

New England **VETERAN**

A publication of the VA New England Healthcare System

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Blue Water Navy Act

WELLNESS

Food & Exercise

HERITAGE

Concord, Mass.

CAREGIVING

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Spring 2020

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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA New England Healthcare System

New England Veteran

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On the Cover: Jarod Famisan, Army
Veteran, Litchfield, N.H.

Website

www.newengland.va.gov/news

New England Veteran is published by the VA New England Healthcare System as an educational service. The publication is intended to provide information about Veteran benefits from a military-culture perspective and offer stories of interest to our Veteran community. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes. This publication is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice, which should be obtained from your VA health care provider.



Message from the Director

I am excited to introduce your new *New England Veteran*! Along with a bold new look, we've added more pages, more focus on Veterans, and more information to support the health and well-being of our Veterans, their families and caregivers.

Each issue, *New England Veteran* will feature information you can use to live healthier, including Healthy Kitchen Recipes and Healthy Living Exercise. We'll also focus on support for Veterans, their families and caregivers, and highlight VA programs you might not have known about. We want to make it easier for Veterans and their loved ones to find support when they need it.

We want to highlight Veterans in our communities by featuring a Veteran on the cover and profiling remarkable Veterans in our articles. The new *New England Veteran* is written by Veterans, about Veterans.

Finally, just as we were going to press with our new publication, and by the time you are reading this message, our VA New England Healthcare System remains ever vigilant and on the frontline in our nation's fight against the coronavirus. In our next issue, *New England Veteran* will feature the tireless efforts of our health care professionals in protecting and caring for our Veterans during this unprecedented time in our history.

Enjoy your first *New England Veteran*!

With thanks for your service,

Ryan Lilly, MPA
Network Director

The Shot Heard Round the World



By Mike McNamara,
outreach program manager

See the YouTube video
for a history videocast.



Colonial reenactors commemorate the "Shot Heard Round the World" from North Bridge in Concord, Mass. U.S. Air Force photo by Linda LaBonte Britt

This edition of Our History, Our Heritage takes us to Concord, Massachusetts, 1775.

Since the early 1770s, Massachusetts had been a hotbed of tension and unrest as the American Colonists grew increasingly weary of British rule. By the spring of 1775, the British were cracking down and the march on Concord was intended to deny the Americans military supplies.

The British left Boston late on April 18. This prompted the midnight ride of Paul Revere and William Dawes, who rode through the Massachusetts countryside alerting the Americans that the British Army was moving on

Concord. The first shots were fired just before dawn on the 19th at the town of Lexington. Eight militiamen were killed, and the British continued their march to Concord in search of military supplies. At 11 a.m., at the North Bridge just outside Concord, 400 American militiamen engaged 100 British troops, resulting in casualties on both sides. The British immediately began a withdrawal to Boston under heavy fire from the Americans.

This battle, the "shot heard round the world," started the American Revolution, which led to independence from England and the creation of the United States of America.

Blue Water Navy Act

If you served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, you're considered a Blue Water Navy Veteran.

The Blue Water Navy Act of 2019 extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to BWN Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of Vietnam and have since developed one of 14 conditions related to exposure.

Also, if you served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Sept. 1, 1967, and Aug. 31, 1971, you may qualify for compensation and benefits for you and your family members.

Am I eligible?

Talk with an accredited claims representative or Veterans Affairs regional office to understand eligibility requirements. You don't need to prove contact with herbicides to be eligible.

See www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/blue-water-navy.asp for more information.

DoD Commissary & Exchange Access

The Defense Department has expanded commissary, military service exchange and MWR access for eligible Veterans and has established standards for physical access to military installations. Access the fact sheet at www.militaryonesource.mil/expanding-access.

Veterans Health Library



My Health, My Care: 24/7 ^{Online} Access to VA

Veterans have access to a 24/7 online Veterans Health Library (VHL) for information and education about conditions and treatments offered by VA.

