



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

To The Point

VASNHS Newsletter

Winter -1st Qtr 2020

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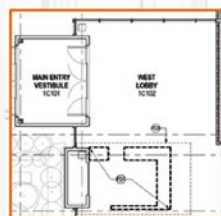
VAMC East & West Main Entrances/CC-215 and Pecos Overpass

NOTICE OF CONSTRUCTION

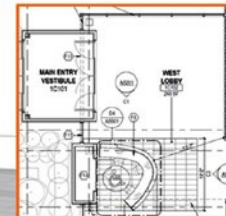
MODIFY VA MEDICAL CENTER ENTRANCES

West Entrance Estimated Dates: 26 Nov. 2019 - 4 Feb. 2020
East Entrance Estimated Dates: 5 Feb. 2020 - 7 Apr. 2020

- More Space - Improved Entrance and Pedestrian Flow
- Upgraded Security Bollards - Improved Safety and Protection



Before



After

In an effort to create a better patient experience at our VASNHS Medical Center, we are improving our East and West Entrances. The new additions will allow for better flow of incoming and outgoing pedestrians and a more spacious information desk. In preparation for the start of the East & West Entrances Modification Project, the current West Entrance Information Desk will be enclosed with a security barrier for construction.

A temporary information desk will be provided and used for the duration of the project. Additionally, the West Entrance Traffic Loop has been temporarily closed off for vehicular traffic since Nov 25. Valet Services and Shuttle/POV drop off have been re-routed. The West Entrance work is expected to be completed on Feb 4.

In addition to lobby information desk modifications, the installation of security bollards at the vehicular drop off areas

in front of the East and West hospital entrances, and the installation of sensor controls for the existing solar shades at each entrance is also required as part of the renovation.

Following the completion of the West Entrance improvements, a similar construction plan will begin on the East Entrance, with an expected start date of Feb 5, with an estimated completion date of Apr 7.

CC 215 & North Pecos Overpass

Construction is still on-going for the CC-215 freeway and Pecos overpass in 2020. In the coming months expect delays and alternate routes due to road construction on N Pecos road affecting access to the the North Las Vegas VA medical center.

For the latest updates on construction please visit our website:
www.lasvegas.va.gov

Whole Health For Life

Connecting with a New Approach to Health and Well-Being through the VA

Monica Smith, VASNHS, Chief of Veterans Experience Services

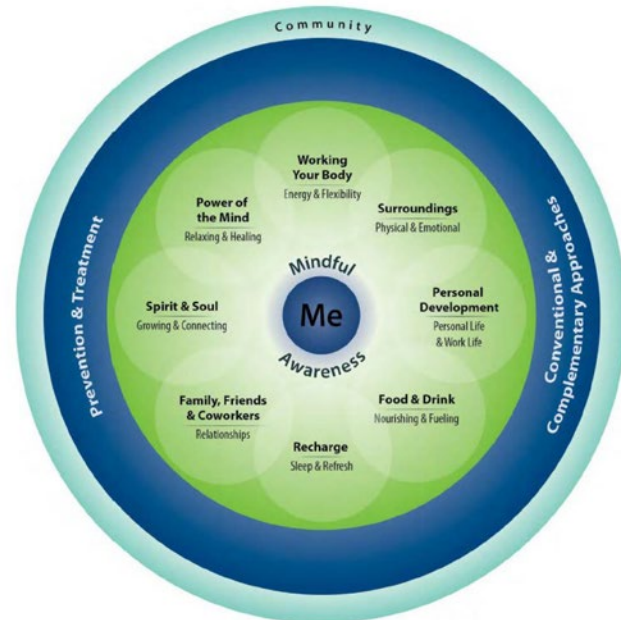
Whole Health - *Circle of Health*

“There is a new VA initiative called Whole Health, which is about changing how the VA healthcare system approaches Veteran’s health and wellbeing. These additions include by looking at the whole person and what matters to each individual (reference the circle of health graphic). This will support the partnership between Veterans and their health care teams, to help each person take charge of their health and well-being, based on what matters to them.

The way we care for our Veterans will determine if our Veterans Choose VA! As the VA move towards an interrogative approach to health care, many new illnesses and high patient demand for care are constantly evolving. The need to redesign health care exist. In the VA, the Whole Health approach is an answer to the call for ongoing improvement of health care offered to our nation's Veterans. The conversation on, “how do we manage chronic disease overall” is a conversation had by both our Veterans and our Clinicians.

