Battle Creek 2020 VA Medical Center

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Battle Creek VA Medical Center

Battle Creek VA Medical Center
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Message from the Medical Center Director

Michelle Martin

I am proud that I was selected as the Director of the Battle Creek VA Medical Center. It has been a year filled with challenges, changes, and opportunities to learn that none of us would have anticipated. Safe care has been our mission throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response and continues forward into the new year. I have been impressed throughout the year by the innovative and caring staff that we have, and the adaptability and resilience of both the staff and the Veterans that we serve. I can think of no better job than taking care of our nation's heroes. The collaboration, feedback, and teamwork help us provide the best care possible for our Veterans.

Battle Creek has a proud history of delivering excellent care for our Veterans. This year is no exception. We learned to adapt to new ways to safely deliver care. My goal is that we continue to make positive strides related to improving access and working on our Strategic Planning Priorities, including Mental Health, Veteran Experience, Employee Engagement, Suicide Prevention, and prudent use of resources. Our focus will remain on continuous daily improvement in the new year. As we learn new lessons and best practices from the pandemic response, we will apply them to deliver a great experience for our Veterans.

We look forward to continuing to enhance our services as we move through Fiscal Year 2021. I appreciate our Veterans trusting us to deliver the care that they have earned. I look forward to working with our stakeholders and Veterans during the upcoming year. I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2020.

Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many people additional stress and anxiety this year and emphasizes the importance of Mental Health to our overall well-being. Our team has been focused on proactive outreach to Veterans to ensure they have the support that they need.

To support Veterans during the pandemic, we launched the Virtual VA University for Mental Health in March. The goal was to allow Veterans to stay. There are a wide variety of virtual groups and classes that can help individuals living with mental health concerns move beyond managing symptoms of mental illness and towards improved life satisfaction and quality of life. Even with physical distancing, Veterans are not alone. The VA Virtual University was one way that they continued their recovery journey.

Our 8th annual VA Mental Health Summit went virtual on September 17, 2020. Employers from across Southwest Michigan joined us to discuss the important topic of supporting Veterans in employment. Over 20 employers also partnered to host a Virtual Career Fair for Veterans that same day. This year's Summit built on the momentum and success of past VA Mental Health Summits, which have led to several collaborative partnerships between VA and community entities.

Our Mental Health teams continued to deliver care in-person throughout the pandemic via face-to-face, telephone, or video modalities. We also implemented several promising practices to ensure the safety of staff and Veterans. We launched a Virtual Intensive Outpatient Program (PTSD vIOP). The PTSD vIOP offers time-limited, video-based, intensive outpatient PTSD treatment for Veterans in need of those services. This level of care is appropriate for Veterans who need more intensive treatment than an outpatient level of care, but who do not need the structure or support of a residential program.

As a neuropsychiatric facility, Battle Creek is focused on becoming a national leader in recovery-oriented mental health care. Each Veteran is encouraged to partner with his or her health care team, and through teamwork, identify a treatment plan that fits each individual's personal values, preferences, and goals for care. We are proud to be a leader in providing mental health services to our nation's heroes.

Suicide Prevention is the Top Priority

Suicide prevention is our number one clinical priority. While our methods for partnership and outreach had to adapt during the year, our commitment to this important topic never wavered. Throughout the past year, our Suicide Prevention Team continued a community health approach through outreach, special events, and providing education in the community including virtual efforts. We had successful media engagement sessions as well during the year to help raise awareness.

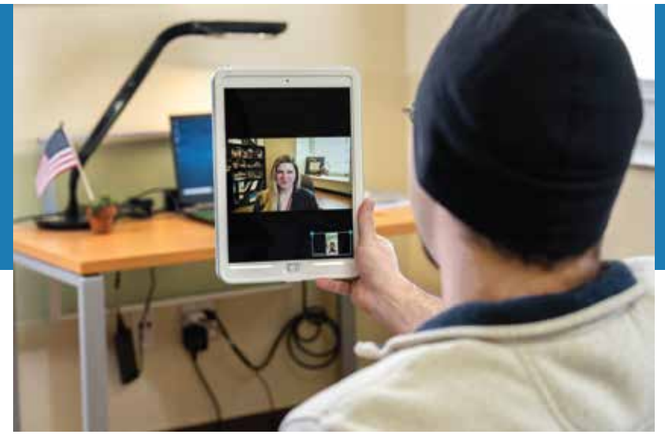
Now more than ever, we know it is important to reach Veterans who are not connected to the VA through family, employers, faith-based organizations, or community partners. Together we can make a difference on this important issue.