VHL has over 1,500 health sheets and 150 videos in both English and Spanish. It gives Veterans access to health information to help them make informed decisions on their care on relevant Veteran topics from PTSD to chronic pain and heart disease.

The VHL is mobile friendly and offers links to other VA resources. It can also be accessed on the MyHealthVet web site.



Unlike other health information web sites, the VHL is free of advertisements and pop up ads. Visit **www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov** today to stay well and well-informed.

Homemade Pizza



Robin LaCroix, registered dietitian at the White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont, presents a homemade pizza.

VA Healthy Teaching Kitchens teach Veterans and their families how to improve their health with healthy food choices and cooking skills.

Registered Dietitian Robin Lacroix from the White River Junction Vermont VA Medical Center makes healthy homemade pizza.

This alternative to frozen pizza offers fresh flavor, less saturated fat and sodium, and room for a variety of delicious toppings on whole wheat dough, a good source of fiber.

For more information and recipes, visit: **www.nutrition.va.gov/Healthy**. Or scan to watch Robin prepare this recipe on YouTube.



To learn more about healthy recipes, contact your VA primary care dietitian nutritionist.

INGREDIENTS:

Serves 3

- ½ ball wheat pizza dough
- Flour for dusting
- ¼ cup jarred tomato sauce
- 1 cup part skim mozzarella cheese
- ½ cup sliced tomatoes
- 1 cup sliced peppers
- Additional topping ideas: broccoli, spinach, mushrooms, onions, ham, chicken sausage

DIRECTIONS:

1. Dust a clean countertop or cutting board with flour.
2. Place dough on the flour and lightly roll to cover dough.
3. Stretch dough to appropriate size on lightly oiled pizza stone or baking sheet. Top with sauce, cheese, and other toppings.
4. Bake for about 15 minutes at 420 degrees. Let cool and cut. Serve with a salad for a complete meal.

The Air Squat

By **Joseph Grimard**, Navy Veteran

Maintaining proper weight, exercising and stretching can help alleviate chronic pain while improving energy levels, strength, stamina and flexibility. Strengthening your legs can help and can be started at any age or athletic level. Additional benefits include better balance, a decreased chance for future injuries, and confidence.

A great exercise to strengthen your legs is the squat. There are many variations of this exercise, but they all involve lowering your body into a seated position (without a chair) and then back up again.

The air squat is done without weights. It can be a good first step for anyone new to squats.

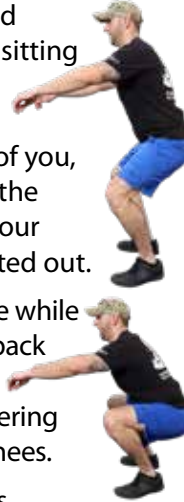
Whether you start with an air squat or use a weight, the basic movements are the same:

1. Stand with your legs shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, toes pointed out slightly. You can stand a bit wider for stability. Be careful not to lock your knees.
2. Pick a spot on the wall in front or just above you to focus your eyes on. This helps you maintain proper form through the squat.



Afghanistan Veteran Kyle Toto demonstrates how to do a squat during an exercise routine at the gym at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, Mass.

3. Inhale as you bend your knees into a sitting position. Keep your arms bent or raised in front of you, thighs parallel to the floor, weight on your heels, knees pointed out.
4. Pause. Then exhale while pushing yourself back to a standing position, remembering not to lock your knees.
5. Do ten repetitions. Complete two to three sets of ten for best results.



Tips for doing squats with weights

- Hold a barbell across your shoulders on your upper back or hold a dumbbell in each hand at your sides.
- Start with a light weight you can comfortably do for 12 to 15 repetitions.
- When you can comfortably complete three sets with good form, increase the weight.
- Take a day of rest between sessions to recover.

Keep challenging yourself and you will see results over time. And as always, consult your VA primary care team before starting any fitness program.

VA Recreation



VA recreation therapy and creative arts therapy services, provided throughout the VA New England Healthcare System, are important to the overall health and well-being of our Veterans.

