



Thunderbirds 'Fly by' to visit Veterans, Lift Spirits

Recovering from surgery is almost never a happy situation, but examples of professionalism, compassion and a gentle smile can go a long way to easing a patient's discomfort. Members of the U.S. Air Force's Thunderbirds recently proved this to be true when they visited Veterans in CAVHCS's Montgomery VA Medical Center.

"I was impressed," said former U.S. Army Artilleryman Allen Kinder of Columbus, Ga. who was recovering from foot surgery in the Medical Center's inpatient ward. "I appreciate their stopping by to visit with us. It makes a tough time a little easier."

CAVHCS patients and staff alike enjoyed the visit. "Our patients really respond positively when active duty members stop by and take the time to visit with them," said CAVHCS Director Glen E. Struchtemeyer during a brief meet



Former U.S. Army Artilleryman Allen Kinder of Columbus, Ga. was visited Friday by members of the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds - Staff Sgt. Brian West, Staff Sgt. Jonathan Mitchell Maj. John Gallemore, (l,r) - in Central Alabama Veterans Health Care Center's Montgomery, VA Medical Center shortly after Kinder's foot surgery. "I appreciate their stopping by to visit with us," said Kinder. "It makes a tough time a little easier."

and greet with the Thunderbirds. "But, I'm sure they'll be excited to see such a renowned group of professionals. Of course staff won't mind either!"

The Thunderbirds were in Montgomery to conduct an air power demonstration at Maxwell AFB for the first time in more than three years. And while visits to the VA hospital are frequently a routine element of the Thunderbirds' itinerary when visiting a city, the results seem to never get old. "It never ceases to amaze me," said Staff Sgt. Brian West. "We love coming to the VA. We're always greeted with smiling faces and happy people. And, considering that most of the people we meet are not feeling well, being a part of lifting their spirits makes us all feel pretty good."

CAVHCS Supervisors Never Stop Learning, Improving

According to Grigori Perelman, "Learning is what most adults will do for a living in the 21st century." Of course it doesn't take a renowned Russian mathematician to place a value on education, but the necessity of continual learning may have been behind the recent decision to add an additional 20 hours of required training for all CAVHCS supervisors.

"The new supervisor training is a result of feedback that came from the All Employee Survey," said Carol Ann Sanders, CAVHCS Education Service's Deputy Chief. "When Mr. Struchtemeyer asked us to look into it further we found that extensive supervisor-specific training had not been a requirement in quite awhile. So he directed us to develop a curriculum that combines VHA (Veterans Health Administration) supervisory training with training in leadership."

One component of supervisor training will focus on VHA specific staffing, labor and employee relations, the roll of the supervisor, performance management and position classification. This training will be conducted in classes with a size limit of 35, and supervisors will soon be able to sign up for each of the classes in Synquest. "Once the classes and schedules are finalized we'll be sure to announce them to everyone affected," said Sanders. "Our supervisors will have ample opportunity to meet the requirement."

Another component of supervisory training focuses on leadership and supervisory skills. Fourteen CAVHCS employees were trained as Achieve Global

facilitators so that leadership/supervisory skills training could be delivered in-house. "We looked at several leadership programs and Achieve Global fit our needs the best," said Sanders. "So, now we have a cadre of facilitators we're able to offer classes on a regular basis without having to bring external trainers on to our campuses. Announcements for this training are sent out regularly by Employee Education."

The new annual training requirement for supervisors is here to stay. "We're going to continue our work with HR to develop annual, ongoing training," said Sanders. "It will be integrated into the other required supervisor training." Apparently Perelman was right - learning is indeed part of what CAVHCS supervisors will be expected to do for a living.



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CAVHCS All-Stars

I would like to comment on your lab tech Patricia (I don't know her last name) here at the Columbus clinic. I find her to be very pleasant and feel as though she performs her job very efficiently and with kindness. She is very considerate of the Veterans and our concerns. You should have more employees like her! -- Respectfully, Tecore R. Columbus, Ga.

