

Horizons

A NEWSLETTER OF WILKES-BARRE VA MEDICAL CENTER // JUNE 2022



Appearing in the photo from left to right: Emergency Management (EM) Specialist Justin Farley, Officer Jason Vincent, Sargent John Parsons and Medical Center Director Russell Lloyd.

WILKES-BARRE VA EMPLOYEES PRESENTED WITH GREAT CATCH AWARD

Sargent John Parsons, Officer Jason Vincent, and Emergency Management Specialist Justin Farley received the Great Catch Award from Wilkes-Barre VA Director Russell Lloyd for helping to save a Veterans Life.

Sgt. Parsons and Officer Vincent were at the main entrance COVID-19 screening building with the Emergency Management (EM) Specialist Justin Farley. Sgt. Parsons noticed an older man running towards the exit location of the screening building. When asked, he stated, "I need help. A person on my bus is unconscious".

Sgt. Parsons immediately called dispatch via radio and requested a Rapid Response as he, Officer Vincent, EM Farley, ran towards the transport bus that was located on East End Blvd. When the officers arrived at the bus, they immediately noticed the Veteran was a bluish gray color and did not appear to be breathing. The Veteran was checked to see if he had a pulse, but one could not be found. Because of the Veteran's size, they could not move him out of the bus, so they had performed CPR right on the floor. EM Farley said he was going to get an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Sgt. Parsons notified dispatch and officer Vincent that they needed to start CPR. EM Farley returned with the AED and Sgt. Parsons immediately started placing the AED pads on the Veteran as Officer Vincent continued CPR. Once the AED was utilized, Officer Vincent and Sgt. Parsons continued with CPR until Code Blue team members arrived and eventually took over.

The quick actions of these three gentlemen saved the Veteran's life. He fully recovered and is doing well today.

A Message from the Director



Statistics show that there is a sizable percentage of eligible Veterans who have never applied for VA health care services. There are a variety of reasons Veterans give for not applying which I would like to address.

One myth is that "I probably would not qualify because I was not a combat Veteran." The fact is, Veterans who served and didn't receive a dishonorable discharge regardless of combat duty, may be eligible for VA health care services.

Another myth is that Women Veterans won't be able to get the care they need through the VA. Based upon feedback from women Veterans, the Wilkes-Barre VA has a great deal to offer including primary care, mental health assistance, gynecological care, military sexual trauma (MST) counseling and reproductive health care.

Some Veterans also think the VA does not provide modern services like other health care systems. That couldn't be further from the truth. The Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center uses the latest medical technology, and our VA doctors are skilled in the latest procedures, medicines, and techniques.

Still others have never applied because they think they would be taking services away from other Veterans in need. That is not the case. Health and financial situations change over time and the Wilkes-Barre VA and other VAs nationwide have the resources and are ready to care for all Veterans in need.

I hope this helps dispel some enrollment misconceptions. I would like to encourage unenrolled Veterans to apply by calling 570-824-3521 and select option 4 or visit www.choose.va.gov/health to learn more.

Sincerely,

Russell E Lloyd, Director

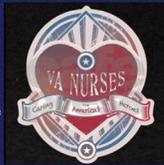
The Wilkes Barre VA is now recruiting

NURSES

Competitive salary

Health insurance & matching 401k

Tuition reimbursement & scholarships



13-26 days of vacation

11 federal holidays

13 sick days

Apply now at [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov)
For additional information on how to apply
contact **Jamie Accardi, Nurse Recruiter**
570-824-3521 ext 24348



Pharmacy Residency Program Providing Graduates with a Clearer Focus

"Across the country, the VA trains students, and residents at more than 150 VA medical centers in over 60 health professions, including pharmacy, nursing, general and specialized medicine and dentistry. Nearly 70% of America's physicians complete training at VA, directly contributing to the quality and access of Veteran health care and health care in the country at large."

