



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# To The Point

## VASNHS Newsletter

Winter 2024

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## VA National Homeless Mission

### VASNHS focused on unsheltered Veterans in 2024



Las Vegas has been chosen as one of six cities of focus for unsheltered Veterans this year by the Department of Veterans Affairs. VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) is increasing its outreach efforts to help meet VA's goal to house 38,000+ Veterans experiencing homelessness nationwide. Throughout the winter months, VASNHS Community Resource and Referral Centers (CRRCs) is working with community partners to identify and assist the population of homeless Veterans in Southern Nevada.

"We know that winter is a hard time of year for homeless Veterans," said Liz Jarman, CRRC program coordinator. "We also know that during the holidays people are isolated and it can be a really hard time of year, so we want to make sure that we can help as many people to find shelter during that time as possible."

VASNHS has planned several outreach events over the winter to connect with homeless Veterans in the community. During Project Homeless Connect at the Cambridge Community Center, VA and community partners were able to provide services to more than 100 homeless Veterans. VASNHS staff will also be conducting several pop-up events in areas of Las Vegas with large homeless populations.

"The goal of these events is to connect with homeless Veterans and let them know we care," said Jarman. "If they are ready, we can help them find them shelter that same day. If not, we do progressive engagement to follow up within 48 hours and let them know that there are services available for support."

Additionally, within the next few months, VASNHS plans to introduce a medical mobile unit to support at-risk and homeless Veterans with mental health clinicians, social workers and other staff.

For a list of resources for Veterans who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, please visit our website at <https://www.va.gov/southern-nevada-health-care/health-services/homeless-veteran-care/>



## Veteran Highlight Story

### VA and Project Hero changing lives through cycling



James and Richard Sterrett enjoying the Hero cycle event in Las Vegas

James and Richard Sterrett share several bonds: Father and Son, Veterans, and cyclists. While James, 41, lives in St. George, Utah, he visits Las Vegas to see Richard, 74, and take part in Project Hero cycling events with other Veterans he has met through VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System's physical therapy program. Richard Sterrett served in the Air Force from 1968 until 1992 and lives in Las Vegas. He began riding with the VASNHS cycling group 10 years ago with the help of his physical therapist. Due to his service-connected injuries, he worked with an electric motor-assisted bike, and eventually was able to acquire a recumbent bike through the help of VASNHS and Project Hero.

"I've had four back surgeries and both my knees worked on, but I needed to keep moving," said Richard. "My physical therapist said 'well if you can't run, you can't walk long distances, can you ride a bike?' So he introduced me to a group of Veteran who rode once a week, and after a few months of training, helped me to get me a bike to ride on my own."

This experience has helped to inspire his son, James. When James left the Marines Corps in 2015, he was looking for something to keep him active and help him deal with physical and mental injuries he experienced while deployed. "I first found out about this program through my dad," James said. "He got me involved with his physical therapist at the VA and that's how I found out about also Project Hero. He told me how they ride together and they were correlating together to do not just physical therapy, but mental as well."

Since 2018, the duo has made the Veterans Day "Hero Ride" in Las Vegas an annual event. "No matter how far away I am, I will make the trip here with the family so my dad can see the grand kids and we can ride together," said James. Project Hero is a national non-profit organization dedicated to helping Veterans affected by PTSD, TBI and injury achieve rehabilitation, recovery, and resilience in their daily lives and increasing awareness to combat the national mental health emergency posed by PTSD and TBI. The organization also works with VA to build and provide adaptive bikes to physically-challenged and injured Veterans.

The Veterans Day "Hero Ride" is just one of many Ride 2 Recovery events that Project Hero and VA put on throughout the year. "Ride 2 Recovery started when a recreational therapist with VA thought cycling would be an effective alternative therapy for PTSD and TBI treatment as well as physical injury rehabilitation," said Peter Bylsma, Director of Marketing for Project Hero.

