Better

A Butler VA Quarterly Magazine spring 2020



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HEALTHCARE HEROES

























cover photo

As we move forward, please remember masks are to be worn inside the facility and proper physical distancing is to be observed by all.



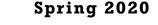
Dear Veterans, family members, employees, volunteers and friends of the Butler VA,

I am excited and honored to officially be a part of the Butler VA team as the new director. First and foremost, I want you to know that I am here to support you and your families through this pandemic. I know this is hard, and we are all in a stressful time. Please know the Butler VA is here for you. I am here for you, and I look forward to the time when I can meet and work with all of you in-person.

The Butler VA continues to provide excellent care to our Veterans, and I will continue to build upon that. Thank you for your service and sacrifice. I look forward to serving and seeing you soon at the Butler VA.

Kevin Amick, Director

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Prior to COVID-19, the Butler VA's Community Living Center had an extensive pet therapy program. After some creative thinking, recreation therapists purchased interactive Joy for All Companion Pets to help residents during this time.



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Caring for You During COVID-19

Butler VA Operations and Support

The Butler VA Health Care System has always been here for Veterans, and we will continue to be here for you during the COVID-19 crisis. We are open to see our Veterans, and we are still enrolling Veterans in VA care—but please contact us first.

VA has implemented an aggressive public health response to protect and care for Veterans, their families, health care providers, and staff in the face of this health risk. We are working directly with the CDC and other federal partners to monitor the virus.

The Butler VA is open, but operations have changed and continue to change.

- Everyone entering our facilities is screened (questions asked and temperature checks)
- Face coverings are mandatory. We encourage you to bring your own, or you can use one we provide. Veterans who have concerns with wearing a mask are asked to speak with their Primary Care Team prior to coming into the facility.
- Veterans may have one care person with them during their visit. No one under the age of 18 is permitted.

- All Veterans, care persons accompanying Veterans, and staff are to be mindful of physical distancing, maintaining the 6-foot rule. Waiting areas have been reconfigured to promote social distancing. Please do not move chairs/ tables.
- The Canteen Cafeteria and Retail Store are open; however, the dine-in option is not available at this time.
- The Butler VA's Wellness Center remains closed at this time and associated wellness programs.
- Facility in-person events are currently on-hold, but virtual events are conducted weekly via Facebook Live on the Butler VA's official Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ VAButlerPA.

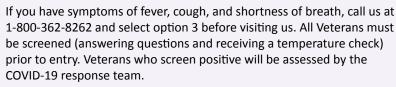
Thank you for your understanding as we continue our efforts to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus and make sure everyone stays as safe and healthy as possible.

If you are a Veteran having thoughts of suicide, you are not alone, VA is here during these challenging times. Call, text or chat with the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. www.veteranscrisisline.net.



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Our staff made many cloth masks (and continue to do so) for non-clinical employees. Log onto www.health.pa.gov for more information on Pennsylvania's masking guidance.

VA COVID-19 Tools:

COVID Coach App

The COVID Coach app was created for everyone, including Veterans and Servicemembers, to support self-care and overall mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Note: This app is available on the App Store for iPhone and iPad and at Google Play for Android devices. https://mobile.va.gov/app/covid-coach.

VA Coronavirus Chatbot

VA developed an interactive VA coronavirus chatbot to provide precise and timely information throughout this time. This new tool directs Veterans to information and services without requiring a phone call. It includes access to a coronavirus symptom self-checker tool, aligned

with the latest CDC advice. The tool provides Veteran-focused Frequently Asked Questions, information about how Veterans can access VA health care and other benefits and services. https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-chatbot/

COVID-19 Guide for Veterans

The guide is to help Veterans learn how to use VA health care benefits during COVID-19 and has links and resources Veterans can reference to protect themselves and others. https://www.va.gov/covid-19-links-and-resources.pdf.

