

VA works to attract more veterans to home-based care

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

Many veterans don't enroll for health care with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In one survey of aging Utah veterans, "70 percent had never accessed the VA," said Kris Patterson-Fowler, chief of Home & Community Based Services at the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center in Walla Walla.

That's a head scratcher and something the VA seeks to change with an outreach effort called Cover to Cover. The VA Salt Lake City Health Care System in Utah launched a pilot in 2013 and now the Walla Walla center has joined the program, along with VA facilities in four other states. The program especially targets older veterans who need home-based health services.

This isn't an addition of services. There are already a smorgasbord of home-based programs — 13 in all — including access to home health aides, respite care, hospice, caregiver support, adult day care, palliative care and home-based primary care.

However, many veterans don't use those programs or any other VA services.

"There are misunderstandings," Patterson-Fowler said. "Some veterans believe that if they didn't serve in conflict, if they weren't in war, they are not eligible for service."

With the Cover to Cover program, the VA relies on community agencies that serve the aging population to spread the word to veterans that they are missing out.

"They ask the question, 'Are you a veteran?'" Patterson-Fowler said.

If the veteran says yes, he or she is told of the array of VA services on tap and given information about eligibility. If they wish to enroll, they are fast-tracked into the system.

Patterson-Fowler said her own father, a Vietnam veteran, didn't enroll into the VA system until the very end of his life. The retired commercial airline pilot had considered VA health care as something for veterans who didn't have insurance, said his daughter.

As he lay dying of cancer at the Kadlec Medical Center in 2008, he finally decided to enroll.

"When my dad was dying, he had all his private insurance and his Medicare benefits," said Patterson-Fowler, who has worked at the Walla Walla VA for 13 years. "He'd never tapped in to VA resources. We were talking about it. He really couldn't go home to Wallowa Lake to die. He really needed inpatient care. We expedited the enrollment process."

Her father was moved to the Walla Walla VA two weeks before his death — it had an inpatient unit then — and he received end-of-life care.

About 18,000 veterans are enrolled in the Walla Walla

VA's service area, which includes Umatilla County.

Eva Morales, administrative officer for Walla Walla's Home and Community Based Services programs, is helping implement Cover to Cover. Morales, a veteran, said it took her years to actually enroll even though she worked for the VA.

"As a veteran myself, I was one of those 70 percent up until a few months ago," she said. "One day I just decided I should."

She knows there are plenty of others out there who could benefit.

"I have friends in the community who think it's too much of a hassle or they don't think they deserve it," Morales said. "Or they're afraid of the paperwork — they think it's a monster."

She said the enrollment process is increasingly more user friendly.

"With the new online system, it's relatively easy," she said. "It's still a task, but it's not that difficult."

Brian Westfield, director of the Walla Walla VA, said the in-home programs such as Home Based Primary Care keep veterans in their homes and away from the emergency room. Technology plays a part.

"We can put an apparatus in their home on their phone system. On a daily basis, it'll start beeping at them. They'll need to go to the phone and answer questions such as 'What is your weight today?'"

and "Any difficulty breathing today?"

He said registered nurses who monitor the responses will call the veteran if something isn't quite right.

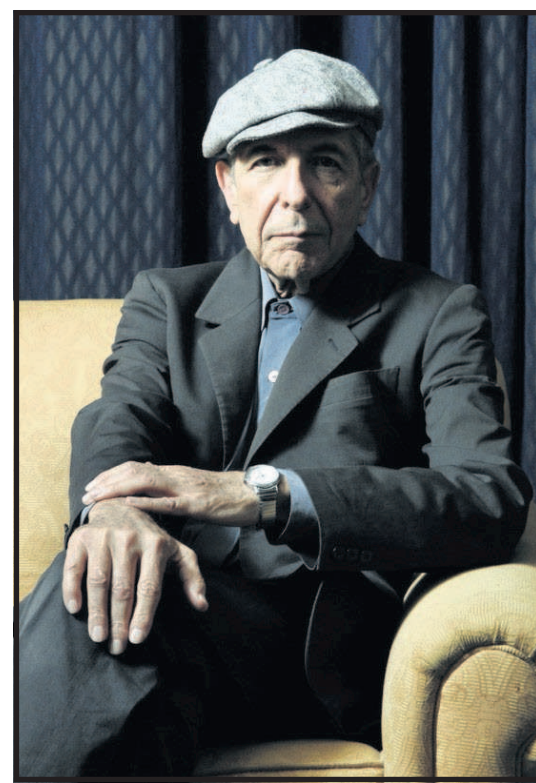
Some VA services aren't offered by Medicare or private insurance.

"One of the very unique things that VA is able to offer that Medicare doesn't provide and that hospice isn't able to do is that when an individual is receiving in-home hospice care and care rises to a point where they are no longer safe to be in the home, the VA pays for end-of-life care in a nursing home," Patterson-Fowler said.

The Walla Walla VA contracts with nine nursing homes in Hermiston (Regency), Lewiston, La Grande, Walla Walla, Tri-Cities and Yakima and is looking at establishing new contracts in Pendleton, Selah and Colfax.

Another program — the Homemaker Home Health Aide program — allows for a non-skilled caregiver to go in and help veterans with such activities as toileting, showering, dressing, grooming, laundry, meal prep and transportation to medical appointments.

"That allows them to stay in their home," Patterson-Fowler said. "Private insurances usually do not cover this. Medicare doesn't cover that service either. This is a unique service the VA can offer to our enrolled veterans."



Aaron Harris/The Canadian Press via AP, File

In this 2006 file photo, Leonard Cohen poses in Toronto. Cohen, the gravelly-voiced Canadian singer-songwriter of hits like "Hallelujah" and "Bird on a Wire," has died, his management said Thursday.

