

ALBANY VAMC WOMEN'S HEALTH PROGRAM

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2025



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs
Stratton VA Medical Center



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WOMEN VETERANS COLLABORATION CLUB AUGUST 20, 2025

From 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM



WHAT WE WILL DISCUSS:

- What Is Music Therapy?
- How do I get Involved?
- How will Music Therapy help me?

**WOMEN'S HEALTH
CONFERENCE ROOM D805**

**PRESENTATION WILL
BEGIN AT 11 AM**

GUEST SPEAKER

CHRISTINA RULISON, LCAT, MT-BC,
NMT-F™
LICENSED CREATIVE ARTS
THERAPIST
MUSIC THERAPIST-BOARD CERTIFIED
NEUROLOGIC MUSIC THERAPY®
FELLOW



TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT

JAMIE.HARRIGAN@VA.GOV

518-626-7274

BREASTFEEDING & LACTATION

If you're a woman Veteran who is pregnant or planning to become pregnant, you're likely thinking about what's best for your health and your baby's health. An important part of that is figuring out the best way to feed your baby. While it's a deeply personal journey, VA is here to help you understand the benefits, challenges, and resources available for breastfeeding and lactation support.

BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

[Breastfeeding offers a wide range of health benefits](#) for both you and your baby. Human milk is packed with nutrients and antibodies, particularly in the first few days after birth. These antibodies can help protect your newborn from infections and illness. According to the Academy of Pediatrics, [long-term benefits for your baby](#) include a lower risk of:

- ◆ Asthma and allergies
- ◆ Type 1 diabetes
- ◆ Childhood obesity
- ◆ Leukemia
- ◆ Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

But the benefits don't stop with your baby. Breastfeeding can help your body recover from pregnancy and childbirth, and the act of breastfeeding releases hormones that may reduce your risk of postpartum depression. [According to the Centers for Disease Control](#), breastfeeding can also lower your risk for type 2 diabetes, ovarian cancer, high blood pressure, and breast cancer.

BREASTFEEDING ISN'T ALWAYS EASY

While breastfeeding is natural, it's not always possible. You may find yourself the sole source of milk for your baby, which can feel overwhelming, especially when your sleep is disrupted for frequent feedings.

Plus, not everyone is able (or wants) to breastfeed. Physical or emotional challenges, certain medications, or personal reasons may make it difficult or unsafe. It's important to know that no matter how you nourish your baby, you're not alone. Reaching out to a support network of other parents, either in person or online, can make a big difference in your experience. [VA's maternity care coordinators](#) are also here to connect you to supportive services and resources based on your needs. We fully support whatever path you take. What matters most is finding what works best for you and your baby and having access to the right support along the way.

VA offers a wide range of lactation and postpartum services to help you breastfeed. These services are available at many VA facilities and, in some cases, through VA's Community Care program.

To get started, reach out to your [maternity care coordinator](#) or a lactation professional at your local VA facility. They will work with you to create a care plan that fits your needs. They can also connect you with additional services through VA Community Care or other community organizations.



Courtney O'Keefe, BSN, RN Maternity Care Coordinator

Courtney.O'Keefe@va.gov

518-626-6180

There are many ways to feed your baby



You have our support



Breastfeeding Classes

Practical skills to help you meet your breastfeeding goals



Postpartum Mental Health Support

Taking care of baby starts with taking care of yourself



Lactation Consultants

Personalized guidance and support



Social Workers

Connection to local resources



Maternity Care Coordinators

Coordination of care, referrals



Support Groups

Lactation support groups with new mothers

Supplies You May Be Eligible For:

- » Breast pumps
- » Nursing bras and pads
- » Nipple cream and shields
- » Milk storage bags

Breastfeeding benefits both babies and mothers

1-855-VA-WOMEN
www.womenshealth.va.gov





**Meeting Virtually for a 16 week closed cycle every Monday at
1000**

Date: September 15, 2025

WHAT IS DBT?

DBT is an evidence-based treatment that specializes in teaching individuals to better regulate their mood & impulses, deal with distress, & manage relationships.

WHO MAY BENEFIT?

It has been shown to be helpful for any individual eager to learn effective coping strategies for dealing with life stressors.

Everyone can seek a life worth living!

HOW DO I REGISTER?