Programs include acute, outpatient, home-based and community settings offering wide-ranging therapies such as recreation, art, drama, dance and movement, and music.



For Veterans enrolled in VA health care, ask your VA primary care provider for a consult to participate in therapeutic recreation programs.

For more information, contact your VA facility outpatient recreation therapy coordinator.



Joe Grimard is a recreation therapist at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital. He works with Veterans at the domiciliary on the Bedford VA campus and outpatients to promote long-term quality of life and independence through healthy, social, and leisure activities.

Jarod Famison: From Fueling Soldiers to Fueling Homes



By John Paradis,
senior editor & writer

Jarod Famison once fueled Soldiers with food as an Army cook. Now he fuels homes in New England as an HVAC technician.

I first met the Litchfield, N.H., Veteran at a VA New England Healthcare System outreach event at “Bike Week” at Laconia. Famison posed for a photograph with his 2006 Harley Davidson Electra Glide at our Veterans Portrait Project tent.

Famison joined the Army in 2001, serving three years as a cook, first at Fort Bragg, N.C., with the 18th Airborne Corps and then overseas in South Korea with the 2nd Infantry Division at Camp Hovey near the demilitarized zone.

Today, he is the service manager of a New Hampshire locally owned and operated HVAC company.

He used a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs “On-the-Job & Apprenticeship Training Program” to make the transition from the military to his civilian career. Famison was the first of eight Veterans at his HVAC company to use the benefit program.



I caught up with him recently to learn more about his service and his transition to civilian life. Here's part of our conversation.

Paradis: What motivated you to join the Army as a cook?

Famison: "So I always wanted to be a cook, I always wanted to be a chef and I wanted to get out of high school to go to (Johnson and Wales) and do my thing but I talked to a recruiter and he said, you know what, the Army needs cooks; you want to jump out of a plane and cook? Go ahead and do it."

Paradis: You prepared large quantities of food for thousands of Soldiers. Holidays must have been especially tough. What was that like?

Famison: "Those holidays aren't with your family; you are preparing for everyone else's family for that day... You are in the kitchen first thing in the morning all the way until the last person leaves the dining hall at night and it's your job to make sure that every soldier or family member that walks in is taken care of."

Paradis: And now you're working in a field where people rely on you just like they did in the Army. How did the Army prepare you to be successful in your civilian job?

Famison: "It's the acronym LDRSHIP (Army core values). It's loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. If you lived your day every day and you covered all those bases, you're waking up tomorrow morning and deciding to do it all over again."

Paradis: What do you like best about your job?

Famison: "I love the challenge of it. I love being able to mechanically take something and put it together to heat someone's home... My favorite part of every day is going into that job that someone can't figure out and at the end of the day they are going to go to bed and when they wake up in the morning it's going to be 68 to 72 degrees like they want it."

Paradis: How has the VA "On the Job Training Program" helped your company?

Famison: "You're taking someone who knows nothing about this field and putting them in the field and every day he is learning something new. The VA has been awesome about it."

Paradis: What would you tell other employers about hiring a Veteran and using the VA training program?

Famison: "It's a hidden gem. I'd tell you right now; I'd hire any soldier because they have that (military) background where they are going to be there; they are going to be dependable. That makes Monday morning easier – because Monday mornings aren't as easy when you can't rely on someone. When you can rely on everyone it's easy. And that's why it's fun to go to work."

On-The-Job Training and Apprenticeship



Eligible Veterans can learn a trade or skill through participation in a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

Programs typically involve signing a training contract with an employer or union. At the end of the training period, a job certification is issued, or journeyman status achieved.

Most Veterans receive a salary from the employer or union during training. GI Bill payments are issued monthly.

There are many on-the-job and apprenticeship opportunities available, such as:

- Union plumber
- Hotel manager
- Firefighter



For more information, contact your nearest Veterans Benefits Administration regional office or call 1-800-827-1000.

