

# Annual Report to the Community



## VA EASTERN KANSAS

Colmery-O'Neil  
VA Medical Center  
Topeka, Kansas

Dwight D. Eisenhower  
VA Medical Center  
Leavenworth, Kansas



**VA**

U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



*Integrity*  
*Commitment*  
*Advocacy*  
*Respect*  
*Excellence*

## VA Eastern Kansas

### Mission

To provide accessible, courteous, comprehensive, and quality health care to veterans in an environment of excellence.

### Vision

- Promote the health and wellness of the veteran population we serve.
- Achieve distinction as a quality patient-driven health care system that provides the full range of medical, behavioral, rehabilitative, and preventive services to veterans and others.
- Improve our clinical care through research, education, and creative administration to become a model for the future.





## Director's Message

Dear Friends,

First, let me thank each of you for your support of VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System (VAEKHCS) in achieving many of our goals this year in taking care of our nations' heroes who have willingly sacrificed their time and shared their talents for our Freedoms. The Price of Freedom is visible here—throughout the halls of Leavenworth and Topeka hospitals and within our nine Community Clinics. It is our privilege to serve these men and women and to partner with you in this most noble service.

For VAEKHCS, 2016 focused on access to quality health care. MyVA Access introduced a new transformational initiative placing veterans more in control of how and where they receive health care. MyVA Access is a declaration from VHA employees to the veterans they care for; a call to action and the reaffirmation of the Core Mission: *"to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."*

We have provided increased access through advanced planning. We have expanded the number of appointments, become more efficient in clinic utilization,

increased staffing, added more clinic days, increased provider agreements, expanded telehealth and many other strategies. We consistently complete 95 percent of our appointments within 30 days.

Additionally, VAEKHCS has consistently achieved 4-Star ratings at both Topeka and Leavenworth campuses under VA's Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) evaluation system. This continues with our sound focus around our key driver of providing high quality and safe patient care to all our veterans through quality measures.

I am proud to share with you this report on our achievements. They are, after all, not just the successes of our dedicated staff, but also of the community, that plays a vital role in supporting our veterans. These achievements reflect the tremendous dedication of over 1700 employees. It is an honor for me to lead them. Together, with them, we are committed to building stronger relationships with you; our supporters and community partners. I thank you for this partnership and look forward to affecting an even brighter future for our VA in the years to come.

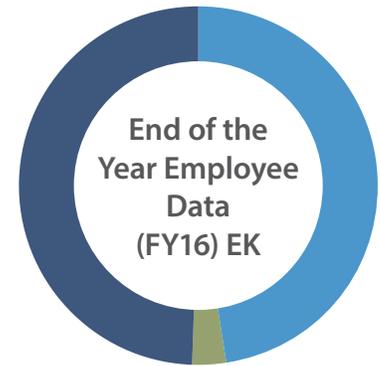
Sincerely,

*Rudy*

A. Rudy Klopfer, FACHE  
Director, VAEKHCS

# Health Care System Goals

VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System goals are developed from the Blueprint for Excellence (BPFE) and the VISN 15 Link to Excellence. The BPFE serves as the strategic plan for the Veterans Health Administration. VISN 15 implements the BPFE at the operational level.



|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Employees             | 1844    |
| Cumulative FTEE       | 1776.75 |
| Avg Onboard Physician | 105.1   |

## GOAL 1

**Enhance Communication with Internal and External Stakeholders.** Eastern Kansas Health Care System (EKHCS) will expand and disseminate information in all forums and as frequent as possible through posters, electronic boards, web sites, Twitter, Facebook, face to face meetings, and town hall forums.

## GOAL 2

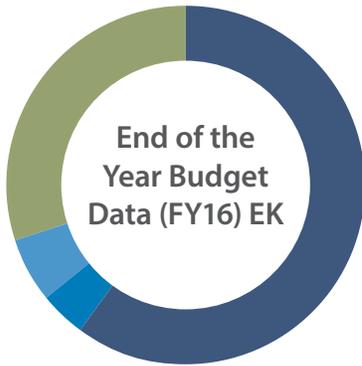
**Improve Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT) Performance** EKHCS PACT Oversight Committee will evaluate gaps, initiate compliance strategies and report compliance to Executive Leadership Team (ELT) monthly, to include rural health clinics.

