From the Director
Page 2

Events Calendar
Back Page

OPSEC
Page 4

THE CAVHCS SALUTE
SALUTING SERVICE WITH SERVICE
Central Alabama Veterans Healthcare System is part of VA Southeast Network (VISN 7)
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Stakeholders discuss Veteran Patient Centered Care Program

Central Alabama Veteran Health Care System (CAVHCS) hosted another quarterly Stakeholders Meeting recently and the main topic of discussion was the progress being made implementing the new Veteran Family Centered Care program.

"We've been developing this program for awhile now," said VA Southeast Network Director, Lawrence Biro to the crowd gathered at Montgomery's Hilton Garden Inn, just a few blocks away from CAVHCS' Montgomery VA Medical Center. "Veteran Family Centered Care builds upon our existing commitment to develop stronger patient relationships, while giving the patient greater control of their care."

"We've been getting things into place for awhile, and we're to the point now of greater implementation," added Interim Veteran Family Centered Care Liaison, Rhonda Lewis shortly before introducing three of CAVHCS' first Veteran Family Advisors who shared stories of how and why they became involved. "Our staff has been receiving training and we're already applying the basic concepts in selected areas."

Veteran Family Centered Care is defined by the values of; Dignity and Respect or listening to and honor the patient/family perspectives and choices; Information Sharing which deals with communicating and sharing complete and unbiased information with patients and families; Participation through support and encouragement to patients/families for participation and decision-making at the level they choose and Collaboration or the inclusion of patients/families on an institution-wide basis in policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation.

CAVHCS Director of Customer Services, Sabrina Hughes explains the benfits, values and planning behind CAVHCS' Veteran Family Centered Care program during the recent Quarterly Stakeholder Meeting in Montgomery.
(Photo by Robin Johnson)

"Veteran Family Centered Care is an innovative approach to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of health care that is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships among patients, families, and providers," explained CAVHCS Director, Customer Serivces Sabrina Hughes during a briefing shortly before Stakeholders in attendance

'Please see Stakeholder'
Page 5

CAVHCS hosts OEF/OIF Welcome Home Bowl

Welcoming home members of our armed forces usually conjures up images of ticker tape parades and marching bands, and while a hero's welcome is always cool, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System's (CAVHCS) recent welcome home ceremony for Alabamians returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan focused on a unique, family-centered activity…they went bowling.

"The most important thing to returning service members is reuniting with loved ones, so when we planned on holding a welcome home event we knew we would be doing something well after their actual return," explained CAVHCS OEF-OIF Program Manager, Marius Patton. "We weren't about to delay any family reunions, but we did want to do something family-orientated, since families can have a positive impact on veterans accessing benefits."

While educating veterans and their families on their available benefits was a major objective, everyone in attendance had another objective in mind. "We received support and participation from a number of outside entities, like the Vet Center, the benefits office and even Ace Bowling Alley themselves," explained Patton. "Everyone was more than willing to help. They all wanted to do something to show how much they appreciate the sacrifices these veterans and their families have made. And, they all wanted to attend the event so they could say thank you personally."

Veterans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families were recently honored at a Welcome Home Bowl in Montgomery's Ace bowling Lanes. They bowled, shot pool, dined and learned about the benefits available at CAVHCS.

From the Director

Glen E. Struchtemeyer

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the staff on two recent major positives. First off the Office of Inspector General did a focused review of endoscope cleaning process and found that we were in compliance with the mandates from VA Central Office. This was a national review of every facility that Congress had requested as a result of recent incidents at three VA facilities.

Secondly, we were recently notified that we were removed from the IPEC watch list due to tremendous improvements in our critical care areas. This was a huge undertaking by the staff and to borrow comments from the reviewer, we were a poster child for demonstrating the value of this review process as they had identified issues and we implemented actions that led to dramatic improvements in care to our veterans.

Again, congratulations to the staff for a job well done!