See the YouTube Video for our videocast with Jarod



VA's Caregiver Support Line



Each VA New England medical center has a Caregiver Support Coordinator available to assist Veterans.

Are you a caregiver for a Veteran? You don't have to navigate the journey alone. VA has two programs for caregivers: The Program of General Caregiver Support Services (eligible Veterans of all eras) and the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (eligible post-9/11 Veterans).

For help enrolling, contact your local Caregiver Support Coordinator by contacting your nearest VA medical center or call 1-844-VA-CARES or 844-822-2737.

Veterans and caregivers can also call the Caregiver Support Line, or CSL, at 1-855-260-3274 (toll free 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET).

The CSL is an important lifeline for Veterans and their caregivers. Responders are professional social workers trained in mental health therapy and experienced in matching caregivers with available resources both inside VA and within the community. In addition, they help counter the feelings of isolation many caregivers experience.

For more information, visit www.caregiver.va.gov.

Do You Qualify for a HISA Grant?



A HISA grant can make a Veteran's home more accessible.

By Marion Felix-Jenkins,
Spouse of Army Veteran

VA medical centers in New England can assist disabled Veterans with applying for important grants for medically necessary improvements to a primary residence. The goal is to help provide greater independence and accessibility in the Veteran's home.

Home Improvement and Structural Alterations grants, or "HISA," help with modifications that can include remodeling bathrooms, widening doors and lowering counter tops.

As the spouse of a retired U.S. Army military police officer who broke his neck while serving his country on active-duty, I can tell you that this is an incredibly important benefit.

We used it to replace the bathtub in our home with a walk-in shower. This greatly improved my husband's quality of life.

To be eligible, the Veteran's primary care physician must write a prescription for the necessary improvements/alterations.

There are limitations. For example, HISA will not pay for new home construction, a spa, exterior decking or walkways to exterior buildings.

The total lifetime HISA benefit is up to \$6,800 for Veterans and service members who have a service-connected condition rated 50 percent or more.

A lifetime benefit of up to \$2,000 may be provided for Veterans who have a non-service-connected condition under certain criteria or who are eligible for aid and attendance or housebound benefits.

To learn more, including requirements, contact Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services at your nearest VA medical center.

Stay Safe at Home with Virtual Care

The VA New England Healthcare System is committed to providing high-quality care while keeping Veterans safe from the coronavirus (COVID-19). Using Connected Care, Veterans can access VA health care from the safety of their own homes using a smartphone, tablet, or computer.

To help us address our Veterans' most-urgent needs first, please use these online tools for routine or non-urgent questions.

Telephone or Video Appointments

Receive care at home via phone or video using VA Video Connect on a computer, smartphone, or tablet. To set up a telephone or video appointment, send your provider a secure message on My HealtheVet by visiting myhealth.va.gov. To learn more about VA Video Connect, visit **mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect**.

Prescription Refills

Request prescription refills and order and ship medications to your home using My HealtheVet or the Rx Refill mobile app. Download the app at **mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill**.



Text Message Reminders

Use Annie's Coronavirus Precautions protocol to receive automated text messages with information about COVID-19. This application helps you monitor for symptoms and can assist if you need to contact your VA facility for care. Enroll at **mobile.va.gov/annie**.

Secure Messaging

Send online secure messages to your VA health care team to ask them nonurgent health questions using My HealtheVet, VA's online patient portal. Register at **myhealth.va.gov**.

For more information about VA's Connected Care technologies, visit **connectedcare.va.gov**.

Any Veteran using VA New England health care with symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath, should call their local VA medical center or clinic. VA urges Veterans to call before visiting. Calling first helps us protect you, medical staff and other patients.

Take Advantage of Your Benefits



*By Paul Corbett,
Marine Corps Veteran*

Did you know only 13 percent of Veterans are using their VA home loan benefit?

Likewise, even though 3 out of 4 Veterans in New England qualify for VA health care, less than half are using the benefits they have earned and deserve.

