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New England **Veteran**



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Meet Army Veteran & VA pandemic fighter, Sarah Carnes

Summer 2020

New England Veteran

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Robin Lacroix, VA registered dietitian

On the Cover: Sarah Carnes, U.S. Army
Veteran, Bedford, Mass.

Website

www.newengland.va.gov/news

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Message from the Network Director

In the past several weeks, we've all heard comments describing health care workers as heroes. The nation has seen their compassion as they care for patients during the most significant health care crisis in our lifetimes.

But I've always considered each of our VA New England employees, 16,600 strong, to be heroes. By the very definition, they have shown great courage every day. This issue of New England Veteran is dedicated to our VA staff who have put others – especially you, our Veterans – before themselves.

Our cover feature profiles Sarah Carnes, an Army Veteran, an emergency manager, and a VA librarian at our Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford. She is just one example of the selflessness I've witnessed over these past several months.

There is no doubt that all health care, including VA health care, will never go back entirely to where we were before this pandemic. Connected Care, which uses the full range of telehealth technologies, is and will be the global trend moving forward. VA New England is very fortunate to have the best platforms in our Nation, and we are well positioned for the future. There are several features in this edition of New England Veteran that highlight our superior programs.

I hope you take advantage of everything VA New England Healthcare System has to offer and that you and your family members stay healthy and safe.

With thanks for your service,

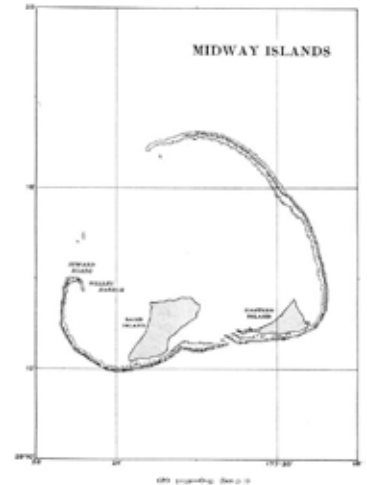
Ryan Lilly, MPA
Network Director

The Battle of Midway



By Mike McNamara,
outreach program manager

See the YouTube video
for a history videocast.



Torpedo Squadron Six aircraft are prepared for launching on USS Enterprise at about 0730-0740 hours on June 4, 1942. The Battle of Midway is celebrated as one of the most decisive victories in U.S. naval forces' history.

In June 1942, the U.S. Navy, with the Marine Corps and Army Air Forces, defeated the Japanese Navy at the Battle of Midway.

The Japanese hoped that another devastating defeat would force America to sue for peace, ensuring Japanese dominance throughout the Pacific. However, due to code-breaking efforts, America was aware of the plan and laid a trap at Midway Island.

On June 4, 1942, the Japanese launched air attacks against Midway to pave the way for an invasion. The attacks failed to accomplish the desired results. The Japanese, unaware that the American fleet was nearby, prepared for another attack against the island. While Japanese preparations were underway, the outnumbered U.S. fleet launched a strike against the Japanese fleet.

For over an hour, American aircraft attacked the Japanese, sinking three of its four aircraft carriers. The remaining Japanese carrier launched an attack on the American fleet leading to the sinking of the American carrier, USS Yorktown. However, that Japanese carrier was also sunk later in the afternoon.

Over the course of the battle, the Japanese lost four aircraft carriers and more than 3,000 men against an American loss of one aircraft carrier and 300 men. The U.S. triumph at Midway was called one of the most decisive victories in the history of naval warfare. It allowed the U.S. to switch to the strategic offensive. The Japanese never again launched a major offensive in the Pacific.

Weight Loss isn't Far Away with TeleMOVE!

Using popular technologies, Veterans can now participate in the TeleMOVE! weight management program without leaving home.



TeleMOVE! matches Veterans with a VA clinician or care coordinator, and with at-home health monitoring technologies that best fit their needs.

It combines the very successful MOVE! Weight Loss Program with tools of telehealth, like video and teleconferencing. It's a 90-day program that focuses on nutrition, physical activity, and behavior change. Participation in TeleMOVE! along with a healthy diet and activity changes may also help improve health conditions such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, COPD, and depression.

