

# VALIANT

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

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## Improving Patient Experience Through Dental Sleep Medicine

Obstructive sleep apnea and snoring are among the most common causes of sleep disruption, although there a number of sleep disorders. It is well known that one's quality of sleep can dramatically impact overall health, well-being and quality of life.

While various treatments are available, some individuals are incapable of tolerating continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapies. Dental sleep medicine, or oral appliance therapy, is often a suitable alternative for those who cannot use the CPAP method.

Dr. Her-Flores and her team recognized this as an issue among Veterans. Immediately wanting to find an alternative treatment, they set out to investigate necessary training requirements and selected a reputable program to empower the VA CCHCS dental team with the knowledge and expertise necessary to provide high quality oral appliance therapy for Veterans.

Upon completing their research, Dr. Her-Flores submitted a proposal requesting that VA CCHCS offer Dental Sleep Medicine services.

Given the full support of facility leadership, the entire team consisting of 4 committed general dentists completed the "UCSF Mini-residency in Dental Sleep Medicine." Over the course of five months each of the general dentists became proficient providers of dental sleep medicine, a needed service for many Veterans.

(See **Dental Sleep Medicine** page 6)

Above, the Dental Sleep Medicine team: (left to right) Mao Her-Flores, DDS; Natalie Luu, DDS; Bridgit Khater, DDS; Alexandra Hazen-Nazaroff, DMD.

# VA CCHCS Calendar

**January 1**

New Year's Day  
Federal Holiday

**January 17**

Benjamin Franklin's Birthday

**January 21**

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Federal Holiday

**February 1**

Go Red for Women Day



## Words from the Director

**Stephen R. Bauman, Medical Center Director**  
*VA Central California Health Care System*

Happy New Year! Hopefully everyone enjoyed an opportunity to spend time with family, relax and recharge over the holidays. The work done over the past year is a true testament to just how far CCHCS has come. However, there is still work to be done.

The transformation and progress made over the past 12 months is being recognized by our Veterans, their family members, caregivers and our stakeholders. We have received numerous letters over the last year commending the excellent customer service provided by the caring support staff at CCHCS.

What we are witnessing are the direct results of the actions of a dedicated staff. We are exhibiting our commitment to VA core values, [I-CARE]; Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence.

Looking forward to the coming year we must continue to focus on keeping Veterans at the center of everything we do at VA Central California HCS. Let us collectively continue to aim to transform the culture of VA, putting the needs of Veterans and their families first.

Together I know we can accomplish this, by maintaining a culture of continuous improvement and improving every Veteran experience.

We are charged and privileged with the honor of serving Veterans daily. Thank you for your many contributions and accomplishments throughout 2018. I am confident approaching the new year, that each of you will remain resolute in your dedication to serve our nations heroes.





## KNOW WHAT TO DO WHEN A VETERAN'S IN CRISIS?



## Learn What Steps to Take

**Wednesday  
January 23, 2019  
1:30 p.m – 3:30 p.m.**

Fresno City College  
Old Admin Building (OAB-251)  
1101 East University Ave.,  
Fresno, CA 93741

VA CCHCS offers public training resources for Veterans, their families, friends, and health care providers. This training is specifically for those who work with Veterans on a daily basis.

For more information  
contact Jerry Silva, L.C.S.W.:  
Jerry.silva2@va.gov



## New Study Shows VA Tops Private Hospitals

According to a recent independent Dartmouth study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals outperform private hospitals in health care in local areas, on average.

Of the 3,123 hospitals surveyed, VA performed better than non-VA facilities in nearly every quality measure, in over 120 health care markets.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said it is proof that the hard work and dedication of VA employees is making a real difference in the lives of the nation's Veterans. Wilkie also stated, "It validates the strong work we're going for ... giving our heroes the very best quality of care that they have earned through their faithful service to our country."

In fact, VA CCHCS has shown steady improvement for Strategic Analytics for Improvement & Learning (SAIL), which is VA's star-rating system encompassing aspects of quality and efficiency.

VA's SAIL rating system was created by the Operational Analytics and Reporting Office in pursuit of greater understanding relating to a comparative value-based framework within VA. The system is based on a model used by Reuters' Top 10 Health Systems Study and includes additional VA metrics to provide a benchmark for VA hospitals and medical centers.

