



365 DAYS
OF REDEFINING
HEALTH CARE EXCELLENCE

ANNUAL REPORT / 2011

VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

TO CARE FOR HIM.
HAVE BORNE THE
HIS WIDOW AND

AB

TO ALL OUR PARTNERS:

We have just wrapped up an incredible year here at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, and—as you will soon read—we made every moment count.

We spent the last 365 days caring wisely and compassionately. Cramming energy and innovation into each passing minute. Investing in tomorrow while embracing—and enriching—the here and now.

As the pages in this publication illustrate, our physical footprint grew in 2011—and so did our influence. From opening our state-of-the-art Ambulatory Care Center to hosting an unforgettable 31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games, we showed the city, the country and the world what VA care can be: **Personal. Impeccable. Progressive. Inspired.**

Veterans: Throughout it all, we made your health, your future and your happiness our focus. We dedicated each passing second to serving you—and we owned this mission.

2012, here we come.

Consider the bar enthusiastically raised.

Very respectfully,



Terry Gejig Wolf, FACHE
Director and Chief Executive Officer
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



WHO SHALL
BATTLE AND FOR
HIS ORPHAN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Director Wolf greets Sgt. Hunter
Howell II and Sgt. 1st Class Debra
Smallwood of the Army Reserve.





TAKE ONE MISSION. ONE VISION. ONE LIFE-
AWARDS EARNED, BRICKS LAID, LIVES SAVED,

365 DAYS OF EXCELLENCE
NAME OF CARING FOR

SIMPLY PUT: 2011 WAS



CHANGING EVENT. FACTOR IN COUNTLESS
DOORS OPENED...AND WHAT DO YOU GET?

REDEFINED—ALL IN THE
OUR NATION'S HEROES.

OUR YEAR TO SHINE.

DAY 003

01.03.11

VAPHS LAUNCHES A GROUNDBREAKING CIVILITY INITIATIVE TO ENHANCE KINDNESS AND MUTUAL RESPECT IN THE WORKPLACE.

As part of the initiative—which stems from years of dialogue between leadership and employees—more than 70 volunteer committee members meet each month, and the task force’s early successes include:

- + creating a system-wide civility policy to orient employees on expected behaviors and what to do if they encounter incivility in the workplace
- + developing a logo, slogan, official pledge and online presence to help brand the initiative
- + hosting a daylong event devoted to civility
- + applying the initiative’s principles to Director Wolf’s successful employee message board—a move which helps underscore the importance of civility in the workplace



DAY 013

01.13.11

Air Force Veteran Alisha Seelye gives birth to baby Chandler, marking the first time maternity care and labor are covered for a VAPHS patient under VA health benefits.

DAY 031

01.31.11

VAPHS draws more than 50 community partners together for a forum on ending homelessness among Veterans.

DAY 054

02.23.11

VAPHS Veterans send their first secure messages directly to providers thanks to enhancements in VA’s online personal health tool, My Health eVet.

2011

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11

JAN.

FEB.



Committee members gather at the Highland Drive campus—one of 68 civility meetings in 2011.

DAY 080

03.23.11



THE JOINT COMMISSION AWARDS FOUR VAPHS PROGRAMS WITH A THREE-YEAR ACCREDITATION.

An independent nonprofit that accredits health care organizations nationwide, The Joint Commission recognized VA Pittsburgh for best practices in:

- + alerting patients of the dangers of mixing smoking with medical oxygen
- + teaching frontline staff how to screen patients for behavioral health issues
- + performing suicide risk assessments throughout the health care system

“This accreditation shows that we are not simply meeting national and global health care standards—we are offering Veterans the very best care available,” says Jean Yavorski, an accreditation specialist for quality and patient safety at VA Pittsburgh.

DAY 056

02.25.11

VAPHS launches CREW (Civility, Respect and Engagement in the Workplace), a national initiative devoted to improving employee satisfaction and engagement.



DAY 070

03.11.11

VAPHS leaders, Veterans and community partners gather for the year’s first of three roundtable events to discuss VA care and news.

DAY 074

03.15.11

The American College of Surgeons recognizes VA Pittsburgh for its high-quality cancer care with a three-year reaccreditation as a Comprehensive Cancer Center.



