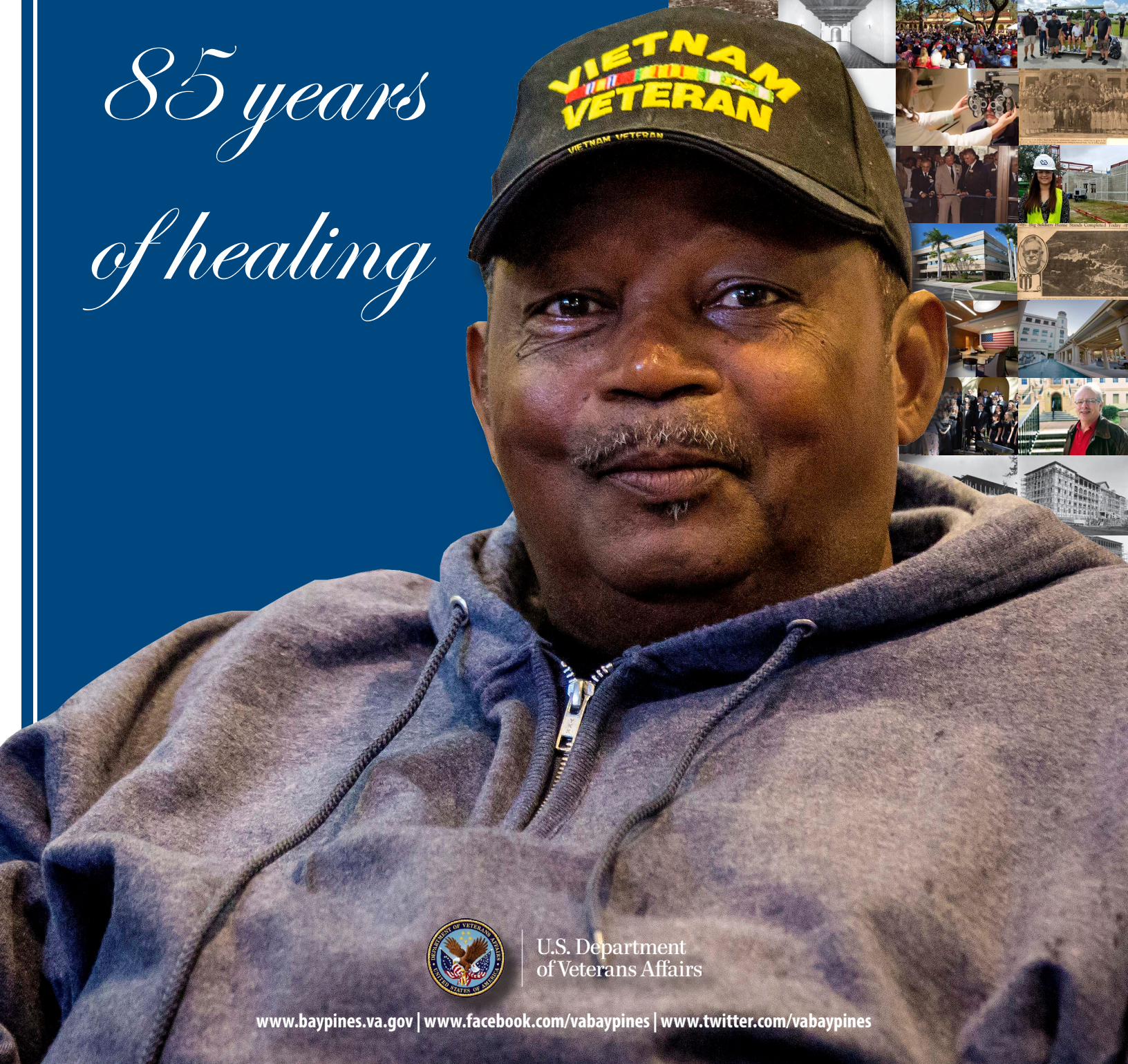


# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

BAY PINES VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

*85 years  
of healing*



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

[www.baypines.va.gov](http://www.baypines.va.gov) | [www.facebook.com/vabaypines](https://www.facebook.com/vabaypines) | [www.twitter.com/vabaypines](https://www.twitter.com/vabaypines)



## A Message to our Stakeholders

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System has a long and rich history of providing the very best health care services to America's Veterans. From our organization's humble beginning in 1933 as a National Soldiers Home for disabled volunteer service men and women to one of the largest and most complex VA healthcare systems in the country – our mission was and will always be "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."

By the time you get a copy of this publication, we will have already celebrated our 85th Anniversary – more than eight steadfast decades of service to America's Veterans. As you read through the pages of this report, you will notice that the content is organized under five distinct headings: quality, access, customer experience, employee engagement, and operational efficiency. Each heading is what we call a key business driver, and key business drivers are critical to us realizing our strategic objectives for the brave men and women we have the privilege and honor to serve each day. If you have not had the opportunity to read our full strategic plan, I encourage you to do so by visiting: [www.baypines.va.gov/fivestar.asp](http://www.baypines.va.gov/fivestar.asp).

From constructing new facilities like the beautiful new mental health center and cancer infusion clinic, to meeting and exceeding health care quality measures and improving access to care – we are determined to become a five-star organization recognized as a premiere provider of VA health care services in the country. While there is still much to do, we are making significant progress for America's heroes and delivering on our promise to provide the best care our Nation has to offer – America's Veterans deserve nothing less.

Please enjoy our 2017 annual report, and thank you for your continued support of the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System and the Veterans we serve across southwest Florida.

