



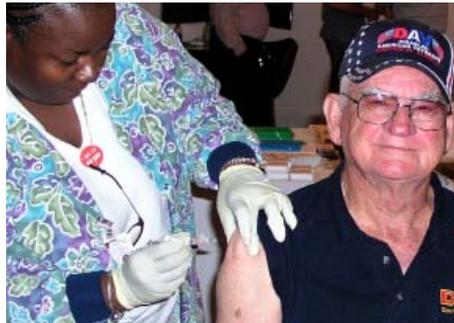
## Flu Season 2009, it's important to know 'The Facts'

Annual Flu Season campaigns are usually conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs from September through December, and each year VA medical facilities educate Veterans and staff about the benefits of bolstering immune systems by receiving the vaccination. However, this year, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) providers find themselves in the midst of a World Health Organization declared Flu Pandemic, which makes this year's Flu Campaign anything but usual.

"The VA, CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) World Health Organization and even Homeland Security are all actively involved in this year's flu campaigns," said Ms. Laundrea LaPradd-Bradley, CAVHCS' 2009 Flu Campaign Champion. "And while they're usually involved to a certain extent every year, this year we have the added

responsibility to focus on the H1N1 'Swine' Flu, which will be a completely separate vaccine."

Reports from the CDC anticipate the initial supply of H1N1



Starting in September, Veterans will be able to receive the annual Seasonal Flu vaccine - just like this member of the Disabled American Veterans did last year - in any CAVHCS clinical setting. The initial distribution of the developing 'H1N1' vaccine is expected in the October/November timeframe, and will be made available to high risk groups while supply levels grow.

vaccine to be available in the October/November time frame. The ongoing development of the H1N1 vaccine, and how it will be administered, could be a source of anxiety and confusion for Veterans and staff who have long been told about the benefits of annual vaccinations.

First and foremost, if you're a Veteran who got the Seasonal Flu vaccine - or were advised to get it - you should get vaccinated again this year. The Seasonal Flu vaccine will still provide benefits to your immune system, but will not target the "H1N1" antigen. "We've been educating Veterans and staff on the benefits of getting the Seasonal Flu vaccine for decades," said Dr. William Hill, CAVHCS Occupational Health. "And

*Please see*

*'Flu Campaign'*

*Page 2*

## CAVHCS Selects 2009/10 Woman of Excellence

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System, Diversity Advisory Committee, Federal Women's Program presented the Women's Equality Day Observance on Tuesday, August 25, 2009. The speaker for this observance was one of CAVHCS' own, Twila J. Mercan, Supervisor, Business Office, Toastmaster, District 77, Area 10 Governor, and Veteran. Ms. Mercan shared information on outstanding women who shaped the history of America, fought for and won the battle for Women's right to vote, along with those who stood beside world leaders to make a positive difference. The highlight of the observance was the naming of "CAVHCS Woman of Excellence 2009-2010." This year's "Woman of Excellence" is Peggy J. Hall, Nurse Practitioner, and Women's Veterans Program Manager.

The nomination read, "I can think of no occasion more appropriate to profile the hard work, dedication, motivation, and the accomplishments of Ms. Peggy Hall than on this National Women's Equality Day Observance."

The nomination went on to state that Ms. Hall is an

asset to CAVHCS and to healthcare. Her compassionate care, calm demeanor, professional attitude, and successful track record for impacting the lives of so many are attributes that epitomize the meaning of "CAVHCS Woman of Excellence." The newly appointed Associate Director for CAVHCS, Ms. Anita Willard joined the group in congratulating Ms. Hall and expressed her commitment to working with CAVHCS and making healthcare second to none and number one in our nation.



Ms. Peggy J. Hall (inset and right), Nurse Practitioner, and CAVHCS Women's Veterans Program Manager, receives a certificate from Ms. Anita Willard recognizing her selection as CAVHCS Woman of Excellence, 2009-2010.

## 'Flu Campaign'

From Page 1

those benefits to our immune systems remain crucial.”

“Our plan will be to offer Veterans the Seasonal Flu vaccine through any clinical opportunity just as we did last year,” said LaPradd-Bradley. “But we’ll also be offering Seasonal Flu vaccine through established ‘Flu Clinics’ that will be open from 6 am through 10 pm in both medical centers (Tuskegee and Montgomery) and from 8 am through 4 pm in our Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Dothan, Fort Rucker and Columbus, Ga. Our flu clinics will be where we vaccinate staff this year.”

