

# Horizons

A NEWSLETTER OF WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER // DECEMBER 2021



Wilkes-Barre VA

## CONTINUING TO PROVIDE CAREGIVER SUPPORT

VA  
Caregiver  
Support

When it comes to caregiver support, the Wilkes-Barre VA has programs that look out for the well-being of the people who care for our Veterans. The VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) is focused on improving the quality of life for caregivers. CSP accomplishes this by providing support, helping caregivers navigate the VA health care system and linking caregivers to needed resources.

One of the main resources to assist Veterans and their families with enhanced clinical support is called the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury (including a serious illness) in the line of duty while in the active military, naval, or air service on or after September 11, 2001, or on or before May 7, 1975 may be eligible for caregiver support services, if they have a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70% or more.

If the Veteran does not qualify for the Caregiver Support Program, they may qualify for the Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) which provides resources, education, and support to caregivers of Veterans which the Veteran does not need to have a service-connected condition, for which the caregiver is needed, and may have served during any era.

Caregivers who enroll in the PGCSS program have access to education and training, including in-person courses at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center. If circumstances prevent the caregiver from attending in person, Telehealth and Telephone Based sessions as well as Online Resources are also available. The program's support services may also include coaching, counseling, support groups and mentoring. VA home and community-based care is also part of the PGCSS program.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center is committed to provide the best possible care for our Veterans and their families. To get an application for either program or if you are in need of caregiver support, please visit [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov) or call the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center's Caregiver Support Team at 570-824-3521, ext. 27697, or the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 (Monday-Friday, 8:00 am to 10:00 pm ET; Saturday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm ET).

## A Message from the Director



How many times through the years have we told our spouse or our kids to "be safe"? We would say, be safe while driving, watch out those scissors are sharp, don't walk alone, don't stay out in the sun too long,

and so forth. We all want our loved ones to be careful and watch out for the physical dangers in life.

Today, "be safe" means far more. Not only does this include the dangers above, but we also must try to keep ourselves and our families safe from viruses like COVID-19 and its variants. Our soldiers fought for our freedom to be able to choose whether to become vaccinated. However, seeing the damage of contracting the COVID-19 virus firsthand has led me to believe the best way to avoid getting infected is to get the vaccine and subsequent boosters, especially if you have any underlying conditions. In August of this year the Pennsylvania Department of Health stated that 94% of COVID-19 cases in PA came from the unvaccinated.

I don't mean to preach; we can all make up our own minds. Nevertheless, I do urge you to do your research and know the risk factors of being unvaccinated. If you decide to not get vaccinated, please adhere to hand washing, masking and social distancing to minimize the risk to others.

As the year comes to a close and we get to spend more time with our loved ones, I feel comfortable that I've done everything I could to keep my family and our Veterans here at the Wilkes-Barre VA safe. I hope you will do the same.

Sincerely,



Russell E Lloyd, Director



VA Volunteers Linda Molitoris and Alice Keiner get CLC care packages ready for distribution.

## Veteran's Day Week Celebrated at Wilkes-Barre VA

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center celebrated Veteran's Day Week with a slew of events organized by the Wilkes-Barre VA's Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE).

At the start of the week the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center got a chance to expand our services beyond health care for the benefit of the Veterans we serve. We had an opportunity to partner with a non-profit organization called Fork Over Love to provide free meals to Veterans and their families. The non-profit organization hires local restaurants to supply donated meals wherever needed.

Three different meals were supplied by local restaurants which included a cookie and a Veterans Day card from area children thanking them for their service.

On Wednesday, Veterans with appointments at the Medical Center and our Community Based Outpatient Clinics received small tokens of appreciation (flowers, candy, notebooks, pens) from items donated throughout the year. Our Community Living Center (CLC) residents also received care packages which included Veterans Day cards from children from local schools.

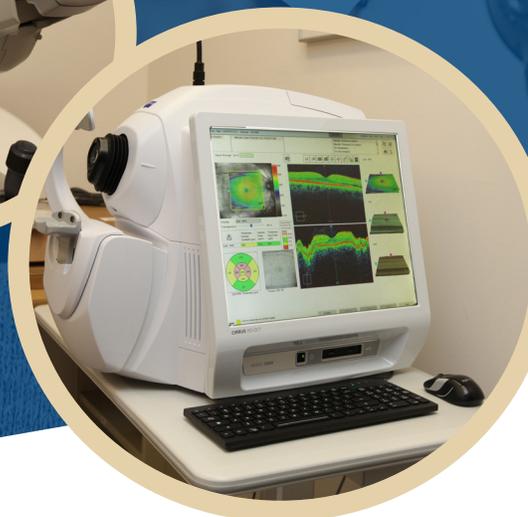
Veterans Day week concluded with a Virtual Veterans Day Ceremony and video thank you messages from VA employees which were posted on the Wilkes-Barre VA's Facebook page.