Sincerely,

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Executive Leadership Team



Suzanne M. Klinker  
Director



Kristine M. Brown  
Deputy Director



Dominique A. Thuriere, MD  
Chief of Staff



Teresa E. Kumar  
Associate Director,  
Patient Care Services



Jonathan S. Benoit  
Acting Asst. Director

## Our sites of Care



### Palm Harbor VA Community Clinic

35209 U.S. Highway 19 North | Palm Harbor, FL

Phone: 727-734-5276

Fax: 727-734-5914



### C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center

10000 Bay Pines Blvd. | Bay Pines, FL

Phone: 727-398-6661 | 888-820-0230



### St. Petersburg VA Community Clinic

840 Dr. MLK Jr. St. N. | St. Petersburg, FL

Phone: 727-502-1700

Fax: 727-502-1773



### Bradenton VA Community Clinic

5520 State Road 64, Suite 101 | Bradenton, FL

Phone: 941-721-0649

Fax: 941-721-6080



### Sarasota VA Community Clinic

5682 Bee Ridge Rd., Suite 100 | Sarasota, FL

Phone: 941-371-3349

Fax: 941-371-7749



### Sebring VA Community Clinic

5901 U.S. Highway 27 S. | Sebring, FL

Phone: 863-471-6227

Fax: 863-471-6510



### Port Charlotte VA Community Clinic

4161 Tamiami Trail, Suite 401 | Port Charlotte, FL

Phone: 941-235-2710

Fax: 941-235-2712



### Lee County Healthcare Center

2489 Diplomat Parkway E. | Cape Coral, FL

Phone: 239-652-1800

Fax: 239-652-1951

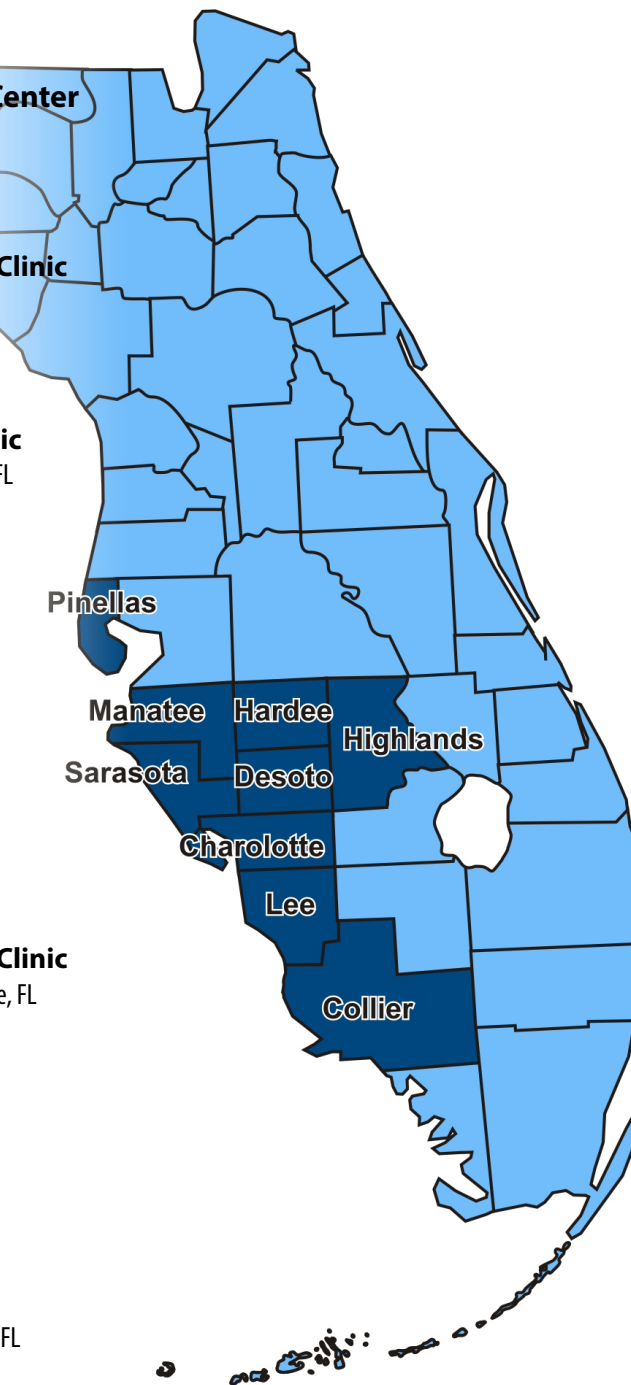


### Naples VA Community Clinic

2685 Horseshoe Drive S., Suite 101 | Naples, FL

Phone: 239-659-9188

Fax: 239-659-0526





## 2017 Operational Overview


The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System is a level 1a, tertiary care facility headquartered in Bay Pines, Fla. Originally opened in 1933, the medical center is located on 337 acres situated on the Gulf of Mexico approximately eight miles northwest of downtown Saint Petersburg, Fla. Co-located on the medical center campus are a VA Regional Office and National Cemetery. This area is part of Tampa Bay, the second most populated metropolitan area in the state. The healthcare system operates nine facilities to include the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center located in Bay Pines and outpatient clinics located in Bradenton, Cape Coral, Naples, Palm Harbor, Port Charlotte, Sarasota, St. Petersburg, and Sebring. In 2017, the organization served more than 110,000 Veterans patients while completing approximately 1.45 million outpatient visits (nearly 4,000 appointments per day). Ninety-eight percent of these appointments were completed within 30 days of the patients' preferred appointment dates (the date agreed upon between Veterans and their respective medical providers as medically appropriate given the type of medical condition). The medical center and its outpatient clinics serve Veterans residing in 10 counties covering about 9,000 square miles in central southwest Florida to include Charlotte, Collier, Desoto, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Lee, Manatee, Pinellas and Sarasota. About 185,000 eligible Veterans reside within the service area. About 66 percent of Veterans residing in the service area are enrolled for VA health care services.

### Our Accreditations

- The Joint Commission
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
- Commission on Cancer (only VA Medical Center in the state of Florida)
- American Psychological Assoc.
- American College of Radiology
- Commission on Dental Accreditation
- College of American Pathologists
- National Health Physics Program
- Food and Drug Administration
- American Assoc. of Blood Banks
- Assoc. for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care
- Assoc. for Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs

Total Employees: **4,309** 

Veterans Served: **110,292** 

Operating Beds: **397** 

Outpatient Visits: **1.45 million** (3,973 daily) 

### Veterans Served and Appointments Completed By Location:

<b>BAY PINES</b> <b>96,848</b> Veterans <b>759,437</b> Visits	<b>BRADENTON</b> <b>16,237</b> Veterans <b>80,806</b> Visits	<b>CAPE CORAL</b> <b>38,707</b> Veterans <b>310,702</b> Visits	<b>NAPLES</b> <b>7,470</b> Veterans <b>43,341</b> Visits	<b>PALM HARBOR</b> <b>7,607</b> Veterans <b>53,194</b> Visits
<b>PORT CHARLOTTE</b> <b>10,302</b> Veterans <b>65,744</b> Visits	<b>SARASOTA</b> <b>12,529</b> Veterans <b>78,383</b> Visits	<b>ST. PETERSBURG</b> <b>2,942</b> Veterans <b>24,302</b> Visits	<b>SEBRING</b> <b>4,095</b> Veterans <b>29,173</b> Visits	<i>Note: The sum of the site specific data exceeds the number of total Veterans served because Veterans are often seen at more than one facility within the healthcare system.</i>

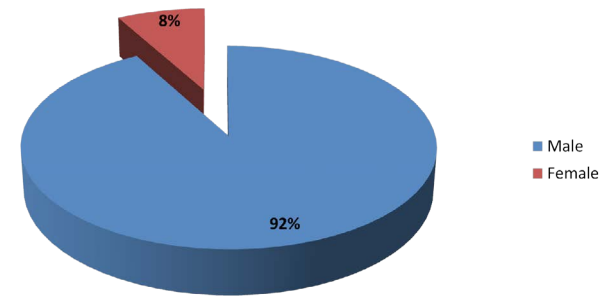
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET: **\$809,914,581**

 <b>MEDICAL CARE</b> <b>\$749,849,749</b>	 <b>EMPLOYEE PAYROLL</b> <b>\$434,872,377</b>	 <b>SUPPLIES &amp; SERVICES</b> <b>\$335,126,673</b>	 <b>MCCF COLLECTIONS*</b> <b>\$60,064,832</b>	 <b>CAPITAL ASSETS</b> <b>\$28,215,531</b>
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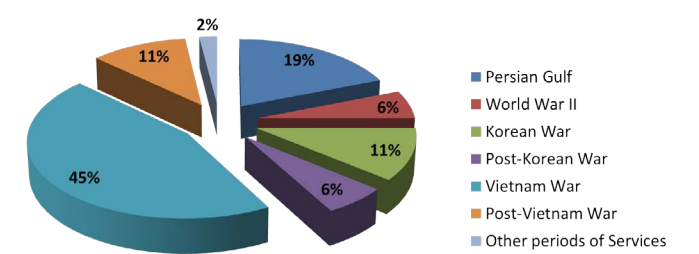
\*Funds collected by VA for co-payments and health insurance reimbursements which are returned to the healthcare system to provide services for Veterans.

