



(October 5, 2015)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing: Veterans Canteen Service**

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Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) is committed to providing the highest level of customer service excellence to our Nation's Veterans and those who serve our Veterans. This past year, VCS kicked off a number of exciting initiatives that not only embrace the spirit and meaning of our ICARE principles, but allow us to better enhance the experience of our customers.

Since May 2014, VCS has remodeled more than 40 PatriotStores to enhance the overall experience when visiting our medical centers. Veterans and employees have responded positively to the new décor, noting a warmer and more inviting atmosphere. While store remodels will continue through fiscal year 2016, upgrades to the PatriotCafés will begin soon with modernized food concepts emphasizing speed of service. Cafes will include state-of-the-art décor and a soothing environment accompanied by new healthy options and updated menu selections. Also included will be an advanced food ordering program.

Successful pilot programs in Cleveland, Ohio, and Decatur, Georgia, have led the way for overnight café food services, providing hot meals as late as 12 a.m. The overwhelming support and appreciation for these changes from patients, their family members, and our employees is driving the growth of this program across the country.

To accommodate departing staff and early arrivals, VCS is rolling out extended hours of coffee shop operations in 62 VA Medical Centers. Coffee shops will soon be

open as early as 6 a.m. and as late as 8 p.m. Also on the horizon, VCS will introduce VCS mini-markets to support off-site clinics, food trucks at our larger campuses, advance food ordering, evening delivery services, and an enhanced Employee Payroll Deduction program.

Coming in 2016, Veterans and VA staff will soon have online access to more merchandise and products than ever before. “ShopVACanteen.com” will offer the wide variety of products we offer in-store including military logo merchandise, apparel, and electronics, but the website will also expand into areas currently underserved to our Veterans and employees, covering professional uniforms, wheelchair mobility equipment, and more. This initiative is especially important for our Veterans living in rural areas who do not have direct access to their VCS benefits.

VCS plays an integral role within VA, with an emphasis on rendering the highest level of service to enhance the overall experience of our customers. Your support of VCS directly supports a number of Veteran-focused programs like VA’s rehabilitation events, Fisher Houses, polytrauma centers, disaster relief efforts, VA’s homelessness initiatives, community stand-downs, and other activities. VCS’s motto — “Benefits You’ve Earned, Service You Deserve” — is reflected in the coming changes as well as an unwavering commitment to serve all of us.

Visit VCS online at www.vacanteen.va.gov for more information.

PLEASE PRODUCE LOCALLY FOR ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT ROUTINELY ACCESS EMAIL DUE TO THEIR SPECIALTIES.