



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks

VHSO, where Veterans come first!

VETERANS

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM OF THE OZARKS



1100 North College Avenue | Fayetteville, AR | 72703

(479) 443-4301



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**A Message from
Martha A. Smith,
EdD, RD**
Executive Director

Dear Veterans and Community Partners,

When I began my journey as the Interim Executive Director for Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO) in June 2025, I was immediately struck by the remarkable passion and dedication of our employees, the unwavering support from our community partners, and above all, the trust that Veterans place in our medical center. The spirit and commitment I witnessed were truly second to none.

Today, I am deeply honored to serve as the Executive Director for VHSO. Working alongside our exceptional team, I am excited to lead the expansion of our services and facilities in the upcoming years. Last year, VHSO celebrated the groundbreaking of a new Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Bella Vista, AR, as well as acquiring an acquisition of a new lease for Fayetteville Audiology, our Home-Based Primary Care program, and the Homeless Program Clinic. We started planning and preparing to implement the Electronic Health Record Management system – a major national VA initiative designed to unify clinical data, improve care coordination, and provide Veterans with a seamless health record experience across all VA and DoD facilities.

I am proud to share for the third consecutive year, VHSO received a 5-star rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. We are one of only 18 VA medical centers nationwide to earn this distinction three years in a row. This achievement speaks volumes about our team's dedication and the deep trust Veterans place in us every single day. Our mission remains steadfast: to honor and serve Veterans with the world-class care they have earned and deserve. It is a mission we strive to fulfill each day.

Looking ahead, VHSO will continue to expand and enhance our virtual and digital healthcare offerings. We are committed to continually evaluating telehealth access, quality, and patient satisfaction. Additionally, we will intensify our efforts to prevent homelessness and suicide among transitioning service members and Veterans. VHSO will focus on broadening access to holistic and behavioral health services by advancing whole health, mental health, and substance use programs.

Thank you, for your partnership, your service, and your ongoing trust in VHSO. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of those who have served our nation.



2025 Leadership Team

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.



Embra K. Jackson, III MPH, VHA-CM
Associate Medical Center Director

Embra K. Jackson, III was appointed as the Associate Medical Center Director for the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO) January 1, 2025 – July 17, 2025.



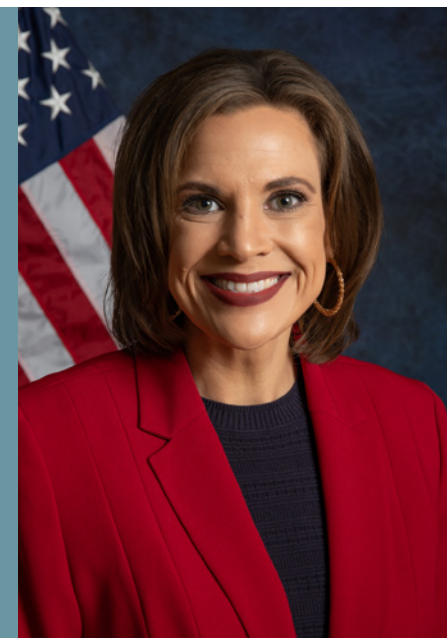
Derek Bryant, MD
Interim Chief of Staff

Derek Bryant, MD, was appointed as the Interim Chief of Staff for the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks June 2, 2025 – September 14, 2025.



Ivy McGee Blanks, MD
Interim Chief of Staff

Ivy McGee Blanks, MD was appointed to serve as the Interim Chief of Staff for the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks September 15, 2025 – January 12, 2026



Jenifer Thornbrugh MSN, RN
Associate Director, Patient Care Services

Jenifer Thornbrugh, MSN, RN, was appointed as the Associate Director, Patient Care Service for the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks December 15, 2024.



Jeremy Caviness, MAOL
Assistant Medical Center Director

Jeremy Caviness was appointed to serve as the Assistant Medical Center Director for the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks April 9, 2023.

