



# The Alabama Veteran

## *“Proudly Serving America’s Finest”*

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WINTER 2014

### IMPORTANT DATES

- January 9 - SBVA Meeting
- February 14 - Valentine’s Day
- February 16 - President’s Day
- March 8 - Daylight Saving Time Begins

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## Governor Robert Bentley Releases Plan Aimed at Helping Alabama Veterans and Their Families



Alabama Governor Robert Bentley releases the Alabama Veterans Network Commission’s Long-Range Plan for a unified statewide system for the delivery of services aimed at helping servicemembers, veterans and their families. Joining Governor Bentley are, from left, W. Clyde Marsh, Department of Veterans Affairs, Jim Reddoch, Department of Mental Health, and retired Major General Larry Ross. (Photo: Jamie Martin )

Governor Robert Bentley released the Alabama Veterans Network (AlaVetNet) Commission’s Long-Range Plan at a press conference held at the State Capitol on October 23, 2014. The plan will help improve and coordinate services for Alabama servicemembers, veterans and their families.

In December 2013, Governor Bentley signed Executive Order 42 creating the AlaVetNet Commission. Commission members studied and evaluated all services in the state directed at improving the well-being of servicemembers, veterans and their families in the key areas of health, education, employment, homelessness, legal assistance and family services. Among the goals: To reduce unemployment and homelessness among veterans; improve access to

health care and provide pro-bono legal services to eligible veterans.

Another main goal of the plan is to help Alabama residents who have served during the more than 11 years of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and who have physical or psychological problems as a result.

“We want to do everything that we can for our veterans,” Bentley said. “That includes finding them a job. If they’re homeless, finding them a place to live. If they have medical problems, making sure that they get quality health care.”

Veterans Affairs Commissioner Clyde Marsh and Alabama Department of Mental Health Commissioner Jim Reddoch serve as co-chairs of the commission. Sixteen additional state agency directors also serve on the commission.

See AlaVetNet page 3



## Commissioner's Corner - W. Clyde Marsh

Fellow Veterans, State Employees and Alabamians, I would like to wish you all the best of health, peace and prosperity at the top of the New Year! ADVA has concluded another productive year providing state services and assisting veterans and family members with earned benefits. Although understaffed and underfunded, we were able to provide basic services and state VA benefits as a result of our employee's expertise, compassion and willingness to go above and beyond office and county boundaries while assisting Alabama Veterans.

As a consequence, ADVA was able to facilitate three new initiatives that are as follows: (1) The implementation of the Alabama Veterans Executive Network (AlaVetNet), which was created to assist state military members, veterans and families. AlaVetNet is designed to fill the cracks, or close the gaps that are not covered by established state or federal veterans agencies or related institutions. This initiative is made possible by the "sea of goodwill" that exist throughout the country and state where business, industry and private citizens with resources, goods or services are inclined to donate, share or loan to our active military, veterans and their family members; (2) ADVA is in the process of accepting contract bids from construction firms to expand the columbarium at the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery. This is made possible from a \$400,000 Federal VA Grant which will expand the columbarium from 128 to 768 by adding 640 new columbarium niches; and (3) ADVA is in the process of expanding the dayrooms on all floors of the Bill Nichols State Veterans Home in Alexander City, AL. Additionally, all public access areas of the facility to include hallways will be upgraded.

ADVA's major challenges are centered on budget shortfalls and personnel shortages. As a result of reduced department funding, ADVA was forced to suspend, or downsize services in about two dozen offices over the last two years, and veterans were required to drive to a nearby county veterans service office if their local county VSO had closed. ADVA has been able to maintain adequate services to veterans and family members through "hub county offices", and in many areas of the state, VSOs who serve as veteran's advocates/counselors, are providing itinerate weekly services in multiple counties.

Our objective and legislative request for 2015 and beyond is to ask for a \$2 million increase to fully fund the ADVA General Fund Budget which will allow the reopening of most county offices where veterans services were suspended. Although state revenue coffers have limited funding, ADVA has received support from the Governor's Office, Veteran Service Organizations and key segments of the State Legislature. The State Board of Veterans Affairs (SDVA) and the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA) will continue to lobby and request full funding as our veterans deserve nothing less.

