

# James E. Van Zandt VAMC

**2018 Annual Report to Stakeholders**



**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration**

**2018 VISN 4 ANNUAL REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS****Dear Stakeholders,**

Our Altoona VAMC facility, along with our five community based outpatient clinics in DuBois, Huntingdon, Indiana, Johnstown and State College are extraordinary places. The one thing that has become increasingly apparent to me, since my arrival more than a year ago, is that our Veterans and our staff are exceptional people. I often catch myself telling everyone that “We are the Altoona VA, we work in a special place, taking care of our nation’s heroes!”

Over the past year, based on your recommendations we have added or expanded more than 17 services. When we evaluated the toll on our Veterans who had to take bus services for more than two hours one way, to receive vital cancer treatments, we decided that we had a duty to bring them back to Altoona and we did! We added the largest telehealth infusion clinic in the United States. Now they can stay close to home and get the much needed rest they deserve.

For the same reason, we added colonoscopies, EGDs, chiropractic care and acupuncture to assist with those Veterans who have long-term care requirements. At your request we expanded hours for radiology in three of our outpatient clinics and have plans to upgrade our radiological services in Altoona. Finally, we added clinics like wound care, allergy and pain management. Not only are we listening, but we are advocating to make sure you continue to receive the best care in our region.

Growing to better serve our Veterans will continue to be our motto moving into the new year. We have plans to add or grow several more services. We plan to evolve our bronchoscopies, ear, nose and throat (ENT), general surgery in Huntingdon and Johnstown outpatient clinics, ophthalmology, optometry in our Huntingdon and Indiana outpatient clinics, podiatry in all our outpatient clinics and of course we want to remain the leaders in our telehealth services.

It is an honor to be your VAMC Director. Throughout my more than 30 year career as a nurse, I have never been in a place as kind, as special, as Veteran-centric as here. I promise that we will continue keeping our focus on what matters most to you, our Veterans. We will continue providing unparalleled services so that we can continue as the leader in our region for Veterans healthcare. Our exceptional services are why Veterans Choose VA!

*Sigrid Andrew*

Director, James E. Van Zandt VAMC

## JAMES E. VAN ZANDT VA MEDICAL CENTER — ALTOONA

### TOTAL EMPLOYEES

881

Employees who are Veterans

224

Nurses 200

Physicians 27

### UNIQUE PATIENT TOTAL

25,948

Male 24,081 / Female 1,866

#### OPERATING BEDS

51

#### SURGICAL PROCEDURES

489

#### ADMISSIONS (Including Observation)

697

#### OUTPATIENT VISITS

246,750

### TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET

\$159,999,000

### VIRTUAL CARE

Encounters completed via Telehealth 13,178.50

(Home Telehealth, Store and Forward and Clinical Video Telehealth)

CVT 7,670 Store & Forward 1,128.50

Home Telehealth 4,380

Telemental Health Care Encounters 4,364 (including 47 VA Video Connect Visits)

Unique Veterans Used Secure Messaging 3,305

Unique Patients Served via e-consult 13

### VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Volunteers 329

Volunteers Hours 39,640.50

Youth Volunteers 13



### 2018 Blair County Hall of Fame Inductees for Sustainability Award

By: Chris Lemke

**J**ames E Van Zandt VAMC is among the first Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities in the country to go to an alternative fuel capable fleet, to install an alternative fuels fueling station with both bio-diesel and E85, and to start running diesel fleet vehicles on bio-diesel.

Additionally, facility and contracting staff are aggressive in constructing energy saving buildings. While performing renovations there is intense focus on reducing greenhouse gases through energy use reduction.

As a Chesapeake Bay contributing facility, our storm water management operation reduces pollution and improves the quality of the water in the streams and rivers downstream of the facility. Increased water quality reduces the production and release of methane from the stream substrate while increasing the quality and quantity of riparian vegetation enhancing the consumption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

Joe Hurd, CEO of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce, along with other distinguished community leaders presented Derek Coughenour, Associate Director, Jerry Wilson, Chief of Facilities and Glenn Holsinger, Environmental Health Technician with the award at the Annual Chamber Breakfast.

"This is a great honor for our facility," said Coughenour, "and it is a testament to our dedication to the community and the future sustainability of our facility."

The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center has received numerous awards through their GEMS programs. Just like those awards, this one will be displayed in our first floor halls for all visitors, family members, Veterans and staff to see.

### EPA Award - Leadership



*Glenn Holsinger, Environmental Health Technician and Derek Coughenour, Associate Director accept the award from David Lacono, EPA*

By: Glenn Holsinger

**T**he James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center in Altoona, PA, has helped improve the Green Environmental Management Systems at more than half of the hospitals in its network.

They also created a SharePoint website containing useful tools, policies, procedures and guidelines used at VA Medical Centers across the country. This Center leads its Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) with green chemical purchases, facility recycling, and the reduction of municipal solid waste that is generated.

