



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

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CONSTRUCTION TOTALING \$19 MILLION COMING TO VA

TUSCALOOSA – Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center announced today that funds totaling approximately \$19 million have been approved for two different construction projects that will drastically change the way long-term nursing care is provided to patients at the medical center.

The first construction project, with a cost of approximately \$10 million, is the renovation of two community living centers in Bldg. 61, which will involve a complete renovation of the building to create a more home-like environment for the residents. Specifically, the project includes conversion of semi-private rooms to private rooms for each resident, remodeling of day rooms, conversion of nursing stations to living rooms, and updating of furniture. The purpose of the project is to create an environment as close to a home for the residents as possible. Design of the project begins this year, with construction expected to begin in 2010.

The next project is Phase 1 of a plan to build a total of 12 homes over time, each with 10 bedrooms, a living room and kitchen, as well as the construction of a clubhouse for the residents of the 12 homes and Bldg. 61. Referred to as “The Cottages,” Phase 1 of this project, totaling approximately \$9 million, will build two of these homes, and the clubhouse. Design for Phase 1 also begins this year with construction expected to begin in 2010.

The Cottages will transform long-term care by providing a living experience that is radically different from the traditional long-term care environment. Each cottage is a self-contained residence, designed like a private home. Each resident room has a private bedroom and full bathroom.

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VA CONSTRUCTION 2-2-2

“The cottages provide an environment where residents, including young veterans or service members who are recuperating from the effects of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, can receive assistance and support with activities of daily living and clinical care, without the assistance and care becoming the focus of their existence,” said Alan J. Tyler, medical center director.

Each cottage is not meant to be "homelike," but to be a home. The purpose behind having 10 residents per home is because research has shown the number has been associated with reduced depression and anxiety, increased sociability, and improved mobility and independence. Residents will choose their activities, mealtimes, and degree of participation in household tasks. The relationship of the private rooms to the living area will allow the residents to easily control their own level of social interaction. A key feature of the design of the home is the short distance from bedrooms to common space. This design feature helps to increase resident mobility and reduce their need for mobility devices.

The design of the cottages incorporate the latest “green” building standards in order to increase energy and resource efficiency while limiting indoor pollutants. Design includes significant window openings to let natural light into each bedroom and common areas. Each home also incorporates new technology and special design features to enhance the privacy, independence and safety of the residents.

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