Until we design a health care system that proactively manages risk and promotes health for the whole person and for all people, we will continue to ineffectively deal with chronic diseases and the next crisis to come along.

Whole Health: It Starts With Me



Whole Health can change the conversation and VHA facilities are shifting from a system designed around points of clinical care, to one that is based in partnership in which the primary focus is on whole health. By putting our Veterans' health back into their hands and allowing our Veterans to focus on their goals.

Here at VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, our Whole Health Team assist with educating both our staff and our Veteran patients by ensuring Intro to Whole Health is offered for our Veteran patients to understand VA's Whole Health approach to care.

We also encourage our Veterans to move on to “Taking Charge of my Life” which is a longer-term group program where Veterans can dive deeper into self-exploration of areas in their lives they wish to enhance and to create goals with action steps that will help them to accomplish and attain these goals.

For our employees, we offer WH 101 for clinicians, which is an 8-hour experience designed to enable our clinicians with the tools and education to continue the Whole Health journey for the patients that they engage with daily. WH 102 is a 4-hour experience designed to guide participant in exploring Whole Health and considering how it can be used to improve one's own health and well-being.

For more information on Whole Health, please contact **702-791-9000 ext. 15436**

Service Animals

Understanding the Rules at VASNHS



VASNHS VA Police Chief Reginald Winbush

There have been concerns about “pets” being allowed on VA owned and leased property. Although it may appear that VA Police are allowing all animals on the property, we are being very diligent to follow proper directives. I’d like to explain what VASNHS staff members can and cannot do.

In accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act, 28 C.F.R 36.102 et. Seq. (1990), persons who require the use of a Seeing-Eye dogs and other Service Animals will be allowed access to common areas of the VASHNS where patients, visitors and employees are normally allowed.

The issue we face today is when we suspect that a pet is not a “Service Animal.” We receive complaints of Veterans having two Service Animals or the animal is riding in a wheelchair. Service Animals are very valuable working animals because they are specially trained to accommodate that patient’s specific disability.

They are trained not to bark at other animals, urinating on the floor, become uncontrollable by the owner, etc. If you see an animal that is behaving in any of those manners, contact the VA Security Police (Extension 14073) to address the situation.

The VA will always welcome bonafide Service Animals because we understand the important role they play, so Veterans can fully participate in everyday life.



**To Protect & Serve
Those Who Have Served.**

DID YOU KNOW...

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) **emotional support animals are not considered Service Animals.**



VA staff are only allowed to ask two questions:

- Is the animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Animals are **NOT permitted in areas where patient care, patient safety and infection control standards would be compromised by the presence of an animal.**

For example: Operating Rooms, Hemodialysis, Intensive Care Units, Infusion Clinic, Procedure Rooms, Select Areas of SPD, Radiology, Microbiology Lab, Nutrition and Food Service Kitchen Areas and Pharmacy.

IMPORTANT:



Bring someone to watch your Service Animal. VA staff are NOT allowed to babysit dogs, whether or not they are a Service Animal. Also, it’s unreasonable to ask any employee to accept liability should something happen to their animal.

Expanding Behavioral Healthcare at the VA

VASNHS Opens New Addiction Recovery and Renewal Center (LVR³)

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System is proud to announce the grand opening of the Las Vegas VA Residential Recovery and Renewal Center (LVR³). LVR³ is a 30-45 day, 20-bed substance use and gambling residential treatment program, with five dedicated rooms for female Veterans. The facility will provide research-based, high quality interventions to assist our residents in the following ways:

- **Help with learning about addiction and triggers and develop a sustainable relapse-prevention plan.**
- **Develop individualized and person-centered recovery plans.**
- **Provide a whole health approach to help improve emotional, physical and mental health.**
- **Assist residents in choosing, accessing and using community and social supports.**

This is the VA's first residential program in Southern Nevada. It is also the second residential gambling addiction recovery center in the nation. "There is definitely a great need for this here in Las Vegas," said LVR³ Program Manager Dr. Roxanne Untal. "Gambling and substance abuse already exist here, so it's important that we are responsive to that when problems arise for our Veterans. The biggest goal is to provide residential care for Veterans when more intensive care is needed than what they would receive in outpatient treatment."