## GOAL 3

**Expand Virtual Care** Virtual Care is the delivery of health-related services and information via a myriad of technology solutions. Virtual Health includes the use of telehealth services such as secure messaging, pharmacy refills, etc. The goal is to expand TeleDermatology, TeleRetinal and TeleMental Health as a mode of psychotherapy.

## GOAL 4

**Deliver a 5 Star Health Care Experience.** Utilize the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) reports published quarterly to assess areas and implement plans of improvement. Of the 28 measures in the SAIL model, 14 relate to inpatient care quality, 8 outpatient care quality, and 6 cover overall care quality.



**OPERATING EXPENSES**

|                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Salary and Benefits            | \$188,102,502.00        |
| Other Expenses/Supplies        | \$93,522,709.00         |
| Consolidated Mail-out Pharmacy | \$18,388,521.00         |
| Drugs and Medicine             | \$12,257,836.00         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>\$312,271,568.00</b> |

**GOAL 4A**

Ensure access to healthcare is convenient and effective for all veterans with particular interest to rural veterans.

Maximize use and participation in the Choice program and Care in the Community for all eligible veterans. Build relationships with providers to enhance the veterans' experience.

**GOAL 5**

Initiate a 10-year Rural Health Clinic (RHC) Plan.

Plan shall identify specialty and virtual services needed to serve our veteran population in outreach communities.

**GOAL 6**

Engage Employees in Work Environment

Develop action plans in all Service Lines to address issues identified in the All Employee Survey (AES). Psychological Safety will be a focus for workgroup supervisors whose scores fall below a 3.5 rating. Senior Leaders will attend Service Line staff meetings to exchange information.

**GOAL 6A**

Implement LEAN (White Belt) Training for all employees during FY16.

A Lean culture involves improvement and ownership at all levels of the organization. Lean streamlines processes by eliminating waste, while continuing the delivery of high quality care.

# We continue to Excel

## Patient Safety Gold Cornerstone Award

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The VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System is pleased to announce that our facility has received the 2016 VA National Center for Patient Safety Gold Cornerstone Recognition Award. For the 7th year in a row, Eastern Kansas has obtained the highest recognition in patient safety. This award is given based on staff-reported adverse events and close calls, as well as the number and quality of root cause analyses conducted throughout the year. The award is intended to promote a culture of safety throughout the organization, as well as to encourage the identification of systems-based improvement opportunities.



## CARF

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### VA Eastern Kansas Receives “CARF Gold Seal” and 3 Year Accreditation

The VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System is pleased to announce we received accreditation in 2016 for a period of three years for our mental health residential programs and services. The latest accreditation survey was the best in the history of VA Eastern Kansas resulting in ZERO findings. Surveyors from the international accrediting body, CARF (the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities), made mention that the VA Eastern Kansas survey is also the first one they have completed in which zero findings were recorded. By pursuing and achieving accreditation, VA Eastern Kansas has demonstrated that it meets international standards for quality and is committed to pursuing excellence.



## Joint Commission

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Last year, VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System earned The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval® for accreditation after an exhaustive evaluation process.

As an independent, not-for-profit organization, The Joint Commission (JC) accredits and certifies nearly 21,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. Joint Commission accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization’s commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

To earn the Gold Seal of Approval, all facilities within the VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System, were subject to a rigorous on-site survey August 24-26. A team of nine Joint Commission expert surveyors evaluated the facilities for compliance within the highest standards of care throughout the Hospital, Home-Based Care, Behavioral Health, Long-Term Care, and Ambulatory Care and Rural Clinics. The Surveyors were positive in their comments of VA Eastern Kansas staff highlighting the great team of employees who live the mission every day. The Director of VA Eastern Kansas, Mr. Rudy Klopfer, shared with his staff that “Each employee played a part in the preparation and execution of a great JC Visit.”

The Surveyors mentioned many employees by name and the great work being done in: Sharing information, explaining processes followed in the provision of care, and expertise in individual positions. The Lead Surveyor stated, “Everyone who works here at VA Eastern Kansas is engaged and loves and respects veterans. It is felt and it is real.”