Photo left: VA's Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) allows us to deploy our employee volunteers anywhere in the nation that we need. During this pandemic, 46 Butler VA DEMPS volunteers went to multiple areas. Thank you to our employee volunteers and to all of you for your dedication in caring for Veterans.

https://www.publichealth. va.gov/n-coronavirus/

Meet Kevin

Navy Veteran Kevin Amick Leads the Butler VA Team



Kevin Amick was appointed as the new Director of the Butler VA Health Care System and officially started on-site at the main facility, the Abie Abraham VA Clinic, on Monday, April 27.

"I am honored to officially be a part of the Butler VA team as the new director. First and foremost, I want our Veterans and families to know that I am here to support them through this pandemic. I know this is hard, and we are all in a stressful time. Please know the Butler VA is here for you. I am here for you, and I look forward to the time when I can meet with all of you inperson," said Amick.

Mr. Amick previously served as the associate director at the Durham VA Health Care System in Durham, North Carolina. His service to the Veterans Health Administration began in 2010, serving in various positions at the Durham facility and at the Hampton VA Medical Center in Hampton, Virginia. Amick also served as a chief hospital corpsman, among other roles, in the Navy Hospital Corps during his 21-year naval career.

So, why Butler, Pennsylvania?

"From my first visit here, I could quickly see that the Butler VA is an excellent facility providing outstanding care to Veterans with staff that truly care. I'm looking forward to building on the great care already being done here," said Amick. "It's also more than just the job though, it's the Butler community. My wife, Tammi, and I are excited to be in Butler with its hometown feel, community pride, and even more so, surrounded by people who truly support Veterans in the way they deserve to be supported."

Mr. Amick is focused on Secretary Wilkie's four priorities:

- 1) Customer Service
- 2) Implementing the Mission Act
- 3) Electronic Health Record
- 4) Transforming our Business System

More information about those priorities here: https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/about/strategic_plan.cfm.



He also has four main goals of his own:

- 1) Improve access and quality of care for Veterans in the Butler area, including how post-COVID-19 health care will look for our Veterans.
- 2) Focus on employee engagement/development
- 3) Continue the High Reliability Organization journey (everyone is a problem solver)
- 4) Improve technology and innovation.

Mr. Amick holds master's degrees in health administration and human resources management from Strayer University and a bachelor's degree in health science from Old Dominion University. He is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Outside of work, Mr. Amick loves spending time with his family and their five rescue dogs. He enjoys sports (mostly watching) and relaxing. He hopes to get into hiking and kayaking soon. Originally from Maryland, he is unfortunately a Ravens football fan. But, having no hometown hockey team to root for, we're hoping to turn him into a Pittsburgh Penguins fan!

www.butler.va.gov/about/leadership.asp





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Adapting Pet Therapy for Veteran Residents

Recreation therapy is a key component of care for Veterans in the Butler VA's Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center (CLC). Veteran residents typically enjoy a variety of recreation activities such as special visitors, field trips, car shows, bingo nights, and social gatherings. With the current COVID-19 pandemic, and no visitors or large group gatherings allowed, the program has learned new and creative ways to adapt while supporting our Veterans' health and well-being.

"We're trained to be able to adapt and modify programming based on internal and external factors, and during this pandemic that has been no different," shared Mary Ann Capuzzi, certified recreation therapist. "With no visitors and social distancing, technology has played a large role in adapting recreation therapy activities."

Smaller groups and utilizing iPads are one way the department has adjusted to the times. But, the one program they really wanted to adapt was the pet therapy program.

Prior to COVID-19, the Butler VA's CLC had an extensive pet therapy program consisting of almost daily pet therapy visits, including evenings, weekends and holidays. After some creative thinking and research, the therapists purchased interactive Joy for All Companion Pets (five dogs and five cats).

These pets look, feel, and sound like real cats and dogs. Built-in sensors respond to motion and touch. Realistic, soft fur looks and feels like a real pet, and they have lifelike coats and make authentic sounds.

"These pets have surpassed our expectations: they have comforted, calmed anxiety, provided companionship, increased social engagement, and decreased loneliness due to lack of visitors," shared Capuzzi. "These robotic pets have truly increased the overall quality of life for our Veterans during this challenging time."