For questions or to register, please contact:

Lori Hansel, LCSW-R : 518-626-5346

Leslie Harris, LCSW : 518-626-5497

Wellness Workshop for Veterans

- FALL INTO ALIGNMENT -

A ONE DAY WORKSHOP:

- ◊ Learn about wellness and what it can mean for you
- ◊ Make the best use of your mental and physical health services
- ◊ Learn how mental health, emotional health and physical wellness will help you to achieve your goals
- ◊ Learn how to manage day-to-day stress
- ◊ Stay well by connecting with others



September 5, 2025 TIME: 10:30-2:30

LUNCH PROVIDED

Location: 3rd Floor Auditorium

For more information or to RSVP please Contact:
Sarah Mulhall, LCSW 518-626-7523 or sarah.mulhall@va.gov


****SPACE IS LIMITED. RSVP REQUIRED****

MILLION VETERAN PROGRAM

The VA's Million Veteran Program is over one million participants strong and growing! The Million Veteran Program (MVP) is the VA's largest research effort to improve health care for Veterans and one of the world's largest research programs on genes and health. Preventions, treatments and diseases can affect men and women differently. With your help, we hope to enroll as **many women as possible** into MVP so we can make more discoveries for women.

Researchers are using information from MVP to study health conditions that affect women Veterans, including breast cancer, endometriosis, infertility, heart disease, and osteoarthritis.


Veterans can sign up online at mvp.va.gov or in-person at the Albany VA or by calling 866-441-6075. MVP also accepts walk-in appointments in room 503 core between the A and D wings Monday – Thursdays 930 AM- 4:30 PM

**Million Veteran Program**

Women Veterans

The Million Veteran Program (MVP), VA's largest research effort, is inviting more than 1 million Veterans to help us understand how genes, lifestyle, military experiences, and exposures affect your health and wellness.

Preventions, treatments, and diseases can affect men and women differently. With your help, we hope to enroll as **many women as possible** into MVP so we can make more discoveries for women.



Women enrolled in MVP

- 61% White
- 27% Black
- 1.3% Asian
- 1% Native American /Alaskan
- <1% Pacific Islander
- 5% Multiple Races
- 1.5% Other

*3% of enrollees did not report their race

Women in MVP come from many different service branches

- 51% Army
- 21% Navy
- 20% Air Force
- 8% Marine Corps
- 1% Coast Guard
- <1% National Guard

You can make a difference for women Veterans by joining MVP

Sign up today at mvp.va.gov, or call 866-441-6075 to make an appointment at a participating VA facility.



MVP's research is important to women Veterans

- We learned that a genetic risk model can accurately predict breast cancer risk in women Veterans. This may lead to personalized screenings based on your risk.
- Our data is used to study many mental health conditions experienced by women Veterans in MVP, including depression, PTSD, traumatic brain injury, and anxiety.
- The rate of suicide among women Veterans is nearly double that of non-Veteran women. At MVP, we're studying ways to better predict and prevent suicide attempts.
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States. We're studying what puts people at risk – and what protects people – from different kinds of heart diseases. For example, we recently learned that people who report eating nuts, but not peanut butter, more than six per week have a lower risk of coronary artery disease.
- Over 2 in 5 women in MVP report having osteoarthritis. We discovered genetic risk factors for osteoarthritis, which may aid in the development of interventions and treatments for women with osteoarthritis.

Your privacy is at the core of our mission

We follow all federal regulations to keep your data and information secure. One way we do this is by removing information like your name, date of birth, and social security number from your data, so our researchers do not know your data belongs to you.

It's always your choice if you want to participate in research. You can stop at any time. Your participation won't affect your eligibility for, or access to, VA health care or benefits.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Did you know.....August 12th is World Elephant Day?

ORIGIN OF THE SANDWICH

Initially perceived as food that men shared while gaming and drinking at night, the sandwich slowly began appearing in polite society as a late-night meal among the aristocracy. The sandwich is named after John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich, an eighteenth-century English aristocrat. It is commonly said that Lord Sandwich, during long sessions of cribbage and other card games at public gambling houses, would order his valet to bring him roast beef between two pieces of toasted bread. He was fond of this form of food because it allowed him to continue gambling while eating, without the need for a fork, and without getting his cards greasy from eating meat with his bare hands. The dish then grew in popularity in London, and Sandwich's name became associated with it. The rumor in its familiar form appeared in Pierre-Jean Grosley's *Londres* (Neuchâtel, 1770), translated as *A Tour to London* in 1772; Grosley's impressions had been formed during a year in London in 1765. An alternative is provided by Sandwich's biographer Nicholas A. M. Rodger, who suggests Sandwich's commitments to the Royal Navy, politics and the arts mean the first sandwich was more likely to have been consumed at his desk.



WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

August 26 is Women's Equality Day in the United States. It is a day to commemorate the 19th amendment of the Constitution which, in 1920, gave women the right to vote.

Before 1920, it was illegal for women to vote. In fact, until 1868, the right to vote was only held by white male landowners. This was changed with the introduction of the 14th amendment which gave any man born in the US that right.

In 1870, the 15th Amendment was signed to prevent any American citizen from being denied his right to vote based on their race, color, or whether they used to be a slave. Women however were not included in the 15th Amendment and were still denied the right to vote. Although it was illegal for women to vote in most states, women did try to cast their votes under the 15th Amendment during elections and were often arrested.

The fight for women's rights in the United States began on July 19, 1848, with the Seneca Falls Convention. Over 200 women gathered there to discuss the issues and discrimination that women faced based on their gender. They believed they deserved to be equal to men economically, legally, socially, and representatively. Some of the attendees were unsure about the fight for their right to vote, as they feared that their male supporters would withdraw. It was the support of Frederick Douglass that moved the fight for votes for women forward.

Some individual states were very quick to allow women the right to vote. For example, the state of Wyoming gave women the right to vote in 1869. Other states such as Kentucky allowed widows with children to vote. It took a lot longer however to persuade the nation to change its electoral system.

In 1869 Susan B. Anthony founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). This organization began a paper called 'The Revolution' which wrote articles about equality and petitioned the government for change. After 17 years of campaigning, the NWSA and other organizations were successful in bringing the first debate on equality to Congress in 1886. The motion to allow women the right to vote was defeated by a large margin.

The Suffragettes returned to Congress in 1919 with support from new states in the Union that already had equal rights for women in their own constitutions. Large numbers of women took to the streets to protest for their rights and in May 1919 the majority of Congress voted for the 19th Amendment to be added to the Constitution. The Secretary of State, Bainbridge Colby, signed the amendment in 1920 on August 2, officially giving women in the United States the right to vote.

The idea of creating a day to celebrate equality and women's right to vote came from New York Congresswoman Bella Abzug. In 1971 she introduced a resolution to Congress suggesting August 26 should be declared as Women's Equality Day.

Congress met in 1973 on August 16 and approved the resolution. Ten days later, Women's Equality Day was celebrated for the first time. The resolution also requested the President to issue an annual proclamation commemorating August 26 as the day women won the right to vote. Every President since Richard Nixon has issued a proclamation designating August 26 as Women's Equality Day.



ALBANY VAMC WOMEN'S HEALTH VETERAN SPOTLIGHT

Colonel Kelly Fayellen Hilland, born May 18, 1959, in Manhattan, New York, is a retired U.S. Army officer with over 32 years of military service, including more than 26 years as a commissioned officer. She served with distinction in the Army National Guard (ARNG) and the United States Army Reserve (USAR), earning the rank of Colonel in 2013.

Throughout her career, Col. Hilland held pivotal leadership roles in finance, human resources, and public affairs. Her assignments included Battalion Commander of the 27th Finance Battalion, Theater Financial Controller in Afghanistan, Comptroller for the J8 in Djibouti, and Director of the 310th Human Resources Services Command in South Carolina. She participated in critical operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, earning high honors such as the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (with four Oak Leaf Clusters), and multiple campaign medals.

Col. Hilland completed extensive military education, including the Command and General Staff College and Advanced Joint Professional Military Education. She holds a B.S. in Organizational Management from Nyack College and an M.P.A. from Marist College.

After retiring in 2017, she became a successful entrepreneur. She is the owner of Brownies Dispensary LLC, a licensed adult-use cannabis business in Colonie, NY, and Natural Hair Care by Kelly, a holistic beauty salon. Her work continues to reflect her passion for leadership, community service, and innovation.

All of us here at the Women's Wellness Center of the Albany VAMC, thank Colonel Hilland for sharing her story. If you are interested in sharing your story, experience, etc. please reach out to Jamie Harrigan, Women's Health PSA at

Jamie.Harrigan@va.gov



COLONEL RUBY BRADLEY

Colonel **Ruby Bradley** (19 December 1907 – 28 May 2002) was a United States Army Nurse Corps officer, a prisoner of the Japanese in World War II, and one of the most decorated women in the United States military. She was a native of Spencer, West Virginia, but lived in Falls Church, Virginia, for over 50 years.