Construction and demolition waste declined significantly but the recycling percentage remained essentially unchanged.

Given its leadership, the entire VISN has experienced enhanced environmental protection. In collaboration with the Lebanon and Wilkes Barre VA Medical Centers, Van Zandt's environmental stewardship efforts serve to protect the Chesapeake Bay Drainage Basin — a vital and cherished national asset.

### New Veteran Focus Leads to 17 Services Expanded

Staff at the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center have taken up the charge to remain focused on Veterans and their needs.

Due to their dedication, more than 17 services have been expanded over the course of 2018. Those service include:

- Allergy
- Chemotherapy
- Chiropractic/Acupuncture
- Colonoscopy
- Esophagogastroduodenoscopy (EGD)
- Expanded Radiology Services at Altoona VAMC
- Optometry – currently expanded to Dubois, Johnstown and State College CBOCs
- Pain Clinics: Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection (LESI); Opioid Use Review Clinics w/VA Pittsburgh Health Care System; and CVT Pain PACT w/VAPHS
- Podiatry
- Non-complex Nail Clipping
- Podiatry expanded to all CBOCs
- Radiology Services expanded hours - Dubois, Johnstown, and State College CBOCs
- Wound Clinic

With 2019 already upon us, the staff at the Altoona VA continue to keep their eyes on the future.

Currently, there are another nine services being reviewed to determine if they can be added or expanded within the main facility or one of the five community based outpatient clinics.

### Altoona VA Finishes #3 in Nation, AES Participation

Altoona VAMC finished with the third highest participation rate in the nation in the recent All Employee Survey.

Finishing with more than 89% of all staff participating, Altoona VA finished better than 138 other VA facilities nationwide.

Altoona VA's participation results were the highest in VISN 4, and soared above the national average participation rate for VA which averaged 60% for all VA facilities. It should be noted that those high participation rates also reflected higher satisfaction scores among employees with the main facility and our five community based outpatient clinics.

Altoona VA showed an improved AES composite score of 25 points. This improvement was the 4th largest gain of 141 facilities in the nation. The Best Places to Work score gained 14 points moving Altoona to score a 70% satisfaction rating.

### Altoona VA #5 in Nation for Patient Safety Participation

Altoona VAMC ranked fifth in the nation for participation in the Patient Safety Culture Survey for 2018. The survey was conducted from August 27 – September 16 on the heels of the All Employee Survey. Altoona had 314 respondents for a 40.3% response rate – the highest in VISN 4.

The facility nearly tripled the response rate from the 2016 survey in which there were 112 respondents for a 16.1% response rate. The high participation rate for the 2018 survey can be attributed to an active marketing plan to include poster displays, all employee emails, Patient Safety Manager and Leadership rounding, and most importantly, active Leadership support throughout the survey period.

### Meeting Demands of Aging Veteran Population

Remaining Focused on Future Veterans, Programs and Outreach Events

**By:** Shaun Shenk

Our Veterans are unique! Many of our patients are the fathers and mothers, siblings, next door neighbors, and previous teachers of our employees. Many of our Veterans have known our employees their entire lives. Some Veterans even come to the facility so they can celebrate milestones like promotions and retirements with our employees. With that sense of community, comes a higher demand for service. Fortunately, we are up for the challenge!

Our Veteran population's needs are shifting. Fifty-six percent of our Veteran population, who use our services, are above the age of 65. Many of them have never used VA services prior to their retiring. Some of them have never filed for a service connection. With that, brings a demand for very specialized level of care. We are fantastic at providing that care, and will do everything we can to make sure our Veterans receive the benefits that they have earned.



With only 20 percent of our Veterans under the age of 45, we have to reach them. That is why we established an outreach coordination committee to oversee all outreach events. They have acquired materials, tables and pamphlets so that the information is easily understood and can be taken anywhere.

We depend on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to communicate. We have increased our followers to nearly 1,900 and we are growing every day. Like our page or tag us @VAAltoona.

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**“..56 percent of our Veteran population, who use our services, are above the age of 65.”**

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Additionally we are forming Community Engagement Boards for civic leaders who have interest in Veterans programs, and a Veterans Input Pool for patients who use our services and have ideas how we can become better at serving those who served.

We are the world leaders in telehealth using it in nearly every aspect of our facility to make sure every Veteran has unrestricted access.

We need everyone's help ensuring all Veterans Choose VA as their primary healthcare provider. If you want to enroll or know a Veteran that should enroll please have them call 814-943-8164 and ask to speak with an enrollment coordinator.



