



Workshop Bolsters Lines of Communication

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) recently hosted a 'Care to Women Veterans Workshop,' in the Tuskegee VA Medical Center's Building 90 Theater in support of National Professional Social Work Month. The workshop not only provided an opportunity for professional education, but also bolstered the essential lines of communication between that Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and local social workers to better support Veterans and their families.

"Being that one of the greatest role's we have in this profession is to advocate, there is always the need to have a keen sense of community services and the professionals providing these services." explained Iva Davis, CAVHCS' Chief, Social Work Service. "The workshop provides all of our staffs with the opportunity to put a face with a name."

Social Work has a wide and varied scope, and Social Work at the VA

is no different. However, while many disciplines of social work focus on social justice and social change, at CAVHCS the focus of social work is improving the quality of life of Veterans and their families.



Jessica Hardy, RN, MPH, Director, Public Health Office of Women Health Services addresses CAVHCS' recent Annual Social Work Month Workshop (Photo by Eric Johnson)

Of course CAVHCS Social Workers interact with DoD and civilian social workers with the same focus. So having DoD staff from Fort Benning, Ga., Maxwell AFB in attendance and making presentations - the workshop featured a balanced and far reaching approach to the discussion of services available to women.

"The workshop not only brings these folks to CAVHCS to have the opportunity to network," said Davis, "but it gives us all a chance to meet with professionals that others in attendance may not normally meet. We featured presenters from Maxwell as well as Jessica Hardy, RN, MPH, Director, Public Health Office of Women Health Services."

"For the past five years we have focused on Seamless Transition:

Please see 'Workshop'

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New Collective Bargaining Agreement Signed

WASHINGTON – Officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) have reached final agreement on a new national collective bargaining agreement, their first since 1997. This contract will enhance VA's partnership with the union, change the rules for teleworking and expand the use of e-mail in labor-management relations.

"This new agreement reflects VA's commitment to collaborate with an important labor partner," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "The outcome will be a more highly motivated, more effective workforce serving our Nation's Veterans."

About 204,000 of VA's 315,000 employees are eligible for AFGE membership, with another 23,000 employees eligible for membership in four other unions.

Secretary Shinseki approved the contract on March 15. The complete labor agreement will be signed soon by Shinseki, AFGE leadership and the VA and AFGE members of the bargaining teams at an internal event that will be broadcast at VA facilities around the country.

Among the provisions of the contract are:

Enhanced collaboration with union officials on work-related issues;

Expansion of tele-working among employees, including clarification of rules governing tele-work; and Increased reliance upon e-mails and new technology in labor-management communications and processes.

VA is the second largest cabinet office in the country in terms of workforce. VA employees operate 153 major medical centers, about 1,200 other sites of health care, manage a nationwide system of 131 national cemeteries, and administer about \$75 billion in disability compensation, Veterans pensions, educational benefits, home loan guarantees, life insurance and other financial programs.



Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki, AFGE National VA Council President Alma Lee and AFGE National President John Gage (Left to Right) at the signing of the new AFGE, VA master agreement.

CAVHCS All-Stars

Thank you and your staff for the effort they put forth to ensure the Veterans receive good medical treatment and courteous consideration. I appreciate the Volunteer (Daina Andrews) that approached me in the waiting room. People like her provide services that money cannot buy but are seldom appreciated. The volunteers provide a vital and necessary service of listening and reacting in a positive manner. I thank whoever is responsible for the doughnuts, etc. brought around by the hospital employee. Although I did not partake it was very beneficial to those waiting to be seen. Keep up the good work.

My story: I received a short appointment to see Dr. Islam. I was told to fast and arrive early for lab work. When called by the lab nurse, I was informed I was not scheduled for lab. I spoke with Red Team receptionist, he asked me to have a seat. He contacted Dr. Islam's nurse (Crystal) and she took care of me getting in for lab work and also got Dr. Islam to see me early. I was ushering for a funeral at 1230. When I requested Jay's name (red team receptionist) he wanted to know why I wanted it. This indicates to me he is not quite sure about his position and customer treatment. However, he was very helpful and went beyond what might normally be expected in his efforts to assist.

The Dental Team is always very professional. On this day, all hospital staff and volunteers provided excellent service. Please tell the volunteer they are important, Hats off to Perry Hill VA. -- RML, Jr.