Who is the 2009/2010 CAVHCS Woman of Excellence?

The CAVHCS Diversity Advisory Committee will observe Women's Equality Day by sponsoring "CAVHCS Woman of Excellence 2009-2010." Any CAVHCS woman may be nominated. You can even nominate yourself!

Criteria: Nominations must meet at least two of the following:

a. Has overcome specific barriers in life to achieve personal and/or professional goals;
b. Displayed high–potential skills and behavior, and is considered "on the cutting edge" or an "out of the box thinker";
c. Has overcome adversity and has a unique message to share-overcoming life events, health issues, social barriers, demonstrating positive energy, and an attitude that makes a difference;
d. Has a special story to tell about career development or unique goal(s) set and accomplished;
e. Has demonstrated unique leadership characteristics and skills in balancing professional and personal life.

All nominations must be received by COB Thursday, August 20, 2009. Sorry, late nominations will not be considered. Please submit your nomination of one page or less addressing two of the above criteria via Email to Twila J. Mercan at twila.mercan@va.gov; or to Mary Smith at mary.smith5@va.gov. All staff, including outpatient clinics' staff is encouraged to participate.

The Women's Equality Day Program announcing the winner will be held Tuesday, August 25, 2009. For additional information, contact the EEO Office at ext. 3571.

CAVHCS All-Stars

I wish to say that all of the staff at the Columbus Outpatient Clinic has shown me the most polite and courteous care. I would like to express my thanks to them all and to you. -- *R.ay W., LaGrange, Ga.*

I am Jerome B. and I would like to thank Mrs. Margaret White and see that she gets some kind of recognition for her work in the Diabetes Care Class. She deserves many thanks. Since I have been coming here she has helped me and also other Veterans and treated all of us the same. She deserves a write up in the paper to make her feel good because she does such a good job! -- *God Bless, Jerome. B., Sr.*

I just wanted to send a letter of thanks to you and your staff for the kind, quick and special attention I received as I visited your facility to have a Basal Carcinoma removed from my back. From my initial visit to the removal of my stitches every staff member was very professional and expressed a genuine concern for my care. People always write things are bad but I wanted to express my thanks and let you know what a great staff you have in place on the 2nd and 3rd floors. I will pass on my pleasurable experience to other fellow Vets. -- ***Many Thanks, Jeff A.., Greenville, Ga.***

This was an outstanding to very informative class. Mr. Anderson, Charity and Chatman provided a plethora of information that was very beneficial to my better understanding/controlling my condition. They ensured that the participant was well informed and knowledgeable of their condition. This has been one of the best class I've attended.

-- *Larry P., Montgomery, Ala.*

The CAVHCS Salute

Accredited by The Joint Commission

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Acting Associate Director, Patient Care Services	Carolyn Caver-Gordon
Chief of Staff	Clifford Robinson, MD
Public Affairs Officer	Al Bloom

Employees of the Month

Tuskegee Campus
Mr. Michael Spann

This nomination is to recognize the hard work and dedication of Mr. Michael Spann, IT Specialist (Networking). It is without doubt that Michael has met and continues to exceed the criteria for nomination for Employee of the Month. His extraordinary customer service in the telecommunications arena, has given Mike daily contact with employees, supervisors, contractors, various committees and many at CAVHCS. He is always responsive to their needs and often responds to last minute scheduling and unscheduled requests, such as setting up the V-Tel right before a meeting begins; re-wiring as necessary for the installation and/or relocation of fax or copier machines and installing telephone and computer services.

We have never seen Mike begrudgingly carry out any assignment, but is always positive and has a very helpful demeanor. He takes pride in his work and ensures customer satisfaction is always his first priority. Mike has gone above and beyond the call of duty, helping retrieve information for employees in a crisis situation, regardless of the time of day.

