



Stimulus Bill Spending Benefits CAVHCS Veterans

As recent visitors to Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System's (CAVHCS) Medical Centers in Tuskegee and Montgomery will attest, there's been a recent increase in construction projects at the facilities. CAVHCS has been budgeted to spend more than \$2.5 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) or Stimulus Bill funding, designed to not only assist the American economy in the short term, but benefit Veterans for years to come.

"We have Stimulus projects ranging from the renovation of our EKG Unit and Sprinkler/Fire Alarm systems to modernizing our Nursing Home," said CAVHCS Chief of Facilities and Engineering, Leah Griffin. "We also have projects focused on energy conservation that will literally realize savings for decades to come."

One of the functions of a VA Facilities Manager is maintaining the material condition of the properties' infrastructure under the manager's control. So, while there were funds

already in the budgetary pipeline to accomplish that task, additional funding



Virgil Bryant of Heflin, Ala. works on the \$1.5 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funded renovation of CAVHCS' Community Living Center, which was Awarded to a Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned business and put an additional 30 tradesmen to work.

that will not only assist the economy but benefit Veterans for years to come, is always welcome. Plus, when that responsibility includes the upkeep of a medical facility 85 years old like CAVHCS' Tuskegee Campus and 70 years old like its Montgomery Campus, there are always legitimate projects.

"Our process involves identifying immediate and long-term maintenance requirements, presenting them to our regional offices and receiving budgetary funding to maintain our facilities," said Griffin. "However, this year our budget was bolstered by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which means we had an opportunity to target additional projects that will provide long-term improvements and savings."

One of CAVHCS' major ARRA projects is the renovation of CAVHCS'

'Please see 'Stimulus Spending'

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VA kicks off National, Multi-media Recruitment Campaign

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has introduced its first national TV advertising campaign to attract qualified leads and subsequently recruit and hire doctors, nurses and pharmacists to fill vacant positions. A secondary but equally important goal of the effort is to dispel the myth of "your father's VA" by promoting the exceptional quality of care, advanced technology, the sheer size of the health system and the benefits of working for the Department.

The television commercials debuted on Veteran's Day, Wednesday, November 11, 2009 on the Country Music Awards. Overall, the campaign will run on network and cable television and will also be featured across a variety of web sites, including HULU, Yahoo!, and niche health care sites, among others, through banner ads and rich media.

This campaign will generate interest in VA from millions of viewers encouraging them to view your job vacancies at www.VAcareers.va.gov. To see the various commercials and to get a behind the scenes look at the making of "Today's VA" visit: <http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/wmc/VACareers/splash.asp>, TV Commercials proudly featured on "The American Veteran" <http://www1.va.gov/opa/feature/amervet/video/amvet2009-12-1.aspx>.



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CAVHCS All-Stars

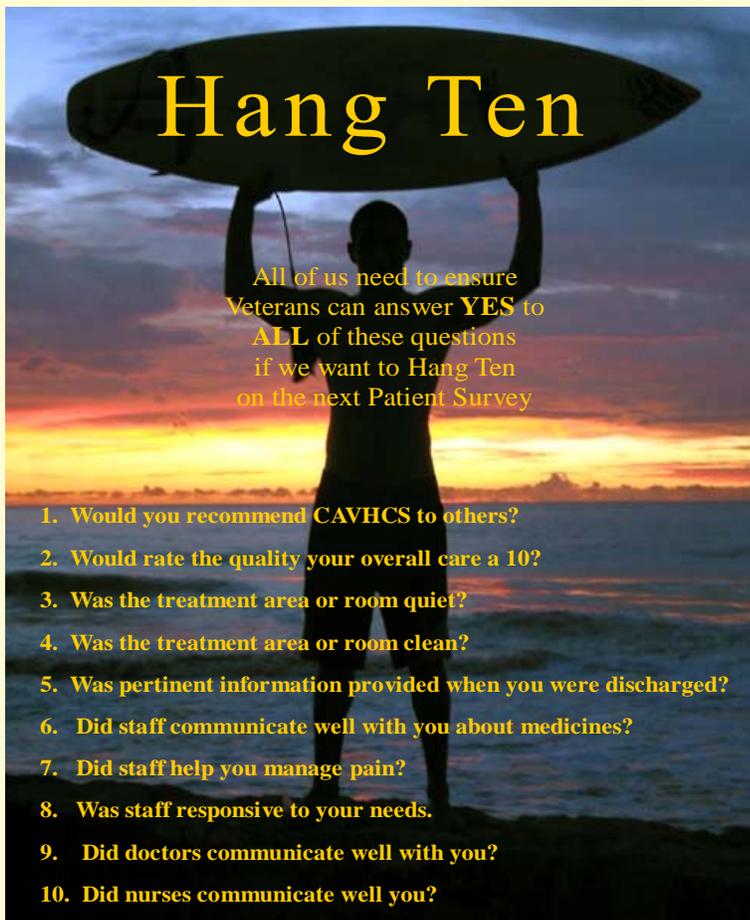
If your office handles “complaints,” then I hope you will accept a simple “thank you.” I am only one service-connected Veteran. However, it seems like every time I go into my local CBOC for treatment, that not only me alone, but all the Veterans are treated in the utmost caring fashion. Your staff are caring, compassionate, efficient and very professional. Please convey my gratitude to all of them, but particularly Dr. Lakesh, Bruce Clyne and Dr. Welch, Maria Acobe, RN, Evelyn Sonn, RN and Mo Funderbirk. -- *Sincerely, Dan H.*