We all play a role in preventing suicide, but many people and organizations do not know what they can do to support Veterans or Service members in their reach, who may be going through a difficult time. A simple act of kindness can help someone feel less alone. Our actions can save lives. We hope you will help raise awareness of suicide prevention within our community by working with us to spread the #BeThere message.

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

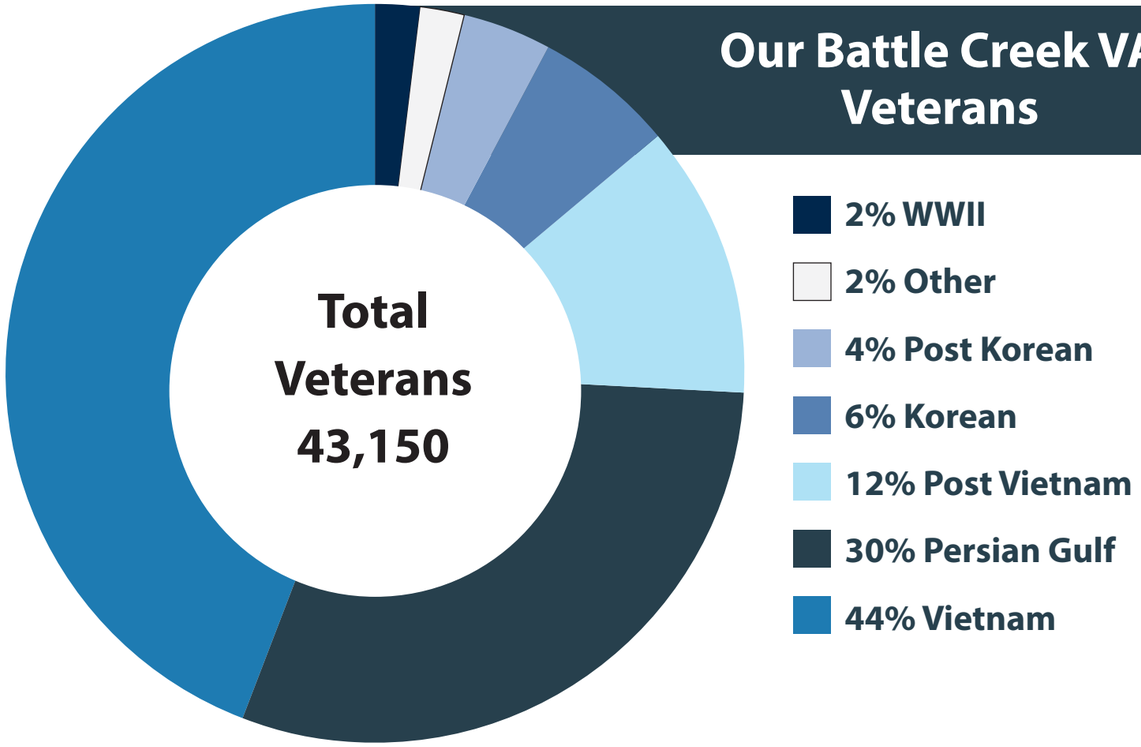
Visit www.veteranscrisisline.net or contact our Suicide Prevention Coordinator at (269) 966-5600 ext. 35390.