Why? After meeting thousands of Veterans, I believe this is partially due to a fear of "taking away" benefits from fellow Veterans.

Please know it is impossible to take benefits from another Veteran. At VA, demand is the driving force behind growth. Every time a Veteran enrolls in VA health care, they subsequently help to increase the capabilities of the facility they are visiting. This translates into more staff, research and resources.

Funds set aside for a Veteran, if not used, can be used for other Veterans. So, by enrolling in VA health care, you are actually supporting your fellow Veterans. Just be sure to visit VA at least once a year to maintain your enrollment status.

Lastly, all people need health care. All Veterans deserve happy and healthy lives.

Scan to access more information about VA's Connected Care resources.



A chat with Dr. Mark Logue

Dr. Mark Logue is an Army Veteran and a statistician at the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder at the VA Boston Healthcare System. His research interests include the genetics of brain disorders such as PTSD, Alzheimer's disease, and anxiety. He's also an associate professor of psychiatry at the Boston University School of Medicine. He has published work in dozens of academic journals. Some of his research involves VA's Million Veteran Program.

His military service:

Logue joined the Army Reserves after high school in 1989. As a medical supply specialist, he was assigned to a reserve combat support hospital unit in Vancouver, Washington. His reserve unit was activated in December 1990, in support of Operation Desert Shield. During the war, he was sent to a hospital in Stuttgart, Germany. He was released back to the reserves in March 1991 and stayed there until he was discharged in 1997.

His VA research:

Logue works on genetic studies examining the impact of genes on PTSD and Alzheimer's disease. His team is looking at genetics across multiple levels.

Scan to watch the video.



Dr. Mark Logue, an Army Veteran, is a VA statistician in the National Center for PTSD on the Jamaica Plain campus of the VA Boston Healthcare System.

"Hopefully, identifying genes and biological pathways related to PTSD and Alzheimer's disease will lead to new treatments and to better identification of Veterans at risk."

Seeing the impact of your work:

"Seeing Veterans every day when I enter and leave the building is very motivating. It helps me appreciate the fact that my data comes from real people who have volunteered their time to participate in these important duties. These are the real people who we are trying to help. I want to keep doing research that can help them lead healthier and happier lives."

The Keys to Success:

"An important part of life is learning. Never stop learning. That doesn't have to mean going to school and getting a doctorate the way I did. It may just mean finding out more about the world through travel, visiting your local library, or trying new things. Often, the payoff for learning isn't clear at the outset. But it can lead to new opportunities that you don't even think are possible."



Around NEW ENGLAND

To read about each of these headline stories, visit the VA New England “News” page at www.newengland.va.gov/news

BRISTOL, VT.

The Virtual Living Room, a space where veterans can use broadband connections provided by local telecommunications providers to access VA telehealth services, opened in February.

NEWBURY, N.H.

The 23rd annual New England Winter Sports Clinic for Veterans with disabilities was held at Mount Sunapee Ski Resort in January. More than 50 Veterans who receive VA health care participated in this year's clinic.

BOSTON, MASS.

VA Boston Healthcare System was named one of the top places to work in Massachusetts in the 12th annual Boston Globe employee survey. The survey covers factors such as leadership, training and the ability for employees to work to their full potential.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.

In one of the largest genetic studies on anxiety, researchers at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System and Yale University have found new evidence that could lead to a better understanding and new treatments of the condition.

GLASTONBURY, CONN.

Building Homes for Heroes provided a mortgage-free home for Veteran U.S. Army Specialist Craig Hall. Hall, a VA Vet Center outreach specialist, was injured during a mission in Iraq in 2007.