Acting Associate Director

July 17, 2025 – Present



VA Core Values

VA Core Values

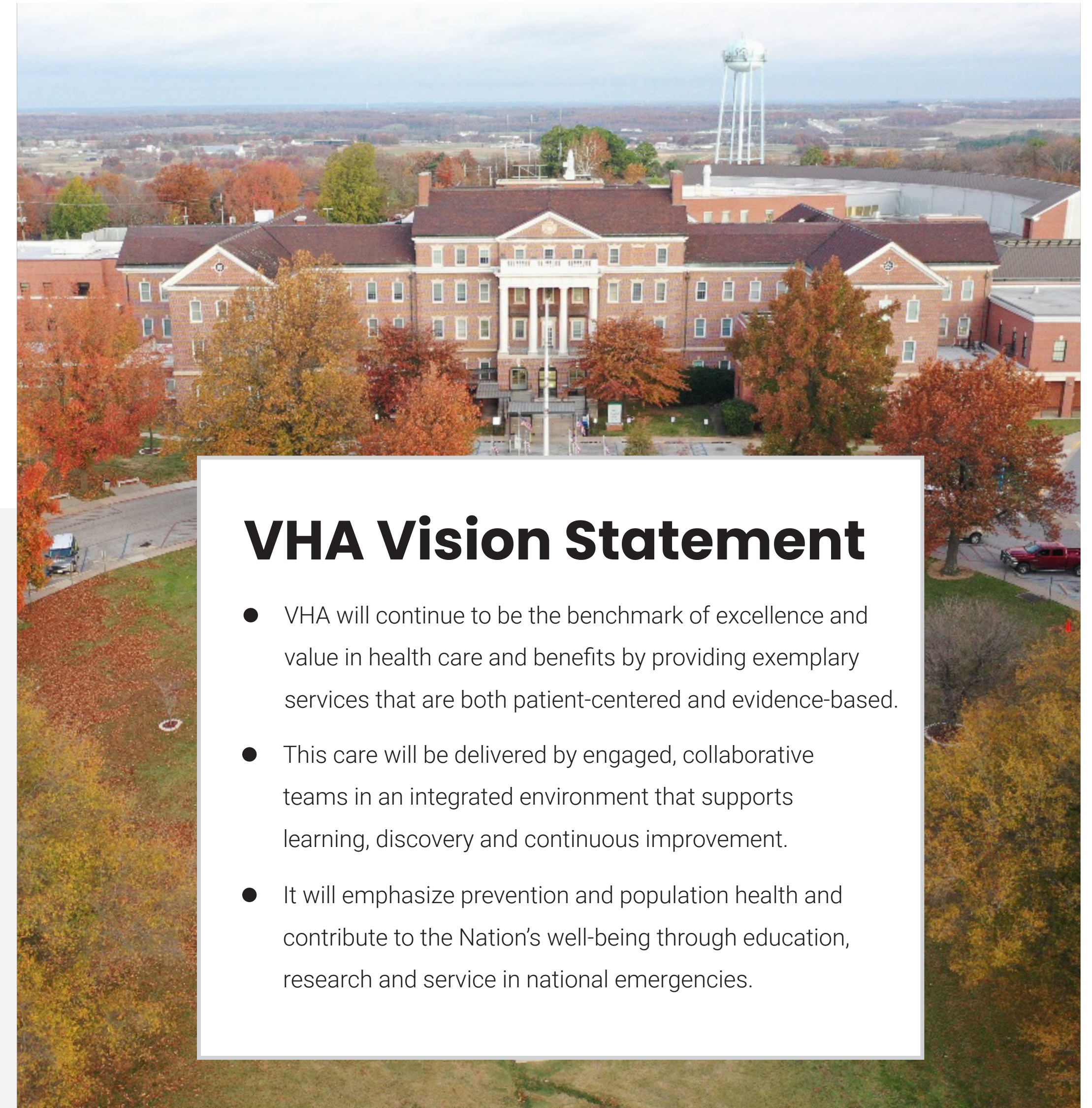
- **Integrity:** Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.
- **Commitment:** Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.
- **Advocacy:** Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries national emergencies.
- **Respect:** Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.
- **Excellence:** Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

