



CAVHCS Volunteerism Heads Back to School

More than 50 volunteers from Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System and the Veterans Benefits Administration's Montgomery Regional Office gathered at Wares Ferry Road Elementary School Saturday August 13 to get the school ready for the upcoming school year and take part in the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce's School Clean-up Initiative.

"We've got people that are cleaning the outside," said CAVHCS Acting Associate Director Johnny Davis who manned the pressure washer for most of the day. "We're painting on the inside; we're cleaning floors; we're dusting, and we're basically getting the school ready for the upcoming school year."

The adopt-a-school project was a team effort that pulled together area Department of Veterans Affairs staff to serve the community. "We solicited volunteers from the workforces of the Medical Center and Regional Office," said Ricardo Randle,

Director, Veterans Benefits Administration's Montgomery Regional



Robert Carlson (foreground) and Larry Thomas mopped, scrubbed, and waxed the floor recently when more than 50 VA staff prepared Wares Ferry Road School for the new school year.

Office. "And, we were very pleased to see the number of people who wanted to give up their Saturday to come out and help."

The driving force behind the project was the local American Federation of Government Employees. "I work in the VA; I'm a Veteran myself, and our children come to these schools," said Clifton Wrencher, President, AFGE Local 503. "So with the way the various budgets are right now in the local area – schools are hit too. So, we wanted to be able to give back. We want to be able to help the school system any way we could."

"Helping. Helping out," said Sierra Pease, who decided to join her daughter who works at CAVHCS.

"We're helping the children come back to a beautiful school," said Cynthia Petty, CAVHCS Tele-health Coordinator.

"Yes; making it lovely for the kids," said Dr. Tina Majors, Nurse Practitioner, CAVHCS Diabetic Clinic.

Montgomery VA Medical Center ED Re-opens

Construction was recently completed to improve the capabilities and privacy of the Emergency Department (ED) in Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System's (CAVHCS) Montgomery VA Medical Center.

"This project will improve ED patient flow," said Cheryl Owens, CAVHCS Emergency Department Nurse Manager. "With that improved patient flow we should also see a decrease in missed opportunities and reduce patient stays. We'll also improve quality of care to our patients thus improving customer service."

The 13-month project cost \$ 881,112 and was specifically designed to address compliance with Joint Commission standards regarding privacy as well as new Veterans Health Administration standards for Mental Health Design.

"The project resulted in the construction of a SOG (Special Observation Group) patient room and bathroom reconstructed to meet VHA Mental Health Standards, said Owens. "And, it also gives us two additional beds, two more sinks to promote with infection control, ceiling-mounted patient lifts in each room to assist staff in weighing and moving patients and a brand new Negative Pressure Room, which we'll be able to use for isolation of patients presenting with airborne contagious diseases."

Successful project usually require ample planning as well as follow through and teamwork, and CAVHCS' Correct Privacy Issues ED Phase II project was no different. "The ED

leadership and staff were very involved during the design phase," explained CAVHCS Engineering Technician Elaine Adams. "Plus, they were always available for any questions that came up during the construction phase."

For the past few months patients arriving at the Montgomery VA Medical Center for emergent care have been triaged near the Emergency Department and then taken to the second floor for treatment. "A special thanks to the ED staff for developing creative solutions to the many challenges of being relocated to the 2nd floor," said Owens. "And another special thanks to the nursing staff on 2A (SDS) for their hospitality (as our sister unit) over the past year."



CAVHCS leadership (l-r) Mr. Glen Struchtemeyer, Dr. Gilmer Rodriguez, Dr. Cliff Robinson and Rozelia Bean recently cut the ceremonial ribbon to re-open the newly renovated Emergency Department in the Montgomery VA Medical Center.

CAVHCS All-Stars

While Dr. Sacks was very professional in her evaluation of my PTSD claim on July 8, 2011, she also showed concern and empathy for my particular situation. I applaud Dr. Sacks and the Veterans Administration for having compassion and understanding for the Veterans. Dr. Sacks is a genuine credit to the VA and to the Veterans. Thanks for Caring!

-- Richard F., Georgia

I received excellent service from Dr. Bannister and Ms. Faulkner in the Eye Clinic. The service was great and the staff was exceptional. Please tell them to keep up the good work and thank them again for me.

-- Respectfully, Tony Mc., Troy, Ala.

Dr. Silas Gbenle (Geriatrics) has been my doctor since his arrival at CAVHCS. He is very patient, never hurried and gave me his personal cell number for emergencies. He always remembers me personally and needs to be recognized for a terrific bedside manner and great care he gives the Veterans.

Also I have a suggestion: PLEASE redistribute the handicapped parking space North of the Hospital (along the sidewalk area). There is a lot of wasted space in the crowded parking lot.

-- Thanks again, Frank F., Montgomery, Ala.

I would like to commend Ms. Annie Gosha, Dr. Bannister and Ms. Mee Chin Ho for their excellent service during my recent visit to the Eye Clinic on July 14th, 2011. I had an outstanding experience. The entire staff was very professional!

-- Sincerely, Roy S., Montgomery, Ala.