MAR.





DAY 100

04.11.11

VAPHS joins eight other VA sites in a four-year study examining the effectiveness of using magnetic energy to stimulate areas of the brain associated with depression and other behavioral disorders.

Here, VA Pittsburgh psychiatrist Steven Forman manipulates a magnetic stimulator coil.

Student researchers test out HERL's new simulation equipment.



DAY
096

04.06.11



VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FINALIZES THE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR A \$27.6 MILLION RESEARCH OFFICE BUILDING.

The facility, located on the University Drive campus, will house some 250 research staff working on a full spectrum of clinical studies—everything from efforts to prevent the progression of kidney disease to understanding how VA can better serve new Veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder.

“This new facility represents our ongoing commitment to spearheading world-class research to improve the lives of our Nation’s heroes,” says Chief of Staff Ali Sonel, who emceed the building’s groundbreaking ceremony in October.

VA Pittsburgh’s Research and Development program is home to four nationally designated VA Research Centers of Excellence. In 2011 alone, the \$36.5 million program supported the work of 146 investigators and 350 studies.

THE NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Veterans Affairs Initiative to Prevent Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* Infection

Najiv Jain, M.D., Stephen K. Gralovic, M.D., M.P.H., Martin E. Evans, Meredith Amburn, M.H.A., Lorella A. Surprenell, V.S., J. Scott Ooms, Mark L. Rescher, M.D., Ron W. Lueberg, M.S., John A. Jernigan, Robert R. Mucen, M.D., LaToya L. Miller, M.P.H., and Gary A. Rosell

DAY 104

04.14.11

An article by VAPHS staff about preventing methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* infections appears in The New England Journal of Medicine.

DAY 109

04.19.11

VAPHS opens a 1,730-square-foot women’s health clinic at University Drive, satisfying a growing need to offer comprehensive primary care and specialty care—such as reproductive services and treatment for military sexual trauma—to female Veterans.

DAY 143

05.23.11

VAPHS opens a new \$9.2 million outpatient surgical suite—home to gastrointestinal care, colonoscopies and more—fulfilling phase one of a two-part project on the University Drive campus.