VHA Mission Statement

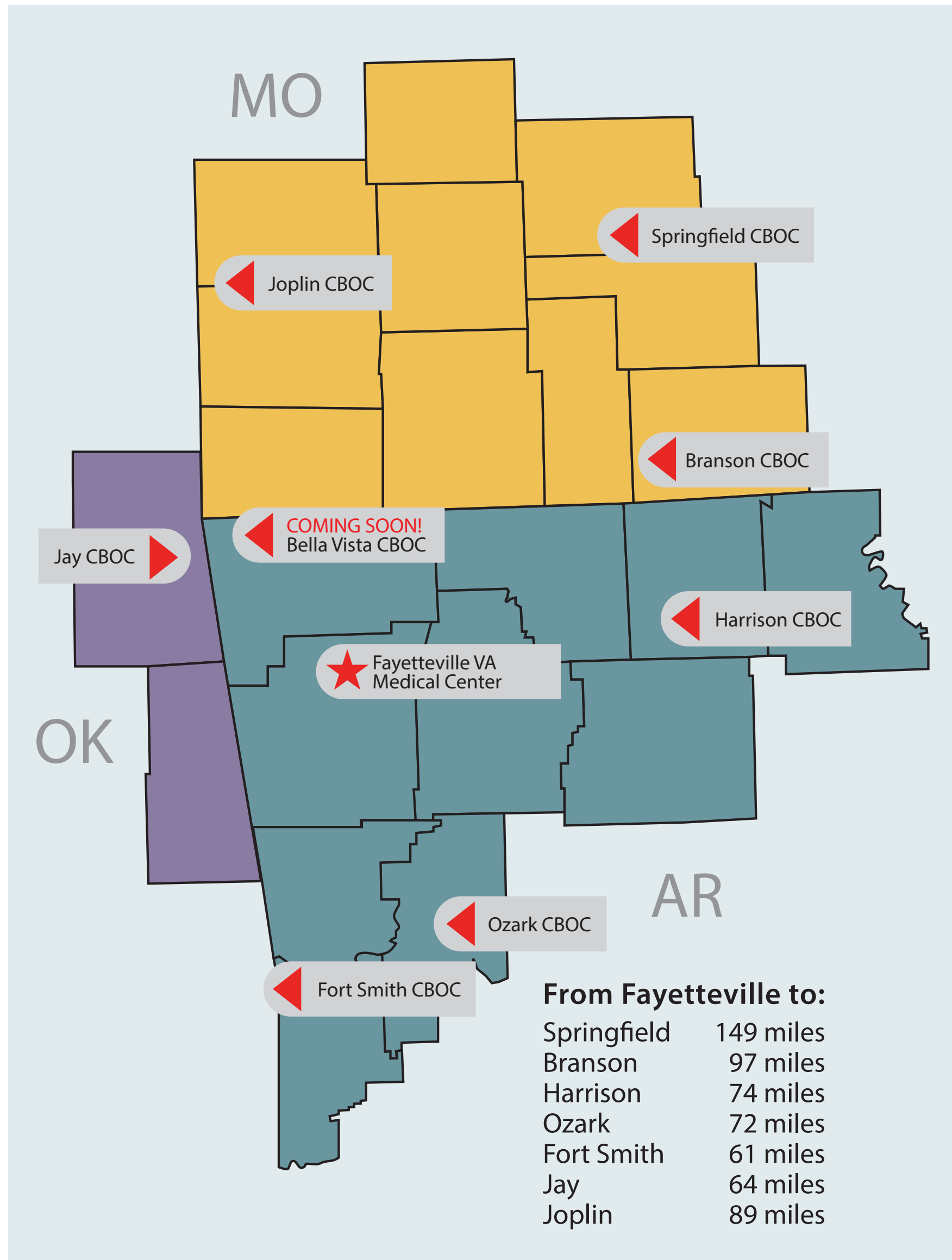
Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

VHA Vision Statement

- VHA will continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care and benefits by providing exemplary services that are both patient-centered and evidence-based.
- This care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery and continuous improvement.
- It will emphasize prevention and population health and contribute to the Nation's well-being through education, research and service in national emergencies.