"This facility fills a gap in our mental health continuum of care," said Tim Jobin, Chief of Behavioral Health. "We talk about doing the right thing for our Veterans, and countless hours of planning, mindfulness and reviews have been dedicated to making this happen here today. This is a great day for Veterans."



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new LVR³ Clinic at the VAMC North Las Vegas - Left to right: VASNHS Director Bill Caron, LVR³ Program Manager Dr. Roxanne Untal and Chief of Behavioral Health Tim Jobin

Treatment at LVR³ includes daily activities to take help with the recovery from addiction. Recreational Therapists provide instruction in exercises like archery, horseback riding, and yoga.

LVR³ also provides a separate wing with five rooms dedicated to female Veterans with a staff attendant available 24/7. This more than doubles the legal requirement of 10% coverage for female patients.

Veterans interested in referral for the LVR³ can talk to their primary care provider or take advantage of the same-day mental health service. "One of the biggest services that we offer is the same-day walk-in service for mental health care," said Dr. Untal.

"Even if you aren't an enrolled Veteran yet, if this is something that you really need to address, come on in. Any licensed provider can put in a consult and we are doing quick turn-arounds for screening them for admission."

**Las Vegas VA
Residential
Recovery &
Renewal Center
(LVR³)**

Behavioral Health Services

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System

ChooseVA

Look for our new LVR³ brochure to answer any questions you may have.

www.lasvegas.va.gov/Documents/VASNHS_LVR3_Brochure.pdf

VA Caregiver Program

How The VA Program Has Made A Difference For One Family After Military Service

When Adam Wilner medically-retired from the Marine Corps in 2017, his DD-214 said he had completed 24 years of service. His body and mind, however, had experienced a lifetime's-worth of grueling physical training, deployments, injuries and surgeries. Adam's Marine career saw him performing several physical and mentally-taxing jobs. He served as a communication security specialist, a Marine Corps martial arts program instructor, and a recruiter. Before his separation, he began experiencing constant back pain and his leg would "go out on him" while walking and standing. Adam's wife Bobbie was there for him and an integral part of his recovery following his first back surgery in 2015.

"The pain and weakness began to interfere with normal activities and made most of his hobbies a thing of the past," Bobbie said. "That, combined with his psychiatric issues meant that I needed to cease working and focus on being his full-time caregiver." Bobbie, who had a background in health care, didn't hesitate. "It's different when it's someone you love," she said.

The Wilners met in North Carolina in 1997 and were married in January 1999. They have one daughter, Sonya, and a four-year-old granddaughter. Their relationship has seen them move 11 times during those 20 years; with five permanent changes of station and several deployments. While that kind of strain is something that can challenge even the strongest families, Bobbie was prepared for the military lifestyle.

"Both of my parents are former Marines and being a sergeant major's daughter certainly prepared me for a Marine family of my own and gave me the ability to adapt to new situations and places," she said. "Our relationship has weathered and thrived throughout deployments, floats, work-ups, schools, recruiting duty, injuries, surgeries, a house fire and retirement.

While our new normal isn't what we would have chosen for ourselves, we both are adapting and try our best to make the most of it."

One of the most difficult adjustments came after Adam's retirement. His career left him with several service-connected disabilities including a degenerative disk disorder resulting in two spinal fusion surgeries, PTSD, and migraine headaches. Because he was unable to perform many day-to-day activities, Bobbie became a full-time caregiver.

She researched support options, and was admittedly hesitant when she first discovered the Caregiver Support program through the VA. "When we learned of the program, friends had told us that it was too difficult to be accepted into. But we decided to give it a shot."

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System offers resources and support to caregivers of qualified Veterans of all ages and service eras. Enhanced services for eligible participants may include a financial stipend, access to health care insurance, mental health services and counseling, caregiver training, and respite care.