I had the honor and the privilege of working with two of your employees regarding a peculiar case involving one of my patients about a month ago, Ms. Cunningham and Ms. Huffman. Might I say how impressed I was to be in the mix of such professionalism and caring co-workers. The way this particular case was dealt with makes me proud to say I'm a CAVHCS employee because these two women so greatly represented.

We should have more people functioning the way these employees does. Please present them with recognition in hopes of elevating the morale. -- Julia A. Pace, RRT, Home Oxygen Coordinator (CAVHCS)

Dr. Beasley, Chief of Pharmacy; The prompt assistance from your pharmacist Dr. Deborah Wade was greatly appreciated. Just wanted to recognize her for the kind and thorough assistance she provided to your veteran who is transitioning his care here but is without an appointment for another month. Have a great weekend. -- James Timothy Bridges, D. Ph. (Tim), Adjunct Pharmacy Programs Manager, James H. Quillen VAMC, Mountain Home, TN

We've made a PACT with Veterans

'It's a team effort'



Patient Aligned Care Team



I want you to know of the outstanding customer service I received from Mr. Lindsay Osborne on 7 March 2011. I was in the Montgomery VA Medical Center for my physical and Mr. Osborne was very helpful in getting me assistance beyond his area of responsibility. He was courteous and very professional and actively sought to ensure my questions and needs were met. I'm newly retired and Mr. Osborne's genuine interest and concern in helping me to effectively navigate this VA system/maze is greatly appreciated. He is to be commended! -- Sincerely, Michael A. B., Lt. Col, USAF (Ret.)

I would like to express my appreciation to the Program Manager of DC HV, PRRTP and CWT/TR programs. Ms. Valarie Clark who works with these programs is very professional and efficient at her job. I hope that you will give her some recognition and commendation for a job well done. -- Thank you, Billy F. B., Tuskegee, Ala.

I recently had an MRI for my back. I received a letter from Dr Rodney with the results of the MRI, along with information that a scan would be scheduled. I've never received information like this. She is doing such a great job with all the women she takes care of. Please let management know this. Thank you! DG, woman veteran

The CAVHCS Salute

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Rebranding the Suicide Prevention Hotline

The Veterans Crisis Line, ‘Press One’

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) continue to work together to ensure all Americans in emotional distress or suicidal crisis have a single confidential number to call for help. They provide a special service for Veterans through the SAMHSA-funded National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Veterans and concerned family members can call the Veterans Crisis Line by dialing 800-273-8255 and “pressing 1.”

The rebranding is an integrated national outreach effort to increase awareness and use of the Veterans Crisis Line and confidential online chat service, support and promote broader VA suicide prevention efforts, and promote help-seeking behaviors among Veterans at risk of suicide and other mental health problems.

This effort is the result of extensive research, including consultation with recognized authorities on suicide prevention and social marketing, key internal and external intermediaries who deal with Veterans every day, and Veterans themselves.

The rebranding will emphasize the “Press One” option for Veterans and family members who call the Veterans Crisis Line, ensuring their call is immediately transferred to VA’s call center in Canandaigua, NY, which is staffed with professional responders trained and dedicated to serving Veterans and their families.

New messaging will reinforce the confidentiality of the Veterans Crisis Line for both Veterans and their family members, who may be the first to realize a Veteran is in crisis.

VA is developing tools to aid its employees in sharing the Department’s story about the Veterans Crisis Line, including outreach collateral, PSAs and educational videos, talking points, potential social media content, online banner ads for VA Medical Center sites, electronic posters, and story banks for the media.



Suicide prevention outreach efforts need to use carefully tailored and targeted messaging. Unlike outreach for many other health issues which rely on underscoring the prevalence of the problem, outreach for suicide prevention that emphasizes rising suicide rates among Veterans runs the risk of normalizing suicidal behaviors, helping to convince Veterans in crisis that considering suicide is a normal or even expected response to their challenges—and possibly leading to an increase in suicide attempts. Through this effort, VA will provide effective and safe messaging and outreach strategies that focus on affirming Veterans’ strength and resilience and reinforcing help-seeking behavior.

VA Celebrates Women’s History Month

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs joins with the nation to observe Women’s History Month in March by recognizing and honoring women Veterans.

