



CAVHCS Annual Memorial Day Observance ‘Shines’

Despite threatening skies and an occasional cloudburst before and afterward, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) conducted its annual Memorial Day observance Monday, May 31, at the Montgomery VA Medical Center - complete with patriotic music from the Capitol Sounds Orchestra, a Gun Salute and the Presentation of the Colors by Maxwell, AFB Honor Guard, a wreath laying ceremony and of course taps.

After welcoming the more than 150 Veterans, family members, guests and staff CAVHCS Associate Director, Ms. Anita Willard made sure to acknowledge Veterans from each era of conflict dating back from World War II to Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

“The ground we stand on today, the very air we breathe was paid for time and time again by our

warriors,” said Willard. “Every mountain between our two coasts; every island over which an American Flag flies; every acre of farmland; every tree, every lake, every stream or field - was paid for by a Veteran.



More than 150 Veterans, family members and staff participated in CAVHCS’ annual Memorial Day observance that included music from The Capitol Sounds Band, Taps, a live Gun Salute and a moment of Remembrance. (Image by Robin Johnson)

“Today our nation remembers those who have sacrificed, but for those of us in the Department of Veterans Affairs - Memorial Day - is also very much about the living,” added Willard. “It’s about the 23 million veterans living, working and contributing to our society today. In serving those who have served, we also honor those who gave their full measure.

This year’s keynote speaker was Maj. Gen. Robert C. Kane, Commander, Spatz Center for Officer Education, and Commandant, Air War College Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

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Nurse Practitioners, Increasing Access to Health Care

Collaboration is an integral aspect of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Veteran-Centered, Medical Home model. And, while most of us are focusing on the inclusion of Veterans and family members into that process, it’s also important to consider the essential collaborative role played by Nurse Practitioners – particularly in May which celebrates Nurses Week.

“We work in a collaborative manner,” explained Joycelynn LaMont a Nurse Practitioner (NP) who works at Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) in Mental Health. “Nurse practitioners are nurses who often have decades of specialty experience as well as certified specialty training.”

By definition a Nurse Practitioner is a registered nurse who has completed specific advanced nursing education (generally a master’s degree) and training in the diagnosis and management of common as well as some complex medical conditions. Nurse Practitioners are generally licensed through nursing boards rather than medical boards as they provide advanced healthcare services. Nurse Practitioners provide a broad range of health care services.

Nurse Practitioners treat both physical and mental conditions through comprehensive history taking, physical exams, ordering physical therapy, ordering tests and therapies for patients, within their scope of practice. NPs

can serve as a patient’s “point of entry” health care provider, and see patients of all ages depending on their designated scope of practice.

That versatility translates to a unique ability to address one of the most common patient satisfaction concerns...increasing access. “We represent an opportunity to increase access to care, because we are capable of not only seeing patients within our specialty, but collaborating with physicians to expand the health care system’s overall capabilities,” explained LaMont. “We also support family members, as well as providing expertise in specialty care to a general practitioner who needs a timely consult to ensure their patient has the best care possible.”

Considering that the nation is currently undergoing both nursing and outpatient care physician shortages, the flexibility nurse practitioners offer may offer an institutional approach to increasing access in the future. However, one remaining limitation seems to be the state-by-state approach to how NPs are licensed and used.

Generally speaking NPs are licensed by the state in which they practice, and have a national board certification

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CAVHCS All-Stars

I am writing this letter to inform you that I received outstanding care in your Kinesiology Clinic. I recently had surgery to repair my torn Achilles tendon. Ms. Gloria Brown in the KT clinic developed a program individually tailored to meet my needs to assist in my rehabilitation. She also instructed me in a home exercise program, and ordered a device shipped to my home for me to use. One personal observation, the KT clinic needs at least a part-time assistant to help her. Every time I was there she was working with three or four patients simultaneously, and it appears that appointments to her clinic are rationed. It is amazing that she can be so effective balancing this workload.

-- Sincerely, Gerald D. B. Ft. Mitchell, Ala.