Montgomery Campus
Ms. Cynthia Hopper

For the past few years, there have been quite a number of changes in Human Resources. Change in and of itself, whether positive or negative, creates anxiety and uncertainty. Throughout the changes, as well as the many challenges in Human Resources, Cynthia has dealt with these professionally, maintaining a positive attitude and willing to go the extra mile. It is a known fact that Cynthia is a "go to person" in Human Resources, because of her knowledge base. She is truly a bulwark for the Service. Customers are never dissatisfied with their contact with her and her expertise. Cynthia has been in Human Resources some 17 years and has received numerous kudos from satisfied customers and visitors alike.

Cynthia is a great team player and takes pride and ownership of her work. She consistently goes beyond the call of duty; many times performing outside her assigned tasks. She is never too busy to assist a veteran, a visitor, an employee, or a fellow co-worker. She is truly a valuable asset to the Human Resources Management Service.

Wellness Reminders New Feature of MyHealtheVet

Wellness Reminders is an online feature of the MyHealtheVet Personal Health Record where you can view your VA Wellness Reminders. Wellness Reminders are available to VA patients who have registered on MyHealtheVet and have completed the In–Person Authentication (IPA) process. To view your Wellness Reminders, simply log in to MyHealtheVet, click on the "GET CARE" tab, then go to Wellness Reminders.

You will be able to view the following types of health Wellness Reminders from your VA treatment facility(s) where applicable:

General Wellness Reminders include:

- Colorectal cancer screen
- Influenza (Flu)
- Pneumococcal (Pneumonia)
- Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)
- LDL control (Cholesterol)
- Lipid measure (Cholesterol)
- Body Mass Index
- For people with diabetes:
- Diabetes foot exam
- Diabetes hemoglobin A1c
- Diabetes retinal exam

For women:

- Cervical cancer screen
- Mammogram screen

What will be the benefits of using My HealtheVet Wellness Reminders?

- Alerts you to important tests, examinations or other medical procedures that you should schedule to protect your health
- Helps you remember important health information
- Allows you to view your VA health Wellness Reminders
- Provides you with detailed Wellness Reminder information
- Provides health information to help you understand your Wellness Reminders
- Allows you to share your Wellness Reminders with non–VA healthcare providers

My healthevet
My Health, My Care: 24/7 Online Access to VA

Operational Security (OPSEC) a CAVHCS concern

Operational Security is often a concept many of us associate with the Department of Defense or Homeland Security. However, staff at any federal installation has a responsibility to remain vigilant to safeguard against any attempt to compromise physical security, information security and in the case of Veteran Health Care patient privacy. For staff at CAVHCS this responsibility is Operational Security or OPSEC.

"OPSEC deals with our overall approach or posture to securing information as well as our physical security," explained Roderick Byrnes, Chief of CAVHCS Police and Security. "We patrol our grounds to ensure physical security as well as to provide a deterrent to disruptive behavior, but there are of course other aspects to CAVHCS OPSEC that are less visible, but just as vital."

While all aspects of CAVHCS OPSEC are not readily visible by design, staff have a wide scope of responsibilities when dealing with OPSEC, which can be broken down into a few areas that make them more manageable: **Proactive Access**, which deals with preventative measures; **Patient Privacy**, safeguarding patient information; **Preparedness**, the planned response to emergencies and threatening situations and **Physical Security**, policing CAVHCS facilities to ensure only authorized access and appropriate behavior.

"Information Security deals with all of the above," said CAVHCS Information Security Officer, Patricia Cross. "We have a series of proactive safeguards and strategies like firewalls and software installed to protect against unauthorized use or access to patient information. We also have a series of processes in place to ensure the strict tracking of custody of mobile devices. However, staff is still responsible for getting annual training and then remaining prepared and vigilant to ensure our safeguards work."

Staff vigilance is essential for any CAVHCS OPSEC strategy to be effective. "We have a number of response plans in place that have been tested and proven effective," said CAVHCS Chief or Safety Management, Debbie Morrison. "But when you consider changes in national threat levels as well as health and weather conditions - staff familiarization with our emergency response planning and procedures has to be an ongoing effort."