Bradley entered the United States Army Nurse Corps as a surgical nurse in 1934. She was serving at Camp John Hay in the Philippines when she was captured by the Japanese army three weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

In 1943, Bradley was moved to the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila. It was there that she and several other imprisoned nurses earned the title "Angels in Fatigues" from fellow captives. For the next several months, she provided medical help to the prisoners and sought to feed starving children by shoving food into her pockets whenever she could, often going hungry herself. As she lost weight, she used the room in her uniform for smuggling surgical equipment into the prisoner-of-war camp. At the camp she assisted in 230 operations and helped to deliver 13 children.

Bradley served in the Korean War as Chief Nurse for the 171st Evacuation Hospital. In November 1950, during the Chinese counter-offensive, she refused to leave until she had loaded the sick and wounded onto a plane in Pyongyang while surrounded by 100,000 advancing Chinese soldiers. She was able to jump aboard the plane just as her ambulance exploded from an enemy shell. In 1951, she was named Chief Nurse for the Eighth Army, where she supervised over 500 Army nurses throughout Korea.

Bradley was promoted to the rank of colonel in 1958 and retired from the army in 1963. After her retirement in 1963, she continued to work for 17 years as a civilian nurse supervisor in Roane County, West Virginia, where she also bought a ranch near her family.

Bradley was the subject of a 23 February 2000 *NBC Nightly News* report by Tom Brokaw about the forgotten heroes of the military.

Bradley died at the age of 94 due to natural causes and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. After her death in 2002 Bradley was also the recipient of a memorial resolution, drafted by Congressman Joe Baca of California, regarding her exemplary service to this nation.



VETERAN'S DAY OUT



ALBANY COUNTY INVITE VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES
TO ENJOY A FREE* BBQ AT LAWSON LAKE COUNTY PARK

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23

12:00PM - 4:00PM

LAWSON LAKE COUNTY PARK

293 LAWSON LAKE ROAD, FEURA BUSH, NY 12067

LIVE MUSIC BY: THE ULTIMATES • FOOD CATERED BY: MISSION BBQ IN COLONIE
**ACTIVITIES INCLUDE: AX THROWING TRAILER, ICE CREAM TRUCK, CORNHOLE, HORSESHOES &
CAN JAM, KAYAKING, TRAILS AVAILABLE FOR FAMILY WALKS IN THE WOODS AND MORE!**



SCAN ME

SCAN HERE TO REGISTER OR
VISIT: WWW.ALBANYCOUNTY.COM/VETERANS/EVENTS
DEADLINE TO REGISTER: 8/22/2025



Daniel P. McCoy
Albany County Executive

ALBANY COUNTY
Cares about our Veterans



VILLAGE OF COLONIE 2025 VETERAN STAND DOWN

**VILLAGE OF COLONIE REC CENTER
3 THUNDER RD, ALBANY, NY 12205
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4TH
9 A.M TO 1 P.M.**

FREE VETERAN SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED:

**BREAKFAST AND BOXED LUNCH
MEDICAL SCREENING
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
CLOTHING
TOILETRIES
HAIRCUTS
PROGRAM INFORMATION
FEMALE SERVICES**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
DOM DOMINGUEZ 518-522-1175
VILLAGE HALL 518-869-7562**



HISTORY OF FAIRS

In 1765, less than 300 years after Columbus finished his work in the New World, the first North American fair was presented in Windsor, Nova Scotia. The Hants County Exhibition continues to operate today under the guidance of the Windsor Agricultural Society. In upper Canada, as Ontario was known in early Confederation, a fair was held in 1792, sponsored by the Niagara Agricultural Society. As with Windsor, the Niagara Fair remains in operation today. In addition, many small fairs were held during the early 1700s in French Canada while under French rule. Similarly, in the not-yet formed United States, a fair was chartered in York (Pennsylvania) in 1765 and existed as a 2-day agricultural market.

However, the concept of the “county fair,” organized by an agricultural society, was initiated by Elkanah Watson, a New England patriot and farmer. He earned the title “Father of US agricultural fairs” by organizing the Berkshire Agricultural Society and creating an event (known then as a Cattle Show) in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in September 1811. It was not a market and was more than just an exhibit of animals – it was a competition, with prize money (\$70) paid for the best exhibits of oxen, cattle, swine, and sheep.

