



CAVHCS Staff Setting VA Standard

The VA's Director, Office of Security and Law Enforcement recently announced the selection of the Patrol Officer of the Year, Large Size Facility - Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System's own Detective Cedric Thomas.

"They may have given this honor to me personally," said Thomas shortly after hearing of the honor. "But, this is also recognition for everyone in CAVHCS' Police & Security Service. This job is very much a team effort."

Judging by the award citation the CAVHCS Police & Security team has been both busy and effective.

Accomplishments listed include; a \$450,000 investigation into fraud to include identity theft, travel fraud, and government property theft and damage, more than \$10,000 in fraudulent travel claim funds returned to CAVHCS and a 90% prosecution rate.

One area that Det. Thomas excelled in was the ability to build

working relationships with outside law enforcement entities. "Detective Thomas was instrumental in developing



Police and Security Service's Cedric Thomas was recently selected as the VA's Office of Security and Law Enforcement Patrol Officer of the Year.

a working rapport with the local US Attorney, State and County District Attorneys," said CVAHCS Chief, Police & Security Rod Byrne. "That rapport and interaction resulted in the uncovering of local theft rings of government property, drug diversion and travel fraud. He also coordinated with the Secret Service on a fraud and theft case in excess of \$350,000 from the VA Credit Union!"

"Like I said before, those investigations were accomplished through teamwork," said Thomas.

"Yeah that's true," responded Byrne. "We've been fortunate. We've built a capable team of effective professionals. In fact, we've got the Director, Office of Security and Law Enforcement Patrol Officer of the Year working here. But, to be honest, I wouldn't be surprised if Detective Thomas is our first – and some of our other officer's follow in his footsteps."

Accelerating the Claims Process

New Disability Benefits Questionnaires Address Backlog

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced the release of 68 new forms that will help speed the processing of Veterans' disability compensation and pension claims.

"VA employees will be able to more quickly process disability claims, since Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) capture important medical information needed to accurately evaluate Veterans' claims," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Disability Benefits Questionnaires are just one of many changes VA is implementing to address the backlog of claims."

The new forms bring to 71 the number of documents, called Disability Benefits Questionnaires, which guide physicians' reports of medical findings, ensuring VA has exactly the medical information needed to make a prompt decision.

When needed to decide a disability claim for compensation or pension benefits, VA provides Veterans with free medical examinations for the purpose of gathering the necessary medical evidence.

Veterans who choose to have their private physicians complete the medical examination can now give their physicians the same form a VA provider would use. It is very important that physicians provide complete responses to all questions on the DBQs. VA cannot pay for a private

physician to complete DBQs or for any costs associated with examination or testing.

"By ensuring relevant medical information can be found on one form, we will cut processing time while improving quality," added Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey.

DBQ's can be found at <http://benefits.va.gov/disabilityexams>. The newly released DBQs follow the initial release of three DBQs for Agent Orange-related conditions.

Veterans may file a claim online through the eBenefits web portal at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov>. The Department of Defense and VA jointly developed the eBenefits portal as a single secure point of access for online benefit information and tools to perform multiple self-service functions such as checking the status of their claim.

Servicemembers may enroll in eBenefits using their Common Access Card at any time during their military service, or before they leave during their Transition Assistance Program briefings. Veterans may also enroll in eBenefits and obtain a Premium account in-person or online depending on their status.



CAVHCS All-Stars

“I have been here in the hospital for about two weeks, and I just wanted to compliment the Social Workers, Nurses, Physicians, and other staff that have had an impact on my stay here. I especially wanted to point out my appreciation of Dr. Kumar, Mukesh his attending Physician, Dr. Fife, Jessaka his Psychiatrist, and his Social Worker Dominique. I am a Vietnam Veteran and I’ve been in the VA System for 37 years. I’ve had care at several facilities around the country from Tucson and Phoenix, Las Vegas, to Gainesville, Fla., and Miami, Fla., but this is the best treatment that I’ve ever received at a VA Facility. This is his first experience where he felt that all staff seem to genuinely care.

-- Glenn R. Ward 3A, West Campus.