## Around the State

AlaVetNet continued from page 1

Governor Bentley appointed Major General Larry Ross, USA (Ret.), to serve as Coordinator of AlaVetNet and further develop the recommendations from the Commission.

“I am truly honored to be appointed by Governor Bentley to coordinate the activities of AlaVetNet,” Ross said. “Our mission is to improve the well-being and quality of life for our servicemembers, veterans and their families. By engaging organizations that want to help our veterans, we are creating a network that is stronger and has greater reach than each group operating alone. Success will come from leveraging our local and state government offices with non-profits, the business community, educational institutions, our clergy, and many other community support organizations, to identify and help solve individual and family issues for our veterans.”

Commissioner Marsh said Alabama is among states leading the way for delivering quality services to veterans and their families.

“Alabama has led the way among states for taking additional steps, or implementing initiatives, in providing better services to our veterans and their families,” said Marsh. From delivering long-term care in our four state veterans homes, providing educational opportunities for spouses and children of disabled veterans, to establishing a veterans treatment court program, are just a few examples of unique services that our state is providing to veterans and their family members.”

Commissioner Reddoch added that veterans deserve the best health care and other services that the state can offer.

“They are entitled to whatever the state can do to meet their needs,” Reddoch said. “They have paid the price.”

## Vietnam Veteran Recalls War Experiences

Dennis Lindsay had been in Vietnam 29 days when he was shot on Jan. 14, 1969.

Lindsay was in a gun battle just about every one of those days during search-and-destroy missions. The memories of those 29 days still cause nightmares for him.

He was among a group of Vietnam veterans honored Oct. 25, 2014, at a celebration at the Jimmy Harris VFW Post 6837 in Boaz, Ala., marking the 50th year since the start of full-scale involvement by the United States in the Vietnam War.

Lindsay describes himself as a “pack rat,” and the Purple Heart he was awarded is still in its original case. He also displayed his field and dress uniforms, as fresh as the memories that haunt him.

Lindsay grew up in Blount County and graduated from Susan Moore High School in 1967. In 1968, at 19, he was drafted into the U.S. Army.

He went to Fort Benning, Ga., for basic training and Fort Polk, La., for advanced infantry training.

Lindsay arrived in Vietnam on Dec. 15, 1968, as part of the D Co. 1/26th, First Infantry Division.



*AlaVetNet is focused on leveraging resources across the state among state, federal, and non-profit agencies for improving the well-being of servicemembers, veterans and their families in the areas of health, education, employment, homelessness, legal assistance and family services.*

### State Agencies that Comprise the AlaVetNet Commission

Department of Veterans Affairs  
 Department of Mental Health  
 Alabama National Guard  
 Department of Labor  
 Serve Alabama  
 Office of the Attorney General  
 Department of Education  
 Department of Corrections  
 Department of Economic and Community Affairs  
 Department of Post Secondary Education  
 Commission on Higher Education  
 Department of Rehabilitation Services  
 Department of Public Health  
 Medicaid Agency  
 Law Enforcement Agency  
 Department of Human Resources  
 Department of Transportation  
 Office of the Chief Justice

His unit was set up at a rubber plantation, and they went out every day on missions.

“It was real hot,” Lindsay said. “They dropped us out in the jungle, and we had to jump out of the helicopter. You’d be in mud and water up to your knees.”

He said they didn’t have enough water and it was difficult to have more brought in.

“We were about to run out of water and ammunition, and they dropped it in a B-52 bomber crater,” he said. “Before we could get to it, the Viet Cong would shoot it up.”

The day Lindsay was shot was like most others. “We walked into an ambush,” he recalled. “Six of us got hit.”

They were caught in the crossfire and hit by their own men.

“They were shooting over our heads,” Lindsay said. “We had hit the ground and were on our bellies.”

The gunfire echoed all around them, and, with no place to go, he said, “We knew we were going to get hit.”

