

MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR

Last month I shared our customer service initiatives and how they are supporting our High Reliability Organization Journey. Another key piece to improving the care we provide at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is empowering our nurses, those that care directly for our Veterans. We have more than 800 nurses at our VA who are committed to the mission of caring for those who served, so I am excited to share the journey that Nursing has started—seeking the prestigious international designation as a Pathway to Excellence Organization.

Seeking this designation is a rigorous process evaluating our organization against a set of nursing standards. This journey consists of identifying, implementing and supporting practices that enable nurses to provide excellent care. The designation is through the American Nursing Association and American Nurse Credentialing Center, which also oversees the Magnet designation process.

Currently there are three VA facilities amongst the 177 designated hospitals in the United States, as well as hospitals in the United Kingdom, Asia, Central America and the Middle East. In Charleston, there are no Pathway to Excellence designated hospitals although The Medical University of South Carolina and Roper St. Francis are Magnet-designated.

The process is an approximately year-long journey of documenting how our organization measures up against six practice standards: Shared Decision-Making, Leadership, Quality, Safety, Well-being and Professional Development. We know that these standards are the foundation of those organizations that embody excellence, providing high-quality health care services. The journey culminates in a survey of our nursing staff; evaluating how well we provide the environment and structures that allow nurses to practice the art and science of nursing—essentially, how well does

our organization empower nurses to improve processes to provide the best care for our Veterans.

While this is a designation that focuses on nursing practice; improving nursing practice improves the care we provide and that is good for all our employees, but especially our Veterans. This journey to excellence is pivotal to our work to become a High Reliability Organization. Organizations that embark on this journey enjoy benefits of improved staff satisfaction, improved retention, decreased turnover, enhanced inter-professional teamwork, improved quality metrics, improved patient safety metrics and improved patient experience. Our nurses are our frontline in patient care; improving our culture ultimately serves our mission to provide the best care for our Veterans.

Veterans Day Parade

On Saturday, Nov. 9, I had the opportunity to join the Charleston community for the first time at the annual Veterans Day Parade. This is the 19th year our Voluntary Service has coordinated this parade for the community, and I was overwhelmed by the support I saw for our Lowcountry Veterans. Residents and visitors lined the streets of downtown Charleston waving American flags and cheering as signs of appreciation for the dedicated service of our Veterans.

We had Veteran Service Organizations, local schools, elected officials, supportive community groups and Joint Base Charleston participate in this year's parade, with more than 60 groups marching and riding. This year's parade Grand Marshal was Major General Gerald Minetti, a decorated Veteran with more than four decades of time spent in the U.S. Army. Maj. Gen. Minetti continues his service by volunteering in several Veteran-based community organizations: he is the Program Lead for the Charleston Chapter of Project Healing Waters Fly

Fishing and a mentor with PGA Hope. We are also grateful to have him at our VA as one of our volunteers and as a Veteran representative on our VA Voluntary Service Committee, and a member of the Lowcountry Veterans Experience Team. It is for his dedicated and tireless service to our country and our Veterans that Maj. Gen. Minetti was selected as the Grand Marshal; and it was my honor to recognize him during the opening ceremony.

During the week leading up to Veterans Day our VA paid special tribute to the employees at our VA who are also Veterans. Nearly 30% of our workforce is made up of Veterans and I am grateful to them for choosing to continue their service by caring for Veterans at our VA. These staff are an important piece of our VA, connecting with our Veterans on their service, their injuries and their combat experience.

As I reflect on this month and Veterans Day, I'd like to extend my personal gratitude to all of our country's Veterans. Without your service and sacrifice I would not be able to enjoy the everyday freedoms that I do today. As a sign of my gratitude, it is my commitment to ensure Lowcountry Veterans receive the best health care services anywhere – here at the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC.

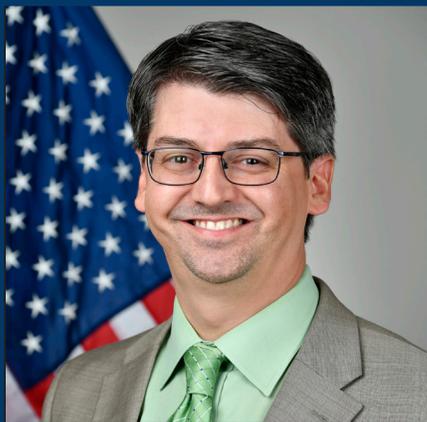
Sincerely,



Ronnie Smith | Acting Director & CEO



VA | Ralph H. Johnson
VA Medical Center



Ronnie Smith, MSHA, MBA
Acting Medical Center Director

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 6, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., Million Veteran Program Celebration: 12,000 Veteran participants, VAMC Picnic Area

Dec. 13, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., Soldiers Angels Food Distribution, Elks Lodge, 1113 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, Charleston, SC 29407

Dec. 14, 2 – 4 p.m., Fisher House Holiday Open House, 150 Wentworth Street, Charleston, SC 29401

Dec. 18, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Red Cross Blood Drive, VAMC Main Auditorium

Dec. 25, Christmas, Federal Holiday

SUICIDE PREVENTION TAKES EVERYONE!

#BeThere

Veterans Crisis Line:
1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

Online chat at:
www.veteranscrisisline.net

Text: 838255



Choose VA



**1,513 FAMILIES
SERVED**