



Valentines for Veterans Concert a 'Hit' Again this Year

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) hosted a complimentary Valentines for Veterans (V4V) Concert, featuring "The Platters," in downtown Montgomery's Davis Theater February 10.

"They were wonderful," said a Veteran as he danced through the lobby of Troy University's Davis Theater for the Performing Arts following 90 minutes of clapping, dancing and singing...which actually describes the audience!

"They can certainly sing, but when they came into the audience and got some of the Veterans to participate; those were special moments."

Audience participation began early in the night. "Can I get a Hooah," asked the evening's Mistress of Ceremony Tonya Terry, star of WSFA 12News' Today in Alabama, after explaining her father is an Army Veteran. "Are you ready for The

Platters?" The resounding, "Yes," that came back from the more than 1,000 in



The Platters had everybody in the packed Davis Theater for the Performing Arts dancing, singing and happy to be part of the show!

attendance made it clear they were ready to party!

"Even though we're all here to enjoy a concert from The Platters; given the military nature of our audience as well as the patriotic fervor all Alabamians share – we knew song should be the first we heard tonight," said Terry as she introduced Air Force Tech. Sgt. William Page, from Maxwell-Gunter's NCO Academy who provided a moving a cappella version of the National Anthem, and Tuskegee University's U.S. Air Force ROTC, Detachment 15, U.S. Army ROTC, Tiger Battalion and U.S. Navy ROTC who presented the colors.

Terry also took time to acknowledge the mix of Veterans in the audience. From World War II to Veterans from Operation New Dawn and those who recently returned from

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VA Expands the Safety Net, Adds to Suicide Prevention efforts

The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding its efforts to prevent suicide through several new initiatives that increase the availability of services for Veterans, Servicemembers and their families.

The new initiatives include a new, free, confidential text-messaging service in the existing Veterans Crisis Line, introduction of toll-free access from Europe, and collaboration with Vets Prevail and Vets4Warriors, two groups providing crisis help to Veterans, Servicemembers and their families.

"Offering text messaging services will help VA reach more Veterans and their friends and families," said Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's national mental health director for suicide prevention. "We are working to meet their needs by communicating through multiple channels - over the phone, through online chat, and now via text, which provides quick, easy access to support. VA wants all Veterans to know that confidential support is only a text message away."

Since its founding July 2007, VA's Veterans Crisis Line and the later Chat Service have received 500,000 calls and engaged in 31,000 chats resulting in over 18,000 rescues of Veterans in immediate crisis.

Now, in addition to the Veterans Crisis Line (**1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**) and online chat (www.VeteransCrisisLine.net), Veterans and Servicemembers in crisis—and their friends and families—may text free of charge to 83-8255 to receive confidential, personal and

immediate support. The text service is available, like the Veterans Crisis Line and online chat, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year and connects a user with a specially trained VA professional - many who are Veterans themselves.

VA's Veterans Crisis Line continues to add external resources to provide Veterans with additional support. Two of these organizations include Vets Prevail (www.VetsPrevail.org) and Vets4Warriors (www.Vets4Warriors.com).

In December, Vets Prevail launched a chat service that connects Veterans to caring responders who provide information on a wide variety of resources. If the Veteran is in crisis or needs mental health support, the conversation is then seamlessly transferred to a VA Veterans Crisis Line responder.

Vets4Warriors has helped thousands of their peers connect with confidential assistance through a free hotline (**1-855-838-8255/1-855-VET-TALK**) and online chat (www.Vets4Warriors.com). If a Veteran is in need of professional crisis or mental health support, Vets4Warriors' responders will transfer the Veteran to a responder at the Veterans Crisis Line.