Cycling has helped them build not only a connection with each other, but with other Veteran cyclists. "We love the camaraderie of everybody that gets together at these rides. We all pick on each other, but we treat each other like family, and you know you're in a safe place with other people who've served alongside you."



## VA Launches Long-term Veteran Caregiver Program

### VASNHS starts Medical Foster Home (MFH) program for Las Vegas in 2024



VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) has announced its Medical Foster Home (MFH) program to reach the growing needs of our Veteran population in 2024. This community-based living arrangement is intended for Veterans living alone who can no longer safely live independently and require 24/7 care.

A MFH is an affordable alternative to traditional nursing home placement. It's a unique partnership between licensed adult care homes and VA. The program meets the increasing demand for long-term care services through care in a non-institutional setting. VA ensures that the caregiver is well trained to provide VA planned care. They'll receive bi-annual training for direct patient care instruction from the Safety, MFH team, and Home-Based Primary Care team. Then, caregivers have access to the 24-hour nurse advice line to assist with residents' needs during after-hours and holidays. Veterans are responsible for directly paying the caregivers each month. Rates are negotiable and based on the Veteran's level of care needs and set by the caregivers.



VASNHS is looking for caring and nurturing individuals with some caregiving experience to foster Veterans. Caregivers must be at least 21 years of age, hold or willing to pursue a State of Nevada license to operate an adult care home, be financially stable, and pass background checks. Additionally, MFH caregivers must pass initial and yearly VA home inspections.

If you know someone who may be interested in becoming a MFH Caregiver, review the [Medical Foster Home Checklist](#), then call the **VASNHS MFH Coordinator** at (702) 791-9000 extension 13494. Watch more here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U767AaA5A9A>



## Mamava Lactation POD Donations

VASNHS receives 5 lactation PODS to meet Women Veterans healthcare needs



New Mamava lactation POD installed at the Womens Health Clinic in the VASNHS Medical Center

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) has stepped-up in a big way for Women Veterans. Throughout the healthcare system, freestanding lactation pods have been installed at four area primary care clinics, and the medical center's ICU, emergency department and Women's health clinic.

These pods are designed to give nursing mothers a private and convenient place to breast-feed and pump. "It's a relief to have an area dedicated to relax and just nurse, and to not be interrupted," said Veteran and employee Ebony McCrae. "When you're relaxed and your mind is at ease, it was a better nursing experience for me." Breast-feeding contributes to health and wellness benefits for both mothers and babies by offering a balance of nutrients and can boost the baby's immune system.

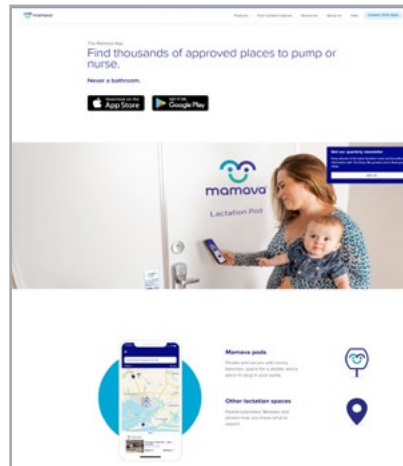
"The addition of Mamava lactation pods helps us create an inclusive workplace," explained Cindy Clement-Miller, VASNHS Women Veteran Program Manager. "It helps us meet lactation laws, sends a strong message to our Women Veterans, and shows that we prioritize their needs."

The lactation units are easily accessible locations for Women Veterans, family members and employees. "I would put a chair in the shower in our locker room and shut the door and pump there," said Emergency Department nurse Kristin Manning. "The concern is more for male coworkers being uncomfortable and, therefore, private space is more suitable."

Access to these free-standing spaces goes through the Mamava app. It also shows where the pods are located within the medical center and if they are in use and even to book the pod.



Download the [Mamava App](#) to book and find other POD locations.



Cindy Clement-Miller, VASNHS Women Veteran Program Manager inspects the inside of the new Mamava lactation POD

## PACT Act Updates

VBA still processing PACT Act claims, so don't delay!

