

PRESS RELEASE: 24-21

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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

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Bay Pines VA Recognizes Survivors, Highlights Clothesline Project in Support of Sexual Assault Awareness Month

BAY PINES, FL — Today, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System announced plans for the organization’s annual Clothesline Project, in support of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

“We’re proud to recognize every Veteran survivor who has experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST) through the Clothesline Project,” said Paul M. Russo, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Director/CEO. “Thanks to efforts by the MST coordinator, these survivors are able to Break the Silence that often surrounds MST through inspirational artwork and powerful, personal messages.”

The kick-off to the month-long awareness campaign begins Tuesday, April 2, at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg Campus, at 140 7th Ave. S, St. Petersburg, Fla. The Clothesline Project is on display from noon to 2 p.m., and affords Veterans, visitors, and employees the opportunity to see the journey of MST survivors through their artwork.

“One in three women and one in 50 men have disclosed having experienced MST to their VA providers,” added Lisa Shoemaker, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System MST coordinator. “As we honor Veterans who are survivors of MST, our hope is that others will see these messages and find the strength to come forward.”

Shoemaker has coordinated to take Project Clothesline on the road where every Veteran and employee can see the messages of hope at their local VA clinics. The dates, times and locations scheduled for Project Clothesline across Bay Pines VA Healthcare System are below.

- 2 April USF St. Petersburg Campus – 140 7th Ave S, St. Petersburg, Fla. (Noon—2 p.m.)
- 3 April Lee County VA Health Clinic – 2489 Diplomat Parkway East, Cape Coral, Fla. (11 a.m.—1:30 p.m.)
- 4 April Port Charlotte VA Clinic – 4161 Tamiami Trail, Suite 401, Port Charlotte, Fla. (10 a.m.—1:30 p.m.)
- 16 April North Pinellas VA Clinic – 26286 US Highway 19 North, Clearwater, Fla. (10 a.m.—1:30 p.m.)
- 17 April Sebring VA Clinic – 5901 US Highway 27 South, Sebring, Fla. (11 a.m.—1:30 p.m.)
- 19 April C. W. Bill Young VAMC – 10000 Bay Pines Boulevard, Bay Pines, Fla. (10 a.m.—1 p.m.)

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- 23 April Bradenton VA Clinic – 5520 State Route 64, Suite 101, Bradenton, Fla. (11 a.m.—1:30 p.m.)
- 24 April Naples VA Clinic – 800 Goodlette Road North, Suite 120, Naples, Fla. (10 a.m.—1:30 p.m.)
- 30 April Sarasota VA Clinic – 5682 Bee Ridge Road, Suite 100, Sarasota, Fla. (10 a.m.—1:30 p.m.)

“Veterans, their caregivers, and family members should know that MST-related services across our healthcare system are comprehensive, expansive, and provided free of charge,” added Russo. “Also, Veterans are not required to provide documentation of any MST experience, do not need to have reported the MST experience at the time it occurred, sought care within a certain time frame, or applied for service connection for an MST-related condition to get care.”

Additionally, former service members who may be ineligible for VA Healthcare enrollment in VHA may still be eligible for health care related to their MST experience. Former service members are encouraged to reach out to VA eligibility or directly to the MST coordinator for assistance.

“Across Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, we want all Veterans to know that we believe you and we believe in you,” said Shoemaker.

Details on our MST-related services offered across Bay Pines VA healthcare System are available at MentalHealth.va.gov/MST.

For additional information on this event or future coverage opportunities: Contact Bay Pines VA Healthcare System’s Public Affairs Officer Rob Frazier at Robert.Frazier1@va.gov or 727-317-8120. See the latest news, stories, and Veteran health care information available on our official [website](#) or official [social media accounts](#).

April is Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month

Veteran's Clothesline Project



The Clothesline Project is a visual display that raises awareness of military sexual trauma, sexual assault, and sexual abuse.

To 'break the silence' that can often surround these experiences, male and female Veterans who received treatment for MST at Bay Pines VA designed these shirts to reflect their experience of sexual trauma and recovery. Designing these shirts allowed Veterans to speak up about experiences they may have previously kept silent and continues to allow others to bear witness to their pain, strength, and recovery.



Learn more about VA treatment and health care options related to Military Sexual Trauma

April 2 12 – 2 p.m. at
USF St. Petersburg Campus

April 3 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at
Lee County VA Health Care Center

April 4 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at
Port Charlotte VA Clinic

April 16 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at
North Pinellas VA Clinic

April 17 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at
Sebring VA Clinic

April 19 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at
C.W.Y. Bill Young VA Medical Center

April 23 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at
Bradenton VA Clinic

April 24 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. at
Naples VA Clinic

April 30 10 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at
Sarasota VA Clinic

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