Lyrics of a well-known artist’s song go, “You better lose yourself in the music, the moment, you own it, you better never let it go; You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow, this opportunity comes once in a lifetime …”

The song goes on to draw a picture of a person who stepped onstage, ready to bellow out lyrics, but things are holding him back--his mind, his nervousness, and all the life issues he is dealing with from money to kids and so on. Then he considers his reasons for wanting to succeed and the anticipation of the song elevates until finally, he owns the moment, and the rest is history.

When it comes to patient care, customer service plays an important role, and so does owning the moment, said LaDonna Stone, Hampton VA Medical Centers, Customer Experience Manager.

“When we put the chaos of ‘behind the stage aside’ and step out ‘on stage’ and focus on the moment,” she said. “What we are saying is, ‘I am here in this moment with you and I am present’, then our patients feel like we care and they matter.”

She also said owning the moment means taking responsibility instead of thinking, “It is not my department,” or “I don’t have the time.”

“We have to get into the mindset, if we don’t know, we need to find out, or do a warm hand off or personally take someone where they need to go,” said Stone.

Stone began implementing what is known as the “Own the Moment” initiative at the Hampton VAMC in March 2017. It is one of five Veterans Affairs (VA) initiatives that are expected to be implemented.

Continued on Page 6
What drew you to choose Hampton VAMC? I have been an advocate for several years on the Department of Defense side of the house; when my husband retired after 31 years and 13 days of Active Duty Army service, I wanted to have a bird’s eye view of this facility. What have you gained from working at Hampton VAMC? Patience! Coming from the Department of Defense, where process function differently, and the various positions operate with different levels of authority, I had to learn that the VA is a completely different being. What is the Patient Experience and why is it important? Patient Experience is what our Veterans walk away from our presence feeling. Maya Angelou said, “People will forget what you’ve said, they will forget what you’ve done, but they will never forget how you made them feel”. This is Patient Experience. Which of the ICARE values do you believe is the most important? Why? All the ICARE values are equally important, however, I feel integrity is most important. It dictates how I, as an individual function. If I operate in a manner that lacks integrity, the others are just lip service. Any random facts you could share with us? I am an author, publisher, certified life and children’s mindfulness Coach, motivational and inspirational speaker. How do you define success? Success to me, is fully recognizing one’s purpose and calling in life, then spending every waking day fulfilling it.

Florenza Lee,
Hampton VAMC Patient Advocate

Px INITIATIVE: Standardized Phone Greetings

A Standard Phone Greeting improves an important touchpoint in the health care journey, and serves as a regular reminder to employees and leaders of the commitment to patient experience. The phone call is often the very first touchpoint that a Veteran or caregiver has with the VA. This is the first chance to set the tone of patient experience.

Why Does this Matter?

• Veterans know what to expect from their health care.
• Communication with Veterans is consistent, uses plain language, and invites engagement.
• Veterans feel confident that they are being listened to and heard.
Peter J Moise, Hampton VAMC Patient Advocate

What drew you to choose Hampton VAMC? As a Veteran and retired Combat Medic, working at the VA is just a continuation of service to my military brothers and sisters.

What have you gained from working at Hampton VAMC? A sense of accomplishment, satisfaction and excitement to be part of something bigger than myself.

What is the Patient Experience and why is it important? Patient experience involves giving our clientele satisfaction through ease at obtaining services, providing effective and beneficial programs to meet our customers’ needs and making our veterans feel valued and important.

Which of the ICARE values do you believe is the most important? Why? Integrity. I believe this is the driving force behind ICARE. Doing the right thing all the time and having the personal courage to fulfill the demands of standards and principles is hard. However, doing it offers the most rewards in terms of excellence, respect and customer service. Quality starts within.

What is the weirdest job you’ve ever had? I once had to wear a famous pizza mouse costume.

If you could do another job for just one day, what would it be? Be a Veterans Affairs Hospital Director.

Px INITIATIVE: “I Choose VA” Badge

The “I Choose VA” Badge gives all employees an opportunity to identify and share their personal connection to the mission.

What impact do “I Choose VA” name badges have on patients?

- Displayed personal employee connections to Veterans and VA
- Increased opportunities for Veteran and employee communication and trust relationship possibilities
- Fostered culture of care, empathy, and trust
- Veterans identify and connect with employees

Paula
Birmingham, AL

I Choose VA
BECAUSE...
I’m Inspired

Peter J Moise, Hampton VAMC Patient Advocate
Adriene Walker-West, Hampton VAMC Patient Advocate

What do you hope people will understand about your role? That we are not just the complaint department. We are the Liaison/buffer between the veteran and the staff. We assist the veteran in navigating our challenging system. We are the sounding board for veterans who just need to be heard. We provide information and guidance to veterans among many other things.