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DAY 186

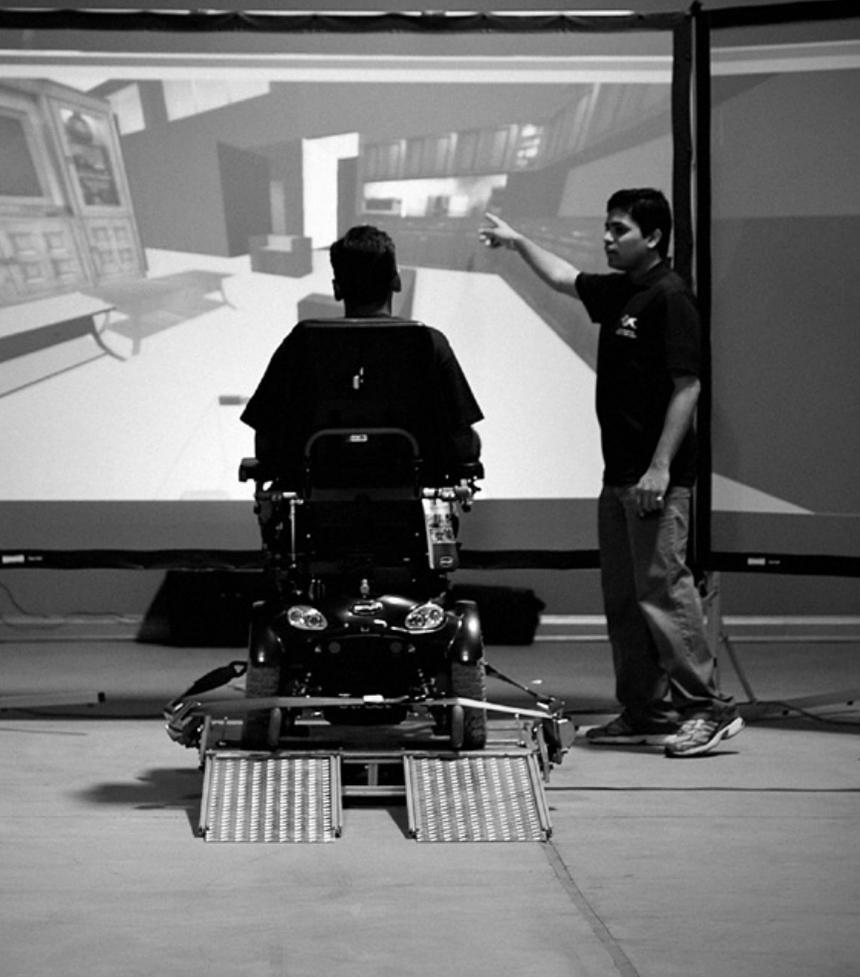
07.05.11

VAPHS'S HUMAN ENGINEERING AND RESEARCH LABORATORIES (HERL) MOVE INTO THEIR NEW HOME IN PITTSBURGH'S BAKERY SQUARE.

The space, at 26,000 square feet, is substantially larger than the team's old location on the Highland Drive campus and boasts an electronics lab and an impressive catalog of high-tech machinery.

For researcher Rory Cooper, who directs the laboratories, more room equals more opportunities for research central to focus on HERL's ongoing mission: To improve the lives of Veterans who rely on wheelchairs or assistive technologies.

"This new space took us from being one of the best teams in the world to being *the* best. We leapfrogged everybody else," says Cooper. "Now, we have a facility—and the people—that puts the VA at the forefront of rehabilitation engineering worldwide."



DAY 178

06.27.11

VAPHS earns a three-year reaccreditation from the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care.

DAY 181

06.30.11

VAPHS enrolls its first caregiver in a new national program offering support services to family members caring for seriously injured post-9/11 Veterans.

DAY 182

07.01.11

Sterling Medical Corporation secures a contract to staff two VAPHS community outpatient clinics in Pennsylvania's Fayette and Washington counties.



DAY 196

07.15.11

The new 13,500-square-foot Patriot Café—a \$3.1 million renovation project—opens on the University Drive campus.

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JUL.

DAY 213

08.01.11



WITH A HEARTWARMING HELPING OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT, VAPHS AND THE KEYSTONE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA KICK OFF THE 31ST NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES.

The weeklong, 17-sport event draws 567 athletes to Pittsburgh from throughout the United States, Great Britain and Puerto Rico and represents the culmination of three years of meticulous, Veteran-focused planning.

Longtime Games competitor and Army Veteran Orlando Perez is impressed. "Pittsburgh is raising the bar," he says. "What stands out to me most is the community and how they have really, really committed themselves to this Games."

Event highlights include:

- + kicking off the action with an event on the historic Roberto Clemente Bridge
- + an outpouring of generous volunteer support at 3,700 helpers strong

- + a special night of Pirates baseball at PNC Park with an on-field pregame salute to a stadium packed with Veterans
- + a Gateway Clipper ship cruise followed by a block party at Heinz Field, home of the Pittsburgh Steelers
- + an innovative meal purchase card system allowing athletes and volunteers to choose their winning diet each day
- + record-setting fundraising efforts totaling \$529,222
- + VA Pittsburgh's 28 athletes scoring 62 medals
- + local competitor Jerry "Bull" Baylor winning the prized Spirit of the Games award for epitomizing the qualities of a true champion

Key players cut the ribbon on VA Pittsburgh's Ambulatory Care Center.



DAY 222

08.10.11

Installation wraps on a \$473,000 digital radiography unit on the University Drive campus.



DAY 224

08.12.11

VAPHS assumes ownership of the \$77.9 million Consolidation Building at University Drive. The facility, which integrates primary care and behavioral health services, is slated to open to Veterans in spring 2012.

DAY 232

08.20.11

VA Pittsburgh partners with the community for Stand Down 2011, where 310 homeless Veterans receive aid, such as free food, clothing, legal advice and health care information.

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23

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DAY 273

09.30.11

THE VA PITTSBURGH COMMUNITY CELEBRATES THE OPENING OF A \$40.8 MILLION AMBULATORY CARE CENTER ON ITS H.J. HEINZ CAMPUS.

