

# Veteran Updates

News and updates on Veterans issues from the San Francisco VA Health Care System • February 2015

## National Salute to Our Veteran Patients

San Francisco VA Health Care System (SFVAHCS) salutes our Veteran patients!

This year, from February 9-13, we'll bring special greetings to all Veteran patients at the San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFMVC) and community clinics during VA's National Salute to Veteran Patients event.

This annual event includes the distribution of hundreds of Valentine's cards from area schools and the local community, as well as donations of gift bags from Veteran groups and organizations.

"This year, on February 9, our Volunteers are invited to meet at 10 a.m. at Voluntary Service (Bldg. 7, First Floor, Room 120) to decorate the main entrance of Bldg. 200 with hand-crafted Valentine's cards for Veterans," says Chief of Voluntary Service

Owetdia Dupree. "On February 10, Presidio branch members of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will fill gift bags to present to our Veterans," says Owetdia.

"On February 11, to celebrate National Salute Parade, DAR members will deliver Valentine's cards and gift bags to patients throughout the Medical Center," says Owetdia. "Handmade Valentine's Day cards will also be given to Veteran patients at our six community VA clinics.

On February 12, fresh carnations will be handed out to patients in the SFVAMC clinic areas. On February 13, Volunteers will also distribute soft, warm lap robes for all Veteran patients at SFVAMC.

This annual event also provides an opportunity for the community to become acquainted with volunteer opportunities at SFVAHCS.

To find out more about how you can participate, or to learn more about volunteering, call Voluntary Service at (415) 750-2144.



February is American Heart Month, and on **February 6**, the San Francisco VA Health Care System (SFVAHCS) will participate in **National Wear Red Day** by asking Veterans and VA staff to wear red in support of heart health.

Heart disease is the #1 killer of women in the United States. One in four (25 percent) American women dies from heart disease; one in 30 (3 percent) dies from breast cancer, per the American Heart Association.

Fortunately, lifestyle changes, medicines, and medical or surgical procedures can help women lower their risk for heart disease. Early and ongoing prevention is important.

Stop by the Stairwell Alcove (Bldg. 7, ground floor, on the way to the Canteen) on **February 6** from **10 a.m. – 2 p.m.** for information about heart disease, healthy recipes, tips for a healthier lifestyle, and giveaways.

## Affordable Care Act Update

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) open enrollment season is scheduled to run through **February 15, 2015**.

Veterans who are enrolled in the VA health care system already meet the minimum essential coverage standards set by ACA and don't need to take any further action. Veterans who are not enrolled can enroll at any time.

Veterans also can explore the Health Insurance Marketplace for coverage for themselves or their families. Find out about how ACA affects Veterans and their families by visiting [www.va.gov/aca](http://www.va.gov/aca).

## Veteran Kudos

"Outstanding!" says the way I feel about the Ukiah, California VA clinic and the staff, but especially Dr. Linda Mulligan. She's not only very well informed, but cares for her patients. The best doctor I ever had, and I've had many!" – D.H.

(Commenting about Guitars for Vets Program at Santa Rosa VA Clinic) "Way to go, Christiane Swartz of Santa Rosa VA, best social worker I know!" – D.D.M.

"I want it to be known that the service and attention I get at the VA clinic in San Bruno has been fantastic. The staff there are professional, friendly and most importantly, prompt." – B.L.

## Heart Attack in Women: Know the Signs

What are the symptoms of a heart attack in women?

According to the American Heart Association, here are the signs:

1. Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back.
2. Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
3. Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.



4. Other signs such as breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

As with men, women's most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain.

If you have any of these signs, don't wait more than five minutes before calling for help. Call 9-1-1 and get to a hospital right away.

## VIST: Helping Veterans With Low Vision

February is national Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) and Low Vision Awareness month. AMD is a leading cause of vision loss, affecting more than 2 million Americans age 50 and older. Low vision aids can make the most of remaining vision.

The SFVAHCS's Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Program assists Veterans whose vision loss affects their daily life, and helps the Veterans and their families cope with the functional and emotional issues associated with vision loss.

Any Veteran whose vision loss impacts activities of daily living and is eligible for VA health care may participate in the VIST program. Referrals can be submitted by the Veteran, family, or a health care

professional. Veterans in the VIST program are offered a yearly exam to assess their adjustment to sight loss, current vision, hearing, and general health.

After the assessment, Veterans can then be referred for specific training to learn adaptive techniques to help compensate for vision loss, community services and benefits, and follow-up health care, as needed.

The VIST Coordinator helps Veterans maximize VA and other sources of benefits. For more information contact VIST Coordinator Lila Jaffray at (415) 221-4810, ext. 2813, or [lila.jaffray@va.gov](mailto:lila.jaffray@va.gov).