— By Dr. Steven L. Lieberman, M.D. — *Military Times*

At the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, our Pharmacy residency program trains four recent Doctor of Pharmacy graduates each year. The American Society of Health System Pharmacists accredited program provides residents with a strong foundation to build their clinical skills. The program rotates through a variety of clinical settings including, internal medicine, ambulatory care, pain management, long-term care, mental health, and practice management. Being exposed to the variety of clinical settings has given each of this year's pharmacy residents a clearer focus of what they want to pursue in the pharmacy field in the future.

Applicants applied for various reasons. University of Connecticut Graduate, Callie Abramowitz applied because the program provided her with a way to continue her education and expand her knowledge so she can practice as a clinical pharmacist. Wilkes Graduate Matt Dacey applied because the COVID-19 pandemic caused a few of his past rotations to be virtual. The lack of internal medicine and live rotations caused him to question his readiness to jump right into certain pharmacy settings. Being able to do his residency gave him an opportunity to gain global experience in the field. Temple Graduate, Paul Papi applied because he wanted a clinical job in the future. He didn't feel confident enough to go right from school and jump right in. He felt the Wilkes-Barre VA's residency program did a great job slowly building up his confidence.

Not all Doctor of Pharmacy graduates want or need to participate in a residency program. Rutgers graduate, Taeka Hayashi, feels that the experience she has gained from rotating clinical settings at the Wilkes-Barre VA, gives her an edge for the future. It's equivalent to three years of clinical training.

Experiencing a variety of different clinical pharmacy settings has given each resident some clarity in what they want to do moving forward. Resident Papi came into his residency, thinking he wanted to concentrate on ambulatory care, but by cycling through other clinical settings, he started to shift a bit. Paul ended up applying for a clinical occupation job, similar to internal medicine, which deals with patient care on the floor. Resident Dacey did a rotation with mental health patients on Ward 9. He said it was a real eye opener. You have to know when to push a little and when to pull back.

Each resident had to perform different research projects throughout the year. The information gathered by each will benefit both the resident and the medical center in the future.

The one-year residency is soon coming to an end for each pharmacist. All four have touted the benefits of doing a residency here at the Wilkes-Barre VA. Being able to help the Veterans on a daily basis was very satisfying for each. The family atmosphere and the work life balance afforded by Dr. Mansuri's program were favored by all, and one they hope to continue in the future.

The experience each has gained through cycling through each clinical setting has resulted in more clarity for the future for each resident pharmacist. Two of them have already been hired by the Philadelphia VA Medical Center and the two others have applied here at the Wilkes-Barre VA. It's a win-win for both the residents and the Veterans they will soon care for within the VA system.

Finding Passionate Nurses to Serve our Veterans

Most staff who work at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center take great pride in serving our nation's heroes. Nowhere else is that sense of satisfaction more on display than with our great VA nursing staff. In today's work climate, it can be a challenge recruiting and retaining the best for nurses who have a passion for their profession. That challenge is what nurse recruiter Jamie Accardi faces every day. COVID-19 has changed the nurse recruiting landscape. We have added new nursing positions throughout the hospital, that coupled with the retirement of others, has created openings that we continue to fill.

Jamie's grandfather was a Veteran and helping take care of him is where she drew her passion for nursing and the VA.

"It is very comforting that I help serve our nation's Veterans. My goal is to recruit the best to serve them. I want to hire nurses who are looking to make a difference. Our Veterans deserve it."

— **Jamie Accardi, RN** — Nurse Recruiter at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

The Wilkes-Barre VA has a lot to offer potential nurses. New hires start off with 5 weeks' vacation, which is usually unheard in the private sector, especially for newly board-certified nurses. The VA also offers a great benefits package, along with a retirement pension for nurses who make it a career.

Nurse recruiter is a challenging position, but Jamie loves it. What she likes most about the position is that she helps people get a professional job that will make a huge impact on their individual lives.

"I try to make them feel comfortable with the process. It's a win-win for both the hired nurse and VA. That's why I love it."

— **Jamie Accardi, RN** — Nurse Recruiter at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center

If you're a nurse looking for a rewarding position serving our nation's Veterans at the Wilkes-Barre VA, apply at www.usajobs.gov. For additional information on how to apply, contact Jamie Accardi, nurse recruiter at 570-824-3421 ext. 24348.



