



**Sioux Falls VA Health Care System
Sioux Falls, SD
December 13, 2017
Report for the South Dakota Veterans Commission**

During FY2017, there were approximately 300,000 outpatient visits at the medical center and five outpatient clinics. This workload is similar to FY2016. We continue to encourage all Veterans to seek enrollment, and VA staffed over 100 events last fiscal year throughout our catchment area. Many of these were at events for the first time, such as the Sioux Falls Sports Show, Rib Fest, and several county fairs. We also had opportunities to speak with Veterans and their families during the benefits fair preceding the Valentines for Veterans concert in February, several Veterans town halls, and the November open house of newly renovated and constructed areas of the medical center. We appreciate the collegiality of having SDDVA staff also present at many of the outreach events.

We continue quarterly Veterans town hall meetings and will begin holding similar town halls in CBOC communities at least once a year. The next local town hall will be in Sioux Falls at the DAV on January 30 at 5:00 PM. Veterans, their families, VSOs, community partners, and the public are invited and encouraged to attend to talk with the Director about VA health care improvements.

Direct scheduling has recently been expanded to improve access for enrolled Veterans for routine podiatry appointments. This is in addition to audiology, optometry, and nutrition clinics.

Suicide prevention remains a top priority across VA. Tom Hanks narrates a new video asking the public to help combat Veteran suicides with simple gestures such as a handshake or phone call. <https://www.militarytimes.com/veterans/salute-veterans/2017/11/09/in-new-video-tom-hanks-asks-the-public-to-help-combat-veteran-suicides/> Sioux Falls leadership discusses Veteran suicide every week with midlevel managers, who in turn discuss with their own teams.

Construction of the new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Dakota Dunes (replaces the one in Sioux City, IA) is progressing and expected to be complete by midsummer.

Other Construction Staff have moved into the new surgical suites, and the first surgery took place December 12.

- The acute medical/surgical project is complete, and six additional beds have been put into service.
- Integrative Health has also moved into their new space, where acupuncture, massage therapy, health coaching and tai chi and yoga classes take place.

- Occupational Therapy will soon return to their renovated space.
- The Specialty Medicine addition is expected to be complete by this spring, and the Oncology Unit will also wrap up construction by this spring.
- The chapel and respiratory therapy services recently began renovations.
- A new CT machine is being installed in the imaging service on ground floor.
- Other projects in design or early phases of construction include a new Lab and expanded Emergency Dept., plus an outpatient mental health building.

Hiring:

- Timothy Pendergrass, MD begins duties as the new Chief of Staff January 21 following the retirement of Jack Wempe, MD. Dr. Pendergrass has over 30 years of active duty military experience.
- Kathleen Metzger began as Chief, Health Administration Service (Business Office) on June 25, 2107.
- Kerry Nilson began as Chief, Engineering Service on December 10, 2017.

A new Chief of Voluntary Services, Kristin Hendrickson, has been working with Brenda Stevens, current chief until she retires the end of December.

John Michael Montgomery will provide this year's Valentines for Veterans concert, which is complimentary to all Veterans plus a guest. Tickets will be available January 15. This is the sixth year of the concert, which is made possible with donated funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this information. Please let us know if you have questions about this information or other items.