I would like to give your dedicated team of professionals a Certificate of Appreciation for their demonstration of dedicated service, honest opinion, tender care they rendered to me during my recovery from surgery. As a Visually Impaired Veteran, it is very difficult to find an individual who is aware of our special needs but to find an entire group that is aware is unique indeed.

This team is led by Ms. Linda Echols consists of Mrs. Janice Watts, Mrs. Doris Howard, and Mrs. Eldra Marcus) truly embody those who put the needs of the patient FIRST. Their concern for their clients demonstrates the kind of professionalism we all need to strive for on a daily basis.

The Veterans Administration has truly chosen well with this outstanding team working for them in the pursuit of excellence in the continuum of care on behalf of the Veterans. Their Professional ethics, soothing tone of voice, calming and consistent encouragement and genteel approach makes it easier for recovery. I am proud to have them on my health team.

-- Sincerely, Joseph D. M., Sr.

As a patient, I would like you to know how satisfied I have been over the last 14 months with the care given me by Dr. Ahmed (at the Columbus, Ga. CBOC). He has been thorough, courteous and timely and his manner makes me feel very comfortable in his presence. Please know that I feel he is the best physician I have seen thus far in the years I have visited your clinic.

-- Yours truly, Richard G.

I hope things have been going well for you. My name is Paul H. and I live here in Montgomery, Ala. I am a former Marine. I was medically discharged from Marine Corp Base Camp LeJuene in 1988 with Disabilities of the back and right foot/Achilles tendonitis, of which I have been receiving medical care there at the VA. I want to thank you again and praise the good work that you and your staff do for me and the Veterans. During my recent appointments at the Physical and Occupational Therapy clinics I received excellent care. From August 31, 2009 to October I would like to recognize the OT unit for their high level of care. Mrs. Mia Rocker and Ms. Doloris Sweeney worked with me and they had all the heart and soul one could ask for in preparing me to get better. May God bless these wonderful people and May God Bless America.

-- Gratefully, Paul H. Montgomery, Ala.

From the Director

Dear Employees,

Thank you for participating in the 2010 VA All employee Survey. As you know our goal for participation in the All Employee Survey was 100 percent. During the last day of the survey our overall participation rate according to the organization collecting the data was 71 percent.

We care about your opinions and how we can make your work place the best it can be. Participating in this survey was one important way in which your input will be used to make positive changes in your work unit.

Within several weeks we will have our facility level data at which time we will share the information with all of you. Action Planning will occur at the work group level after discussing ways to improve the workplace.

Please remember that your survey responses remain confidential and anonymous. Again, thank you for your help to make our facility a better work place.

Sincerely,
Glen E. Struchtemeyer
HCS Director



Celebrating at the 'All Employee' Picnic. (Image by Eric Johnson)

The CAVHCS Salute



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Cliff Robinson, MD
Al Bloom

Employees of the Month

Mr. George McKnight

Nutrition and Food Services,
Montgomery Campus



George McKnight is being honored for his outstanding record, his length of service, dependability, willingness to learn new tasks, performance on the job and his ability to get along with his fellow workers.

This has enabled him to perform any task in Nutrition and Food Services. He maintains his duties and assists his co-workers with their assignments. Mr. McKnight meets and interacts with Veterans, visitors and other employees in a courteous manner.

He is always friendly with all Veterans, family members and staff. He is never too busy to check on the patients that are not eating well and he checks with the dietician and supervisor for special items that patients may need or have a taste for. He is exceptionally courteous and responsive, helps them open their milk and juice or other package items on their trays.

Because of his outstanding efforts he has received two letters of appreciation (Daphne Edwards, Dietician and Customer Service) and it is obvious that Mr. McKnight will keep up the good work as he enjoys his job. He is an asset to the Nutrition and Food Services and to CAVHCS.

Ms. Shirley Armer

Patient Care Services,
Tuskegee Campus



Editor's note: *The following information was submitted by Jacqueline Groce, who wrote in reference to a Code Blue she witnessed on May 6th, in front of Bldg. 83.*

Shirley Armer displayed an act of heroism which should be commended, putting forth her ultimate and professional effort, which resulted in saving a Veteran's life.