For more information about VA's suicide prevention program, visit: http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/

CAVHCS All-Stars

I'm grateful for the service of the team in Building 120 at the Tuskegee Campus. I want to especially thank staff member Jacqueline Ross. She took my blood pressure just in time before something more severe had an opportunity to happen. I am indebted to her for her service and commitment to us Veterans. -- *Respectfully, Lakesha S., Columbus, Ga.*

I am taking this time to give credit where credit is due. I have been using the V.A. Hospital since 1996 exclusively and in all that time I have never been treated with as much care and true consideration as I received from Dr. Vachhani and his nurse Regina Williams. He even calls if something serious is going on with my health. They truly care about the Veterans. -- *William F., Veteran*

I would like to take the time and let you know Barbara Bristow in Dental did an excellent job. She was very courteous and made me feel welcome at my appointment. -- *Thank you again, Robert R., Veteran*

Please give my compliments to Dr. Murray and Dr. Robinson in Podiatry. Both of them here helped me out and answered a lot of my questions. They are a credit to CAVHCS and should be congratulated for the care they give. -- *Regards, Anonymous*

March is Women's History Month

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating March as National Women's History Month, when we pause to recognize women's place in history, the present, and the future. This year's theme is Women's Education -Women's Empowerment. As we celebrate this month, we recognize women's long struggle for equality in education.

According to the National Women's History Project (NWHF), which provides detailed descriptions and timelines of women's struggles in the education arena, women's struggles in education can be traced throughout civilization's history.

Although Harvard was founded in 1636, it was open only to men. The first women's college, Oberlin, was not chartered until 1833. However, even with discrimination and limitation, women have plowed their own path to receiving education, often not even getting recognition when they completed the requirements for a degree. Even as - coeducation grew, women's courses of study were often different from men's, and women's role models were few, as most faculty members were male. Single-sex education remained the elite norm in the U.S. until the early 1970s. Discrimination against women attending college was not prohibited until Title IX of the Education Codes of the Higher Education Act Amendment was passed in 1972 and implemented in 1976.

Today, there are about 60 women's colleges, but all educational institutions must allow women to enroll. According to 2010 Census data, women now account for 50.8 percent of the U.S. population. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that in 2009 women accounted for 57.1 percent of all individuals enrolled in either full or part-time postsecondary education. In VA, as of September

30, 2011, women account for about 59.8 percent of the total VA workforce.

VA education attainment data for fiscal year 2011, which is based on self-reporting, showed that 63 percent of the VA workforce has achieved some type of postsecondary degree (Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Professional, or Doctorate). Of this group, 66 percent are women with an Associate's degree or higher-level degree.

As the leader in providing benefits and health care to Veterans, VA understands the important role women have in the military. As of September 30, 2011, there were over 214,098 women serving on active duty, reserves and National Guard, representing 14.6 percent of the overall military workforce. As of 2011, there were 1,853,690 women Veterans, representing about 8.3 percent of the overall Veteran population. While women's roles in the military are critical, historically their roles were limited to what some considered - gender appropriate jobs or assignments.

Today, some of those limitations still apply, including limited roles in combat-only specialties or assignments. However, on February 9, 2012, Lolita Baldor of the Associated Press published an article that included newly-released Pentagon rules that - opened thousands of jobs to women in units that are closer to the front lines than ever before.



The CAVHCS Salute

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The CAVHCS Survey says...

“What is your favorite aspect of serving Veterans?”



**Kimberly Echols,
Charge Nurse on 129-
1B in the Community
Living Center.**

“They have vibrant personalities that make my day, even though I’m supposed to be making theirs.”



**Justina Okeke,
Social Work Service,**

“When I look back on what they’ve done for us in Iraq, WWII, and Viet Nam, I try to provide the best Social Work care for them and their families, because what they’ve done for us has given me the opportunity to serve them.”



**Detective Cedric
Thomas
Police Service**

“To ensure that the Veterans feel safe and secure in their environment while at CAVHCS.”

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service in the International Security Assistance Forces in Afghanistan – all were recognized and honored.

With an audience ready and raring to go, CAVHCS Interim Director, Anthony Dawson took time to acknowledge the generosity of local sponsors as well as national underwriting. “Their Chief Executive Officer, Mike Lynch was unable to join us tonight, said Dawson as he explained that the Valentines for Veterans Concert Series was supported nationally by Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV) www.HHV.org. “It’s only through their leadership and generosity that the Valentines for Veterans Concert Series is a reality.