To join the program, let your VA Primary Care team know you are interested in TeleMOVE! They'll have you complete a questionnaire that will guide you and your health care team in setting specific goals.

Chicken Vegetable Stir Fry



Robin LaCroix, registered dietitian at the White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont, prepares chicken vegetable stir fry.

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

This month's recipe involves making your own chicken vegetable stir fry sauce, flavored with lemon, ginger and garlic. You can also use a bottled stir fry sauce if you are pressed for time or do not have all these ingredients. This recipe also works well with lean beef, pork, shrimp or tofu.

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 4 (about 1 ¼ cup stir-fry with 1 cup brown rice)

- 1 lemon
- 1/2 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons fresh minced ginger (or ½ tsp dry ground ginger)
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 teaspoons corn starch
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 bag frozen stir fry vegetables (or 3 cups fresh chopped vegetables)
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic

DIRECTIONS:

1. Grate 1 teaspoon lemon zest and set aside. Juice the lemon and whisk the juice with broth, soy sauce, ginger, honey and cornstarch in a small bowl.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken and cook, 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Transfer to a plate with tongs. Add frozen vegetables to the pan, cook about 5 minutes. Add garlic and the lemon zest. Cook 30 seconds.
4. Whisk the broth mixture and add to the pan; cook, stirring, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the chicken; cook, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve over brown rice.

The Push-Up

By Kyle Toto, Army Veteran

Upper body strength is good for everyone. For this month's Warrior Wellness feature, I asked VA Bedford's Joe Grimard, a recreation therapist and Navy Veteran, about his thoughts on how to do the push-up properly.

Kyle: What is the right form for a basic push-up?

Joe: Start with feet close together. Your body should form a straight line from your head to your ankles. Arms are straight down from your shoulders. Squeeze your glutes the entire time to keep your hips stable and in line. Abdominal muscles should be tight.



Lower your body slowly until your chest is near the ground. Your head stays in line with your body. Pause, then slowly push your body back up to the starting position.



Try three sets, two to three times a week of as many repetitions as you can with strict form throughout. Give yourself a day or two in between before attempting them again.

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

Kyle Toto is an Afghanistan Veteran who has enjoyed running and weightlifting for two decades. He has run three marathons and numerous half marathons, 10Ks and 5Ks. He is currently an avid CrossFit athlete.

Joe Grimard is a recreational therapist and Navy veteran and has been working at the Bedford VA since 2009. Joe has more than 30 years of experience in physical training and fitness.

Music Therapy and Movement



Music therapy is the evidence-based use of music for a therapeutic purpose. It can help promote relaxation, reduce depression and anxiety and even help with pain management.

Along with the benefits of music, being physically active is another important step that you can take to improve your health. Some physical activity is better than none, and any amount of physical activity can improve health-related fitness.

Music and movement can both be great ways to help relieve stress during tough times, but it's also a fun combination together!

For more information on self-care and how to incorporate music and well-being into your lifestyle, contact your VA facility outpatient recreation therapy coordinator.

Sarah Carnes: Behind the Frontlines on the COVID-19 Fight



By John Paradis,
senior editor & writer

While VA New England Healthcare System continues to respond to COVID-19, those on the frontlines at our VA medical centers are relying on a hidden asset: emergency managers and information experts. One of these is Sarah Carnes.



Throughout her career, both in the U.S. Army and now with VA New England, Carnes has always been invaluable in identifying and meeting information needs related to clinical care.

She is the clinical librarian for the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital located in Bedford, Mass.



During the pandemic, she has also been detailed as VA Bedford's emergency manager. The two roles, while different, are intertwined, she says.

Carnes works to make sure medical staff and VA New England leadership have relevant, timely information to complete the mission to take care of Veterans. Whether it's library support in conducting medical literature searches or making sure VA Bedford staff are prepared for the next phase in battling the coronavirus, Carnes has used her military medical background to full use.

Carnes was an Army Medical Service Corps Officer, starting her military career in 1993 at Fort Hood, Texas. There, she was an ambulance platoon leader in a main support battalion.

She then became the battalion adjutant and a company executive officer. The Army sent her to Germany as a battalion supply officer and then a Medical Company commander. She participated in training at Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels and went to Bosnia and Albania. She finished her Army career at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. This is the largest U.S. military medical facility outside the United States.