Seeing her in action made me personally feel good to know that people like her are here at this facility putting forth such an effort to save lives, which makes me feel more comfortable being employed here as well as being a patient myself.

I feel Ms. Shirley Armer deserves not only Employee of the Month, and Employee of the Year, but should be awarded a special award for her excellent skill she displayed today, because she is most definitely an asset to the facility and should be recognized as such.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude.

1-877- 4AIDVET for Assistance

Secretary Announces New Hotline for Homeless Vets

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced recently the establishment of a new telephone hotline to provide emergency support and resources to homeless Veterans.

"It is unacceptable for a single Veteran to spend the night on the streets of America," said Shinseki. "The hotline of the new National Call Center for Homeless Veterans will provide homeless Veterans with caring, timely assistance and coordinated access to VA and community services."

Family members, workers at community agencies and non-VA providers also may call the hotline at **1-877-4AIDVET** to find out about the many programs and services available to assist homeless Veterans.

Well-trained expert responders will staff the hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They will join other responders who staff VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline in Canandaigua, New York.

Responders are cross trained to handle calls at either call center. While a responder will know which type of call is incoming, all Veteran callers will be receive a brief suicide screening.

VA officials recognize that homeless Veterans are in need of food and shelter, clothing, financial assistance, and treatment for medical conditions. Additionally, many require access to permanent housing, Veterans benefits and vocational resources.

VA assistance is available for homeless Veterans who may have mental health issues, substance abuse, depression, traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. The

responders operating the new hotline will ensure Veterans receive the help they need and deserve.

The hotline, which began service on March 1, has received 1,846 calls. Call volume is expected to grow as awareness of the service increases.

The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans is the latest in a series of initiatives to help homeless Veterans. Last year, Shinseki launched a campaign to eliminate homelessness among Veterans within five years. Since then, the number of Veterans homeless on a typical night has dropped 18 percent.

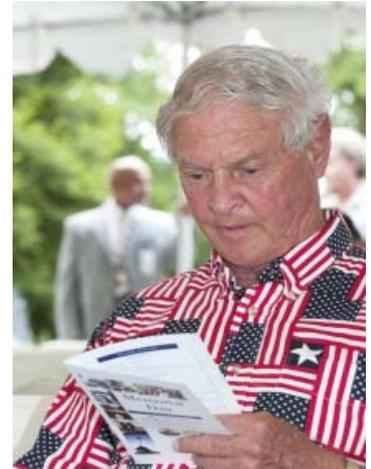
"This reduction was achieved through VA's commitment to end homelessness among Veterans through enhanced collaboration with other federal, state, faith-based, Veteran service organizations and community partners," Shinseki said.

VA has approximately 4,000 agreements with community partners to help homeless Veterans. Last year, more than 92,000 homeless Veterans were served by VA's specialized homeless programs. This is an increase of 15 percent from the previous year.



CAVHCS Photo Gallery

Despite threatening skies and an occasional cloudburst before and afterward, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) conducted its annual Memorial Day observance Monday, May 31, at the Montgomery VA Medical Center.



Images by Robin Johnson

‘Memorial’

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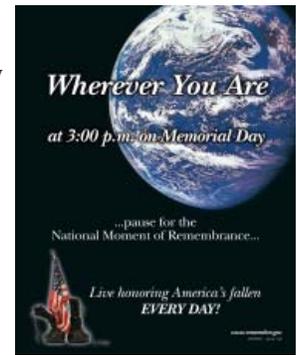
joined Ms. Willard to lay a wreath below Building One’s main flag.

The observance also featured the firing of a Gun Salute, the playing of Taps a moment of silence. While most of the event will be in keeping with CAVHCS’ traditional Memorial Day observance, this year CAVHCS moved the start time for the second year to 2:30 p.m. to incorporate the National Moment of Remembrance at 3 p.m.