If the above image looks familiar, that's because it is. VA CCHCS' main hospital building accompanied a subsequent article on the matter appearing on the VA Insider, an internal online resource for VA employees.

The following URL may be used to view the full text of the original article at: <https://bit.ly/2SfVqhc>.



## We're Open Despite Government Shutdown

VA will continue normal operations, as it is funded through fiscal year 2019. A partial government shutdown will NOT impact VHA operations.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie released the following statement, regarding the possibility of a partial federal government shutdown: "... We thank the president and Congress for their commitment to our nation's heroes in funding VA, and stand ready to provide all of the VA benefits and services our Veterans have earned."

# REBOOT

## COMBAT RECOVERY

Join us for  
**12 WEEKS**

FOCUSING ON THE  
**SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF  
COMBAT RECOVERY**

**REBOOT is a course** – not a support group – providing **practical help** for service members and families dealing with the aftereffects of combat. You won't find shortcuts or easy answers, but instead **you'll find solutions that last.**

NEXT CLASS STARTS  
**JANUARY 10, 2019**  
NEW CLASSES STARTING SOON

REGISTER AT  
**REBOOTRECOVERY.COM**

Classes meet  
**Thursdays  
6 - 8 p.m.**  
**Fresno VA Hospital**  
Independence Building  
2615 East Clinton Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93703

**Dinner Provided**

For more information, contact:  
**Terry Rommereim**  
Terry.Rommereim@va.gov  
(559) 225-6100, Ext. 5351

## Many Volunteers Turn Out to Help Veterans

From Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, the holidays are a time of giving. This year was no exception at VA CCHCS as many groups and individuals worked to provide for Veterans and make their holiday season a little bit brighter.

According to Bill Gonzalez, Central Valley Veterans Board Member, more than 300 non-perishable food items and toys were placed into the donation boxes located throughout the hospital. The food drive was a joint effort with Central Valley Veterans and VA CCHCS. In addition, Central Valley Veterans worked with VA Social Work Service to collect toys for the children of Veterans enrolled in the Homeless Veteran Program. This Toys-for-Tots program was coordinated by the Marine Corps League Detachment 14, Fresno.



*Many volunteers turned out to help stuff bags and backpacks for Veterans.*

Another program provided more than 500 Veterans with backpacks, popcorn products, blankets and/or gift bags from Santa. Many volunteers turned out to help stuff the bags that were then delivered to Veterans in recovery, hospitalized Veterans and homeless Veterans. This could not have been possible without the incredible generosity of our VA Voluntary Service Advisory Committee members, organizations and community partners.

Thank you to all who helped to brighten the holidays for our Veterans. If you would be interested in helping next year, please contact VA Voluntary Service: (559) 228-5364.



*Omega Delta Sigma members shake hands with VA CCHCS Acting Police Chief, James Weyant.*

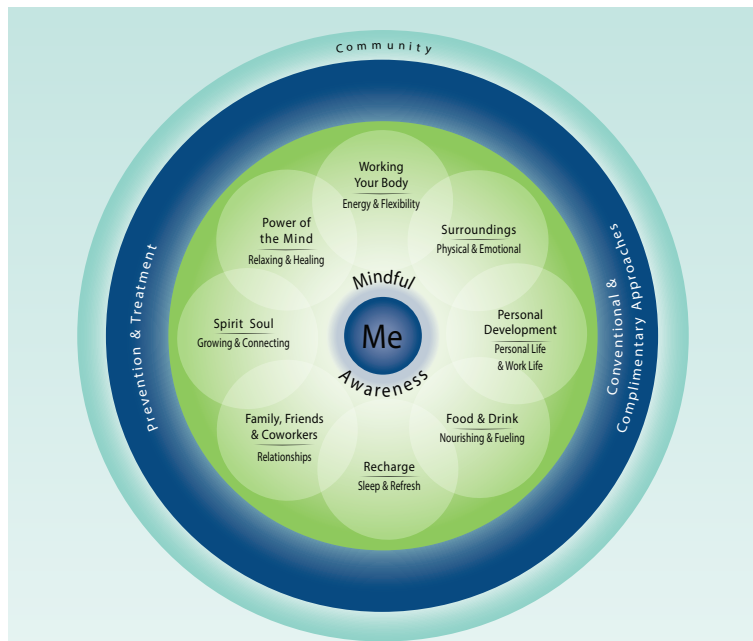
## Fraternity Hands Out Christmas Cards to VA CCHCS Veterans

On December 21, VA CCHCS had the pleasure of hosting the brothers & sisters of Omega Delta Sigma CA-A as they visited our Community Living Center to spend time with Veterans and spread some holiday cheer. The fraternity passed out over 400 personally hand-written Christmas cards and wished happy holidays to Veterans in the Central Valley.