Locations



Fayetteville VA Medical Center

1100 North College Avenue
 Fayetteville, AR 72703-1944
 Main phone: 479.443.4301

Total Veterans Served 50,871
Female Veterans Served 5,569
Outpatient Visits 376,076

Branson VA Clinic

5571 North Gretna Road
 Branson, MO 65616-7287
 Main phone: 417.243.2300

Total Veterans Served 7,615
Female Veterans Served 657
Outpatient Visits 40,219

Fort Smith VA Clinic

5700 Phoenix Place
 Fort Smith, AR 72903
 Main phone: 479.441.2600

Total Veterans Served 10,712
Female Veterans Served 974
Outpatient Visits 88,043

Gene Taylor Veterans' Outpatient Clinic

1850 West Republic Road
 Springfield, MO 65807-5730
 Main phone: 844.501.8387, ext. 64500

Total Veterans Served 19,775
Female Veterans Served 1,820
Outpatient Visits 138,731

Harrison VA Clinic

814 US Highway 62-65 North, Suite 8
 Harrison, AR 72601-2149
 Main phone: 870.704.6300

Total Veterans Served 1,687
Female Veterans Served 135
Outpatient Visits 7,114

Jay VA Clinic

1569 North Main Street
 Jay, OK 74346-2903
 Main phone: 888.424.8387

Total Veterans Served 1,953
Female Veterans Served 212
Outpatient Visits 11,121

Joplin VA Clinic

3015 South Connecticut Avenue
 Joplin, MO 64804-3035
 Main phone: 800.691.8387

Total Veterans Served 7,001
Female Veterans Served 578
Outpatient Visits 41,685

Ozark VA Clinic

2713 West Commercial Street
 Ozark, AR 72949-3409
 Main phone: 877.760.8387

Total Veterans Served 1,467
Female Veterans Served 97
Outpatient Visits 9,129

Veterans We Serve



57,456

92.2% Male Veteran Patients



5,220

7.8% Female Veterans Patients

62,676

Total Veterans Patients

We serve all who have served.



728,317

Outpatient Visits

79

WWII Veterans

925

Korean War Veterans

9,172

Post 911 Not Deployed Veterans

921,524

Total Unique Encounters

18,541

Vietnam Era Veterans

3,734

Pre911 Gulf War Veterans

16,149

Post 911 Deployed Veterans

\$938,843,300

Total Operating Budget

PACT Act

The PACT Act is a law that expanded VA healthcare and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances. This law has helped us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve. VHSO concentrated on outreach efforts to educate and enroll Veterans who are eligible for care under the PACT Act.

56,019

Unique Veterans Screened

27,771

Unique Veterans Reporting at Least One Exposure(s)

50%

Percent of Veterans Reporting Exposure

Toxic Exposure Screening (TES) Report	Count	Percent
> = 1 Endorsed Exposure	34,657	50%
Burn Pit	12,210	22%
Gulf War	2,402	4%
Agent Orange	8,703	16%
Radiation	2,403	4%
Camp Lejeune	1,510	3%
Other	7,429	13%
Declined	459	1%
Doesn't Know	2,957	5%
None	27,798	50%
Total	55,987	100%

Veteran Experience

“The Veteran Experience Office (VEO) serves as the voice of the Veteran within VHSO.”

The Veterans Experience Office (VEO) serves as an empathic ear and voice to advocate for the concerns and expectations of our Veterans.

