



## CAVHCS conducts week-long Veterans Day Observance

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) held a week-long celebration of Veterans that included the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day parade on the Tuskegee Campus and culminated with a Veterans Day observance on the Montgomery Campus at the traditional eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

“Ninety-one years ago today, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the guns fell silent in Europe. The Armistice ending World War I – the Great War, the War to End all Wars – was signed,” said CAVHCS Director Glen E. Struchtemeyer, explaining roots of Veterans Day and the significance of the scheduling tradition.

“More than a million soldiers from both sides were lost on the battlefields of Europe,” added Struchtemeyer. “More than four million

Americans served during what was the first modern, mechanized war. We in the Department of Veterans Affairs know too well the human cost of our veterans’ service; and we also know the deep pride their service engenders. We honor their quiet pride as we work to meet their special needs on behalf of a grateful nation.”



Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange, CAVHCS Director Glen E. Struchtemeyer (l,r) lay a Memorial Wreath during CAVHCS’ Veterans Day observance.

A few days earlier on November 5, the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day Parade on the Tuskegee VA Medical Center served to kickoff CAVHCS’ Veterans Day celebration. Tuskegee’s Veterans Day Parade is an event that celebrates Veterans as well as historic ties between CAVHCS and the City of Tuskegee. This year’s Parade Grand Marshall was State of Alabama, Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner W. Clyde Marsh, Admiral (US Navy, Ret.). The parade was highlighted by participants ranging from local military units, area schools, college bands and beauty queens to drill teams, marching units and Veteran and military organization floats.

**‘Please see ‘Veterans Day’**

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## President Signs Budget Reform allowing VA to Budget in Advance

President Barack Obama signed the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act into law recently at the White House. The primary purpose of the law is to ensure that the VA will know its budget one year in advance.

“In short, this is common-sense reform,” remarked President Obama at the signing. “It promotes accountability at the VA. It ensures oversight by Congress. It is fiscally responsible by not adding a dime to the deficit. And it ensures that Veterans’ health care will no longer be held hostage to the annual budget battles in Washington.”

According to Department of Veterans Affairs officials, the VA did not have the ability to plan its budget in advance, and a late budget meant that the VA couldn’t effectively plan. With this new law, they noted that all of that has changed.

“At this very moment, the VA is operating without a budget, making it harder for VA medical centers and clinics to deliver the care our vets need,” said the President at the signing. “The hardworking folks at the VA know this. ...It’s frustrating for them and it’s frustrating for our vets, who pay the price when budgets are delayed: the new doctors, nurses, and critical staff that aren’t hired; the new medical equipment that isn’t purchased; the construction of new facilities and clinics that isn’t started; the new programs for medical care that are delayed. This is inexcusable. It’s unacceptable. It’s time for it to stop. And that’s just what we’ll do with this landmark legislation - the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act.”

Department of Veterans Affairs officials pointed out that, while VA has consistently provided world class health

care to our Veterans, having advanced appropriations will now allow them the ability to raise that care to an even higher standard.

The President’s complete remarks can be found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.



President Barack Obama signs the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act into law Oct. 22 at the White House. Looking on are Veterans and Department of Veterans Affairs officials. (Photo courtesy of The White House)

## CAVHCS All-Stars

**Editor's Note:** This month's CAVHCS All-Stars section has been expanded in keeping with the theme of recognizing and appreciating what we have to be thankful for...like YOU!

**True Professionals** who take the extra step to show the Vets you care! Thanks to each and every one of you in the "B-Team!" Sometimes, God answers our prayers through special people like you (in the) B-Team. Thank you so much! -- *Johnny C.*

I had an appointment on August 25 2009 with Dr. Hodge. I was well pleased with her. She took the time to get to know me and my "ailments," and genuinely knew her job. She was very knowledgeable and seemed sincerely interested in veterans and our health issues. I am writing this letter in appreciation of Dr. Hodge and her entire staff and to let you know what an asset she is to your staff. I also had an EKG, Diabetic Eye Exam and blood work done. Each of the nurses and staff were very good and very helpful. Over all, my visit to your hospital was exceptional. Every one that I came in contact with was very helpful and courteous. You have outstanding personnel, especially Dr. Hodge. -- *Jim J. Albany, Ga.*

We have a great Social Worker in Ms. Downey. She is very professional and very helpful and needs to be recognized for all she does for the Veterans. -- *Andrew P. Dothan, Ala.*

I greatly appreciate the service of Dr. Rosalinda Borlaza. The great concern for my health and providing service for me has indeed been a blessing. Ms. Theodora Flowers' attending to me health care and seeing that I had what I needed was the best! They both go to their BEST EFFORT to make me feel welcome and I have the highest faith and trust in them both.

-- *William E. J. Columbus, Ga.*

To the VA Pharmacy - I appreciate the Montgomery VA Pharmacy and the service it has provided me over the many past years. I could not ask for any better service. Again thank you for your excellent service the pharmacy has provided me. It is truly appreciated.