See the YouTube video for our videocast with Sarah.

Carnes was recently interviewed by Paul Corbett for a New England Veteran videocast. Here's part of their conversation.

Corbett: How did your military background help you with your current responsibilities?

Carnes: "I think for anyone who has been in the military, we sort of take it as the norm that you're going to think of what else can go wrong. So, I got trained and I had to do a lot of emergency preparedness."

Corbett: It surprises many people to know that VA medical centers have libraries. Talk about what service you provide for Veterans.

Carnes: "We go wherever we are needed. I call myself the forward support librarian because I'm supposed to be where I can be most useful."

Corbett: What's your life been like as the emergency manager working through a pandemic?

Carnes: "If I can help, I feel a moral obligation to help. I think that's how many of us who have served in the military feel – that's why we served. I came into this with the same approach I did with deployments, which is, 'it's ok; where do I go? Where do you need me?' It's an honor to help. This is where I belong."

Corbett: VA New England has had a lot of volunteers – many with military experience – who went down to places like New York to help at VA hospitals. What's that been like?

Carnes: "There have been quite a few people who are former military who have volunteered but also a lot of non-military people too – they are all VA staff who just want to help wherever they can help. It's a real testament to our culture here in the VA."

Corbett: We're now seeing so many doctors and medical providers using telehealth more than ever before, but VA has been doing telehealth for years. What has that been like?

Carnes: "We've expanded it immensely during this crisis. Not just because it's safer but also so our staff can be more available. If we have someone out sick, we can have someone else cover it through telehealth."

Corbett: VA has always relied on volunteers, but this has been a difficult time. What are some of the ways that people can still be involved with VA?

Carnes: "The library for Veterans is all through donations through the community. We've told people that if there are DVDs or CDs that they want to share, that's wonderful. iPads are always in demand and DVD players where people can watch movies. Operation Mail Bag – sending a letter of support -- is another where you can show support to both our staff and our Veterans."

VA NEW ENGLAND
COVID-19 RESPONSE

COVID-19 Timeline

JAN. 22: VA New England participates in VA's Emergency Management Coordination Cell



MARCH 3: Incident Command Center is activated

MARCH 19: Process to hire retired medical professionals to ensure seamless operations begins

MARCH 27: VA's COVID-19 Response Plan is executed to include shifting outpatient care to telehealth and postponing elective surgeries

APRIL 2: VA Bedford cares for Chelsea Veterans' Home patients; VA New England helps community nursing homes and state Veteran homes

APRIL 5: VA New England personnel deploy to assist with COVID response in New York City and in greater Boston

APRIL 13 – VA clinicians placed on assignment in New Haven, Conn., to provide medical support to homeless population at risk for COVID-19

APRIL 26 – VA Maine deploys medical staff to New York City to continue support for COVID-19 operations

MAY 11: VA New England sends medical staff to the Rhode Island State Veterans Home

Support for Caregivers



VA New England recognizes that caregivers play a critical role in caring for Veterans every day, and even more so now, in the time of COVID-19.

The Caregiver Support Program provides support to you with important resources and services. Your local Caregiver Support Coordinator, or “CSC,” at your VA New England medical center is available to help.

The Caregiver Support Line, or “CSL,” can also be reached at 1-855-260-3274. Caring, licensed professionals are available.

PREPARE

- Submit medication refills via MyHealthVet or the call-in number, 1-877-327-0022.
- Learn to use VA Video Connect through the VA mobile app store at <https://mobile.va.gov/appstore> or by contacting the VA care team at your VA New England medical center.
- Have two weeks’ worth of non-perishable food at home. It’s important to minimize trips to the grocery store. If needed, contact your local CSC for community resources.

Manage Prescription Refills Online



By Marion Felix-Jenkins,
Spouse of Army Veteran

There are several ways VA New England can help with your medications and prescription refills without going to the pharmacy.

VA’s My HealthVet online prescription tools make it easier to manage your medicines online. Members registered in My HealthVet are able to:

Refill VA Prescriptions (Rx):

You can refill VA prescriptions online. You need a prescription written by a VA doctor that has previously been filled at a VA pharmacy.