Leonard Cohen dead at age 82

By ANDREW DALTON and ROBERT JABLON
Associated Press

YouTube videos, reality shows and high school choir concerts.

LOS ANGELES — Leonard Cohen, the baritone-voiced Canadian singer-songwriter who seamlessly blended spirituality and sexuality in songs like "Hallelujah," "Suzanne" and "Bird on a Wire," has died at age 82, his son said Thursday.

"My father passed away peacefully at his home in Los Angeles," Adam Cohen said in a statement. "He was writing up until his last moments with his unique brand of humor."

Cohen, also renowned as a poet, novelist and aspiring Zen monk, blended folk music with a darker, sexual edge that won him fans around the world and among fellow musicians like Bob Dylan and R.E.M.

He remained wildly popular into his 80s, when his deep voice plunged to seriously gravelly depths. He toured as recently as earlier this year and released a new album, "You Want It Darker," just last month. Adam Cohen said his father died with the knowledge that he'd made one of his greatest records.

Cohen's "Hallelujah" went from cult hit to modern standard, now an unending staple on movies, TV shows,

Cohen, who once said he got into music because he couldn't make a living as a poet, rose to prominence during the folk music revival of the 1960s. During those years, he traveled the folk circuit with younger artists like Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Joan Baez and others.

His contemporary Kris Kristofferson once said that he wanted the opening lines to Cohen's "Bird on a Wire," on his tombstone.

They would be a perfect epitaph for Cohen himself: "Like a bird on a wire, like a drunk in a midnight choir, I have tried in my way to be free."

"Hamilton" star and creator Lin-Manuel Miranda quoted those lines on Twitter Thursday night as one of many paying tribute to Cohen.

Judy Collins, who had a hit with Cohen's song "Suzanne," once recalled he was so shy that he quit halfway through his first public performance of it and she had to coax him back onstage.

Like Dylan, his voice lacked polish but rang with emotion.

In 2016, Dylan told The New Yorker that Cohen's best work was "deep and truthful, 'multidimensional' and 'surprisingly melodic.'"



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Veteran Tom Curtiss of Pendleton looks at Pilot Rock FFA students while entering the gymnasium for a Veterans Day Ceremony on Thursday at Pilot Rock High School.

VETERANS: High school band, chorus performed

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and family, and carry out the nation's missions in places such as the desert of Afghanistan, where temperatures reach 120 degrees.

Oregon National Guard soldiers served in military conflicts going back to World War II, and he said the state has one of the nation's highest deployment rates. The Chinook helicopter unit out of Pendleton, for example, has deployed three times in 15 years.

Ford also thanked the students and people of Pilot Rock for the ceremony. He said the show of appreciation means a great deal and validates that sacrifice.

The concert showcased performances from the high school band and chorus, as well as kindergarten and grade school classes. The primary students delivered "God Bless America," "You're a Grand Old Flag" and more. And the band and chorus took on more challenging fare, including "Homeward Bound" by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and the "Armed Forces Salute."

Bob Deno, Pilot Rock city councilor, attended. He served in the U.S. Navy and recalled a unique moment of his service from 1958 when he flew around the world — backward.

Deno was part of a crew on a Douglas A3D bomber that took off from the deck



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Vietnam veteran Bob Deno sings the National Anthem along with his wife, Rose, during a Veterans Day ceremony at Pilot Rock High School.

of the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Lexington about 152 miles off the coast of Guam for a reconnaissance mission.

"I was busy with the navigation and sat back-to-back with the pilot," Deno said. "I was too busy to move."

The jet bomber returned 190 miles from Guam and required 11 "stops" to re-fuel while in flight.

"My heart stopped every time we did it," Deno said.

Deno said he faced backward the whole way and Admiral Arleigh Burke submitted paperwork to Guinness World Records for the achievement.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Veterans Tom Tangney, left, and Paul Ellis talk about the famous Korean War era pack horse, Reckless, after eating breakfast Thursday at Pilot Rock High School.

DOCK: Columbia River tribes objected to the terminal

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setting a legal precedent for future development.

"This dock site and one adjacent are the only two remaining dock sites for major industrial development in the John Day Pool," said Gary Neal, general manager at the Port of Morrow. "Without this potential dock site, our ability to create jobs, grow economic development and attract new businesses is severely curtailed."

The dock was slated to be built along a stretch of river where Neal said the port bought land from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1967, following construction of the John Day Dam. The now-flooded land was supposed to be used for "port or industrial facilities," under the terms of the purchase.

The port has already invested more than \$50 million at the site, including a rail loop designed so that trains could transfer their shipments. Neal said he believes the terminal was rejected due to the political pressure surrounding coal exports.

"We hope to continue into the future to develop our waterfront as it was intended to be used," he said.

Columbia River tribes objected to the terminal, arguing it would inter-

fere with their fishing rights guaranteed by the Treaty of 1855. Chuck Sams, spokesman for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, said they are not opposed to economic development as long as it doesn't violate treaty rights.

"It just depends on the type of commodity they're transporting, and the infrastructure that needs to be put in place," Sams said.

The CTUIR does not approve of the Columbia River as a corridor for dangerous fossil fuels, Sams said. He added the tribes look forward to working together with the port in the future.

Lighthouse Resources announced in October it would no longer pursue the Morrow Pacific Project. The company is currently exporting coal through Westshore Terminals in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Bill Ryan, deputy director of operations for the Department of State Lands, said the agency is pleased to have the legal issues resolved. Though an unusual circumstance, he said the agreement reached with the port, tribes and others is appropriate for the situation.

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