-- *John H. K. Geneva, Ala.*

I would like to thank you for the hospitality Cart. I've been coming here for many years and believe this is a very nice idea and touch to the facility. Miss Zolla Tolliver was very helpful and nice as well. That's the way a Vet should be treated and we really appreciate it.

-- *Ulysses K. Enterprise, Ala.*

I am addressing this letter to you to express my feelings about Dr. Ahmed. I think Dr. Ahmed is a very professional and wonderful doctor because he is very thorough and answers my questions related to my medication that I am taking. I am happy to have him as a doctor. Thank you for your time and effort in this matter.

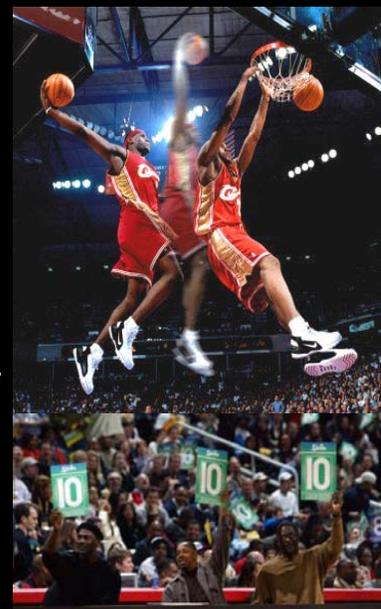
-- *Sincerely, John R. K., Jr.*

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*

## It's a Slam Dunk! we CAN earn a 10

if we Fly High and get yes answers to each question

1. Would Veterans recommend CAVHCS to others?
2. Would Veterans rate the quality of 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 Veterans were discharged?
6. Did staff communicate well with Veterans about medicines?
7. Did staff help manage pain?
8. Was staff responsive to Veteran needs.
9. Did doctors communicate well with Veterans?
10. Did nurses communicate well with Veterans?



### The CAVHCS Salute



Accredited by  
The Joint Commission

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# CAVHCS' Combined Federal Campaign Exceeds Goal

The CAVHCS 2009 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Campaign kicked off September 14, with a financial goal is \$48,750.00 and the overall goal is 100 percent contact. This year's campaign ended recently with CAVHCS surpassing its annual goal. In fact, **CAVHCS raised \$66,078.69 – or 136 percent of the annual goal.**

The 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.

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. The CFC provides the opportunity to give gifts of



**CAVHCS CFC Coordinator William Wheat posts the final figures, which saw CAVHCS raise 136 percent of the annual goal.**

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' successful effort featured the concerted efforts of trained CFC key workers, who contacted CAVHCS staff and provided the CFC booklets which listed the more than 20,000 nonprofit, charitable organizations participating in this year's campaign.

## VA Outlines 5-Year Plan to Eliminate Veteran Homelessness

During the recent "VA National Summit Ending Homelessness among Veterans," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki unveiled the department's comprehensive plan to end homelessness among Veterans by marshalling the resources of government, business and the private sector.

"President Obama and I are personally committed to ending homelessness among Veterans within the next five years," said Shinseki. "Those who have served this nation as Veterans should never find themselves on the streets, living without care and without hope."

Shinseki's comprehensive plan to end homelessness includes preventive measures like discharge planning for incarcerated Veterans re-entering society, supportive services for low-income Veterans and their families and a national referral center to link Veterans to local service providers. Additionally, the plan calls for expanded efforts for education, jobs, health care and housing.

"In the past, VA focused largely on getting homeless Veterans off the streets," said Shinseki. "Our five-year plan aims also at preventing them from ever ending up homeless."

Other features of the plan outlined by Shinseki include:

- \* The new Post-9/11 GI Bill provides a powerful option for qualified Veterans to pursue a fully funded degree program at a state college or university. It is a major component of the fight against Veteran homelessness.
- \* VA is collaborating with the Small Business Administration and the General Services Administration to certify Veteran-owned small businesses and service-disabled Veteran-owned small businesses for listing on the Federal Supply Register, which enhances their visibility and competitiveness – creating jobs for Veterans.
- \* VA will spend \$3.2 billion next year to prevent and reduce homelessness among Veterans. That includes \$2.7 billion on medical services and more than \$500 million on specific homeless programs.

- \* VA aggressively diagnoses and treats the unseen wounds of war that often lead to homelessness – severe isolation, dysfunctional behaviors, depression and substance abuse. Last week, VA and the Defense Department cosponsored a national summit on mental health that will help both agencies better coordinate mental health efforts.
- \* VA partners with more than 600 community organizations to provide transitional housing to 20,000 Veterans. It also works with 240 public housing authorities to provide permanent housing to homeless Veterans and their families under a partnership with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The VA/HUD partnership will provide permanent housing to more than 20,000 Veterans and their families.

