

# Lebanon VAMC

N E W S L E T T E R



Volume 2 - 2017



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Lebanon VAMC social worker Karen Madrigal poses with Vietnam Veteran Eddie Gehringer. Madrigal helped her patient receive an award he earned more than 40 years ago: the Combat Medic Badge.

## HEALING OPEN WOUNDS

### *VA Social Worker helps Vietnam Vet Receive Badge of Honor*

MATT JONES  
*Public Affairs Specialist*

More often than not, Veterans seeking treatment for PTSD can trace the origin of their trauma to one keystone event, the trigger, as VA clinical social worker Karen Madrigal calls it. When she noticed one Vietnam Veteran had too many incidents to pinpoint a specific trigger, she could only draw one conclusion: he was a medic.

Her instincts were right. Edwin Gehringer, or Eddie as she and his friends call him, was selected to serve as his unit's medic after many of their trained medics had become casualties. Though he had only received three days of training, he immediately began giving life-saving treatment to wounded soldiers on the battlefield. In one of the first tests of his newly acquired skills,

Eddie rendered care to a soldier whose legs were blown off by a grenade. He did so in the dark while taking machine-gun fire with the threat of a second grenade in the back of his head. He gave his first-ever IV, created makeshift tourniquets and a makeshift litter and rescued the soldier who is still living today.

After returning to his unit a hero, Eddie was eventually discharged after receiving treatment for his own wounds that resulted from an early morning mortar attack.

Despite the heroic efforts that preceded his injuries, Eddie was never formally recognized by the Army for his service as a medic. Instead, he was recognized as an infantryman due to his initial role in the Army after being drafted in 1969.



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

Veterans Health Administration  
Lebanon VA Medical Center



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# From the desk of the director...

## Fellow Veterans, Co-Workers, Friends, Family and Stakeholders,

On May 22, 2017, I returned from a seven-month detail leading the Wilmington VA Medical Center in Wilmington, Del. I was asked to go there by the VISN 4 Network Director, with the concurrence of the Secretary of VA, to assist the facility with some system-wide improvements. Now that my work there is complete, I have to tell you how proud I am of the work you accomplished while I was away. Veteran satisfaction, quality and access to care continue to be very good. Lebanon has also become a new National Center of Innovation. We have a new culture of excitement, innovation and change at the workgroup and employee level. This enthusiasm continues to spread. I'd like to pay a special thank you to Associate Director of Patient Care Services and Nurse Executive, Margaret G. Wilson, for doing such a terrific job as the Acting Director during my detail. Please know I am grateful for your thoughts and prayers while I was away from the facility and my family. Thank you for your personal dedication, the level of compassion you show our Veterans and going that extra mile to deliver that memorable experience our Veterans have earned.

This summer edition highlights some great teams working together and the results they achieve for our Veterans. Great teams achieve great results! Our hospice is a perfect example of this philosophy -- so are our Engineering and Voluntary Teams. Read their articles in this newsletter and see what our employees recently accomplished. We have many great teams and I look forward to highlighting their accomplishments in future editions. Lebanon's reputation and quality of care continue to be mentioned at national levels because our employees are unmatched in dedication, selflessness, expertise and compassion. Thank you one and all. And thank you for the warm welcome home. I missed you very much.

Enjoy your summer, and as always please be safe. And never hesitate to stop me when you see me traveling the halls, rounding or at a meeting to share your Lebanon VA experience or suggestions with me. Your great ideas lead to greater outcomes for our employees, our communities and most of all our Veterans.

Respectfully,

Robert W. Callahan, Jr.  
*Director and CEO*  
*Lebanon VA Medical Center*



### LEBANON VA MEDICAL CENTER LEADERSHIP TEAM:

**Robert W. Callahan, Jr.**  
Director

**Linda S. Umberger, RN**  
Executive Assistant to the Director

**Cindy Shiner**  
Interim Associate Director

**Margaret G. Wilson, MSN, RN**  
Associate Director for Patient Care Services

**Anthony J. Slavinski, MD**  
Chief of Staff

**Laine Hellein, MSN, RN**  
Director of Quality Management

# VA Officials Present National Clinical Leadership Award to Lebanon VAMC Clinician

## Award recognizes exceptional service in providing care to our Nation's Veterans

TED NICHOLS II  
Public Affairs Specialist

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs senior leadership presented the 2016 Mark Wolcott Award for Excellence in Clinical Leadership to Dr. Scott T. Shreve in a ceremony held April 21, 2017, at Lebanon VA Medical Center.