## SECVA Visits VA Eastern Kansas

2016 had our Secretary of the VA, Robert McDonald, visit with tremendous recognition to our employees and veterans.

No organization can succeed without values to match its mission. Our mission, as the Department of Veterans Affairs, is to care for those “who shall have borne the battle and for their families and survivors.” Our core values focus our minds on our mission of caring and thereby guide our actions toward service to others.

These values — Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence — define our culture and strengthen our dedication to those we serve. They provide a baseline for the standards of behavior expected of all VA employees. They remind us and others that “I CARE”.

# A letter

*from the family of our late friend and veteran hero, Mr. Ben Lohman.*

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Over five years, I had the privilege of taking part in being a caretaker for my father-in-law, Benedict L. Lohman Sr., who recently passed away in June of 2016. As we researched the right care facility for Ben, those involved came to the realization that finding the right place is nearly impossible. We tried about four or five facilities all ending with disastrous circumstances due to the staff not being equipped to handle someone with Alzheimer's and Dementia. Ben was a veteran of the United States Marine Corps and was a POW in Japan during WW II for a little over three and a half years.

There seems to be many aspects to this disease that I can't even explain but one thing I do know, it takes a very exceptional individual to pull off the proper care for these patients. It seemed to us that it could be accomplished with the right training from the right individuals. As family and caregivers, we learned what we could about the disease and how to handle people with this disease that made our stay with Ben and his wife, more enjoyable for us and them. After his wife Frieda passed, Ben progressed into the disease quickly. He was 96 years old at the time and with PTSD as part of the added concerns, we really struggled with finding the right fit. Some facilities could care for him to a certain point and then as incidents began to happen, we seemed on a tour of one facility after another which isn't good for these patients either.

We would be called to a facility because "your father is not listening to us" only for us to arrive and see him sitting in a hallway on the floor surrounded by nurses who would not let him leave the area. I would give him a chocolate donut and we would go to his room and talk until he fell asleep. I never understood how a facility that claimed to "deal with Alzheimer



*Every family deserves care.*

patients all the time" couldn't understand it wasn't that *he* didn't understand *them*, and being combative with him would cause the same reaction in return. I don't have a medical background but even I knew enough to know that wherever he was, I went with it and all turned out fine. I could go on with other stories but the main reason for my letter is to brag about a unit at the VA Eastern Kansas in Topeka VA that completely understands and lives the way of treating patients, and veterans in particular, that have Alzheimer's, Dementia, and PTSD and other behavioral diseases.

Unit 4B is led by Dr. Maritza Buenaver and her staff of angels. This unit should be duplicated all across America and be available to each and every veteran who suffers from any type of behavioral issues. They made it a point to treat every patient they had in their wing as if they were their own relative. One could not only see the love and passion they had for their jobs, but you could feel it in the atmosphere. Ben was sent to Topeka from the VA in Kansas

City on his birthday 12/31/2015, only due to a lack of rooms available in the Kansas City facility. I would like to add that the Kansas City VA did a great job with taking care of Ben also. A request was made for him to remain in Topeka until his passing 6 months later and though it wasn't around the corner, due to the tremendous care he was getting, I personally was very happy to make the drive to visit Ben. My wife and I cried the day we learned that he would be able to stay with this unit until he passed. The ladies and gentlemen of Unit 4B wear the love of their jobs on the outside. We knew early on that we have been led to the best of the best in what they do and I can only hope that our government finds a way for this to be used as a standard treatment course for behavioral matters with our veterans. Every family deserves to have their loved ones cared for as Unit 4B did for Ben and his family, and myself.

Unless you are fortunate enough to experience it, I would say it is very hard to put into a few words what the VA Eastern Kansas and Dr. Buenaver have done and mastered for many families. I believe we need to find a way to reach out to other facilities caring for other loved ones, maybe even your own, and spread the VA Eastern Kansas and Unit 4B way of treating patients to them all. I still get sad today thinking of what Ben lived through all his life, and the struggles we faced until that day they decided to send him to Topeka, Kansas and Unit 4B. This band of ANGELS will always be a special part of our life for the care, understanding, and love they gave Benedict L. Lohman, Sr. They are soldiers of a different kind and we love each and every one of them. We appreciate them and I will always consider them a friend and a huge part of my family.

