



Erie VA Medical Center Annual Report to the Community

# *Moving Forward*





Dear Veterans, Employees and Partners  
of the Erie VA Medical Center,

With the support of Veterans, employees, community members and other partners, I am pleased to report the end of another successful year of serving Veterans in 2009. In this *Report to the Community*, you will see a brief snapshot of a few of Erie VA's major accomplishments this past year.

One of the highlights for me in 2009 was the Roar on the Shore event that raised \$55,000 for Erie VA's Returning Veterans Program. This event brought exciting activities to Erie VA's own backyard. The smiles that spread across the faces of our patients as they enjoyed a motorcycle ride in the parking lot were priceless. Those smiles remind me of what an honor we have serving Veterans.

Our facility is continuously transforming to not only meet the needs of our Veterans, but to exceed their expectations. With the well being of the Veteran at the center of our mission, we continue to push the frontiers of health care by implementing new programs and services while boldly planning for the future.

This past year, we provided more services to Veterans who live in rural areas by expanding the Home Telehealth program for Veterans who have chronic illnesses or diseases. This program provides patients the care they need in the comfort of their own homes.

We have also adopted the Medical Home Model in our Primary Care Red Team. With the addition of four case managers to the team, patients receive more one-on-one care which has helped in the prevention of chronic diseases such as diabetes and high cholesterol.

The Behavioral Health program has also continued to expand, adding more employees and new programs to address the emotional and mental health issues that Veterans of all eras can face.

In the coming year, I look forward to the many opportunities we will have to improve health care for our Veterans. Through innovation among staff and volunteers along with dedication from you, our partners, Erie VA will continue to excel at building a community of support for America's Heroes, America's Veterans. Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Michael Adelman, M.D., EVAMC Director