“This is just a note to let you know of the great staff here at this facility working for us Veterans. I am very proud of each and every team member. Wow! What great people you have and they should be proud of the great job they do. They are very polite on a whole and many stop in the halls and ask if you need help. This shows the care they all take for their charges. Please Commend ALL of these excellent people for me and the rest of the Veterans!

-- Damon W. H., Prattville, Ala.

“This comment is about Lindsay Osborne. His work was very impressive and he did in one try something no one at Ft. Rucker could do. Several people at the Wiregrass facility tried to draw my blood and could not get it, even the best of the staff. But Lindsay came in and got it done on the first try! It was less painful than the previous ones and he was very caring and that means so much, because I was a little worried on my way here that it might not get done again when it needed to. I was VERY pleased. I am going to tell my doctor from now on that I only want Lindsay to draw my blood. He did an excellent job and should be commended for taking such great care with his patients.”

-- Sincerely, Betty Sue M., A Very Happy Veteran
Columbus, Ga.

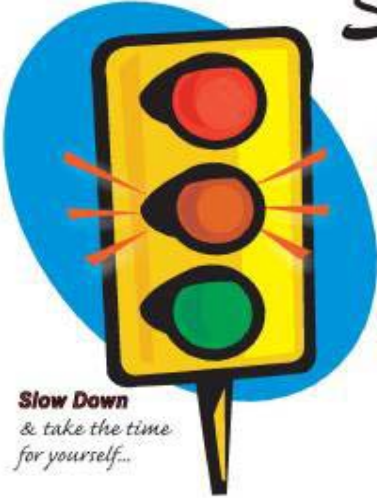
“I wanted to take this time to thank you and your staff for excellent service. You all do an exceptional job and take great care of the Veterans who come to this facility. -- Thanks again, Joni D.

“Dr. Chava was waiting for my arrival at the C&P office this morning at 8:30 am at the Montgomery VA Facility. He greeted me and my wife with a smile and a handshake. The exam was done professionally and quickly. My questions were answered and then we were led by the nurse, Eddie M. Scott into another room for the EKG. She greeted us with a smile and took care of business in a polite and professional manner.

-- Respectfully, M.R. McFarland, Veteran

Your Opinion Counts!

All Employee Survey!!!



SLOW DOWN !!!
...and provide your opinions about pay, recognition, praise, management, promotions & many other issues. YOU can make a difference in the VA just by completing this short survey!!!

The 2012 VA AES will be administered April 23 through May 14.

The VA AES is a census survey of VA employees that assesses job satisfaction and perceptions of workplace climate and culture. The AES is the key tool within the organization that supports VA efforts of assessing and getting feedback on organizational health measures. The AES serves as an annual check up on VA employee perceptions of their work environment and holds leaders accountable for articulating action plans and implementing improvements.

The CAVHCS Salute

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The CAVHCS Survey says...

“If you could recommend one improvement at CAVHCS, what would it be?”



**Norma English,
Library Technician.**

“Better communication between the Services, and between employees and supervisors.”



**Nina V. McConico
Chief, Health Information
Management Section (HIMS)
Business Office**

“My recommendation would be that management and supervisors at all levels examine and embrace the concept penned by Stephen M.R. Covey and lead at “the Speed of Trust”. The development of an authentic foundation of trust is critical to our credibility, productivity and our future success.”



**Beverly E. Sims,
Registered Nurse**

“When starting a new program, have the staff members who will be involved educated in it and visit a site that already has the program in operation.”

CAVHCS Review Processes ensure Continual Excellence

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) recently hosted teams of Consolidated Assessment Review and Evaluation (CARE) and Combined Assessment Program (CAP) examiners who provided collaborative insight into adherence with The Joint Commission (TJC) standards as well as monitoring progress of the implementation of CAVHCS Improvement Plans developed in preparation for TJC accreditation.

“The CARE team focuses on many of the same programs aspects as The Joint Commission,” said CAVHCS Acting Chief, Performance Improvement (PI), Sabrina Hughes. “The major clinical assessments are mirrored, which includes a deep dive into acute, primary and long term care and behavioral health”.