Caregivers like Unit 4B are rare,  
but they don't have to be!!

With sincere thought and love for all of Unit 4B  
and the VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System,

*David and Teri Seibold*

*No reach  
too far.*

“ I was in a deep, dark hole until a hand reached in to pull me out and saved my life. That 'hand' was VA Eastern Kansas. ”

– Michael Fellman





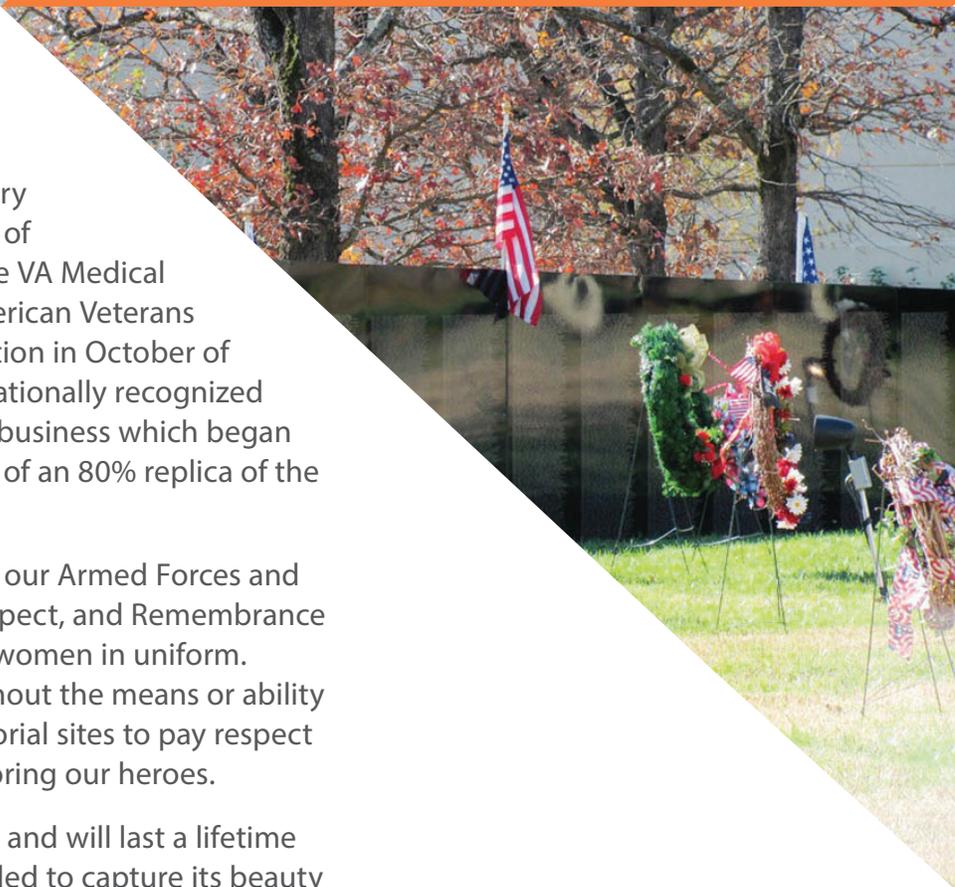
*Honor, Respect,  
and Remembrance*

## Vietnam Wall

In celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War the Community of Leavenworth, in association with the VA Medical Center and others, brought the American Veterans Traveling Tribute (AVTT) to our location in October of 2016. The AVTT is a multi-division nationally recognized veteran owned and operated small business which began through the improved construction of an 80% replica of the Traveling Vietnam Wall.

AVTT prides itself on the support of our Armed Forces and continues the mission of Honor, Respect, and Remembrance for our fallen and serving men and women in uniform. Additionally, AVTT allows those without the means or ability to travel to our great national memorial sites to pay respect and share in the experience of honoring our heroes.

The event saw nearly 10,000 visitors and will last a lifetime in the memories of those who traveled to capture its beauty and purpose.