Staff's responsibility for familiarization with appropriate policies, procedures and planning is essential. "We exercise our emergency planning to ensure readiness, but it's important that our planning is shared outside our exercise," said Morrison. "For example - we've exercised our Pandemic Flu Plan several times. In fact, we participated in a VA-wide Pandemic Flu Exercise last year, which served us especially well this year when the H1N1 Swine Flu Pandemic developed. That said, even though we've exercised our plan and have been advertising its title and where to find it, I'm sure there are some staff who still haven't taken the time to get up to speed. Everyone should be getting ready for flu season – now."

Other OPSEC responsibilities are easier, but just as vital. "When it comes to Physical Security of our facilities the easiest test is proper identification," said Byrnes. "Anyone with a legitimate reason to be on campus will have proper identification. If they don't – it's alright to challenge them. In fact, it's not just alright; it's an essential part of OPSEC. Staff is our first line of defense. If it doesn't look right…contact security."

New Post 9/11 GI Bill kicks off, Alabama Colleges participate

On August 3, 2009 VA and national leaders welcomed the first class of New GI Bill Post 9/11 Education Benefits Veterans to schools across the country. VBA has received more than 150,000 applications under the new program and expects hundreds of thousands more.

Secretary Shinseki joined the new program's champions, Senator Jim Webb and former Senator John Warner, at the George Mason University (GMU) Campus in northern Virginia in a ceremony marking implementation of the new program. They shared the stage with veterans whoenrolled in GMU programs under the New GI Bill.

Secretary Shinseki said earlier that he expects the Post-9/11 GI Bill to have as big an impact as the original GI Bill. "What that bill did for the country was to change the course of our history," he said. "When those veterans went back to their communities with their college degrees, they ended up being our leaders in religion, education, business, government. The Post-9/11 version has the opportunity to create in the 21st century the same kind of impact for development."

GMU is one of more than 1,200 colleges and universities that have joined the New GI Bill's voluntary Yellow Ribbon program under which VA matches the difference between a school's tuition cost and the highest tuition cost of public schools in a state if the Yellow Ribbon school's costs are higher.

For more information on the new GI Bill Post 9/11 and a list of participating institutions visit www.gibill.va.gov.

What's next for Veteran Family Centered Care Program?

To some CAVHCS staff Veteran Family Centered Care (VFCC) is a concept that appears to be coming faster than anyone imagined. For a large number of staff the training provided last month was their first exposure, and many of those same staff members are asking the age-old question…"how is this going to affect me?"

"Believe it or not Veteran Family Centered Care gives many of our staff more control and impact on securing better outcomes for Veterans," explained Veteran Family Centered Care Liaison, Rhonda Lewis. "While they may be concerned when they hear something like flexible visiting hours, I hope they can look past those concerns and see that Veterans and their families are more likely to be happy about their outcome when they feel empowered and involved in their treatment."

CAVHCS staff has heard and can probably recite the VISN's three promises to all veterans: 1- Provide care second to none; 2 – Maintain, while expanding services and 3 – Every veteran will be personally satisfied based on outcome. And, while the first two promises can arguably hinge on assets and their allocation, promise number three is squarely within the staff's control.

"When we fall short of our SHEP (patient survey) goals the areas we usually have trouble in are access, courtesy and coordination of care," said Lewis. "Our Veteran Family Centered Care program targets these areas for improvement. We've been asking the same survey questions and for the most part we've been getting the same general answers. Now, we have a commitment to a program to doing something about improving in those areas."

Following training sessions and exposure to the concepts and values necessary for a successful VFCC program, CAVHCS' approach to implementation is incremental growth. "We've been operating a pilot program on Montgomery's Ward 3A since last October," said Lewis. "We've instituted bedside rounding by our Interdisciplinary Team; Chaplain Shadix has been conducting support groups on Health Care issues and we've even implemented flexible visiting hours. So far the reaction has been all good."

