

Healthcare For Heroes

ERIE VA MEDICAL CENTER | 2014 ANNUAL REPORT



VA
HEALTH
CARE | Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

Message from the Director

Dear Veterans and community partners,

On behalf of everyone here at the Erie VA Medical Center, thank you for your continued support of our medical center. While I joined the team just after the new fiscal year, it is my honor to present this 2014 Annual Report – a glimpse into the heart of the Erie VAMC.

In 2014, access to timely VA health care became a focal point throughout the Nation. One of the truly great things about Erie VAMC is that access to timely care has been a focal point here at our facility for several years now. Because of that, we were able to continue providing same day access for both primary care and behavioral health care needs and were able to improve access in several specialty care clinics so Veterans' health needs continue to be met in a timely manner.

In this report, you will see Erie VAMC's continued commitment to serving Veterans. Everything we accomplished in 2014 – from enhancing access to care by expanding virtual care services, to collaborating with community partners to end homelessness among Veterans, to improving and expanding our facility landscape – was done to enhance Veteran-centered care.

This year has certainly been a year of transition for the VA – both nationally and on a local level. But the opportunities to restore, refocus, and reinvigorate bring much hope to the future of the VA and the care of our Nation's heroes.

We have one of the most noble missions in our country – to serve our Nation's Veterans. It's a mission that our staff, community partners, and Veterans have poured their hearts and souls into supporting. And for that, I thank you. I look forward to the years ahead as we continue to build upon Erie VAMC's long and proud legacy of caring for Veterans.





Erie VA Medical Center was honored to welcome home more than 800 Veterans and their families during our annual Welcome Home Veterans Appreciation Event at the Erie Zoo. While this event is open to Veterans of all eras, it is specifically held to connect returning Veterans and their families with VA and community resources available to them. VA representatives and other Veteran-related community organizations were on-site to provide attendees with information and to link them to appropriate services.

Expanding Virtual Care

My HealthVet

Expanding Access at your fingertips

13,335 Erie VAMC patients have a MHV account

10,122 Erie VAMC patients have a premium account

10,657 Secure Messages sent by Erie VAMC patients

Last year, Erie VAMC made a strong commitment to expand online access to health care by enrolling and authenticating more patients in the My HealthVet program. This program allows Veterans to refill prescriptions, send secure messages to their providers, view lab results, view upcoming appointments, view provider notes and much more. Today, nearly one out of two Veterans enrolled at the Erie VAMC is managing his or her health care online.

Behavioral Health Access on Campus

Erie VAMC was the first in the VISN (Veterans Integrated Service Network) to successfully pilot a telehealth partnership with a local university. This collaborative effort uses telehealth technology to seamlessly bring VA behavioral health support to Veteran students at Edinboro University.

“We heard from our OEF/OIF/OND program that student Veterans would often comment about not being able to squeeze in appointments between classes,” says Theresa Allen, Erie VA Telehealth Technician. “The beauty of telehealth care is that we can work around patients’ schedules to provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place.”

The Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) program launched in June 2014. CVT uses cameras, in this case computer cameras, to link the Veteran face-to-face with an Erie VA Behavioral Health specialist over a secure online connection. No more squeezing behavioral health care in between classes. Veterans can focus on their behavioral health care needs when they want, where they want, and how they want.

Launched Tele-Cardiac Rehab Program

In 2014, Erie VAMC launched the first telecardiac rehab program in our VISN. Patients using this program visit their VA clinic at least once for an initial visit and then are followed at home through video conferencing with a physical therapist from Erie. This program provides easy access to follow-up care while allowing Veterans the convenience of recovering in the comfort of their own home.