#BeThere

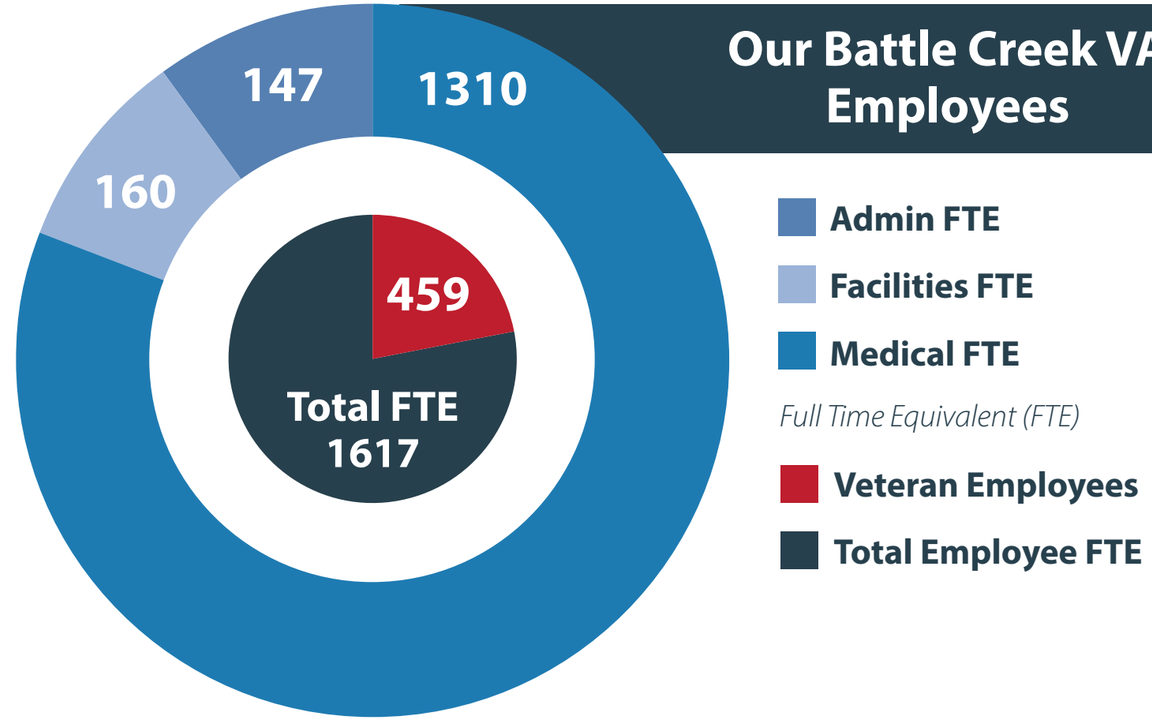


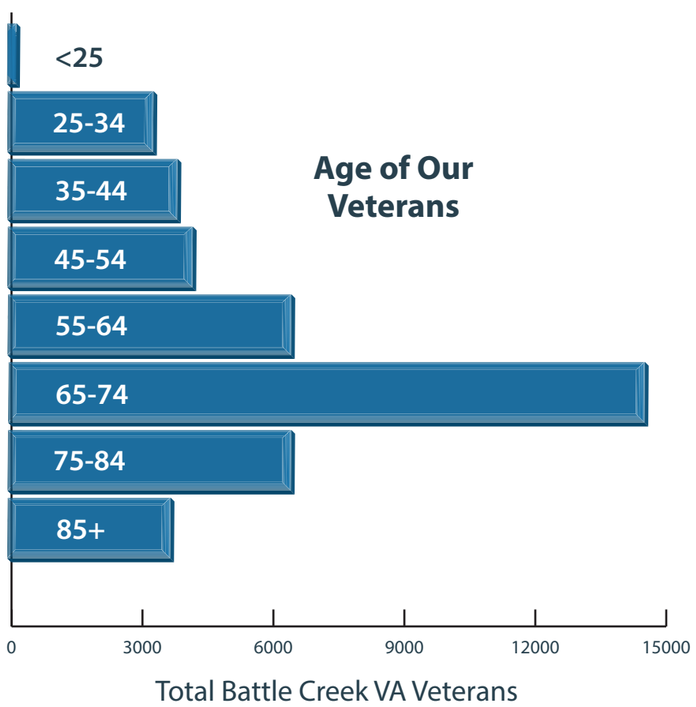
VA Virtual University

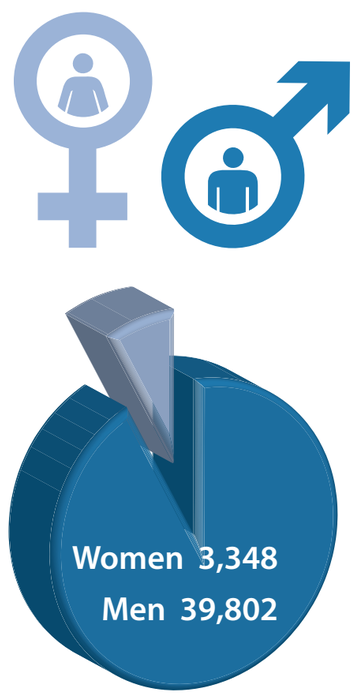
Our Battle Creek VA Veterans



Our Battle Creek VA Employees







Prudent Use of Resources

Salary	170,674,424
Care in the Community	118,753,703
Pharmacy	37,035,967
Non-Recurring Maintenance	28,476,745
Supplies and Materials	27,267,016
All Other	26,004,180
Grants	11,455,619
Rent and Utilities	9,057,444
Equipment	4,675,055
Total	433,400,153

The Battle Creek VAMC had a balanced budget this year utilizing the opportunity to expend COVID -19 funding to deliver safe and timely care. We also utilized available funding to purchase laboratory equipment to expand our facility testing capability to include rapid flu testing and COVID-19 testing. We continue to conduct strategic evaluation of our Programs and Services. We are working to continuously improve and modernize our business practices and infrastructure while being good stewards of our nation's resources to deliver the most value to our Veterans.

