



Summit Target: Eliminating Veteran Homelessness

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) hosted a Homeless Veterans Summit to discuss the Federal Strategic Plan to prevent and end Veteran Homelessness recently in the East Campus' Building 90 Theater.

"This was the first time we've held a summit here at CAVHCS," said Springe Love, CAVHCS' Homeless Grant & Per Diem Program Manager. "We work with most of the attendees throughout the year, and felt it would be beneficial for us to get everyone together to refocus our efforts on identifying and assisting Veterans."

Homeless Veteran Summit attendees also discussed the progress being realized in support of the Department of Veterans Affairs commitment to end Veteran Homelessness by 2015, and how to

maintain that momentum through professional cooperation and



Springe Love, CAVHCS' Homeless Grant & Per Diem Program Manager, reviews information discussed at the recent Homeless Veteran Summit on the East Campus. (VA photo by Eric Johnson)

interaction.

"Secretary Shinseki announced our national goal to eliminate Veteran Homelessness by 2015 a little more than two years ago," said Love. "At that time, the VA estimated that there were 131,000 Homeless Veterans nationally. Today, that estimate is down to approximately 75,600. And, we intend to take that estimate below 60,000 by June 2012."

"We're also making real progress locally," added Love. "We're raising awareness of the programs we offer to Veterans through activities like our recent two-day Homeless Stand Down in Montgomery. Plus, we recently received additional HUD/VASH

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Make the Connection

Shared Experiences and Support for Veterans

Make the Connection, a new campaign launched by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is creating ways for Veterans and their family members to connect with the experiences of other Veterans -and ultimately to connect with information and resources to help them confront the challenges of transitioning from service, face health issues, or navigate the complexities of daily life as a civilian.

"I have seen over and over again how important it can be for a Veteran to hear a message from another Veteran. This type of communication will be especially useful in helping to break down the stigma associated with mental health issues and treatment," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA is leveraging this powerful connection using an approachable online resource that links Veterans to personal stories from their peers, to VA resources and support, and to reliable information about mental health and resilience."

The campaign's central focus is a website, www.MakeTheConnection.net, featuring numerous Veterans who have shared their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. It offers a place where Veterans and their families can view the candid, personal testimonials of other Veterans who have dealt with and are working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, and mental health

conditions. The Web site also connects Veterans and their family members with services and resources that may help them live more fulfilling lives.

"VA is heartened by the tremendous commitment of Veterans of all service eras, genders and backgrounds who are stepping up to share their stories," said Shinseki. "Just as they would never leave a fellow Servicemember behind on the field of battle, they are once again reaching out to support their fellow Veterans with their compelling examples of successful treatment and recovery."

At MakeTheConnection.net, Veterans and their family members can explore information on mental health issues and treatment—and easily access support—in comfort and privacy, anywhere, anytime. Visitors to the Web site can customize and filter their online experience, directly connecting with content that is the most relevant to their own lives and situations.

VA's *Make the Connection* campaign is raising awareness through public service announcements, advertising and partnerships with Veteran Service Organizations and mental health service providers nationwide. For more information, visit MakeTheConnection.net or VA's mental health services website at www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

CAVHCS All-Stars

This morning on the CAVHCS Montgomery campus I had a follow-up appointment with Lab Work for a 9:00 am Lab and an 11:00 am Doctor visit with Dr. Vachhani. I had to fast so I was given a meal ticket for breakfast, which was ok for the price of 84 cents. The Dining Room staff was very helpful and carried my tray to the cashier and the table. Later, I was greeted by my Doctor's nurse Ms. Williams who took me to the Doctor's office where she took my vitals and then escorted me to see him. Both were very helpful, polite and expressed their concern.

-- Norman R. H., Montgomery, Ala.

Dear Dr. Capel;

I just wanted to drop a line to let you know how much my wife (Guin) and I appreciate the extra effort you put into my recent visit to the Tuskegee, VAMC. I am glad you were assigned as the C&P Doctor on my case. You went above and beyond what was required of you by calling and let me know of the UTI shown from the lab results and the letter notifying me of the indication of diabetes. I have seen numerous VA Doctors over the years and I'm pleased to tell you I think you are the very best. I do not know what will be the results of my claim but I do know you were a tremendous help to us. My hope is that the VA will employ more doctors of your caliber.

-- My regards, William H. C., Marion, Ala.

I recently had an Ultrasound at your facility. Ms. Wenzelow was very courteous and professional. She explained to me the procedure she performed and I appreciated the care she took and kindness shown. She seems to need some help with the patient volume too. Please give her an "Atta Girl" for me and a job well done. She truly deserves it. -- Thanks, Robert B., Montgomery, Ala.