As a result of those efforts, 96.8% of VHSO’s Veterans report they “feel respected,” and 93.9% of our Veterans express trust in our organization.

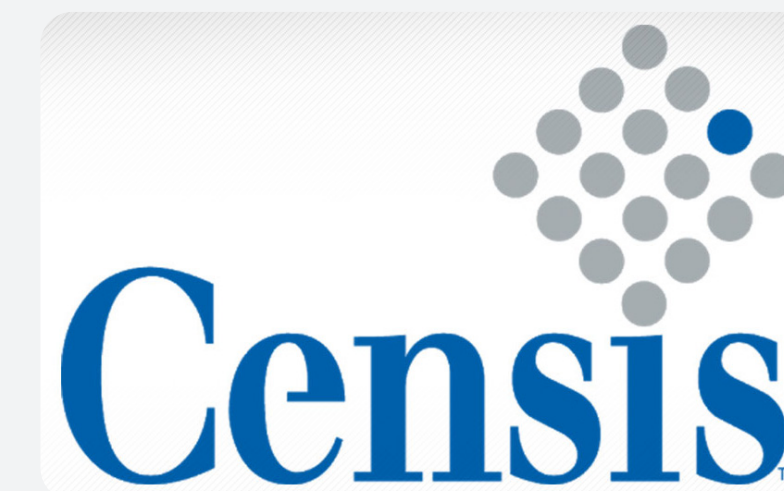
To accomplish this degree of success, the VEO uses many tools. For instance, the VEO utilizes a Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients (SHEP) and statistics with Veterans Signals (V-Signal).

These real-time feedback tools enable VHSO with the ability to resolve Veteran’s concerns immediately. As a result, VHSO has been a leader in Veteran Patient Satisfaction in critical areas such as safety, lab/imaging, health care visit, and overall trust and respect.

For all of these reasons, VHSO will continue to utilize the skill and compassion of the VEO to enhance the support to our nation’s heroes.



Awards & Accreditations



Ron Hesch Mission First Award 2025

Comprehensive Accreditation for Behavioral Health Care and Human Services

- Comprehensive Accreditation for Home Care
- Comprehensive Accreditation for Hospital
- Comprehensive Accreditation for Laboratory and Point-of-Care Testing
- Comprehensive Accreditation for Behavioral Health



VHSO Earns Prestigious 5-Star CMS Rating for the Third Year in a Row

For the third consecutive year, VHSO has achieved an outstanding 5-star rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services—a testament to our unwavering dedication to delivering exceptional healthcare. In 2025, VHSO stands out as the only hospital in Arkansas to attain this distinguished honor, underscoring our leading role in advancing patient care across the state. A 5-star rating from CMS signifies excellence across several critical domains: mortality, safety of care, readmission rates, patient experience, and timely, effective care. VHSO’s continued recognition places us ahead of non-VA hospitals in the region, confirming that our patients receive healthcare services of the highest caliber. We are proud of our team’s steadfast commitment to safety, compassion, and quality—and we remain steadfast in our mission to serve those who have served.





Trust Scores

Break Down of Trust Scores per CBOC and Medical Center.

Fayetteville

Trust Score	93.3
Respect Score	96.5
Satisfaction Score	96.4

Branson

Trust Score	95.6
Respect Score	96.6
Satisfaction Score	97.3

Fort Smith

Trust Score	94.6
Respect Score	97.5
Satisfaction Score	97.7

Springfield

Trust Score	93.8
Respect Score	96.6
Satisfaction Score	97.1

Harrison

Trust Score	87.4
Respect Score	93.2
Satisfaction Score	94.7

Jay

Trust Score	97.4
Respect Score	99.0
Satisfaction Score	99.0

Joplin

Trust Score	94.4
Respect Score	97.2
Satisfaction Score	97.3

Ozark

Trust Score	97.9
Respect Score	99.5
Satisfaction Score	99.5

How We Are

“The new Fort Smith VA clinic has a great staff and makes me feel respected and heard”