Lindsay looked over at his buddy, and saw blood running out from under his helmet. “It just grazed him, but blood was running down,” he said.

## Around the State

### War Experiences continued from page 3

Then Lindsay said he felt what seemed like ants on his shoulder. "It was bullets hitting me," he said, "I said, 'I'm hit.' It was burning real bad and went right through my shoulder blade. If I'd been sitting up, it would have killed me."

The six injured soldiers—with Lindsay the most seriously wounded—were flown by medivac helicopter.

"They didn't really want to land in the hot zone, but they did," he said. "We were at the hospital within three minutes."

Lindsay underwent a three-hour operation and was flown to Okinawa, Japan, within three or four days.

He was there about two weeks and was finally able to get out of bed and make it to the bathroom. It was there he first saw his reflection in the mirror.

"I looked terrible," Lindsay said. "I lost down and just weighed about 100 pounds. You could see the bones in my fingers and my face."

Then he and several others were flown back to the United States.

"They put us on a cargo plane on stretchers and they stacked us on top of each other, about two feet apart, and four or five of us high," he said. "We were strapped down, but it just about jarred you to death."

It was about a 10-hour flight to Alaska, where they stopped for the night. Then they headed for Maryland, and he ended up back at Fort Benning.

Lindsay had three or four months of rehabilitation and served the remainder of his time in the Army as a mail clerk at Fort Gordon.

He and the others were presented with the Purple Heart medals during a ceremony at Fort Gordon.

Lindsay was discharged from the Army in August 1970 and returned to his home in Snead.

He worked at American Cast Iron Pipe Co. in Birmingham for several years and eventually retired from Chandelier Homes in Birmingham.

Lindsay also was in the National Guard for 15 years, but got out after Operation Desert Storm.

He has flashbacks and bad dreams about Vietnam.

One night he jumped off his bed, thinking he was jumping out of the back of an Army truck.

"I busted my head open," he said.

Fighting tears, Lindsay said he appreciated the current efforts to honor Vietnam veterans.

"I'm glad they're doing this," he said. "We didn't get a lot of respect when we came home."

*Reporter Lisa Rogers Savage with the Gadsden Times contributed this story.*

## Residents of Bill Nichols Veterans Home Place in Alabama Nursing Home Association's Senior State Games



Left to right, Roger Thornton, Calvin Hall and Charlie Boswell won medals for checkers and dominos in the Alabama Nursing Home Association's Senior State Games

Three residents of the Bill Nichols State Veterans Home competed in the Alabama Nursing Home Association's (ANHA) Senior State Games held in Birmingham June 20, 2014.

This is the first time the ANHA has hosted the Senior State Games, designed for ages 50 and above to stay active and healthy. The veterans home residents competed in checkers,

dominos and bocce ball.

"It's a good way for seniors to be able to practice using their muscles and hand eye coordination," said John Matson, director of communications for ANHA.

Charlie Boswell, Calvin Hall and Roger Thornton from Bill Nichols each earned an award competing in the games. Special medals were minted

for seniors competing in the Senior State Games this year.

Boswell and Thornton competed in checkers for their age groups, winning gold medals for their outstanding skill. Boswell also went on to compete against all participants in the checkers group, and won a gold medal in the overall group.

Hall competed in the 60 and up age group for competitive dominos, and brought home the silver medal in his age group.

The ANHA Senior State Games is a partnership with the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS) and the Alabama Sports Festival (ASF) Foundation. The games coincided with the ASF Foundation's 32nd Annual Alabama State Games. The Alabama Nursing Home Association is a title sponsor for the senior games as they kicked off their first year. There were a total of 13 competitions for the games including swimming, table tennis and shooting sports.

## Around the State

## ADVA Establishes Homeless Veterans Program



OTisha McDowell assists a Veteran during the 2014 Homeless Veterans Stand Down in Montgomery

In 2014, the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs established a Homeless Veterans Program to advise and assist veterans and their dependents who have become homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. The program is designed to provide personalized services to veterans with assistance from state, federal and non-profit agencies to those veterans in need.

