



Quarterly Newsletter For Veterans and Stakeholders

SUMMER 2021

Upcoming Events

July

- July 3: CurveFest at Curve Stadium
- July 8: VA Night at the Altoona Curve Stadium
- July 21: Arts Altoona Pop-Up Event at Main Campus
- July 26: Huntingdon County Food Share at VFW Memorial Field

August

- August 3: Somerset County Rural Veteran Outreach at VFW Post 7457
- August 3: National Night Out Against Crime in Downtown Altoona
- August 17: Annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony at Curve Stadium
- August 30: Huntingdon County Food Share at VFW Memorial Field

September

- September 23: Somerset Senior Expo 2021 at Somerset County Fairgrounds
- September 27: Huntingdon County Food Share at VFW Memorial Field

Serving All Who Serve: Special Emphasis Program Launched to Support Inclusiveness

By: Evan Hinkley

In the Summer of 2021, The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center continued its commitment to serving all Veterans by further engaging in Special Emphasis Programs (SEP's).

SEP's are designed to promote inclusion and stop discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability.

The two primary goals of SEP's are to: (1) Raise awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusiveness for Veterans and staff, and (2) identify and eliminate discriminatory practices to ensure equal treatment and a welcoming environment for VA employees and Veterans.

Numerous empirical studies have shown positive correlation between diversity and organizational performance. Research shows that diverse teams are more creative, are better at problem solving, and result in better decision making—compared to less diverse groups.

Two flagpoles were installed outside the Medical Center to allow SEP flags to fly during different days and months throughout the year. The first flag raised was the LGBTQ+ Pride Flag for Pride Month in June.



Photo By: Evan Hinkley

The LGBTQ+ Flag flew outside the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center throughout June for Pride Month.

Flags raised as part of the SEP include: The Women's Suffrage Flag for Women's Equality Day (August), A Hispanic Heritage Flag (Sept. 15-Oct. 15), and a Disability Employment Awareness Flag (October).

"The flags show that our VA is supportive of all Veterans in the community," said Nicole Siford, LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator.



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New Specialty Clinic Addition Opens, Allows for Enhanced Patient Experience

By: Evan Hinkley

In June 2021, a new specialty clinic addition opened on the third floor of the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center. The new 12,500 square foot space houses Cardiology, Optometry, and Respiratory specialty care—with each service gaining additional space.

“We’re really excited for this space,” said Medical Center Director, Sigrid Andrew. “It’s new and fresh and it allows us to expand from our really tight quarters, because we have increased our specialties so much.”

Planning for the approximately \$8 million addition started five years ago and Director Andrew said the project is largely a result of Veteran and staff feedback.

“We asked Veterans and staff what they need, and

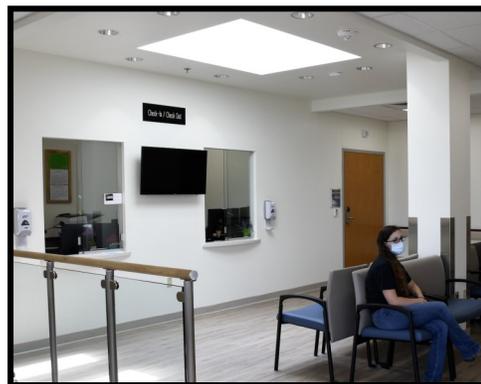


Photo By: Evan Hinkley

The waiting room area of the addition features a skylight, one of many design elements used to give natural lighting to 75% of the new space. Natural lighting is proven to improve overall mood and well-being.

they gave us a list of specialties. To that end, we have continued to expand with what our Veteran population is asking us for,” she said.

The addition was designed for collaboration between services — especially Cardiology and Respiratory.

“When a Veteran comes in for their cardiac appointment, they very often need to see respiratory service as well—now they simply go across the hall. So it’s a very convenient thing for our Veterans and improves their overall experience,” Director Andrew said.

The addition also features a non-skid floor, spacious rooms for patients and equipment, and a skybridge (connecting the addition to the existing third floor of the hospital).

On the roof of the addition are 170 solar panels that, during prime sunlight hours, can provide nearly enough energy to power the entire addition. This allows the space to be close to self-sufficient.