So if the H1N1 vaccine is a completely separate vaccine, how will Veterans and staff be vaccinated this year? After decades of trying to get as many Veterans and staff vaccinated as possible, the tendency might be to assume that everyone should be vaccinated with both the Seasonal and H1N1 vaccines. However, available supplies of the H1N1 vaccine will necessitate the targeting of high risk groups for initial H1N1 vaccination.

So how will Veterans and staff know if they’re in a high risk group? “That question makes getting the Seasonal Flu vaccine that much more important,” said LaPradd-Bradley. “Generally speaking staff that interacts with patients will be in a targeted, high risk group. However, for Veterans who are not health care providers, the targeted high risk groups for Seasonal Flu and H1N1 are not completely the same.

“So especially this year, Veterans should come in and get their Seasonal Flu shot. While they’re here for that

shot, we will be able to review their records and advise them if they will be targeted to receive the H1N1 vaccine during the initial roll out in the October/November timeframe.”

“Members of our staff who interact with patients are generally within a targeted group that – unless they’ve been told by a doctor not to get vaccinated – should get both vaccines,” said Hill. “But that said, even staff should plan on coming into the Flu Clinics during the Seasonal Flu Campaign so we can advise them individually.”

CAVHCS staff, as well as a wider scope of federal employees, will primarily be vaccinated and documented as receiving vaccinations through the Flu Clinics. Another new and unusual aspect of this year’s flu season will be the additional steps necessary to ensure the additional documentation dictated by the current pandemic. “The pandemic makes this year’s campaign more of a matter of national security,” said Hill. “There will be additional, more robust reporting requirements. So we’re getting ready to receive the training so we can be fully compliant.”

From developing a vaccine to managing the several evolving methods for delivering as many as three shots, this year’s flu season is both fluid and more complex than campaigns of the recent past. However, one thing is definite. “We will kick off our Flu Season Campaign September 1,” said LaPradd-Bradley. “And as usual, we’ll try to find as many ways to make the vaccine as accessible as possible. One of our early outreach opportunities will be in conjunction with the upcoming CAVHCS Health and Safety Fairs (September 10 in Tuskegee from 9 am-2 pm and September 11 in Montgomery from 9am-2 pm). We’ll announce more outreach opportunities throughout this year’s campaign.”

## CAVHCS All-Stars

Ward 2A and Surgery Staff were very professional and personal at the same time! Having served this great country for 20 plus years it is very comforting to experience the level of care and attention I was afforded today! -- My Sincere Thanks!  
*Evan B., Enterprise, AL*

I received outstanding service that was very beneficial and effective to my treatment. On a scale of one-to-ten, I will give them a “10” for a job well done. Please offer my thanks to Dr. John Harris and his wonderful staff of technicians.  
-- With Appreciation, *Eli H., Montgomery, AL*

My compliments to the P.T. Department with special kudos to Janet and Larry. As an amputee and World War II Vet, they have gone beyond their call to assist me in my endeavor to walk unassisted with a cane. I am not there yet, but with their help, possibly in the near future I will be. Thank you also for the other staff members of the entire VA facility branch of Montgomery. They all do an excellent job! -- Sincerely, *John R. M., Montgomery, AL*

I’d like to express my appreciation for Dr. Raghu Sundaram. He really and truly cares for his patients. When I have questions about my health care or symptoms, he takes the time to explain in detail, so I can better understand my illness. Dr. Sundaram and his staff have always been courteous and understanding. I am grateful for their expertise and compassion. -- Sincerely yours, *Jimmy R. W.*

## The CAVHCS Salute



Accredited by  
The Joint Commission

The CAVHCS Salute is produced by the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care (CAVHCS) Public Affairs Office. CAVHCS Salute is an unofficial, internal communications publication.