- The 2022 PACT Act expanded health care and benefits for millions of Veterans exposed to toxic hazards during their service, and their survivors – including many Vietnam-era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 Veterans.
- Veterans and their survivors have filed more than one million claims for toxic exposure-related benefits under the PACT Act since President Biden signed it into law Aug. 10, 2022.
- As of December 9 2023, VA has processed more than 814,000 of these claims, granting 76.1% of them and awarding more than \$3.32 billion in earned benefits to Veterans and survivors.
- VA's public-facing [PACT Act dashboard](#) is published every other Friday and has the latest data and information on how VA is implementing the PACT Act. For more info: <https://department.va.gov/pactdata/>
- The PACT Act is here to stay, and Veterans and survivors can file for benefits anytime. The sooner you file, the sooner you can start getting your earned benefits.
- Learn more about the PACT Act and apply for benefits by visiting [www.va.gov/PACT](http://www.va.gov/PACT) or calling **1-800-MY-VA-411**.

## PACT Act - *Knowing your options makes a difference!*

Let the VA help with where to start your claim process...

Check out the VA's numerous informational products available 24/7



VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Southern Nevada Healthcare System

Go to the website to view or download "What's The Difference" handout: <https://bit.ly/3XtIKoW>



# VASNHS Improving Public Safety

## VASNHS Police Debut Body-Worn Cameras



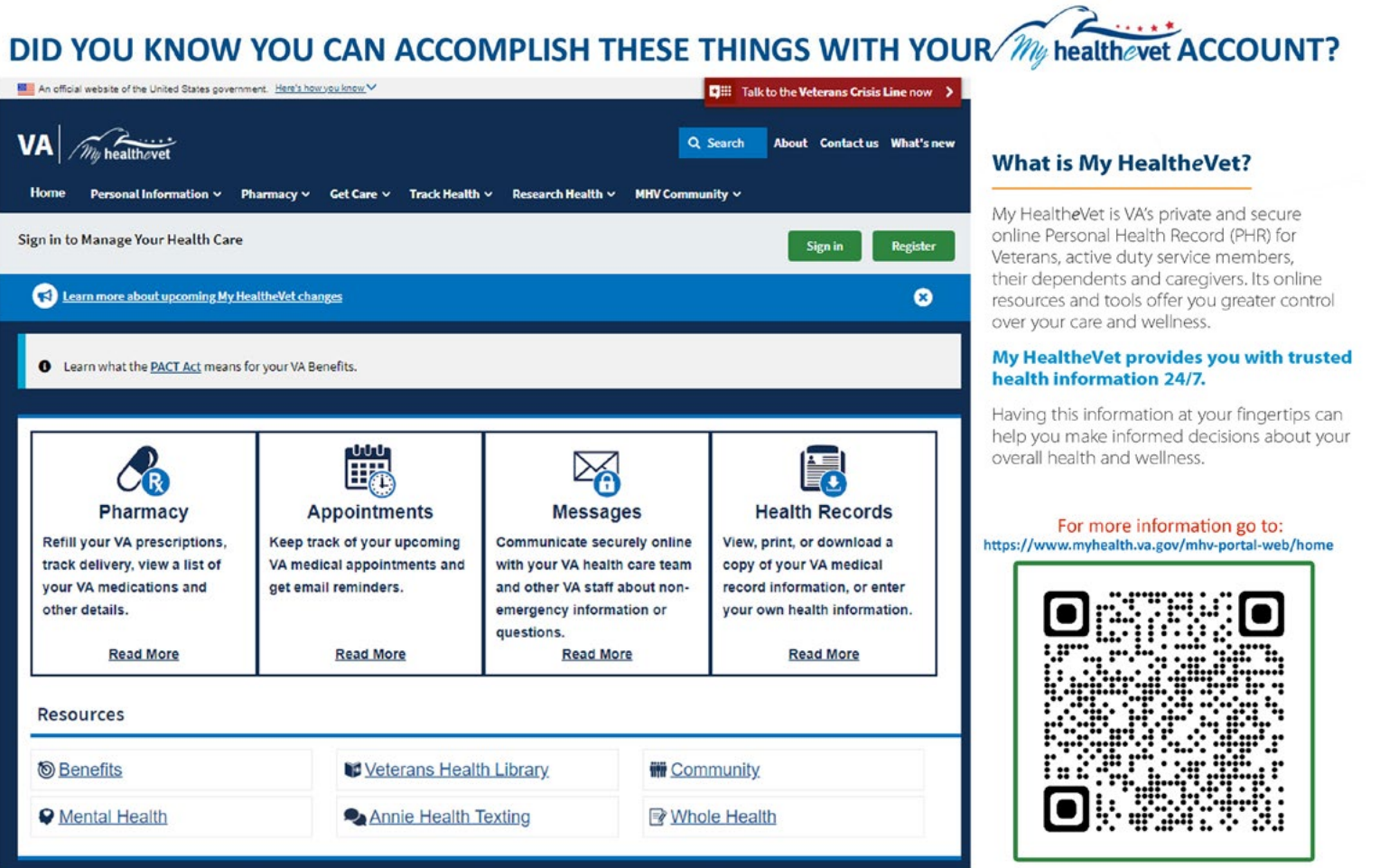
The mission of the VA Police is to “protect those who served” – including Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors – and as well as VA’s great public servants. As a part of this mission, VA Police will begin to use body-worn cameras (BWC). The use of body-worn cameras began Dec. 11 at VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System facilities. All VA police officers nationwide will be utilizing body-worn cameras and in-car cameras by the end of 2023.