## 2017 Workload

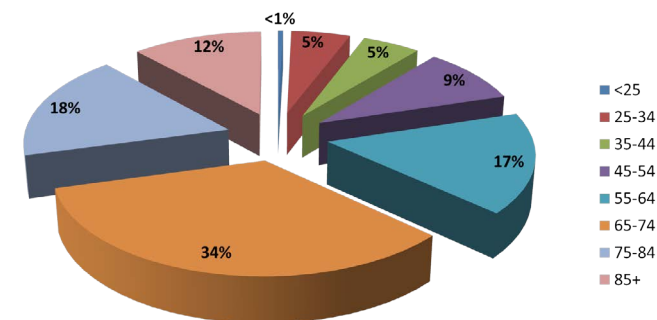
Veterans Served by Gender



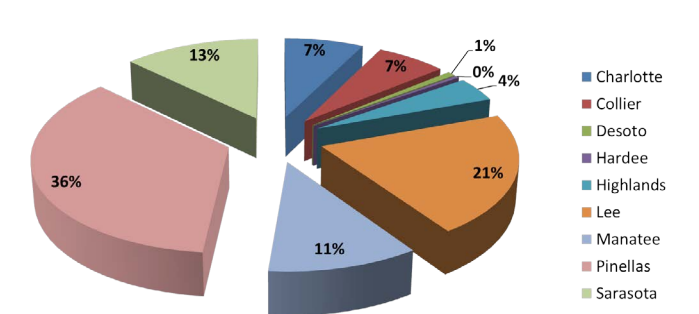
Veterans Served by Era of Service



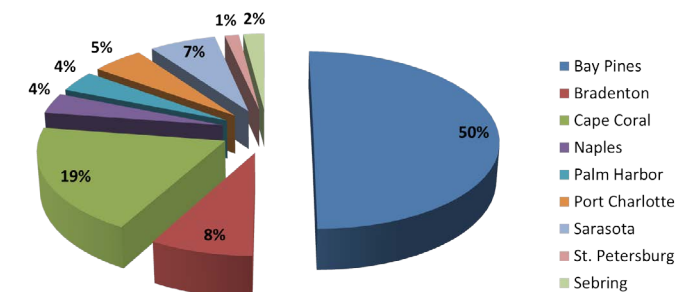
Veterans Served by Age



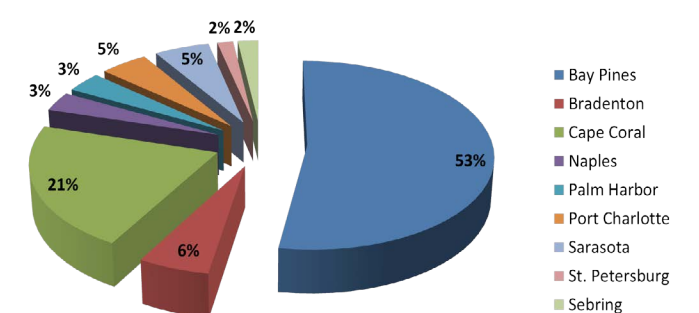
Veterans Using Bay Pines VAHCS by Home County



Veterans Served by Facility Location



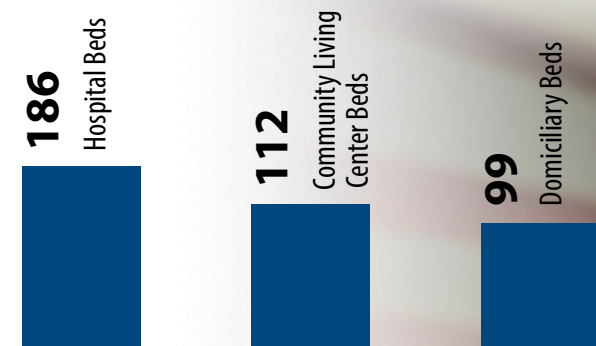
Outpatient Visits by Facility Location




## 2017 Workload

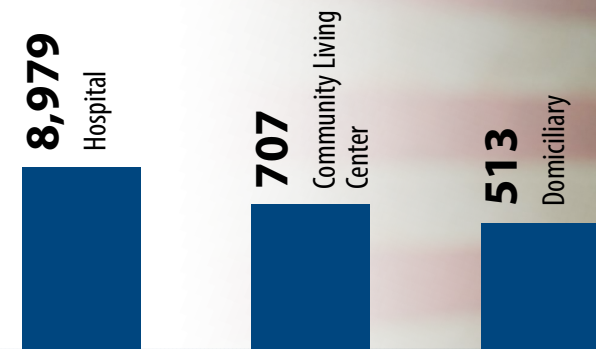
### Operating Beds: 397

 = 10



### Total Admissions: 10,199

 = 500



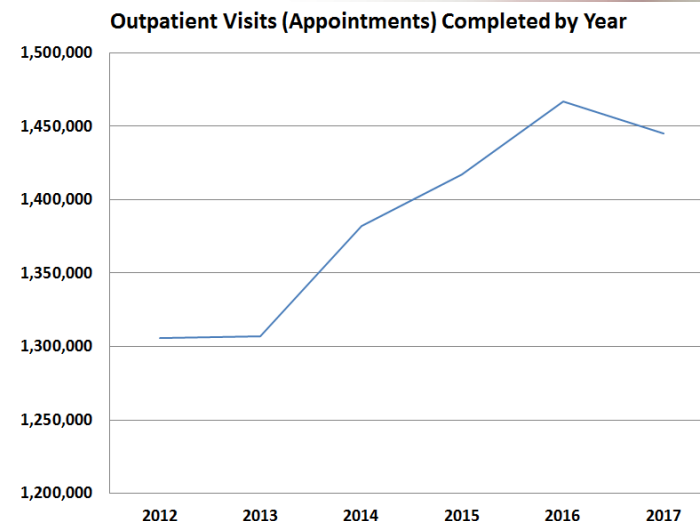
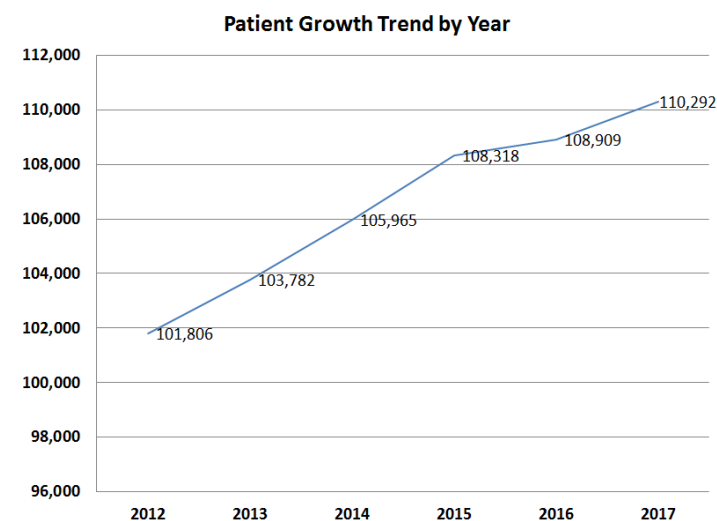
Emergency Department Visits  
**26,493**