2014 TeleHealth Usage



TeleHealth
5,455



Secure Messaging
5,764



Store & Forward
Telehealth
4,097



Clinical TeleHealth
1,160



Home TeleHealth
668

9,773 Erie VA Patients Used TeleHealth



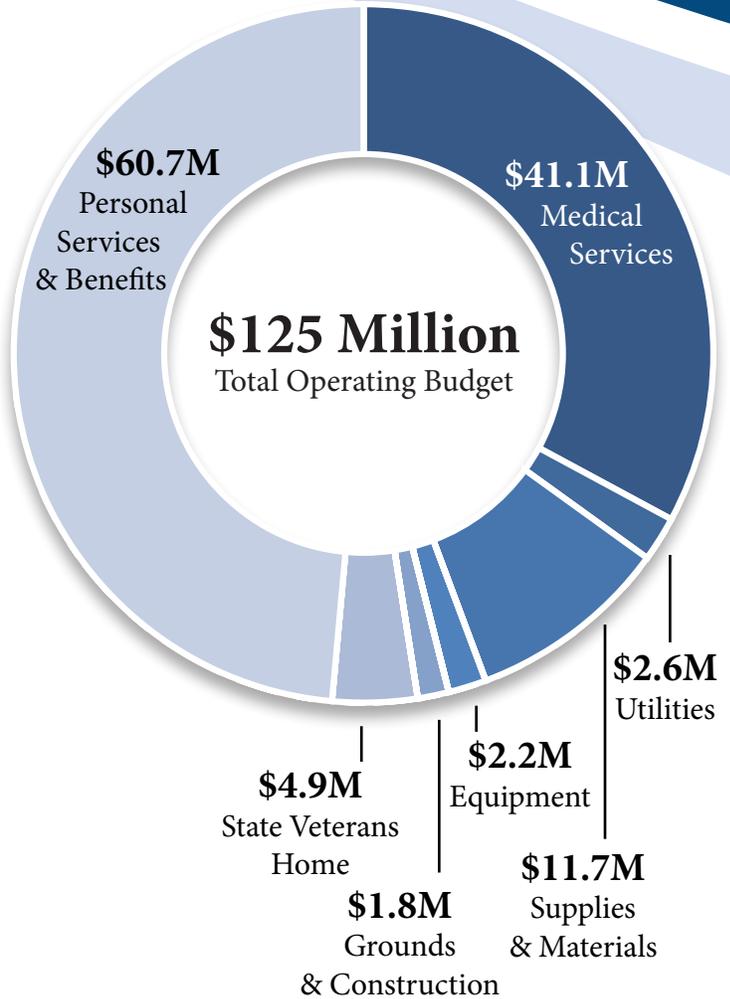
Urgent Care Center

The popularity of our Urgent Care Center (UCC) continues to grow as we reached a record-high of **7,958 UCC visits in 2014**. Erie VAMC's UCC provides Veterans with easy, convenient access to care for urgent care needs. The UCC is open every day from 8am-8pm including weekends and holidays.

Non-Institutional Care

Part of Erie VAMC's Veteran-centered approach to health care is offering care in a location that is most convenient to the patient. Our Non-Institutional Care program meets this need by offering care at home or in their community for patients who have chronic health conditions or limited mobility.

Non-Institutional Care services, such as Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) and Home Telehealth, specifically benefit Veterans in rural areas by enhancing access to VA care. In 2014, Erie VAMC added two registered nurses, one social worker and two dietitians to expand HBPC services available to McKean, Venango, and Warren counties. This shift to non-institutional care has dramatically reduced hospital admissions and helps keep patients healthier at home.