The Valentines for Veterans Concert Series is part of the week-long VA National Salute to Veteran Patients celebrated during the week of Valentine’s Day each year at VA medical facilities nationwide. The purpose of the week-long celebration is to pay tribute to Veterans, increase awareness of the needs of hospitalized veterans, and provide an additional opportunity to express appreciation for the sacrifices of America’s Veterans. The concerts are also a great way for Veterans and their families to share time together...especially in celebration of Valentine’s Day.

Prior to the concert The Platters made a visit to the Montgomery VA Medical Center where they met with staff and Veterans alike. “It’s perfect to have The Platters concert scheduled to coincide with our annual National Salute to Veteran Patients,” said CAVHCS Chief of Voluntary Service, William Petty. “During our National Salute – whether it’s visiting with Veterans or sending post cards we always have great support from River Region communities.

“But, the Platters’ visit was something special,” added Petty. “As they were entering one room someone told

the Veteran that the Platters were there to visit. The Veteran’s demeanor changed completely and he broke into song – singing, ‘Only You! The Platters were blown away. In fact, they mentioned the visit during the concert.”

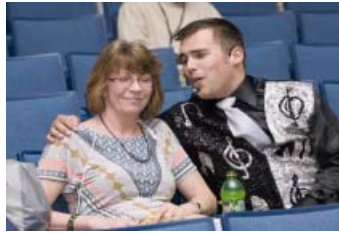
CAVHCS’ Valentines for Veterans Concert also served as a Welcome Home for the River Region’s recently deployed service members and their families. CAVHCS works directly with the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs, which are designed to provide information, services, referral, and proactive outreach programs to Soldiers and Airmen as well as their families through all phases of the deployment cycle.



Showing off what they called their ‘Temptations Dance’ the Platters had all 1,000 Valentines in attendance in the palms of their hands in the packed Davis Theater for the Performing Arts. Each of The Platters sang favorites from their era. Together they performed such chart-topping hits as ‘The Great Pretender,’ ‘Only You,’ and ‘Smoke Gets in Your Eyes!’

CAVHCS Photo Gallery

During February CAVHCS hosted a Valentines for Veterans Concert featuring The Platters. February also featured observances of Black History Month, National Salute to Veteran Patients and concerts by Re-Creation. (VA photos by Robin and Eric Johnson)



Prevention, Screening Key to Good Health

By: **MaryCatherine Porch, APRN**

Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Program Manager

I just recently learned that March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness and National Nutrition Month! This gives me a perfect opportunity to link two important subjects and VA's healthy messages to get recommended screenings, eat wisely and be physically active.

In the United States, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of death and the third most common cancer among men and women. It is most likely to appear after age 50, but may occur in younger people as well.

Prevention

Even though colon cancer is more likely to occur in older adults, colon health is very important throughout the lifespan. There are four approaches to maintain good health and prevent premature death from a number of diseases including cancer.

First, consuming whole grains and a variety of fruits and vegetables daily is now understood to play a major role in health. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has recently revised its recommendations for healthy eating. There are tools on the website for calculating appropriate weight and tracking the foods you eat. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/grains.html>.

There are numerous studies that link adequate daily physical activity with colon health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/olderadults.html>) recommends that adults should engage in moderately intensive exercise for at least 150 minutes per week or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week.

Since smoking has long been associated with elevated colorectal cancer risk, it is important to quit smoking as soon as possible. A great interactive site geared toward military personnel and veterans is <http://www.ucanquit2.org>. Visit the site today!

Screening

Screening for colon cancer focuses on detecting polyps and removing them before they become a problem. All veterans age 50 and older should talk with their health care providers about the type of screening and how often to be screened.

The most common screening test recommended for those 50 and older is the colonoscopy. This is an examination in which a fiber optic scope is passed through the rectum and then through the rest of the colon allowing the clinician to see all parts of the colon.