AUGUSTA, MAINE

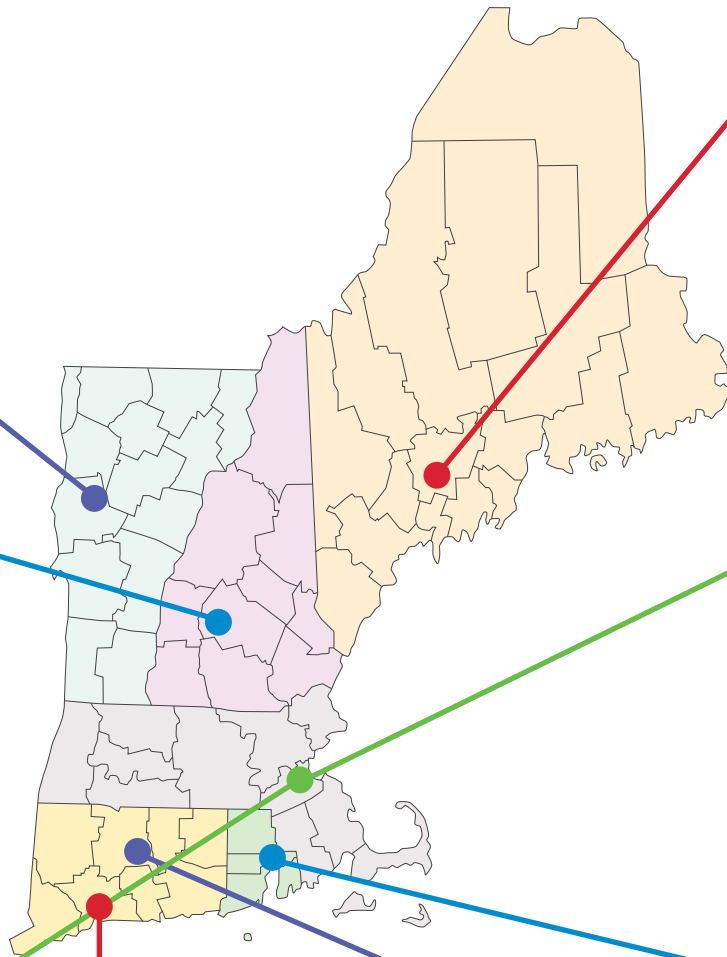
A total of 283 Veterans were hired during the Maine Hire-A-Vet Campaign, exceeding the program's goal for 100-plus employers to hire 100-plus Veterans in 100 days. The VA was one of the top agencies that had the most hires during the campaign.

BOSTON, MASS.

The VA Repurposing Agriculture for Nutrition and Diet Awareness program (VARANDA) will create a network of sustainable food gardens at VA hospitals to provide free fresh food to Veterans and their families.

PROVIDENCE, R.I.

A new facility will be dedicated later this year to the Providence VA Medical Center Research Service following a renovation of the former Jonathan H. Harwood U.S. Army Reserve Center.



New England Veteran

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200 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730

New England **VETERAN**

Be In The Know. On The Go.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
va.gov

MyVA 311
1-844-MYVA311

Official VA News Blog "Vantage Point"
va.gov/Vantage

VA New England Healthcare System
newengland.va.gov
1-844-VA-CARES (822-2737)

VA Benefits
benefits.va.gov
1-800-827-1000

Veterans Crisis Line
veteranscrisisline.net
1-800-273-8255 Press 1 OR
text to 838255

Vet Center Combat Call Center
vetcenter.va.gov
1-877-WAR-VETS (927-8387)



Homeless Veterans
va.gov/homeless
1-877-424-3838

Women Veterans
womenshealth.va.gov
1-855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)

VA Caregiver Support
caregiver.va.gov
1-855-260-3274

National Cemetery Administration
cem.va.gov
1-800-697-6947

What's New on YouTube

Check out our New England Veteran videocasts of important topics.

You can find our video playlist online at the Veterans Health Administration YouTube channel at **www.youtube.com/user/VeteransHealthAdmin**. Or, you can scan the QR code for a complete YouTube playlist.

NEVpodcasts
Long form podcasts



NEVshorts
Quick interviews
and info segments



NEVmilitaryhistory
For those who enjoy
military history



NEVpsa
VA New England public
service announcements