Veterans Served by Mental Health  
**22,294**

Surgeries Performed  
**6,900**

Pharmacy Prescriptions Filled  
**2,045,148**

Inpatient Meals Served  
**465,298**



## Our Workforce

### WORKFORCE PROFILE

Total Employees	4,309
Veterans Employed	35%
Male	41%
Female	59%
Caucasian	66%
African-American	19%
Hispanic	8%
Asian	6%
Other	1%
Employees with Documented Disabilities	13%
Registered VA Volunteers*	1,160

\*Our volunteers logged more than 172,000 hours of service in 2017

### WORKFORCE SNAPSHOT

Nurses	1,403
Physicians	398
Social Work Staff	233
Pharmacy Staff	212
Mental Health Staff	206
Facilities Staff*	592

\*Includes Engineering, Environmental Management and Safety staff

*"I chose the VA for employment because I believe that my experience as a soldier has given me the fortitude needed to make a difference that I have always dreamed about making."*

**Jos Victor**  
Administrative Officer, Nutrition and Food Service  
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

# Quality

## Bay Pines recognized as a national leader in Patient Safety

Again in 2017, the Bay Pines VAHCS was recognized nationally as a Cornerstone Recognition Award gold winner by the VA National Center for Patient Safety (NCPS). The healthcare system was one of 115 VA facilities nationwide to receive recognition, and one of 111 that received the gold award. The award recognizes facilities for transparent incident reporting processes and for using root cause analyses (RCA) to improve health care delivery systems and patient safety. RCA is the process VA health care facilities use to improve the delivery of care by identifying prevention strategies to

mitigate health care-related adverse events or “close calls.” Our professionals consistently work to deliver safe, effective, and high-quality care to Veterans who choose Bay Pines as their trusted health care provider. The Cornerstone achievement is the result of a culture of safety, transparency and open communication. This was the eighth consecutive year the healthcare system was recognized as a gold winner.



### Understanding VA's Star Rating System

VHA uses a comprehensive performance improvement tool called Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) that includes key metrics used by the private sector as well as additional metrics that are important for addressing access to care, quality of mental health care, employee perception about the organization, nursing turnover and efficiency. The metrics are organized into nine quality domains and one efficiency and capacity domain. The Quality domains are combined to represent overall Quality. Each VA medical center is assessed for overall Quality from two perspectives: relative performance compared to other VA medical centers using a star rating system from 1 to 5 and improvement compared to its own performance from the past year. Both relative performance and size of improvement are used to focus improvement efforts. Throughout 2017, the Bay Pines VAHCS's overall star rating was **3 out of 5** and showing improvement. As stated in our strategic plan, our goal is to be a 5-Star facility in health care quality and customer satisfaction. You can read our strategic plan at: [www.baypines.va.gov/fivestar.asp](http://www.baypines.va.gov/fivestar.asp).



### Health Care Quality Matters

As consumers of VA health care services, it is important for Veterans to know how Bay Pines stacks up against hospitals and healthcare systems in the private sector. The good news is that Bay Pines not only has a reputation for being one of the most beautiful VA campuses in the nation, we also outperform private sector hospitals in our region in many different quality areas to include, but not limited to:

- Overall rating of hospital
- Rates of wound splits after surgery on the abdomen/pelvis
- Postoperative sepsis rate
- Postoperative hip fracture rate
- Rates of deaths with serious treatable complications after surgery
- Catheter-related bloodstream infection rate
- Pressure ulcer rate
- Serious blood clots after surgery

We use traditional quality benchmarks set by the health care industry, and often set our quality standards at a higher level. You can read more about VA quality of care and published data at [www.accesstocare.va.gov](http://www.accesstocare.va.gov).

### Providing exceptional care to older Veterans

For four straight years, the Bay Pines VAHCS has achieved “Exemplar” status for the Nurses Improving Care for Healthsystem Elders (NICHE) program. NICHE is the premier designation indicating a hospital's commitment to excellence in the care of patients 65-years-and-older. Of the 700 facilities with NICHE designation, only 84 carry the NICHE Exemplar status. Of these 84 facilities, Bay Pines VAHCS is the only VA facility with this designation.





## Bay Pines Saving Lives with New Hepatitis C Treatments

Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms with nearly every known human illness. The age old question “why am I so tired” can often be answered by observing one or more personal habits, routines or overall lifestyle. Other times, fatigue can be a sign of something much more serious – even life threatening – like Hepatitis C.

In 2005, former U.S. Navy rescue diver Peter Harbachuck started feeling progressively tired, lethargic and weak. Even with increased sleep and an improved diet, nothing seemed to help.

“I felt so tired all the time,” Peter recalled. “It felt like I had the flu or something, and it just wasn’t going away.”

Peter’s wife Annie watched her husband’s condition continue to deteriorate and noticed some red flags.

With some encouragement from his wife, he agreed to see his primary care doctor and was tested for Hepatitis C. The results came back positive and the virus had already caused extensive damage to Peter’s liver.

At the time of his diagnosis, and because of his condition, he could not be successfully treated and faced the possibility of premature death. This fear would soon

*“The treatment was an absolute gift. I felt so good for Peter. The light in his eyes seemed to shine brighter, and now we have the opportunity to move forward.”*

*- Annie Harbachuck, wife of U.S. Navy Veteran Peter Harbachuck*

subside with the advent of new antiviral medications that effectively cure the disease.

In 2014, after decades of research and development, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved several new medication therapies. Many more have been developed since and have been effectively shown to cure 95 to 99 percent of patients with little or no side effects.

The typical treatment regimen requires patients to take one pill a day for 12 weeks. While treatment for a non-Veteran can cost up to \$80,000, Veterans enrolled for VA health care receive the medications at no cost or pay an \$8-9 co-pay for each 1-month supply.



Former U.S. Navy rescue diver Peter Harbachuck and his wife Annie visit with Dr. Joseph Hong, Hepatology Pharmacy Program Manager, at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Peter is one of about 1,000 Veterans treated by the Bay Pines who have been cured of Hepatitis C due to new treatment options.

In September 2015, Peter was the first Bay Pines VAHCS patient treated with Daclatasvir, a newer medication approved by the FDA in July 2015. Daclatasvir is one of several medications available to Veterans enrolled for VA health care who require Hepatitis C treatment.

After being on the medication only four weeks, the virus could no longer be detected in Peter’s body. The result was the same after he completed the full twelve weeks of treatment. He was cured.

“I got a new lease on life. Praise the lord, you know?” Peter said, reflecting on the outcome of his treatment. “I can’t even describe the feeling. It was like hitting the lottery or something,” he said.

“The treatment was an absolute gift. I felt so good for Peter. The light in his eyes seemed to shine brighter, and now we have the opportunity to move forward,” Annie said.