A big "Thank You" goes out to all who made these Veteran's Day Week events possible and to all who served in the armed forces, both past and present, who helped protect this great nation.

**"Being able to help the local restaurants and the local economy while supplying the comfort of a hot meal to our Veteran families is a win, win for all involved." — PAOLA MONTROSS-CHIEF, NUTRITION AND FOOD SERVICES WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER**



*Nidek Auto Refractor - Performs automatic refractions, which makes it quicker and easier to complete glass fittings.*



*Cirrus HD-OCT 500, takes photographs of the retinal surfaces, and supplies measurements down to microns.*

## Wilkes-Barre VA Eyecare

### Using the Latest Technology to Help Veterans See

The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center has been offering our Veterans great eye care services since the beginning. What Veterans may not know is that we have one of the most experienced eye care staff in the region and bolster some of the industry's most state-of-the-art eye care equipment.

The Eye Clinic is made up of Optometrists and Ophthalmologists offering a full range of eye care services which include routine eye care and screening exams, specialty exams for cataracts, glaucoma, plastic surgery and retinal services. We also offer Telehealth Services where we can check for diabetic retinopathy both remotely and at any of our remote Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

The medical center also features off-site Specialists who come in and provide additional services for cornea and external diseases of the eye.

Cataract surgeries are routinely performed here at the medical center and when there is a need for a corneal transplant or a glaucoma procedure, we have specialists come in to perform those operations.

The Wilkes-Barre VA's technologically advanced equipment includes a unit that basically performs automatic refractions, which makes it quicker and easier to complete glass fittings. Another advanced piece of equipment takes photographs of the retinal surfaces, and supplies measurements down to microns (portions of millimeters), so that our Doctors can better evaluate and treat retinal disorders and other diseases.

The Wilkes-Barre VA Eye Clinic continues to provide advanced expertise and latest technology to ensure that our Veterans are getting the best eye care possible. We hope you can SEE the difference.

**"Over the past 15-20 years eye care services at the Wilkes-Barre VA have changed dramatically with more technologically advanced equipment that many times the individual offices on the outside cannot afford."**

**—Dr. Bruce Brownstein Chief of Eyecare Services, Wilkes-Barre VA**

# Focusing on a Veterans Whole Health, VA Offering Intuitive Eating Classes

The Wilkes-Barre VA is helping Veterans take an overall whole health approach to managing their healthcare by supplying them with the resources they need to make better healthy eating choices. One of the programs offered by the Wilkes-Barre VA's Nutrition and Food Service is a class that teaches Intuitive Eating.

Emily Fasciana, Registered Dietitian at the Wilkes-Barre VA, explains Intuitive Eating as the practice of being more self-aware of what your body is asking for regarding your hunger and recognizing your fullness signals. It's respecting your body more and having compassion regarding the way you look at what your body does every day. It's also practicing more gentle nutrition. You are making peace by allowing every food to be in your diet and practicing how you can make all foods fit. Our dietitians want Veterans to have a good relationship with food.

With this approach, calories and portion control are not a focus, and diets are discouraged. It's about honoring your hunger and recognizing what your body needs at that point in time.

**"Say, for example, you restrict brownies, and you end up eating everything in the house that night, when all you wanted was a single brownie. You could have saved so many calories and all the stress on your body if you just ate the brownie."**

—Emily Fasciana - Registered Dietitian at the Wilkes-Barre VA

**"I like this way of eating from the standpoint that a lot of times when you start a conventional diet and you mess up for a day, it discourages you to the point where you just say, I just can't do this, but this intuitive eating philosophy is contrary to what we've learned in life up to this point."**

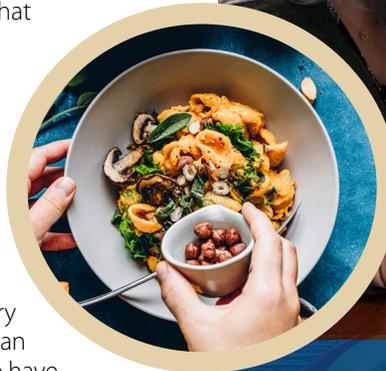
—Veteran James Plitt

There are ten principles of Intuitive Eating. You could focus on all of them, but typically work through a couple at a time and you're not focusing on all ten at one time.