Director  
Associate Director  
Acting Associate Director, Patient Care Services  
Chief of Staff  
Public Affairs Officer

Glen E. Struchtemeyer  
Anita F. Willard, MPH  
Carolyn Caver-Gordon  
Cliff Robinson, MD  
Al Bloom

## Employees of the Month



### Montgomery Campus Ms. Shai Holden

Shai Holden, IT Specialist, has been selected as the Employee of the Month for the CAVHCS West Montgomery Campus for her exceptional customer service to Central Alabama employees. An IT trainer by trade, she eagerly took on the leadership of the Office 2007 CAVHCS rollout. During the month of July she ensured over 1500 CAVHCS employees on the Tuskegee and Montgomery Campuses and CBOCS received the upgraded software package – better Office applications, easier transfer of data between applications and enhanced desktop security.

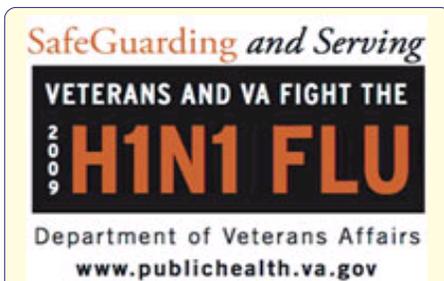
Shai has headed several projects such as; Upgrade management and execution for the Tuskegee and Montgomery Campuses to enable deployment of the standard desktop; fielded questions and concerns from users and resolved problems; achieved a 93% completion rate for IT customers receiving Office 2007 upgrades, and made it immediately available to the VISN; resolved any challenges during the post-Office 2007 rollout; SynQuest training data base manager, maintained an outdated system and provided instructional support to CAVHCS personnel until VA can finalize the new on-line education system. She also resolved more than 27 CAVHCS IT help desk tickets, installed PKI on CAVHCS Users desktops, enabling personnel to transmit sensitive patient and employee data safely and securely, and has a Superior Customer Support attitude!

### Tuskegee Campus Ms. Margaret Sutton-Brown



Margaret Sutton-Brown, CTRS, has exhibited a passion that has resulted in the following tangible benefits for the last five to six years: 1) \$9,360.00 donated to Voluntary Services for haircuts, shaves and shampoos from the American Legion Post 267 in Columbus, Georgia; 2) \$4,000.00 donated to Voluntary Services haircuts, shaves and shampoos from the American Legion Post 296 in Destin, Florida; 3) \$6,000.00 donated from the American Legion Post 135 in Phenix City, Alabama.

Such passion deserves to have a light shined upon it and today we shine that light on Margaret for all to see. It shows us all that when an employee is committed and passionate about work, it can become infectious and can help community leaders reach out to the heroes we admire so greatly. It affords us an opportunity to discuss our organization, our vision, mission and goals, as well as a chance to include portals of entry for them to help our Veterans. It is a privilege to nominate Margaret Sutton-Brown as Employee of the month for her loyalty and support of the Veterans, the processes used here at CAVHCS and her total commitment to a “job well done.”



### 2009 Flu Vaccination and VA

This year, VA hopes to give more than 3 million Veterans and VA staff seasonal flu vaccine and is preparing to give H1N1 flu vaccine to a similar number of Veterans and VA staff, if it is approved for use.

At the request of the White House, VA is also preparing to help vaccinate some other Federal employees as well.

## Flu Season Dragnet

We've conducted a Flu Season Dragnet for ...just the facts!

**Fact: The Seasonal Flu vaccine will NOT give you the flu!**

**Fact: The Seasonal Flu vaccine is separate from the H1N1 “Swine” Flu vaccine.**

**Fact: All Veterans and Staff should seek the Seasonal Flu vaccine unless otherwise directed by a physician.**

**Fact: No appointment is needed to get the Seasonal Flu vaccine.**

**Fact: The Seasonal Flu vaccine does NOT vaccinate you from H1N1 Flu antigen, but will bolster your immune system.**



# Combined Federal Campaign ready to Kick Off

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is the only authorized solicitation of employees in the Federal workplace on behalf of charitable organizations. It continues to be the largest and most successful workplace fundraising model in the world, with more than 300 CFC campaigns throughout the country and internationally to help to raise millions of dollars each year.

The CAVHCS 2009 CFC Campaign is set to kick off September 14. This year's financial goal is \$48,750.00 and as usual the overall goal is 100 percent contact. Pledges made by Federal civilian, postal and military donors during the campaign season (Sept. 1 to Dec. 15) support eligible non-profit organizations of their choice that provide health and human service benefits throughout the world.