Peter is one of more than 1,600 Veterans successfully treated by the Bay Pines VAHCS with one of the new medications. A simple test today could mean living a much longer, healthier life tomorrow. Veterans with questions on testing or evaluation of Hepatitis C are encouraged to contact their Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) or visit [www.hepatitis.va.gov](http://www.hepatitis.va.gov).

### Hepatitis C testing and treatment quick stats

**4,000+** Veterans born between 1945 - 1965 screened for Hep C in 2017

**1,669** Veterans had received new Hepatitis treatments by the end of 2017

**78%** of the Bay Pines VAHCS’s patient population at the highest risk for Hep C has been treated

## Quality

### #BeThere for Veterans

Supporting the Veteran or Service member in your life who's going through a difficult time does not have to be complicated. We can all play a role in preventing suicide. Join the U.S. Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense in spreading the word that preventing suicide starts with this simple act: Be There. Helping someone feel included and supported can make a big difference during a challenging time. Small acts — calling an old friend, checking in on a neighbor, or inviting a colleague on a walk — are all thoughtful ways to show someone you care. Visit [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/SpreadTheWord) to download free materials and to learn how you and your community can help prevent suicide. If you notice warning signs in yourself or a Veteran loved one, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat), or text 838255 to get confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

**Veterans  
Crisis Line**



1-800-273-8255  
PRESS 1

### Enhancing Suicide Prevention Awareness

Veteran suicide prevention is a top priority VA, and we empower and remind our staff that there is no wrong door to VA health care for a Veteran in crisis. In 2017, our suicide prevention team conducted 75 training events for staff to ensure all employees were equipped with the basic skills and knowledge to effectively assist Veterans in crisis. In addition to internal training opportunities for staff, the team conducted or participated in 113 outreach/training events in the community with external partners like local police departments, colleges, high schools, military organizations, local and national conferences, and town hall meetings. Our suicide prevention team is currently comprised of five individuals, however, a plan is in place to hire six more staff members. In the summer of 2017, we also launched a robust communication campaign intended to engage the community in suicide prevention awareness starting with a discussion among members of the Pinellas County Veterans Community Engagement Board - a group of community leaders who aim to bridge the gap between VA and local resources. The initial discussion resulted in a robust communication campaign which included community meetings, media coverage, social media, employee communications, and print product development - namely a Veterans resource card that was distributed to local law enforcement partners. Police officers give the card to Veterans they come into contact with during daily operations. On the front side of the card, the Veterans Crisis Line is prominently displayed along with contact information for important services like mental health, homeless programs and shelters, Vet Centers, and more.

Veteran suicide touches everyone - families, friends, those of us at VA, community first responders, and our communities. We urge our community partners, family members, friends and others to help Veterans connect to VA health care services. If you know a Veteran who needs help, please help us help them by connecting them with us by letting them know that help is available 24/7.

### Using Data to Identify Veterans at Risk

In April 2017, VA launched a new initiative called Recovery Engagement and Coordination for Health - Veterans Enhanced Treatment (REACH VET). Using a new predictive model, REACH VET analyzes existing data from Veterans' health records to identify those at a statistically elevated risk for suicide, hospitalization, illness or other adverse outcomes. This allows us to provide preemptive care and support. On average, about 100 Veterans within our healthcare system fall within the top 0.1 percent risk stratum (which is what REACH VET targets) each month. Staff review care plans and reach out to these Veterans to discuss any unmet care needs, in some cases before a Veteran even has suicidal thoughts.

## Gun safety matters...because no one can unfire a firearm.

For someone in crisis, a locked firearm can mean the difference between a tragic outcome and a life saved. Though many Veterans are well-versed in gun safety, all Veterans and their families should understand how to properly handle and store firearms in the home.

Firearms - along with poisonings, motor vehicle crashes, falls, and suffocations - are the top five leading causes of injury-related deaths nationwide. Firearms are found in roughly 34 percent of homes nationwide. The risk of unintentional firearm deaths among youths drops by 80 percent when guns and ammunition are stored separately in a lockbox.

These simple steps can keep Veterans and their loved ones safe:

- Make sure firearms cannot be accessed by children and unauthorized adults by keeping guns locked and unloaded when not in use.
- Store ammunition separately from firearms and out of reach of children and unauthorized adults.
- Regularly reassess steps to ensure safe storage and use of firearms, especially during periods of increased stress or emotional crisis.

Veterans and their loved ones can request a gunlock at no cost from our suicide prevention team by calling 727-398-6661, extension 14226.



# Help prevent suicide.

Learn how to be there for the Veteran or Service member in your life.

**VeteransCrisisLine.net**

## Did You Know?

The Bay Pines VAHCS operates one of the VA's premiere residential Military Sexual Trauma (MST) programs. First established in 2000, the Bay Pines Center for Sexual Trauma Services (CSTS) is a 16-bed program that serves an equal number male and female patients. Veterans are admitted from all over the country and receive evidence-based psychotherapies for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD as well as gender-specific interventions) and other therapeutic modalities to treat the unique aspects of MST-related PTSD. Approximately 100 Veterans go through the program each year and the average length of stay is 6-8 weeks.

All treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to MST is provided at no cost to Veterans. This includes outpatient, inpatient, residential, and pharmaceutical treatment. Veterans may be able to receive free MST-related care even if they are not eligible for other VA care. For example, there are no length of service or income requirements to receive MST-related care.

To learn more, visit: [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mst-home.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/mst-home.asp), or call the Bay Pines VAHCS MST Coordinator at 727-398-6661, ext. 17170.

## Providing Legal Support for Veterans in Need

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS), in collaboration with Bay Area Legal Services, and Stetson University College of Law's Veterans Law Institute, launched a new Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) program on February 1, 2017. The program is designed specifically for Veterans enrolled for care with the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (some exceptions may apply) who are in need of legal representation or consultation for non-criminal offenses, who may not otherwise be able to afford legal representation. Services are provided to eligible Veterans by MLP attorneys at no cost. Eligibility is determined by financial need. Legal services available include: family law, housing, consumer, bankruptcy, advanced directives, licensing, sealing/expungement, and VA benefits assistance. In 2017, more than 700 Veterans were assisted through the Bay Pines VAHCS MLP program. Studies show that patients are more effectively able to address their health care needs when not burdened by legal troubles. The new program is one way we are removing barriers and improving access to health care services for the Veterans we serve across southwest Florida. To learn more, visit: [www.baypines.va.gov/services/mlp.asp](http://www.baypines.va.gov/services/mlp.asp).

## Health Care Equality for All Veterans

Again in 2017, the Bay Pines VAHCS was recognized as a "Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality" by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation, the educational arm of the country's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization. This was the fifth consecutive year Bay Pines was recognized with this achievement. The findings were part of HRC Foundation's Healthcare Equality Index, a unique annual survey that encourages equal care for LGBT Americans, and recognizes healthcare institutions doing the best work. A record 590 healthcare facilities actively participated in the 2017 survey. Of those facilities, about 45 were VA medical centers.

The Bay Pines VAHCS earned top marks in meeting non-discrimination and training criteria that demonstrate its commitment to equitable, inclusive care for LGBT patients, and their families, who can face significant challenges in securing the quality health care and respect they deserve. The designation received from the HRC demonstrates our commitment to equitable, inclusive care for all Veterans and aligns with our strategic goal of becoming a 5-star organization in healthcare quality and customer service.

