



For Immediate Release

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WVAMC Welcomes VA Sec., Delaware Delegation and Veteran Leaders for Annual Summit

By James Pernol, Public Affairs Specialist

Wilmington, Del. - Wilmington VA Medical Center Director Vince Kane welcomed U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, The Honorable Denis McDonough, for a tour of the medical center ahead of the annual Veterans Summit hosted by Senator Tom Carper (D-Del) held on campus. Secretary McDonough greeted and talked with Veterans awaiting care to hear their stories and get feedback from them on the care provided at Wilmington VAMC. He was greeted by Air Force Veteran, Franklin Terrey, who shared he has been receiving his care at Wilmington for 8 years and stated he knows he's in the right place.

Part of the tour included Wilmington's new drive thru COVID clinic, where Secretary McDonough and Senator Carper spoke with Veterans waiting in line to receive their vaccine. Both leaders also engaged in discussion with pharmacy and nursing staff about how the clinic is going. "Splendid work done today by the staff and volunteers at the Wilmington VAMC COVID vaccine drive-through clinic, 73% of Veterans enrolled here are fully vaccinated," **said Secretary McDonough.**

Delaware Senator Tom Carper held his annual Veterans Summit at the Wilmington VA Medical Center on Monday for a discussion on Veteran Suicide Prevention and mental health awareness. Carper's summit helps to bring together representatives from Veteran Service Organizations (VSO's) to meet with legislative leaders to discuss the best ways to meet the Veterans' needs. Among those in attendance were Senator Chris Coons, and Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester (all D-Del.), Delaware Lt. Governor Bethany Hall Long and Wilmington VA Medical Center Director Vince Kane along with other VSO members.

Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, and the 11th in Delaware. The VA estimates that 20 Veterans die from suicide every day. Mental health and crisis support services are critical for people showing signs of suicide risk in their thoughts or behavior. The VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has partnered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through a call to action for state and local communities to implement the 2018-2028 National Strategy for the Prevention of Veteran Suicide. The aim of the National Strategy is to prevent suicide among at-risk Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) using a comprehensive public health approach. The National Strategy provides a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts, and contributing to a national focus on preventing and ending suicide among Veterans.

"Suicide prevention remains a top priority for me. It is reassuring to work alongside Delaware's leadership at today's Veterans Summit to further collaborate on ways to tackle this very challenging and important matter in hopes of ending Veteran suicide," **said Secretary McDonough.** The number one takeaway today is that suicide is preventable. For any Veteran who is in crisis, please reach out to us. We are here for you and have the resources and tools to help immediately."

"Today I was honored to join the congressional delegation and U.S Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and leaders in Delaware and across the nation to discuss the importance of ensuring our veterans and families have the services that they need," **said Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long.** "Our service

members often bring home scars that are not visible and suffer in silence. It is estimated that 22 veterans die from suicide a day in the United States. We must do better. I have been honored to launch with Governor Carney and the Wilmington VA the Governors Challenge which aims to end suicide among our veterans. Thank you to the partners including the Behavioral Health consortium who are actively taking steps to ensure our veterans and their families are taken care of.”

“The Wilmington VA is proud of the outstanding work of our staff to provide essential mental health care to our Veterans,” **said Director Kane.** “We are excited for our innovative partnership with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to work together to raise awareness and prevent suicide among Veterans.” Services are available for those who need help. **Veterans can call the VA’s 24/7 National Crisis Line (1-800-273- 8255 and Press 1) or the Delaware Hope Line (1-833-9-HOPEDE).**

More Information:

Wilmington VA Medical Center provides health care services to approximately 33,000 Veterans through its main medical center and five CBOCs in Delaware and southern New Jersey. For more information, please visit www.wilmington.va.gov.



Wilmington VA Medical Center, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE 19805

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Additional photos available upon request.