

07/28/15

**Presentation:
North Star
Behavioral
Health System -
Counseling for
PTSD, Substance
Abuse, and
Dependence
Treatment**

<TARGET><BILL></BILL><SUBJECT>07-28-15 Presentation North
Star Behavioral Health System - Counseling for PTSD,
Substance Abuse, and Dependence Treatment for
Veterans</SUBJECT><COMM>HMLV29</COMM></TARGET>

Location: North Star Hospital, 2530 DeBarr Road

North Star Behavioral Health System:

- Counseling for PTSD
- Substance Abuse and Dependence

Discussion by:

- Dr. Debbie Guris & Dr. Michael Alcorn, Staff Psychiatrists, Military Program (presenting together);
- Andy Lanning, Corporate Military Liaison, UHS Patriot Services
- Admiral William McDaniels, Patriot Support Advisory Board, North Star Behavioral Health
- Dr. Ann Hutcheson, Interim Chief of Psychology, and PTSD/SUD Psychologist, Veterans' Administration Healthcare System
- Laura MacKinzie, Chief of Outpatient Alcohol Treatment Program, Veterans' Administration Healthcare System
- Taya Kyle (Tentative), Author, "American Wife: A Memoir of Love, War, Faith and Renewal"

Thanks much everyone and see you at lunch.

It's 10:32 and we are adjourned. [Adjourn by 10:45 at the absolute latest, please]



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

HOUSE MILITARY & VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Rep. Bob Herron
Chair
State Capitol, Room 406
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
(907) 465-4942 Fax 465-4589

Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux
Rep. Shelly Hughes
Rep. Jim Colver
Rep. Bob Lynn
Rep. Chris Tuck
Rep. Max Gruenberg

HOUSE MILITARY & VETERANS' AFFAIRS SPECIAL COMMITTEE

July 28 Tuesday 9:30 AM

Location: North Star Hospital, 2530 DeBarr Road, Anchorage

Subject: North Star Behavioral Health System: Counseling for PTSD, Substance Abuse and Dependence

Discussion by:

- **Dr. Debbie Guris & Dr. Michael Alcorn**, Staff Psychiatrists, Military Program, UHS Patriot Services
- **Andy Lanning**, Corporate Military Liaison, UHS Patriot Services
- **Admiral William McDaniels**, Patriot Support Advisory Board, UHS Patriot Services
- **Dr. Ann Hutcheson**, Interim Chief of Psychology, and PTSD/SUD Psychologist & **Laura MacKinzie**, Chief of Outpatient Alcohol Treatment Program, Veterans' Administration Healthcare System
- **Taya Kyle** (Tentative), Author, "American Wife: A Memoir of Love, War, Faith and Renewal"

** Streamed live on AKL.tv AUDIO only **

Linda Hay

From: Rob Earl
Sent: Thursday, July 23, 2015 2:52 PM
To: Angela Steph; Clark Bickford; Crystaline Jones; Ken Erickson; Kendra Kloster; LIO Juneau; Rep. Bob Herron; Rep. Bob Lynn; Rep. Chris Tuck; Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux; Rep. Max Gruenberg; Rep. Shelley Hughes; Rob Earl; Stuart Krueger; Ted Madsen; ron.clarke@alaska.gov; Joanna Lewis; Rep. Jim Colver
Subject: MLV Meeting Tuesday, July 28 - 9:30 AM

Please let me know as soon as practical if your legislator will be able to make the House Military & Veterans Affairs (MLV) meeting Tuesday, July 28th at 9:30 AM at North Star Hospital, 2530 DeBarr Road.

Here's the committee announcement with the agenda:

http://www.legis.state.ak.us/basis/get_hearing.asp?session=29&Chamb=B&Date1=07%2F23%2F2015&Date2=07%2F28%2F2015&Comty=&Root=&Sel=1&Button=Display

We don't think there are any powerpoints, but there may be some handouts or other information I will send later. The meeting will be on AKL.tv, audio only. If you need a call-in option for legislators unable to attend in person, please let me know.

As stated, the MLV meeting is at 2350 Debarr Road - but there will be signs because we will not be entering through the main door. I'm assured it will be easy.

The Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital opening event at 11:30 is at a different location: 1650 S Bragraw St. A shuttle from the morning MVA meeting (and return) will be provided OR people can drive themselves and park in the north parking lot at East High - there will be signage and cadets and staff to direct everyone to the actual event about 1.5 blocks away. Everyone will check in at the event and then be led to assigned seats. Try to arrive by 11:30 at the latest.

Thanks,

ROB

ROB EARL
Staff to Representative Bob Herron
907.269.0126 office
907.952.1810 cell



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Dedication Ceremony Held July 28

The Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital was dedicated on July 28, 2015, in Anchorage, Alaska. Named in honor of the late Chris Kyle, Chief Petty Officer (SEAL) U.S. Navy (1974-2013), also known as the "American Sniper," the facility has an intensive inpatient treatment program for United States military service members and veterans who can benefit from mental health care services.

The Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital supports active duty military and veterans who have experienced trauma or may need detoxification or rehabilitation for substance use. The specialized holistic treatment includes intensive multidisciplinary care that focuses on enhancing the mind, strengthening the body and empowering the spirit.

North Star Behavioral Health is one of the largest behavioral health systems in Alaska. According to Andrew Mayo, PhD, CEO and Managing Director of the

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hospital, "we believe the work we do is the most important. Our team approach reinforces our staff's commitment to our work - which makes a difference for the future of our communities and the people we serve."

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Taya Kyle, wife of Chris Kyle and author of "American Wife: A Memoir of Love, War, Faith, and Renewal," stands with corporate executives and representatives of the military during the dedication ceremony.



Taya Kyle cuts the ribbon, officially commemorating the dedication of the hospital to her late husband, Chris.



North Star Behavioral Health is accredited by **The Joint Commission**.



North Star Behavioral Health has partnered with the NAASP to provide education and resources about suicide prevention.

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Hospital and Residential Treatment Centers

Anchorage: DeBarr Bragaw; Palmer

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24-hour crisis

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Psychiatric Hospital for Military Opens Amid VA Funding SNAFU

By [Zachariah Hughes, KSKA - Anchorage](#) | July 29, 2015



From right to left, House member Bob Herron, Lt. Gen. Russell Handy, Adjutant General Laurie Hummel, Taya Kyle center in blue, and Allen Miller, CEO of UHS. (Photo: Zachariah Hughes, KSKA)

The state's first and only facility offering acute and long-term psychiatric care for the military held its official opening ceremony in Anchorage on Tuesday.

VmP

The Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital is named after U.S. Navy Seal featured in the film "American Sniper," who was killed in 2013 by another veteran. The new facility aims to continue Kyle's work aiding service members, and its opening comes as healthcare systems serving Alaska's military are struggling to meet demand.

Beneath a tent in the facility's East Anchorage parking lot local and state politicians lunched with military brass and business leaders. But the guest of honor was Taya Kyle, wife of Chris Kyle, who believes the facility's name recognition will guide more service members towards help.

"I hope that because Chris was so open about his struggles it helps (others) know that the people who want help them here see them as tough, and see them as strong," Kyle said. "Getting help is really just fighting your way back—it's the polar opposite of being weak."

The 36-bed center focuses on acute psychiatric care: up to 28 days of in-patient treatment for PTSD, addiction, and counseling. Most of the staff served in the armed forces, and know first-hand the resistance many service members feel towards treatment. Closing that gap is a part of her late-husband's work that Kyle wants to see continued.



20 members of the Military Youth Academy were on hand to help with the ceremony. (Photo: Zachariah Hughes, KSKA)

"There are a number of stories of people who probably wouldn't tell a whole a lot of people what they were going through," Kyle said, "but they would tell Chris because they trusted him."

The stakes are high. [Depending on who's statistics](#) you use, [up to 22 veterans a day](#) commit suicide. That figure doesn't account for other symptoms of mental anguish: broken marriages, isolation, or substance abuse. Before the rapt audience under the tent, Alaska's top-ranking military officer, Lieutenant General Russell Handy spoke of a soldier named Gus stationed at JBER who took his life.