Track Delivery of VA

Prescriptions: This feature allows you to track delivery of a VA prescription mailed in the last 30 days.

Get VA Prescription Shipment

Notifications: You can get email notifications to let you know when to expect delivery of your prescriptions.

If you have an Advanced or Premium My HealthVet account, you can use the Track Delivery and Rx Refill features and create medication lists. Learn more about upgrading your My HealthVet account by contacting your VA New England My HealthVet coordinator. A list is available at www.newengland.va.gov/patients/MHVCoordinators.asp.

If you do not have a My HealthVet account, your local My HealthVet coordinator can help you register.

VA VIDEO CONNECT

VA Video Connect links Veterans with their VA health care team from anywhere. You use the camera on your computer, phone, or tablet for secure and private videoconferencing sessions. It makes VA health care more convenient for Veterans and their caregivers.



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

VA financial hardship assistance



If you're struggling because of life situations like losing your job, having a sudden decrease in income, or having an increase in out-of-pocket family health care expenses, VA can help.

Some Veterans may be eligible for a hardship determination. This could, for example, qualify them for a copay exemption for VA health care. In this case, you wouldn't pay any VA copays for the rest of the calendar year. A hardship copay exemption doesn't apply to copays for pharmacy medications.

The process for applying for hardship can be found at the following web site: www.va.gov/health-care/pay-copay-bill/financial-hardship.

If a Veteran is currently not eligible for VA health care due to the national income threshold, but has been laid off due to COVID-19 and their household income has dropped, the Veteran should inquire about applying for a hardship determination.

To avoid a hardship to a veteran, VA may use the projected income for the current year of the veteran, spouse, and dependent children if the projected income is below the "low income" limit.

A veteran may then be eligible for VA health care. This may happen when the veteran's projected income for the current year will be substantially below the income from the previous year and below the VA national income threshold.

If you need more information or help with filling out your forms, please call VA at 866-400-1238. The telephone support is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

In New England, Veterans can also contact the Eligibility and Enrollment specialist at their nearest VA medical center. Call 1-844-VA-CARES. Follow the prompts to reach the medical center nearest you and then ask for Eligibility and Enrollment.

Transportation assistance



The VA has partnered with community food pantries to deliver food to Veterans during COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic limits contact and travel for many Veterans. VA New England is using innovative ways to help Veterans with everyday concerns.

For example, when stay-at-home orders were put into place, VA Boston Healthcare System shifted its transportation ride share program to bring food to deliver needed food to Veterans.

VA Boston has partnered with community food pantries and organizations to deliver boxes and bags of food to Veterans.

The program also transports Veterans to medical appointments.

Other VA New England medical centers have instituted similar programs to assist Veterans during this time of need.

If you are a Veteran enrolled in VA health care and you need transportation assistance or help with food, contact your local VA New England medical center and ask to speak with social services.

A chat with Mark Zacheis, RN

Mark S. Zacheis is an Army Veteran from Missouri. After his military service, he used his VA education benefit and attended the University of Missouri's Sinclair School of Nursing in Columbia, earning his Bachelor of Science degree in nursing.

Zacheis is a registered nurse working at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital on the VA Bedford campus in Massachusetts.

This spring, he was among the first VA employees who left New England to volunteer to care for Veterans on COVID-19 units at VA medical centers in New York City.



Mark Zacheis cared for Veterans in New York City who had COVID-19.



His military service:

Zacheis joined the Army in 1978 in military police, trained as a mechanic, and became a Russian linguist. He was stationed in Germany but travelled to Sardinia, Honduras, Panama, and Holland. He was discharged in 1983.

On his experience in New York:

"The Manhattan VA had a significant number of patients with COVID-19 when I arrived. Between the VA staff and other volunteers, we had a great team assisting the patients. I was proud and honored to work with this team."

On honoring Veterans:

"Through our duty as VA employees, I feel we are remembering and honoring the Veterans from our past who, through their service, allowed us the freedoms we enjoy today."

On volunteering:

"Do it! You get back so much more than you give. One can never have too many friends, and I made some new friends in New York City and from so many other areas of the country."

