

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center  
1500 Weiss Street  
Saginaw, MI 48602Contact: Carrie Seward, Public Affairs Officer  
(989) 497-2500, extension 13020  
carrie.seward@va.gov

**We invite any media interested in interviewing our VA staff to learn more about care and services to contact our Public Affairs Officer at 989-497-2500, extension 13020 or e-mail [carrie.seward@va.gov](mailto:carrie.seward@va.gov)**

## **Aleda E. Lutz VA Staff Adapt Quickly to Continue Caring for Veterans in Michigan**

Employees of the Aleda E. Lutz VA in Saginaw, and VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Alpena, Bad Axe, Cadillac, Cheboygan, Clare, Gaylord, Grayling, Oscoda, and Traverse City, have never experienced anything like COVID 19 within the VA before. It all became an unbelievable reality in Mid-March when the facility's Emergency Incident Command was stood up on March 13, and a "normal day at work" changed, drastically.

Immediately, their staff took action to convert Veteran appointments to phone calls and telehealth/virtual care. The goal to keep Veterans and staff safe, meant they needed to decrease the number of face-to-face personal visits to the VA Medical Center and clinics. However, they were also prepared to take care of Veterans who had urgent/essential care needs, in person, when necessary.

See what two Veteran brothers recently shared on the facility's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/VASaginaw](http://www.facebook.com/VASaginaw)):

"I am a vet, I have issues with depression, and when it's at its worse I retreat to my home, my safe place. I do not socialize, nor do I take very good care of myself. The longer I stay here the more I get into my own head. and the less I care about my hygiene, and health. It's not a very good place. Since I have joined the MOVE program I still retreat to my safe place when I get depressed, but with the socializing offered through the program I don't stay there as long. I found MOVE to be a good alternative to my safe place. I am forever grateful to the VA and the professionals of the move program. Since the onset of this virus my VA stepped up, and made decisions with my well-being, and to keep me safe. I thank you all for that. Since the onset of this virus, the professionals of the MOVE program stepped up to ensure that I wouldn't miss a thing by utilizing the VVA (VA Virtual Care) to bring the move program into our homes. I am able to socialize with my fellow vets, exercise, counseling, and much of the same I would do before. These professionals I call my essentials have scheduled sessions to keep me involved for the entire week. It is only on weekends do I find myself able to isolate and get into my own head. You see I need people in my life. I thank God for my Saginaw VA, and I thank God for my essentials in the Move program. Thank you all, A grateful Vet." -Veteran, Tim Malenfant

“I would like to thank Dr. Bates (Director), Dr. Hines (Chief of Staff), and Carol Dopp (Associate Director) for making it possible for the MOVE program to keep operating. The dedicated MOVE staff has went above and beyond making it possible for us veterans to stay in contact. They have set up virtual classes with your help. These sessions not only help us exercise, but also keep us watching what we eat. Actually, just staying in contact, and showing how much they care, helps us to cope with these trying times. Again, Thank You, and please keep this going.” -Veteran, Dave Malenfant

Note: MOVE is a Veteran Weight, Nutrition, and Health Management Program.

There have been so many other success stories, and VA staff have stayed adaptable to daily, and sometimes hourly, changes to processes throughout the last few weeks. Staff have been assigned to other jobs throughout the VA, they opened up a low-complexity Surgical/Medical Care Unit and made additional beds available in their Community Living Center/Palliative Care to transfer Veterans from Detroit and Ann Arbor so they can concentrate their care delivery to COVID 19 Veterans and the community, they deployed several staff to the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center in Detroit and the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System to help their staff care for Veterans, and so much more!

“I’ve seen things done at our VA I’ve never witnessed in all my years within the VA healthcare system,” stated Dr. Barbara Bates, Aleda E. Lutz VA, Saginaw, Medical Center Director. “It has been remarkable. I want to thank our Incident Command Team, led by our Chief of Staff, Dr. James Hines, and all staff who have contributed to upholding our noble mission of providing care to Veterans, whether that be here in Saginaw, or deploying to help our sister VA sites of care.”

The VA wants Veterans and their families to know they continue to be available to them. Should any Veteran have a need for care, please call ahead to their Primary Care Team, and arrangements will be made for a virtual care visit, or perhaps a face-to-face visit, if deemed essential.

Please continue to stay safe and healthy, and follow the recommendations for stopping the spread of COVID 19 by visiting [https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/?utm\\_source=VA%20Alert&utm\\_medium=Banner&utm\\_campaign=Coronavirus&utm\\_content=link%20to%20VA%20Public%20Health%20page](https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/?utm_source=VA%20Alert&utm_medium=Banner&utm_campaign=Coronavirus&utm_content=link%20to%20VA%20Public%20Health%20page)

The Aleda E. Lutz VAMC in Saginaw, Michigan operates an 81-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation Community Living Center. It provides care to over 37,400 Veterans in a 35-county geographic area, from mid-Michigan to the Mackinac Bridge. Veterans also receive care at one of our nine VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics located throughout Michigan. More information about this VA can be found at [www.saginaw.va.gov](http://www.saginaw.va.gov).

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