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WE HONOR VETERANS

AN NHPCO NEWSLETTER FOR
WE HONOR VETERANS

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Cornerstone Hospice & Palliative Care Creates 1st Virtual Flight to Honor

Submitted by Cornerstone Hospice &
Palliative Care

It was just over a year ago that Patricia Gruber, a volunteer specialist for Cornerstone Hospice's Polk County, Florida region, stood among fellow employees and volunteers along with over a thousand other community members at Lakeland Linder Airport. They were there to welcome the arrival of an American Airlines flight carrying VIP's.

The VIPs were 72 World War II, Korean, and Vietnam War Veterans headed home from



Photo courtesy of Cornerstone Hospice & Palliative Care.

a whirlwind day in the nation's capital. Their tightly scheduled trip included visits to the memorials erected in honor of those, like themselves, who returned home from defending the country and those who paid the ultimate price for freedom.

"While waiting there, I felt a tug at my heart as I thought of the growing number of frail Veterans who cannot endure the somewhat grueling daylong trip," said Pat, who had met many Veteran hospice patients in her role coordinating Cornerstone SALUTES!, a local initiative aligned with the national We Honor Veterans program.

"I had been inspired by the Veterans' stories about their experiences and dedication to our country," said Pat. "But all too often, I have heard a Veteran state, 'This is the first time I have been thanked for my service.' It always leaves me in tears."

Pat wanted to find a way to bestow the same honor, comradery, community support, and outpouring of love and thanks to these deserving heroes. She was determined to provide a similar Flight to Honor experience for hospice patients and other frail Veterans.

Pat shared her concern with the planners of the annual Flight to Honor Polk who wholeheartedly agreed. Then they tasked her with coming up with the plan. She worked with the several local organizations in her community, including the American Legion, the VA Clinic, assisted living facilities, and skilled nursing facilities, to organize the event.

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Photo courtesy of Cornerstone Hospice & Palliative Care.

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On October 8, 2016, the Virtual Flight to Honor became a reality. A frail group of 32 WWII, 10 Korean, and two Vietnam War heroes were honored and each thanked for their military service and for protecting the nation's freedom. Of the 44 Veterans in attendance, two were women who served during WWII.

Local active military members, the local high school JROTC, family members, and other Veterans attended to share the Virtual Flight to Honor experience and to honor the special guests. Together, they watched video footage of a previous Flight to Honor, showing Veterans and guardians boarding an American Airlines plane at sunrise and deplaning in Washington, D.C. where they were greeted by a large welcoming crowd.

The special day ended with Cornerstone Hospice Veteran volunteers recognizing each honoree with a Cornerstone SALUTES! pinning ceremony. Flight to Honor also provided a challenge coin and t-shirt to each Veteran.



Photo courtesy of Cornerstone Hospice & Palliative Care.

VETERAN-TO-VETERAN VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Many We Honor Veterans hospice partners have implemented Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer programs which pair Veteran volunteers with hospice patients who have been identified as Veterans. Veteran volunteers add a unique perspective and skill set to the delivery of quality hospice care. Often times, the volunteer and patient are able to connect over a shared military background and experience. This distinctive connection and honorable bond has allowed many patients to open up about their life and heal emotional wounds caused during their time in service to the country.

We Honor Veterans **offers several resources** to help hospice partners implement a Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer program. It is also a criterion for hospices to reach We Honor Veterans partner level three.

The following story features dedicated Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer Colonel Patsy Thompson who received an award from NHPCO in 2016 for outstanding specialized volunteer service.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Submitted by: Margaret Ervin, Social Worker, Sutter Care at Home

Colonel Pat Thompson has over 37 years of service to her country. She served on active duty in the US Air Force Nurse Corps from 1956-1960; she was then discharged and served fourteen years in the US Air Force Reserve. When her unit was dismantled, Col. Thompson joined the California Army National Guard. When her military service ended she decided to serve her local community.

Col Thompson has been a volunteer at Sutter Care at Home- Hospice (SCAH) in Roseville, California for twenty years. Pat and her Dachshund Pretzel visited patients for thirteen years but when it was time for Pretzel to retire, Pat continued to serve by assisting our We Honor Veterans Program. It is not uncommon for Pat to volunteer 75-100 hours per year which constitutes between 1,800-2,000 hours of heartfelt service over a 20-year period.

Pat has been instrumental with SCAH receiving the prestigious We Honor Veterans Level IV designation. With her devotion to integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all she does, it was not difficult to recruit Pat to this program. Pat's common language and military experience forms a strong relational bond with our Veterans. Pat is the lead in presenting our Veteran population with a certificate of service and a flag.