The recreation therapy department at the Butler VA consists of two certified recreation therapists (CRTS), MaryAnn Capuzzi and Allie Schmolly, as well as two recreation therapy assistants, Amy Higgins and Bill Kunst. Their mutual goal is to focus on the physical, mental, social and emotional domains of our Veterans.

Recreation therapy offers a unique non-pharmacological approach to managing various components of medical or mental health issues such as behavior management, anger management, pain management, reality orientation, coping and adjustment, stress management and relaxation, and substance abuse. Recreation therapy also can make a significant contribution to Veterans requiring hospice and/or palliative care utilizing comfort, relaxation, and sensory activities such as music, art, light touch, aroma, reminiscing, journaling, pet visits, etc.





www.prosthetics.va.gov/rectherapy/





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Caregiving During COVID-19

Learn how you can protect, prepare and support yourself and your Veteran loved one through these challenging times with tips on Caregiving During COVID-19: www.caregiver.va. gov/pdfs/CSP-Caregiving-During-COVID-19_TipSheet-23April-2020.pdf#

Caregiver Support Program Resources:

- Annie Caregiver Text Support* is VA's text messaging service that promotes self-care for caregivers. Caregivers need a phone capable of text messaging to enroll.
- Building Better Caregivers* TM (BBC) is a six-week online workshop for caregivers of Veterans of all eras who are caring for someone with dementia, memory problems, posttraumatic disorder, a serious brain injury, or any other serious injury or illness.
- Caregiver Education Calls* are monthly telephone
 education calls for caregivers with a theme of "Care for the
 Caregiver." The topics change monthly and scripts
 and audio recordings of the calls can be found on the
 CSP website.
- Caregiver Support Line (CSL) offers support by caring licensed professionals. The CSL, 1-855-260-3274 is available toll free from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. eastern time., Monday through Friday.
- Caregiver Support Program website contains tips, tools, videos and links to resources for caregivers of Veterans of all eras. The link is www.caregiver.va.gov.
- Peer Support Mentoring Program provides an opportunity for caregivers to receive guidance and share their experiences with a more experienced caregiver. Mentors and mentees communicate regularly for at least six months through email, telephone and letters.
- Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers Health (REACH VA) Intervention* is an evidenced-based intervention that is delivered by VA clinical staff to provide individual support to stressed and burdened caregivers of Veterans of all eras, and those with dementia, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis (MS), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

Apply for VA Health Care at Home

You don't need to

come in-person to apply for health care at the Butler VA. Check out these three simple steps to get started today:

- 1) Have your DD-214 ready
- 2) Fill out an application:

 www.va.gov/vaforms/

 medical/pdf/10-10EZ
 fillable.pdf (or call Ron

 Collett at 878-271-6677

 if you'd like one mailed

 to you)
- 3) Mail your completed application and a copy of your DD-214 to:

ATTN: Ronald Collett, Butler VA Outreach Coordinator Butler VA Health Care System

353 N. Duffy Rd., Butler PA 16001

Need help getting started? Have questions as you go? Call Ron Collett at 878-271-6677. You also can visit www.va.gov/health-care/ how-to-apply/ for more information.



^{*}For more information, please contact the Butler VA's Caregiver Support Program Office at 878-271-6174.



Telephone Lifestyle Coaching (TLC) Program

While we're staying at home, consider the Telephone Lifestyle Coaching (TLC) Program. TLC is a telephone-based coaching program where Veterans talk with a health coach about personal health and self-care behaviors. Veterans receive education and support for goal setting and action planning to improve their health and well-being.

Coaches support Veterans who choose to take charge of their health in any of these areas:

- managing weight
- being more active
- managing stress
- eating wisely
- limiting alcohol

Ask your health care team for a referral to TLC today. You can do so over the phone or through My HealtheVet's Secure Messaging. www.prevention.va.gov/TLC/index.asp

Live Whole Health

With the unforeseen challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, how we deal with and adapt to change will determine our ability to weather the pandemic. Taking care of your physical health is important, but so is taking care of your whole health—adding emotional, mental and spiritual to the physical.