OTisha McDowell, a retired U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant, serves as the department's Homeless Veterans Coordinator.

"There are many reasons Veterans can become homeless, including low-income, lack of support from family or friends, substance use, or mental health challenges that may have developed or worsened as a result of trauma they experienced while serving," McDowell said.

As the Homeless Veterans Coordinator, McDowell conducts outreach, case management and provides referrals to veteran centric agencies such as health care, housing assistance and other services that are available to veterans.

McDowell said there are a myriad of services and resources in Alabama and nationally that can help mitigate or prevent a veteran from becoming homeless.

"My focus is helping veterans and their family members recover from homelessness, or assisting them if they are at risk of becoming homeless by understanding their specific needs and connecting them to the service," said McDowell. "The state and federal VA can provide some services, but many non-profit agencies in Alabama can assist veterans and their families as well."

Available services include:

- Employment Training and Rehabilitative Services
- VA Pension and Compensation Claims Services
- Housing Assistance
- Clothing, Food and Shelter
- Health Care
- Justice Outreach

For more information about the ADVA Homeless Veterans Program, call 334-242-5077, or visit [www.alabama.va.gov](http://www.alabama.va.gov).

## Around the State

### Veterans Service Officer Helps Veterans with Needs, Issues

Once a year, Americans pause to commemorate Veterans Day.

And while the argument exists that one day is not enough to fully honor all that our nation's veterans have done over the decades, Raymond Williamson hopes everyone takes the chance to thank a veteran for their service and sacrifice.

"It's a day where veterans are being recognized," said Williamson, Veterans Service Officer for the Baldwin County Veterans Office in Foley.

"Everybody gets busy. We all have our own lives and concerns, but we have at least one day to focus on the veterans and can take that time to consider the sacrifices they've made."

Along with reflecting on the servicemen and women who have given their lives to defend this American nation and way of life, Williams said he hopes people also consider the sacrifices made during their time in the service.

"We need to consider the freedoms we have because of the things they went through."

Williamson said, noting, among other sacrifices, that service members and their families move from base to base every few years. "So many of their sacrifices are things we don't even consider."

A veteran himself, Williamson has worked in the Baldwin County Veterans Office—the local extension of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs—for a year, assisting the more than 20,000 veterans living in Baldwin County with a large number of issues.

"We are an advocacy group that helps local veterans with wide array of issues," Williamson said. "Anything from helping them get their VA home loans, to helping them qualify for the Alabama GI Bill, and filing disability claims or getting veteran vehicle tags."

Unassociated with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Williamson said the ADVA serves as a local advocacy group, aimed at protecting the rights of veterans and their families.

On one recent day, Williamson said he helped a number of different veterans with issues related to veteran's group life insurance, medical records, military records and medical expense forms.

After more than two decades in the United States Coast Guard and Army, Williams said he enjoys his new job, which allows him to help local veterans on a daily basis.

"This is a dream job," Williamson said. "I really didn't know this type of job existed until I saw the job posting. It's been great. I get to help veterans, lay my head down at night, and know that I did something."

*Reporter Jay Sowers with the Gulf Coast Media contributed this story.*

### Veterans Remembered During the Holidays



For the second year in a row, veterans interred at the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spanish Fort were remembered in a special ceremony December 13. Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts placed American Flags adorned with holiday wreaths on the graves of each veteran. The annual event is held to pass on the importance of remembering veterans to the younger generation.

## Around the State

# State's Tribute to Veterans



Governor Robert Bentley and Rachel Clincksale, former National President, Gold Star Wives of America, placed a holiday wreath at the Alabama's Fallen Heroes Memorial at the Alabama State Capitol during the Sixth Annual Wreaths Across America Statehouse Ceremony on December 8, 2014.



Auston and Bonnie O'Neill of Centreville, Va., visited the Alabama State Capitol, August 21, to promote the "Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive Express." The O'Neill's traveled more than 25,000 miles across the country to remind Americans of the service and sacrifice of the nation's WWII Veterans.



