VETERANS GAZETTE
Quarterly Newsletter for Veterans and Visitors | Spring 2020

Col. Demas T. Craw VA Clinic
Dedication
Welcome to the Spring 2020 Edition
of The Veterans Gazette.

Hello all and welcome Spring! Spring is a time for new beginnings, with trees and flowers blossoming and a fresh start from Winter’s slumber. As to new beginnings, we are pleased to announce the opening of the Colonel Demas T. Craw Clinic in Traverse City, which held a Dedication Ceremony on January 31, 2020. We were honored to have Colonel Craw’s son, Nicolas, be part of the ceremony, in honor of his father.

Currently, we are in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, where we are honoring social isolation and distancing guidelines. Through VA’s virtual care tools, we are able to use available technology to make sure our patients and staff are as safe as possible during this time. We are also excited to use this technology to offer special programs which give support to our Veterans, such as Whole Health classes and MOVE! Program support classes.

While we spring forward, we hope this virus is nearing the end, lending us to resume some sense of normalcy. This pandemic has offered our VA an opportunity to find alternative methods of providing Veterans with healthcare and support not only locally, but also in much needed rural areas. We are pleased to have these opportunities to reach out across our 35 counties, right in the safety of your very own homes.

Thank you for your service and we are grateful to serve you for all your healthcare needs!

-Dr. Barbara Bates
Medical Center Director

“Proudly Serving All Who Have Served”

On the Cover:
Colonel Demas T. Craw VA Clinic Dedication Ceremony, located in Traverse City, MI. Pictured, is Col. Craw in uniform, the clinic and ribbon cutting event. We were honored to have Colonel Craw’s son, Nicolas, be a part of the ceremony. Special thanks to all the Veterans who participated, the building contractor, KF Commercial Properties, LLC, VA Central Office, VISN 10, and Aleda E. Lutz VA Staff, and all who contributed to making this celebration such a wonderful memory in history.
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Showcases Technology-Based Care for Veterans

The Aleda E. Lutz VA, Saginaw, and multiple Community Based Outpatient Clinics promotes a number of online tools and mobile applications to help Veterans keep track of their health records, manage their appointments and prescriptions, receive weight loss support, access tailored programs, and so much more.

My HealtheVet (www.myhealth.va.gov)

Veterans who are using My HealtheVet can’t help but love the VA’s Personal Health Record (PHR). Its web-based resources and tools offer you greater control over your care and wellness. My HealtheVet can empower you to make informed decisions and become an active partner in your health care, avoid duplicate tests and procedures, move easily from doctor to doctor with the VA Blue Button, improve the efficiency and safety of your health care, and receive personalized information from your VA Electronic Health Record. Some of the site’s favorite features include refilling prescriptions, communicating with their health care teams through secure messaging, making their own appointments, and the opportunity to read their own health care team’s notes from appointments and hospital stay, check labs and other test, and all from their home computers, tablets and mobile devices. Since the launch of My HealtheVet in 2003, the site has over 5.2 Million Registrants, over 152 Million Prescription Refills Requests, 2,271,986 active users, 4,703,790 secure messages sent/received and a 77.4 % User satisfaction!

Telehealth (telehealth.va.gov)

Local Veterans are using telehealth services to connect with their care teams and to share important health information. These virtual appointments are taking place in Veterans’ homes, VA clinics and VA hospitals and are changing the way Veterans access VA health care. More than 900,000 Veterans used VA telehealth services to participate in over 2.6 million episodes of care in Fiscal Year 2019.

Beyond connecting virtually with Veterans local care teams, Telehealth prides itself on the use of Clinical Video Telehealth to connect the Veterans with specialists all across the country, often accessing resources at National Service Hubs. Home Telehealth is also utilized by care teams to provide case management and disease management education to Veterans in their homes through mobile monitoring and video technologies. VA video Connect is a VA solution that allows Veterans to virtually meet up with their health care providers from anywhere, making health care convenient and reducing travel times for Veterans. We also have the ability to provide Store and Forward Telehealth, which allows an imager to take a picture of a dermatological site in question and send the images to a dermatologist at the Detroit VA or VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System to review and provide recommendations, decreasing travel and wait times.

VA Mobile Apps (mobile.va.gov/appstore)

Local Veterans are using many of VA’s nearly two dozen patient-facing web and mobile apps. These online tools assist Veterans with issues ranging from anger management, weight loss, and mental health, to refilling prescriptions and scheduling their medical appointments. VA’s mobile apps are utilized by thousands of Veterans each year and aim to improve the health of Veterans by providing technology they can access outside of a traditional office visit, saving them time and travel.

For more information about VA’s Connected Care programs, visit connectedcare.va.gov.