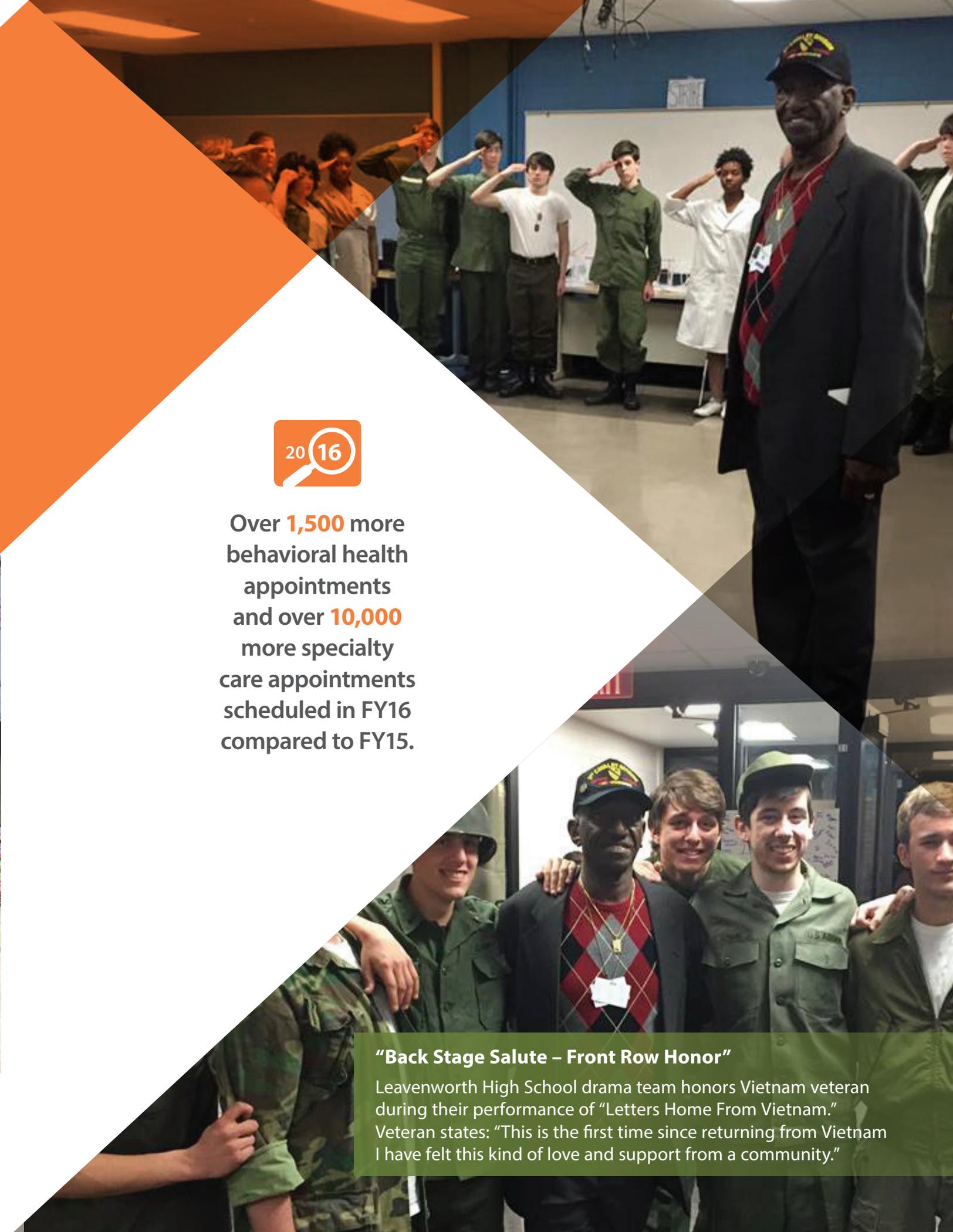




Over **1,500** more behavioral health appointments and over **10,000** more specialty care appointments scheduled in FY16 compared to FY15.

### **“Back Stage Salute – Front Row Honor”**

Leavenworth High School drama team honors Vietnam veteran during their performance of “Letters Home From Vietnam.” Veteran states: “This is the first time since returning from Vietnam I have felt this kind of love and support from a community.”