"Lebanon is a wonderful place and has been a leader in providing care to Veterans at their time of greatest need for over twenty years," said Dr. Shreve. "The mission of VA's hospice and palliative care program is to honor Veterans' preferences. Our job is to find out what is important to the Veteran and their family and help them accomplish that whatever it takes."

"I am so grateful that VA has recognized the dramatic growth in hospice and palliative care across the agency," said Dr. Shreve. "The care of Veterans at end of life is so important. The demographics of the Veteran population require us to be experts at it and it is an honor to be part of this growth."

The award recognizes exceptional service in providing outstanding clinical care to our Nation's Veterans and this ceremony marked the first time VA officials traveled to a physician's home facility to present the award.

"This award is a huge award and is given only once a year to the top clinician and top leader in clinical care for the entire VA," said Dr. Koji Nishimura, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Patient Care Services. "What this award stands for is recognition for a lifetime of services, it is not just about this past year, it is for a lifetime of service."

Dr. Shreve serves as the National Director of the Hospice and Palliative Care Program for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In that position, he is responsible for all policy, program development, staff education and quality assurance for palliative and hospice care provided or purchased for enrolled Veterans. Dr. Shreve has led the implementation and oversight of the Comprehensive End-of-Life Care Initiative to change the culture of care for Veterans with serious illness and to ensure reliable access to quality palliative care.

"We are very proud of everything Dr. Shreve has done. When I came into central office, I said if I could do one project that had a quarter or even a tenth of the impact of what you have done for this Nation and the Veterans I will have been a great success," said Dr. Richard Allman, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Consultant for Geriatrics and Extended Care Services. "We have really seen a transformation in care for seriously ill Veterans nationwide because of Scott's leadership."

Dr. Shreve also is at the frontlines of care and spends half of his time leading the 17-bed inpatient Hospice and Palliative Care Unit at Lebanon VAMC.

"Dr. Shreve is a kind, compassionate and empathetic individual. He is a tireless listener and an extraordinary team builder. His medical expertise, skill and acumen are the result of hard work, keen intelligence and an absolute dedication to the patients he serves," said Lebanon VAMC Acting Director Margaret G.



Dr. Richard Allman, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Chief Consultant for Geriatrics and Extended Care Services (left), and Dr. Koji Nishimura, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Patient Care Services (right), present Dr. Scott T. Shreve (center) with the 2016 Mark Wolcott Award for Excellence in Clinical Leadership in a ceremony held at the Lebanon VA Medical Center, April 21, 2017.

Wilson. "There's no way to accurately measure the breadth and depth on his influence in the fields of hospice care, palliative care and geriatric care. He has touched so many lives and influenced countless caregivers and support personnel. We are all so proud of you."

The Wolcott Award is named after Dr. Mark Wolcott who dedicated more than 30 years of his life to serve and improve health care for Veterans. The award was established in 1996 with a category for excellence in clinical care delivery and excellence in clinical care leadership. The excellence in clinical care delivery category recognizes a practitioner who has demonstrated excellence in hands on direct patient care. The excellence in clinical care leadership category recognizes a health care practitioner who has demonstrated excellence through exceptional support for direction of patient care providers, including support of innovations that enhance the quality of direct patient care delivery.

Dr. Shreve also serves as a clinical associate professor in Penn State's College of Medicine. He has been awarded the Internal Medicine Distinguished Teaching Award in 2007 and 2009 and received the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine Project on Death in America, Palliative Medicine Community Leadership Award in March of 2013. More recently in July of 2013, Dr. Shreve had the privilege of accepting the American Hospital Association's Circle of Life Citation of Honor Award for the Veterans Health Administration's Hospice and Palliative Care program. Dr. Shreve has board certifications in internal medicine, geriatrics and in hospice and palliative medicine. Prior to medical school, Scott was a corporate banker.