"The caregiver support program has been an integral part of my ability to care for my husband as it not only helps to offset my loss of income, but it empowers me to be a better caregiver through educational resources and the aid of my support coordinator," Bobbie said. "The program provides me opportunities to learn more about my husband's health conditions as well as how to better care for him and myself in the process. It gives me access to information I may not otherwise have



Marine Veteran Adam Wilmer and his wife Bobbie Wilmer

about caregiving as well as the benefit of other caregivers' experiences. I know that when issues arise, our coordinator is there, ready to help, which is a great source of comfort. Navigating the VA system can be very stressful and knowing that a helping hand is only a phone call away makes the Caregiver Support Program and our coordinator invaluable resources for our family."

For Veterans and their families who are unsure if they qualify or if the program is right for them, the Wilners have one simple message. "Apply. While the process was not a short one, it is worth the time and effort. When we (as caregivers) are empowered, we can provide quality care to our Vets and in the end, that is what it's all about."

For more information about local caregiver support services, contact VASNHS' caregiver support coordinator at **702-791-9000 ext. 13055**.

Caregiver support coordinators are available at every VA Medical Center to assist Veterans and their caregivers with the application process.

Additional application assistance is available at 1-877-222 VETS (8387)

Veteran Spotlight Story: William “Dean” Whitaker and William Grant

Las Vegas World War II Veterans presented The French "Legion d'Honneur" Award



Veteran William "Dean" Whitaker recounts his experiences during WWII along with Veteran William Grant at a ceremony honoring both men in Las Vegas, NV

World War II Veterans William “Dean” Whitaker and William Grant received the French Legion d'Honneur award in a ceremony in Las Vegas on Oct 5. The Legion d'Honneur is France's highest award, conferred upon men and women for outstanding achievements in military or civilian life. The two Veterans, both 94-years old, celebrated with friends, family, and distinguished guests like Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak at the National Atomic Testing Museum. Grant and Whitaker were also honored with certificates from Gov. Sisolak, the Nevada Department of Veteran Services, and representatives from Nevada's Congressional delegation.

The award was presented by Sebastien Thevenin, the French Honorary Consul for Southern Nevada. “These two men are examples of the Greatest Generation,” Thevenin said. “They are an unbreakable link in the long chain of friendship between our two countries that will remain forever in our hearts.”

Both Veterans, who receive care from VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, spoke about remembering those who lost their lives in World War II and the importance of educating younger generations about the impact of the conflict.

Second Lieutenant William “Dean” Whitaker, born in Los Angeles, enlisted as a bombardier in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1943. Whitaker flew 20 missions over Europe in a B-17 Flying Fortress. He earned a purple heart for injuries sustained on his first mission, and his 20th and final mission ended when his plane was shot down over Merseburg, Germany. Whitaker was taken prisoner and survived seven months in a P.O.W. camp before liberation by Gen. Patton's forces in 1945. Following the war, Whitaker returned to California where he worked as a school teacher, a firefighter, and an architect, building homes throughout Laguna Beach. He moved to Las Vegas, Nevada soon after retirement, where he now resides.

Private First-Class William Grant joined the Army as an infantryman from his hometown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in September 1943. He landed on Normandy on July 13, 1944 and participated in the liberation of France; seeing action in the Battle of Falaise Gap and Monschau. He was wounded by an artillery barrage at the Battle of Hurtgen Forest, for which he would receive the Purple Heart. Grant would go on to fight in the Battle of the Bulge and finished his tour of duty with a European Campaign Medal with Five Bronze Service Stars. After the war, he worked for the Social Security Administration for 35 years, after which he retired and moved to Las Vegas.

Flu Season Still Here: Still Time To Get The Flu Shot

VASNHS is Still Providing The Flu Shot For Veterans Till The End Of March

You protected and defended your country. Now it's time to protect and defend yourself and your loved ones against the flu. Did you know anyone can get the flu? Studies show that getting a flu shot can reduce illness and death from the flu. Get a flu shot and practice healthy habits like getting enough sleep and exercise, eating a balanced diet and drinking plenty of fluids to stay healthy. Locally at the VA within the Las Vegas Valley and Pahrump, Veterans can get their flu shots during any scheduled appointment or by visiting the patient aligned care team (PACT) at their local VA clinic during regular business hours.

Flu shots for Veterans and employees will be available at the VAMC in the Occupational Health Clinic on the first floor 1B-158

Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

and also all VASNHS Specialty Care/Las Vegas VA Clinics.