The facility houses a wide range of outpatient services, including integrated primary and behavioral health care as well as a variety of specialty services such as podiatry, orthotics, adult day care and spinal cord injury care. Innovative features include a 19-exam-room dental clinic with 3-D imaging capabilities and a laboratory for creating custom crowns, as well as an expansive physical rehabilitation clinic complete with a wound care treatment center and three-season courtyard for mobility training. The 117,000-square-foot center is part of a larger, multi-year construction initiative totaling nearly \$300 million.



DAY 238

08.26.11

VAPHS's outreach team sets up a booth at the Jason Aldean concert. Throughout the year, the group attends more than 65 community events and processes some 600 enrollment applications.

DAY 244

09.01.11

VAPHS receives VA's Let's Get Certified Campaign Silver Achievement Award for supporting speciality certification among nursing staff.



DAY 252

09.09.11

VAPHS's homeless programs earn a three-year accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

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SEP.





DAY 215

08.03.11

U.S. Paralympian Scott Severn from Caro, Mich., prepares to pass during a quad rugby match at the 31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games, a national event co-hosted by VAPHS.

The Army Veteran's team went on to win gold in the sport.

DAY 279

10.06.11

THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION HONORS VA PITTSBURGH WITH ITS GOLD PERFORMANCE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR EXCELLING IN HEART FAILURE CARE.

To win the award, VAPHS had to satisfy the association's rigorous patient care guidelines for two consecutive years. This achievement "helps prove that our patients receive some of the best care in America," says assistant nurse manager and cardiology team member Thomas Tear.

- Some of the many ways that VAPHS delivers top-notch coronary care include:
- + administering any test necessary—from X-rays to echocardiograms—to get an accurate picture of how a heart is pumping
 - + prescribing vital and potentially life-saving medications to help reduce a heart's workload
 - + offering Veterans free help in quitting tobacco—a move that can cut their risk of developing heart disease and blood clots
 - + providing guidance and education—as well as access to home telehealth services—to help patients improve their quality of life long-term



DAY 274

10.01.11

VAPHS enhances access to care by supporting a record 2,274 clinical video telehealth encounters in 2011.

DAY 274

10.01.11

One-third of all endocrine and diabetes consults are now completed electronically, reducing wait times and return trips for Veterans needing care.

DAY 276

10.03.11

VAPHS opens a new \$2.2 million preoperative and recovery unit for the outpatient surgical suite, wrapping up a two-part project on the University Drive campus.



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OCT.



Tear discusses heart failure care with Air Force Veteran Marshall Hall.

DAY
298

10.25.11



CREWS BREAK
GROUND ON A
FISHER HOUSE AT
UNIVERSITY DRIVE.

The 8,000-square-foot home will offer families a free place to stay while Veterans seek treatment and recover at the medical center.

“While our employees do everything that they can to fill a loved one’s shoes, nothing can replace the comfort of family,” says Director Terry Gerigk Wolf of the project. “This house enables loved ones to be there—truly be present—for our patients. It is one of the greatest gifts that we can give to our Nation’s heroes.”

After construction wraps in fall 2012, the fully furnished house will include 10 bedrooms with private bathrooms plus common spaces, such as a living room, library, kitchen and dining area.

More than 630 community members donated nearly \$720,000 to help fund the project, which stems from a unique partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Fisher House Foundation.

DAY 294
10.21.11

VA Secretary Eric Shinseki honors Director Wolf with a national award for promoting diversity and inclusion at VAPHS.



DAY 305
11.01.11

Nearly 300 employees attend Civility Day, the first event of its kind in VA, and commit to creating a kinder, more civil workplace.

DAY 305
11.01.11

VAPHS receives the Keystone Alliance for Performance Excellence Commitment Award for ongoing efforts to enhance organizational performance.

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NOV.

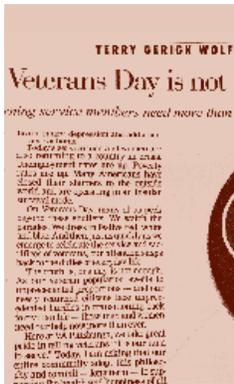
DAY 354

12.20.11

Surgical resident Allison Tobey watches attentively as otolaryngology surgeon Melonie Nance performs an ear, nose and throat procedure—VA Pittsburgh's 5,425th operating room case of 2011—at the University Drive campus.