On teamwork:

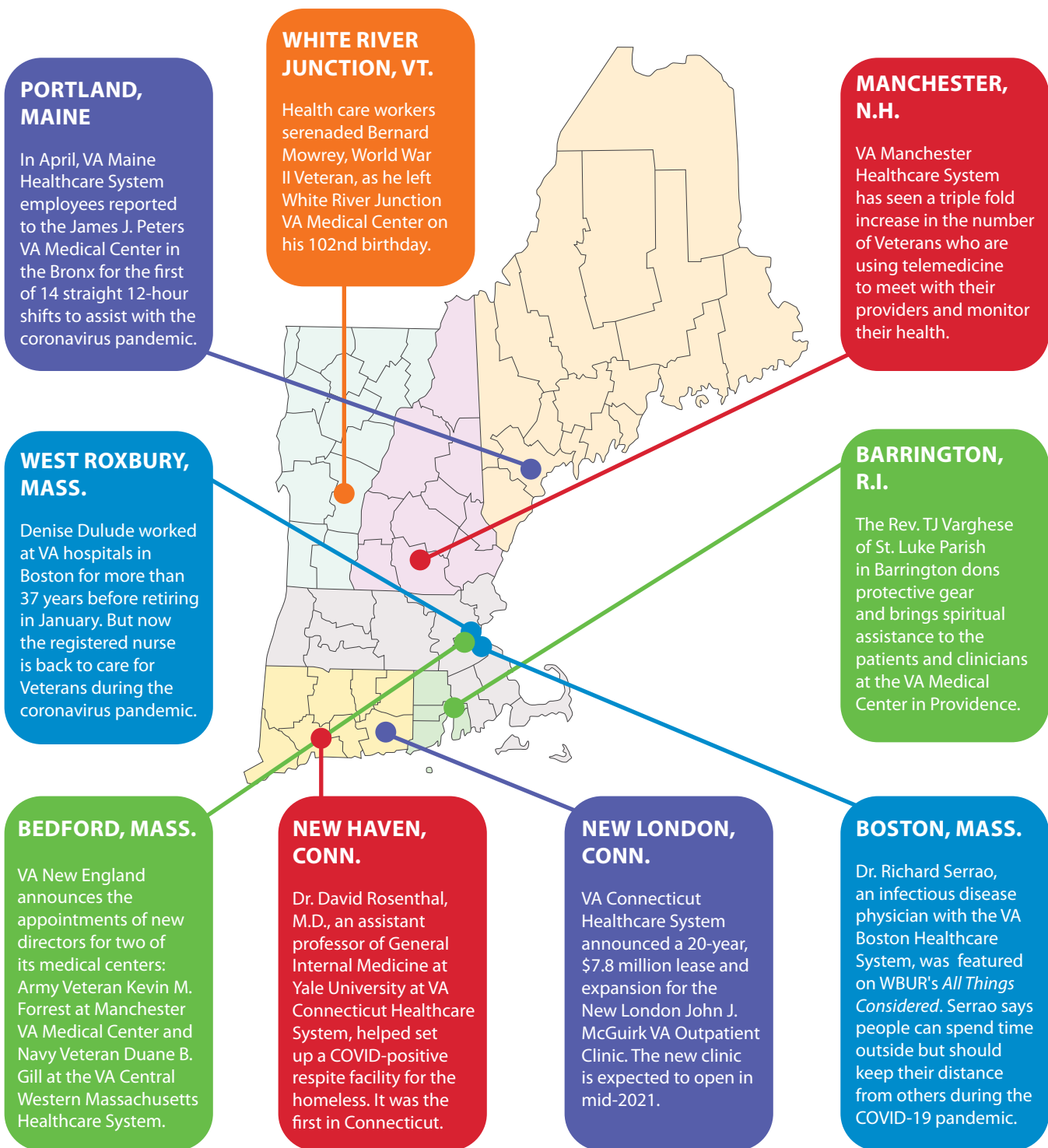
"You can learn a lot from being a part of a different team. You can bring back what you've learned to help others here at home."



See the YouTube video for our videocast with Mark.

Around NEW ENGLAND

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



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New England **VETERAN**


Your Benefits. Our Commitment.

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the benefits you have earned and deserve!

