

MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR

Over the past few months I've shared with you a lot of information on initiatives we're implementing to enhance the Veteran experience at our medical center and increase accessibility for our frontline staff to improve the care we deliver. Throughout the year, but especially during this season, I am grateful for the more than 3,000 staff we have on board who are truly dedicated to the mission of providing health care for our Veterans, and for their continued efforts to improve the care we deliver.

Another key component of ensuring all our Veterans needs are met is the support we receive from the community, especially our volunteers. In fiscal year 2019 we had more than 520 volunteers log close to 80,000 total volunteer hours. Our VA leads the Southeast Region (VISN7) in total amount of volunteer hours by more than 20,000 hours. This donated time amounts to a nearly \$2 million contribution to our facility. I cannot think of a more incredible gift and show of support for our Veterans—it is truly inspiring.

Our volunteers vary in age, gender, income, education, race or ethnicity, but all our volunteers share one thing in common – they are driven with a patriotic spirit to use their unique talents and skills toward improving Veterans' lives at our medical center. Our volunteers are invaluable in their ability to supplement the already outstanding work being done by our staff. They make every inch of our hospital feel like home for our Veteran patients and having them at our medical center and clinics enhances the Veteran experience and makes us better. It is the warm smile they offer Veterans walking through our doors, the kind guidance to

an appointment for the Veteran who seems lost, a free ride to their medical appointment, and the overall uplifting spirit they bring to our halls that make what they do extra special. We also have volunteers using their professional skillsets to serve our Veterans. These volunteers are using marketing experience to update outreach materials, teaching yoga classes, providing reiki sessions, providing financial counseling on our mental health inpatient unit, and using logistics skills to coordinate Veteran participation in the DAV transportation program.

During this season, I am also reminded of the generosity of our community through the donations received by our Voluntary Service office. Through in-kind and monetary donations, our VAMC was donated more than \$1.6 million in fiscal year 2019. Once again, leading the region by a large margin –\$700,000 more in donations than the next medical center in VISN7. Earlier this month, American Legion Post 178 from Murrells Inlet, South Carolina arrived at our medical center with a trailer full of \$7,000 worth of donated items for our Veterans. Through fundraisers in their community they were able to purchase t-shirts, socks, sweatpants, jackets, shoes, underwear, toiletries and gift cards that will help us provide the necessary items for our Veterans-in-need for many months to come. [Click here](#) for WCIV ABC4's story on their donation. American Legion Post 178 is just one of many examples of groups and individuals that come together all year long to say their thank you to Veterans through donations—both big and small.

During the holiday season, our Voluntary Service staff leads two

campaigns: 12+2 Days of Christmas and our VA's Angel Tree. The 12+2 Days of Giving helps our program gather the critical items needed to support our Veterans; items like pre-packaged snacks, winter coats, hygiene items, clothes, gift cards, bus passes and reading glasses. Donations will be used to help Veterans at our six community clinics, three Vet Centers and our medical center. Through this year's Angel Tree, we had over 280 children which were part of 88 families, and 18 senior angels that were adopted and will receive holiday gifts. The Angels, children of Veterans-in-need, were referred by our social workers and our Senior Angels are residents of our Community Living Center. Both staff and community donors dropped off gifts to our Voluntary Service Office to make sure everyone on the list has a happy holiday.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation for everyone's support and dedication to our Veterans and their families during this holiday season and throughout the year. We couldn't do what we do without you. Our VA is proud to be a part of this community and we are grateful to be able to work with such generous partners to care for our Veterans. If you'd like to learn more about opportunities available through our Voluntary Service office, visit www.charleston.va.gov/giving.

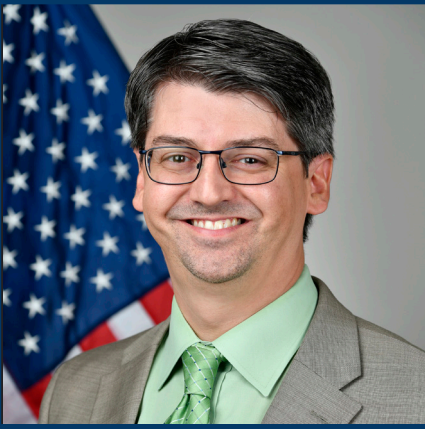
Sincerely,



Ronnie Smith, MSHA, MBA,
Acting Director & CEO



VA | Ralph H. Johnson
VA Medical Center



Ronnie Smith, MSHA, MBA
Acting Medical Center Director

CHECK IT OUT-
CHARLESTON VAMC
VIRTUAL TOUR

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Dec. 25, Christmas, Federal Holiday

Jan. 1, New Years Day,
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**



**1,608 FAMILIES
SERVED**