## MEDICAL UPDATE

# Lebanon VAMC Hospice: 24 Years of Dedicated Service to South Central PA Vets

RON J. JONES, MSW  
*Hospice Social Worker*

Lebanon VA Eagle Heights Inpatient Hospice Unit is entering into its 24th year of providing Hospice services to Veterans of South Central Pennsylvania. With the administrative support of then Medical Center Director Leonard Washington, inpatient Hospice opened its doors in October of 1993 under the inspiration and leadership of chief chaplain Dr. James Luck and nurse manager Barbara Kohr. Following the arrival of Hospice medical director Dr. Scott Shreve in 1995, the unit became a nationally recognized academic training ground for resident physicians, palliative care and oncology fellows, and interns and students from a host of health care disciplines. Later, the unit became a model and training site for other developing VA Hospice units in the region. Lending to his leadership success on the unit and beyond, Dr. Shreve was appointed to his "afternoon job" as the first and only VA National Director of Hospice and Palliative Care in 2004. His continued success at leading VA nationally has contributed to a robust expansion of VA Hospice and palliative care programs throughout the U.S., and his receipt of several national awards — including the prestigious 2016 Mark Wolcott Award for Excellence in Clinical Leadership.

Parallel to the successes of the unit, it has maintained its humble beginnings, where



*The Eagle Heights Hospice Interdisciplinary Team begins each week with Monday morning rounds to address patient care priorities and to enhance effective communication and collaboration between team members, patients and their families.*

the philosophy of the unit maintains that all Veterans are equal and appreciated and honored for the sacrifices and contributions that they have made — regardless of rank or service experience. Similarly, all staff members, regardless of titles or positions, are considered equal and vital partners in the delivery of care. The goals of the 17-bed unit are to aggressively treat pain and uncomfortable symptoms while assisting with daily care — all while respecting a patient's desire to remain active in their care planning and supporting their remaining

life goals to the greatest extent possible. In an effort to enhance the quality of remaining life, a host of other services are available to Veterans including emotional and spiritual support; therapies that include physical, recreational, speech, occupational, and restorative care; and education, bereavement and emotional support for the Veteran's family.

The unit offers a family bedroom, visiting rooms, and two large dayrooms including a fully equipped kitchen in a home-like environment that is located on the VA grounds. Being a part of the complex allows for the 24-hour support of vital hospital services such as respiratory therapy, and a full pharmacy as well as such amenities as motorized scooters to enhance mobility and independence; access to VA activities, volunteer and chapel services, and the same specialty services available to non-Hospice patients.

Previous legislation resulted in Hospice care being a part of every enrolled Veteran's uniform benefits package — a "required service" for those that clinically qualify. Services would include both home and inpatient Hospice or VA Hospice contract care. More information can be obtained by calling Ron Jones, VA Hospice social worker, at 717-272-6621, ext. 4540.



*Key members of the Eagle Heights Hospice Interdisciplinary Team. The team is standing in the unit's Heroes' Lounge where holiday celebrations, theme parties, and a variety of weekly social and recreational activities take place.*

## FACILITIES & ENGINEERING UPDATE

# *Exciting projects continue to progress at Lebanon VA Medical Center*

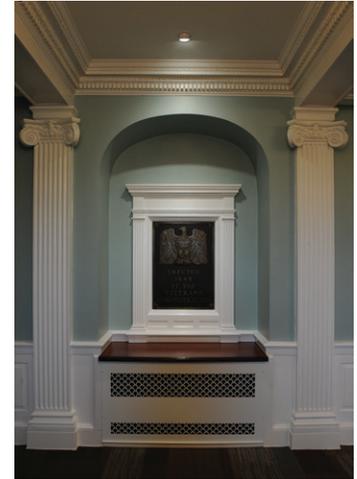
THADDEUS S. KOCUBA  
*Facility Manager,  
Engineering Service*

The new south entrance to the facility is now open. It will connect Building 1 and Building 104. Currently, you cannot access Building 104 from the entry because of the construction of a new elevator lobby serving the future Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

The new ICU adds a second-floor mechanical space and a third-floor ICU to Building 104. The ICU will have direct elevator access to and from the Surgery Center. The area features 13 beds and state-of-the-art capabilities including Tele-ICU. You will see a tower crane in the near future that will lift the steel beams into place during non-business hours.