# Successful Outcomes of Whole Health & Recreational Therapies

Whole Health can be arguably defined as one of many keys to unlocking consciousness for many Veterans afflicted by traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or polytrauma.



*The whole health diagram above shows how everyone has inter-connected factors (such as the mind, spirit, relationships, environment) contributing to a mindful awareness of one's self.*

Other challenges, including mental health and career transition can also affect many of the Nation's returning wounded, or injured Veterans. Thanks to discoveries in modern medicine and advances in prosthetic technologies, however, more Veterans are returning from war campaigns and living longer than ever before. VA leads the nation in treating Veterans in each of these areas.

Whole Health is an approach that empowers and equips Veteran patients with the ability to take charge of their health and well-being. This is accomplished through talking with Veterans to learn what their individual goals are and embarking on a health plan to achieve those goals.

Well-being programs such as self-care and skill building are also essential components of health coaching and partner support. Clinical care, treatment and health and disease management also play a vital role in the whole health initiative.

Whole health programs include a number of recreational therapies, like kayaking, equine therapy, cycling, snowboarding, bob-sledding, skiing, blind slalom skiing, blind swimming, archery, shooting, biathlon, triathlon, music, creative writing, marathons and fine arts.

This is why sports programs such as the Paralympics, Summer Sports Clinic, Winter Sports Clinic and Wheelchair Games are such a vital outlet for Veterans.

Many of the effects of whole health may not be fully measurable, in terms of metrics, but they can be visualized in the form of successful Veteran outcomes. For example, seeing Veterans experience happiness again following long periods of sorrow or discontent, or Veterans' families or significant others reporting new found hope or a sense of independence, or becoming more active in their communities.

Talk to your primary care provider if you are a Veteran or know someone who is a Veteran that may benefit from a Whole Health approach, today.

For more information on Whole Health at VA Central California HCS, please contact Dr. Sunitha Nalavenkata, at (559) 225-6100, Ext. 5149.



*Whole health programs include a variety of recreational therapies such as (clockwise from top left) wheelchair basketball, equine therapy, photography, kayaking.*

## Dental Sleep Medicine *(continued from page 1)*

Dr. Her-Flores said that having the ability to provide this service in-house is a significant advantage in improving the overall patient experience, one of the core values of VA. She was excited to share the new service offering at a recent medical staff meeting.

Providers and leaders of the organization come together each year, at the annual medical staff meeting, to introduce new staff and share updates, discuss challenges and successes.

Dental Service was challenged to improve the Veteran experience by providing mandibular advancement devices to facilitate more efficient and seamless processes for Veterans.

The process has been streamlined since its inception. Once a Veteran is identified with a need for dental sleep medicine, a consult is placed for dental outpatient services and dental service completes a thorough evaluation. Upon completion the service constructs, adjusts, and directly coordinates care with sleep medicine.

“Gone are the days of multiple consults to community care, technician time coordinating visits with the local provider of dental sleep medicine, wait-time obtaining records, and down-time for awaiting care authorizations,”

said Dr. Her-Flores.

The addition of dental sleep medicine is a testament to the Dental Service team and VA CCHCS leadership, illustrating the commitment to excellence in health care for San Joaquin Valley Veterans, and improving their health



*Dr. Mao Her-Flores (above), seated at her computer, worked to provide Dental Sleep Medicine to VA CCHCS.*

## Reflection

Silent icon Jim Williams passed away at age 84. Although many people may not have known him by name, Williams became famous for posing for the original “Reflections” painting, by Lee Teter.

