 Brickway Blvd.  
 Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
 (707) 569-2300

### VA Ukiah OPC

630 Kings Court  
 Ukiah, CA 95482  
 (707) 468-7700

### Clearlake VA Clinic

15145 Lakeshore Drive  
 Clearlake, CA 95422  
 (707) 995-7200

## VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System

### Ioannis A. Lougaris VA Medical Center

11985 Locust Street  
 Reno, NV 89502-2597  
 (775) 786-7200

### VA Lahontan Valley OPC

345 West A Street  
 Fallon, NV 89406  
 (775) 428-6161

### VA Sierra Foothills OPC

11985 Heritage Oak Place  
 Suite #1  
 Auburn, CA 95603  
 (530) 889-0872

### VA Carson Valley OPC

925 Ironwood Drive, Suite 2102  
 Minden, NV 89423  
 (775) 786-7200 Ext. 4000

### NEW VA Diamond View OPC

110 Bella Way  
 Susanville, CA 96130  
 (530) 251-4550

## NEW Winnemucca Rural Outreach Clinic

Army 735 4th Street  
 Winnemucca, NV 89445  
 (877) 320-4990

## VA Pacific Islands Health Care System

### Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Center

459 Patterson Road  
 Honolulu, HI 96819  
 (808) 433-0600

### VA PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program

459 Patterson Road  
 Honolulu, HI 96819  
 (808) 433-0004

### VA Maui OPC

203 Ho'ohanna Street, Suite 303  
 Kahului, HI 96732  
 (808) 871-2454

### VA Hilo OPC

1285 Waiuanuenue Ave., Suite 211  
 Hilo, HI 96720  
 (808) 935-3781

### VA Kona OPC

75-377 Hualalai Road  
 Kailua-Kona, HI 96740  
 (808) 329-0774

### VA Kauai OPC

3-3367 Kuhio Hwy., Suite 200  
 Lihue, HI 96766  
 (808) 246-0497

### NEW VA Guam CBOC

498 Chalan Palasyo  
 Agaña Heights, Guam 96910  
 (671) 475-5760

### VA American Samoa OPC

Fitele Teo Army Reserve Building  
 Pago Pago, American Samoa 96799  
 (684) 699-3730

### NEW VA Lanai Outreach Clinic

628-B Seventh Street  
 Lanai City, HI 96763  
 (808) 565-6423

### NEW VA Saipan OPC

Marina Heights Business Park  
 P.O. Box 500938  
 Saipan, MP 96950  
 (670) 323-9000

### NEW Manila OPC

Seafront Compound  
 1501 Roxas Boulevard  
 1302 Pasay City, Philippines  
 (011) 632 833-4566