"Although all signs at work and at home were that we were improving, we lost him a couple of months ago," Handy said. "As hard as he tried, he couldn't beat the demons that were in his head."

"A lot of times our active duty service members in particular prefer not to be in the general population," explained Dr. Andy Mayo, CEO of the North Star Behavioral Health System, which owns and operates the Chris Kyle center. "Some of the issues they have are distinctly different than what you'll find in the civilian population."

The new center is one of [14 similar facilities](#) designed specifically to address acute mental health needs among service members. The franchise is owned by [Universal Health Services](#), a fortune 500 company. North Star and UHS are taking advantage of a gap in care amid a rising need.

"Knowing the market is really important," Mayo explained. "There is no other specialty hospital in the state of Alaska."

Prior to its opening in April, active duty soldiers who needed long-term psychiatric care had to either go either out of state or be institutionally committed.

There are [73,397 veterans in Alaska](#), roughly three-times the number of active duty military personnel, which hovers around [23,000](#). But less than half of the state's vets—about 31,000 according to the director of the Department of Military and Veterans affairs, Verdie Bowen—are accessing care in VA facilities. So while wait-times for mental health treatment are generally low, a big part of that is because care options are under-used.

"We know that the need is there," said Albert Wall, director of the state's Division of Behavioral Health. "If everybody that needed that service came out it would swamp the system and there wouldn't be the availability."

Veterans are not able to access the Chris Kyle Center for now, unless they pay out of pocket.

Owing to [policy and fiscal changes at a national level](#), the VA blew past its budget and slowed down referrals to outside providers. The situation has created a bottle-neck for veterans trying to access treatment, delaying procedures and interrupting care that has been routine for years. As it stands, the one payment source still available is a private contractor, TriWest, that is not yet set up to handle insurance at the new center. State officials are optimistic the issue will be resolved in the months ahead.



Of the 14 facilities in the Patriot Support Program within UHS's 227 healthcare facilities, many of which specialize in acute care, this is the only one named after an individual. (Photo: Zachariah Hughes, KSKA)

This is the only facility named for Chris Kyle, and as per an agreement with the family it will retain the name in perpetuity, even if ownership changes. Taya Kyle was not personally compensated for the naming rights. However the company is in discussions over making a donation to a either a scholarship or a charitable foundation she oversees.

"I love that it's in Alaska," Kyle said. She and her husband visited once on a vacation cruise through Southeast, and wanted to spend more time in the state. That, combined with the high number of veterans, and a vision of healing complemented by the hospital's approach, led Kyle to lend her support to the project. "It just feels right."

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[Tegan Hanlon](#) ^[1]

July 28, 2015

Main Image:

[tarakyle](#) ^[2]

Main Image Caption:

Taya Kyle, the widow of the late Chris Kyle, spoke Tuesday at the dedication of Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital, a new intensive inpatient treatment program in Anchorage for military service members and veterans. Chris Kyle, a celebrated former Navy SEAL sniper, inspired the movie "American Sniper." He was killed in Texas in 2013 by a veteran.

An intensive inpatient treatment program for veterans and active duty military in need of mental health care that opened a few months ago in Anchorage was dedicated Tuesday to the late Chris Kyle, the Navy SEAL who inspired the movie "American Sniper."

The 36-bed Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital is part of North Star Behavioral Health System, an Anchorage subsidiary of the large publicly traded firm Universal Health Services, headquartered in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. The health care management company's subsidiaries operate more than 220 acute care and behavioral health facilities and surgery centers in the U.S. and overseas, said Alan Miller, founder, chairman and chief executive officer of Universal Health Services.

Out of all the company's programs, Miller said the one in Anchorage is the first it has dedicated to a person. Miller, who served in the U.S. Army, said at the dedication ceremony that his company was "very impressed by the American hero, American patriot Chris Kyle" who served four tours in Iraq. Miller said he did not like some of the comments he heard about Kyle.

"I, personally, was infuriated that he, who put his life on the line protecting all of us, was called a murderer," Miller said. "I wanted his name and accomplishments not only to be remembered by those of us for a short time, but for many others for years to come."

