2019 National Veterans Golden Age Games
Welcome to the Summer 2019 Edition of The Veterans Gazette.

The MISSION Act of 2018 officially went into effect on June 6, 2019. Nationally, due to the high volumes of consults, we are finding community care appointments are taking longer than expected time. In addition, Urgent Care locations are being added to increase the availability to Veterans in need of this service. VA is also working to improve the prescription filling process. We ask for your patience as we work through some of these challenges.

Our medical center is committed to providing exceptional service to Veterans in a timely fashion. Same-day appointments are available for mental health services and walk-in Whole Health classes are also being offered. We know you best and this is why we want you to CHOOSE VA for your quality, comprehensive care.

The healthcare you receive at our medical center revolves around you, the Veteran. We want you to be directly involved in your healthcare! We continue to provide alternative treatment methods with our Whole Health Program, offering classes such as, Tai Chi, Yoga, Healing Touch, and Mindfulness, to mention a few. Veterans are providing positive feedback with these alternative programs and there is evidence in which Veterans who practiced mindfulness, developed stronger connections between specific brain networks, which resulted in an easing of their pain symptoms. These types of programs, as well as other specialized services we offer, are what sets us apart and allows us to be the choice you make for your healthcare needs.

Our medical center employees strive to serve Veterans with the highest level of care and respect!

“Proudly Serving Those Who Have Served”

-Dr. Barbara Bates
Medical Center Director

On the Cover:
The Aleda E. Lutz VAMC sent three Veterans to the National Veterans Golden Age Games (NVGAG) to Anchorage, AK to compete in a variety of different events. Of the three Veterans from our VA team, two were legally blind. The NVGAG is the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program competition in the United States, offering multi-event sports and recreational activities for senior Veterans to compete, while improving their quality of life. The VA encourages it’s senior Veterans to be proactive in embracing a healthier lifestyle, as the NVGAG’s motto is “Fitness for Life.” The Games are open for Veterans, ages 55 and older, and who receive care at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
The Aleda E. Lutz VA Voluntary Service is Recruiting Volunteers

Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center’s Voluntary Service is currently looking for new volunteers to join our team and assist Veterans at our medical center located at 1500 Weiss St, Saginaw, MI 48602. Voluntary Service has three programs available for volunteers to join.

The Red Vest Program provides guidance to Veterans and their families in various locations throughout the medical center. The Red Vest Greeter position is stationed at the main entrance of the medical center greeting Veterans, families and visitors as they enter the facility, as well as providing directions. Other Red Vest opportunities are available on each hospital floor where they would provide Veterans directions or escort them to appointments upon exiting the elevator. Requirements for these volunteer opportunities include friendly individuals with strong customer service skills. Physical requirements include the ability to transport Veterans in wheelchairs weighing up to 350 pounds, if needed. The program operates Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with flexible shifts available.

The second program for volunteers to join is the Patient Escort Program. This program offers Veterans an escort to their appointments, which may include wheelchair transportation. It also entails delivering mail and/or packages to residents staying in our Community Living Center, transporting laboratory samples, and folding/stuffing envelopes on occasion. Requirements for this volunteer opportunity include the ability to transport Veterans in wheelchairs weighing up to 350 pounds and who possess strong customer service skills. The program operates Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with flexible shifts available.

The Parking Lot Shuttle Program is our third volunteer opportunity. We are currently recruiting volunteers to drive VA shuttle vehicles around the VA parking lot to transport patient, families, or visitors to and from entrances to the medical center. Requirements include a valid Michigan drivers license, proof of insurance, and a clean driving record. This position will also require the individual to have a physical examination conducted at the VA.

For more information or if interested, please contact Voluntary Service at 989-497-2500.

Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center Recognized for it’s Leadership on Environmental Sustainability

In recognition for its achievement and innovation in health care sustainability, the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center in Saginaw, MI, received the Greenhealth Emerald Award from Practice Greenhealth, the nation’s leading organization dedicated to environmental sustainability in healthcare.

Practice Greenhealth is the leading membership and networking organization for sustainable healthcare, delivering environmental solutions to more than 1,100 U.S. hospitals and health systems. Learn more at practicegreenhealth.org.

Greenhealth Emerald Award recognizes healthcare facilities which are setting the standard in eliminating mercury, reducing and recycling waste, sustainable sourcing, and other areas. Winning hospitals have demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability and shown leadership in the local community and in the healthcare sector.

“As more and more hospitals embed sustainability into their operations, the bar for environmental excellence increases every year,” said Gary Cohen, president of Practice Greenhealth. “Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center demonstrates the kind of leadership, innovation, and performance that can drive the entire health sector toward more environmentally responsible practices.”
Feature Articles

Make the Connection—"The Moment When" Campaign

In conjunction with Mental Health Month in May, Make the Connection has launched “The Moment When” campaign aimed at starting a conversation about mental health to include treatment and recovery. If you visit https://maketheconnection.net/ you will find heartfelt videos of veterans who share their stories about the moment when they decided to seek mental health help to the moment when they realized treatment was helping. The goal is to destigmatize mental health and provide hope for Mental Health Recovery.

On a local level, the Aleda E. Lutz VA employs five Peer Support Specialists who are trained to use their stories to help engage patients with serious mental illness and substance use disorders into care and act as role models of recovery through facilitating group and individual sessions.