Growth



Bella Vista CBOC Ground Breaking

The Bella Vista Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) lease was awarded, marking a major milestone in expanding access to care for Veterans in Northwest Arkansas. The new clinic will be located at the intersection of Rogers Road and Forest Hills Boulevard in Bella Vista, Arkansas, providing a modern, purpose-built healthcare setting for the region. The 16,862 square foot facility will support four PACT teams and deliver a comprehensive range of services, including Primary Care, Women’s Health, Mental Health, and Home Based Primary Care. To enhance clinical capability and reduce travel burdens for Veterans, the clinic will also offer on site blood draw, general X ray, ultrasound, telehealth, and tele retinal services. Construction completion is anticipated in July 2027, followed by activation activities leading to an expected late fall 2027 opening. This project represents a significant step in strengthening access, improving care capacity, and supporting the long term healthcare needs of the Bella Vista Veteran community.



“Excellent, the best care I have ever had. THANK YOU FOR CARING.”



Growth



Fayetteville Audiology, Home Based Primary Care, Homeless Program Clinic

The lease for the new Fayetteville Audiology, Home Based Primary Care (HBPC), and Homeless Program Clinic was awarded, advancing the replacement of the expiring Sunbridge Avenue leased facility. The new clinic will be constructed on North Stephen Carr Memorial Boulevard in Fayetteville, Arkansas, providing a modern, purpose-designed space that consolidates and enhances these critical

Veteran services. The 20,748 square foot facility will house Audiology and Speech Pathology, HBPC, and HUD VASH services, supporting improved care coordination and greater operational efficiency. The expanded footprint will allow updated clinical suites, improved patient flow, and enhanced capacity to meet growing demand within the region. Construction completion is anticipated in July 2027, followed by activation activities leading to an expected late fall 2027 opening. This project ensures continuity of services currently provided at the Sunbridge Avenue location while significantly upgrading the care environment for Veterans across Northwest Arkansas.

“The VA here in Harrison and Fayetteville are doing a great job. I never fall through the cracks here.”

Electronic Health Records Management



Federal Electronic Health Record

Electronic Health Records Management (EHRM) Infrastructure Construction was awarded. The EHRM program

is a major national VA initiative designed to unify clinical data, improve care coordination, and provide Veterans with a seamless health record experience across all VA and DoD facilities. Successful deployment depends on a fully modernized, standardized, and compliant technical environment. For VHSO, the EHRM Infrastructure Project is the foundational prerequisite that enables this transition. It delivers the essential upgrades to electrical systems, mechanical systems, networks, cabling, and clinical/IT spaces needed to support Cerner's requirements. Without these infrastructure improvements, the new EHR system cannot be installed, tested, certified, or safely operated. Timely execution of the infrastructure project is therefore mission critical. Any delay directly affects the EHRM deployment timeline, compresses testing and remediation windows, and increases operational and patient care risks. Ensuring rapid award, mobilization, and completion is essential to protect the quality of the EHR transition, maintain operational continuity, and support better outcomes for Veterans. This is \$43M project installs new fiber optical cabling to and throughout all VHSO facilities and constructs a standalone dedicated data center with its own emergency power and cooling system to house new servers for supporting the new Oracle-Cerner software for health records. VHSO's go-live date for EHRM is 11/30/2028 placing this infrastructure project on the critical path for deployment.

Growth



Close to Me

Specialty services have expanded to include Cardiac Rehabilitation at the Fayetteville, AR campus. The “Close to Me” Infusion program has also grown to serve Veterans at the Springfield, MO, Branson, MO, and Joplin, MO Community-Based Outpatient Clinics.

Finalizing Renovation Plans

Nursing teams are finalizing renovation plans for the Emergency Department and anticipate the completion of the Medical/Surgical ward renovation (2B), which will enhance patient care and facilities.