I am a 100% service connected disabled Veteran. I just wanted to take time to let you know how much we appreciate the service from the people at the Diabetes Clinic. It is a blessing to have a place like this to come to when you need guidance and care. -- D. M., New Brockton, Ala.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my appreciation to Mrs. Doris Howard for the untiring dedication she shows to patient care. During my visits to Occupational Therapy at the VA Center, Ms. Howard always shows a high level of professionalism in working with all her clients. She is a joy to work with and I enjoy each and every visit. I feel she deserves recognition for her outstanding care. She should receive an award. -- Respectfully, Glenn F., Columbus, Ga.

I must commend you for the services provided to me in the geriatric section. Dr. Silas Gbenle, M.D. is excellent. He has taken a personal interest in me and my family, providing me with his personal cell phone number. -- Sincerely, Fred F.

I have just left the Dental Clinic and I feel that I should tell you how impressed I am with the staff and services. Dr. Dukes and his nurse Rose are highly proficient and courteous. I have never had service of this high caliber, even when I paid for it in the civilian world. It is good to know that our service men and women are treated with such respect and professional service.

-- Thank you, Carl H. S., Wetumpka, Ala.

I attended the Renal Dysfunction class and I feel that it was very informative and it is something that should be continued and supported. -- Russell A. B.

The CAVHCS Salute

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The CAVHCS Survey says...

As we get closer to the holidays, what present is at the top of your list?



MaShelia Gail Rowan
HR Assistant,

“My employees are my top priority, ensuring that they are happy and taken care of.”



Ms. Mindi Hunsaker,
Chief, Therapeutic
Recreation
“Something knitted
by my twin sister!”



Ms. 'Cookie' Peterson,
IT Specialist in OIT
“Peace on earth and
good will towards men.”

'Tis the Season

It's Flu Season, are You in a High Risk Group?

It's not too late to vaccinate – Get your flu vaccine today!

When you see “Get Your Flu Vaccine Here” signs and banners after November outside pharmacies and in doctor's offices, you might think, “isn't it too late for that?” The answer is “no!”

“Flu season typically peaks in January or February and can last as late as May,” says Dr. Anne Schuchat, Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service and Director of CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. “We are encouraging people who have not yet been vaccinated to get vaccinated now.”

For millions of people each year, the flu can bring a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, fatigue, and miserable days spent in bed instead of at work or school. However, you may not realize that more than 200,000 people are hospitalized in the United States from flu complications each year. The flu also can be deadly. Between 1976 and 2007, CDC estimates that annual flu-associated deaths in the United States ranged from a low of about 3,000 people to a high of about 49,000 people.

An annual flu vaccine is recommended for everyone 6 months and older. It's available in two forms: shots and a nasal spray. The flu shot options include the regular flu shot, the new intradermal flu shot, and a high-dose flu shot. While the regular flu shot can be given to just about everyone, the intradermal flu shot is approved for use in adults 18 through 64 years of age, and the high-dose flu shot is for people aged 65 years and older. The nasal spray vaccine is approved only for use in healthy people ages 2 to 49 years who aren't pregnant.

Anyone can get the flu, but some people are at greater risk for serious flu-related complications, like pneumonia, that can lead to hospitalization and even death.

For those at greater risk for complications, getting the flu vaccine is especially important. People at greater risk include:

- Children younger than 5 years old, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Pregnant women
- People with certain medical conditions like asthma, diabetes (type 1 and 2), or heart and lung disease
- People 65 years and older

It's also important to get the vaccine if you care for anyone in one or more of these high risk groups, or for babies younger than 6 months because they are too young to get the vaccine.



We want YOU!

**To get your flu vaccination
and be healthy this year.**

It's easy. All you have to do is drive to the VA Hospital on Perry Hill Road, Montgomery or the Clinic at 2020 Alexander Drive, Dothan, AL or Wiregrass VA Clinic 301 Andrews Avenue, Fort Rucker, AL December 10, from 8 am – Noon.

You don't even have to get out of your car! Just drive up and we'll get you vaccinated and rolling in no time!

CAVHCS Photo Gallery

During November CAVHCS East Campus hosted it's 62nd Veterans Day Parade. (VA photos by Robin Johnson)



A Healthier Holiday Spirit without Abusing Spirits

By: Mary Catherine Porch, APN

*CAVHCS Health Promotion Disease Prevention
Program Manager*

The holidays are fast approaching so this is a good time to consider taking stock of healthy behaviors that often are put on hold for the next six weeks. Today I would like to focus on limiting alcohol consumption.

There are a number of groups of individuals, such as, children, adolescents, women who may become pregnant, or those who are pregnant who should not drink any alcohol. There are no safe limits for these groups. Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can lead to a number of fetal disorders. Children and adolescents are at risk to have problems with alcoholism in later life, problems in school and significant accidents and injuries.