Local Peer Support Specialist, David Slaughter, shares his moment and recovery with us. “It was April 2014. I was standing out in front of a Homeless Shelter in Saginaw, MI with a little more than 2 years of sobriety. I felt hopeless and lost; I was at a familiar fork in the road. I had a decision to make: One, continue to stay clean and sober and utilize community 12-Step self-help programs or two, seek mental health treatment for what was obvious mental health issues. I decided to commit to something I never committed to in the past, a wholistic approach to mental, physical, and spiritual care at the same time. On January 29, 2019, I celebrated seven years of clean and sober days, four years of no smoking cigarettes, and almost five years of continued mental health treatment. I am living my best life!”

Peer Support Specialist Spencer Daniels recalls the following about his moment and his journey. “My years of denial resulted in untreated Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and my anger had become rage, hypervigilance was nearly constant, and nightmares were almost nightly. Depression had now set in and my relationship with family continued to get worse. Suicide now became an idea of “the only way” to escape. My moment was realizing I could not do this to my two beautiful daughters. I sought counseling here at the VA. Through my recovery journey I was introduced to the concept of peer support. I loved the idea of turning the aftermath of combat and a career in law enforcement into something that could help others with the “demons” they face from PTSD, anger, depression, etc. Helping Veterans regain a sense of purpose and hope has been the most rewarding job I have ever had. I’ve learned to not hate the journey and continue to work on keeping my perspective of life in check.”

Everyone has a story. As VA employees, we are lucky to be a part of our Veteran patients’ stories and hopefully help them along their journey.

Farmer’s Market Returns to Aleda E. Lutz VA on Tuesdays

The Aleda E. Lutz VA in Saginaw, 1500 Weiss Street, welcomes back the Farmer’s Market to their front lawn. The Farmer’s Market is a great way to introduce locally-grown produce and other products to promote health and wellness.

The Farmer’s Market will be held on Tuesdays, from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., beginning June 18, 2019, and will be located in front of the medical center on the lawn.

Veterans, visitors, and others are more than welcome to stop by and support local gardeners and farmers bringing fresh produce and other items to our community. We sure hope to see you!
Information You Can Use

Hazardous Materials Exposure
Veterans who have served may have been exposed to hazardous materials, which could have resulted in illness. Examples include burn pit or agent orange exposure. To learn more about hazardous materials exposure and the registry, visit the following link: https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/ Please note, you will need to complete the registry paperwork before you can make an appointment at a VA Medical Center. The phone number for the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center’s Specialty Exam Clinic is 989-497-2500, Ext. 11349. If you have any questions about the specialty exam for burn pit, agent orange, or other hazardous materials exposures, please be sure to call that number. Thank you!

Dental Services
We often hear Veterans asking questions about how they may be able to obtain community dental care if they are not eligible for VA dental care. We’d like to share information on this topic. Please visit our Health Care Services A-Z listing and click on Dental to learn more by visiting https://www.saginaw.va.gov/services/index.asp.

Choose VA
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.

Whole Health presents
Self Healing Touch Walk-In Classes
No order necessary. Call the Whole Health Hotline (989) 321-4555 for status of walk-in class updates.

Drop-In Yoga Classes
Veterans enrolled for care at the VA may drop in to the Yoga class on Thursdays. Please call the Whole Health Hotline (989) 321-4555 to obtain updates for class cancellations.

Whole Health: A Deeper Dive
Into your health & wellness

Join us for a monthly class to learn more about improving different areas of your health and well-being, such as physical activity, personal development, nutrition, recharge, mindful awareness and more. Get introduced to goal setting with a Whole Health Coach. For more information or to schedule, call 989-497-2500, Extension 11744 or 11703.

VLER Health Exchange is a program that securely shares certain parts of your VA health record with community care providers. To learn more or to sign up, visit: www.va.gov/VLER
Candids

Director’s ICARE Certificate and Coin Awardees

Patient Safety Great Catch Award

VA2K Walk and Health Fair
Our VA Staff Show Compassion to Veteran Nearing End of Life!

A Veteran in our Palliative Care Unit was nearing his end of life and was concerned he wouldn’t be able to say his last goodbyes to his son who was incarcerated. Our dedicated VA staff took quick action to help him fulfill his last wishes and he passed away peacefully two days after he was able to face-time his son. We want to thank the staff who coordinated technology and an opportunity with the correctional facility to make this happen. They are Margaret Abbenante, Chief, Social Work; Mike Pressler, RN, Palliative Care; Bill Noonan, Glenn Stringer, Mark Stanley, Mitch Pinkley, and Nicholas Leist of Information Technology Operations and Service.

You are all to be commended!

Volunteer Recognition Banquet—April 11, 2019

National Public Service Recognition Week

Yellow Belt Student Report Outs (Process Improvements)
**Program Highlights**

**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](http://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](http://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.

**Introduction to Whole Health Classes**
Take control of your health and wellbeing.
Contact: Michael Ritchings 989-306-1306

**National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**
Learn more at [www.prevention.va.gov](http://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.

**Construction Project Update**
The new Welcome Center is NOW OPEN—Located there is MSA/Urgent Care, Billing, Eligibility, Patient Advocate, Release of Information, and MyHealtheVet. The ambulance bay for drop off remains closed. Ambulatory Surgery Waiting Room —1st floor lobby; Check-in remains on the 3rd Floor. Compensation and Pension Exam Rooms and Check-in is on the 5th floor, Check-in is in Room 5150. The 3rd Floor Podiatry Clinic is in room 3170. Coumadin is in Room 2224, 2nd floor.
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

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:

**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

**Traverse City** 3271 Racquet Club  
231-932-9720, Ext. 11412

**Grand Traverse VA Clinic**  
(Physical Therapy and Mental Health)  
880 Munson  
800-406-5143, Ext. 13653

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

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www.va.gov

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