If it were not for the aid and assistance of Dr. Katz and the staff my life would be in misery. They made me understand many things about my condition and face the changes needed and helped me get the support necessary. Their help is appreciated in a big way. They made me feel very special. Please thank them for me. -- Joyce M., Ala.

There are several bright spots at the VA that I want you to know about. First, I would like to say thank you to Dr. B. Taylor of the Green Team for all the support and care she has given to me over the years. Sometimes I may have to wait a while to see her but she has never let me down. Please keep up the great work. I appreciate her very much. Second, the care and concern Ms. Cynthia Davis, Social worker, has given me and a couple of the Veterans are deeply appreciated. She has always gone above and beyond to see that our concerns are heard. Thank you.

-- Yours Truly, Sylvester G., Pike Road, Ala.

I really had a nice experience at the VA recently. The entire staff was excellent, very friendly and helpful. Please give them "High 5's" for me and tell them to continue serving the Veterans because we need more like the staff on Ward 2A.

-- Jerry Mc., Alabama

I was treated today by Dr. Carol Williams, D.D.S. She has excellent communication skills and makes a particularly uncomfortable visit something pleasant and remarkable. She is a very nice young lady and I could not be happier or more at ease with anyone else. -- Regards, Herbert L. W., Dothan, Ala.



It's that time again!

The Combined Federal Campaign

Check with your Key Worker for information and materials.

CAVHCS GOAL: \$51,132



Accredited by
The Joint Commission

The CAVHCS Salute

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Director
Acting Associate Director
Associate Director, Patient Care Services
Chief of Staff
Public Affairs Officer

Glen E. Struchtemeyer
Johnny R. Davis
Yvette Hill, MS, RN
Cliff Robinson, MD
Al Bloom

The CAVHCS Survey says...

What does Veteran-Centered Care mean to you?



Deborah B. Ellis,
Kinesiotherapist,
West Campus

“The Veterans are our first priority, and their needs must be met with that specifically in mind. Our accomplishments must be guided by the Veterans needs or wishes concerning their treatment.”



Earl D. Hawkins
Program Specialist,
Voluntary Services

“Veteran Centered Care is to put the Veterans first, using interventions to enhance communication between patient and provider.”



Dr. Hope Warren,
Dental Service, Infection
Control Nurse

“The Veterans are the focus of all the services we provide. The Veterans should direct their care and we should be listening to them, or anticipating their unspoken needs.”

Open Source Electronic Health Record Agent Begins

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced it has completed an important milestone on its joint path with the Department of Defense (DoD) to create a single electronic health record system for servicemembers and Veterans. OSEHRA, the Open Source Electronic Health Record Agent, has begun operations and will serve as the central governing body of a new open source Electronic Health Record (EHR) community.

“We developed our open source strategy to engage the public and private sectors in the rapid advancement of our EHR software, which is central to the care we deliver to Veterans and servicemembers and to our joint EHR collaboration with the Department of Defense,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “With the launch of OSEHRA, we begin the implementation of our strategy and we look forward to the creation of a vibrant open source EHR community.”

As part of the initiation of OSEHRA operations, VA has contributed its current EHR, known as VistA (Veterans Integrated System Technology Architecture), to seed the effort. OSEHRA will oversee the community of EHR users, developers, and service providers that will deploy, use, and enhance the EHR software.

Individuals and organizations interested in participating in OSEHRA (www.osehra.org) are invited to join through the community website. Established as an independent non-profit corporation during its initial phase of operation, OSEHRA is putting in place the framework and the tools that will enable the public sector, private industry, and academia to collaborate to advance EHR technology.

VA Explains Upcoming Changes to GI Bill

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reaching out to inform Veterans of recent changes made by Congress to the Post 9/11 GI Bill that take effect in 2011.

General Allison Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits, said “The Post 9/11 GI Bill is incredibly important because it reduces the financial burdens of higher education so that Veterans have an opportunity to achieve their education goals.

“It’s hard to believe how far we have all come with the Post-9/11 GI Bill the past two years,” added Hickey. “Today, more than 537,000 students have received over \$11.5 billion in GI Bill benefits to help them take charge of their future.”

Upcoming changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill effective August 1, 2011 include paying the actual net cost of all public in-state tuition and fees, rather than basing payments upon the highest in-state tuition and fee rates for every state; capping private and foreign tuition at \$17,500 per academic year; and ending payments during certain school breaks, to preserve Veterans’ entitlement for future academic semesters.

Beginning October 1, 2011, eligible individuals will be able to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill for programs such as non-college degrees, on-the-job training, and correspondence courses, and they will be eligible to receive a portion of the national monthly housing allowance rate when enrolled only in distance learning courses.

CAVHCS Photo Gallery

CAVHCS staff and family gathered recently to provide elbow grease and a sweat equity for Wares Ferry Road School in preparation for this year's new school year. Meanwhile, the Director's Diversity Advisory Committee, held its annual CAVHCS Women of Excellence competition, and observances of Women's Equality Day featuring the Honorable Judge Lynn Bright, as keynote speaker. This year's winners are: Category I – Cathy Fitzpatrick, Category II- Captain Gloria Perry and Category III-Dorothea McBride.