Circle of Security

Social Work introduced the “Circle of Security” parenting group in alignment with Intimate Partner Violence prevention efforts. Additionally, the team partnered with the Cherokee Nation to launch one of the first Native American Veteran Treatment Drug Courts, providing essential services to Veterans from all tribal nations.





CDCE

VA Center for
Development & Civic
Engagement

Donations	\$202,020.75
Volunteer Hours	13,117

The Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) plays a pivotal role in enriching the Veteran experience by seamlessly weaving together volunteers, donations, and community partners into VA operations. Driven by its mission to improve Veterans' lives, CDCE places Veteran engagement at the heart of its work.

This year, CDCE energized participation across more than 60 unique events, thanks to dynamic collaborations with over 24 organizations and schools. As a result, thousands of Veterans and their families benefited from our diverse programming and outreach initiatives.

CDCE's commitment to building strong community connections was further demonstrated through impactful events delivered alongside local groups, businesses, and Veteran Service Organizations. These partnerships have expanded our support network and deepened our collective ability to serve those who have served us.



Freedom Fest: Providing Veterans with a safe and welcoming environment to celebrate together without the worry of fireworks. The event was filled with games, music, delicious food, and camaraderie.



Food Box Giveaway: Veterans, whether enrolled in VA care or not, were welcomed with open arms. Drive-up and walk-up Veterans were greeted by dedicated VHSO employees and volunteers who shared resources, support, and heartfelt gratitude. VHSO believes food security is health care. We are proud to stand with our Veterans and provide the care, compassion, and support they deserve.



Legal Aid: More than 150 Veterans took advantage of the Free Legal Aid Event held at VHSO in partnership with The Veterans Task Force of Legal Service Corporation (LSC).



Veterans received free civil legal services including estate planning, reinstating driver's license, domestic relations and much more.

Homeless Veteran Program



The VHSO Homeless Program is celebrating real progress in the fight to end Veteran homelessness. This year, we helped 306 Veterans move from experiencing homelessness into safe, stable housing—with an impressive 95.4% of them successfully maintaining their homes. These Veterans aren't just getting housed—they're thriving and proving the lasting impact of our approach.

In response to VA Secretary Doug Collin's challenge, VHSO is scaling up efforts and making bold moves. Our team reached out directly to 266 unsheltered Veterans, connecting each one to critical housing resources and personalized support.

At VHSO, we know that ending homelessness starts with meeting Veterans where they are and truly listening to their needs. That's why our strategy is anchored in the proven "Housing First" model—prioritizing safe housing as the first step, then building customized support. Veterans gain access to health care, job training, legal guidance, education assistance, and more, empowering them to build brighter futures.

VHSO's work is about more than numbers—it's about changed lives, renewed hope, and a commitment to ensuring every Veteran has a place to call home.



Veteran's Healing Harvest Garden impressively expanded to 16 beds, including shade beds, pollination beds, and a "tasting bed." Additionally, the garden now features comfortable seating areas, an efficient irrigation system, lighting, a storage shed, and ADA-compliant paved walkways. The Veterans' Healing Harvest Garden produced 1,233 pounds of fresh food for food-insecure Veterans. The garden's purpose is to provide a positive impact on Veterans — as both a food source and a wellness source. Veterans can volunteer, garden, or simply enjoy the peaceful atmosphere seven days a week.

Employees Recognition

Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing

Jodi Meckem



Jodi Meckem, LPN, Nursing Operations in Primary Care, was honored with the Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing at both the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks (VHSO) and the South Central Veterans Integrated Service Network during Nurses Week in May 2025. Jodi played a pivotal role in elevating patient care within the Fayetteville primary care team by initiating team huddles and providing comprehensive training on patient aligned care team tools and data resources. Her collaborative approach with the healthcare team ensures that each Veteran's individual needs are met, with a special focus on supporting those facing mental health challenges. Continuously dedicated to professional growth, Jodi demonstrates accountability and utilizes a variety of systems to drive improved health outcomes for Veterans.