Melissa Sundin  
Associate Director



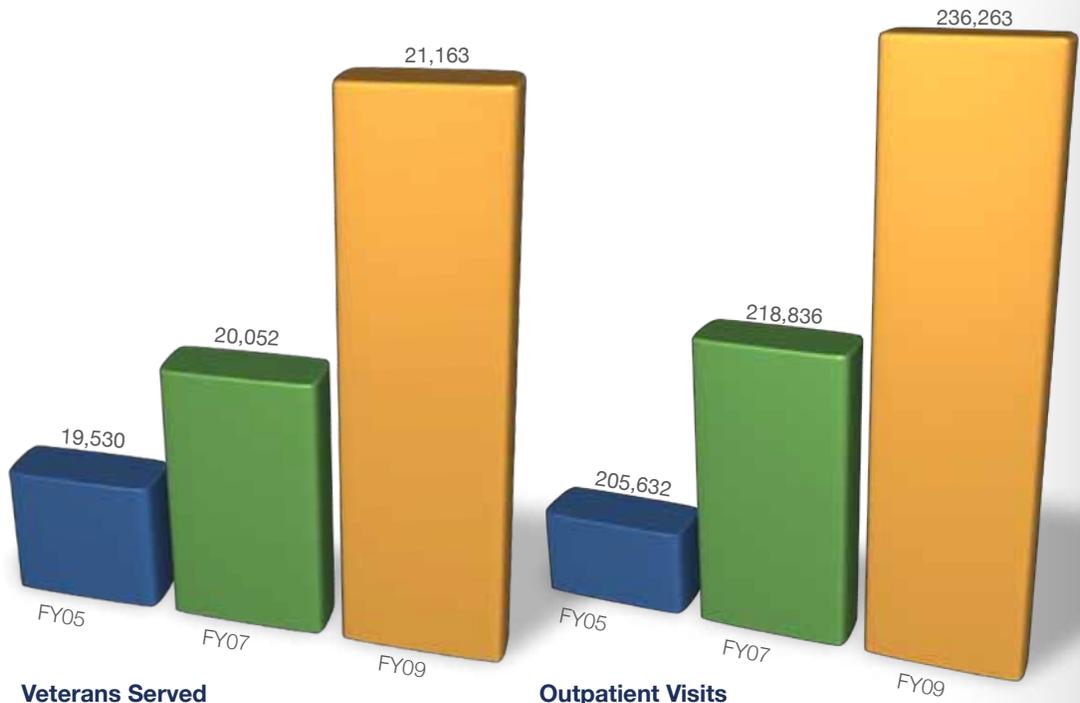
Dr. Anthony Behm, D.O.  
Chief of Staff



Donna Yarnell, R.N., M.S.N.  
Associate Director  
of Patient Care Services

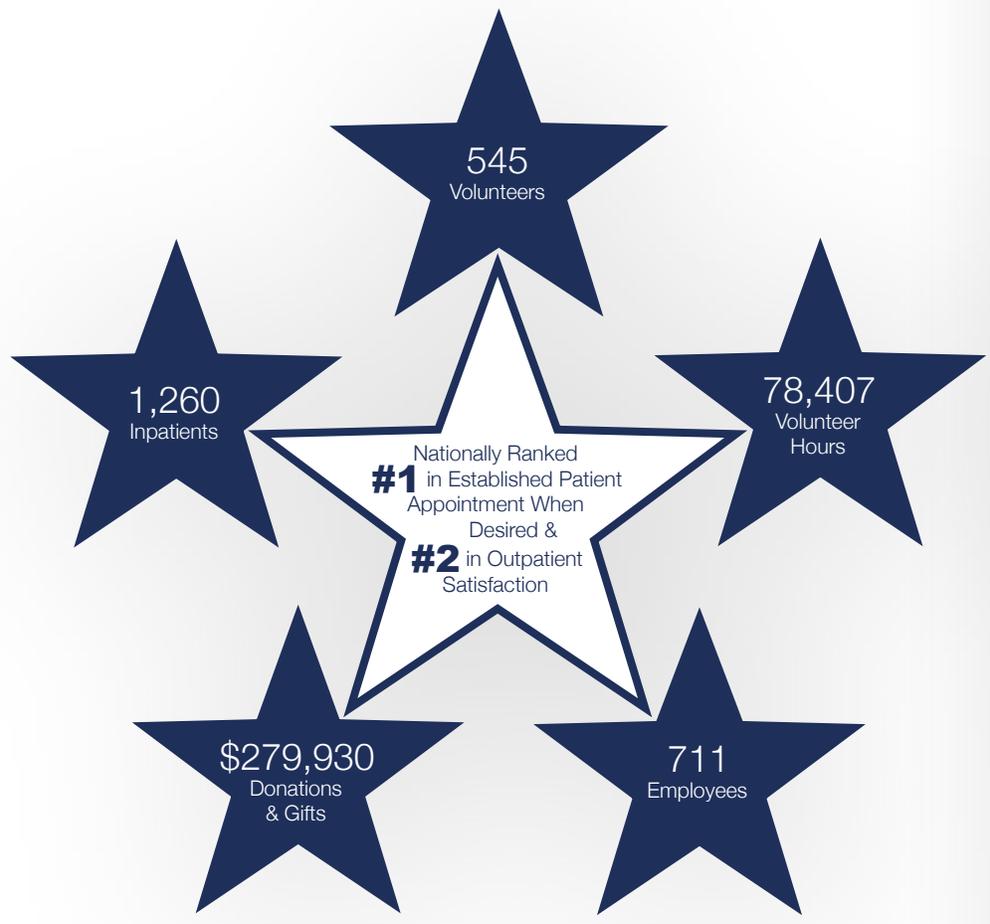
# FY 2009 Operating Expenses

Drugs & Medicines \$3,804,000
Equipment & Projects \$6,332,000
All Other \$7,700,000
Supplies & Services \$39,350,000
Salaries & Benefits \$51,469,000



Veterans Served

Outpatient Visits



Providing exceptional health care through outstanding access, performance, and quality.

# Erie VA Heartbeat



# Roaring to Support Veterans

Returning Veterans were the focus of one of the biggest fundraising events in town.

## Local Event Raised \$55,000 for Returning Veterans Program

More than 33,000 motorcycle enthusiasts attended a local fundraising event — Roar on the Shore — that raised \$55,000 to support local Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Veterans and their families that are served by Erie VA.

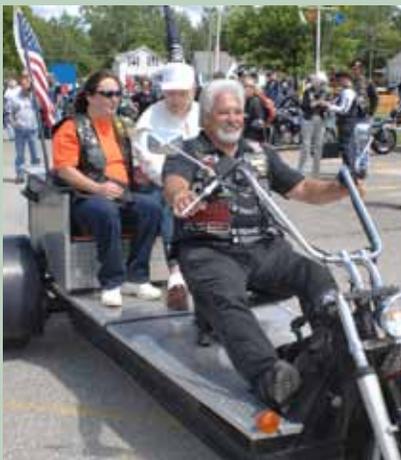
The Roar on the Shore Bike Rally, sponsored by the Manufacturer and Business Association, was held from Thursday, July 16, 2009 to Sunday, July 19, 2009.