The Third Annual POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony was held at the State Capitol on September 20, 2014.



Parades, concerts and other patriotic events were held across the state on Veterans Day to recognize and honor the men and women who have served in uniform. Above: The U.S. Air Force Officer Training Squadron, Maxwell Air Force Base, march in the Montgomery Veterans Day Parade. Left: The Greene County High School Army JROTC Cadets were among the entries for the National Veterans Day Parade in Birmingham.

## News to Use

### VA Caregiver Support Services

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides services specifically designed to support family veteran caregivers. The programs are available both in and out of a home to help both the veteran and the caregiver.

#### Adult Day Health Care Centers

The VA Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) Centers offer a safe and active environment with constant supervision designed for veterans to get out of the home and participate in organized activities. It provides veterans with the opportunity to socialize with other veterans and to regain personal independence through rehabilitative care based on his or her specific health assessment.

#### Home-Based Primary Care

Home-Based Primary Care is a program designed to deliver routine health care services to a home when a veteran has medical issues that make it challenging for him or her to travel. Home-Based Primary Care is staffed with medical professionals who provide in-home nursing care, medication management, nutrition services, physical rehabilitation, mental health care, social work and referrals to VA and community services.

#### Skilled Home Care

Skilled Home Care services include basic nursing services and physical, occupational, or speech therapies. The Skilled Home Care service is similar to Home-Based Primary Care, but it involves VA purchasing care for a veteran from a licensed non-VA medical professional.

#### Homemaker and Home Health Aide Program

Caring for a loved one can be very stressful, physically taxing, and time-consuming for a caregiver. The Homemaker and Home Health Aide program provides a professional health care aide who will come to the home on a regular basis to help care for the veteran while allowing the caregiver personal time to care for his or her own needs.



#### Home Telehealth

The Home Telehealth program is designed to give a caregiver ready access to a care coordinator by using technology such as a telephone and/or a computer in the home. The Home Telehealth program enhances and extends care management for the caregiver and is typically offered to individuals who live at a distance from a VA Medical Center.

#### Respite Care

At times it may be difficult for a family caregiver to find time for a much-needed break from their daily routine and care responsibilities. Respite is time for the caregiver to relax and renew their own energy, and respite care provides them that time. A caregiver is eligible for up to 30 days of respite care per year. The care can be offered in a variety of settings including at the home, or through temporary placement of a veteran at a VA Community Living Center, a VA-contracted Community Residential Care Facility, or an Adult-Day Health Care Center.

#### Home Hospice

During the advanced stages of a terminal disease, Home Hospice Care offers comfort and supportive services at a home for the caregiver and the veteran. An interdisciplinary team of health care providers and volunteers from a local community hospice agency provide the services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## News to Use

### VA Implements Choice Card Program

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has implemented a temporary benefit called the Veterans Choice Card program that will deliver timely quality care to veterans.

The Choice program is a new health care plan that allows some veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility.

The first round of Choice Cards along with a letter explaining the program was issued on November 5 to veterans who are eligible based on their place of residence. VA is now engaging in the next phase of its rollout of the plan to veterans waiting more than 30 days from their preferred date to be seen or considered medically necessary by their physician.

To improve service delivery, VA has prioritized efforts to accelerate veterans off of wait lists and into clinics through the Accelerated Care Initiative begun over the summer. Through this initiative, VA medical centers have increased access to care inside and outside of VA, added more clinic hours and work days, deployed mobile medical units and shared their best practices from VA's high-performing facilities throughout the organization.

### Significant Improvements have resulted nationally:

- Scheduling more than 1.2 million more appointments in the past four months than in the same period last year. In total, VA medical centers have scheduled over 19 million veterans appointments from June to October 1, 2014;
- Reducing the national new patient Primary Care wait time by 18 percent;
- Completing 98 percent of appointments within 30 days of the veterans' preferred date, or the date determined to be medically necessary by a physician;
- Authorizing 1.1 million non-VA care authorizations, a 47 percent increase over the same period last year; and
- Increasing the amount of time providers could deliver care to veterans by increasing the amount of clinic hours in primary and specialty care and through adding weekend and evening clinics at our medical centers.