So what's next? "We're currently developing a metric to measure staff understanding of VFCC," said Lewis. "We've had the lectures, so next we'll be combining that metric with a Blitz Team to take it out of the classroom and into application in Ambulatory Care."

'Stakeholders'

From Page 1

broke up into groups to discuss three areas identified as CAVHCS' biggest opportunities for improvement. "We're interested in hearing your ideas on how we can get better in the areas of Access/Timeliness; Staff Courtesy and Coordination of Care."

Some of the issues identified included:

Access/Timeliness - Improve telephone access and responsiveness, Review load of Primary Care Panels/ fully utilize clinics in reference to scheduling, Change procedures so that veterans are allowed to schedule beyond 30 days and Ensure another provider can see patients rather than closing a clinic due to Doctor's absence.

Staff Courtesy - Hierarchy (Leadership) needs to be more visible to veterans and Families, Do not ignore Veterans, Do not ask Veterans condescending questions, Speak to veterans face-to-face (eye-to-eye contact), Tell veterans a reason for a delay and Encourage staff to smile more.

Coordination of Care - Ensure notification is made to veteran to reduce impression that veteran failed to show, Improve coordination of care between providers and specialist to ensure follow-up of recommended procedures for internal and external consults is timely, Ensure timeliness of procedure report results (especially CT and magnetic resonance imaging [MRI]), and close the gaps between facilities so that the referring provider may discuss outcome of consult with the patient at next appointment.

Gwin Kelly has been a volunteer on CAVHCS Montgomery Campus for about two weeks. Originally from "Gee's Bend" or Boykin, Ala., she is also an OEF/OIF Veteran with more than 20 years of service in the U.S. Army.

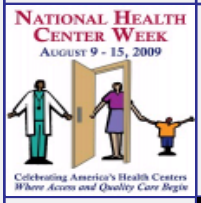
Her mother, Jessie Pettaway, 79, is one of the famous "Gee's Bend" quilters, whose world-renowned work has been the subject of a US postage stamp, museum displays (right) and even a documentary.

As a volunteer Gwin has been impressed by how nice and friendly everyone has been to her and her family. She works in the Administrative Section fielding and placing phone calls to Veterans, listening to their concerns and issues.

Gwin says she volunteered as a way to "give back" to her country and other Veterans and is trying to fit in with a changing lifestyle after so many years in the military.

Participants prepare to head to their first tees for the shot gun start of the recent 6th Annual VIC Golf Tournament held on Maxwell AFB. The tournament raised more than $3,400, which will be used in support of CAVHCS' Voluntary Services program. (photo by Robin Johnson)

August

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Cataract Awareness Month - www.aao.org/eyemd; www.preventblindness.org National Immunization Awareness Month - www.cdc.gov/nip/events/niam Neurosurgery Outreach Month - www.aans.org ; www.neurosurgerytoday.org Psoriasis Awareness Month - www.psoriasis.org Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month - www.curesma.com; www.fsma.org					1
2	3	4 Coast Guard Day (1790)	5	6	7 Purple Heart (1782)	8
	10	11	12	13	14 Navajo Code Talkers Day www.navajonationcouncil.org	
16 Health Unit Coordinator Day		18	19	20 **CAVHCS Woman of Excellence** nominations due.	21	22 Ramadan begins at sundown
23	24	25 	26 Women's Equality Day (1920)	27	March on Washington (1963) "I Have a Dream" speech 28	
30 Minority Enterprise Development Week http://www.azmbec.com/MEDWeek.html	31					

Need more CPRS training? Refresher classes are available by customer request. Contact the Clinical Informatics team for more information on class availability. Also feel free to go to the Clinical Informatics web presence on the intranet for a listing of subject matter training.

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.