



April 2023 SAVAHC'S Director's Report

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Director

Community Engagements & Partnerships

Recurring Each Month

- Sierra Vista United Veterans Council Meeting- First Saturday of each month
- Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV) Monthly Membership Meeting- First Saturday of each month
- City of Tucson Veterans Affairs Committee Meeting- Second Wednesday of each month
- Yuma Military Affairs Committee (MAC) Meeting- Third Wednesday of each month

March Community Engagements and Partnerships

- Honoring Women's History Month Celebration at the Tucson VA Medical Center- Monday, March 1
- Arizona Coalition of Military Families/Be Connected Team of Teams gathering in Phoenix, AZ- Thursday, March 2
- SAVAHC'S Quarterly Veteran Resource Fair at the Tucson VA Medical Center- Saturday, March 4
- SAVAHC'S Director and Eligibility and Enrollment attended the Sun City Veterans Club of Oro Valley to provide updates on PACT Act and facility operations- Monday, March 6
- SAVAHC'S Quarterly VSO, Congressional, and Community Partner Update- Wednesday, March 8
- Wreaths Across America Mobile Educational Exhibit at the Tucson VA Medical Center- Monday, March 13
- SAVAHC'S welcomed Amy Ashcraft, LCSW, Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) National Program Coordinator, Megabus Section 5304 Project Lead and Jennifer Knetig, PhD, National Program Manager, IPVAP Megabus Pilot. SAVAHC'S was selected as one of 10 medical centers for the implementation of Megabus Section 5304 Pilot program. This two-year pilot program is intended to assess the feasibility and advisability of assisting Veterans who have experienced, or are experiencing, intimate partner violence, or sexual assault. At the conclusion of the pilot, a cumulative summary report of findings and recommendations will be compiled and submitted to Congress- Tuesday, March 14
- Tucson Veterans Serving Veterans Stand Down at the Grand Luxe Hotel- Wednesday, March 15
- Marana Veteran's Club Patriot Pantry Donation- Monday, March 20
- SAVAHC'S hosted Dr. Jennifer Strawn, DNP, RN, NEA-BC. She is currently the Acting Executive Director, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services for the VHA. During her visit, staff showcased the health care services provided to Veterans. Additionally, Dr Strawn took time to recognize 10 members of the nursing staff for their outstanding work- Wednesday, March 22
- The Joint Commission conducted an on-site survey at the Tucson VA Medical Center and VA Community Care Clinics for accreditation- March 21-24
- Women Veteran's Tele Town Hall (Virtual)- The virtual event provided information to women Veterans on SAVAHC'S health care services- Thursday, March 30



Hot Topics

- The SAVAHCS has spent the better part of the past few months implementing provisions of the PACT Act. Over 20,000 Toxic Exposure Screenings have been completed and almost half have had a secondary screen
- The SAVAHCS was recently approved for a Lung Cancer Screening Program- March 27
- Holly Krull, PhD, Acting Director, Biomedical Laboratory Research & Development, VA Office of Research & Development, will be a guest speaker at SAVAHCS during Research Week 2023, which will take place May 9-12, 2023
- SAVAHCS will host its upcoming Quarterly Veteran Resource Fair and Town Hall in June, more details to follow
- SAVAHCS will be hosting a PACT Act outreach event on July 22, more details to follow as we get closer to the event
- The SAVAHCS Fisher House celebrated its 7-Year Anniversary on March 24 with an open house



SAVAHCS Construction Updates

- **Exterior building painting completed for buildings 94 and 90. Building 57 will be next.** This project includes a total of 10 buildings - 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 57, 90, and 94
- **Bed Tower #1 will be solicited for construction in the second quarter of FY23.** Radiology has resubmitted an MRI and CT lease package to Contracting
- **Upgrade controls and mixer boxes in buildings 38 (1st floor), 50 (2nd floor), and 57 (1st floor).** Work will take place above the ceilings during nights and weekends. This project is on hold. The contractor is waiting for construction materials to arrive
- **Expanding the Mental Health Clinic in building 90 (13,000 square feet):** Activation of first phase will begin on May 6, 2023. The second phase, which will convert existing administrative space into clinical space, is scheduled to complete by November 2023
- **Mental Health building 90 renovation project will start in September 2023 to convert the Agave clinic into a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) compliant layout.** This project will also renovate the lobby and common hallway
- **Emergency Department Expansion.** The design has been completed. We will submit for FY24 construction funding approval
- We expect the renovation of our inpatient acute care unit, 2S, to be awarded the end of March. We anticipate starting construction in May 2023
- Three FY23 Non-Recurring Maintenance (NRM) projects are in the process of being transferred to the Army Corps of Engineering – construct perimeter fence, renovate Community Living Center building 60 and repair the roofs of buildings 50, 60, 78, and 90

Veteran Health Care Information

- **The PACT Act-** The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. The new law empowers VA to provide generations of Veterans and their survivors with the care and benefits they have earned. Key components of the PACT Act can be located at the following link <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>.

