Fisher House coming to Dorn VA

It’s official. The William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center is slated to be home for one of the 14 newly selected Fisher Houses to be built over the coming years.

A Fisher House is “a home away from home” for families of patients receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers. The homes are normally located within walking distance of the treatment facility or have transportation available. There are 71 Fisher Houses located on 24 military installations and 29 VA medical centers. They are a temporary residence; not a treatment facility, hospice or counseling center.

“We were officially notified by the Fisher House Foundation back in November,” said Tammy Finney, the chief of Voluntary Services at Dorn VAMC. “There was a lot of ground work to cover.” Part of that ground work, according to Finney was the establishment of campaign website in which people can financially contribute to the project (http://donate.fisherhouse.org/ColumbiaSC).

Typically, the houses are 5,000 to 16,800 square foot homes donated by the Fisher family and Fisher House Foundation. Each house is designed to provide 8 to 21 suites. All are professionally furnished and decorated in the tone and style of the local region. The houses can accommodate 16 to 42 family members. They feature a common kitchen, laundry facilities, dining room and an inviting living room with library, and toys for children. The newest houses are 100 percent handicap accessible and include elevators.

“The addition of a Fisher House to the Dorn VAMC campus will be a major enhancement for the families of patients receiving medical care at the facility and will be an asset to the community, said Interim Medical Center Director David Omura. “The Dorn VA is grateful to the Fisher House Foundation, those involved in the application process, and community leaders who are in support for this important project.”

To date, more than 277,000 families have spent more than six million days of lodging in a Fisher House since the program began in 1990.
Free legal advice, aid for qualified Vets

Lawyers 4 Vets connects low-income and homeless Veterans with attorneys who provide legal advice and representation on certain issues.

As a service to area Veterans, the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center has partnered with the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center and members of the private bar to establish Lawyers 4 Vets, a free legal clinic in the Columbia area for low-income Veterans.

Legal advice/assistance at no cost - but court cost, administrative cost or other fees are the responsibility of the Veteran.

The clinic will ONLY address the following topics:

- Obtaining identification (Social Security, South Carolina State ID, birth certificates)
- South Carolina child support orders and modifications
- Expungements of SC criminal records, and/or pardon
- Simple wills and health care power of attorney (available for veterans and their spouse)

Veterans who would like to be screened for eligibility should call (877) 289-6000 and leave a message. Please include name, phone number, and legal issue. The Veteran will be contacted within two business days by an intake volunteer who will ask the veteran a number of questions to determine if they are eligible.

If the Veteran is eligible and has a qualifying legal issue, they will be given the next available appointment at the legal clinic.

Appointments are required for a Veteran to receive a face-to-face meeting with a lawyer. Walk-ins will not be seen and will be directed to contact the telephone intake.

New regulation changes co-payment cost of medication

By Shannon Baer, VA public affairs specialist

Effective Feb. 27, the Department of Veterans Affairs will change the federal regulations concerning co-payments charged to Veterans for medications required on an outpatient basis to treat non-service connected conditions.

Estimates show that co-payment amounts would increase three times over six years if the current regulations are left unchanged, but switching to a tiered system and freezing associated co-payments will continue to keep costs low for Veterans.

The new tiered co-payment structure will decrease the costs of outpatient medications for most Veterans, aligning with VA’s goals to reduce out-of-pocket costs, encourage greater adherence to prescribed outpatient medications and reduce the risk of fragmented care that results when multiple pharmacies are used to fill Veteran prescriptions.

Under the new regulation, co-payment amounts would be fixed and would only vary depending upon the class of outpatient medication in the tier. The rulemaking will establish three classes of outpatient medications tiers with associated co-payment. Veterans who currently do not have a co-payment or are exempt by law will not be affected by the change.

Veterans can view frequently asked questions and see a breakdown of the medication tiers by visiting the following links Medication Co-payment Brochure-English Version or Medication Co-payment Brochure-Spanish Version

For information on VA health benefits or to learn more about the new tiered medication co-payment structure please visit the VA Health Benefits website.
SC Philharmonic provide special concert for Veterans

Byrd enjoys conducting the South Carolina Philharmonic.