People who have difficulty limiting alcohol consumption to appropriate levels should also avoid drinking any alcohol. So what are appropriate levels? A standard serving size in the United States is 0.6 ounces. This is the amount typically found in a 12 ounce beer, a 5 ounce glass of wine, 8 ounces of malt liquor or 1.5 ounces of liquor. Men should not consume more than 2 and women no more than 1 serving in a 24-hour period.

There is yet another group who should avoid alcohol. Anyone who plans to drive, operate machinery or perform any activity requiring concentration, attention and coordination should not drink at all. Drinking below the legal limit does not ensure that these activities can be performed safely. Impairment of brain function begins below the legal limit. Remember there is no safe limit under these circumstances. Please heed the warnings not to drink (at all) and drive.

Chronic overindulgence of alcohol can lead to numerous health problems. These problems can surface in young people as well as those who are older. Common problems are motor vehicle accidents, injuries, high blood pressure, liver diseases, cancer, mental disorders, suicide and homicide. There are also many medications including over-the-counter medications that interact with alcohol. It is important to consult your health care provider to determine if it is safe to drink alcohol while taking certain medications.

If you commonly consume more alcohol than the recommended amounts, please talk to your health care provider now about help to quit drinking. Oftentimes, it is not easy to stop. Veterans Administration has programs to assist veterans to stop alcohol consumption. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Your life and the lives of your family and friends may depend on it. Let this be a happy and healthy holiday season.

If you would like more information about limiting or stopping alcohol consumption, health care and healthy living, visit the Veteran/ Family Health Education Centers in Tuskegee and Montgomery. Healthy Living to YOU!

Five Fast Facts about Drinking and Driving

1 Drunk driving causes approximately one-third of all traffic fatalities in the United States.

2 On average, someone in the U.S. is killed by a drunk driver every 40 minutes.

3 According to the law in all 50 U.S. states, a driver is considered to be legally drunk when his or her blood alcohol content (BAC) level is at or above .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL).

4 It takes approximately six hours after drinking for the body to completely eliminate alcohol from its system with a BAC level of .08 g/dL.

5 Approximately 75% of fatal crashes occurring between midnight and 3 a.m. involve alcohol.

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vouchers, which means we have more capacity to place Veterans directly into homes and apartments.”

Summit participants ranged from CAVHCS staff, members of Alabama Rural Coalition for Homeless (ARCH) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as well as, additional community providers and stakeholders from the array of homeless programs in Central and Southern Alabama.

“These groups do a great job of working with us to identify Veterans in need,” said Love. “Their focus is on all homeless, so when they identify a Veteran they know they can count on us to help. It’s a great working relationship. They count on us to support Veterans and we count on them to identify Homeless Veterans so we can achieve our goal.”



Summit attendees engage in a round table discussion during the recent Homeless Veteran Summit on CAVHCS' East Campus. Once the roundtables finished attendees presented highlights of their discussion to others in attendance. (VA photo by Eric Johnson)



Health Benefits Fairs were held recently on both campuses in support of Open Season for the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB). Representatives from Blue Cross Blue Shield, First Health (formerly Mail Handlers Benefit Plan), and Government Employees Hospital Association (GEHA) were available to answer staff questions concerning their health insurance plans. Open season continues to December 12. Employees are strongly encouraged to use MYPAY at <https://mypay.dfas.mil> when making their FEHB Open Season elections. (VA photo by Eric Johnson.)

2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS VA OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS FEDERAL HOLIDAY						
<h1 style="margin: 0;">December 2011</h1>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<input type="checkbox"/> National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month <input type="checkbox"/> International AIDS Awareness Month				1 *World AIDS Day *Civil Air Patrol Founded (1941)	2 *Artificial Heart Transplant Anniversary (1982)	3 *First Heart Transplant (1967) *International Day of Persons with Disabilities
National Aplastic Anemia Week (Dec. 4-10); National Hand Washing Awareness Week (Dec. 4-10)						
4	5 *International Volunteer Day	6	7 *Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (1941)	8 *U.S. Enters WWII (1941)	9	10 *Human Rights Day *American Veterans of WWII Founded (1944)
Human Rights Week (Dec. 10-17)						
11	12	13	14	15 *Bill of Rights Day	16 *Battle of the Bulge (1944)	17
18	19	20 *U.S. Invasion of Panama (Operation Just Cause) (1989)	21 *Chanukah Begins (Dec. 21-28)	22 *Winter Begins	23	24
25 *Christmas Day	26 *Christmas Day (Federal Holiday) *Kwanzaa Begins (Dec. 26-Jan. 1)		28 *Pledge of Allegiance Recognized (1945)	29	30	31 *New Year's Eve

The CAVHCS Community Calendar is not intended to be an all-inclusive, official calendar. It is intended rather to provide a medium for CAVHCS Salute to share upcoming events.

If you would like to add a CAVHCS event please email details directly to alan.bloom@va.gov. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published. Editorial considerations will be made for propriety, promptness and print space.