VASDHS Represented in Pride Parade

VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) had another amazing Pride contingent at the largest civic event in the San Diego region - LGBTQ Pride on July 14th. San Diego Pride estimates there were between 350,000 to 400,000 people lining the streets of Hillcrest to watch the annual event. Many people cheered the VA marchers along the parade route, which continued into the weekend festival. Staff, patients and family took part on behalf of VASDHS. In addition to marching, the VA had a booth at the Pride Festival where staff answered enrollment, benefits and health services questions for hundreds of LGBTQ active duty personnel and Veterans.

New, Modern Private Rooms for Inpatients

Spacious hallways, private rooms, modern amenities – is it a new La Jolla hotel? No, it’s our newly remodeled inpatient unit on the fifth floor of the La Jolla Medical Center. The remodel is still in progress, but the unit began admitting patients into eight finished rooms the first week of August when the remodel is complete, there will be 32 new private rooms. The first patient admitted to the new unit was Rudy Degracia, a Vietnam Veteran with a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. “I can’t believe this room! This is like the Hilton – I don’t want to go home,” Degracia said upon admission and went on to say, “They did a great job with the renovation, and I really appreciate this at the VA.”

The inpatient unit redesign creates a modern, comfortable experience and promotes a patient-centered environment. “This new facility addresses the Veteran’s dissatisfaction with having to share a room, lack of privacy and noise,” said Joan Hermosura, MSN, RN, Nurse Manager for 5 East. The rooms and bathrooms are much larger than before, which is pleasant for the patient and visitors, and it creates a safer working environment for staff. Each room has a recliner chair for the comfort of family who may want to stay with the patient overnight. We also have the GetWell-Network on a TV screen so patients can surf the web, take patient education classes and order meals.

VASDHS opened in March 1972 when multi-patient rooms were the norm. But that is not the standard today, and providing an updated, fresh look became a priority some time ago. This remodeled unit promises to improve patient satisfaction and employee morale. We are delighted to see the next generation of San Diego inpatient care.
Audiology Initiative Makes Finalist Stage in National VA “Shark Tank”

The VA San Diego Audiology Team has advanced to the “Finalist” stage in 2018 VHA Shark Tank Competition for their improvement idea titled, “Improving Audiology Same Day Access Using Hearing Aid Drop-off Process.” In response to veteran requests several years ago, the team began offering same day service for hearing aid repairs.

Historically, patients who reported to the same-day hearing aid repair clinic waited in the Audiology waiting room until called into a treatment room to evaluate the problem. The patient would then wait in the treatment room while the repair was completed. While patients liked receiving same-day care, the Audiology team felt the time Veterans spent in the waiting room was too long. They noted that a shortage of exam rooms seemed to be a partial barrier to timeliness. The team suspected that if they slightly modified the clinic flow process, they could improve efficiency for both patients and staff.

New Coffee Shop

Patients will be excited to know the new coffee shop located at the front entrance is expected to open by the end of August.

Fun in the Sun – Stay Safe and Healthy

Nothing’s better than summer in San Diego, but stay safe by protecting yourself from heat and sun. Here are a few tips for a healthy summer:

1. Prevent sunburn and skin cancer:
   - Avoid the sun between 10 am and 3 pm
   - Wear a wide-brimmed hat and long sleeves in the sun
   - Use sunscreen of at least SPF 15 that shields you from UVA and UVB rays, even on cloudy or overcast days
2. Drink lots of water, even if you’re not thirsty
3. Avoid caffeine and alcohol which can dehydrate you
4. Wear protective, lightweight, light-colored clothing
5. Eat lighter meals more often
6. Never leave your child or pet alone in the car

More Construction Announcements
- The Chula Vista replacement clinic contract was awarded in September 2017 and has a tentative opening date of November 2019.
- Inpatient psychiatric expansion estimated completion date is March 2019.

**Patient Experience and Leadership Rounding**

VASDHS is launching We Care Rounding based on best practices from world-class organizations with strong patient experience improvement initiatives such as Stanford and UCLA health systems. Rounding is a random in-person survey interview that allows leaders to hear from patients and front-line employees on what is working and what needs improvement.

If someone introduces themselves as a We Care Rounding team member, please give them your candid feedback. We value your suggestions.

**Vet Text Reminders**

Q: What’s one of the best tools for reducing no shows for appointments at VA health facilities?
A: The text messaging tool released by the Veterans Health Administration called VEText.

VEText is an appointment reminder system that started rolling out in March 2018 with 138 facilities currently using it, including VA San Diego Healthcare System.

With the program, Veterans can confirm or cancel an appointment, allowing the system to set up replacement appointments, which reduces the average wait for appointments.

In San Diego, we send out approximately 64,000 VEText appointment reminders per month to about 60,000 patients. We’re also one of the only facilities that uses VEText for homeless Veteran outreach appointments.

For a preview of VEText, text the word DEMO to (909) 245-9443.

**Appointment Access**
Appt. wait times:  
Primary Care: 1.19 days  
Specialty Care: 4.93 days  
Mental Health: 2.27 days  
(completed appts as of 6/30/18)

Choice referrals:  
In fiscal year 2017, VASDHS referred 35,891 Veteran episodes of care to the community for a total cost of $69,891,170.

Calendar  
National Veterans Wheelchair Games (Orlando, Fla.): July 30 – Aug 4  
National Veterans Golden Age Games (Albuquerque, N.M.): Aug. 3 - 8

About VA San Diego Healthcare System  
The VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services at the medical center in La Jolla; and at six community clinics located in Chula Vista, Escondido, Imperial Valley, Mission Valley, Oceanside, Sorrento Valley and at the Rio Clinic. We provide medical, surgical, mental health, geriatric, spinal cord injury and advanced rehabilitation services. VASDHS has 296 authorized hospital beds including skilled nursing beds and operates several regional referral programs including cardiovascular surgery and spinal cord injury care.

We are affiliated with the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and provide training for 1,440 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 751 other health profession trainees in areas such as nursing, pharmacy, dental and dietetics. VASDHS has one of the largest research programs in the VA nationally with a budget of $41.3 million, 210 principal investigators and 698 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2017: 83,014  
*Number of Veterans in San Diego County: 243,369  
*Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley: 6,225  
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties: 249,594

*from VetPop, 9/30/2017

Important Phone Numbers:

VA’s Top 5 Priorities:

1. Greater Choice for Veterans  
2. Modernize Our Systems  
3. Focus Resources More Efficiently  
4. Improve Timeliness of Services  
5. Suicide Prevention