Army Veteran and CLC Resident Sylvester Byrd enjoys conducting the South Carolina Philharmonic.

Army Veteran and CLC Resident Albertha Sumpter dances in his wheelchair to the melodic sounds of the South Carolina Philharmonic.

Veterans and employees at the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center were visited by members of the South Carolina Philharmonic in January. The SC Philharmonic played several Veteran-centric pieces for the Veterans in the Community Living Center Atrium as their way of saying “thank you” to the Veterans for their selfless service to our country. As a special highlight to the mini concert, Veterans and other guest were encouraged to come forward to be the Philharmonic’s guest conductor.

VA to provide fertility counseling, treatment for certain Veterans, spouses

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced in January it is amending its regulation regarding fertility counseling and treatment available to eligible Veterans and spouses.

VA currently provides certain infertility services other than in vitro fertilization services to Veterans as part of the medical benefits package. This interim final rule authorizes IVF for a Veteran with a service-connected disability that results in the inability of the Veteran to procreate without the use of fertility treatment.

It also states VA may provide fertility counseling and treatment using assisted reproductive technologies, including IVF, to a spouse of a Veteran with a service-connected disability that results in the inability of the Veteran to procreate without the use of fertility treatment.

“I have always believed that one of the main responsibilities of a grateful nation is to make whole the men and women who have made sacrifices on our behalf,” said then VA Secretary Bob McDonald. “It is important that we fully understand the needs of our Veteran population, and incorporate the major scientific advances available today that can allow them to live a full life. Providing fertility counseling and treatment, including in vitro fertilization, is consistent with VA’s goal of restoring reproductive capabilities of Veterans and improving the quality of their lives.”

As part of the medical benefits package, VA provides many different types of fertility treatments and procedures to Veterans. These include infertility counseling, laboratory blood testing, surgical correction of structural pathology, reversal of a vasectomy or tubal ligation, medication, and various other diagnostic studies or treatments and procedures.

Full implementation of this regulation requires that VA utilize and optimize existing capabilities for care in the community and develop internal processes that will provide Veterans with a seamless path to receiving ART services.

Veterans can immediately schedule appointments with their local health care system for eligibility determinations, clinical evaluation and consultation, and initial treatment as we work to build this structure.

The interim final rule was published in the Federal Register on Jan. 19. Although the interim rule references Sept. 30 as the date the funding expires, the funds are authorized through Sept. 30, 2018.
Three Gamecocks visit Dorn to thank Veterans for service, sign autographs

Army Veteran Angel Miranda poses for a photograph with University of South Carolina baseball players (l-r) Infielder (shortstop/2nd baseman) LT Tolbert, Pitcher John Parke, and Pitcher Reed Scott. The three athletes visited several Veterans Jan. 18 thank Veterans for their service, hand out schedule calendars/team photos, and sign autographs.

Air Force Veteran Angel Miranda poses for a photograph with University of South Carolina baseball players (l-r) Infielder (shortstop/2nd baseman) LT Tolbert, Pitcher John Parke, and Pitcher Reed Scott. The three athletes visited several Veterans Jan. 18 thank Veterans for their service, hand out schedule calendars/team photos, and sign autographs.

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February is American Heart Month

Strong men put their heart health first

Courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The perfect gift this Valentine’s Day is the gift of heart health. Along with Valentine’s Day, February marks American Heart Month, a great time to commit to a healthy lifestyle and make small changes that can lead to a lifetime of heart health.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women. While Americans of all backgrounds can be at risk for heart disease, African American men, especially those who live in the southeast region of the United States, are at the highest risk for heart disease.

Additionally, more than 40 percent of African Americans have high blood pressure, a leading cause of heart disease and stroke.