What have you gained from working at Hampton VAMC? I have gained a good deal of knowledge. In helping the veterans, we serve, I have been introduced to many processes and procedure here at the Hampton VAMC that I was not aware of being a veteran myself.

What is the Patient Experience and why is it important? The interaction between the patient and the staff/facility. Our Veterans and family have sacrificed so much to protect our country’s freedoms and way of life and I feel they should be treated with dignity and respect in their time of need.

Which of the ICARE values do you believe is the most important? Why? Respect. The Golden Rule “Do to others as you want them to do to you” and your loved ones.

What is the one thing you cannot resist? Bar-B-Que Ribs

Px INITIATIVE: Red Coat Ambassadors

Red Coat Ambassadors are an effective way to provide a personal and positive first impression, standardize the experience of assistance with navigation and information for Veterans and their family, and foster a general culture of care, providing personal assistance for customers at the facility’s main entrances.

How does this enhance Patient experience?

• A program that provides greeters at the main entrances of VA medical centers.
• A program that can be supported by trained volunteers and/or designated employees.
• A VA program to offer personal and positive greetings, assistance with navigation, and information for Veterans and their families.
• A branded, standardized, and easily recognized VA experience.
What initiatives would you like everyone to know about? (1) Service Level Advocates throughout the hospital to assist clinics with veteran concerns. (2) Own the Moment Training (This allows the employees the freedom to use their best judgment when interacting with our veterans: Connect and Care, Understand and Respond, and Guide the Journey).

What drew you to choose Hampton VAMC? I am a 21-year retired Army Veteran and I have a passion to serve the Veteran.

What have you gained from working at Hampton VAMC? I have learned a wealth of knowledge from the VAMC perspective and from the Veteran’s perspective.

What is the Patient Experience and why is it important? Effective, easy, and emotional. It is important that the veteran received the services needed and the services they received was with ease, that when they left, they felt like a valued patient.

Do you have a favorite quote? “God will never take you, where his Grace won’t keep you.”

What would you to try but never have? Sky diving

Olympia Leonard, Hampton VAMC Patient Advocate
across all VA's in 2018. The other initiatives include: (1) Red Coat Ambassador, which encompasses volunteers who help veterans with way finding (2) We Care Rounding, which consists of leadership visiting units to offer help and ensure all is well, (3) Standardized Phone Greetings and (4) “I Choose VA” Badge. These initiatives come directly from the recently stood up Veterans Experience Office (VEO), a division of the National Veterans Health Affairs Office, Patient Experience Organization, which was created to better develop and standardize the patient experience across all VHA's. The initiatives are expected to be implemented through each local VHA’s Patient Advocacy Office.

“We need to think beyond healthcare when we treat patients and understand customer service is part of a patient’s overall care,” said Stone.

At Hampton VAMC, Customer Service training is currently provided in a trickle-down effect. It starts with Stones staff which includes four Patient Advocates. Recently, Hampton VAMC leadership participated in an informational and interactive training provided through the VEO. “Ultimately, customer service training will fall on leadership whose role is to coach and develop people,” she explained. “If we, as a Patient Advocate Office, pour into our leaders and give them the tools and resources they need, then it is up to them, in return, to pour that back into our employees.”

“They should also be modeling that behavior because if they don’t, we dis-empower our employees to do the right thing and we as leaders lose all credibility.”

Stone also believes part of ensuring excellent customer service is treating employees well and providing needed resources and training to perform their job most effectively. “It is important employees feel they are being provided opportunity for development and are kept well informed and know they have somewhere to turn when they are struggling,” she said.

Hampton VAMC employees are also receiving “Own the Moment” training in new employee orientation (NEO). The Patient Advocacy Office can also provide individual training to services upon request and Stone is working to build more facilitators to provide additional training to existing staff, who for now, can receive it through NEO if their time allows, said Stone. “It is important all staff remember customer service issues are not Patient Advocate issues, they are all staff issues,” Stone emphasized. “It’s important to work at your level to resolve an issue.”

“Patient Advocacy is not the customer complaint office. Really, it is for helping veterans and caregivers navigate the VA system because it is a large system with various departments,” she said. “We are here to help veterans understand processes and give them information and knowledge they need to play an active role in their healthcare. We also help with misunderstandings that may have occurred during a clinical visit, which may mean we reach out to staff to get a better footing of an issue.”

She also explained that most Services have what is known as a Service Level Advocate (SLA) who receive monthly training. If a patient runs into an issue at the service that cannot be resolved by front line staff, they can speak to the SLA who can help make sense of what is going on or address a customer service issue, explained Stone.