Over the duration of the conference it is expected that over 1,200 homeless service providers from federal and state agencies, the business community, and faith-based and community providers will attend and participate in the summit. "This is not a summit on homelessness among Veterans," added Shinseki "It's a summit on ending homelessness among Veterans."



**CAVHCS conducts local Homeless Stand Downs throughout the year; providing a single meeting point so homeless Veterans access several services at once and hopefully assist them in their efforts to improve their quality of life. (Photos by Eric Johnson)**

# VA Extends ‘Agent Orange’ Benefits to More Veterans

Relying on an independent study by the Institute of Medicine, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki decided to establish a service-connection for Vietnam Veterans with three specific illnesses based on the latest evidence of an association with the herbicides referred to Agent Orange.

The illnesses affected by the recent decision are B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson’s disease; and ischemic heart disease.

Used in Vietnam to defoliate trees and remove concealment for the enemy, Agent Orange left a legacy of suffering and disability that continues to the present. Between January 1965 and April 1970, an estimated 2.6 million military personnel who served in Vietnam were potentially exposed to sprayed Agent Orange.

In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a “presumed” illness don’t have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This “presumption” simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

The Secretary’s decision brings to 15 the number of presumed illnesses recognized by the Department of Veterans

Affairs (VA). “We must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will,” Shinseki added. “Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence.”

Other illnesses previously recognized under VA’s “presumption” rule as being caused by exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War are:

- \* Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy
- \* AL Amyloidosis
- \* Chloracne
- \* Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia
- \* Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)
- \* Hodgkin’s Disease
- \* Multiple Myeloma
- \* Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma
- \* Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- \* Prostate Cancer
- \* Respiratory Cancers, and
- \* Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma,

Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi’s sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA’s services and programs for Veterans exposed to the chemical are available at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange).



## Flu Season Dragnet

**We’ve conducted a Dragnet for “...nothing but the facts!”**

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

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

**Fact:** An appointment is NOT needed to get the Seasonal Flu vaccine.

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

**Fact:** The H1N1 vaccine targets the H1N1 antigen.

**Fact:** EVERYONE should get the Seasonal Flu vaccine and consult your provider to determine if you are in a high risk category and should get the H1N1 vaccine as well.



## ‘Veterans Day’

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A newer aspect of the week-long celebration was a special Women Veterans program which was held Friday, November 6, from 8:30 am until noon in the Tuskegee VA Medical Center’s Staff Training Room.

Culminating CAVHCS’ annual celebration of our nation’s heroes was the Veterans Day ceremony held at the Montgomery VA Medical Center. The ceremony, which was attended by Veterans from World War II and youngsters alike, featured the Presentation of the Colors by the Honor Guard from Maxwell-Gunter, Air Force Base, patriotic music from the Capitol Sounds Concert Band, the laying of a Memorial Wreath and comments from keynote speaker the Honorable Todd Strange, Mayor of the City of Montgomery.

“From those brave patriots who fought for this Nation’s independence straight through to the young men and women serving so valiantly in Iraq, Afghanistan and across every continent and ocean today, America’s Veterans have earned and deserve our respect and appreciation for their sacrifices and the sacrifices of their families,” said Veterans Benefits Regional office Director, Ricardo Randle in his closing comments in Montgomery’s observance. “So, we at VA have the duty and obligation to meet the responsibilities and challenges of providing Veterans the very best care and service possible. For us it’s more than a duty; it’s a privilege.”

# CAVHCS Photo Gallery

Photos by Eric Johnson

CAVHCS held a week-long celebration of Veterans; including the 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans Day parade on the Tuskegee Campus and a Veterans Day observance on the Montgomery Campus.





CAVHCS held a week-long celebration of Veterans in early November; including a Women Veterans Program held on the Tuskegee Campus.  
(Photos by Eric Johnson)

# December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month - <a href="http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov">www.nhtsa.dot.gov</a>		<b>World AIDS Day</b> December 1 	2	3	4	5
Colorectal Cancer Education and Awareness Month - <a href="http://www.ppsinc.org">www.ppsinc.org</a>			Aplastic Anemia & MDS Awareness Week - <a href="http://www.aamds.org">www.aamds.org</a>			
6	 <b>Pearl Harbor Day</b> DECEMBER 7	8	9	10	11	12  <b>HAPPY CHANUKAH</b>
13	14	15	16	17	18 Islamic New Year 	19
	Chanukah Begins at Sundown	December 12 thru Dec. 19				
20	21 Winter Begins 	22	23	24	25 <b>Merry Christmas!</b> 	26  <b>KWANZAA</b> (Dec. 26-Jan. 1)
27	28	29	30	 New Years Eve	Safe Toys and Celebrations Month - <a href="http://www.aao.org">www.aao.org</a>  Spiritual Literacy Month - <a href="http://www.one-river.com">www.one-river.com</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.