Some patients are unable to have a colonoscopy due to certain health factors. In these cases the recommendation is that a fecal occult blood test (FOBT) and a sigmoidoscopy be performed. The FOBT is a take home test that requires three stool samples be collected at home according to special instructions.

The sigmoidoscopy is performed by inserting a fiberoptic scope in the rectum and advancing it a short distance into the sigmoid colon. This examination does not require sedation. The disadvantage of the sigmoidoscopy is that it does not allow the full view of the colon.

If you would like more information about colorectal cancer and healthy living, visit the Veteran/ Family Health Education Centers in Tuskegee and Montgomery. As always, healthy living to YOU!

New Web site Connecting Veterans with Like Experiences

Make the Connection, a new campaign launched by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is creating ways for Veterans and their family members to connect with the experiences of other Veterans - and ultimately to connect with information and resources to help them confront the challenges of transitioning from service, face health issues, or navigate the complexities of daily life as a civilian.

"I have seen over and over again how important it can be for a Veteran to hear a message from another Veteran. This type of communication will be especially useful in helping to break down the stigma associated with mental health issues and treatment," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA is leveraging this powerful connection using an approachable online resource that links Veterans to personal stories from their peers, to VA resources and support, and to reliable information about mental health and resilience."

The campaign's central focus is a website, www.MakeTheConnection.net, featuring numerous Veterans who have shared their experiences, challenges, and triumphs. It offers a place where Veterans and their families can view the candid, personal testimonials of other Veterans who have dealt with and are working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, and mental health conditions. The Web site also connects Veterans and their family members with services and resources that may help them live more fulfilling lives.

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"VA is heartened by the tremendous commitment of Veterans of all service eras, genders and backgrounds who are stepping up to share their stories," said Shinseki. "Just as they would never leave a fellow Servicemember behind on the field of battle, they are once again reaching out to support their fellow Veterans with their compelling examples of successful treatment and recovery."





At MakeTheConnection.net, Veterans and their family members can explore information on mental health issues and treatment - and easily access support - in comfort and privacy, anywhere, anytime. Visitors to the Web site can customize and filter their online experience, directly connecting with content that is the most relevant to their own lives and situations.

VA's Make the Connection campaign is raising awareness through public service announcements, advertising and partnerships with Veteran Service Organizations and mental health service providers nationwide. For more information, visit MakeTheConnection.net or VA's mental health services website at www.mentalhealth.va.gov.



The Honorable Robert J. Bentley, Governor of the State of Alabama (r) stopped by CAVHCS' West Campus in Montgomery to spend some time with fellow Veterans during this year's national Salute to Veteran Patients.
(VA photo by Robin Johnson)



2012 CALENDAR OF EVENTS VA OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS							FEDERAL HOLIDAY
March 2012							
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's History Month National Nutrition Month National Kidney Month National Eye Donor Month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Colorectal Awareness Month Multiple Sclerosis Education Month National Social Work Month Irish-American Heritage Month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save Your Vision Month American Red Cross Month Hemophilia Month Ethics Awareness Month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic Fatigue Awareness Month Deaf History Month Brain Injury Awareness Month 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peace Corps Founded (1961) 	2	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Anthem Day (1931) 	
4	5	6	7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Army Distinguished Service Medal Authorized (1918) 	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Working Women's Day World Kidney Day 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered Dietitian Day 	10	
Patient Safety Awareness Week (March 4-10)							
11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daylight Saving Time Begins 	12	13	14	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VA Cabinet Status (1989) 	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom of Information Day 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saint Patrick's Day 	
International Brain Awareness Week (March 12-18)							
18	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operation Iraqi Freedom Begins (2003) 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Begins 	21	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuskegee Airmen Activated (1941) 	23	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Tuberculosis Day 	
National Poison Prevention Week (March 18 -24)							
25 	26	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diabetes Alert Day World Water Day 	28	29	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doctor's Day 	31	
National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic — Snowmass, CO (March 25 - 30)							

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.