- **The PACT Act will bring these changes:**
 - Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras.
 - Adds 20+ more presumptive conditions for burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic exposures.
 - Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation.
 - Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care.
 - Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures.
 - If you're a Veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits be either visiting <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/> or calling 1-800-698-2411 for more information.

- **COMPACT Act of 2020-** Starting January 17, 2023, Veterans in acute suicidal crisis will be able to go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost – including inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VA system to use this benefit, for more information click [HERE](#).
- **The SERVICE Act** requires that VA ensures that any Veteran who was deployed during active-duty military service to an identified area where they may have had a toxic exposure, such as burn pits is eligible for a breast cancer risk assessment by a VHA healthcare provider and a clinically appropriate mammogram either within the VA or in the community.
 - March 2023- Veterans that are already enrolled in VA Health Care and assigned to a primary care may have a breast cancer risk assessment and clinically appropriate mammogram completed by their provider.
 - May 2023- SERVICE Act eligible Veterans who are not enrolled in VA or not utilizing primary care will also require a breast cancer assessment and clinically appropriate mammogram.
- **New Veterans Crisis Line New Number: Dial 988, then Press 1-** Veterans in crisis or those concerned about a Veteran can call to reach trained responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive confidential crisis support.
 - Veterans can still call [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255) and Press 1, chat online at [Chat \(veteranscrisisline.net\)](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net) and text 838255 to reach trained crisis responders.
- **VA Mobile Check-In for Appointments-** Veterans can now check in to their appointments at the SAVAHCS with their smart phones by scanning a QR code on the mobile check-in poster in the clinic lobby or text "check-in" to 53079 and a link to complete the check-in process will be sent.
 - Veterans can learn more at [How to check in with your smartphone for some VA appointments](#)
 - If Veterans do not have a smart phone or need help checking in for an appointment, staff at the front desk will check in Veterans to their appointments and answer any questions.
- **The COVID-19 Spread Rate Within the SAVAHCS Catchment Area is High-** Masks are required and physical distancing is necessary at all the SAVAHCS facilities
 - Use the [VA medical center locator](#) to find the facility's current level and learn more about [VHA Health Protection Levels](#).
- **Veterans can still use the latest technology to connect with their health care teams-** Please have Veterans who have questions on how to use the virtual technology options reach out to their primary care team.
 - **Telephone or Video Appointments-** Veterans may receive care at home, either over the phone or via video using VA Video Connect on their computers, smartphones, or

tablets. Visit mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect or call your primary care team to learn more.

- **Veterans can save time by using [MyHealtheVet](#)** for all their routine healthcare needs. Veterans can make medical appointments, contact providers, and request prescription refills. To learn more, contact the SAVAHCS MyHealtheVet Coordinator at 520-792-1450, extension 1-6889.
- **Prescription Refills-** Veterans may request prescription refills, order, and have medications mailed to their homes using My HealtheVet or the Rx Refill mobile app. Download the app at va.gov/app/rx-refill, or call 1-800-470-8262 and press 1.
- **VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22) Nurse Advice Line at 1-877-252-4866-** Veterans can call 24/7 to connect with a registered nurse for any routine health care questions or concerns over the phone.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Veterans can see how VA Hospitals rank on patient satisfaction in comparison to community hospitals through Medicare's Care Compare Website.** On the Care Compare website, you can search and compare VA and non-VA medical care facilities. To view the Care Compare website, click [HERE](#).
- **Primary Care, Mental Health, and Specialty Care appointment wait times** by VHA facility can be found at the newly updated Access to Care website at <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/>

SAVAHCS Local Contacts:

- Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS) Main Line 520-792-1450 or 1-800-470-8262
- Caregiver Support Program 520-792-1450 extension 5390
- Care in the Community 520-792-1450 extension 6555
- Compensation and Pension 520-629-4662
- Eligibility and Enrollment Section 520-792-1450 extension 6572 or 1740
- Homeless Program Coordinator 520-792-1540 extension 1839
- Medication Automated Refill Line (Toll Free) 1-800-470-8262, Press 1, then press 1 again to use the automated line to refill/renew a prescription
- Mental Health Clinic 520-629-4884
- My HealtheVet 520-792-1450 extension 6889
- Native American Program 520-792-1450 extension 6622
- Patient Advocate Office 520-629-4933
- Public Affairs 520-629-1819
- Release of Information Office 520-792-1450 extension 4665
- Suicide Prevention Coordinator 520-792-1450 extension 6415
- Post-9/11 M2VA Case Management for Veterans recently separated from military 520-269-1684
- Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) (formerly Voluntary Services) 520-629-1822
- Women's Health Clinic 520-629-4885

VA National Contacts

- 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) for all VA related questions about care, benefits, and services
- General VA Billing Questions 1-866-400-1238
- National Caregiver support line 1-855-260-3274
- National Memorial Cemetery Phoenix 480-513-1412
- Phoenix Regional Office (VBA) 1-800-827-1000

- VA Billing and collections Consolidated Patient Account Center (CPAC) 866-802-6819
- VA Health Care 877-222-8387 (VETS)
- VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Nurse Advice Line 1-877-252-4866