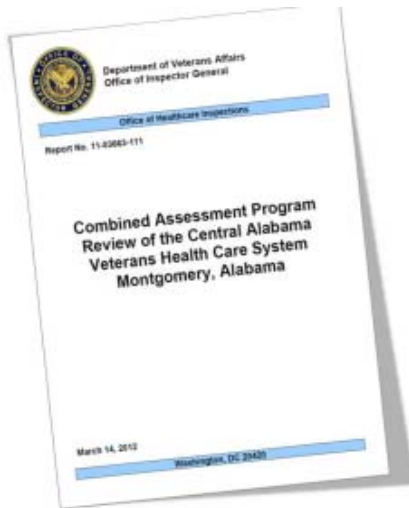
The VA incorporates the CAP, CARE and SOARS (System Wide Ongoing Assessment and Review Strategy) programs between Joint Commission reviews to ensure continual excellence.

Reviews like the recent CAP are part of the Office of Inspector General’s (OIG’s) efforts to ensure that high quality health care is provided to our Nation’s veterans. CAP reviews combine the knowledge and skills of the OIG’s Offices of Healthcare Inspections and Investigations to provide collaborative assessments of VA medical facilities on a cyclical basis.

CAP and CARE reviews evaluate how well VA facilities are accomplishing their missions of providing Veterans convenient access to high quality medical services. “Like the Joint Commission, CARE utilizes the tracer methodology to determine how care has been rendered to a patient,” explained Hughes. “Tracer methodology is a process designed to evaluate the care and services provided to a patient from the point of entry to the point of discharge. This includes medication administration, review of medical documentation and medical care of all sorts.”


In addition to this typical coverage, CAP reviews may examine issues or allegations referred by VA employees, patients, Members of Congress, or others. “Current Joint Commission regulations, local and national policies are evaluated to determine compliance,” Hughes said. “Staff members are also interviewed to determine if the policy and practice are the same.

“Unlike a TJC Survey, a CARE review is consultative. The CARE mission is to identify strengths across a network and provide a facility with ways to improve,” added Hughes. “However, gaps and significant issues are discussed in comparison to required standards and actions to improve are expected. In contrast, TJC findings could lead to partial or no accreditation.”



CAVHCS Photo Gallery

During March CAVHCS hosted a Women's History Fair, a series activities ranging from a breakfast to a workshop in support of Professional Social Work Month. March was also National Nutrition Month. (VA photos by Robin and Eric Johnson)

CAVHCS Police Service would like to recognize the graduation of Sgt. Harold Fair from Grand Canyon University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Safety Administration.

Officer Fair is a former Air Force Security Police Officer and Vietnam Veteran, whose prior experience includes duty with the Auburn University and Tuskegee Police Departments.

Sgt. Fair's hard work and dedication in earning his degree reflect great credit upon himself and raise the already high standards of CAVHCS Police Service as a professional and highly trained organization.



April is National Injury Prevention Month

By: **MaryCatherine Porch, APRN**

Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager

April marks National Injury Prevention Month. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, falls are the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. About half of all falls happen at home so it is the first place to make changes to limit this common occurrence. Conduct a home safety assessment and consider making the following changes:

1. Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep rugs from slipping.
2. If anyone in the home has balance or strength problems, install grab bars next to bathroom fixtures and inside tubs.
3. Improve lighting in the home
4. Remove items that you can trip over such as papers, books, clothing, shoes, and toys from stairs and all passageways. Double check these areas before going to bed to make sure passageways to bathrooms and doors are clear of clutter.
5. Organize your kitchen and other work areas so that frequently used items are within easy reach without having to use a stepstool.



6. Use non-slip mats in bathrooms and on shower and tub floors.
7. Make sure all staircases are well lighted and have handrails.
8. Wear non-slip shoes inside and outside the home.
9. If there are infirmed members in the household, be sure to position frequently used items within easy reach of their bed or sitting area. Have a method arranged they can use to summon assistance such as a bell.
10. Consider providing an alert device for infirmed members who live alone or who are alone long periods throughout the day.

Everyone should engage in regular physical activity, including strengthening exercises at least twice a week. It has been shown that those who are strong enough to stand without assistance are much less likely to suffer from a fall.

So this April take a moment to make sure that your home is a safe place for you and those you love, and make a plan to engage in regular physical activity. If you would like more information on preventing injuries and healthy living, visit the Veteran/ Family Health Education Centers in Tuskegee and Montgomery.

As always, healthy living to YOU!