DAY 313

11.09.11

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette runs Director Wolf's article rallying others to do more to recognize the needs of new Veterans (read it here: www.pittsburgh.va.gov/vetsday2011).



DAY 314

11.10.11

The Veterans Justice Outreach Program, which aims to connect justice-involved Veterans with VA resources, celebrates its second anniversary.

DAY 325

11.21.11

A new Patriot Canteen store, a \$1.1 million renovation project, opens and offers one-stop shopping on the H.J. Heinz campus.

DAY 339

12.05.11

A VAPHS team receives \$1.5 million to pilot a program that will increase surgical specialty care access for remote providers in VA Healthcare-VISN 4.

DAY 339

12.05.11

VAPHS implements Veriphy, a computer-based communication system that cuts provider wait times for radiology results—giving Veterans even faster access to answers and care.



DAY 321

11.17.11



THE FINE FOUNDATION AND THE JEWISH HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION NAME VAPHS'S CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE CARE TEAM THE WINNER OF ITS PRESTIGIOUS PLATINUM FINE AWARD.

The \$30,000 honor recognizes VA Pittsburgh's overwhelming success in treating Veterans diagnosed with congestive heart failure.

To take the top prize, VAPHS's 13-member team developed a special training booklet and tracking system to enhance patient education. They also instituted standardized discharge instructions to ensure that each Veteran is well-versed in their follow-up care.

"With these innovations in place, VA Pittsburgh's congestive heart failure patients now enjoy shorter hospital stays, and they are less likely to be readmitted relative to the average American heart failure patient," says cardiologist Matthew Suffoletto.

DAY 365

12.31.11

VAPHS HELPS A RECORD NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS MOVE OFF THE STREETS AND INTO PERMANENT HOUSING.

VA Pittsburgh's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program disperses all 180 allotted housing vouchers—up 25 from 2010—to help Veterans find stable housing. The vouchers, which stem from a unique partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA, "are one way we are working to fulfill VA Secretary Eric Shinseki's pledge to end homelessness by 2015," says HCHV Coordinator Mary Frances Pilarski.

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Thanks to the housing voucher program, Veteran Norman Sampson moved off the streets and into his very own apartment.



DAY 341

12.07.11

VAPHS receives a five-year reaccreditation from the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs, which promotes the highest safety and quality standards in human research.

DAY 343

12.09.11

VA Pittsburgh invests \$380,000 to upgrade its patient monitoring system.



DAY 362

12.28.11

Community Living Center staff host the year's 60th neighborhood association meeting, where Veterans offer feedback and ideas about their care.

05 06 07 08 09 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

AN UNFORGETTABLE YEAR

VA Pittsburgh's leaders select their top accomplishments of 2011



TERRY GERIGK WOLF
DIRECTOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

DAY 213
08.01.11

HOSTING THE OPENING CEREMONY FOR THE 31ST NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES.

"All of our efforts in the past few years came together and culminated in this one moment—one grand celebration focused on our Nation's heroes. It was so beautiful and emotional, and I was incredibly proud to be a leader of such a great event."



JOHN GENNARO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DAY 298
10.25.11

BREAKING GROUND TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION ON A FISHER HOUSE AT UNIVERSITY DRIVE.

Our community came together to enable family members to be with Veterans while they receive world-class care at VAPHS. The generosity of many—the Fisher House Foundation, Veterans service organizations, congressional and local stakeholders, and our employees—made this milestone event possible."



IRA RICHMOND
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF PATIENT CARE SERVICES

DAY 240
08.28.11

HIRING A CHAPLAIN TO WORK EXCLUSIVELY WITH OUR HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE TEAM.

"Spiritual issues and concerns become paramount for many Veterans receiving hospice and palliative care. Now, VAPHS has a specially trained chaplain to walk with these men and women—and their families—into this last battle."



ALI SONEL
CHIEF OF STAFF

DAY 279
10.06.11

WINNING THE GOLD PERFORMANCE ACHIEVEMENT AWARD IN HEART FAILURE CARE.