**"Feel the Fullness is one of the key principles we need to get back to. When we were toddlers and infants, we knew when to push the plate away. We knew when we were full. Most people completely ignore those signals from their body, it's getting back to that."**

—Emily Fasciana - Registered Dietitian at the Wilkes-Barre VA

Another principle of intuitive eating is "Movement of the Body". One does not have to beat themselves up because the other day they were supposed to exercise but didn't have time. It's OK to miss a day, just have them pick up where they left off the next day.



## The 10 Principles of Intuitive Eating

1. Reject the Diet Mentality
2. Honor Your Hunger
3. Make Peace with Food
4. Challenge the Food Police
5. Discover the Satisfaction Factor
6. Feel Your Fullness
7. Cope with your Emotions with Kindness
8. Respect Your Body
9. Movement-Feel the Difference
10. Honor your Health with Gentle Nutrition

**"I stopped beating myself up because I'm doing good so far. Started July 31 and dropped 20 lbs. in about 3 months."**

—Veteran Johnny Barnhill

Johnny's weight has fluctuated over the years with big weight losses and big weight gains. With following the Intuitive Eating principles, the goal is to try not to have a Yo-Yo pattern. The class stresses to try not to look back, instead, try to look and move forward for the rest of their lives.

The intuitive eating classes give Veterans more options when it comes to staying healthy. The classes teach Veterans what they need to break away from the thinking that they always need to lose weight and count calories. Intuitive eating helps Veterans acknowledge what their bodies are telling them. Knowing what their body needs and making good food choices can only make them healthier.

To find out more details about upcoming Intuitive Eating groups, contact Emily at 570-824-3521 Ext. 24746 or [Emily.Fasciana@va.gov](mailto:Emily.Fasciana@va.gov)



# WILKES-BARRE VA SLEEP CLINIC

## Changing to Meet Veterans Needs

### EIGHT CONVENIENT LOCATIONS TO SERVE YOU

#### Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

1111 East End Blvd., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711  
570-824-3521 / 877-928-2621

#### Allentown Community Based Outpatient Clinic

3110 Hamilton Blvd., Allentown, PA 18103  
610-599-0127

#### Columbia County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

225 Columbia Mall Drive, Bloomsburg, PA 17815  
570-316-4116

#### Northampton County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

701 Slate Belt Blvd., Bangor, PA 18013-9341  
610-599-0127

#### Sayre Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1537 Elmira Street, Sayre, PA 18840  
570-888-6803

#### Tobyhanna Community Based Outpatient Clinic

Tobyhanna Army Depot, Bldg. 220  
Tobyhanna, PA 18466  
570-615-8341

#### Wayne County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

600 Maple Avenue, Honesdale, PA 18431  
570-251-6543

#### Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1705 Warren Avenue, 3rd Fl., Ste. 304  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
570-322-4791

A good night's sleep is essential to keep our bodies healthy. More than 50 million Americans, which includes many of our Veterans, suffer from some type of sleep disorder and at least 25 million of them (1 in 5 adults) suffer from sleep apnea. Sleep Apnea is a potentially serious sleep disorder in which a person's breathing is repeatedly interrupted, or ceases, during the course of a night's sleep.

The VA Medical Center's foot traffic limitations caused by the pandemic have prompted the Sleep Clinic to adjust care delivery modalities to meet the needs of our Veterans. When the pandemic first hit, we were forced to shut down in-patient sleep studies temporarily. We eventually reopened in July to 25% of our normal in-patient capacity and we are now at 50%. The clinic had to readjust and focus more on outpatient sleep studies as opposed to the in-person testing. With the advancement in remote sleep disorder technology, the sleep clinic was able to adjust seamlessly. Only the most critical cases of sleep disorder or when there is an operator or equipment error, are Veterans encouraged to come in and get tests done at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center.

One of the main things we want Veterans to know is that ignoring sleep disorders

like sleep apnea can cause many health problems like high blood pressure, daytime fatigue, type 2 diabetes, liver problems and heart disease to name a few.

**"Sleep disorder identification has changed with awareness over the years. In the past, the medical community would just kind of profile a person with possible sleep disorders. For example, if they had a big neck or if they were overweight, but sleep disorder is also prominent in thin people as well."**

**—Lisa Scrobola – Respiratory Therapist, Wilkes-Barre VA**

The Wilkes-Barre VA has seen a recent uptick in testing, which has resulted in more sleep disorder findings. While we are not doing as many in-patient sleep studies, the outpatient sleep studies have put us on track to do the same volume as pre pandemic levels.

What we want our Veterans to know is that we continue to change when the needs of our Veterans change. With the advancements in new technology, the VA can offer sleep testing service in a more convenient and timely manner, so that our Veterans can receive the treatment necessary to attain maximum health.

Call Center

1-877-928-2621

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