Phase 2 of the Radiology addition continues to progress forward. All steel has been set, and the concrete floor is poured. Phase 2 of Radiology will relocate many of the x-ray machines from the current area to the new ground floor location, next to the new Radiology entrance.

The in-house Engineering team recently completed a restoration of the old x-ray waiting room, on the first floor of Building 1, to match its original use as the main entrance to Building 1. The crew restored the moldings to match the original construction, and took care to assure all work matched the original appearance. The result is a beautiful room; appropriately named the Lincoln Room. This room will be used as a conference and meeting room. As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the medical center, the Lincoln Room exemplifies the pride and care the Engineering employees have in Lebanon VA Medical Center.



*The original entrance of Building 1 has been restored and will now be used as a conference room and known as the Lincoln Room.*



*A 4,700-square-foot addition to the front of Building 1 will expand radiology services and will house several x-ray machines.*



*Volunteers will operate a new welcome desk inside the center of the new south entrance connecting Building 1 and Building 104.*



*The new south entrance connects Building 1 and Building 104 and provides for one centralized entry and will connect to new elevators as additional floors are added to Building 104.*

## VOLUNTARY SERVICE UPDATE

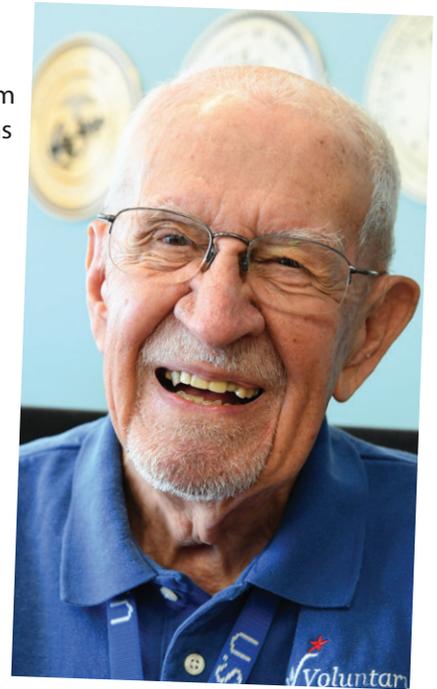
# *Voluntary Service invested in hospice care*

JEREMY K. FEES  
Voluntary Service, Chief

**NO VETERAN DIES ALONE PROGRAM:** No Veteran Dies Alone is a program that provides non-medical support services to hospice and palliative care to Veterans and their families. It provides volunteers a unique opportunity to spend time with Veterans who are approaching the end of life. Time is spent listening to the Veteran, reminiscing, taking walks to the garden or quietly holding hands. This program provides reassurance to the Veteran that they are not alone. Voluntary services partners with the Hospice and Palliative Care Team to provide specialized training that prepares volunteers for this rewarding experience.

### **VOLUNTEER** *Spotlight*

Robert Boyer first started volunteering with VA more than 13 years ago. In 2017, Mr. Boyer received the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for volunteering 4,000 hours. He has also been presented the NOVA award. The NOVA award honors individuals and/or groups who have made significant contributions to the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs, the nursing profession, the health care of Veterans, or in service to our country. Mr. Boyer continues to serve our Veterans at the information desk in Building 17 and also participates in the No Veteran Dies Alone program on our hospice unit.



*Robert Boyer on duty at the information desk in Building 17 where he answers questions and helps Veterans find their destination. Boyer also volunteers on our hospice unit with the No Veteran Dies Alone Program.*

*"Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent."*  
- Carl Sandburg, Poet



*Hospice and Long Term Care Veterans at Lebanon VAMC enjoying recreation therapy activities led by Sybil Stambaugh.*