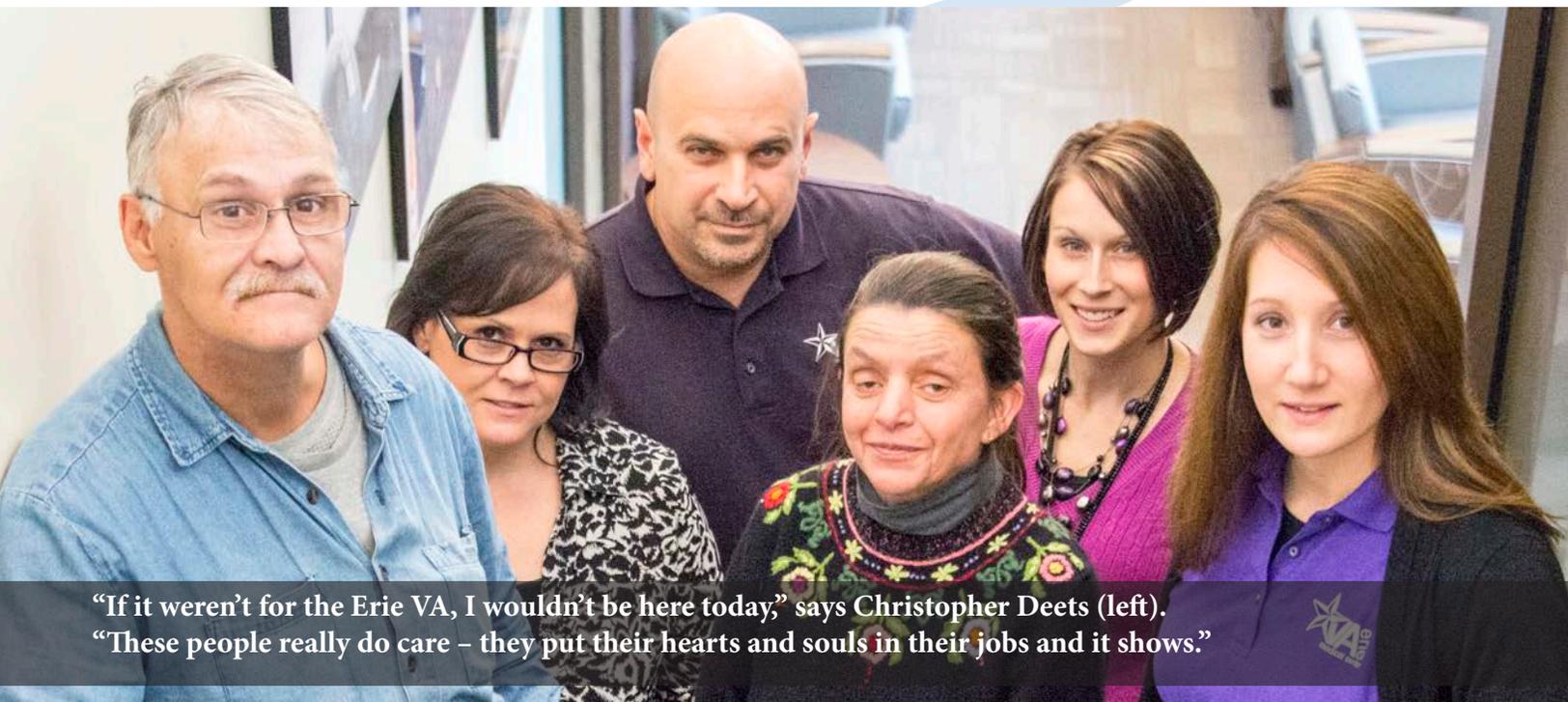


Erie VA By The Numbers

 7,958 UCC Visits	 23,345 Unique Patients	 1,418 Women Veterans
 267,142 Outpatient Visits	 710 Employees	 1,920 OEF/OIF/OND Veterans
 \$380,932 Donations	 631 Volunteers	 47,996 Behavioral Health Visits

Eliminating Homelessness One Veteran at a Time

A story of hope



**“If it weren’t for the Erie VA, I wouldn’t be here today,” says Christopher Deets (left).
“These people really do care – they put their hearts and souls in their jobs and it shows.”**

(left to right): Christopher Deets, Janet Montgomery, Jeff Natalie, Laryssa Stolar, Deb Semanscin-Doerr, Amanda Merski.

For nearly 27 years, Christopher Deets struggled with several mental health issues, alcohol addiction, and chronic homelessness. After multiple run-ins with the law, probation violations, and suicide attempts, Deets was left feeling hopeless and defeated.

It wasn’t until about a year ago that Deets finally reached a turning point as he sat in jail. During one of his visits with Jeff Natalie, Erie VAMCs Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator, something clicked.

“[Jeff] gave me an idea that I’m better than just sitting on the street begging for money. I can be better; I can do more,” says Deets. “For the first time, I had hope that if I stopped drinking, my life might get better. For the first time, I had a goal.”

In treatment court, Deets was given one last chance to turn his life around. It was then that he

fully committed to his treatment and recovery in partnership with the Erie VAMC. With the help and support of the homeless care team, Deets found a safe and reliable home that he moved into within a month of being released from jail.

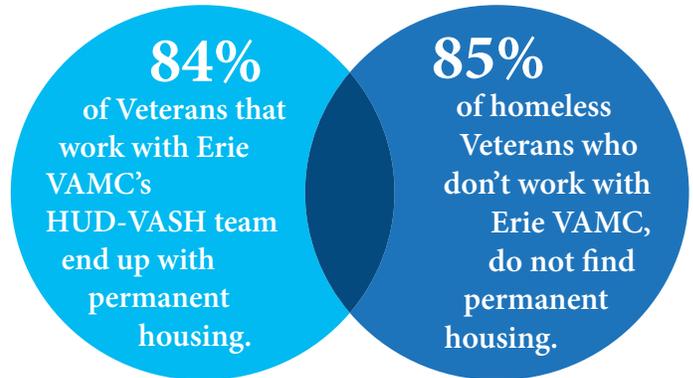
“I don’t focus on my past anymore. I focus on what I can do with the present,” says Deets. “Where I used to be greedy is now filled with an internal drive to give to others. Now, no matter how bad I feel, I get up and do something for someone else.”