I would like to say Charlotte Thompson, Audiologist, is a very good outstanding worker and a true warrior for the Vets. She is one of the best you have on staff. You need more like her who know how to communicate. -- *Thanks again, Larry T.*

I would like to take this time to welcome you aboard and tell you about two outstanding employees! I am speaking of Ms. Jennifer Smith and Ms. Williams in your “Release of Information” Office in Montgomery. They provide outstanding service each time I visit. I told them I would ask you to stop by and personally say, “Thanks for the good work!”

-- *Greg J. Montgomery, Ala.*

I have been coming into the clinic for a little over a year now and my blood pressure has been very hard to maintain. Dr. Ahmed has prescribed several prescriptions to get it under control and on my last visit; my blood pressure was at a manageable level. I just wanted to thank him for a job well done. Thank you so much for your time. -- *Ms. Cherry A. F. Columbus, Ga.*



Hang Ten

All of us need to ensure Veterans can answer YES to ALL of these questions if we want to Hang Ten on the next Patient Survey

1. Would you recommend CAVHCS to others?
2. Would rate the quality your overall care a 10?
3. Was the treatment area or room quiet?
4. Was the treatment area or room clean?
5. Was pertinent information provided when you were discharged?
6. Did staff communicate well with you about medicines?
7. Did staff help you manage pain?
8. Was staff responsive to your needs.
9. Did doctors communicate well with you?
10. Did nurses communicate well you?

Dear Director, Every so often a person comes along with a new approach in their profession that provides hope to needy people. Most of the time new and modern techniques are introduced and implemented in a simple but effective manner to help them cope with the day-to-day challenges in their lives. My family suffered a major crisis with our son since the 1990's after the completion of his tour of duty in the Army. He was later committed in the Mental Health Division, Tuskegee Veterans Hospital for less than a month. After his committed term he was sent to live in the dormitory in the Phoenix City/Columbus area. He soon left the facility and has been homeless since. These and other problems have been echoed to Dr. Blackshear, Clinical Psychologist from my wife and I. He has called us and has spoken with Jesse. I am not sure what he said to our son, but within hours he was back at the hospital to start again receiving treatment. We are very thankful to Dr. Blackshear for everything that he has done for our son and wanted to thank the VA for such an excellent staff member. His kindness and concern have placed him high on our list!

-- *Sincerely, Jesse A. B., Sr.*

I would just like to thank the office staff of the Dothan CBOC VA Medical Center. They are the most caring and helpful people in the VA offices that I have ever met. Please thank Ms. Downing and Ms. Hardwick.

-- *Respectfully, Ned B.*

The CAVHCS Salute



Accredited by
The Joint Commission

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Delivering on Promise of Transparency

Secretary Shinseki Releases Hospital Report Card

For the second consecutive year, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released a “hospital report card” as part of VA’s effort to provide the public with a transparent accounting of the quality and safety of its care.

“This report demonstrates VA’s determination to be open and accountable,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “As a health care organization, transparency of information is essential to providing quality care for our Veterans.”

In addition, for the first time, data from both the 2008 and 2009 reports will be available to the public in machine-readable format on Data.gov. To empower Veterans and the public at large to track quality, safety and access to Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities, VA’s hospital report cards include raw data on care provided in outpatient and hospital settings, quality of care within given patient populations, and patient satisfaction and outcomes.

VA issued its first facility-level report on quality and safety in May 2008. As part of the Obama Administration’s commitment to open government and accountability, VA highlights its rigorous quality programs and actions taken to address the issues VA identified from the last report.

The report gives the health care system high marks, with VA facilities often outscoring private-sector health plans in standards commonly accepted by the health care industry.

“Patient-centric care is our mission,” said Shinseki. “As Secretary, I am committed to continuing to meet and surpass our high standards of care each and every day.”

Some of the marked improvements that VA showed in 2009 include:

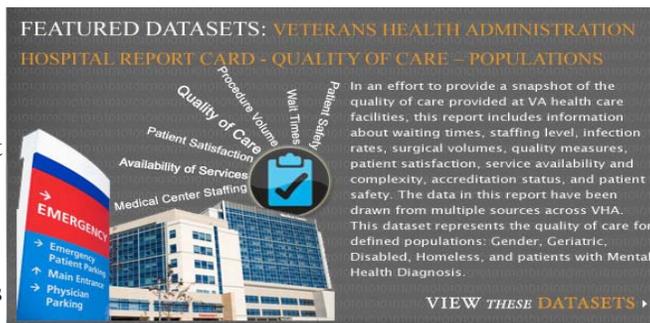
- Smoking cessation counseling provided to 89 percent of Veteran patients, a 6 percent improvement from 2008; and
- Among all ages at risk, 94 percent of Veterans received a pneumonia immunization, a four percent improvement.

The report notes there is more to be done for women Veterans. To address this priority and provide women Veterans with the highest quality care VA has implemented several

initiatives, such as placement of women advocates in every outpatient clinic and medical center, and creating a “mini-residency” program on women’s health for primary care physicians.

The report also found minority Veterans are generally less satisfied with inpatient and outpatient care than other Veterans. In addition to targeting outreach efforts to these Veterans, a minority Veteran program coordinator has been placed in every medical center.

“VA’s hospital report card will become a valuable resource of information for Veterans, stakeholders and the department,” said Shinseki. “It will allow VA’s health care system to be forward looking and focused on advancement.” VA’s 2008 and 2009 hospital report cards can be found at <http://www.va.gov/health/HospitalReportCard.asp>.



VA to Survey Veterans, Active Duty, National Guard, Reservists

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched a national survey of Veterans, active duty service members, activated National Guard and reserve members, and family members and survivors to learn if they are aware of VA services.

“By hearing directly from Veterans and their family members, we gain valuable information to help us serve them better. We hope those who receive the survey will respond to it,” Secretary Shinseki said.

In addition to assessing awareness levels, the National Survey of Veterans will collect important health care, benefits, employment, and demographic information that VA will use to inform policy decisions and improve benefits. Recognizing a broader client base than just Veterans, this is the first time VA has included others, such as Veteran family members, in its survey population.

VA is mailing out survey “screeners” to more than 130,000 households to identify potential survey

participants. The screener asks if anyone in the household is a member of one of the identified survey groups – Veterans, family members and survivors, active duty, Guard or Reserve members. Eligible survey participants then may be requested to participate in a full-length survey.

Participants will be able to select a preferred survey method: through U.S. mail, telephone or a password-protected Internet address. VA expects approximately 10,000 Veterans to complete the full-length survey.

This is the sixth VA National Survey of Veterans since 1978. The information collected will help VA in its efforts to design and conduct outreach to Veterans. In addition, it will provide a clearer picture of the Veteran population’s characteristics to help evaluate existing programs and policies and measure their impact.

The data collection is expected to be finished by the end of February and the final report released by December 2010.



CAVHCS programs receive CARF Accreditation

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System's (CAVHCS) recently received outside validation that two vital programs are on the right course.

"This is an honor achieved by the support of the organization, the residents and the dedicated team of disciplines within the residential programs specifically, and the Mental Health Service Line respectively," said Ms. Valarie D. Clark, M.S.W., LGSW, Manager of the Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV) and Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (PRRTP) - after recently receiving word of program accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

CARF International is a private, non-profit organization with a mission to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process that centers on enhancing the lives of the persons served.

"It is an overwhelming relief to have this challenge completed, and we can continue our efforts in maintaining the highest level of quality care for our residents, enhancing our clinical team, and embracing additional community resources to strengthen and support the lives of our veterans upon discharge from the residential programs," said Clark.

CARF accreditation was of course a team effort. The review focused on answering questions of how CAVHCS' programs were assisting with the identification of resident's goals as well as their partnering to meet goals of recovery, rehabilitation, health maintenance, improved quality of life and community reintegration.

"To achieve CARF Accreditation the DCHV and PRRTP had to meet 21 areas for the provisions of quality care, more than 1,189 standards, and reviews based on feedback from the persons served within these programs," said Clark. "This was a team effort with extraordinary and phenomenal support from Cynthia Holland, Performance Improvement Coordinator for Mental Health & Behavioral Medicine."

While the recent field accreditation of its DCHV and PRRTP programs demonstrates substantial conformance to the CARF standards, CAVHCS' has demonstrated a commitment to on-going quality improvement while ensuring programs are designed and operated to benefit the persons served. "The organization's connection to CARF and other accrediting bodies exemplifies our long standing commitment to the Veterans we serve," said Clark.

WebHR Coming to VA

Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC) is the sponsor for WebHR. WebHR is an automated system allowing for the initiation and processing of Requests for Personnel Actions (Standard Form-52s) in an electronic format.

The application allows customers to initiate the electronic SF 52 and Human Resource (HR) personnel to process those transactions. The application provides a mechanism for both customers and HR personnel to view the status of transactions and track actions from start to finish. Usage of the WebHR application allows end users to track actions, generate reports, and manage workflow.

The expectation is that all VHA facilities and VISN offices will implement use of the product no later than March 31, 2010. Assistance in preparation, training, and deployment is available through the WMC HPDM Program Office.

Additionally, we are providing a site where you can access information to assist you in your implementation efforts. This site will provide information which includes documentation, calendar and registration for LiveMeeting training sessions, and information on scheduling face-to-face training at your facility/office.

Visit: <http://vaww.hpdm.wmc.va.gov/HRIS/default.aspx>.

National EEO Conference held in Atlanta

The Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Employment Team held the 2009 VHA EEO National Conference in Atlanta, Ga. The conference highlighted educational seminars that included: Workforce Succession Strategic Planning, Effective Communication, VA National Database for Interns, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Office of Resolution Management, Reasonable Accommodations, Internship Programs, and Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

Over 175 individuals were in attendance. Omar Zecira, EEO Manager in Orlando, FL VA Medical Center stated, "The conference was excellent in bringing the VHA EEO community together to discuss critical issues affecting all EEO Managers throughout VHA."

Each EEO Program Manager was inspired by Roberto Barrero, the guest speaker. Mr. Barrero's presentation "The 4 S's of Life" challenged the attendees to develop a balanced life that includes service, self, spirituality and a sense of humor.

There were additional seminars that encouraged wellness as well as provided technical EEO knowledge. The EEO Masters Technical Career Field Program was one of the

many best practices featured during the poster presentation. EEO Managers had a great opportunity to network during the conference.

"VHA EEO Conference was a much welcomed opportunity to recharge energies, meet colleagues from across the United States, stay current on issues and best of all, network and establish new contacts. The experience of talking with colleagues that understand the business and share the same or similar challenges and opportunities is empowering, refreshing and motivating," stated Nilda Lopez, EEO Manager, VA Caribbean Healthcare System.

As a result of the conference, additional training classes will be developed and presented via MS-Live Meetings. Additional information regarding the training sessions can be found on the EEO/AET Calendar: <http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/WMC/10A2E/Calendar.asp>



‘Stimulus Spending’

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Nursing Home. This \$1.5 million project will provide design changes that include traditional issues ranging from replacing door frame protectors, new sinks and vanities to ceiling tiles throughout the building. However, other issues within the project are focused on improving the environment. “We’ve been undergoing a culture change in our nursing home, which we now call our Community Living Center,” said Griffin.

“Along those lines, we have removed the traditionally centrally located nursing station and constructing a Meditation Room, Internet Café and Barber Shop. Our staff will be more mobile, plus we will lose most of that institutionalized feeling.”

Another major ARRA project impacting Central Alabama is the \$1 million renovation of mental health inpatient areas. This project will convert mental health resident inpatient rooms in CAVHCS’ domiciliary to private or semi-private rooms with individual bathrooms.

“This project will have a direct impact on improving the quality of our inpatient experience,” said Griffin.

CAVHCS’ ongoing Nursing Home project is employing more than 30 tradesmen and laborers from nearby Andalusia, Ala., and both major projects were awarded to Service Disabled, Veteran-Owned businesses, which translates directly to Veterans helping Veterans.

“Part of our process is to encourage Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned businesses to participate in our bidding process,” said Griffin. “Of course they have to be viable and capable to effectively service the contract, but when projects this size end up going to Service-Disabled, Veteran-Owned companies it’s a win, win, win. It’s Veterans helping Veterans... helping the nation’s economy.”

Department-wide the VA will direct more than \$68 million of ARRA funding to renewable sources including solar, wind and geothermal energy and has dedicated nearly \$238 million toward retrofitting existing buildings to use energy and water more efficiently. To use energy and water more efficiently, facilities department-wide are replacing or upgrading windows and roofs; upgrading lighting to more efficient types; automating lighting controls and energy management systems;

installing low-flow faucets and toilets and other water-conserving equipment; installing variable-volume air handling units; and enhancing boiler control systems and tune-ups.

While extremely effective in reducing long-term operational costs, energy savings projects are rarely as visible as the modernization of a nursing home or an EKG unit. However, in terms of facilities management, their costs are far less - while the returns continually grow.

“These investments help spur new energy savings and, at the same time, reduce our environmental footprint,” Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said recently. “The President is leading us in a new direction away from our dependence on foreign oil and the destabilizing effects of a changing climate. Since hospitals use such large amounts of energy, we need to step up our efforts to transition to clean-energy technologies.”

One such project is CAVHCS’ retrofitting of rest rooms to change to water-free urinals. Expected savings at CAVHCS is approximately 40,000 gallons of water per unit annually. With 30 water-free urinals scheduled to be installed, the estimated water savings is approximately 1.2 million gallons of water per year. Not only will CAVHCS be realizing savings in terms of water and sewer costs, maintenance and repair bills, but the new urinals actually create more hygienic touch free and odor-free restrooms since there is no standing water in the urinal to collect bacteria causing odors in restrooms. The

new water-less urinals use Green Friendly chemicals that do not create odors like water urinals and the Environmentally Safe chemicals used clean the bowl and treat the urine in the cartridge before the cartridge discharges the urine down the sewage line.

Another environmentally-driven project is the installation of new Occupancy Sensors, which as their name implies, senses a room’s occupancy and adjusts the use of lighting, heating and cooling accordingly. The target of the project is to install 500 sensors and realize an estimated annual savings of as much as a half of one percent (.5%) of CAVHCS’ electricity bill.



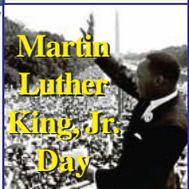
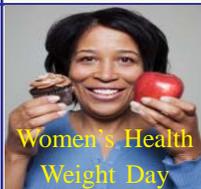
CAVHCS has been budgeted to spend more than \$2.5 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) or Stimulus Bill funding projects like the \$1.5 million renovation of CAVHCS Community Living Center will add a Meditation Room, Internet Café and Barber Shop while putting 30 additional tradesmen to work. Another project calls for the installation of 30 water-free urinals which will result in an estimated annual water savings is approximately 1.2 million gallons. (Photos by Eric Johnson)



Associate Director Ms. Anita Willard (far left) joined several CAVHCS Combined Federal Campaign 2009 Key Workers to accept a Gold Award Organization certificate from Maxwell AFB, Air University's Vice Commander, Maj. Gen. Stephen Miller (far right) in a recent ceremony culminating this year's Heart of Alabama CFC campaign. CAVHCS reached 139 percent of its goal by raising \$67,887.81. (Photo by Robin Johnson)

January

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

		<p>National Clean Up Your Computer Month National Get Organized Month National Glaucoma Awareness Month National Mentoring Month Cervical Health Awareness Month</p>		<p>2</p>		
<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>
	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>
<p>17</p>		<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>		<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>
<p>24</p>		<p>25</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	
<p>31</p>		<p>Thyroid Awareness Month National Radon Action Month National Volunteer Blood Donor Month Self-Help Group Awareness Month</p>				

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.