Donations and Gifts
$444,137

Number of Volunteers
445

Volunteer Hours
36,100

Thank You for the Community Support!

We are proud and grateful to work with so many community partners, Veterans Service Organizations, and other volunteers throughout the year. These individuals and organizations help to connect Veterans to community services, host special events, and to serve the needs of Veterans throughout the 22 counties that we serve. It is great to have such outstanding community support focused on Veterans in Southwest Michigan.

While many of these volunteers and organizations could not show support in-person for much of the year, there was certainly an outpouring of virtual support in the form of donations and positive wishes. The community stepped up to provide items such as cloth masks for our Veterans. Many also helped send cheer and thanks to staff during the height of the COVID-19 response. We look forward to welcoming back volunteers during the new year and the continued support of our great community.

Girl Scout Cookie Donation from Troop #80268

Drink Donation from EPIC Nutrition

Sign Donation from Heartland Hospice

Honor Credit Union Donation from Schlotzsky's

Cookie Donation from Sweets by Robin

Social Media

Utilizing technology has become important to reach the widest possible audience. While we continue to use bulletin boards, flyers, and other brochures to distribute information on campus, we have also increased the use of social media and e-mail to widely distribute information on events, healthy living topics, and other key information for Veterans to know. Veterans can look for a monthly key topics newsletter in their e-mail inbox, or follow our social media for regular updates and information about the Medical Center and their health.

556
Instagram Followers

624
Twitter Followers

5,829
Facebook Followers

635,926
Total Reach

598,367
Email Newsletter Reach

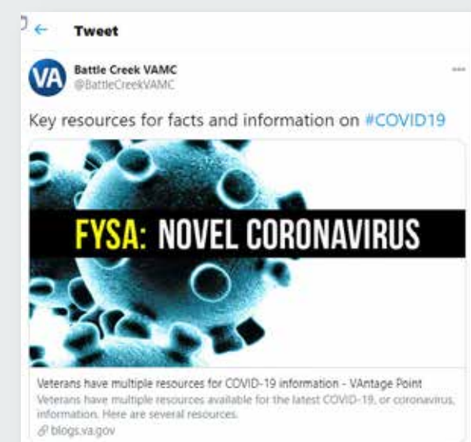
34,737
Email Participants

A great day for a parade!
8.3K reaches
1.3k post clicks
724 reactions

Supporting Gold Medal Winner
11.1K reaches
184 post clicks
637 reactions

Keeping Veterans Informed Throughout the Year

Keeping informed about key information is always important, but it became an even bigger priority during the pandemic. We quickly adapted and delivered messages in a variety of formats including e-mail, Tele Town Halls, social media, text messaging, website and regular mail reminders. Veterans and other stakeholders can join our e-mail newsletter list on the right hand side of our homepage, www.battlecreek.va.gov to receive monthly newsletters and other critical updates as needed You can like us on Facebook (VABattleCreek) or follow us on Twitter (@BattleCreekVAMC) to find out about events, classes, and other key information. We also distribute key information through postings and handouts throughout the Medical Center as well. Our goal is to keep you informed about current events and important information. It is our honor to be your choice for the healthcare that you have earned.



Virtual Care

The Battle Creek VA Medical Center is committed to providing high-quality care while keeping Veterans safe from coronavirus (COVID-19). We had already begun the use of technology for virtual care, but the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the usefulness and the need to be able to deliver care virtually.

There has been a lot of positive responses to the use of virtual care. We continue to use feedback form Veterans to develop and enhance virtual care services where they make sense to achieve safe and convenient care. Through VA's virtual care tools, we are able to leverage available technology to make sure that our patients are able to get the care that they need.

