

VA News

The Department of Veterans Affairs had some announcements recently. The most recent was an announcement of a new app for mobile devices such as tablets and smart phones. It is called VA Launchpad and is available for both Android and Apple products. So, of course, I tried it with mixed results. First, I loaded the app on my new Android tablet and got the message that it was not yet optimized for my device. I tried it anyhow and found that not all of the options in the app worked. I then loaded it on my Android smart phone, didn't get the message about optimizing but still found several options that didn't work. I recommend waiting for the next version. I am happy that the VA is finally getting into the current world of apps for tablets and smart phones. I have been using My HealtheVet for some time to manage my VA health care and am pleased with it. It is a web-based application.

The VA also announced that they will award approximately \$426 million in awards to 271 grant programs to support ending Veterans' homelessness in this country. The goal is to rapidly find housing for homeless Veterans and to prevent Veterans from becoming homeless. The Community Action Partnership of North Dakota and the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans were both awarded funds. Since the program was started in 2010, Veteran homelessness has been cut in half. As I've written in a previous column, there is currently an agreement with the VA in Fargo and the Housing and Rehabilitation Authority of Clay County to eliminate Veterans' homelessness.

Perhaps the best VA news of the summer is reaching a milestone in its electronic health record modernization program. Earlier this summer the VA transferred the health records of 23.5 million Veterans to a new database provider, the same one that is used by the Department of Defense (DoD). "For decades, VA and DoD have been struggling to achieve interoperability and seamlessly share patient records between our health systems - placing an unfair burden on our Veterans and their families," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "No Veteran, family member or caregiver should have to carry boxes of paper, medical and service records around. This data migration is the first step to solving that problem for good." Once completed, a service member will be able to authorize the VA and other community health care providers with access to his or her military medical records, all done electronically and immediately.

Here is a story from the movie world. A documentary 'The Spy Behind Home Plate' is the story of Morris 'Moe' Berg, a baseball catcher who turned spy against the Nazi nuclear program while working for the OSS during WWII. Berg grew up in an immigrant Jewish family in Newark, N.J., attended Princeton University and received a J.D. from Columbia University during his off seasons in baseball. He played professional baseball from 1923 to 1939 for the Brooklyn Robins, Chicago White Sox, Cleveland Indians, Washington Senators and Boston Red Sox.