The Choice Program is part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 to enable VA to meet the demand for veterans' health care in the short-term. For more information visit <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>, or call 866-606-8198.

### Veterans Can Now Track Delivery of Prescriptions

Call it innovative thinking, ingenuity, or just a plain great idea to better serve Veterans! VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald recently reminded VA employees that the mission is clear—to serve veterans. Putting veterans at the center of VA is first and foremost.

For VA employee Kenneth Siehr, National Director, VA Consolidated Mail Out Pharmacy Program (CMOP), his great idea not only foreshadowed the sentiments expressed by Secretary McDonald months later, but brought national recognition to VA and My HealtheVet.

Joining four other federal finalists, Siehr's innovative idea for the President's 2013 Securing America's Value and Efficiency (SAVE) Award focused on the use of technology to save money and improve the services VA provides to Veteran patients. His idea, won the him the SAVE award in December 2013.

Siehr's idea allows veteran patients to track the delivery of their VA prescriptions online through My HealtheVet at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov). He believed that taking the idea of a self-service delivery tracking tool would improve customer service to veterans by giving them the ability to track their VA refill medications online, 24/7. This online option is designed to be both efficient and customer-focused. It may eliminate a portion of the estimated 1.8 million telephone calls to VA health care facilities generated from veterans seeking to track their medication delivery each year.

More than 4,000 veterans are already using VA's Prescription Tracker available on My HealtheVet every day. Postcards are being sent to enrolled veteran patients so that they may learn more about the new Prescription Tracking feature.

## National VA Update



## VA Secretary Robert McDonald Outlines the Way Ahead to Improve the VA

In the last few months as your Secretary, I have met and heard from Veterans and family members about how we can better serve Veterans. I've also traveled to VA facilities across the country and have had the extraordinary opportunity to meet with you, the men and women who work on the front lines and behind the scenes to care for and serve Veterans every day. These opportunities have informed my thinking as we work to plan for the future of the Department.

Already, more than 2,000 VA employees at 20 facilities serving 1.4 million Veterans have shared their perspectives on how we can improve this Department, and have provided insightful and thoughtful feedback about how VA should be organized to better serve Veterans. It is clear that our shared mission is important to you and your colleagues. It's also clear that you share my goal of making VA easier to navigate for Veterans. I am grateful for your contributions, and your support in this endeavor.

As we have been considering changes to VA, we have also met with Veterans, Veterans service organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders. We have used your feedback, and the common themes we heard in all comments, to begin shaping the way forward for VA. Soon, we will begin implementing changes to VA, to better structure our organization to meet Veteran needs. Our new alignments may change some of our processes, but our employees remain valued members of the team.

Our shared goals are to ensure that Veterans have a clear understanding of VA and where to go for what they need within any of our facilities; that employees are empowered with the authority, knowledge and tools they need to solve problems and take action; and that the products and services that we deliver to Veterans are integrated within the organization. The changes we plan to make are as follows:

- Establish a new **VA-wide customer service organization** to ensure we provide top-level customer service to Veterans. A Chief Customer Service Officer who reports to the Secretary will lead this effort. The mission of the new office will be to drive VA culture and practices to understand and respond to the expectations of our Veteran customers.

See VA Secretary page 11

### ALABAMA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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- Establishing a **single regional framework** that will simplify internal coordination, facilitate partnering and enhance customer service. This will allow Veterans to more easily navigate VA without having to understand our inner structure.
- Working with our partners to establish a national network of **Community Veteran Advisory Councils** to coordinate better service delivery with local, state and community partners. Expanded public-private partnerships will help us coordinate Veteran-related issues with local, state and community partners, as well as VA employees.
- Identifying opportunities for VA to realign its internal business processes into a **shared services** model in which organizations across VA leverage the same support services, to improve efficiency, reduce costs and increase productivity across VA. Right now, we're looking at options used in the private sector to enhance our rapid delivery of services, and also at our own business processes that are suited for shared services.