With the number of participating charities estimated at over 20,000 nonprofit, charitable organizations, CFC provides the most inclusive workplace-giving campaign in the world.

Year-in and year-out, VA's charitable giving through CFC has met or exceeded our targets. In 2008 alone, we met 127% of our goal, with an average 68.4% employee

## Transformation

### Be part of VA effort

You've heard about Transformation; NOW BE PART OF IT! VA's transformation into a 21st Century Veteran-centric, results-driven, forward-looking organization has begun. In April, more than 16,000 of you shared your ideas for that vision with Secretary Shinseki. Now he wants to hear your "Big Ideas" that will transform the way VA serves Veterans.

There are two ways to contribute: First, any employee with a "Big Idea" on how to improve the Department – for Veterans and for employees – can share it with the Secretary! Just click on "Big Ideas" at [vaww1.va.gov/opa/](http://vaww1.va.gov/opa/), log on to the online suggestion box and submit your idea in your own words. Second, you may be among a randomly selected group of 26,000 VA employees invited to participate in an in-depth organizational survey beginning next week.

Secretary Shinseki seeks and values your input, and the survey results and your Big Ideas will help identify changes he will consider to make VA 21st Century-ready to deliver for our Veterans, their families, and caregivers now and into the future. If selected for the extended survey, you will be notified via e-mail or direct contact through your HR representative. Thank you for your support of this important effort. For further details, please see the full description of these efforts at [vaww1.va.gov/opa/](http://vaww1.va.gov/opa/) "Big Idea." This is your chance to help shape the future of VA!



participation rate. Nineteen VACO organizations reached or exceeded a 75 percent participation rate.

That's what the CFC does so very well; it provides the opportunity to give gifts of hope, opportunity, and charity in the finest sense of those words. In giving, we also receive. From bringing education resources to our inner cities, to helping harness the power of medical research; from providing service animals to the visually impaired, to helping a non-profit fly a cancer-stricken child to a distant medical center for specialized treatment - your time and effort strengthened our sense of purpose in ourselves, in each other, and in the communities we serve.

CAVHCS has already conducted training of CFC key workers, and the CFC booklets listing the more than 20,000 nonprofit, charitable organizations participating in this year's campaign are now available for review. If you have any questions please contact your work center key worker or CAVHCS' 2009 Project Chairperson William Wheat, Jr., Engineering Program Support Assistant, Ext. 3639; Alternate Project Officer Judy Davidson, Secretary Pathology & Lab, Ext. 4710.

## Diversity, Inclusion Plan

VA has launched two major initiatives aimed at promoting diversity and inclusion in the VA workforce. Earlier this year, VA issued its first National VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan specifically designed "to foster a diverse workforce and inclusive work environment" through strategic outreach, retention, and inclusion initiatives.

VA is the first major cabinet level department to issue a Strategic Plan devoted exclusively to workforce diversity and inclusion. The Plan defines diversity and inclusion in the broadest context and links them to high organizational performance in the 21st century.

In May, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki, publicly stated his personal support of the Plan and his expectations that all Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and key officials develop implementation plans to achieve the goals and objectives contained in the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. In a related initiative, VA created its first Department-wide Diversity Council to serve as an advisory body and forum to share best practices, leverage resources, and drive innovative initiatives designed to promote diversity and inclusion in VA's workforce, service delivery, and operations.

The Council is composed of senior VA leadership, union representatives, and internal stakeholders. As the second largest Federal agency, VA has stepped into the vanguard of advancing the principles of diversity and inclusion in the public sector. See the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan on the Web at [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/strat.pdf](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/strat.pdf).

# Flu Season: Know the facts about H1N1

The novel H1N1 flu virus is causing illness in infected persons in the United States and countries around the world. CDC expects that illnesses may continue for some time. As a result, you or people around you may become ill. If so, you need to recognize the symptoms and know what to do.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

The high risk groups for novel H1N1 flu are not known at this time, but it's possible that they may be the same as for seasonal influenza. People at higher risk of serious complications from seasonal flu include people age 65 years and older, children younger than 5 years old, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people who are immunosuppressed (e.g., taking immunosuppressive medications, infected with HIV).

*CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.* This is a change from the previous recommendation that ill persons stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer.