Watson worked diligently for many years, helping communities organize their agricultural societies and their respective shows (fairs). By 1819, most counties in New England had organized their agricultural societies, and the movement was spreading into the other states. The nineteenth century closed with almost every state and province having one or more agricultural fairs or exhibitions. The core elements of those agricultural society events of the early 1800s – those early fairs – are at the heart of the agricultural fair in North America today. Competition for the best agricultural and domestic products of the county or community (or region or state), an annual celebration for the community to come together, share, and learn.

Today, about 2,000 fairs are held in North America each year. Additionally, agricultural fairs can be found throughout the United Kingdom, in Australia, Mexico, and other countries. They provide industrial exhibits, demonstrations, and competitions to advance livestock, horticulture, and agriculture, emphasizing educational activities such as 4-H, FFA, and similar youth development programs. Most fairs also provide exceptional educational activities to help today’s consumer understand the importance of farming and the food source on their plate. While enjoying these high-minded pursuits, fair visitors can also see, hear, touch, smell, and taste the richness and variety of what the world has to offer.



Did you know.....August 13th is International Left-Handers day?

WORLD LUNG CANCER DAY

World Lung Cancer Day is observed annually on **August 1** to raise awareness and educate the public about lung cancer. World Lung Cancer Day was first initiated in 2012, through the collaboration of the Forum of International Respiratory Societies and other lung health organizations, with the goal of bringing lung cancer into the spotlight.

World Lung Cancer Day was first initiated in 2012, through the collaboration of the Forum of International Respiratory Societies and other lung health organizations, with the goal of bringing lung cancer into the spotlight. Back in 1912, Dr. Isaac Adler described lung cancer as one of the rarest diseases, with only 374 cases recorded worldwide.

In the 1920s, scientists started connecting the increase in lung cancer to environmental exposures like industrial pollution, toxic gases from World War I, and most importantly, cigarette smoke. It wasn’t until the 1940s and 50s that research made the connection clear. Case-control and cohort studies showed that people who smoked were far more likely to develop lung cancer than those who didn’t. But smoking wasn’t the only danger. Long before cigarettes became popular, miners in Germany’s Ore Mountains were dying of a disease called “mountain sickness,” which was later identified as lung cancer.

Alongside these discoveries, lung cancer treatment also evolved. In 1933, Dr. Evarts Graham performed the first successful surgery to remove a lung. Over the next few decades, surgeons developed less extreme techniques like lobectomies and wedge resections to preserve more of the healthy lung.

By the 1980s, minimally invasive surgeries using cameras, known as video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery, became common and helped improve recovery times.



GRILLED LASAGNA

INGREDIENTS:

- 1—1 lb. ball fresh mozzarella, halved & thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- Pinch of red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt
- 2 garlic cloves grated (or 1 tsp jar garlic)
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 3 large tomatoes (2 thinly sliced, 1 finely chopped or grated)
- 12 no-boil lasagna noodles
- 8 cups baby spinach lightly chopped (about 5 ounces)
- 1/3 cup low-fat ricotta cheese
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil & parsley
- Aluminum foil



DIRECTIONS:

Preheat a grill to medium. Combine the mozzarella, parmesan, red pepper flakes, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and all but 1/4 teaspoon garlic in a bowl; drizzle with olive oil and toss. Season the sliced tomatoes with salt. Lay out 4 double-layer sheets of nonstick foil. Drizzle each with olive oil, top with 1 noodle and sprinkle each noodle with 1 tablespoon water. Divide half each of the spinach, sliced tomatoes and mozzarella mixture among the noodles. Repeat to make another layer of noodles, water, spinach, tomatoes and mozzarella mixture. Finish each stack with a noodle, 1 tablespoon water and a drizzle of olive oil. Bring the foil together and crimp tightly closed to make 4 flat packets. Grill the packets, covered, until tender, about 10 minutes per side. Let rest 5 minutes. Meanwhile, mix the grated tomatoes, a pinch of salt, the reserved 1/4 teaspoon garlic and 1 tablespoon olive oil in a bowl. Open the packets and cut the lasagna in half, if desired. Top with the tomato mixture, ricotta and herbs.

- Prep Time: 20 min
- Cook Time: 20 min
- Yield: 4 servings

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION PER SERVING:

Calories: 924

Total Fat: 37 grams

Saturated Fat: 21 grams

Cholesterol: 108 milligrams

Sodium: 807 milligrams

Carbohydrates: 98 grams

Dietary Fiber: 8 grams

Protein: 47 grams