Please keep in mind that this is a long-term process and we are just beginning to plan how this will all unfold. As we move forward with these changes, your feedback, ideas and perspective will be invaluable.



VA Secretary McDonald talked to VA employees across the county to determine the way ahead to better serve veterans

To gather your suggestions, we have launched an intranet web tool, the My VA Idea House, where employees from across VA can submit ideas online to improve services, streamline processes

and solve issues for Veterans and their families. Employees can also vote on submissions from your colleagues across VA.

Sponsors will select ideas and create topic-related groups to encourage collaboration and help make the ideas a reality. The Idea House website officially opened for submissions on Veterans Day, November 11, 2014. I encourage you to go to [vaideahouse.ideascale.com](http://vaideahouse.ideascale.com) to submit your ideas and proposed solutions to the challenges you are seeing.

## Veterans Health Care

## University of Alabama at Birmingham TBI Project

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Department of Psychology is leading a research project aimed at providing therapy for veterans and active duty personnel that suffer from traumatic brain injuries incurred during combat.

The project called "The Brave Initiative" is aimed at treating traumatic brain injuries often as the result of a bomb blast. The initiative consists of two treatments: CI therapy, for constraint induced, which helps the veteran to use different motor-training techniques, and alternative therapy that combines holistic exercises with physical and mental fitness. Dr. Edward Taub, professor and project director, expects veterans to succeed with these therapies based on 'pilot' studies.

The treatment will take place during a three-week period, with participants living at the Lakeshore Foundation and receiving treatment at UAB and at Lakeshore.

Both treatments being compared are likely to be an immediate benefit to the veterans who take part in this study and are provided at no cost. Funds are provided to help cover travel, lodging, and living expenses.

If the study is successful, these treatments are likely to become national standards that can benefit veterans all around the country. To participate, a veteran must be at least 19-years-old, be at least three months post-TBI, and have movement problems or weakness in one or both arms.

The project is made possible through a \$2.7 million grant from the Department of Defense. The Lakeshore Foundation is partnering with UAB in this project. For more information, and/or to volunteer for the project, contact TBI rehabilitation research at (205) 934-9768 or visit [www.tbirehabtherapy.net](http://www.tbirehabtherapy.net).

## VA's Top Doctor Named Among Top 20 Most Influential

*Dr. Carolyn Clancy selected by Modern Healthcare Magazine from reader and editor recommendations*

*Modern Healthcare Magazine* recently ranked Dr. Carolyn M. Clancy, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Interim Under Secretary for Health, as number 19 in its annual "100 Most Influential People in Healthcare" poll.

Dr. Clancy has appeared on the publication's notable list for 11 straight years.

"This is a well-deserved recognition of Dr. Clancy's expertise, knowledge, judgment and informed approach to developing and implementing new initiatives here at VA," said VA Secretary Robert McDonald. "As anyone who knows and works with Dr. Clancy can attest, she is a person of enormous integrity, tireless work ethic and a deep love and respect for Veterans. As VA undergoes a transformation focused on delivering the best outcomes for patients, Dr. Clancy brings a dedication to quality and safety that is exemplary."

As Interim Under Secretary for Health at VA, Dr. Clancy oversees the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Nation's largest integrated healthcare system. VHA provides care for millions of Veterans at 1,700 hospitals, clinics, long-term

care facilities and Readjustment Counseling Centers.

Dr. Clancy most recently joined VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald in launching VA's Blueprint for Excellence. The Blueprint outlines the steps VA will be taking to improve performance, promote a positive culture of service, advance healthcare innovation for Veterans and the country and increase access to care and accountability.

Prior to assuming the duties of the Interim Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Clancy joined VA in August of 2013 as Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health, for Quality, Safety and Value, where she served as the Chief Quality Management Officer for VHA. A general internist and health services researcher, Dr. Clancy is a graduate of Boston College and the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Dr. Clancy holds an academic appointment at George Washington University School of Medicine (Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Medicine) and serves as Senior Associate Editor, Health Services Research and is a member of numerous health-related editorial boards.