One of the events that paid special tribute to Erie VA patients during this four-day event was the Patriot Ride Rally from the medical center to downtown Erie.

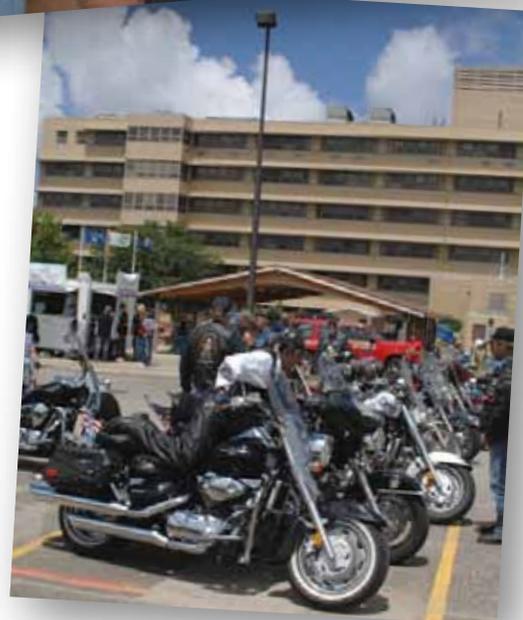
During the Patriot Ride Rally, the American Bells, a patriotic choral group, went room-to-room singing to patients inside the hospital. While outside, members of a local Rolling Thunder organization provided motorcycle rides for our Erie VA inpatients' enjoyment.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Gary Wetzel, Bike Legend Arlen Ness, the American Bells, Michelle Smith and more than 700 motorcyclists from across the country flooded into Erie VAMC's own backyard for the Roar on the Shore Patriot Ride.

More than 125 Erie VA employees and volunteers donated their time to support this event by working at refreshment booths, merchandise tents and registration tables as just another way to serve local Veterans.



“When I woke up that morning, I never expected I would be riding on a motorcycle. It was one of the nicest things that has happened to me.”



## A Seamless Transition for Returning Veterans

Erie VA's Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Program continues to welcome returning Veterans back while helping them adjust to life at home.

The OEF/OIF team is actively involved in building partnerships with community resources and reaching out to returning Veterans and their families to ensure the needs of Veterans are met.

Whether connecting returning Veterans with benefits or enrolling them in VA health care, the OEF/OIF Program is the one stop all returning service members should make after returning home.

This program works closely with the Post-Deployment Health Clinic which provides comprehensive health care screening for physical, mental and emotional wounds to returning service members.

Erie VA Serves

# 2,043

OEF/OIF Veterans including

# 190

OEF/OIF Women Veterans



## A Home Run Welcome Home Celebration

Nearly 1,000 Veterans and their families filled the Erie SeaWolves Baseball Stadium, Jerry Uht Park, on Saturday, July 11, for the annual Erie VA Welcome Home Veterans Appreciation Day. This event kicked off with a picnic in the park followed by a baseball game. Countless community members also came out to show their support for their hometown heroes.



## Erie Team Welcomes Stryker Brigade Home at Fort Dix

When almost 4,200 National Guardsmen in the 56th Stryker Brigade returned home in August and September of 2009, staff from Erie VA welcomed them home. To help make their transition back home as smooth as possible, each service member was able to apply for VA health care services on the spot. Almost 300 of these returning members are in the Erie area and surrounding counties. Those wanting to schedule appointments were able to be seen in less than three weeks. Providing timely, quality health services continues to be a priority.



### Covering Hospice Patients in Comfort

A new Erie VA Quilting Committee, pictured below, is breaking out their sewing kits to help Veterans feel right at home. A group of 30 Erie VA employees and their families meet one Saturday a month and quilt for up to five hours at a time. Its members range from bona fide expert quilters to women who have hardly stitched a straight line in their life. The committee handed out quilts to all 13 hospice patients at Erie VA and will continue to do so for every hospice patient for years to come. To the Veterans, these quilts represent a token of home and appreciation – full of personality, color and warmth.

“Hospice isn’t about giving up,” says Dayna Yockey, Nurse Manager for the Erie VA Hospice Program. “It is about being able to live in comfort. The quilts reflect this mission. They offer patients a little slice of home.”