As Hampton works towards implementing the customer service initiatives, Stone believes customer service should be at the forefront of everyone’s mind every day. “This needs to be inundated into the VA culture and should be a natural aspect of our core values, from the language we use, to topics at staff meetings and a part of staff recognition,” she said.

Ultimately, more than getting Veterans enrolled in the VHA system, her hope is to ensure once they are in, the VA is doing more than simply providing a benefit the service member earned. “We need to treat our veterans with the dignity and respect they deserve and take on the attitude every day that serving them is both our honor and privilege,” she said. “We want our Veterans to be here. I think when they see what is important to us, through both our words and actions, the VA will always be where our Veterans choose to be.”

See page one: LaDonna Stone, who is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and the Customer Experience Manager for the Hampton VAMC whose passion for the homeless population drew her to the VA. She also grew up with hearing impaired parents and feels advocating and treating people fairly have been ingrained in her since she as a child. She is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Industrial Organizational Psychology.
What You Can Do for Heart Health
You can lower your chance of heart disease and a heart attack by taking simple steps.

Information courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control

Eat a healthy diet with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. Choose foods low in saturated fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.

Exercise regularly. Adults need 2 hours and 30 minutes (or 150 minutes total) of exercise each week. You can spread your activity out during the week, and can break it up into smaller chunks of time during the day.

Be smoke free. If you are ready to quit, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or 1-855-DÉJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569 for Spanish speakers) for free resources, including free quit coaching, a free quit plan, free educational materials, and referrals to other resources where you live.

Limit alcohol use, which can lead to long-term health problems, including heart disease and cancer. If you do choose to drink, do so in moderation, which is no more than one drink a day for women. Do not drink at all if you are pregnant.

Know your family history. There may be factors that could increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.

Manage any medical condition you might have. Learn the ABCs of heart health. Keep them in mind every day and especially when you talk to your health provider:
- Appropriate aspirin therapy for those who need it
- Blood pressure control
- Cholesterol management
- Smoking cessation

“As an Army Veteran and VA nurse, I encourage you to know your numbers.”

– Beverly Buchanan, National Spokesperson for the American Heart Association’s Go Red For Women® Movement

Talk to your provider about blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and BMI (body mass index).

Your heart depends on it.
**FEBRUARY:**

**Around the Campus**

Feb 8. VA Goes Red February is HEART month. VA has partnered with American Heart Association for many years to focus on women’s heart health. Bldg. 83 (Education and Training) 10 AM to 2 PM Vendors: **Healthy Eating:** Nutrition, including Move! **Health Movement:** have invited PT to have heart-healthy exercises. **Healthy Breathing:** smoking cessation. **De-stress:** mindfulness coloring pages, crochet lessons, arts and crafts with red dresses. **Massage:** At least two massage chairs. **Health Education:** My Healthy Vet, Veteran Health Education (Mr. Herb Cooke and Librarian Lucinda Edwards). **Nursing:** Blood pressure checks and flu shots. **Mental Health:** biofeedback station, other de-stress, and LGBT Coordinator. **Other:** spiritual health (chaplains), women Veterans, and Telehealth.

Feb 14. VA Digital Screenings Caring For Her Health Is Within Every Woman’s Reach. The Mobile Mammography Van Will Be At VA Hospital. To Schedule your Appointment Call (757) 261-5420 Opt 1

Feb 16. VA Hampton VAMC Talent Show POC Joe Lewis 722-9961 xt. 3051 or Joseph.Lewis2@va.gov Bldg. 14B, Dorm Lobby 7-9 PM Categories include: MUSIC, ARTS AND CRAFTS, POETRY, CREATIVE WRITING, DANCE, DRAMA. All entries in the Hampton VAMC will be judged for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. 1st place winners will then compete against five other VA locations. Those 1st place winners will then be entered into the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival takes place the week of Oct. 29-Nov. 4 in Des Moines, IA. All invited veterans expenses are FREE, to include round trip airfare, lodging and all meals during the week. At the culmination of the week of practices and

**Veterans, Have you?**

Joined our [Facebook Page](#), get fast facts, information on benefits and upcoming events

**Hampton VAMC Employees, Have you?**

Checked out our [intranet page](#) for information on events, celebrations and more?

**The Hampton Focus** is a monthly publication. Articles and information should be submitted no later than the 10th of each month. Please contact the Public Affairs Office at VHAHAMPublicAffairs@va.gov

**Next month’s focus:** Choice, National Salute to Hospitalized Vets, Women’s History Month