Today, Deets is 9 months sober and counting. He volunteers his time at the Mental Health Association and co-founded Erie VAMC’s One Veteran at a Time support group that dedicates its time to helping other local homeless Veterans. With a roof over his head and goals to focus on, Deets’ recovery is moving forward.

Eliminating Homelessness among Veterans

Last year, the Homeless Care Team assisted more than 700 Veterans who were homeless or at imminent risk of becoming homeless. The team conducted outreach to hundreds of homeless Veterans and community partners who share their mission of ending homelessness.

The Erie VAMC Homeless Care Team was recognized as one of the Nation's top five homeless programs for their efforts in community outreach, strategic partnerships, and data collaboration.



In 2014, Erie created a locally-based data sharing process to create a comprehensive list of all homeless Veterans. This collaboration with community partners resulted in quicker identification of homeless Veterans in the community, more targeted and effective delivery of VA homeless services, and a much more accurate measurement of homelessness among Veterans in our community. This data-sharing process has become a best practice for VA homeless care teams across the country.

Expanding Veterans Justice Outreach

The number of Veterans served through the Veteran Justice Outreach program has tripled since adding a full-time Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator in 2014. The VJO Coordinator works with Veterans who are involved in the criminal justice system to connect them with VA treatment and recovery resources. In 2014, the Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator was instrumental in helping develop Erie's Veterans Court which is aimed at ensuring Veterans who are involved in the justice system can get the treatment and mentoring they need to be successful. Erie's Veterans Court launched in January 2015.

"VJO focuses on treating the invisible wounds of war that are often masked by substance abuse, alcohol dependence, and bad decision making," says Jeff Natalie, Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator. "VJO helps to give a context to make sense of it all, educate the justice system, and helps Veterans return to the sense of honor that they served with."

Number of Veterans Served via Veterans Justice Outreach

30 Veterans
2012

37 Veterans
2013

148 Veterans
2014



A Community of Support

↑ Caregiver Support Conference

Erie VAMC hosted a Caregiver Support Conference for local caregivers to provide them with education about VA services and community resources available to help them support the Veterans they care for. Erie's Caregiver Support Program provides support services to more than 250 family caregivers.

1 Recognized for Excellent Hiring Practices

Erie VAMC's Human Resources department received the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Business Award in recognition of their work going above and beyond to hire Veterans and other individuals with disabilities.

2 Mental Health Summit

Our Behavioral Health Clinic hosted a community-wide Mental Health Summit to address the specific mental health care needs of Veterans and their families and to enhance access to mental health services for Veterans. Discussions were focused on outreach and engagement, implementing recovery principles, eliminating mental health stigma, coordination of mental health services, reducing barriers to mental health services, and building community collaborations to meet the needs of Veterans' family members.

3 Community Outreach

Erie VAMC's outreach team attended more than 70 community events to actively reach out to Veterans and their families and link them to VA health care. The Homeless Care Team also attended more than 100 outreaches at local soup kitchens, warming centers, the Erie City Mission, and other activities in efforts to identify homeless Veterans in the community and to connect them to Erie VAMC's homeless services.



4 VA2K Walk & Roll Event

More than 100 employees, Veterans, and community members all came out to support local homeless Veterans during our annual VA2K Walk & Roll event. This event helps build awareness about the programs and services available to homeless Veterans while promoting health and wellness. Many participants also donated funds to support our Homeless Veterans Program.

5 Behavioral Health Clinic Open House & Art Gala

As a grand opening celebration for the new Behavioral Health Clinic, Erie VAMC hosted a Veteran Art Gala and Open House for Veterans, their families, and members of the community. The Art Gala showcased art projects that were created by Veterans involved in Erie VAMC's Behavioral Health Clinic. Each art piece represented a Veteran's journey through recovery.



3



4



2



5

Improving the Erie VAMC Landscape

Parking Garage

Expected Completion Date: Fall 2015

The long-awaited parking garage will add approximately 275 parking spaces to Erie VAMC's campus.