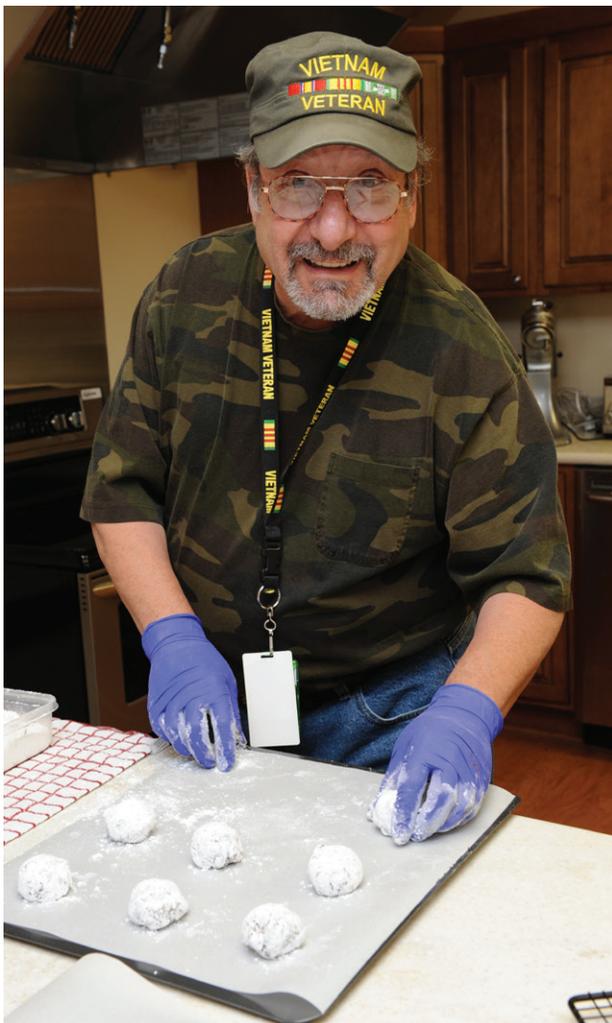
**RECREATION THERAPY, MUSIC THERAPY AND CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY** are services offered on the hospice unit weekly by Sybil Stambaugh, M.A., RMT, CTRS. Residents can experience live vocal, guitar, flute and harp music during morning worship service, one-on-one room visits and social gatherings. Resident Veterans can engage in art therapy or art studio projects in their rooms, the dayroom and in the art studio gathering. Veterans are encouraged to join in garden club and garden visits on warmer days. Residents can also join in board games, travel, movies, baking, music, trivia, and theme parties. Families can visit with conversation kits provided by recreation therapy to help start a conversation about a farm, city or theatre with pictures, props and questions all offered in a plastic shoebox kit to begin a dialogue. Residents can join in picnics, outings, bingo and live entertainment off the unit with Voluntary Services. All Veterans on the unit are encouraged to ignite their passion in living and explore the possibilities in living each day to the fullest for their well being

## VOLUNTARY SERVICE UPDATE *(continued)*

Volunteers also participate in a **BAKING PROGRAM** on the hospice unit. Not only does the smell of fresh baked goods conjure up the image of home, it can also encourage reminiscing among the Veterans about special meals and family gatherings. It really means something to them when they can tell someone, “boy am I hungry for a piece of cherry pie,” and before you know it, they are served a nice, warm piece of cherry pie à la mode.

The importance of the rituals that surround preparing and enjoying food is evident when you watch the interactions between the Veterans and the bakers.

Asked what he enjoys most about baking for the Veterans on the Hospice Unit, “Just the satisfaction of helping fellow Veterans,” Joe said. Joe is an Army Veteran who served in Vietnam. He had been participating in the baking program for six months.



*Joe Raia prepares cookies in the hospice kitchen at Lebanon VAMC. Joe has been volunteering with VA for more than 8 years.*

## *Badge of Honor*

*(continued from page 1)*

Upon learning this, Karen began looking into what could be done to rectify the situation. Working with the Berks County VA office and others, Karen was able to help Eddie receive the honor that he had earned nearly half a century ago: the Army Combat Medic Badge.

More than just a simple piece of metal or trinket to throw into an old foot locker in an attic, the medal symbolized to Eddie the work he had done in Vietnam and the trauma that he brought home as a result. While he was proud to have received the Combat Infantry Badge, he said it felt out of place for him. After all, he spent the brunt of his deployment saving friendly lives, not taking enemy ones.