Life has always been a process of evolving and adapting to change. That's what makes finding ways to stay balanced and strong so important. Learning new skills to stay healthy and care for ourselves and our families is now more important than ever.

VA posts weekly whole health resources, including video sessions that you can follow along with from your own home. Sessions pull from a variety of existing VA resources, and may include breathing exercises, stretching, meditation, fitness, yoga, tai chi, and more. They also highlight various VA informational resources to support you and your family. Check out the resources posted, and be on the lookout for others to come: www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/category/health/live-wholehealth/

For more information on maintaining and enhancing your mental health and well-being during the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, visit VA's mental health coronavirus webpage: www.mentalhealth.va.gov/coronavirus/

For more information on self-care through the whole health components of health and well-being visit: www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/circle-of-health/index.asp



www.va.gov/wholehealth

SHARING
STORIES
AND NEWS
FROM
VETERANS
TO

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Volunteer Heroes During a Pandemic

For the past five years, the Lighthouse Foundation has worked with Butler VA's Voluntary Services program to set-up specific days and times that Veterans transported through the DAV/Volunteer Transportation Program can obtain their monthly food support.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. Navy Veteran and Butler VA Volunteer Danny Turner, along with fellow volunteer James Caldwell are continuing this service several times a month, slightly adjusted, by picking up food orders from the Lighthouse and dropping off to Veterans in the community.

The following excerpt was provided by the Lighthouse Foundation:

"We are thankful for everyday heroes like Jim and Danny who deliver food orders to VA Veterans and Grapevine (a mental health drop in clinic) clients. To hear their stories of why people are in need of food will break your heart. We have seen a significant increase in Veterans that are using our food pantry. We are honored to provide food for those who have served our country and those who are unable to leave their homes at this time. Thank you to everyday heroes for helping get food to those in need."

At this time, the majority of volunteer assignments are on hold in an effort to keep everyone safe. We





can't wait to welcome our volunteers back though! For more information about volunteering at the Butler VA, please contact Andy Pepe, Voluntary Services Coordinator, at 878-271-6957. You also can visit www.butler.va.gov/giving/index.asp.



Veterans Serving Veterans

During this pandemic, Butler VA employees are volunteering to assist Veterans in other parts of the country more significantly impacted by COVID-19. Many of these volunteer employees are Veterans themselves.

want to help out other Veterans wherever I can. I was a medic in the Army National Guard, did two tours in Afghanistan, and I like getting up in the front lines and helping out wherever I can. I look forward to serving the Veterans in New Jersey during this timel.

Hey Veterans! Share your stories with us in Vet Chat. Contact the Butler VA Public Affairs Office today at 878-271-6492.

Voluntary Services Specialist and Army National Guard Veteran Andrew (Andy) Gryskewicz

Hand Hygiene Quick Quiz

Test your knowledge on hand hygiene below and then check out the key times to wash your hands.

- 1. What is the single most important way to prevent the spread of infections?
- 2. Which of the following hand hygiene products will kill bacteria:

a. Plain soap and water

b. Antimicrobial soap and water

c. Alcohol-based hand rubs

3. When a healthcare worker touches a resident, who is colonized but not infected with resistant organisms (e.g., MRSA or VRE), the healthcare worker's hands can spread resistant organisms to other residents and the environment?

a. True

b. False

4. If you wear gloves while caring for a resident, you don't have to wash your hands.?

a. True

b. False

Key Times to Wash Your Hands

You can help yourself and your loved ones stay healthy by washing your hands often, especially during these key times when you are likely to get and spread germs:

- **Before, during**, and **after** preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After hanging diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After handling pet food or pet treats
- After touching garbage

During the COVID-19 pandemic, you also should clean hands:

- After you have been in a public place and touched an item or surface that may be frequently touched by other people, such as door handles, tables, gas pumps, shopping carts, or electronic cashier registers/screens, etc.
- Before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because that's how germs enter our bodies.