To learn more about the Human Rights Campaign and the Healthcare Equality Index survey, visit [www.hrc.org/hej](http://www.hrc.org/hej).

## New Mental Health Center Opens for Veterans

The Bay Pines VAHCS is taking active steps to modernize and improve its facilities, programs, and services for the more than 110,000 Veterans who seek care from the organization. In 2017, the healthcare system started or completed several key projects and initiatives aimed at improving health care delivery and access to care. The most substantial and visible project on the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center campus is the new 155,000 square foot Mental Health Center. The new facility features a wide array of inpatient, outpatient, and residential services for Veterans seeking mental health care. The facility opened to serve Veterans in September 2017. The new facility brought together the majority of mental health programs and services (inpatient, outpatient, and residential) together into one location. Outpatient and Residential services are currently operational within the new facility. The psychiatric inpatient unit (located on the third floor) is expected to activate in early summer 2018.



### Making Health Care More Convenient

We know that attending a health care appointment can be difficult - especially when you have a full-time job or other responsibilities that consume the majority of your day. As an added convenience for Veterans, we offer extended appointment hours for patients who require primary care, mental health, and other select services. Extended hours services are available Wednesday mornings and evenings, as well as Saturdays at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center, Lee County Healthcare Center, Bradenton CBOC, Sarasota CBOC, and Port Charlotte CBOC. Hours and services available vary by location. Veterans are encouraged to talk to their assigned PACT team if interested in scheduling an appointment at one of our extended hours clinics.



### Unfettered Access to Health Care Services

In 2017, the Bay Pines VAHCS completed 1.45 million outpatient appointments across nine sites of care. About 98 percent of these appointments were completed within 30 days of the patient indicated date (the date determined by a Veteran and his or her health care provider appropriate for an appointment based on type of care required, urgency, and other factors). This is better than the national and regional averages. A large part of our success in providing timely, accessible health care services to Veterans is due to our continued focus on resource optimization, staffing, and removing barriers for Veterans seeking care through same day or next day clinics. We offer same day and next days services in primary care, mental health, cardiology, audiology, and chiropractic. In addition, Veterans who request services in audiology, optometry, podiatry, and nutrition can call to be scheduled directly without a consult from their primary care provider. Amputee patients who need power wheel chair assessment can also call directly for needed services without a consult. We have also made it easier for Veterans to schedule and cancel appointments through a new app called VAR, or the Veterans Appointment Request. To learn more about VAR as well as other apps, visit the VA app store at: <https://mobile.va.gov/>.

### Expanding Community Based Outpatient Clinics

In October 2016, we entered into a new 10-year lease agreement that will relocate the Naples Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) from its current location at 2685 Horseshoe Drive South to 800 Goodlette Road North. The new building is more than double the size of the existing clinic and is expected to open in summer 2018. All health care services currently available at the Naples CBOC will transition to the new facility. When open, the new clinic will provide a patient-centered environment and spacious accommodations for both Veterans and staff. It is an excellent location for us to deliver high quality VA health care services in a comfortable setting.



### How long do Veterans wait for care?

In 2017, our appointment wait times were in single digit days with the exception of specialty care appointments for new patients (Veterans new to a particular specialty care clinic). Here are the numbers:

#### Ave. wait times for return patients\*

Primary Care  
**3 Days**

Mental Health  
**3 Days**

Specialty Care  
**4 Days**

#### Ave. wait times for new patients\*

Primary Care  
**9 Days**

Mental Health  
**4 Days**

Specialty Care  
**11 Days**

In addition, more than **91 percent of Veterans reported they were satisfied** with their appointment wait times at our VetLink kiosk system.

\*Data current as quarter 4, FY2017. Wait time averages regularly fluctuate.

# Access

## Using Technology to Improve Access to Care for Veterans

Virtual Care uses a combination of communication technologies, health informatics and disease management practices to make health care more convenient and accessible for Veterans, and to help keep them healthier. There are various Virtual Care modalities available to Veterans enrolled for care within our healthcare system. These modalities include various forms of Telehealth (Clinical Video, Home, and Store-and-Forward), VA Video Connect, Secure Messaging available through My HealtheVet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)), and electronic consultations. In 2017, about 60 percent of Veterans actively seeking care within the Bay Pines VAHCS used some form of Virtual Care. In 2012, less than 19 percent of Veterans participated in our Virtual Care program.

Our most popular form of Virtual Care is secure messaging available through the award winning My HealtheVet online portal. Secure Messaging enables Veterans to compose and send messages to their VA care team about non-urgent health care concerns, appointment requests, medication refills, questions and more.

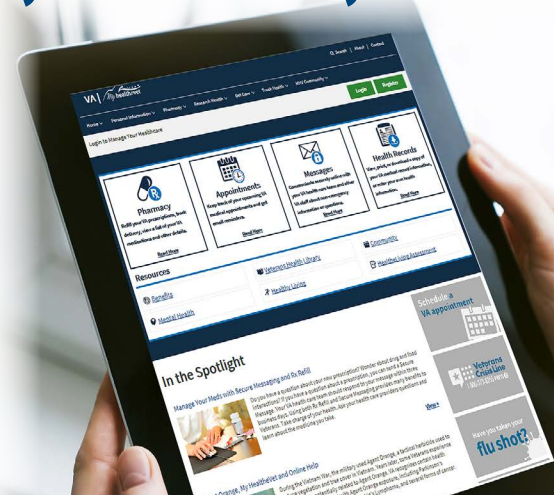
Another unique and growing Virtual Care modality is Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT). CVT allows for Veterans to connect directly with healthcare providers using video-conferencing technologies. Video-conferencing equipment is one of the most common forms of

technologies used in synchronous telehealth. There are also peripheral devices that can be attached to computers or the video-conferencing equipment which can aid in an interactive examination. In 2017, we delivered 29 different specialty health care services to Veterans using CVT ranging from simple nutrition counseling services to genomic care, mental health, and surgical consultations.

Lastly, VA's newest Virtual Care tool, VA Video Connect, is an application that connects Veterans with their health care team from anywhere, using encryption to ensure a secure and private session. The app makes VA health care more convenient and reduces travel times for Veterans, especially those in very rural areas with limited access to VA health care facilities, and it allows quick and easy health care access from any mobile or web-based device. VA Video Connect was used on a limited basis by the Bay Pines VAHCS in 2017, but plans are in place to expand the use of the technology in 2018 and beyond. To learn more about VA Video Connect, please visit: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>.