*The Army Combat Medic Badge features the Medical Corps branch insignia, modified by the addition of a Greek cross suggesting the Geneva Convention between the wings and the entwined serpents, signifies the recipient's skills and expertise. It is superimposed upon a stretcher alluding to medical field service. The oak symbolizes steadfastness, strength and loyalty.*

Berks County Veterans Affairs Director Dale Derr awarded Eddie the Army Combat Medic Badge in a public ceremony. Eddie also agreed to be interviewed for a three-part story for the Reading Eagle newspaper. However, he didn't do this because he was interested in the attention. Instead, he said he wanted to highlight for his fellow Veterans the care he received at VA and the transformation that is possible through proper mental health care.

“This is a new VA, not the VA of 40 years ago,” Eddie said during his interview for the newspaper. “The help there now is really good. Go get it.”

While VA treats all Veterans who are experiencing a mental health crisis, a recent study found that only 30 percent of Veterans who commit suicide received VA care. Even Veterans with so-called bad papers—less than honorable discharges—are able to receive same-day emergency treatment regardless of their eligibility for other VA health care.

# COMMON QUESTIONS & VA HEALTHCARE ELIGIBILITY INFO

lebanon.va.gov

SOCIAL  
MEDIA



/VALebanon



@VALebanon

## Am I a Veteran?

YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED how many times we are asked this question. Folks seem to have all sorts of preconceptions about what makes someone a Veteran. Fortunately, however, the answer is quite simple. If you served in the active Armed Forces of the United States, then you are a Veteran! Pure and simple. It's not necessary to have served overseas or during a time of war. National Guard members and Reservists who have been called to active Federal service are also Veterans. Age, income, race, gender, religion, creed or marital status do not matter—the only thing which does, is that you wore the uniform of an American defender. Thank you for your service!

## Returning Veterans

If you are a recently discharged Veteran with service in a theater of combat operations (OIR/ORS – Operation Inherent Resolve/Operation Resolute Support), VA can provide you with free care for 5 years from your discharge from active duty for conditions possibly related to your service, regardless of your income status.

**Returning Veterans, please call Transition Care at 717-272-6621 x 4565 for more information.**

## Questions?

CALL 717-228-6000 OR 1-800-409-8771,  
EXT. 6000, TO SPEAK TO ONE OF OUR  
ENROLLMENT SPECIALISTS!

## Am I Eligible for Care?

ALL VETERANS ARE ELIGIBLE to apply for VA care. Our enrollment specialists review your military service record to determine your benefit eligibility. The results are sent to you in writing. You will be assigned to a priority group based on your specific eligibility status, income, and service information you provided on the 10-10EZ form. Your enrollment information is reviewed each year or whenever you have a life change. Your ability to remain enrolled in VA may depend on the funding that VA receives from Congress to provide your care. You will be notified in writing if VA cannot renew your enrollment for another year. You should contact our enrollment specialists any time you have a major life change such as retirement, loss of income or housing, change in marital status or a disability condition.

Veterans enrolled in VA Healthcare meet the minimum required standards of the Affordable Healthcare Act.

**To discuss eligibility or to apply for VA Healthcare at Lebanon VAMC, please call 717-272-6621 x 6000.**

## Combat Veterans

Veterans, including activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, are eligible if they served on active duty in a theatre of combat operations after November 11, 1998, and have NOT been discharged under dishonorable conditions.

Documentation used to determine service in a theater of combat operations can include any of the following:

- ✧ Military service documentation that reflects service in a combat theatre, or
- ✧ Receipt of combat service medals, or
- ✧ Receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits.

*The Best Care Anywhere...The Best Employees Anywhere*



### Lebanon VA Medical Center

1700 South Lincoln Avenue  
Lebanon, Pennsylvania 17042

717-272-6621 • 1-800-409-8771

[www.lebanon.va.gov](http://www.lebanon.va.gov)

### COMMON LEBANON VAMC CONTACTS

717-272-6621 / 1-800-409-8771

Appointment Line	x 5105
Telephone Nursing Care	x 6041
Pharmacy Center	x 6009
Auto Med Refill / Acct & Appt Info Line	x 5991
Enrollment / Eligibility	x 6000
VETERANS CRISIS LINE	1-800-273-8255 Press 1