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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 Earns Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Nursing Three-Peat

BAY PINES, Fla — Today, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System proudly announces that the Associate Director for Patient Care Services, Ms. Carrie Hawkins, has earned the Secretary of Veterans Affairs’ top recognition for nurse executives.

Ms. Hawkins’ selection marks the third-consecutive year a Bay Pines VA leader has been selected as a recipient of the [Secretary’s Award for Excellence in Nursing](#).

“We wouldn’t have a world-class healthcare system without world-class nurses,” offered VA Secretary Denis McDonough in his message to all VA employees. “VA nurses are the strong foundation of all we do to care for Veterans... and everyone who encounters our healthcare system—as a patient, as a visitor, as an employee—is touched by one of our nurses.”

Ms. Hawkins joins the winners of five other categories (registered nurse/staff role, nurse/expanded role, licensed practical nurse, nursing assistant, and medical center director) for the official award ceremony in Washington, D.C., the first week in May.

“Ms. Hawkins epitomizes leadership in every capacity of her role as the senior nurse executive for our healthcare system,” said Bay Pines VA Director/CEO Paul M. Russo. “I, along with our executive leadership team and nearly 1,500 nurses throughout our organization, congratulate her on this tremendous achievement.”

Hawkins was appointed to her current role in 2020 after serving with the Denver VA Medical Center since 2005. Throughout her career, Ms. Hawkins has served as the deputy associate director for patient care services, chief nurse of inpatient care, and as the VISN 19 virtual intensive care unit coordinator.

Last year, Ms. Sonya Arnold was recognized as the registered nurse in an expanded role, for her leadership as the Bay Pines VA chief of geriatric and extended care. And, in 2022, Mr. Russo earned honors as the VA’s executive director recipient for his advocacy of nurses and their role in Veteran care.

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For additional information on this release: 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](#).

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About Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, is one of the nation’s largest tertiary healthcare facilities, caring for more than 105,000 Veterans residing across ten counties, in the southwest region of Florida. Our healthcare system includes nine facilities: C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center, located in Bay Pines, Lee County Healthcare Center, located in Cape Coral, and seven outpatient clinics located in Bradenton, Naples, North Pinellas, Port Charlotte, Sarasota, St. Petersburg, and Sebring. We employ more than 4,500 health care professionals, and we are accredited by The Joint Commission and more than 10 additional accreditation and certification organizations. Learn more at: [VA Bay Pines Health Care | Veterans Affairs](#).