“The police officers at VA Southern Nevada have been making important contributions to our facility to ensure that our Nation’s heroes receive care in a secure environment,” said Travis Payne, VASNHS Chief of Police. “The introduction of body worn cameras for our police officers will not only foster a more respectful atmosphere during police encounters but also improve the perception of police transparency among Veterans and staff members. Research indicates that the implementation of body worn cameras will bolster the overall safety within our Veteran community.” This policy will increase the safety of VA facilities, improve transparency, build trust, support officers, promote de-escalation by both law enforcement officers and those they encounter, enhance the ability to resolve officer-involved incidents and complaints and more.

VA is implementing this policy as a part of President Biden’s Executive Order 14074, “Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety,” as well as the bipartisan Cleland-Dole Act of 2022. The executive order requires that all Federal law enforcement agencies use body-worn cameras to promote equitable, transparent, accountable, constitutional, and effective law enforcement practices, and the Cleland-Dole Act requires that all VA Police officers wear body cameras that record and store video and audio.

# VA Updating MyHealtheVet Website Features

## New changes coming to MHV to improve access for Veterans healthcare



MyHealtheVet Website

VA is building the new My HealtheVet portal on VA.gov so you can manage your health care needs in the same place that you manage your other VA benefits and services. We’re also improving the trusted health tools you use today. And we want your feedback to help us make sure these tools serve your needs.

As part of this effort, we’ve built a new version of My HealtheVet secure messaging on VA.gov. You can communicate privately and securely with your VA health care team on My HealtheVet on VA.gov just as you do on My HealtheVet today. We encourage you to try it now.

Specific features in My HealtheVet are available to you based on your account type. If you are a Veteran who receives care at VA, learn how to upgrade your account to Premium at your local VA facility. Access many more features, tools and resources by registering for a My HealtheVet account at [www.myhealth.va.gov](https://www.myhealth.va.gov).