Correct Answers:

Good hand hygiene
 B and C. Cleaning your hands with plain soap and water will remove bacteria but not kill bacteria.
 A 4) B

Source: Minnesota Department of Health; Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention and Control Division

Who's Who?

DAWNA KIMMEL, RNInfection Control Specialist



Keeping YOU Safe!

Dawna Kimmel accepted her first position with the Butler VA as a primary care nurse 12 years ago. Today, she serves as Butler VA's infection control nurse. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kimmel's role has become center stage in the fight against the virus.

"We are doing everything we can to prevent the spread of the virus, to keep staff and Veterans safe.

Here are some of the best ways to protect yourself:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. An easy way to mark the time is to hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice while scrubhing.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick or becoming sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue (not your hands) and throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.





ACCESS MENTAL HEALTH REMOTELY

As we face physical distancing challenges alongside new anxieties, stresses, or even feelings of depression, accessing mental health resources remotely may be more important than ever. To make sure Veterans don't miss out on mental health care. VA has a number of ways Veterans can maintain their well-being no matter where they are, including mobile apps, self-help trainings, videos, and websites.

Mental Health Mobile Apps

Access mental health support wherever you are, whenever you need it! VA's mental health apps can help you manage mental health symptoms and stress, learn to practice coping skills, and more Listed below are descriptions of some of VA's most popular mental health mobile apps.

- **CBT-i Coach** teaches users about sleep, lets them track their sleep and take a sleep assessment, then guides them through the process of developing positive sleep routines.
- Mindfulness Coach provides tools to help users practice mindfulness meditation.
- **Mood Coach** for depression provides positive activity scheduling based on the principles of behavioral activation treatment for depression.
- Moving Forward teaches problem-solving skills, which can be used alone or in conjunction with problem-solving training.
- PTSD Coach provides information about PTSD and options for professional care, a self-assessment, opportunities to find support, and tools - all designed to help Veterans manage the stresses of daily life with PTSD.
- PTSD Family Coach is similar to the PTSD Coach, but it adds guidance for those whose family roles have changed since the onset of PTSD, including tips and information for self-care and for maintaining relationships, as well as ideas for helping a loved one get treatment.

You can explore more mental health mobile apps at www.mobile.va.gov/appstore/mental-health.

Online Self-Help

In addition to its wealth of mobile apps, VA offers many in-depth mental health resources online.

- VA's mental health page features self-help tips, guidance for Veterans and loved ones as they start the healing journey, and information about specific mental health topics and conditions.
- Make the Connection offers Veterans, their family members, friends, and other supporters with information about issues affecting their lives. On the website, visitors can watch hundreds of Veterans share their stories of strength and recovery, read about a variety of life events and mental health topics, and locate nearby resources. Make the Connection also features a series of self-assessments and screenings and self-help strategies that can be used anonymously anytime, anywhere.
- **Veteran Training** is a self-help portal that provides tools for overcoming everyday challenges. The portal has tools to help Veterans work on problem-solving skills, manage anger, develop parenting skills, and more in an entirely anonymous environment. The free tools are based on mental health practices that have proven successful with Veterans and their families.

Telephone or Video Appointments

Veterans should maintain their existing mental health appointments — and may receive care at home using VA Video Connect on their computers, smartphones or tablets. To set up telephone or video appointments, Veterans can send their health care provider a secure message on My HealtheVet by visiting myhealth.va.gov. Learn more about VA Video Connect at mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect.

Crisis Support

If you are a Veteran having thoughts of suicide — or if you're concerned about one — free, confidential support is available 24/7. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, text to 838255, or chat online.

