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# News Release

*For Immediate Release*

**Detroit VA Healthcare System to Join Nation in Saluting Veteran Patients,  
February 14 – 20, 2016**



**(Detroit)** The Detroit VA Healthcare System will once again host Veterans, visitors, media and others in the community for what is always a moving week, as staff joins the nation in the **National Salute to Veteran Patients**, February 14 – 20, 2016.

The National Salute to Veteran Patients Week began in 1978 as a way to honor Veterans, increase community awareness of VA's role in providing comprehensive medical care and to encourage American citizens and community organizations to become more engaged in volunteerism and philanthropic efforts.

"It's our chance to come together and host an exciting week of visitors, events, celebrations and commemorations for Veterans and others," said Dr. Pamela Reeves, Medical Center Director. "We do our best to show them how much we appreciate and admire the sacrifices they have made."

"This year, we've planned some incredible programs that we think will be appealing to all ages, Veterans and non-Veterans," said William Browning, Chief of Volunteer and Community Relations. "**Vietnam Veteran and Ex-P.O.W. Digger O'Dell** will speak on his six-year-long imprisonment in a Vietnamese prison camp. He will share his remarkable story on Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at Noon in the medical center auditorium."

Browning also noted a few other events:

- Screening of the documentary, "**Travis – A Soldier's Story**"; the film portrays the life of Travis Mills, who lost portions of both arms and both legs as a result of an IED explosion during his third tour of duty as a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. Mills continues to overcome life's challenges

and has become an incredible advocate for Veterans and amputees. The film will be shown on Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at Noon in the medical center auditorium. Screening is co-sponsored by the Louisa St. Clair Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

- Screening of **“Flying for Freedom: Untold Stories of the Tuskegee Airmen”**; this is a biographical documentary of the African American servicemen of WWII. The film will be shown on Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. in the medical center auditorium. Screening is co-sponsored by the Detroit Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen.

While the National Salute kicks off in mid-February, Detroit-area residents have the chance to show their appreciation to Veterans all year by volunteering their time at the Detroit VA. No medical experience is necessary and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas on how they would like to give back using their unique skills. To find opportunities, you can call 313-576-3332 or go to <http://www.detroit.va.gov/giving>.

"We have thousands of volunteers here at the Detroit VA and they are a crucial part of our health care team. The National Salute program is a great way for people to learn more about helping the Veterans we serve here at the medical center," said Browning. "Visitors are often surprised at how varied our volunteer opportunities are."

Here are highlights of the 2016 National Salute to Veteran Patients Week at the Detroit VA:

#### **Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>**

- **Noon- 1:00 p.m.** – USAF Veteran and ex-POW Digger O’Dell will share his story as a prisoner of war at the infamous Hanoi Hilton during the Vietnam War (Medical Center Auditorium)

#### **Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup>**

- **9:00 a.m. - Noon** - UAW Region 1 Veterans Council will pass out goodies to Veterans outside of room B1290 and at the Domiciliary Transition Facility
- **11:00 a.m.** - UAW Region 1 will host BINGO in the Closed Ward and the Long Term Care area

#### **Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup>**

- **9:00 a.m.** - A Place for Mom Organization will distribute Valentines
- **9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.** - Veterans History Project in Atrium/Patient Learning Center
- **11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** - AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary Post #57 Valentine’s Luncheon & Bingo for Community Living Center
- **1:00 p.m.** - DAV chapter 19 to host BINGO in Community Living Center
- **1:00 p.m.** – Salute to Our Heroes to share Valentines with patients

#### **Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>**

- **9:00 a.m.** – American Legion Auxiliary will distribute gift bags to female patients
- **9:00 a.m.** - Michigan Math and Science Academy students visit patients
- **10:00 a.m.** - Vietnam Veterans Chapter 154 to pass out goodies to Veterans in clinic waiting areas
- **11:00 a.m – 1:00 p.m.** – Plymouth ELKS Ice Cream Social

#### **Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**

- **1:00 p.m.** – PLAV Auxiliary to host BINGO
- **7:00 p.m.** – Students from University of Michigan Red Cross Club will deliver Valentines

**Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup>**

- **9:00 a.m.** – Taylor Truman Junior ROTC visits
- **11:30a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**– Screening of the documentary “Travis- A Soldier’s Story” in medical center auditorium
- **1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.** – DAV chapter 19 to host BINGO in Community Living Center
- **2:00 – 4:00 p.m.** – Tuskegee Airmen to host screening of “Flying for Freedom: Untold Stories of the Tuskegee Airmen” in medical center auditorium

**Saturday, February 20<sup>th</sup>**

- **11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.** – Student group ‘Intojane’ to visit patients

For a complete schedule of events, please call (313) 576-3340. For more information about volunteer opportunities, to schedule a visit, or to make a donation, please contact the Detroit VA Healthcare System Voluntary Service, (313) 576-3332.

*Since 1939, the Detroit VA Healthcare System has been improving the health of the men and women who have so proudly served our nation. In 1996, the medical center moved from Allen Park, Michigan to the current location on John R. in Detroit. Known as one of the newer VA facilities in the country, we consider it our privilege to serve the health care needs of our Veterans. Services are available to more than 330,000 Veterans living in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, and St. Clair counties. This population represents approximately forty-four percent of the Veteran population in the lower peninsula of Michigan. For more information, visit <http://www.detroit.va.gov>.*

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