## CARE BY THE NUMBERS

### Your Satisfaction Matters

#### Exceeding National Patient Scores

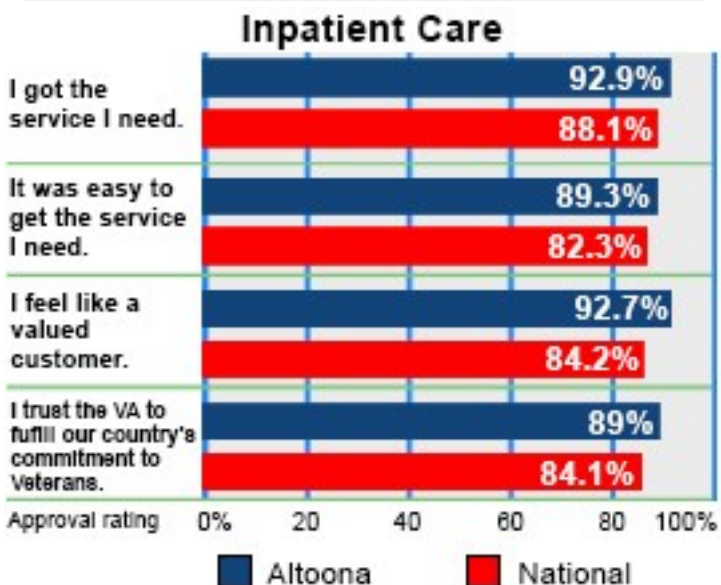
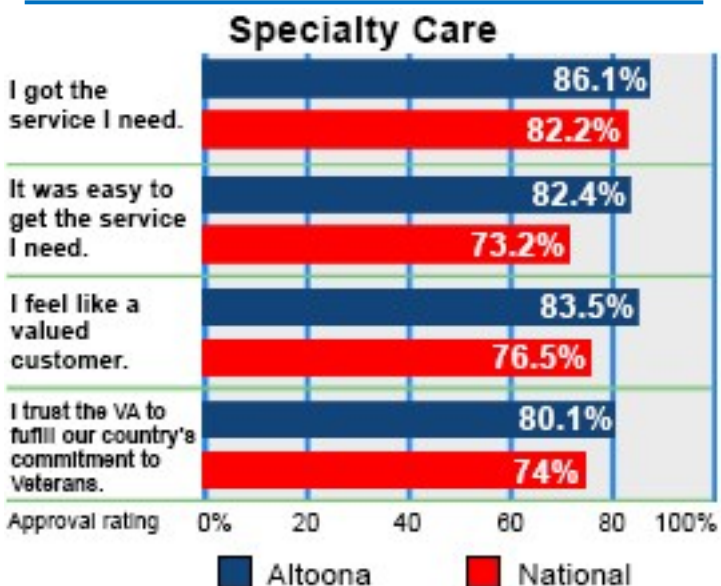
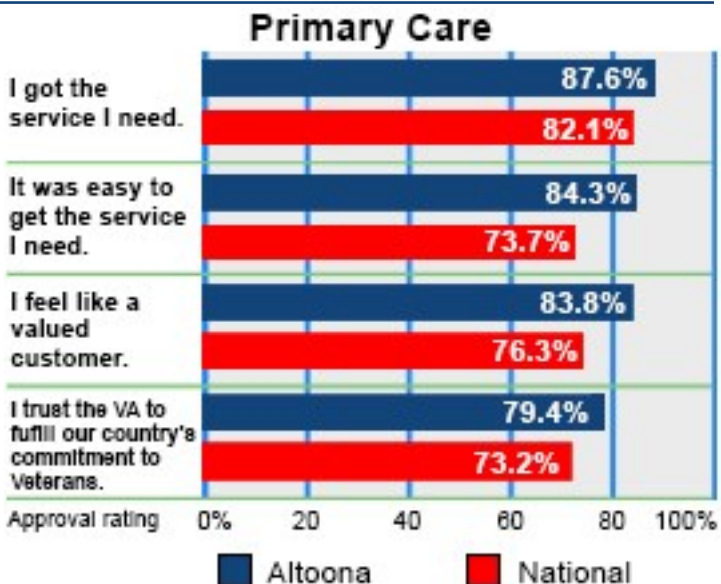
Our goal is to be the preferred provider to Veterans within our region. Recently, through our patient satisfaction scores, we are becoming just that.

We are grateful that nearly 88 percent of our patients are satisfied with their primary care provider and more than 84 percent feel like they can easily get the access to care they want.

In our inpatient care, out of all the Veterans who answered the surveys, nearly 93 percent said that they received the services they needed at the time. Equally, our Veterans told us that we are meeting our goals of making them feel valued.

If you receive a survey, please take the time to tell us about your experience. We want to know the areas we are exceeding expectations and the areas where we could improve. You can also reach out to our Patient Advocates, fill out an ICARE card, or tell any of our nurses, physicians or administrative team. We welcome any feedback you can provide us.

We are proud to say that when our Veterans have a choice, they are choosing VA.





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[altoona.va.gov](http://altoona.va.gov)

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VA OUTPATIENT CLINICS

DuBois, Huntingdon, Indiana, Johnstown, State College

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration