



Wiregrass CBOC Grand Opening

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) recently officially opened the Wiregrass Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Lyster Army Health Clinic, Fort Rucker, Ala. in a short ceremony.

“The grand opening of the Wiregrass CBOC exemplifies our commitment to continue to provide services closer to where Veterans live,” said CAVHCS Director, Glen E. Struchtemeyer during the ceremony. “It also represents the continued momentum of increased collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.”

In the case of the Wiregrass Region’s new Community Based Outpatient Clinic, that continued momentum has been built upon sharing agreements and successfully accessing special funding that was established to support synergistic opportunities.

In August of 2007 CAVHCS announced the signing of an expanded sharing agreement with Lyster Army Health Clinic, Fort Rucker, Ala., which lead to the opening of the VA Wiregrass

Outpatient Clinic March 21, 2008. As a result many of the Veterans in the Wiregrass Region no longer had to drive more than 100 miles to CAVHCS’ Medical Centers in Montgomery, Ala. or Tuskegee, Ala. for primary services like X-ray, laboratory work, optometry consultations or pharmacy support.



CAVHCS Director Glen E. Struchtemeyer talks about the expansion of services closer to where Veterans live during the recent Grand Opening Ceremony of the Wiregrass Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Lyster Health Clinic, Fort Rucker, Ala. (VA photo by Al Bloom)

The expansion of the original 2007 sharing agreement coincided with a Joint Incentive Fund (JIF) project approval. JIF is a result of Section 721 of the 2003 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which required the establishment of a joint fund to provide incentives for creating innovative DoD/VA sharing initiatives.

The purpose of JIF, which is administered by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), is to provide seed money for creative sharing initiatives at facility, regional and national levels to facilitate the mutually beneficial coordination, use, or exchange of health care resources. The goal is to improve the access to and quality and cost effectiveness of, the health care provided to beneficiaries of both departments.

JIF projects compete annually for developmental dollars and must benefit both the DOD and VA party in

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CAVHCS Recognizes our Women of Excellence

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS), Director’s Diversity Advisory Committee observed Women’s Equality Day Wednesday, August 25th at Montgomery, and Thursday, August 26th at Tuskegee.

This year’s recognition is celebration of the 90th anniversary of women’s right to vote. The theme is “Women Winning the Vote.” The Guest Speaker for this occasion was Dr. Cecelia A. Walker, Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor, at Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System.

To recognize this important Constitutional anniversary, the daring and heroism of women continuous fight for expanded rights, and to reflect on women who have displayed high levels of achievements through unwavering determination, the Committee recognized “CAVHCS Women of Excellence.”

Nominations were solicited for women meeting specific criteria in three unique categories determined by grade levels. CAVHCS Woman of Excellence winner in category I is **Novella Brown-Scott**, Category II winner is **Dr. Cecelia A. Walker**, and Category III winner is **Doretha P. Heard**. Each winner earned the title, “CAVHCS Woman of Excellence, 2010-2011,” is the recipient of a personalized engraved award, along with a monetary prize for their achievements.



CAVHCS Woman of Excellence 2010-2011 award winners Dr. Cecelia A. Walker, Doretha P. Heard and Novella Brown-Scott (l-r), received recognition during two recent observances celebrating Women’s Equality Day. This year’s theme celebrated was ‘Women Winning the Vote.’

CAVHCS All-Stars

My name is Lynn J.. My husband's name is James S. J., and we were so scared when we started to use the VA recently because of a bad experience with his father 40 years ago. It was terrible and still burns in our minds. But I just wanted to let you know that everything has changed so much that we feel there has been a definite turn-around in the care given to Veterans. My husband uses Dr. Foster for his heart care and he is just great. Please tell him how much we appreciate him and his support staff. -- Respectfully, Lynn J. , Alexander City, Ala.

To the Administrator – Columbus VA Clinic; Re: Dr. Ahmed

My name is Milton K., and I am a twice wounded veteran of WW2 and I am a patient of Dr. Ahmed's. I would like to take this opportunity to express that Dr. Ahmed has always been attentive when I have seen him and seemed concerned about my health problems. I would like to thank Dr. Ahmed for the care that I received while being treated by him. He does excellent work. -- Sincerely, Milton F. K.

We are very appreciative of the care we get from Dr. M. Stevens, Dermatologist, in Montgomery. We are hopeful that you will keep him on staff as he provides a very necessary service. He relates well with his patients, is very thorough and professional. He is a benefit to the care here at the VA in Montgomery.

-- Respectfully, Robert L. F., Valley, Ala.

I want to thank Ms. Gordon. She is a great worker and performs her job very well. She is the social Worker in Building 62. I think she needs promotion or some type of recognition for the great job she does. Please commend her for me.

-- Thank you, Nathan B.

This note is to commend Ms. Okeke and all the staff who work with her. We deeply appreciate and will never forget the loving care and support they gave to our Dad recently, Mr. Willie W., during his illness and stay at the Tuskegee VA. You all are wonderful people working in a beautiful facility.

-- Thank you, Mr. W's Daughters,
Wilhelmina and Shirley Ann

I want to commend Gerald Johnson, Practitioner Deborah Ambers, Nurse Wanda Pace, Nurse Gloria Wright. They are an excellent team. They were very nice and helpful. Please give them a "High 5" for me.

-- Thank you, Gene and Suzi A.
Tuskegee, Ala.

Top 10 List

Category - Top 10 questions asked leading to a Perfect 10 experience



10. Do nurses communicate well with patients?
9. Do doctors communicate well with patients?
8. How responsive is the staff are to patient needs.
7. How well does staff help the patient manage pain?
6. How well does staff communicate with the patient about medicines?
5. Was pertinent information provided when the patient was discharged?
4. Was the treatment area or room clean?
3. Was the treatment area or room quiet?



2. How would the patient rate the quality of his/her overall care?

1. Would the patient recommend CAVHCS to others?

The CAVHCS Salute



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the Wiregrass Region have been the outstanding teamwork and professionalism displayed by our two staffs," said VA Southeast Network, Deputy Director, Mark Anderson. "In fact, the CAVHCS/Lyster Health Clinic team has built an outstanding reputation for being able to successfully engage the Joint Incentive Fund process. When we reflect upon the responsibility of accurately and convincingly engaging a process that is extremely technical and competitive, and then consider the success they've had that lead us to today's grand opening – it speaks volumes about the expertise and abilities of the CAVHCS/Lyster team."

Collaborative efforts in healthcare between VA and DoD are quickly becoming the norm. In 2009, the Disability Evaluation System (DES) pilot program expanded to 27 sites, conducting 13,241 Medical Evaluation Boards. At these sites, VA and DoD use a single separation examination and rating for separating servicemembers in lieu of two separate examinations usually required of our outgoing military, dramatically reducing processing time. Currently, the average reductions in processing time for these programs are 63 percent and 31.5 percent, respectively.

In August 2008 CAVHCS and Lyster Health Clinic received JIF approval to support construction and rehab of the Lyster Health Clinic's 2nd Floor. This \$2.9 million project began in June of 2009 and was completed by the Army Corps of Engineers in June of 2010. The result is the grand opening of the Wiregrass Community Based Outpatient Clinic. The planned expansion of services include Primary Care, Mental Health, MRI/CT, Audiology, and eventually Sleep Study screening and Dental.

In June of 2010, the momentum of increased local Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense collaboration resulted in the installation of a Hitachi Open Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Toshiba Computed Axial Tomography (CAT) Scan suite in Lyster Health Clinic. This \$3.5 million joint investment resulted in the delivery of a state-of-the-art imaging capability, which provides a direct diagnostic benefit for both the active duty and Veteran communities.

CAVHCS' recent success in expanding services to Veterans through collaboration with DoD care providers is not limited to the Wiregrass region. "We've been successful in engaging JIF elsewhere," explained Struchtemeyer. "In the past we worked with the 42nd Medical Group on Maxwell (Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Ala.) to secure a new MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) in Montgomery. Each of us, by ourselves,

didn't have enough usage to fund an MRI. However, together we were able to justify the expenditure; JIF agreed and provided the funding.

"We're actively looking for opportunities to expand services throughout our catchment area by collaborating with DoD - like with Martin Army Hospital (Fort Benning, Ga.). We've already been doing things like providing social work support to expand our working relationship and support a more seamless transition for wounded warriors. If we find additional opportunity to access JIF funding for another project that will benefit both of our beneficiaries, then I'm sure we'll be ready to submit it for consideration. We have a strong track record."



Wiregrass Veterans render a hand salute while reciting the Pledge of Allegiance during the recent Grand Opening Ceremony of the Wiregrass Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Lyster Health Clinic, Fort Rucker, Ala.



A Joint Incentive Fund (JIF) grant of \$2.9 million funded the Army Corps of Engineers lead reconstruction of a portion of the 2nd Floor of the Lyster U.S. Army Clinic in Fort Rucker, Ala., which has allowed Veterans in the Wiregrass Region to receive more services – closer to where they live. (VA photo by Robin Johnson)



A \$3.5 million Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense collaboration recently resulted in the installation of a Hitachi Open Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Toshiba Computed Axial Tomography (CAT) Scan suite.

CAT scans and MRIs can show several types of tissue with great clarity such as bone, soft tissue and blood vessels and allows easy differentiation between soft tissue structures. MRIs provide improved imaging without the use X-ray radiation. (VA photo by Robin Johnson)

CAVHCS Photo Gallery

CAVHCS celebrated Labor Day with activities and events in support of Tuskegee VA Medical Center inpatient Veterans. *VA Images by Eric Johnson*



Diabetes: Women Veterans

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of Americans with diabetes has tripled to 23.5 million in the past three decades. More than 10 percent of women have some form of diabetes - but about half don't know it. Diabetes is one of the most common diagnoses in women Veterans treated at VA facilities.

Diabetes is a disease marked by high levels of blood sugar. It can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, limb amputation, kidney damage, nerve damage, and blindness. However, treatment and vigilance can greatly reduce the likelihood of complications.

The VA can help fight diabetes. Recent studies show that the Veterans Health Administration excels in diabetes care compared with other health care organizations scoring 13 percent higher than the national sample. *My HealtheVet* is a free, online program to educate Veterans about health care



topics, including diabetes, and allows them to track their care. In addition, each VA facility has a Women Veterans Program Manager to assist women Veterans in getting the proper treatment and services.

The VA's goal is to prevent diabetes and diabetes-related complications with management programs that keep blood sugar or glucose levels close to a normal range through diet and exercise and medication management.

Women are now the fastest growing subgroup of U.S. Veterans. The number of women Veterans is expected to increase dramatically in the next 10 years, and VA health care is in high demand by the women Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Department of Veterans Affairs understands the health care needs of women Veterans and is committed to meeting these needs. Women Veterans served and they deserve the best quality care.



What is eBenefits?

eBenefits is an online service jointly offered by VA and DoD. With eBenefits, service members and Vets can directly access their personal benefit information safely and securely - as well as download a DD-214, check claims status, and more. eBenefits is a one-stop shop for benefits-related online tools and information for Wounded Warriors, Veterans, Service members, Family of Service Members, and those who care for them.

<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/appmanager/eb/veterans>

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VA, Unions Labor Day Example

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) workforce of more than 300,000 - including more than 90,000 who are Veterans - knows one of its objectives as it observed Labor Day is to help young Veterans find jobs.

"This Labor Day, we are not only celebrating the dedicated, talented VA employees working to deliver benefits and care to the Nation's heroes," says Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We also are focusing our efforts in encouraging employers to consider Veterans when they need workers with a strong work ethic, leadership and a drive for success."

Shinseki said VA partners with the Department of Labor and the Office of Personnel Management in helping implement the President's Federal Veterans Hiring Initiative. VA's own national program aims at bringing even more Veterans into its workforce and is a model and source of information for other federal agencies. VA has the largest percentage of Veteran employees among civilian agencies - approximately 30 percent - and is increasing its number of regional employment coordinators to give Veterans more access to VA jobs.

Union members are about two-thirds of VA's workforce and Shinseki praises five national unions and their leadership for ongoing support of Veterans and VA's Veteran employees. VA is one of very few federal agencies to have maintained a National Partnership Council (NPC) with its unions since 1994.

NPC representatives from management and the unions openly discuss new policies and programs and promote critical labor-management relations training. NPC members participate in many VA task forces created to execute new business practices.

Furthermore, NPC this year is helping to develop the new labor-management forums mandated by a presidential executive order signed last December. VA has also decided to create forums at the local and intermediate levels, in addition to its national organization.

Shinseki points out that Veterans and union members are among the Americans who are benefiting, even in the short term, from the department's commitment of \$1.8 billion in Recovery Act funds to improvements at 1,200 VA facility locations across the country.

"Working Americans will help our Nation's economic recovery, and Veterans are especially prepared to participate in that challenge," says Shinseki. "Veterans have the discipline, work ethic and technical skills in areas such as acquisition, information technology, communications, security, information gathering and medical technology."

Useful employment information for Veterans seeking jobs and employers looking to hire Veterans can be found at <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/>.

Congressman Bobby Bright (AL, District 2) addresses the mix of Veterans and active duty servicemembers attending the recent Grand Opening Ceremony of the Wiregrass Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Lyster Health Clinic, Fort Rucker, Ala. (VA photo by Al Bloom)



September

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cholesterol Education Month - www.nhlbi.nih.gov Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month - www.wcn.org Healthy Aging Month - www.healthyaging.net Leukemia, Lymphoma and Melanoma Awareness Month - www.lls.org National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month - www.recoverymonth.gov						
		7	8	9	10	11
12 National Assisted Living Week	13	14 Enhancing Diversity Through Education Exhibition Montgomery's Multipurpose Room 11 am - 2 pm	15 	16 CFC Kickoff Tuskegee Campus Building 90 Theater 10 am - 11:30.	17 National POW/MIA Recognition Day 	18
19 National Rehabilitation Awareness Celebration Week www.nraf-rehabnet.org	20	21	22	23 Autumn Begins 	24	25
26 Gold Star Mother's Day 	27 National Adult Immunization Awareness Week	28 	29 National Women's Health and Fitness Day www.fitnessday.com	30 	National Osteopathic Medicine Month - www.osteopathic.org National Preparedness Month - www.ready.gov/america National Sickle Cell Awareness Month - www.sicklecelldisease.org	

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.