For questions or more information contact the VASNHS MHV representatives: (702) 791-9000 ext. 15233 or ext. 15437

## Upcoming Events Jan - Mar 2024 ( Go to [www.lasvegas.va.gov](https://www.lasvegas.va.gov) for current dates & times)

- January** - National Volunteer Blood Donor/Whole Health Month

**Jan. 15** - Federal Holiday: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**February** - African-American History Month/American Heart Month

**Feb 1** - National 43rd Veteran Wheelchair Games Registration starts

**Feb. 2** - National Wear Red Day - Go Red For Women
- Feb. 11 - 17** - National Salute to Veteran Patients Week

**Feb. 19** - Federal Holiday: Presidents Day

**March** - Womens' History, National Social Work and Nutrition Month

**Mar. 20-26** - National LGBT Health Awareness Week

**March 29** - Vietnam Veterans Day



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## Changing Behavior for Better Health

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) **"To The Point Newsletter"** was designed to give Veterans, families, caregivers, and stakeholders information on the programs, services and the knowledge to better educate them of whole-health approaches to wellness.

Together, with a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), each Veteran works together with health care professionals to plan for whole-person care and life-long health and wellness. The Veteran is the focal point at the center of the health team so he or she can make informed decisions about their health care plan with the provider, nursing, nutrition, mental health, and services in the VA and local community.



# National Veterans Wheelchair Games

Registration open Feb. 1 - April 5

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games is co-presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Both organizations offer programs that help veterans with disabilities increase their independence, health, and quality of life through wheelchair sports and recreation.

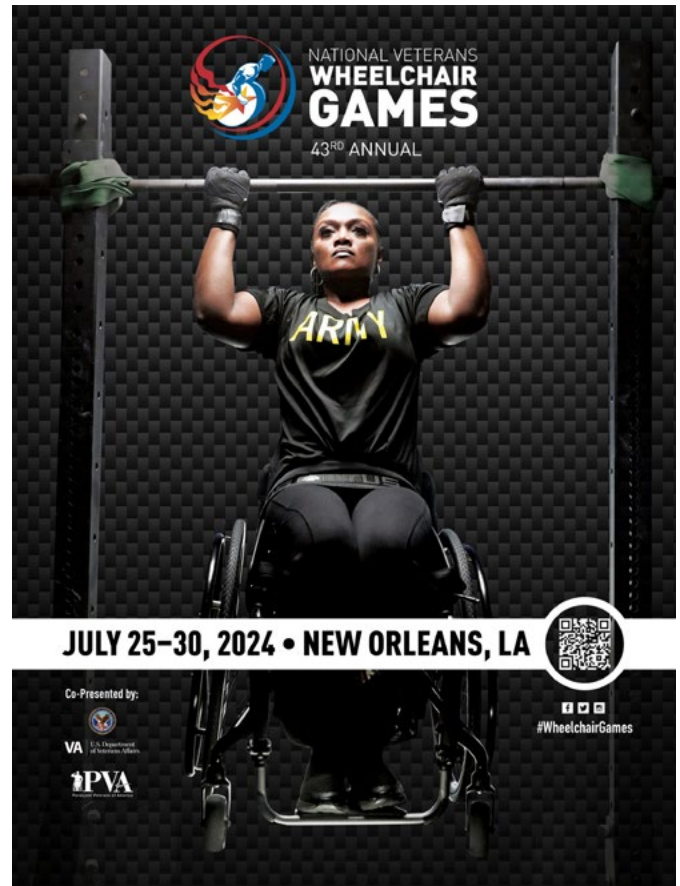
Veterans are often first exposed to adaptive sports through their local VA Medical Center or PVA Chapter.

The Local Organizing Committee is working tirelessly to make the Wheelchair Games one to remember.

This event is further made possible by the support, time, and expertise of our generous sponsors; our passionate volunteers; and hundreds of VA therapists, physicians, nurses, and PVA Chapter staff from across the country.

For more information go to:  
<https://wheelchairgames.org/>

For registration go to:  
<https://wheelchairgames.org/athletes/registration/>



For the latest information in the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System check out the following social media apps and WEB links:

VASNHS Website  
Free Email Alerts



Scan Here to Sign-up!



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