“Duty. Honor. Pride. These words reflect the spirit of generations of American women who have sought to defend the rights and freedom of others,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The history of women in the armed forces began more than 220 years ago with women who served during the American Revolution and continues through the present day. VA is honored to serve these women who have contributed so much to our Nation.”

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living Veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total Veteran population and 6 percent of all Veterans who use VA health care services.

VA estimates women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population by 2020 and 9.5 percent of VA patients.

In recent years, VA has undertaken a number of initiatives to create or enhance services for women Veterans, including the implementation of comprehensive primary care throughout the nation; staffing every VA medical center with a women veterans program manager and regional offices with a designated woman Veterans coordinator; supporting a multifaceted research program on women’s health; improving communication and outreach to women Veterans; and continuing the operation of offices like the Center for Women

Veterans and the Women Veterans Health Strategic Healthcare Care Group.

“During this observance of Women’s History Month, let’s remember the special contributions of the ever-increasing number of women serving in the armed forces,” said Tammy Duckworth, assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental affairs. She noted that women currently make up more than 14 percent of the active-duty military and 18 percent of the Guard and Reserves.

VA has 43 women’s memorials and monuments at its National Cemeteries across the country. Additionally, several notable women are buried in VA National Cemeteries, including Chief Specialist Evelyn B. (Ulrich) Einfeldt, a Navy World War II Veteran who was one of the 67 Navy “WAVES” involved in Operation Magic. She assisted with the assembly of BOMBE (Enigma), a machine to decode German and Japanese transmissions. She was laid to rest at the Fort Sill National Cemetery on April 6, 2006.

Lillian Kinkela Keil, an Air Force flight nurse pioneer, is buried at the Riverside National Cemetery. She flew 425 combat missions and took part in 11 major campaigns, including the D-Day invasion and the Battle of the Bulge in World War II and the Battle of Chosin Reservoir in Korea. One of the most decorated women in American military history, she was awarded 19 medals.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth.

CAVHCS Photo Gallery

CAVHCS once again had a busy month of observances and educational events. From Women's History and National Nutrition Month to Social Work Month and Diabetes Alert Day, CAVHCS staff and Veterans were informed, entertained and even got a bite to eat! (VA photos by Eric Johnson and Robin Johnson)



'Workshop'

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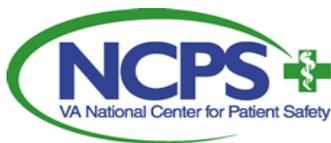
Care to the OEF/OIF Veterans," said Davis describing the themes of recent workshops. "We have addressed the Assessment and Treatment of the OEF/OIF Veteran, PTSD, TBI, Polytrauma, Case Management of the OEF/OIF population, Benefits, Battlemind Training, Collaborative Partnerships in addressing the needs of the OEF/OIF Veteran. This year we wanted to address the needs of the Women Veterans.

"In our planning we always try to focus on topics with high visibility," added Davis. "It's like a professional give back program for us. We have great colleagues who work closely with us all year long."

'Safety is No Accident'

April 4-10, 2011 is National Public Health Week. This year's theme is "**Safety Is No Accident.**" VA works hard to prevent injuries and make VA a great place to work and a great place for Veterans to come for medical care. VA's innovative Safe Patient Handling Program, developed at the Tampa Patient Safety Center of Inquiry, is now part of The Joint Commission standards, the national hospital construction standards, and a part of many nursing school curricula. It represents evidence-based practice, including new technology, unit peer leaders as just-in-time trainers, patient transfer algorithms, and safety huddles. For example, ceiling lifts help caregivers transfer patients from beds to stretchers or wheelchairs. Other lifts are portable; they can help patients stand and they support toileting, changing clothes, and even moving in and out of vehicles in safe way.

The Safe Patient Handling Program represents an example of how VA works to prevent injuries to health care personnel and has led to an almost 50 percent reduction in injuries to care providers over the last four years. The Program is part of VA's own public health department, the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards, <http://www.publichealth.va.gov>.



2010 VA Diversity Report

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for FY 2010 is available at: www.diversity.hr.va.gov/annualreport/index.htm.

This report presents the accomplishments, initiatives, and measurable outcomes of VA's efforts toward realizing the goals and objectives of VA's *Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2009-2013*. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion is proud to lead the effort in cultivating a diverse workforce and inclusive work environment in VA, in collaboration with its three Administrations-Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, National Cemetery Administration-and our Staff Offices.