The *National Moment of Remembrance*, established by Congress, asks Americans wherever they are at 3 p.m., local time, on Memorial Day to pause in an act of national unity (duration: one minute). The time 3 p.m. was chosen because it is the time when most Americans are enjoying their freedoms on the national holiday. The *Moment* does not replace traditional Memorial Day events; rather it is an act of national unity in which all Americans, alone or with family and friends, honor those who died for our freedom. According to the White House Commission of Remembrance website, “It will help to reclaim Memorial Day as the sacred and noble holiday it was meant to be. In this shared remembrance, we connect as Americans.”

The idea for the *Moment* was born when children touring the Nation’s Capital were asked by the Commission’s Director what Memorial Day means. They responded, “That’s the day the pool opens.” A Gallup Poll revealed that only 28% of Americans know the meaning of this noble holiday. The White House Commission on Remembrance was established by Congress (PL 106-579) to promote the values of Memorial Day by acts of remembrance throughout the year. The major initiative of the Commission is the *National Moment of Remembrance*.

“As citizens throughout our great nation begin their summer at poolside and backyard grills this Memorial Day, they are being encouraged to put the “memorial” back in Memorial Day – as we have done - by pausing to honor the sacrifices that make our freedom possible,” said Willard. “We pause in silence because no words are adequate to console those who have lost a loved one serving our nation. Nevertheless, we can pause as individuals, families and a Nation to offer our thoughts and prayers.”



‘Nurse Practitioners’

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(usually through the American Nurses Credentialing Center or American Academy of Nurse Practitioners). Nurse Practitioners can be trained and nationally board certified in areas of FNP, Gerontology (GNP), Women’s Health (WHNP), Psychiatry & Mental Health (PMHNP), Acute Care (ACNP), Adult Health (ANP), Oncology (ONP), Emergency Medicine (as FNP or ACNP), Occupational Health (as ANP). These programs are offered by many universities with a School of Nursing, graduate-level nursing programs upon completion students may be awarded a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree.

In regard to level and scope of practice, each state certifies nurse practitioners thus their scope of practice can differ depending on the state. Nurse practitioners practice under their own license unlike the physician assistant (PA) who practices under the license of a medical doctor (MD).

Nevertheless, CAVHCS has been adopting a more proactive approach toward providing educational opportunities for staff interested in becoming a Nurse Practitioner. To become a Nurse Practitioner (NP), nurses trained at the associate degree or diploma level must first complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) or enter various programs offering an ADN-to-MSN “bridge program,” some of which award the bachelors degree while completing the requirements for the masters; others, upon completion, only award the MSN with only the BSN

coursework being completed instead of an actual degree awarded.

Once state licensure as a registered nurse is attained by successful completion of the NCLEX-RN, the candidate must complete a state-approved advanced nursing education program that usually specializes in a field such as family health, adult health, acute care, women’s health, etc. The degree can be granted by a university which grants an MSN or doctorate in nursing. “We’re working to expand our educational opportunities here at CAVHCS,” said LaMont. “We know that the need for increased access to healthcare is going to continue and Nurse Practitioners can play a vital role.”



Ms. Joycelynn Lamont, CRNP, CAVHCS Mental Health and Behavioral Medicine (seated left) and Dr. Margaret Bok, MD, Psychiatrist, CAVHCS Mental Health often consult on each other’s patients to ensure Veterans receive the best care anywhere.



Reloading as they continue to provide a Gun Salute and a poignant break in the silence, members of the Maxwell AFB Honor Guard followed the National Moment of Remembrance during the annual Memorial Day observance held on the Montgomery VA Medical Center campus Monday, May, 31. (Image by Robin Johnson).

June

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Heimlich Maneuver Introduced (1974)	2	3	4	5
	7 	8	9		11	12
	National Headache Awareness Week					
13		15	16	17	18	19
			National Flag Week Nursing Assistants Week National Men's Health Week Healthcare Risk Management Week			
		22 GI Bill Signed Into Law (1944)	23	24	25	26
			Information and Technology Oversight and Compliance Assessment - June 21-25			
27 		29	30	Professional Wellness Month National Aphasia Awareness Month National Scleroderma Awareness Month Myasthenia Gravis Awareness Month National Hernia Awareness Month		
	Eye Safety Awareness Week					

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.