Undersanding VA Core Values and Characteristics

Core Values and Characteristics that apply universally across all of VA have been approved. The five Core Values define “**who we are,**” our culture and how we care for Veterans, their families and other beneficiaries.

The Values are **I**ntegrity, **C**ommitment, **A**dvocacy, **R**espect and **E**xcellence (“**I CARE**”). The Core Characteristics define “what we stand for,” and help guide how we will perform our core mission; they shape our strategy, and will influence resource allocation and other important decisions made within VA. The Characteristics are *Trustworthy, Accessible, Quality, Agile, Innovative, and Integrated.*

VA Core Values and Characteristics Questions & Answers

What are Core values, and why do we need them?

Core Values describe an organization’s culture and character. Values serve as the foundation for the way individuals in an organization interact with each other and with people outside of the organization. They also influence an organization’s mission, strategy and day-to-day operations. Most successful organizations have core values and they form the foundation on which everything else in the organization is built. Values also serve as a common bond between all employees regardless of their grade, specialty area, location, etc. In the case of our VA Core Values and Characteristics, they also remind us of the special commitment we have to Veterans, their families and other beneficiaries.

What are the differences between the Core Values and Characteristics?

Core Values define “who we are” and Characteristics define “what we stand for.” Values represent our beliefs and provide a baseline for the standards of behavior expected of all VA employees. They are relevant, meaningful and actionable and are enduring. Core Characteristics are a common set of principles around which our actions are organized and describe the traits all VA organizations should possess and demonstrate. The VA Characteristics are relevant today and they are also forward-looking. They identify the qualities needed to successfully accomplish today’s missions and also support our ongoing transformation to a 21st Century VA.

How were the Core Values and Characteristics Developed?

This transformational journey began in 2009 by asking important questions, such as, “How well are we performing our mission?”, “What is changing in our operating environment and how do we respond to that change?”, “What is working, and what isn’t working so well, and why?”, etc. Included in this process were two productive off-sites – one in New Orleans and one at Fort McNair in Washington DC.

The participants from the many different VA organizations provided considerable input into the development of the Core Values and Characteristics. Additionally, critical thinking around these Core Values and Characteristics included input from the VA workforce through

surveys and feedback as well as discussions on myriad of topics. Based on these activities, and the recommendations of the different panels and groups, the Secretary approved the Core Values and Characteristics presented in this packet and on the enclosed DVD. These Core Values and Characteristics reflect the consensus views as to the existing culture of VA and what the workforce believes VA should look like in the future. Once the Core Values and Characteristics were approved, a communications plan was developed to disseminate the information to the VA workforce as well as to other audiences.

Why was it necessary to codify our Core Values and Characteristics ?

Throughout its history, VA’s dedicated and professional workforce has always demonstrated a strong commitment to Veterans and exhibited many worthwhile values aimed at providing the best-possible services, care and support to Veterans. However, there has not been one set of Core Values and

Characteristics that applied to all VA employees until now. The Core Values and Characteristics are more than just words. They represent an individual and an organizational commitment to do the best we can every day to perform our crucial mission of taking care of Veterans, family members, and other beneficiaries. By codifying these Core Values and Characteristics, we ensure they receive the proper emphasis at all levels within the organization, are clearly understood by the workforce, and most importantly, become an enduring part of our VA culture.

How will we know if we are living up to the Core Values?

Most VA employees already display one or more of these Core Values and Characteristics every day. However, now that they have been approved, all of us can and should look for opportunities to publicly demonstrate our Values in the workplace. This effort is not just about knowing what “I CARE” stands for and being able to recite the words. That is the easy part. It is about “actions.” It is about every VA employee living and exemplifying these Core Values and Characteristics every day in the workforce. There is no simple litmus test to verify if someone is living these values. But over time, it will be fairly easy for supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, and the Veterans and other beneficiaries we serve to identify who among us is exemplifying these Core Values.

How will the Core Values change my job?

These new Core Values and Characteristics are not intended to change anyone’s job description or routine duties. Over time, starting in FY 12, VA will begin implementing a formalized program enterprise-wide to recognize VA personnel and organizations which best exemplify the Core Values and Characteristics.



CAVHCS East (Tuskegee) Campus staff have been taking advantage of the new Wellness Project fitness equipment adjacent to the Building 68 Walking Trail. The new equipment features; and air walker for a complete body that's easy on your joints, a Warm Up Station and a Bicycle Station – all in a shaded, outdoor setting.

*If you are a man and over age 40 or a woman and over age 50, or have a chronic health problem such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, or obesity, talk to your health care provider before starting a vigorous physical activity program.

(VA Photo by Eric Johnson)



SEPTEMBER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 Annual Labor Day Carnival Tuskegee VAMC, 8 am.	6	7	8 Community Homeless Assessment and Local Education Networking Group meeting Building 90 Theater, 10 am.	9	10
11	12	13	14 Homeless Stand Down Montgomery Farmer's Market	15	16 CRC Picnic Tuskegee Bldg 90 Theater 11:30	17
18	19	20	21 Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation (PM&R) Awareness Fair	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

YR 2011

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.