## My HealtheVet by the Numbers



Total Number of MHV Users

**63,841**

Veterans Using Secure Messaging

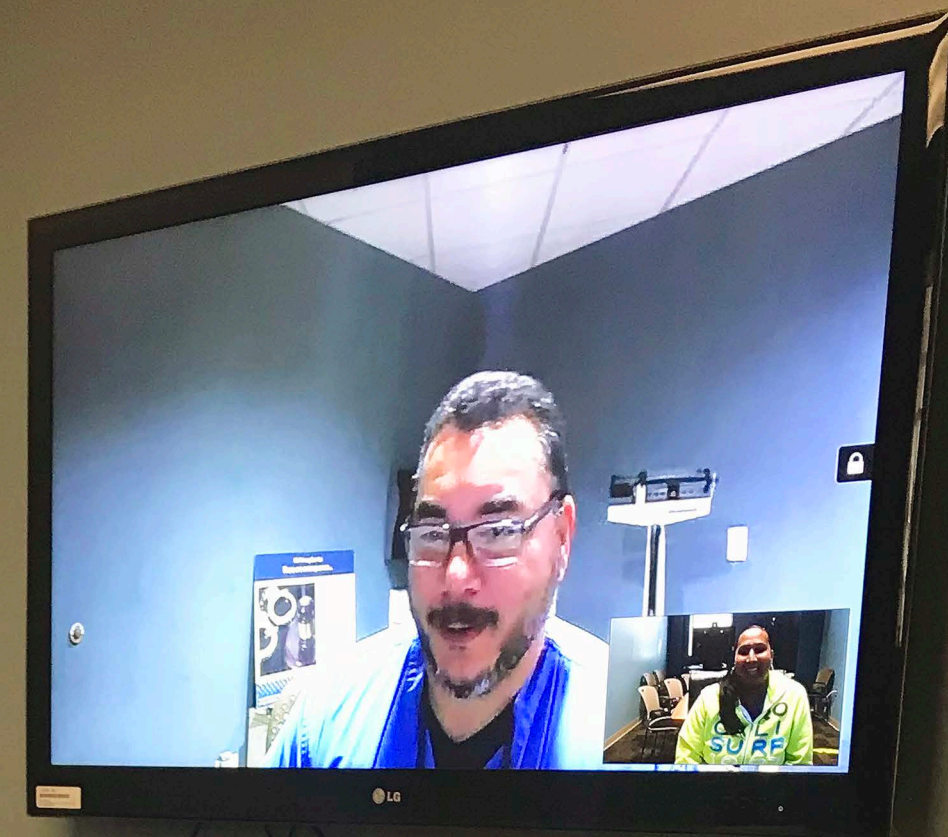
**48,554**

Number of Messages Exchanged

**117,131**

Number of Rx Refills since 2009

**100,000,000+**



### Veterans Using Virtual Care by Modality (2017)

Clinical Video Telehealth	2,688
Home Telehealth	1,922
Store and Forward Telehealth	3,514
Electronic Consultations	8,086
My HealtheVet Secure Messaging	48,544



## Positive Customer Feedback

In 2017, we experienced a tremendous amount of feedback from Veterans, their loved ones, and other stakeholders from an array of systems available to capture “the voice of the customer.” Included in this feedback were nearly 2,000 compliments. To put this into perspective, in 2012 the Bay Pines VAHCS received a total of just 104 compliments all year. The number of compliments received today versus just five years ago is remarkable. What does this mean? This means we are doing a better job today communicating with Veterans and making available appropriate systems for our Veterans to voice feedback. We take feedback from Veterans very seriously and make every effort to take appropriate action to resolve concerns and improve the Veteran experience.

# Customer Experience

## Patient Ambassadors Enhance Veteran Experience

The Bay Pines VAHCS is focused on providing a positive first impression by demonstrating a culture of care, and making the Veteran experience one where individualized personal assistance and information is readily available.

One way we are achieving this is through our new Patient Ambassador initiative. Launched in 2017, the new program is a volunteer-led activity concentrated on improving service through patient greeting and navigation. Volunteers donned in red vests greet and guide Veterans and their loved ones who may need assistance with things like finding the location of a scheduled appointment or another area of the facility. The volunteers are also equipped to answer general questions and direct Veterans to various resources. Patient ambassadors are currently available at both the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center located in Bay Pines and the Lee County Healthcare Center located in Cape Coral.

The Patient Ambassador initiative builds on existing programs developed by the healthcare system’s Patient Centered Care Council – the Patient Navigator/Greeter program and Ready Informed Dedicated Employees (RIDE) program. Both existing programs are similar in nature, and aim to improve customer satisfaction. The Patient Navigator/Greeter program was developed to create a welcoming environment and provide wayfinding support. Also led by volunteers, the program is intended to enhance experience by lending a helping hand or welcoming smile, while connecting Veterans and visitors with resources at information desks, or with the volunteer escort program.

The RIDE program is employee-led and increases opportunities for employees to engage with Veterans outside their normal work space. The goal of the program is to enhance the Veteran’s level of satisfaction by delivering a seamless, integrated and responsive health care experience utilizing trained staff. All of our Veteran-centric programs are designed to make a positive difference in the lives of the men and women we serve. At the end of the day, our goal is to not only delivery of the best care our nation has to offer, but to also provide a five star customer experience. The Veterans we serve deserve nothing less,.



## Wi-Fi Services Available at the Medical Center

In early 2017, we launched complimentary wireless internet, or Wi-Fi services, for Veterans and visitors at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. The service is available in the main hospital building (building 100), mental health center (building 111), and Community Living Center (building 101/71). Inspired by an Orlando VA Medical Center Innovations team design and the Bay Pines VAHCS Strategic Plan, the new Wi-Fi service allows Veterans and guests with internet-enabled smart phones, tablets and laptops to stay in touch with family and friends during outpatient visits and hospital stays. They can read (and send) e-mail messages, access social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, or just surf the internet. Similar to what’s used in private hospitality venues, the Wi-Fi network is high speed and secure. However, guests are cautioned not to use it to transmit sensitive data such as health information, social security numbers, credit card information and other confidential transactions. The second phase of our Wi-Fi project will expand services to other buildings on campus and also to some of our community clinics, starting with the Lee County Healthcare Center.



# Customer Experience

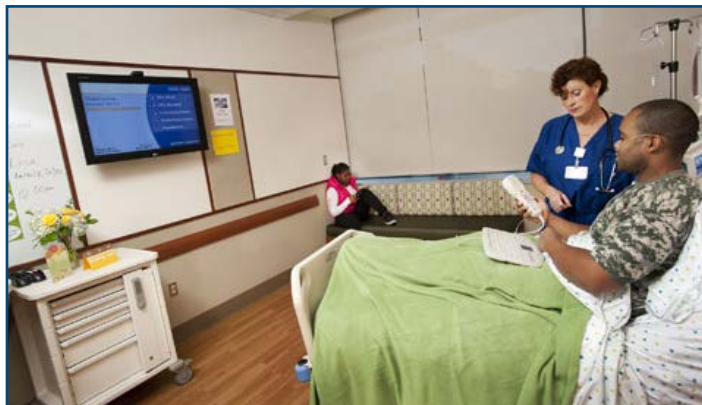
## Providing a Home-Like Hospital Environment for Veterans

We are currently in the process of significant inpatient ward renovations at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. Ward 3D was the first to undergo complete reconstruction from a 40 bed ward to an all new 24 bed patient-centered environment with private and semi-private rooms, and the latest medical equipment. The unit was activated in May 2016. Complete renovation of ward 5D is also complete. Like 3D, the unit features private and semi-private rooms and is fully equipped to treat patients who require telemetry and bedside dialysis. The remaining wards will go through similar renovations over the next several years. Inpatient renovations are part of several ongoing construction projects occurring at the medical center aimed to improve health care quality, health care access and the overall customer experience.