Colonel Pat Thompson

To learn more about the Veteran-to-Veteran Volunteer Program visit our website or contact Hope Fost at hfofost@nhpco.org.

VA INITIATIVE INCLUDES POLICY AIMED AT ENSURING GOALS OF CARE ARE DISCUSSED AND DOCUMENTED

The Life-Sustaining Treatment Decisions Initiative (LSTD) is a national VHA quality improvement project led by the National Center for Ethics in Health Care (NCEHC). The aim of the initiative is to promote personalized, proactive, patient-driven care for Veterans with serious illness by eliciting, documenting, and honoring their values, goals, and preferences.

The initiative involves a new national policy to standardize practices related to discussing and documenting goals of care and life-sustaining treatment decisions, and the tools, resources, education, and monitoring to support clinicians and facilities in making practice changes. The LSTD is designed to assist VA providers to develop and deliver treatment plans that are aligned with the values, goals, and preferences of high-risk patients. More information can be found on the [FAQ page](#).



Veteran-to-Veteran volunteer Arden Pridgeon, wearing his original WWII uniform, is pictured with a Caring Circle patient. Photo courtesy of Caring Circle.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

VA FACT SHEET FOR HOSPICE PARTNERS Go to the [WHV website](#) to download a one page fact sheet that has been designed to help staff identify key information to improve the transitions of Veterans' care across settings. It can be modified to meet local needs and should be completed in collaboration with key stakeholders in the VA and other partners in your community.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT Did you know that there are plenty of apps available on various topics to help you serve your patients? A few that can be a quick help at your fingertips:



VA Mobile's Exposure Ed allows providers to quickly identify potential military exposures and associated health effects. Information can be searched by location or service date, and it can also be pasted into a note that can be emailed or printed for the Veteran and their family. It also includes tips on how to discuss exposure concerns with Veterans, information on presumptive service connected health conditions and diseases, a tool to locate VA facilities, and VA's exposure-related policies and programs. Get the app and user guide [HERE](#).



VA Health Caring4WomenVeterans has useful information to help you serve the unique physical and mental health needs of women Veterans. Women Veterans often have health needs that are different from both those of male Veterans and the general female population. Designed for both VA and non-VA care team members, the app offers comprehensive information targeting the specific health care needs of women Veterans. You will find facts and statistics about women Veterans' health, an overview of common issues they face, questions to guide conversations with your patients and links to additional resources. Get the app and user guide [HERE](#).

RESOURCES FOR WOMEN VETERANS Don't forget about the [Women Veterans Call Center](#) that is available to answer any and all questions regarding status, eligibility, and benefits. You can call for yourself or for a Veteran you know and you will be connected to a trained VA female staff member. There is also a one-on-one chat function that enables women Veterans to chat anonymously with a trained representative. Call 1-855-VA-WOMEN or go to www.womenshealth.va.gov/ and click on the "Chat with the Women Veterans Call Center" icon.

June 28th from
2:00 - 3:30 EST

DATES TO REMEMBER

The next partner networking call is Wednesday, June 28th from 2:00 – 3:30 EST. To register [click here](#) or email us at veterans@nhpco.org.

Did you know that you can listen to past call recordings and get notes to see what was discussed? [Click here](#) to see what you missed!

DR. SCOTT SHREVE WINS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Congratulations to Dr. Scott Shreve for winning the 2016 Mark Wolcott Award for Excellence in Clinical Care Leadership! Many of you know Dr. Shreve from our partner networking calls and he has been instrumental in the creation and success of the We Honor Veterans program. We are grateful not only for his support and collaboration but for his unwavering passion for the quality of care that Veterans receive. Thank you, Scott, for being such an inspiration to us all!

SHARE YOUR STORIES

How would you like to have your We Honor Veterans program on the front page of the next quarterly newsletter? We are now taking submissions for photos and stories that highlight what honor means to your organization's program and the patients you serve. [Click here](#) to submit your stories and photos by August 1st. The winning submission will be featured front and center and receive a gift card.

EARN YOUR STARS

Already a We Honor Veterans partner program? We know that your organization is committed to providing Veteran-centric care to the Veteran patients you serve each and every day. If your program is ready to move up through the levels to increase your ability to serve your Veteran patients, [contact us](#) today. You can learn about the different [We Honor Veteran partner levels here](#).

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Are you part of a non-hospice organization that would like to join the mission to provide support for Veterans in your community? [Contact us to learn how you can become a Community Partner](#).

SPONSORSHIPS

Interested in learning how you can support the We Honor Veterans program beyond becoming a partner? Individuals or organizations interested in sponsorship opportunities can contact Sarah Meltzer at smeltzer@nationalhospicefoundation.org or 703-837-3149.



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