This guidance does not apply to health care settings where the exclusion period should be continued for 7 days from symptom onset or until the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer; see [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines\\_infection\\_control.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm) for updates about the health care setting. This revision for the community setting is based on epidemiologic data about the overall risk of severe illness and death and attempts to balance the risks of severe illness from influenza and the potential benefits of decreasing transmission through the exclusion of ill persons with the goal of minimizing social disruption. This guidance will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

## Avoid Contact with Others

If you are sick, you may be ill for a week or longer. You should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel and not going to work or school, for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.) If you leave the house to seek medical care, wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, and cover your coughs and sneezes with a



tissue. In general, you should avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially people at increased risk of severe illness from influenza. With seasonal flu, people may be contagious from one day before they develop symptoms to up to 7 days after they get sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

Sick individuals should stay at home until the end of the exclusion period, to the extent possible, except when necessary to seek required medical care. Sick individuals should avoid contact with others.

*Keeping people with a fever at home may reduce the number of people who get infected, since elevated temperature is associated with increased shedding of influenza virus.* CDC recommends this exclusion period regardless of whether or not antiviral medications are used.

*When people who have had influenza-like illness return to work, school, or other community settings they should continue to practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene and avoid close contact with people they know to be at increased risk of influenza-related complications.* Because some people may shed influenza virus before they feel ill, and because some people with influenza will not have a fever, it is important that all people cover their cough and wash hands often.

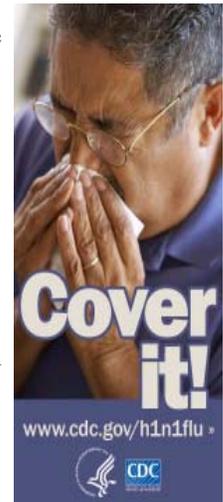
To lessen the chance of spreading influenza viruses that are resistant to antiviral medications, adherence to good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene is as important for people taking antiviral medications as it is for others.

## Who should get the H1N1 Vaccine?

On July 29, 2009 the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met to develop recommendations on who should receive the novel 2009-H1N1 vaccine.

The committee recommended that vaccination efforts initially focus on five target groups: vaccination for pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years, and people ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for novel H1N1, because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

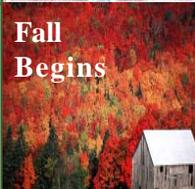
Once the demand for vaccine for the prioritized groups has been met at the local level, programs and providers should also begin vaccinating everyone from the ages of 25 through 64 years. Current studies indicate that the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. However, once vaccine demand among younger age groups has been met, programs and providers should offer vaccination to people 65 or older.





CAVHCS Recreation Therapist Zandra Butler(I) and Social Worker Justina Okeke (r) cozy up to Community Living Center (CLC) resident and Disc Jockey Mr. Holloway during this year's CLC Senior Prom.

# September

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
National Osteopathic Medicine Month - <a href="http://www.osteopathic.org">www.osteopathic.org</a> National Preparedness Month - <a href="http://www.ready.gov/america">www.ready.gov/america</a> National Sickle Cell Awareness Month - <a href="http://www.sicklecelldisease.org">www.sicklecelldisease.org</a>		<b>1</b> <b>CAVHCS Seasonal Flu Campaign</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>			<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> <b>Health and Safety Fair</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
National Healthcare Environmental Services and Housekeeping Week	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <b>NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH</b>	<b>16</b> National Assisted Living Week	<b>17</b>	National POW/MIA Recognition Day 	<b>19</b>
Prostate Cancer Awareness Week	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> <b>Fall Begins</b> 	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> National Surgical Technologists Week 		
<b>27</b> National Adult Immunization Awareness Week 			<b>30</b> National Women's Health and Fitness Day	Cholesterol Education Month - <a href="http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov">www.nhlbi.nih.gov</a> Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month - <a href="http://www.wcn.org">www.wcn.org</a> Healthy Aging Month - <a href="http://www.healthyaging.net">www.healthyaging.net</a> Leukemia, Lymphoma and Melanoma Awareness Month - <a href="http://www.lls.org">www.lls.org</a> National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month - <a href="http://www.recoverymonth.gov">www.recoverymonth.gov</a>		

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](mailto:alan.bloom@va.gov). Submissions are not guaranteed to be published. Editorial considerations will be made for propriety, promptness and print space.