Source: VAntage Point (Official VA Blog)

Health Tastes -Sweet n' Sour Pork Roast



Ingredients

1 (~2 lbs.) pork loin

½ cup brown sugar, packed

½ cup apple juice

1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons reduced-sodium (lite) soy sauce

2 lbs. (32 oz.) frozen mixed vegetables, oriental or stir-fry style

1 (8 oz.) package ready microwavable whole-grain rice (e.g. brown rice)

Fat: 15.5g ★ Calories: 575 ★ Protein: 50g ★ Sodium: 345mg

Directions

Place the pork loin into the bottom of a slow cooker. In a mixing bowl, make a glaze by combining the brown sugar, apple juice, vinegar, and soy sauce. Pour the glaze mixture over the pork loin. Cover the slow cooker with a lid. Cook on low for 4-5 hours or until fully cooked, adding the vegetables and rice when there is 30 minutes left in the total cooking time. Serve warm.

Serving size = 1/6th of the recipe; makes 6 servings

Source: VA Nutrition Services -One Pot Meals Cookbook

HEALTH

Crossword

Stav Home & Puzzle!



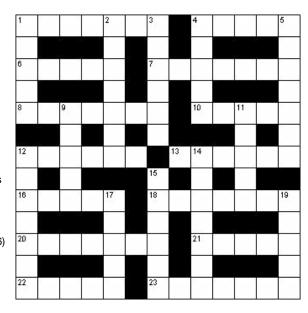
Need something to do whiles staying home? Puzzles are the perfect social distancing activity, AND they may even benefit your mental health. Enjoy!

ACROSS

- 1. State capital of Georgia (7)
- 4. Egyptian dam (5)
- 6. Italian isle (5)
- 7. Montgomery is the state capital (7)
- 8. Grand Canyon State (7)
- 10. Japanese city (5)
- 12. Capital of 16 across (6)
- 13. Capital of the Philippines (6) 12. French wind (7)
- 16. European country (5)
- 18. Capital of Algeria (7)
- 20. North American mountain range (7)
- 21. Egyptian desert (5)
- 22. Tripoli is the capital (5)
- 23. Washington city (7)

DOWN

- 1. Capital of Ghana (5)
- 2. Capital of Kenya (7)
- 3. Biblical Mount (6)
- 4. San Antonio mission (5)
- 5. Falls (7)
- 9. Asian country (5)
- 11. Australian town, ___ Springs (5)
- 14. State capital of Maine (7)
- 15. Topeka is the state capital (6)
- 17. Currency of Nigeria (5)
- 19. French river (5)



HEALTH TIP— STAY CONNECTED WHILE **PHYSICAL DISTANCING**

Seek support from family,

friends, mentors, clergy, and those who are in similar circumstances. While face-to-face communication may be difficult, be flexible and creative using phone, email, text messaging, and video calls. Sign up or join a virtual social network that includes service members and Veterans.

Living Better Spring 2020



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Butler VA Health Care System

353 North Duffy Road Butler, PA 16001 800.362.8262 724.287.4781



butler.va.gov



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www.butler.va.gov/news/MediaCenter.asp

ARMSTRONG COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

11 Hilltop Plaza Kittanning, PA 16201 724.545.8420

CLARION COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

56 Clarion Plaza, Suite 115 Monroe Township, PA 16214 814.226.3900

CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

900 Commonwealth Drive, Suite 100 Cranberry Township, PA 16066 724,742,3500 or 724,741,3131

LAWRENCE COUNTY VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

Ridgewood Professional Centre 1750 New Butler Road New Castle, PA 16101 724.598.6080

MICHAEL A. MARZANO VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

295 North Kerrwood Drive, Suite 110 Hermitage, PA 16148 724.346.1569

The Butler VA Health Care System, located in Butler County, Pennsylvania has been attending to Veteran's total care since 1947. We are the health care choice for over 25,000 Veterans throughout Western Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio and are a member of VA Healthcare VISN 4 under the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Butler VA provides comprehensive Veteran care including primary, specialty and mental health care – as well as management of chronic conditions and social support services for our nation's finest, America's Veterans.