COURTYARD WELL-USED BY CLC RESIDENTS GETS MAKEOVER

Summer is upon us and with the help of the Wilkes-Barre VA's Arts and Humanities Committee (AHC), the Community Living Center (CLC) residents have a newly renovated space to enjoy.

AHC received funding from the National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events to enhance the Community Living Center (CLC) Sensory Garden, a courtyard adjacent to the CLC. The area has received a total makeover, with an emphasis on the VA using creative arts to promote a healing environment. The garden was repurposed with freshly painted benches and walkways, brightly colored music making garden instruments and rubber mulch.

"AHC team members worked hard to determine which music making garden instruments would be most beneficial for our Veterans. We're excited to give the Veterans more opportunities to express themselves in creative ways. I'm sure they will enjoy making music in the beautiful sensory garden."

Amie O'Malia - Chief, Center for Development and Civic Engagement

The bulk of the physical renovation to promote the therapeutic environment was carried out by the great teamwork of the Wilkes-Barre VA's Facility Management Service (FMS). The FMS grounds crew members worked by pulling weeds, mowing grass, trimming trees, emptying garbage bins of debris that collected over the winter. Brian James, Leo Sims and John Sabecky pressure washed the concrete and prepped the areas for painters Josh Bohinski and Rich Benesky. Carpenters, Gerard Cope, Ron Titus and Joe Thomas were instrumental in cutting the bases and mounting the music making garden instruments onto them and Randy Conley, Brian James, Leo Sims and Paul Ubaldini installed the instruments.

Over the past two years, the CLC Veterans have endured many safety measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. The newly renovated outdoor sensory garden should be a therapeutic place our CLC Veterans will enjoy for years to come.



"Our department takes great pride in going above and beyond to make a positive impact for our Veterans. The department decided to freshen up the whole area and Josh Bohinski took the time to add stencil to the benches. The little extras really make a difference."

– Eugene Thomas - Supervisor Grounds/Motor Vehicle Operations



Wilkes-Barre VA OVER 71 YEARS OF CHANGE AND COMMITMENT TO OUR VETERANS

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

When looking through the archives of the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, one can see the sense of pride the community had for our Veterans and this hospital. When the doors opened to the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center in the late summer of 1950, it was considered one of the country's finest. The 475-bed facility cost twelve million dollars to build. The builders of the hospital combined all the best features of an ultra-modern medical center, the comforts of a luxury hotel, and the efficiency of a streamlined office building. It was state-of-the art at the time.

But what made the hospital truly great were its caregivers and volunteers. The Doctors, Nurses and support staff who treated the many injured patients from World War I, World War II and the Korean War. The new facility filled a great need for Northeastern Pennsylvania.

In the 1950s, most area families had loved ones who either served or were currently serving in the military. Many local community organizations were also very active in donating their time, goods and talent to the Wilkes-Barre VA. Donations came in from all over the area. Many organizations donated new console televisions, sun deck furniture and, believe it or not, cigarettes for the Veteran patients. Entertainers from all over the country seemed to perform for our injured Veterans every week. Musicians, singers, comedy acts, school bands, vaudeville casts, theater actors and athletes all came to the Wilkes-Barre VA. It was truly a remarkable time in our history.

In the past 71 years society has sure changed, much of the civic organizations who gave so much to the Wilkes-Barre VA have disappeared along with our older generation of Veterans. Although things have changed, non-military organizations have stepped up and continue to donate time and resources for today's Veterans.

Our commitment to the present care of our Veterans has never wavered. In addition to our Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, we also provide health care services through one of seven Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, which serve Veterans in 18 counties in Pennsylvania and one in New York State.

The health service offerings at our facilities have also broadened to include out-patient primary care, mental health care and specialty care services such as cardiology, vision, hearing, urology, physical therapy, laboratory, and nutrition services and much more.

Today, the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center's Professional Staff and Volunteers are as dedicated as ever to fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

To become part of the VA healthcare community please log onto usajobs.gov or for donating or volunteering your time please contact the Wilkes-Barre VA's Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) at 570-830-7022.

Call Center

1-877-928-2621

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