

# NEWS RELEASE

North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System | Office of Communication & Outreach



**For Immediate Release**

Friday, March 19, 2021

## **Thomas University and Department of Veterans Affairs Collaborate to Provide Vaccines to Rural Veterans**

**Thomasville, Ga.** On Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 90 eligible Veterans enrolled for care at the [North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System \(NF/SGVHS\)](#) received the COVID-19 vaccine in the gymnasium located at Thomas University in Thomasville, Georgia.

“The collaboration with Thomas University provided a quick and convenient option for Veterans that live in the surrounding rural and underserved communities,” said Dr. Dave Waller, Deputy Chief of Staff, NF/SGVHS.

Bob Bohman, Vice President of Student Life at the University has been instrumental in getting the collaboration set up.

“Bob worked really hard to help us get this temporary vaccine clinic up and going,” said Waller. “We couldn’t have done it without him.”

Ensuring Veterans in rural communities have access to the COVID-19 vaccines is important to help stop the spread of the contagious virus. To assist in these efforts, NF/SGVHS has come up with a creative way to get the COVID-19 vaccine supply to these areas utilizing the [Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center \(GRECC\)](#) Education Mobile Unit.



**Pictured in photo:** Marine Corps Veteran, Alfred Hill, receives his COVID-19 vaccine from Kiesha Harris, LPN, Lake City VA Medical Center



**Pictured in photo:** The Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC) Education Mobile Unit outside of the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center before leaving to transport COVID-19 Vaccines.

The GRECC Education Mobile Unit, a 26-foot motorhome, was previously used to provide on-site education opportunities which focused on geriatrics and included topics related to health conditions associated with aging for NF/SGVHS staff and Veterans located in rural communities.

“Our outreach efforts utilizing the mobile education unit were suspended due to COVID-19 related travel and social distancing restrictions,” explained Carmen Fernandez, Associate Director for Education of the GRECC. “We are delighted that the mobile unit was repurposed and deployed by the VA strike team to enhance COVID-19 vaccination efforts.”

Overall Veterans at Thomas University were happy with the ability to receive the vaccine and were impressed with the easy process that was established.

“I have been waiting for this for a while and am grateful that I was able to get it,” said Alfred Hill, Marine Corp Veteran. “The process they set up was very easy.”

John Parish, Medical Administration Outpatient Support Section Assistant Chief, NF/SGVHS feels proud to have been part of the Thomas University collaboration.

“I feel it is my responsibility to ensure Veterans have the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine,” said Parish. “I am a proud Veteran employee that is able to help make a difference on the COVID-19 frontlines utilizing skills I developed while in the military to take care of my fellow comrades.”

As of March 18, 2021, NF/SGVHS provided the COVID-19 vaccine to more than 64,000 Veterans and VA employees.

Veterans who are currently enrolled and are receiving VA health care are eligible to receive the vaccine. Interested Veterans can call 352-548-6000 ext.103755 to schedule an appointment. They may also notify their primary care team of their interest in receiving the vaccine.

Veterans who do not currently receive VA healthcare can visit VA’s eligibility web page at: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/> to learn more.

To stay up-to-date with the latest information related to COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts click [here](#).

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*"...to care for him who shall have borne the battle  
and his widow, and his orphan..."*  
- President Abraham Lincoln



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System**

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The North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System is one of the nation's leading VA healthcare systems, employing more than 5,600 medical professionals and support staff dedicated to providing high quality care to Veterans residing throughout north Florida and south Georgia. The organization operates fifteen facilities to include two medical centers located in Gainesville and Lake City, and clinics located throughout a 50-county catchment area.

To learn more about the facilities and services offered by the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, please visit [www.northflorida.va.gov](http://www.northflorida.va.gov) or "like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/VANFSG>, or follow us on Instagram at <https://www.instagram.com/VANFSG/>

For any questions about the content of this message, please contact the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System Office of Public Affairs at 352-348-7130 or email [vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhanflpublicaffairs@va.gov).