

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL



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VA ANNOUNCES \$92 MILLION IN CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR BAY PINES (VA News Release)

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the award of a \$92 million contract to construct a new mental health facility at the VA medical center at Bay Pines, Fla., to expand care and services for Florida's veterans. The contract provides \$91.9 million to Archer Western/Demaria JV II, of Chicago. The contract calls for construction of a multi-story 156,000 square-foot addition to the main hospital building at Bay Pines. It will be a mixed facility that provides residential rehabilitation, acute inpatient mental health services and outpatient mental health services.

In 2010, the outpatient mental health programs that will be located in the new mental health building had nearly 150,000 visits (an 18 percent increase over the previous year).

It is estimated there will be 211,784 annual visits by 2029 (42 percent patient increase from 2009). The mental health building will also allow the facility to increase the number of inpatient acute psychiatric beds from 33 to 40. In 2010, the facility averaged 125 mental health admissions per month.

VA selected Bay Pines VA Healthcare System as the 2010 recipient of the Robert W. Carey Circle of Excellence Award, the department's top honor for quality achievement.

Last year, VA spent more than \$8 billion in Florida on behalf of the state's 1.7 million Veterans. VA operates eight major medical centers in the state, more than 40 outpatient clinics, 24 Vet Centers and seven national cemeteries.

VA TO EXPAND HOUSING FOR HOMELESS VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES (VA News Release)

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues to develop housing opportunities for homeless and at-risk veterans by adding 34 VA locations across the country. This strategy will increase the

Department's available beds by over 5,000. VA currently has 15,000 transitional beds available to homeless veterans.

Culminating two years of work to end homelessness among veterans, a recent strategic study, the Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) initiative, identified unused and underused buildings at existing VA property with the potential to develop new housing opportunities for homeless or at-risk veterans and their families through public-private partnerships and VA's enhanced-use lease (EUL) program. Under the EUL program, VA retains ownership of the land and can determine and control its reuse.

Additional opportunities identified through BURR will include housing for returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and their families, assisted living for elderly veterans and continuum of living residential communities.

The project will support VA's goal of ending veteran homelessness by providing safe, affordable, cost effective, and sustainable housing for veterans on a priority basis.

To expedite the project, contractors will be asked to develop multiple sites in a region. VA will hold a one-day national Industry Forum in Chicago for interested organizations on July 13, 2011. For information regarding the forum contact VA_BURR@va.gov.

Supportive housing projects are planned for homeless veterans and their families at 23 VA sites including **Bay Pines, Fla.**

VA AND EASTER SEALS OPEN FIRST ROUND OF CAREGIVER TRAINING (VA News Release)

WASHINGTON More than 500 family caregivers who applied for new services offered to Post 9/11 veterans and their caregivers through a program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) started their care-giving training June 9 and 10. The core training, which was developed in collaboration with Easter Seals, is offered in traditional

classroom settings, online or through home study with a DVD and workbook. The modules focus on the health and well-being of both the veteran and the family caregiver. The training includes information on caregiver self-care, home safety, practical caregiving skills, providing personal care services to the veteran, managing challenging behaviors and locating additional resources.

Veterans may review the criteria for eligibility and download the Family Caregiver program application (VA CG 10-10) at www.caregiver.va.gov. The application enables the veteran to designate a primary family caregiver and secondary family caregivers. Caregiver support coordinators are stationed at every VA medical center to assist with coordinating the training or assist caregivers in locating available services.

Support for all caregivers is also available via the National Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274. Caregivers of veterans from all eras are also encouraged to use the Website (www.caregiver.va.gov) and support line to explore more than two dozen other services VA provides caregivers for their service.

THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL ANTHEM "THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER" This patriotic song, whose words were written by Francis Scott Key on September 14, 1814, during the War of 1812 with Great Britain, was adopted by Congress as the U.S. national anthem in 1931. For many years before Congress made this choice, the song was popular and regulations for military bands required that it be played for ceremonies.

Though Key wrote the words during the British bombardment of Fort McHenry at Baltimore, the melody was an English tune well known in America by the 1790s. It was the music for a poem, "To Anacreon in Heaven," written about 1780 as the official song of a British social and musical (i.e. drinking and singing) organization, the Anacreontic Society. In fact, Key had used the music in 1805 to accompany another poem he wrote to honor Commodore Stephen Decatur.

Only with the start of the Civil War did "The Star-Spangled Banner" become a nationally popular song. During World War I, a drive began in Congress to make it the official anthem of America's armed forces. There were other contenders for the title, including "America the Beautiful" and "Yankee Doodle." Maryland legislators and citizens were among the most active groups and individuals who pressed to get Francis Scott Key's words and accompanying English tune ratified into law as the country's first national anthem. That finally happened when President Herbert Hoover signed legislation on March 3, 1931.

A provision in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 authorizes veterans (and members of the Armed Forces not in uniform) to render the military hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, as well as during the raising, lowering, or passing of the U. S. flag.

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022 1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)

Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications 1-877-823-2378

VA EFT Information Hotline (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

VA Health Revenue Service (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

VA Health Administration Center (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -

CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023

CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024

Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 1-800-733-8387

National Cemeteries

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426

6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 352-793-7740

6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 561-649-6489

4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 904-766-5222

Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846

9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840

104 Marine St, St Augustine FL 352-793-7740

National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 1-888-244-6711

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit - Chicago VA Regional Office 1-800-829-4833

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: www.va.gov

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) www.warms.vba.va.gov

St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>

Property Management (sale of VA-repossessed homes): <http://va.reotrans.com/>

Federal employment: www.usajobs.opm.gov

Florida Dept of Veterans' Affairs: www.FloridaVets.org

Library of Congress (information on pending legislation) thomas.loc.gov