## Sunflower Memory Center *and* Cottonwood Community Living Centers

We are very proud of our staff who give their utmost love and time to our veterans who have Dementia. At our VA, there is a dementia steering committee which is composed of an interdisciplinary team of VA staff whose main passion is caring for the elderly population. The focus of care at the Sunflower Memory Center (6-1D) and Cottonwood CLC (4-2B) is a non-pharmacological approach to behaviors associated with dementia with the goal to provide an environment that is like home. The Sunflower Memory Center had its official ribbon cutting in February of 2016 and though opened during the cold days of February, has a courtyard for gardening, picnics, watching nature life, enjoying the sun and relaxing or walking around to help improve Vitamin D levels during our warmer days.

When a veteran comes to the Sunflower Memory Center or the Cottonwood CLC, a "Getting to Know Me" note is completed to provide a way for staff to understand the veteran now and get to know what they were like in their youth. The gift of having a large and integrated team which includes a Geriatrician, a Geriatric Psychiatrist, a Hospice and Palliative Medicine physician, a Geriatric NeuroPsychologist and very passionate nursing staff, has made caring for the veterans who have dementia a success at the Topeka VA.



## University of St. Mary

Professor from the University of St. Mary writes: "It has been an honor for USM DPT Program and the Leavenworth VA to join forces and allow the students to learn while gaining experience interacting with a unique patient population while serving their community through fall and balance prevention screens as well as a community health fair. I look forward to future endeavors of servant leadership that allow us to give back to our veterans."

DPT Director of Clinical Education at St. Mary writes: "The Stefani Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at the University of Saint Mary feels blessed to have an academic partnership with the VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System to aid in the education of our students. Having high quality clinical partners to team with in preparing future physical therapists is essential in preparing our students to

help others. The unique opportunity our students participate in at the VA offers our students a new perspective into the world of rehab. The variety of individual challenges and chronic pains each patient at the VA presents with combined with a rich history of service allows our students to truly appreciate both the patients they work with and the experience gained from the VA System. It genuinely is a one of a kind experience from which they learn a tremendous amount."

Ryan, a senior in the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program at St. Mary writes: "Completing a clinical rotation at VA Eastern Kansas was a fantastic learning experience. Being able to help those who have given so much to our country truly encompasses the idea of 'giving back.' It allows me to go home at night and be proud of what I do for a living."



## Classroom 2 Career

VA Eastern Kansas is proud to host the next generation of servant leaders during the annual Classroom 2 Career event. Giving them a glimpse of not only the largest integrated health care system in the country, but also showing them what taking care of America's Heroes looks like.



## The Garden – Growth and Healing

### VA Eastern Kansas uses gardening as therapy

Lauren, a 27-year-old Army veteran, agreed that a little sweating in the garden is the perfect way to release tension and anxiety. “I can get my hands in the dirt and work off some of the steam that builds up inside me,” she said. “Gardening is very therapeutic for me. You take a seedling, something so small and tiny, and then you end up with something so great. It’s not just food for your body. It’s nourishment for your soul.”

Aggravation is something Angela, a 42-year-old Marine Corps veteran, is learning to leave behind. “It’s hard sometimes to relax my mind,” she admitted, “but gardening allows me to express myself in a way that’s peaceful. I can’t change the things that have happened to me, but I’m learning that I can change how I respond to them. Now, instead of focusing on my trauma, I focus on nurturing something. It reminds me that I’m still a person.”



# PGA HOPE

The Midwest Section PGA Foundation and PGA REACH Kick-Off Midwest PGA HOPE (Helping Our Patriots Everywhere). VA Eastern Kansas linked up with Tom Watson to launch this initiative in Kansas City paving the way for free golf clinics for veterans with disabilities.



**355,137** appointments were completed in FY16 for **33,450** unique veterans in VA Eastern Kansas.





## MMA Fighter

MMA Fighter Rome Lindsay gives back to veterans. He desires his fight inside the ring to represent our veterans fight throughout their military careers. Rome provided free tickets to our veterans and took VA Eastern Kansas inside the ring with him by wearing our new logo on his shorts and banner. We are proud to call you our neighbor, Rome.



## Equine Assisted Therapy

The 142nd Kentucky Derby was run in 2016 at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Kentucky. But a Run for the Roses also took place in Leavenworth Kansas. VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System introduced an equine therapy program for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. There is no actual horseback riding involved in the Equine Assisted Psychotherapy program. Instead, patients are encouraged to interact with horses while working on a special goal or program. "I think the time is right for a lot more alternative treatments to come to the forefront," said Monica Shipp, a clinical social worker at the VA who was instrumental in starting the program in Leavenworth. The equine program began in 2012 in Topeka as an alternative treatment for veterans with PTSD and approximately 125 veterans have participated in the program since.