## Five Star Hospitality: “My time dining” room service

The early development of a plan to begin offering room service dining for hospitalized Veterans at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center is underway. This will include a “my time dining” concept that will provide Veterans the option to order preferred meals and delivery time via telephone or from a virtual menu and ordering system at the bedside. Virtual ordering will be made available using the healthcare system’s existing Interactive Patient Care (IPC) System. Using an in-room television that is transformed at their bedsides, hospitalized Veterans using the IPC receive customized health education as well as information on hospital services, medications, patient safety and pain management, and dynamic, on-line entertainment including Internet access, television programming, movies, video games and music. The tool also allows staff to collect patient feedback in real-time to ensure Veterans needs are tended to immediately. The IPC system is currently installed in 164 medical/surgical inpatient rooms in the medical center. While a specific timeframe for the rollout of the room service component has not yet been announced, it will be a wonderful Veteran-centered addition to IPC.



## Building a “one stop shop” for cancer care and treatment

On the north side of the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center campus, a new 17,375 square foot cancer infusion/chemotherapy center is starting to take shape. The new state-of-the-art facility will augment the medical center’s existing radiation oncology clinic. Features of the new building will include eight additional treatment stations, which equates to a 50 percent increase to available chemotherapy treatment stations at the medical center. The building will also have a standalone compounding pharmacy for patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment. This unique feature will give Veterans the opportunity to receive the majority of their cancer care and medications in one location versus traveling to various locations across campus. Construction is expected to be complete in summer 2018. The Bay Pines VAHCS is the only VA health care facility in the state of Florida accredited by the Commission on Cancer. We have been accredited continuously since 1995.



## I CARE Values in Action

Since 2015, the Bay Pines VAHCS Director has sent weekly email messages to staff as part of the ongoing I CARE Values in action series. Each email highlights an employee or group of employees who demonstrate commitment to VA's core values of integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence. Each email is individually written based on feedback received from Veterans and staff who witness our dedicated professionals going above and beyond the call of duty for each other, and more importantly, the Veterans we serve.



## Employee Engagement

### Building a Stronger Workforce through Relationship Building

In January 2017, the Bay Pines VAHCS rolled out a new nationally developed program called VA Voices. The two-day training program is available to all employees. Its goal is to build connections and to develop the interpersonal focus and skills required to operate effectively in a health care system that utilizes a team-based care delivery model aimed at engaging Veterans in personalized, proactive, patient-driven care. Often, employees of large health care organizations focus on individual work assignments and spend little time working on interpersonal relationships and effective team building strategies that ultimately benefit patients. VA Voices addresses this gap head on by giving employees the opportunity to break away from their individual work groups to gain a better understanding of



themselves and individual values while sharing stories and experiences. In 2017, we held eight classes with a total of 415

participants and rapidly became known throughout the Veterans Health Administration for the program implementation. The bottom line is that a stronger, more connected workforce directly contributes to increased productivity, improved health care outcomes, and ultimately higher levels of patient satisfaction. VA Voices is one way we are achieving that end.

### Shaping the Hearts and Minds of Future Health Care Professionals

Education is the foundation for developing the hearts and minds of teachers and students who dedicate themselves to delivering safe, effective, high-quality health care services to America's Veterans. In addition to delivering the very best care our Nation has to offer, the Bay Pines VAHCS is also a teaching institution. We actively maintain more than 200 academic affiliation agreements with institutions of higher learning all over the country. In 2017, hundreds of students rotated through our facilities to learn from some of the best professionals in the country. From medical students, aspiring pharmacists, and mental health students to dietetic interns, nursing students and even prospective engineers, we are honored to be part of the education mission while providing future professionals exposure to the most noble mission in government.

### Academic Partners and Affiliations

Medical Residents  
**202**

Clinical Rotations Completed  
**350+**

Clinical Students Trained  
**580**

#### Top Medical and Nursing Affiliations

University of Central Florida  
University of South Florida  
St. Petersburg College  
South University

Active Academic Affiliations  
**217**



# Operational Efficiency

## Green Environmental Management

VA health care facilities are required to develop and maintain Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and to promote good environmental stewardship. The Bay Pines VAHCS operates a robust GEMS program as well as a GEMS committee. The committee is a multidisciplinary team of clinical and administrative experts who focus on green environmental management projects and initiatives. The overall goal of the program is to prevent pollution and minimize waste across the healthcare system while meeting or exceeding regulatory standards. Examples of activities that fall within GEMS include, but are not limited to:

- Recycling: cardboard, batteries, oil, lamps, paper, aluminum, electronics, wood pallets, metals and many other items
- Pollution Prevention such as green purchasing, chemical substitution and use of green cleaning chemicals where feasible.
- Proper waste segregation to maximize pollution prevention.

For more information about the Bay Pines VAHCS GEMS program, visit [www.baypines.va.gov](http://www.baypines.va.gov) or call 727-398-6661, extension 17105.

## Focus on Environmental Sustainability

For the second straight year, the Bay Pines VAHCS was one of 75 Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities nationwide recognized as a "Partner for Change" by Practice Greenhealth, the Nation's leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in health care. The award announcement was made during Practice Greenhealth's annual awards ceremony in May 2017 where VHA facilities earned more than 180 honors for efforts ranging from energy reduction to green building design, as well as long term commitments to healthier environments. The award recognizes health care facilities that continuously improve and expand upon programs to eliminate mercury, reduce and recycle waste, source products sustainably, and more. Winning facilities, like the Bay Pines VAHCS, must demonstrate that they are recycling at least 15 percent of their total waste, have reduced regulated medical waste, are on track to eliminate mercury, and have developed successful sustainability initiatives in various program areas. The national recognition demonstrates our efforts to create a better environment of care for Veterans while maintaining a healthy environment in the communities in which we operate.

## Improving Processes through Systems Redesign

The Bay Pines VAHCS operates a specialized Systems Redesign program focused on process improvement and increasing operational efficiency across the organization. Process improvement activities are accomplished through the application of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) performance improvement principles and tools. LSS is a combination of two highly effective improvement disciplines used in all types of industries including health care. In 2017, we completed 24 system-wide process improvement projects using LSS. Some of the more notable projects included:

- A flow project in Emergency Department resulted in reduction of time to admit patients to acute inpatients beds by 20 minutes (152 minutes to 132 minutes).
- A project to streamline the inpatient echocardiogram process resulted in a reduction of time between completion of the order and when the report was read. Prior to the new process, 23% of echocardiograms were taking >48 hours. Post-project, only 8% are taking greater than 48 hours.
- A project to improve care coordination of Veterans with head and neck cancers reduced the time between diagnosis and treatment by 13 days (40 days to 27 days).



Nathan Rivers, Sustainability Officer and Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) Committee member, Bay Pines VAHCS, poses for a picture with Dr. Dominique A. Thuriere, Chief of Staff, during a monthly staff meeting at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center in June 2017. During the meeting, Dr. Thuriere announced that the Bay Pines VAHCS received national recognition as a "Partner for Change" by Practice Greenhealth, the nation's leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in health care.

**Bay Pines VA Healthcare System 2017 Annual Report**  
United States Department of Veterans Affairs

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