According to [2014 statistics](#) ^[3] from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly 73,400 veterans lived in Alaska. Verdie Bowen, director of Alaska's Office of Veterans Affairs, said roughly 27,000 military personnel, including National Guard members, live in the state.

Despite the numbers of veterans and active duty military, many who need inpatient care for post-traumatic stress or substance-related disorders are sent Outside, Bowen said.

Andrew Mayo, the chief executive officer of North Star Behavioral Health, said he hopes the Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital will fill the need for those services in Alaska, allowing people to receive care in their home state and allowing their families to be part of the process.

Taya Kyle, the widow of Chris Kyle, flew into Alaska from Texas for Tuesday's ceremony, which began with lunch served to the seated guests and ended after she used oversized gold scissors to cut the red, white and blue ribbon stretched across the front of the hospital.

But before she cut the ribbon, Kyle spoke at the dedication ceremony. She recounted memories of her husband. She talked about how they met in a bar, his book signing and a snippet of his childhood. She repeatedly used the word "humble" to describe him.

In an interview before the dedication ceremony, Kyle said an employee of Universal Health Services had called one of her friends a few months ago to broach the idea of naming the Anchorage program after her late husband. Kyle said that the two of them researched the company and determined it was a good fit.

She listed the reasons why: The company wanted to give veterans and active duty military an opportunity to receive care in their hometown and the program took a holistic approach -- focusing on diet, exercise and getting family involved, she said.

Also, she said, "the fact that Mr. Miller, who came up with the idea, is so patriotic and really heartfelt about it. ... This wasn't a marketing ploy. This was a true act of the heart."

Kyle said her husband had always wanted to travel to Alaska. and the summer before he died, the couple, their children and their parents took a cruise to Juneau, Ketchikan and Sitka. He wanted to come back, she said.

In February of this year, a jury found Eddie Ray Routh guilty of murdering Chris Kyle. Routh had shot Kyle and his friend, Chad Littlefield, on Feb. 2, 2013, at a gun range outside Stephenville, Texas. Routh had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, [The New York Times](#) [4] reported.

To the crowd Tuesday, Taya Kyle said, "I am passionate about helping veterans and their families know that getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness."

Elke Villegas, director of business development for North Star Behavioral Health, said after the dedication ceremony that the Anchorage program for veterans and active duty military started at the end of April and has so far served roughly a dozen people.

The hospital is housed in a North Star building on Bragaw Street previously used as a program for adolescent girls. That program has moved to a building around the corner on DeBarr Road, Villegas said.

North Star has traditionally provided behavioral health services for young people, Mayo said. Its move into its new program is, in part, fueled by the large number of active duty military and veterans in Alaska and the absence of a facility that provides them with inpatient care.

Mayo said Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital will have a "collegial, peer relationship" with the Alaska VA Healthcare System and the military hospitals. He said they will refer people to those locations if they cannot treat them or for outpatient care.

The inpatient treatment program at Chris Kyle Patriots Hospital spans about 28 days, he said. It is meant for active military and veterans who have experienced trauma or need detoxification or rehabilitation for substance abuse. Universal Health Services already has more than a dozen programs like it across the country, he said.

The program currently takes Tricare, a health care program for service members and their dependents, and staff is working on a contract with TriWest Healthcare Alliance, which arranges outsourced care for veterans, Mayo said. It also takes private health insurance, but does not take Medicaid or Medicare, said Debbie Strzelecki, divisional director business development at Universal Health Services.

Valerie Davidson, commissioner of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, said Tuesday that the new program highlighted the collaborative way Alaska provides health care to its residents.

“Any time you have an opportunity to expand health care to people in Alaska who need it, that’s an opportunity not to pass up,” she said.

Source URL: <http://www.adn.com/article/20150728/new-anchorage-hospital-service-members-named-sniper-chris-kyle>

Links:

[1] <http://www.adn.com/author/tegan-hanlon>

[2] <http://www.adn.com/image/tarakyle>

[3] http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp

[4] <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/25/us/american-sniper-trial-jury-finds-ex-marine-guilty-of-murder.html>