That’s why this February during American Heart Month, Million Hearts® is encouraging African American men to take charge of their health and start one new, heart-healthy behavior that can help reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke.

Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference

African American men can make a big difference in their heart health by taking these small steps during the month of February and beyond.

Schedule a visit with your doctor to talk about heart health. It’s important to schedule regular check-ups even if you think you are not sick. Partner with your doctor and health care team to set goals for improving your heart health, and don’t be afraid to ask questions and trust their advice.

Add exercise to your daily routine. Start off the month by walking 15 minutes, three times each week. By mid-month, increase your time to 30 minutes, three times each week.

Increase healthy eating. Cook heart-healthy meals at home at least three times each week and make your favorite recipe lower sodium. For example, swap out salt for fresh or dried herbs and spices.

Take steps to quit smoking. If you currently smoke, quitting can cut your risk for heart disease and stroke. Learn more at CDC’s Smoking and Tobacco Use website.

Take medication as prescribed. Talk with your doctor about the importance of high blood pressure and cholesterol medications. If you’re having trouble taking your medicines on time or if you’re having side effects, ask your doctor for help.

Strong Men Make Heart Health a Priority

After undergoing triple coronary bypass surgery in 1999, Louisiana native, Clarence Ancar made the decision to make his heart health a priority. Before he had surgery, Clarence knew he had high cholesterol but had dismissed his doctor’s advice on adopting a healthy lifestyle and taking his medication.

Clarence’s cardiologist, Dr. Keith C. Ferdinand, taught him that heart disease was not a death sentence and that he could still live a long, healthy life if he committed to making a few changes and respected his heart condition. Working together with his health care team, Clarence developed a plan to start and stay heart healthy.

By setting small, achievable goals and tracking those goals, Clarence made a big and lasting difference in his health. He learned the importance of taking his high blood pressure and cholesterol medications.

With the help of a dietitian Dr. Ferdinand referred him to, he started eating less of the fatty, salty, and greasy food and added more fruits and vegetables. He also began walking 2-3 miles each day. After his surgery, Clarence lost a significant amount of weight and kept it off.

Today, Dr. Ferdinand continues to motivate and support Clarence in his heart health journey. By having a strong and trusting relationship with his doctor, Clarence was able to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Clarence encourages African American men to be strong and commit to making one heart-healthy lifestyle change during American Heart Month.

Photo courtesy of the CDC
To commemorate and celebrate the contributions to our nation made by people of African descent, American historian Carter G. Woodson established Black History Week. The first celebration occurred on Feb. 12, 1926. For many years, the second week of February was set aside for this celebration to coincide with the birthdays of abolitionist/editor Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. In 1976, as part of the nation’s bicentennial, the week was expanded to a month. Since then, U.S. presidents have proclaimed February as National African-American History Month.

**Note:** The reference to the black population in this publication is to single-race black people (“black alone”) except in the first section on “Population.” In that section, the reference is to black alone or in combination with other races, a reference to respondents who said they were one race (black) or more than one race (black plus other races).

### Population

**46.3 million** – The black population, either alone or in combination with one or more other races, on July 1, 2015, up about 1.3 percent from July 1, 2014. (Source: Vintage 2015 Population Estimates, Table PEPALL5N)

**74.5 million** – The projected black population, either alone or in combination, of the United States (including those of more than one race) on July 1, 2060. On that date, according to the projection, the black population would constitute 17.9 percent of the nation’s total population. (Source: 2014 National Population Projections, Table 10)

**3.8 million** – The black population in New York on July 1, 2015; the largest of any state or equivalent. Texas had the largest numeric increase since July 1, 2014 (94,000). The District of Columbia had the highest percentage (50.0 percent), followed by Mississippi (38.3 percent). (Source: Vintage 2015 Population Estimates)

**1.3 million** – The black population in Cook County, Ill. (Chicago), in 2015; the largest of any county. Harris County, Texas, had the largest numeric increase since 2014 (22,200) and Claiborne County, Miss., was the county with the highest percentage in the nation (85.1 percent). (Source: Vintage 2015 Population Estimates)