"Delivering the highest-quality care to Veterans is my greatest priority. We are on a mission to take 'failure' out of heart failure, and our hard work is paying off. VAPHS is one of only two VA facilities that the American Heart Association has recognized with this award."



LOVETTA FORD
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

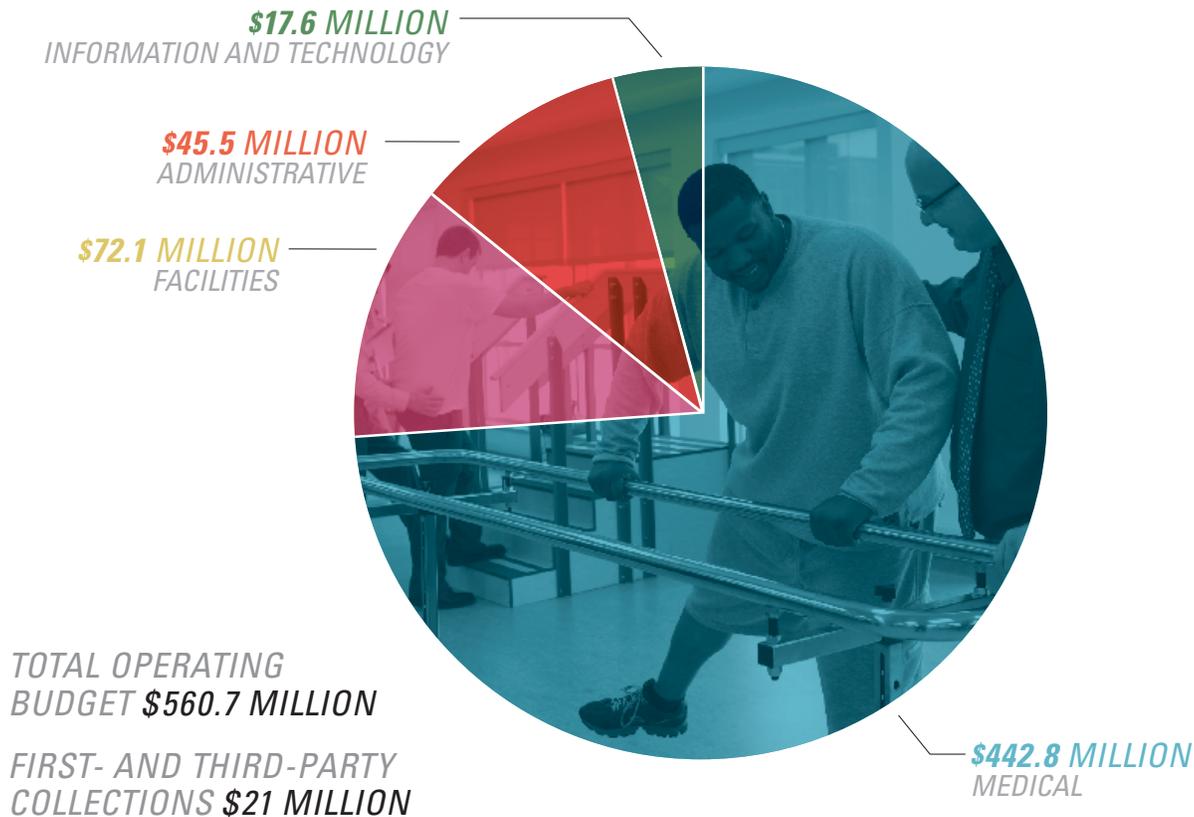
DAY 119
04.29.11

GAINING RECOGNITION FOR SUPERIOR SAFETY PRACTICES IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT.

"As part of our ongoing commitment to employee health and safety, we developed a training program that garnered prestigious best practice honors from Booz Allen Hamilton, one of the country's leading technology and strategy consulting firms."