### Reaching Out to Veterans

This past year, Erie VA staff attended more than 50 community outreaches. Being actively involved in the community allows us to address questions and concerns while educating Veterans and their families about VA health care. From hosting Welcome Home Celebrations to attending county fairs, Erie VA employees are committed to helping Veterans understand VA health care. With an increase in outreaches, Erie VA continued to see an increase in new patients.



Hospice Quilting Committee

Roar on the Shore Patriot Ride



# Building a Community of Support

Staff donated more than

# \$37,000

to CFC Charities

## Employees Give Back in the Combined Federal Campaign

In 2009, Erie VA staff gave more than \$37,000 back to the community in donations during the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). To raise money, staff contributed by making annual pledges and by participating in fundraising activities.

The CFC provides needed solutions to the problems of homelessness, substance abuse, crime, hunger, education and health issues. Through the CFC, employees return the support our community has shown Erie VA and local Veterans by giving back to local and national charities.



Employee Appreciation Picnic

Veterans Day Ceremony

Community clinics offer Primary Care services in rural settings.

## Community Clinics on the Move

In 2009, two of Erie VA's Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) moved into new space to expand services to area Veterans. CBOCs provide Primary Care services in Ashtabula, Crawford, Venango, McKean and Warren counties with a number of clinics now offering Behavioral Health, nutrition counseling, and home-based primary care services.



The Venango County VA Clinic held its Grand Opening on June 29, 2009. After a ribbon cutting ceremony, more than 100 Veterans and community members in attendance took the opportunity to tour the clinic during the open house. The clinic serves more than 1,882 area Veterans.



The McKean County VA Clinic celebrated its Grand Opening on September 12, 2009 with more than 75 Veterans and community members attending the ribbon cutting ceremony and open house. The clinic serves over 1,162 local Veterans.

## The Same Great Care, Closer to You!

Erie VA's Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) offer a variety of health care services in rural areas. Find a clinic near you! Look for more Behavioral Health services in your area soon.

**Erie VA Medical Center**  
135 East 38th Street  
Erie, PA 16504  
(814) 868-8661  
(800) 274-8387

**Warren County Clinic**  
Farm Colony Professional Building  
3 Farm Colony Drive, Suite B  
Warren, PA 16365  
(866) 682-3250

**Ashtabula County Clinic**  
1230 Lake Avenue  
Ashtabula, OH 44004  
(866) 463-0912

**Crawford County Clinic**  
18955 Park Avenue Plaza  
Meadville, PA 16335  
(866) 962-3210

**Venango County Clinic**  
Pennwood Center  
464 Allegheny Boulevard  
Franklin, PA 16323  
(866) 962-3260

**McKean County Clinic**  
23 Kennedy Street  
Bradford, PA 16701  
(814) 368-3019

*New Location!*

## Women's Health Program

In 2009, Erie VA added a full-time Women Veterans Program manager as well as a part-time Women Veterans Case manager. Since then, the program has grown more than 26 percent over the past year. The Women Veterans Program was actively involved with the community attending outreaches, building partnerships and holding special events for women Veterans and their families throughout the year. This program works closely with the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) program team, the Primary Care staff, the Behavioral Health staff and the nursing department as a resource on women's health for safety and privacy concerns. Women Veterans are the fastest growing Veteran population and Erie VA continues to change and adapt to fit their needs.

**26%**  
Increase in Female  
Veteran Patients

## Behavioral Health Program

Suicide prevention and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse continue to remain a high priority at Erie VA.

What's new in Behavioral Health?

- Intensive Outpatient Substance Abuse Program (IOP) - provides intensive treatment to individuals who are working on sobriety from drugs and alcohol.
- Hired 14 additional staff members including three psychiatrists, four social workers, an IOP manager, a suicide prevention coordinator, a nurse, an addictions therapist, a peer support specialist, an administrative support assistant and a Housing & Urban Development - VA Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) case manager.

Behavioral Health staff has also been added to several Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). Behavioral Health will continue to expand and focus on recovery from mental illness to improve the lives of the Veterans we serve.

## Ending Homelessness Among Veterans



The new HUD-VASH program provides homeless Veterans with Section 8 housing vouchers and case management services thereby providing opportunities for a successful transition into permanent housing. The number of Veterans in the Homeless Veterans Program has more than doubled since the HUD-VASH program started this past year.



Photo courtesy of Diego Cupolo

In 2009, the HUD-VASH program gave out all 35 available vouchers to homeless Veterans and provided case management services to hundreds of others. By partnering with community resources, Erie VA helps Veterans transition from homeless to hopeful.