Nationally Published Research



Pictured: Dr. Jordan Fischer, Dr. Jennifer Cole, Dr. Julia Mozes and Dr. Anna Parker, Dr. Matt Duncan, Dr. Marcus Costner

Received Excellence in Research award on their abstract publication of their residency projects presented at the American College of Clinical Pharmacy Virtual Poster Symposium. Their residency projects were featured at the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (ACCP) Virtual Poster Symposium, where they received the Excellence in Research award. Their work has also been published in respected national journals, including the Journal of the American College of Clinical Pharmacy (JACCP), Menopause, and Annals of Pharmacotherapy. These accomplishments highlight the high caliber of clinical research produced by our pharmacy residency program.

Employees Recognition

Employees of the Year:

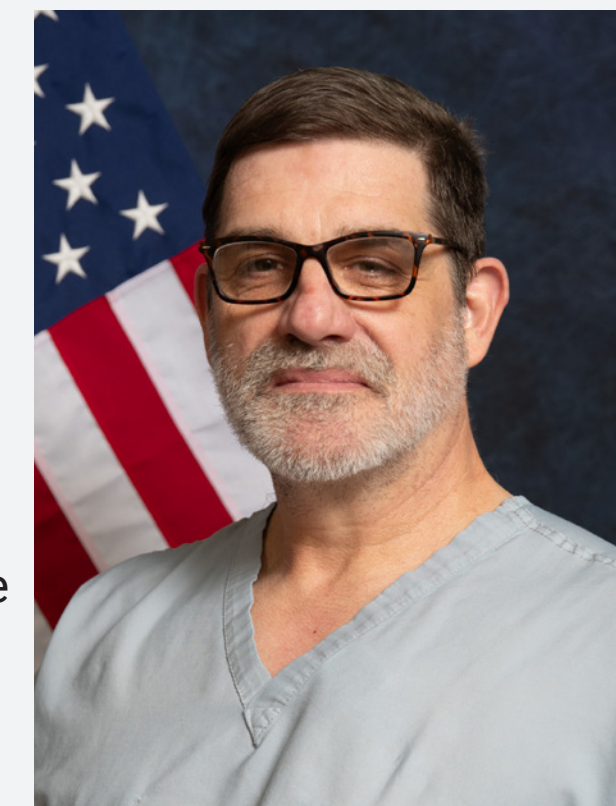
Laura Olivo

Laura Olivo has shown outstanding leadership in advancing care for Veterans in crisis, playing a key role in implementing the Compact Act. Through collaboration with legal and mental health teams, she has streamlined processes to ensure timely, high-quality care while responsibly managing resources. Her dedication and advocacy have made a significant impact on the safety and well-being of Veterans experiencing suicidal crises.



William Childs

Willie Childs exemplifies dedication and professionalism at VHSO, ensuring a clean and safe environment for patients and staff. His proactive approach—including prepping the OR before others arrive and carefully reviewing schedules—demonstrates invaluable attention to detail. Willie’s exceptional work ethic and commitment to excellence is an example of VHSO’s core values.



40+ Years Service Award:

Luanna Oxford

LuAnna Oxford’s remarkable 44-year career at VHSO began as a college work-study student and has encompassed a broad range of roles in service to Veterans including in several key positions such as Ward Clerk, Radiology Secretary, and Dental Secretary. In 1994, she became an original member of the Primary Care team, advancing to supervisor in 2002 and steadily rising through the ranks of Primary Care administration. LuAnna served as Assistant Chief of Primary Care before moving into her current role as Chief of Health Administration Service, which she has held for the past decade. Her dedication, leadership, and commitment have left a lasting impact on local Veteran care and the VHSO community.



“Fayetteville: The best VA in the country.”



VHSO, where Veterans come first!

THANKS



CONTACT US.

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