If you are not yet enrolled in VA healthcare, there are a number of ways to learn about eligibility and enrollment. You may apply on-line at www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction, visit any VA facility for an enrollment packet, or contact Eligibility at 989-497-2500, Ext. 13120 or 13121.
Aleda E. Lutz VA to shift operations in preparation for COVID-19 surge

Part of a tri-state maneuver to preserve resources and equipment for sickest Veterans

The Aleda E. Lutz VA will begin shifting operations to preserve resources this weekend in preparation for an anticipated surge of COVID-19 patients. This is part of a tri-state operation, including VA Medical Centers across Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 10. VISN 10 oversees all VA Medical Centers in Cleveland, Columbus, Chillicothe, Dayton, Cincinnati, Northern Indiana, Indianapolis, Detroit, Saginaw, Battle Creek, and Ann Arbor.

Effective Monday, March 23, 2020, community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in the following areas will temporarily move to triage and virtual care only. This includes the VA CBOCs in Alpena, Bad Axe, Cadillac, Clare, Cheboygan, Gaylord, Grayling, Oscoda, and Traverse City. At these locations, routine appointments will be converted to virtual care, as appropriate.

“This measure is in the best interest of our nation’s heroes,” said Dr. Barbara Bates, Medical Center Director. “We are working to eliminate unnecessary face-to-face contact to help minimize the spread of COVID-19 and maximize our resource allocation to help treat the sickest Veterans. We remain open for business and our mission is unchanged from the charge President Abraham Lincoln gave us more than 150 years ago: To care for him who shall have borne the battle.”

For Veterans in these affected areas who have questions about routine medical care or required lab work, please contact your Community Based Outpatient Clinic Primary Care Team at the number listed below, or secure message them using My HealtheVet.

For those needing PHARMACY REFILLS:
Pharmacy Call Center – Extension 11705 (open during business hours)
Automated Refill Line – Extension 13990 (requires SSN and prescription number on bottle or package).

Veteran may also request refills using My HealtheVet.

The Aleda E. Lutz VA greatly values our Veterans’ understanding and flexibility as we continue to adapt to new information and combat this global pandemic. We are committed to the health care needs of all Veterans, and look forward to returning to normal operations as soon as we can.

Letter to the Editor:

The Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), Healthcare Annex, and Vet Centers take great pride in caring for our Veterans and consider it a privilege to serve those who have made many sacrifices to keep our freedoms we still enjoy today. Despite our current state with COVID-19 and the impact on our communities, I would like to take this time to acknowledge our Vietnam Veterans, specifically, as we approach Vietnam War Veterans Day this March 29, 2020.

We are currently celebrating the 50th Anniversary Commemoration period initiated in 2015 and ending in 2025, which corresponds to each year between 1965 and 1975, the inclusive dates U.S. combat troops were deployed in Vietnam. This Commemoration honors all Vietnam Veterans. We make no distinction between Veterans who served in-country, in-theater, or who were stationed elsewhere during the Vietnam War period.

In past years, our medical center has recognized and honored our Vietnam Veterans by hosting various events, including pinning ceremonies, thus welcoming them home and thanking them for their service. Unfortunately, due to our current situation of restricting visitors and limiting traffic to the VA, we are unable to honor our Vietnam Veterans in the fashion they deserve. We hope to be able to rededicate time to honor them once the many restrictions are lifted.

On behalf of the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, its CBOCS, Healthcare Annex, and Vet Centers, we would like to say Welcome Home and We Thank You for Your Service in recognition of Welcome Home Vietnam War Veterans Day this March 29, 2020! We are truly grateful to your commitments and sacrifices you have made for our country! Thank you for continuing to “Choose VA” for all your health care services and needs.

Dr. Barbara Bates,
Medical Center Director
The Blue Water Navy (BWN) Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 (PL 116-23) extended the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2020, Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of Vietnam, or who had service in the Korean Demilitarized Zone, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides, such as Agent Orange, and may be entitled to service connection for any of the 14 conditions related to herbicide exposure.

To learn more, go to va.gov and search for “Blue Water Navy.”

Intimate Partner Violence and Coronavirus

During a public crisis, which disrupts daily life, it is important to recognize those who are experiencing or using intimate partner violence (IPV). Talk to your provider to connect you to someone to talk to or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)*1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

Veteran Service Officers

Contact Information available on our web front page in the Current State document at www.saginaw.va.gov

The Mid-Michigan Veterans Advocacy Council

Is Looking for New Members!

The Council, a board independent from Aleda E. Lutz VAMC, provides Veterans a greater voice by collecting information from them to improve both medical and mental health programs.

Meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday each month from 1:00 p.m.—3:00 p.m.

Location: Healthcare Annex, Group Room 103

4241 Barnard St., Saginaw, MI 48603

Please contact one of the individuals below if you are interested in serving on this Council for Veterans!

Tom Arnold (989) 284-1266, Bill Sutfin (989) 781-3779, Dan Solheim, (989) 254-8222 and (989) 873-6088. email hawkfoot@gmail.com

Resources for Managing Stress and Anxiety Associated with COVID-19

The National Center for PTSD has developed several virtual resources for managing stress and anxiety associated with the COVID-19 virus outbreak. Learn strategies to help manage stress and reduce anxiety at https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/index.asp
ChooseVA
To enroll for healthcare, we encourage you to visit www.vets.gov, visiting any one of our VA facilities, or calling Eligibility at 989-497-2500, Extension 13120 or 13121.