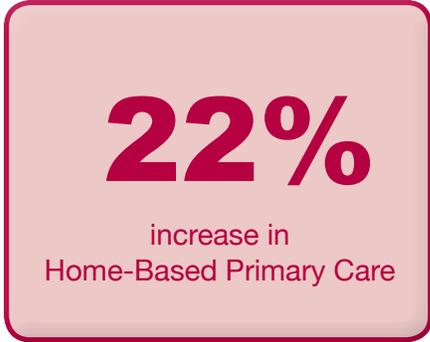
## Medical Home Provides Veteran-Centered Care

This past year, Erie VA implemented the Medical Home Model as part of our Primary Care Team services. The medical home is a process where the patient's provider directs a team of staff to coordinate the care of a Veteran. Along with the provider, case managers follow up on lab and imaging results, help manage medication use and schedule follow-up appointments for patients so Veterans receive the one-on-one care they need and deserve.

## Home Based Primary Care Extends Services

With a staff of 15, the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) program provides in-home medical care, nursing care and education, rehabilitation services, nutritional counseling, social work services, clinical pharmacy services and bereavement support to Veterans in rural areas. This past year, the staff provided their services to 170 Veterans.

The team of HBPC providers has expanded to include psychologists providing behavioral health services to Veterans. This allows Veterans who have limited mobility caused by a chronic disease to receive comprehensive primary care in their home.



Since 2007, the HBPC program has been expanding services to several of the VA community clinics located in Ashtabula, Crawford and Venango counties. HBPC provides care to Veterans located within a 50 mile radius from the Erie VA Medical Center or a community clinic.

Over the next couple of years, the HBPC program will continue to expand to meet the needs of more Veterans in rural areas.

## New Behavioral Health Program

Behavioral Health will soon be offering a new RANGE Program for Veterans living in rural areas. Three social workers were recently hired to provide intensive case management services for Veterans with serious mental illnesses and outreach services in rural regions.

## Mobile Vet Center Takes Services on the Road

The Erie Vet Center received a new Mobile Vet Center (MVC) which is one of only 50 vehicles of its kind across the country. This satellite equipped, 39-foot MVC is designed with two counseling offices onboard, and allows for more counseling services to be provided to Veterans in rural areas. The MVC supported the Warren CBOC during a power outage so the clinic could continue seeing patients.



Patient (below) uses equipment at home which is monitored by Mark Allen (left), Care Coordinator.



## Rural Health Program Keeps Patients Happy & Healthy at Home

In 2009, Erie VA continued to invest more resources in technology that allowed Veterans with chronic illnesses living in rural areas to receive care in the comfort of their own home. The Care Coordination Home Telehealth (CCHT) program uses in-home monitoring technology to track patients vitals allowing nurses and the provider to keep a closer eye on the severity of an illness. By preventing a decline in health, patients are able to stay out of the hospital and remain healthy in their home. Erie VA plans on hiring additional RN care coordinators for this program and will continue to expand services to more Veterans in rural areas.

Erie VA received Federal stimulus money to upgrade and renovate our boiler plant. The medical center awarded

**\$365,710**

on June 3, 2009 to John B. Henry and Associates, a Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business, for the upgrade.

### New Signage – Coming Soon

Erie VA is designing new signs, both inside the medical center and outside in the roadways, to help patients and visitors navigate the campus more easily. This project will be completed within the coming year.

### We've Added More Parking

This year we added a new parking lot in the front of the medical center near the front entrance that is now open for patients and visitors.

### Building for Better Care

Erie VA is constructing a new main entrance and adding 29 exam rooms to the Speciality Care Clinic. This renovation should be completed in the Summer of 2010.

The Radiology renovation on the first floor is now complete and ready to accommodate patients.



### What's Next?

Over the next few years, Erie VA will continue to enhance our facility through projects designed to maintain high quality and efficiency. Future projects include renovating the Behavioral Health building and the Ambulatory Surgery area to serve more Veterans. The Community Living Centers will also undergo new renovations to create a more home-like setting for patients.



### Awarded Improvement Capability Grant

In 2009, Erie VA received a Systems Redesign Capability Grant. Through this grant, we are able to find ways to improve the way we serve you, our patients, by simplifying processes and improving care. We are one of only ten entities across VA that were given grant money to develop and implement innovative and practical approaches to creating improvements that has leadership and front line staff working together to better our facility.



135 East 38th Street  
Erie PA 16504

[www.erie.va.gov](http://www.erie.va.gov)  
800.274.8387