In Fall of 2015, the program began at the Eisenhower VA Medical Center in Leavenworth. The first group of veterans

completed the program in Leavenworth in 2016, including Tom, a Navy airman who served 18 months in Vietnam, who said he suffers from PTSD. "When the horse therapy came up, I decided to try it and see if it would give me some kind of stress relief," Tom said.

At first he was skeptical of the benefits of the therapy. "But every time I went, I got a little better," he said. "I got a little more trust in the horses, more trust in the people I was surrounded by. They (the horses) consoled me," he said. "These horses maybe understand me better than some people. This works for me."

Program specialists say equine therapy is effective in helping veterans deal with stress. "If you ask any of the veterans, they will say that the therapists in the (equine) sessions are not us," said Marci Bilynsky, a suicide prevention case manager in Topeka who was instrumental in beginning the program. "The therapists are the horses."



## Volunteer Services

- Tonganoxie KS Family honors the memory of their father, lost to cancer, by hosting a benefit softball classic. Proceeds were donated to Mr. Donald, a veteran battling cancer, and an Eagle Scout Gazebo Project to launch in spring 2017 on the Leavenworth Campus
- Voluntary Service conducted National Salute to Veteran Patients Week during February 2016. During the event 30 dignitaries visited each campus.
- Volunteer Recognition Ceremonies were held at each campus during April 2016 and consisted of presenting various awards for volunteer hours and years of service.
- Gifts were provided to veterans for Independence Day prior to July 4, 2016.
- Voluntary Service retained 600+ volunteers during 2016.
- Voluntary Service received more than 2 million dollars in donations for 2016.
- There were more than 45,000 volunteer hours recorded for 2016.
- American Legion Auxiliary/American Legion Christmas Gift Shops were held at each campus during November 2016 enabling veterans to enjoy the holiday season by sending presents to family members. Each gift shop amounted to between \$35,000 and \$50,000.
- The American Legion Riders Post 400 sponsored a motorcycle ride that ended at the Topeka Campus. They raised over \$16,000 directly benefiting all inpatient units in the hospital.
- The Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary filmed a short documentary on the "Pink Ladies" at both campuses. Voluntary Service staff was responsible for recruiting "Pink Ladies" to participate and VS staff participated as well.
- Richard Thomas and Randy Whelpley sponsored the R & R Smoke Out and provided a smoked meat dinner along with sides for inpatients, outpatients and staff.
- Coordinated the 50th Anniversary commemoration event for our domiciliary residents.



