

Veteran Updates

News and updates on Veterans issues from the San Francisco VA Health Care System • July 2016

Palms Inn Houses Santa Rosa's Homeless Veterans

One of the VA's top priorities is to house all homeless Veterans. Addressing that challenge, Sonoma County has prioritized creating additional housing to support homeless Veterans. Also embracing the initiative is our Santa Rosa VA Clinic, whose staff is fervently dedicated to ending homelessness.

In September 2014, Akash Kalia, current owner of the Palms Inn, a 104-room hotel in Santa Rosa, approached the VA after hearing about the successful Kearny Street project to house homeless Vets in San Francisco. He proposed to convert his hotel rooms to single room occupancy facilities, with offices for service providers, such as the VA and Catholic Charities, to provide on-site essential services and case management to residents, according to Santa Rosa VA Clinic's HUD/VASH Coordinator, Kym Valadez. Kym then met with local non-profit partners to see what could be done. "People were interested, as the rental market was tightening up, and it was getting increasingly difficult to house our low-income clients," says Kym.

"One year later, we had close to 100 Veterans with HUD/VASH housing vouchers, and nowhere to house them. Catholic Charities had a similar situation," says Kym. "So we partnered with Catholic Charities, and started negotiations with the owner of The Palms Inn, his attorney,

the City and County of Sonoma, and our local elected officials. It was a long and arduous process, with a very successful outcome."

In February 2016, Veterans started moving into the Palms Inn, which sits on a 6.3 acre site. "It's quite a vibrant community here," says Kym. "We have 60 previously homeless Veterans now residing at the Palms Inn, and 44 previously homeless individuals who receive services from Catholic Charities. There's a community garden, guitar jamming sessions, food delivery service, fountains, and lots of open areas."

"From the beginning, this project was a leap of faith for all of us; the whole Santa Rosa HUD VASH team has put their heart and commitment towards this supportive housing community for our most vulnerable Veterans. We continue to be amazed

at the spirit, generosity towards each other, and resiliency of the Veterans who live there." says Kym. "Thanks also to our valued community partners who helped us make this project a reality: Catholic Charities, Santa Rosa Housing Authority, North Bay Veterans Resource Center, Interfaith Shelter Network, and Sonoma County Vet Connect, the American Legion, VFW, and Vietnam Veterans of America. This would not have happened without them. We are thankful that we live in a community where we have partners and Veterans who are so willing, and committed, to helping other Veterans."

If you are a landlord in Santa Rosa and would like to help house homeless Veterans, please contact Kym Valadez, LCSW, at (707) 333-6045 or kimberly.valadez@va.gov.



Veterans Crisis Line: Help is a Phone Call Away

If you are a Veteran in crisis, confidential support is only a phone call, click, or text away, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The Veterans Crisis Line, online chat, and text-messaging service are free to all Veterans, even if you are not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA health care.

Just call (800) 273-8255 and press “1”, or send a text to 838255, or chat online at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net.

The Veterans Crisis Line is staffed by caring, qualified VA responders—many of whom are Veterans themselves.

Crisis feels different for everybody and can arise from situations before, during, or after military service. Some Veterans are coping with aging, stress, difficulties in their relationships, transitioning back to employment, or education.

Whatever’s got you down, a Veterans Crisis Line responder can provide support, day or night.

Make the call. Get the help you’ve earned.

Connect your Docs: VLER Health

Do you see a non-VA health care provider?

There’s a health service that all Veterans seen at SFVAMC and at our community VA clinics may “opt in” to, which connects their Veterans Affairs (VA) medical information with non-VA health care providers. It’s the VA Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) for Health.

VLER Health is a program that shares certain parts of your Veteran health record between VA, the Department of Defense, and selected private health care providers over a secure and confidential network known as the eHealth Exchange. **This program is free and voluntary for Veterans.**

Why Veterans should opt in for VLER Health:

Your health and benefits information will travel securely wherever you go for health care, nationwide.

Electronically sharing relevant health and benefits data improves quality of care, patient safety, and reduces medical errors.

Having a single portal for health information supports continuity of care and reduces or eliminates redundancy of procedures (such as lab or X-ray tests).

It’s a cost effective and secure way to share relevant health and benefits data of Veterans and service

members with VA, the Department of Defense, and private sector health care providers.

There are four ways to opt in:

Online: Visit www.ebenefits.va.gov and follow the instructions.

In Person: Fill out the VA authorization form (VA Form 10-0485) and turn in at the MyHealthVet office (in Medical Practice, Bldg. 200, 1st Floor) at the San Francisco VA Medical Center; or at the outpatient clinic locations in Eureka, Clearlake, Ukiah, Santa Rosa, San Bruno, or the San Francisco VA Downtown Clinic.

By Mail: Mail the completed and signed authorization form to:

San Francisco VA Health Care System
Attn: ROI Office
4150 Clement Street (136C)
San Francisco, CA 94121

By Fax: Fax the VA Form 10-0485 to the SFVAHCS ROI Office at (415) 379-5568.

You may also visit our internet VLER Health web page at www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/vlerhealth.asp to download the forms and learn more about VLER Health.

Want a nationwide list of non-VA private health partners listed by state, to see if your non-VA doctor is on the list to coordinate your non-VA health care with your VA docs? Visit www.va.gov/VLER/vler-health-your-area.asp. This list is regularly updated.