The *Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report* serves to transparently report on the progress made toward achieving the goals reflected in the *Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan*. It provides narrative and statistical information on accomplishments by organization and VA-wide, and includes program output and outcome metrics in a wide variety of equal employment opportunity, diversity, employee engagement, and conflict management areas. Also included several related reports in the appendix for your additional reference. Our hope is that this report serves as a compendium of information related to diversity and inclusion in VA.



Privacy Tip

Always use encryption when sending email containing sensitive information and/or any other message that contains identifying information concerning individuals.

Joint Commission Health Care High 5

IN THE NEWS

1 Joint Commission Updates Sentinel events Statistics

The Joint Commission has updated the sentinel event statistics on its Web site to include data through the fourth quarter of 2010 and has added new types of sentinel events, including dialysis-related events, inpatient drug overdose, radiation overdose, self-inflicted injury, severe neonatal hyperbilirubinemia, and transfer-related events. Visit www.jointcommission.org/sentinel_event.aspx for more information.

2 CDC Identifies Key Health Disparities

Americans' differences in income, race/ethnicity, gender, and other social attributes make a difference in how likely they are to be healthy, sick, or die prematurely, according to a report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. View the report at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/ind2011_su.html.

3 New Osteoporosis Screening Recommendation

The U.S. Preventive Services task Force now recommends that all women ages 65 and older be routinely screened for osteoporosis. The task force also recommends that younger women with risk factors for osteoporosis be screened in some circumstances.

4 Eisenberg Award Recipients Announced

The National Quality Forum (NQF) and the Joint Commission have announced the 2010 recipients of the annual John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Awards. The recipients are listed at www.jointcommission.org/2010_john_m_eisenberg_patient_safety_and_quality_award_recipients_announced/.

5 Trainees' Perceptions of Patient Safety Practices

A study that appeared in the February 2011 issue of *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality and Patient Safety* found that health care trainees perceive failures of supervision to be a significant factor in patient safety issues. The study concluded that improved communication within the medical hierarchy could improve patient safety.



Tuskegee University President Gilbert L. Richon, Ph.D. MPH and Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System Director Glen E. Struchtemeyer (l,r) depart from the Tuskegee VA Medical Center's Community Living Center during a recent orientation visit. (VA Photo by Eric Johnson)

 2011 CALENDAR OF EVENTS VA OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS 						
		<h1 style="text-align: center;">April 2011</h1>				
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol Awareness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Cancer Control Month <input type="checkbox"/> National Donate Life Month <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Wellness Month <input type="checkbox"/> National Occupational Therapy Month <input type="checkbox"/> Injury Prevention Month		<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Assault Awareness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling Awareness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Awareness Month <input type="checkbox"/> Parkinson's Awareness Month			1 *Battle of Okinawa Begins (1945)	2 *World Autism Awareness Day
Testicular Cancer Awareness Week (April 1-7); Medication Safety Week (April 1-7); National Public Health Week (April 7-13)						
3	4	5	6 *National Day of Hope *U.S. enters WWI (1917)	7 *World Health Org. Founded (1948) *National Alcohol Screening Day	8	9 *National Former POW Recognition Day *Civil War Ends (1865)
National Environmental Education Week (April 10-16); Health Information Privacy and Security Week (April 10-16); National Volunteer Week (April 10-16)						
10 *Bataan Death March Anniv. (1942)	11	12 *National Radiology Nurses Day	13	14 *Paralyzed Veterans of America Established (1946)	15 *First School for the Deaf Founded (1817)	16 *National Healthcare Decisions Day
National Minority Cancer Awareness Week (April 17-23); Medical Fitness Week (April 18-24)						
17 *Palm Sunday *Bay of Pigs Invasion Launched (1961)	18 *National Stress Awareness Day *Passover (Sundown)	19 *Battle of Lexington & Concord (1775)	20	21	22 *Good Friday *Earth Day	23
Administrative Professionals Week (April 24-30); National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week (April 24-30)						
24 *Easter *Library of Congress Established (1800)	25 *WWII East Meets West (1945) *Malaria Awareness Day	26	27 *Administrative Professionals Day	28 *Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work Day	29 *Arbor Day	30 *Fall of Saigon (1975) *Cambodia Invaded by US (1970)

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.