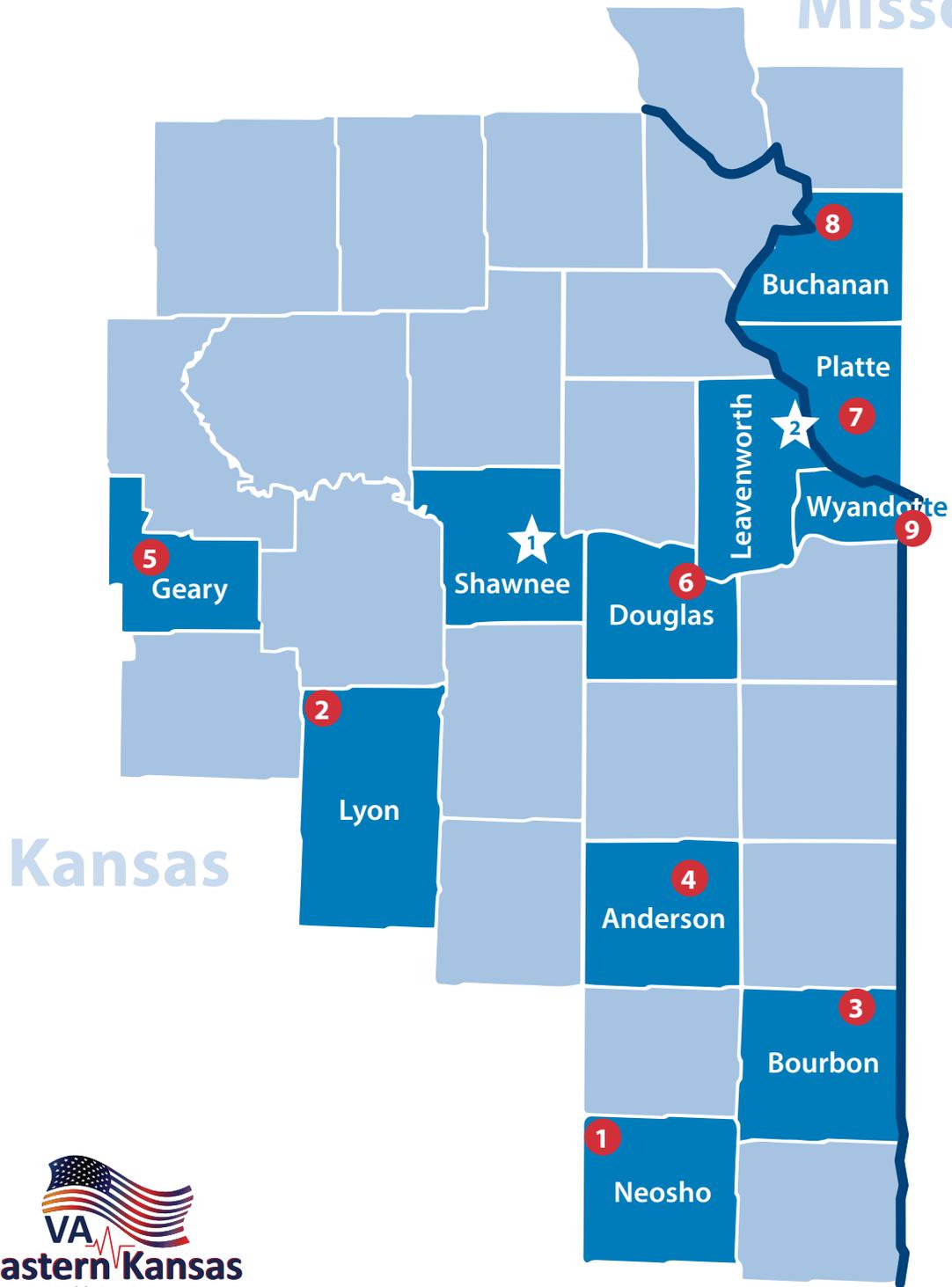
VA Eastern Kansas currently has over **3,400** women veterans enrolled.







Missouri



VA Eastern Kansas covers over 19,000 square miles with over a 105,000 veteran population.



**Shawnee County  
Colmery-O'Neil VA  
Medical Center**  
Topeka, KS



**Leavenworth County  
Dwight D. Eisenhower VA  
Medical Center**  
Leavenworth, KS



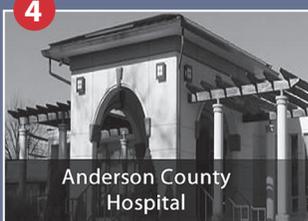
**Chanute Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
Chanute, KS  
*Unique veterans: 343 /  
Total visits: 937*



**Emporia Community  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
Emporia, KS  
*Unique: 354 / Total: 754*



**Ft. Scott Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
Ft. Scott, KS  
*Unique: 521 / Total: 2,004*



**Garnett Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
Garnett, KS  
*Unique: 160 / Total: 429*



**Junction City Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
Junction City, KS  
*Unique: 2,205 / Total: 9,052*



**Lawrence Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
Lawrence, KS  
*Unique: 1,364 / Total: 3,619*



**Platte City Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
Platte City, MO  
*Unique: 382 / Total: 915*



**St. Joseph Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic**  
St. Joseph, MO  
*Unique: 2,861 / Total: 11,255*



**Wyandotte County  
Community-Based  
Outpatient Clinic**  
Kansas City, KS  
*Unique: 1,374 / Total: 4,501*



**Over 32,000 more appointments scheduled in FY16  
compared to FY15 and over 48,000 more than FY14.**



## VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System

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[www.leavenworth.va.gov](http://www.leavenworth.va.gov)

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