### Businesses

**108,473** – The estimated number of black-owned employer firms in 2014. (Source: 2014 Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs, Table SE1400CSA01)

**31,216** – The estimated number of black-owned health care and social assistance firms, the largest sector of black-owned businesses. The health care and social assistance sector is followed by professional, scientific and technical support (15,078) and administrative, support, waste management and remediation services (9,644). (Source: 2014 Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs, Table SE1400CSA01)

### Serving Our Nation

**2.2 million** – The number of black military veterans in the United States in 2015. (Source: 2015 American Community Survey, Table C21001B)

### Education

**84.7%** – The percentage of the black population age 25 and over with a high school diploma or higher in 2015. (Source: 2015 American Community Survey, Table S0201)
Frequently Called Numbers

Admissions .................................................................................................................. (803) 776-4000 x4983/7190
Appointment Line ......................................................................................................... (803) 647-5829
................................................................................................................................. (800) 293-8262
Billing and Insurance
Collections – pay a bill ............................................................................................... (888) 827-4817
General questions ......................................................................................................... (866) 258-2772
Medical claims .............................................................................................................. (803) 776-4000 x6763
Chaplain Services
8 a.m. to 4 p.m. ................................................................................................................ (803) 776-4000 x6332
After hours ..................................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000
Compensation and Pension ............................................................................................. (803) 776-4000 x6183
Enrollment Eligibility ....................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x7010
Information Desk (Dorn VAMC) ..................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x4179/5580
Medical Records ............................................................................................................. (803) 776-4000 x6283
MyHealtheVet .................................................................................................................. (803) 695-6783
Patient Advocate ............................................................................................................ (803) 776-4000 x7998/6937
Prosthetics ....................................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x6323
Optometry (Eye Clinic) .................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x5122
Release of Information .................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x6290
Shuttle Service ................................................................................................................ (803) 776-4000 x6780
Telephone Advice Line
Outside Columbia ............................................................................................................. (888) 651-2683
In Columbia ..................................................................................................................... (803) 647-5829
Travel Office ..................................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x4483/4525/4484
Veteran’s Transportation Service .................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x6398
Veteran Service Organizations
American Legion .............................................................................................................. (803) 776-4000 x7539
AmVets ........................................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x2421
Disabled American Veterans ........................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x2422
Military Order of the Purple Heart ................................................................................. (803) 776-4000 x2430
Paralyzed Veterans Association ...................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x2432
Veteran’s of Foreign Wars ............................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x2443
Voluntary Services .......................................................................................................... (803) 776-4000 x6780/7081

Community-Base Outpatient Clinics

Anderson CBOC
3030 N. Hwy 81
Anderson, SC 29621
Tele (864) 224-5450

Greenville OPC
41 Park Creek Drive
Greenville, SC 29605
Tele (864) 299-1600

Spartanburg CBOC
279 North Grove Medical Plaza
Spartanburg, SC 29303
Tele (864) 582-7025

Florence CBOC
1822 Sally Hill Farms Blvd
Florence, SC 29501
Tele (843) 292-8383

Sumter CBOC
407 N. Salem Ave
Sumter, SC 29150
Tele (803) 938-9901

Orangeburg CBOC
1767 Village Park Drive
Orangeburg, SC 29118
(803) 533-1335

Rock Hill CBOC
2670 Mills Park Drive
Rock Hill, SC 29732
Tele (803) 366-4848

Comments / Suggestions for the Palmetto Post

The Palmetto Post is a monthly newsletter for the Veterans at and around the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center, or one of its seven community-based outpatient clinics in Anderson, Florence, Greenville, Orangeburg, Rock Hill, Spartanburg or Sumter.

This newsletter is a product of the Dorn VAMC Public Affairs Office. Any questions, concerns, comments or suggestions should be directed to Bob Hall at (803) 776-4000 x 6519 or by email to vhacmsdornpa@va.gov.

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