In addition to receiving flu shots at the VA, enrolled Veterans can also get regular flu vaccinations via a VA partnership with Walgreens through March 31. Veterans using this option should tell their Walgreens health care professional that they are a Veteran patient enrolled in the VA health care system, and show their VA ID card, along with a second form of photo ID. For store locations and hours, go to www.Walgreens.com and select Store Locator.

(NOTE: Quadrivalent flu shots are the only immunization covered by the VA under this partnership. Veterans who need a high dosage flu vaccination should visit their nearest VA facility.)



Flu Facts

- The flu vaccine will not give you the flu.
- The flu is caused by a virus.
- It can't be treated with antibiotics.
- The flu can be life-threatening, specially for people in high-risk groups. This includes the very young, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems. Approximately 36,000 people die of complications from the flu each year.
- Influenza is not the same as "stomach flu," the 24-hour bug that causes vomiting and diarrhea. This is most likely due to a GI (gastrointestinal) infection — not the flu.

Upcoming Events Jan - March 2020 (Go to www.lasvegas.va.gov for current dates & times)

1-31 Jan - National Volunteer Blood Donor Month

17 Jan - Blood Drive @ VASNHS Medical Center Auditorium

21 Jan - Federal Holiday: Martin Luther King Jr. Day

1-28 Feb - African-American History Month/American Heart Month

1 Feb - VECB Transition Fair/VASNHS Quarterly Town Hall - VAMC

11 -15 Feb - National Salute to Veteran Patients Week

18 Feb - Federal Holiday: Presidents Day

29 Feb - NV Women Symposium, NDVS - Texas Station Casino

1-31 March - Womens' History Month/National Colorectal Awareness

23-29 March - LGBT Health Awareness Week



VEText Message: Appointment Reminders - **NEW FEATURE ALERT!**

This feature is called **Open Slot Management (OSM)**. Veterans will automatically receive these text message as long they have not opted out of the VEText program. This feature allows Veterans to reschedule their appointment for an earlier available appointment, this includes consults! By using the prompts provided in the message, the Veteran can either reschedule or keep their current appointment. If the Veteran chooses to reschedule their current appointment, VEText will book/schedule the Veteran into the earlier slot and cancel the previously scheduled appointment. We can initiate this feature by service or by individual clinic, customize the features and can based on the particular need of each service or clinic.

If you would like more information, please contact Kimberly Lake at kimberly.lake@va.gov.

**VASNHS NEWSLETTER IS
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY**

VASNHS Public Affairs

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Changing Behavior for Better Health

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System *"To The Point Newsletter"* was designed to give Veterans, families, caregivers, and stakeholders information on the programs, services and the knowledge to better educate them of whole-health approaches to wellness.

Together, with a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), each Veteran works together with health care professionals to plan for whole-person care and life-long health and wellness. The Veteran is the focal point at the center of the health team so he or she can make informed decisions about their health care plan with the provider, nursing, nutrition, mental health, and services in the VA and local community.



Special Events

VA Quarterly Town Hall and VCEB Transition Fair



When:

Saturday, Feb 1, 2020 at 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Where:

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System
Medical Center
6900 N. Pecos Road
North Las Vegas, NV 89086

Background:

Numerous Federal, State and Local Agencies and Community Partners will be on hand to provide information and assistance to Veterans, active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel, families and caregivers. Co-hosted by the Southern Nevada Veterans Community Engagement Board (SNVCEB) and the Department of Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The SNVCEB Transition Service Fair will

include information tables, as well as other displays and information for Veterans, their families and caregivers. The Department of Veterans Affairs will hold its quarterly **Veterans Town Hall Feb 1, 2020**, which includes the **moderated Town Hall from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.** and the **VCEB Transition Service Fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** The Town Hall will include updates from Veterans Health Care and Veterans Benefits leaders on national and local activities and initiatives, followed by a question and answer session where leaders will answer pre-submitted questions or questions of general interest submitted on a comment card during the session.



Veterans can submit questions in advance to:
vhalaspao@va.gov

Questions of a personal nature or those unable to be addressed during the town hall will be sent to the appropriate representative for a direct response back to the submitter.

(Note: Listing of participating non-government organizations is for informational purposes only and does not infer or imply endorsement by the Department of Veterans Affairs)

For the latest information in the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System
check out the following WEB links:

VASNHS Website
Free Email Alerts



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