New Ambulatory Surgery Center

Expected Completion Date: Fall 2015

The new state-of-the-art Ambulatory Surgery Center will provide easier access for patients needing ambulatory surgery services.

Community Living Center (CLC)

Expected Start Date: TBD

The new Community Living Center will provide a more home-like environment for residents.

Now Open: New Behavioral Health Clinic

Opened: May 2014

Erie VAMC opened a new 20,000 square-foot Behavioral Health Clinic (BHC), pictured above, this past May. While Erie VAMC was pleased to celebrate the opening of the new clinic, we were even more excited about celebrating recovery for the local Veterans. As a grand opening celebration, Erie VAMC hosted a Veterans Art Gala and Open House for Veterans, their families, and members of the community.

Now Open: New Ashtabula VA Clinic

Opened: October 2014



Over the past few years, the Ashtabula VA Clinic has expanded its programs and services to meet the needs of a growing number of area Veterans seeking care. The new 6,476-square-foot clinic accommodates for continued growth as Erie VAMC expands on-site specialty services, including telehealth and behavioral health services.

Our Services

General Information

814-868-8661
1-800-274-8387 (toll free)

Appointments

814-860-2124
1-888-860-2124 (toll free)

Medication Refills

814-868-6284
1-800-274-8387 (toll free)

Eligibility

814-860-2970

Release of Information

814-860-2212

Veterans Experience Officer

814-860-2500

My HealtheVet Program

www.myhealth.va.gov
814-860-2821

Caregiver Support

814-860-2657
1-855-260-3274 (toll free)
www.caregiver.va.gov

Returning Service Members (OEF/OIF/OND)

814-860-2965

Women Veterans Program

814-860-2907

MOVE! (Weight Management)

814-860-2554

Behavioral Health Clinic

814-860-2038

Homeless Care Team

814-860-2392

Homeless Veterans Hotline

1-877-424-3838

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255
Text to 838255
www.veteranscrisisline.net

Hospice/Palliative Care (Unit 5)

814-860-2480

Community Living Center (Unit 4)

814-860-2332

Care Closer to Home

Ashtabula VA Clinic

Veterans Served:
2,258

2044 Lambros Lane
Ashtabula, OH 44004
Phone: 866-463-0912

Warren VA Clinic

Veterans Served: 1,975
3 Farm Colony Drive
Warren, PA 16365
Phone: 866-682-3250

McKean VA Clinic

Veterans Served: 1,171
23 Kennedy Street
Bradford, PA 16701
Phone: 814-368-3019

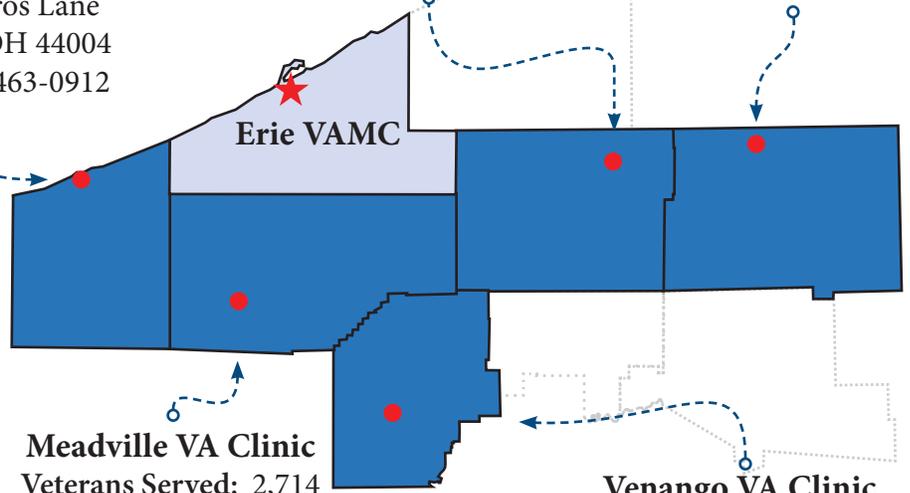
Meadville VA Clinic

Veterans Served: 2,714

16954 Conneaut Lake Road
Meadville, PA 16335
Phone: 866-962-3210

Venango VA Clinic

Veterans Served: 1,970
464 Allegheny Boulevard
Franklin, PA 16323
Phone: 866-962-3260





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