Contest with HUD, Bon Jovi Foundation

'Project REACH' to help Homeless find Services

The Department of Veterans Affairs launched a new contest recently to help the people who help the homeless. It challenges the developer community to create easy, mobile access to resources that the homeless need, when they need it and where they can get it.

"This contest taps the talent and compassion of the Nation's developer community," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are asking them to make a free, easy-to-use Web and smartphone app that provides current information about housing, health clinics and food banks."

Project REACH (Real-time Electronic Access for Caregivers and the Homeless) was announced in collaboration with the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping the lives of people facing economic challenges.

"Last year's 12 percent drop in Veterans homelessness shows the results of President Obama's and the whole administration's commitment to ending Veterans homelessness," said Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun Donovan. "I want to thank Jon Bon Jovi for being a part of that effort and for using competition and innovation to advance the cause of ending homelessness."

One out of every six men and women in homeless shelters are Veterans, and Veterans are 50 percent more likely to fall into homelessness compared to other Americans. The administration has adopted a formal "no wrong door"

philosophy that means all Veterans seeking to prevent or escape homelessness must have easy access to help.

The ultimate goal of the contest is to create a national platform that enables health clinics, food kitchens, housing services and shelters to update availability of key services automatically on the Internet. The winning app will collect, map, and electronically distribute that information for communities across the nation.

The contest will be conducted in two phases. Finalists will be judged primarily on their ability to dynamically update information about housing and shelter near JBJ Soul Kitchen. Basic performance criteria is described in www.challenge.gov.

Additionally, competitors must also be able to display information about local VA services, employment support, crisis hotlines and local legal assistance resources. The first five entries to meet those requirements will receive a \$10,000 cash prize and the opportunity to test their app at the JBJ Soul Kitchen. The winner will receive a \$25,000 prize.

"Secretary Shinseki is very clear," added Pete Dougherty, acting executive director of VA's Homeless Veteran Initiative. "Our mission is to end Veteran and chronic homelessness. Innovations that get information about services right to the point of contact in real – or near real – time using smartphones and Internet technology are going to have a big impact. They are going to help us defeat Veteran homelessness by 2015."

The CAVHCS Minority Veterans Program Manager, William Wheat, Jr. (center) receives a Certificate of Appreciation presented by CAVHCS Interim Associate Director James Talton and Interim Director Anthony Dawson (L,R) in recognition of outstanding performance as the Veterans Health Administration's Minority Veterans Program Coordinator of the Year for Fiscal Year 2011. (VA photo by Eric Johnson)



2012 CALENDAR OF EVENTS VA OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS							FEDERAL HOLIDAY
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
1 • Palm Sunday • Battle of Okinawa Begins (1946)	2 • World Autism Awareness Day	3	4 • National Day of Hope	5 • National Alcohol Screening Day	6 • Passover (Sundown) • Good Friday • World Health Day • U.S. Enters World War I (1917)	7 • World Health Org. Founded (1948)	
Testicular Cancer Awareness Week • Medication Safety Week (April 1 - 7)							
8 • Easter	9 • National Former POW Recognition Day • U. S. Civil War Ends (1865)	10 • Bataan Death March Anniversary (1942)	11	12	13	14 • Paralyzed Veterans of America Established (1946)	
15 • First School for Deaf Founded (1817)	16 • National Health Care Decisions Day	17 • Bay of Pigs Invasion Launched (1961) • National Stress Awareness Day	18	19 • Battle of Lexington and Concord (1776) • Holocaust Remembrance Day	20	21	
National Volunteer Week • National Environmental Education Week (April 15 - 21)							
22 • Earth Day	23	24 • Library of Congress Established (1800)	25 • Administrative Professionals Day • Malaria Awareness Day	26 • Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work Day	27 • Arbor Day	28	
Administrative Professionals Week (April 22 - 28) • VA Research Week (April 23 - 27)							
29	30 • Cambodia Invaded by U.S. (1970) • Fall of Saigon (1975)	• National Donate Life Month • Cancer Control Month	• National Occupational Therapy Month • Physical Wellness Month	• Sexual Assault Awareness Month • Stress Awareness Month	• Injury Prevention Month • Counseling Awareness Month	• Parkinson's Awareness Month • Alcohol Awareness Month	

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.