365 DAYS OF EXCELLENCE

2011 **FINANCIAL** SNAPSHOT



2011 **OPERATIONAL** SNAPSHOT

64,635
VETERANS
SERVED

590,658
OUTPATIENT
VISITS

5,560
SURGERIES
PERFORMED

3,064
EMPLOYEES

163
PHYSICIANS

800
NURSES

332
NEW
EMPLOYEES
HIRED

831
E-CONSULTS
COMPLETED

583
BEDS

358
at H.J. Heinz

146
at University
Drive

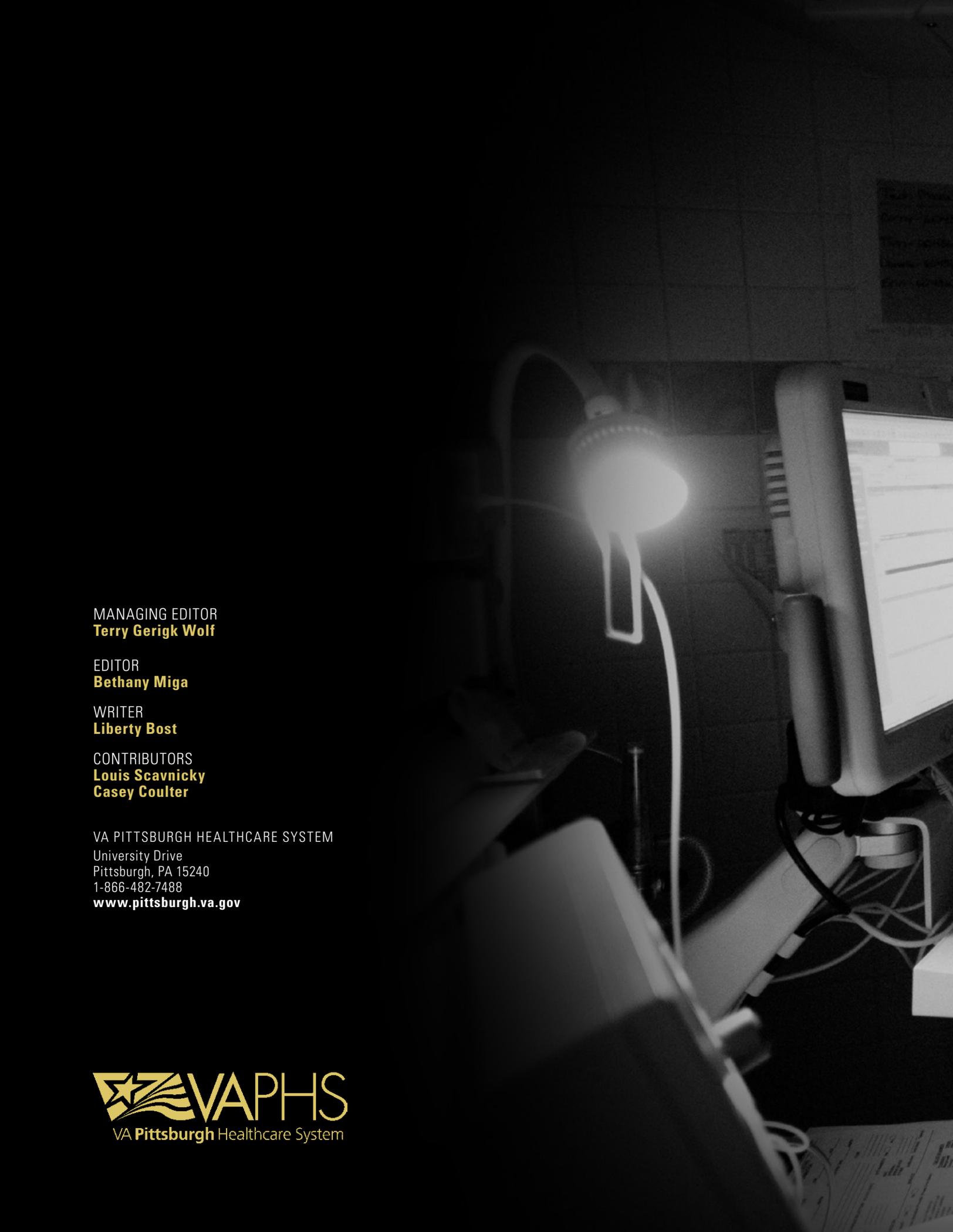
79
at Highland
Drive

1,395
MEDICAL
STUDENTS
TRAINED

42
LIVER
TRANSPLANTS
PERFORMED

25
KIDNEY
TRANSPLANTS
PERFORMED

5,212
TELEHEALTH
SESSIONS
CONDUCTED



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