Smoking Cessation Available

SMOKE-FREE
MAKE THE COMMITMENT
Better health starts today.

Talk with your VA provider or healthcare team, as well as contacting Dr. Trevor Grice, for Smoking Cessation Classes at 989-497-2500, Extension 12454.

Veterans Health Information Exchange (VHIE) is a program that securely shares certain parts of your VA health record with community care providers.

To learn more about the ‘OPT-OUT’ model of electronic health information sharing or to sign up, visit: www.va.gov/VLER.

Strive for a Healthy Weight

Learn more by visiting https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Strive_for_a_Healthy_Weight.asp

VA encourages Veterans and employees to respect each other while receiving care!

The 2020 VA2K and health fair is currently postponed until further notice.

Whole Health: A Deeper Dive
Into your Health & Wellness

Join us for VIRTUAL weekly classes
For more information call Becky at 989-497-2500, Extension 13534

“HARMLESS FLIRTING”

IT’S NOT A COMPLIMENT, IT’S HARASSMENT
High Reliability Organization Training  
—Patient Safety

Facebook Live—Healthy Kitchen Demonstration

Process Improvements—Root Cause Analysis Team Award
Employee of the Year
2019
Tracy Smith, RN,
Primary Care

Employee of the Month 2020
January/February/March

Adam Gonzalez, Patient Relations Specialist
Mark Bourassa, Lead Patient Relations Specialist
Kimberly Evans, LPN, Primary Care

National Salute to Veteran Patients Week
Suicide Prevention
If you know a Veteran who may experience thoughts of suicide, getting them the assistance they need, as quickly as possible, is crucial. The “BeThere” campaign offers information on how you can help.
Visit www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere
Veterans Crisis Line:
1-800-273-8255 Press 1

Are you a caregiver of a Veteran and need assistance? Call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274

Community Care
Learn about Community Care and the Mission Act by visiting: www.va.gov/communitycare

VA Transportation
1. They transport Veterans FROM the Aleda E. Lutz VA in Saginaw TO Ann Arbor and Detroit VA Medical Center’s. Call 989-497-2500, Extension 13108 to schedule a ride.
2. They transport Veterans FROM Gaylord, Grayling, West Branch, and Standish to Saginaw, Ann Arbor, and Detroit. Call 989-497-2500, Extension 13125 to schedule a ride.

Current State of Our VA Medical Center
Please visit the front page of our internet site https://www.saginaw.va.gov/ for the most recent, updated information regarding our current state of our medical center. There are other important topics, resources and contact information relevant to the current Coronavirus pandemic.

Virtual Classes Offered
Log onto our Facebook page to learn of virtual events being scheduled.
https://www.facebook.com/VAStIngaw

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
Learn more at www.prevention.va.gov

VEText
Text Message Appointment Reminders
New Feature Alert—for Veterans waiting greater than 30 days for an appointment. VEText will offer sooner appointments when available. Make sure your current cell phone # and address is listed in our records.
Special Program Contacts

Suicide Prevention Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11778

Caregiver Support Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11686

Former Prisoner of War Advocate
989-497-2500, Extension 11798

Homeless Veteran Program
989-497-2500, Extension 11773

LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11783

Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 15713

Multiple Sclerosis Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11440

Patient Advocate
989-497-2500, Extension 13012

Spinal Cord Injury Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11783

Transition Care Management
989-497-2500, Extension 11794

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators
989-497-2500, Extension 11916 or Extension 11694

Women Veterans Program Manager
989-497-2500, Extension 11560

Whole Health
989-497-2500, Extension 13313

VET Centers
Readjustment Counseling Services

Saginaw—5360 Hampton Place,
Phone (989) 321-4650

Traverse City—3766 N. US 31 South,
Phone (231) 935-0051

Office of Inspector General—1-800-409-9926

Joint Commission—1-800-994-6610
Contact Us

Community Based Outpatient Clinics:

Lt. Col. Clement C. Van Wagoner VA
Alpena  180 N. State Avenue
989-356-8720

Bad Axe  1142 S. Van Dyke Rd, Ste. 100
989-497-2500, Ext. 15602

Cadillac  1909 N. Mitchell Street
231-775-4401, Ext. 11410

Cheboygan County (Mackinaw)
14540 Mackinaw Highway
231-436-5176

Clare  11775 N. Isabella Road
989-386-8113, Ext. 13530

Gaylord  806 S. Otsego
989-732-7525, Ext. 13520

Grayling  1680 Hartwick Pines
989-344-2002

Oscoda  5671 Skeel Avenue, Ste. 4
989-747-0026, Ext. 11411

Col. Demas T. Craw VA Clinic
Traverse City  701 U.S. 31 South
800-406-5143, Ext. 11412

Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center
1500 Weiss Street, Saginaw, MI

VA Healthcare Annex
4241 Barnard Road, Saginaw, MI

800-406-5143
Call Center, Extension 11230
Tele-Nurse, Extension 11240

We invite you to sign-up for our periodic e-mail and website updates by visiting our webpage and subscribing with your e-mail address.