In the painting, also referred to as “The Man at the Wall,” Williams seemingly embodies the pain and loss experienced by so many Veteran survivors in his portrayal of a Veteran businessman visiting the Vietnam Memorial Wall.

Although Williams wanted nothing to do with fame and notoriety, his likeness can be found in hundreds of thousands of businesses, homes and organizations, on everything from coffee mugs to calendars to plaques and wall-mounted, framed prints.

Williams was actively involved in his community. He was a member of several Veteran organizations and also volunteered at a VA Outpatient Clinic, in Cumberland, M.D.

Retired U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Jim Williams died peacefully at home, in Corriganville, M.D., on Dec. 19, 2018. He was 84 years old. He is survived by his widow, Laura, their four daughters, three stepsons, 12 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.



*Right, “Reflections” also known as “The Man at the Wall” painting by Lee Teter*

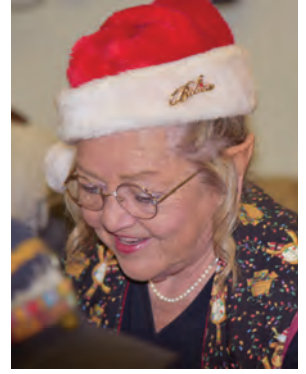


# Santa Spreads Cheer, Gifts to Veterans

Long-time friend of all Veterans, Santa Claus, and the lovely Elf Louise visited hospitalized Veterans Friday, December 21, for VA CCHCS' annual holiday gift bag distribution.

Community Living Center residents, hospitalized Veterans and VA staff had opportunities to pose for pictures with Santa.

Veterans were also bestowed with holiday gift bags made possible through a generous donation from Madera Ranchos' Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce (Bill Whyman, President, shown delivering gift bags to VA CCHCS, below).



## Patrons of Local Bookseller Purchase Over 20 Cases of Books



*(Left to right) Mary Golden, VA Voluntary Service stands alongside boxes of books with Austin Thompson, Bookseller, and Gabe Ponce, VA Voluntary Service*

Barnes & Nobel Booksellers, located in the Villagio Retail Center near River Park in Fresno, CA, held a book-drive in support of Veterans just in time for the holidays. The book drive was open from November 4 - 11, to benefit Veterans receiving care at VA Central California HCS (VA CCHCS).

This is the second consecutive year Barnes & Nobel Booksellers have worked with VA Voluntary Service to bring Veterans the gift of relaxation and recreation through reading, crafts, puzzles and brain teasers.

Over 600 books were purchased this year, specifically for donation, in honor of Valley Veterans receiving care at VA CCHCS.

VA Voluntary Service and VA CCHCS would like to thank Barnes & Noble Booksellers for their continued support of our nations heroes.

# VA | News Release



## You served your country. Now let VA serve you.

Many Veterans may not show any signs of intent to harm themselves before doing so, but some actions can be a sign that a person needs help. Veterans in crisis may show behaviors that indicate a risk of self-harm.

### The following can all be warning signs:

- Hopelessness; feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling as if there is no reason to live
- Feeling excessive guilt, shame, or sense of failure
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug misuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

### The following signs require immediate attention:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.

If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, there are caring, qualified VA responders standing by to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Please call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net** or text to **8382555**.



## VA Central California Health Care System

[www.fresno.va.gov](http://www.fresno.va.gov)

2615 E. Clinton Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93703  
(559) 225-6100

## Community Based Outpatient Clinics



### Merced Clinic

340 East Yosemite Ave., Merced CA 95340  
Main Number: (209) 381-0105  
Fax Number: (209) 381-0107  
Hours of operation: M-F 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Lab: M-F 7:30 - 9:30 a.m.



### Oakhurst Clinic

40597 West Lake Drive, Oakhurst CA 93644  
Main Number: (559) 683-5300  
Fax Number: (559) 683-5303  
Hours of operation: M-F 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Lab: M-F 8 -11 a.m. (preferred hours)



### Tulare Clinic

1050 N. Cherry Street, Tulare CA 93274  
Main Number: (559) 684-8703  
Fax Number: (559) 685-2405  
Hours of operation: M-F 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Lab: M-Th 8 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and  
Friday 8 a.m. - 1p.m.

Connect with VA Central California  
Health Care System:

**@VAFresno**