Dr. Tim DeJong, PTSD Program Manager

Here are some examples of how virtual care is being done:

Telephone or Video Appointments:
Veterans can receive care at home, either over the phone or via video using VA Video Connect on their computers, smartphones, or tablets. To set up telephone or video appointments, Veterans can send their provider a secure message on My HealtheVet by visiting: www.myhealth.va.gov

To learn more about VA Video Connect, visit: mobile.va.gov/app/-va-video-connect

Text Message Reminders:
Veterans can use ***Annie's Coronavirus Precautions Protocol*** to send automated text messages with information about COVID-19. This application helps Veterans monitor for symptoms and can assist if they need to contact their VA facility for care. Enroll at: mobile.va.gov/annie

Secure Messaging:
With My HealtheVet, VA's online patient portal, Veterans can send online secure messages to your VA health care team to ask them non-urgent health questions. Register at: www.myhealth.va.gov

Prescription Refills:
Veterans can request prescription refills and order and ship medications to their homes using My HealtheVet or the Rx Refill mobile app. Veterans can also order them using the phone. Download the app at: mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill

Virtual Group Sessions:
We converted a variety of Veteran groups, activities, and town halls to a virtual format using different technology and methods to reach a wide range of Veterans. We also adapted a number of services throughout the pandemic response for the convenience and safety of Veterans. We implemented drive-up services for hearing aid repair, flu shot clinics and other items.

Access

We have developed a plan to right size our smaller Community Based Outpatient Clinics over the next three years and have targeted ways to increase access to smaller communities. The construction is being finalized on the new Lansing CBOC location and planning is under way for new locations in Benton Harbor and Muskegon that will allow for better patient flow.

Veteran Experience

Awards and Achievements:

- Hosted 2019 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival
- 2020 Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality
- RCA Cornerstone Gold Status for Patient Safety
- 2020 Community Living Center 5 Star Overall Rating on recent Scorecard
- 2020 Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Award
- National HeRO Award for Clinical Group-Shingrix RCA Team

Annual Watermelon Festival, August 2020

Community Living Center Family Parade, July 2020

National Veterans Creative Arts Local Competition, March 2020

Annual Women Veteran Baby Shower, June 2020

We continued to enhance the Veterans' experience to deliver the excellent, timely, and patient centered care that they deserve each visit. During 2020, our Trust score increased as we continued to deliver needed care to Veterans both in-person and through virtual care during the pandemic. We continued to roll out Whole Health, putting the Veteran at the center of their care and implementing health goals that are important to them. Over 76% of all our V-Signals comments were compliments to our staff who are committed to delivering exceptional care.

Sergeant Sarah Mobley shakes hands with Secretary Robert Wilkie

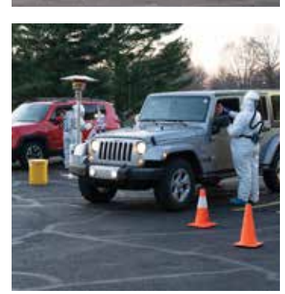
Secretary Visit

For the first time, the Battle Creek VA Medical Center was honored to host a visit by the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. "When I reflect on the visit, the word 'family' comes to mind," said the Honorable Robert Wilkie, Secretary of the VA. He visited the Medical Center on Tuesday July 14, 2020. The impression that there is a strong family atmosphere at the facility for both Veterans and staff. He also visited the Detroit and Ann Arbor VA Medical Centers on his tour of Michigan.

His primary goal was to tour the facilities in Michigan and to thank staff for the efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. He signed his photo saying: To the warriors of Battle Creek, thank you for protecting America! The Secretary was provided with a Leadership briefing highlighting some of our COVID-19 response activities, support of the 4th mission, strong practices and opportunities for the Medical Center. He also learned about some historic facts and information about key programs.

Emergency Preparedness

Our COVID-19 response happened swiftly, implementing many precautions at the beginning of the pandemic. We have a robust Emergency Preparedness Program that had several tools in place for responding in an emergency, but this event was much larger in scope and length than any other type of emergency that we had prepared for in the past. We instituted contingency strategies and tested out a variety of scenarios early on in the response that allowed us to learn new lessons and adapt as time went on. We monitored the changing guidance and lessons learned from the state, CDC, and other community partners as well as best practices from throughout the VA. Safe care is our mission and remained our priority throughout the pandemic response. Through a process of continuous improvement and after-action reporting, we continue to update and evolve. We are appreciative of our staff who worked to adapt and deliver safe care throughout the COVID-19 response.



The Fourth Mission

VA's "Fourth Mission" is to improve the Nation's preparedness for response to war, terrorism, national emergencies, and natural disasters by developing plans and taking actions to ensure continued service to Veterans, as well as to support national, state, and local emergency management, public health, safety and homeland security efforts. Our staff stepped up to volunteer to support the Detroit VA Medical Center who in turn provided 35 Med/Surg and 15 ICU beds to assist the community and accepted non-Veteran patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also helped to provide PPE, including gowns and isolation gowns to State Veterans Homes in Michigan.