I would like to send a special thanks to the Doctors and Nurses, and a High Five to Ms. Sylvia and Ms. Annie for their selfless service provided to a stranger in their city and facility. All too often, you hear the horror stories, about the wait for service, and the treatment once served. I would like all of you to know there is no better care and service than what you provided me at your facility. -- Thanks again, Eric J., DoD Contractor, Herat, Afghanistan (treated at Columbus CBOC)

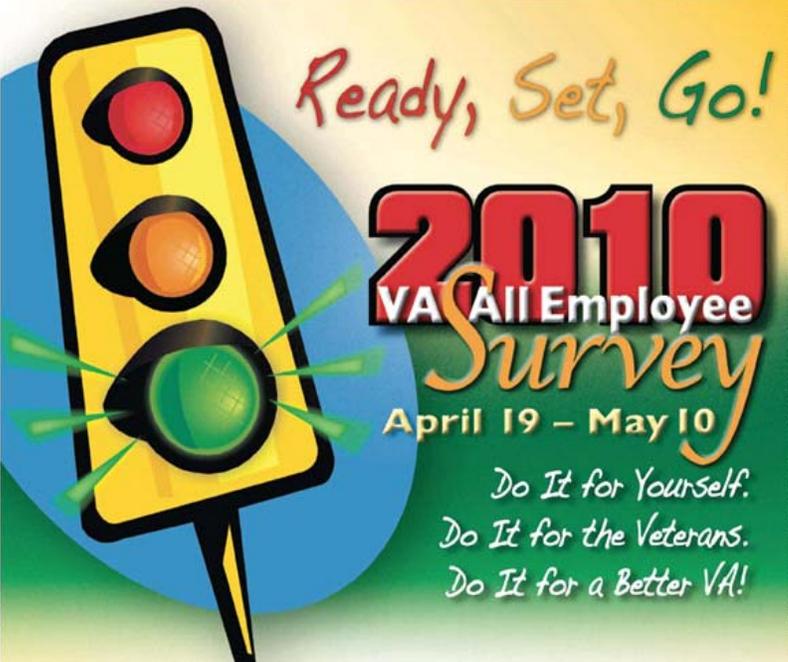
Please express my thanks to your staff on the fine care I received at your facility! Great care by Ms. Gosha and Dr. Bannister in the Eye Clinic. It was clear that Ms. Gosha loves her job and that made the visit all the more pleasurable! -- Sincerely, Stephen D. Gunter AFB

I was in Columbus last week for a Women's Wellness appointment. I was seen by Dr. P. Daniel and Nurse R. Johnson. They were very kind and did what I needed done for my health. They were very efficient and listened to me when I spoke to them about my care. You need to know that on "my side of the fence," I received excellent care from pleasant and helpful ladies. -- Thank you! Norma O. C., Opelika, Ala.

I have been coming to the Tuskegee VA for 22 years and I have seen many doctors come and go. By far Dr. Barnes is the most helpful, caring and knowledgeable doctor I have had. Many thanks for all his tremendous help and concern expressed for me. The VA needs more like this individual! -- Sincerely, James M. Auburn, Ala.

Mrs. Arical Johnson is such a beautiful person and I wanted you all to know how much she is appreciated. If you need an encouraging word or an extra boost through the day, she is the one you need to see! If you have a question about a procedure she makes it her business to explain and comfort you to put you at ease about it. Please commend her on her excellent work! -- Lamar S.

I want to make a comment about Mr. Earl Hawkins whom I love dearly. Anything that you need or have a concern about, he will stop what he is doing and assist you. If you haven't been to a site that you desire, best believe he will get you there. -- Alexis S., Montgomery, Ala.



Ready, Set, Go!

2010
VA All Employee
Survey

April 19 - May 10

Do It for Yourself.
Do It for the Veterans.
Do It for a Better VA!

Your Opinion Matters at VA!

The VA All Employee Survey collects information on your perceptions of your workplace and your satisfaction at work. **Provide your opinions about pay, recognition, praise, management, promotions and many other issues.** By voicing your opinion, **you can influence the future** of VA! Teams at your facility will analyze the results of the survey and make changes where needed.

It is completely confidential and anonymous. Completing the survey is **voluntary** for all VA employees, but your help in responding to the survey is very important!

For more information, contact your local VA All Employee Survey Coordinator:

Donna Mackey-Pollard, AES Coordinator Ext. 2634
Cynthia Hopper, HR Coordinator (M) Ext. 4920
Cynthia Hill, HR Coordinator (T) Ext. 3002

This survey is part of an ongoing effort to assess employees' satisfaction, to eliminate barriers to employees' effectiveness, and to make VA an employer of choice.

The CAVHCS Salute



Accredited by
The Joint Commission

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

Glen E. Struchtemeyer
Anita F. Willard, MPH
Carolyn Caver-Gordon
Cliff Robinson, MD
Al Bloom

Employees of the Month

Mr. Charles Wilkins

*Beneficiary Travel,
Tuskegee Campus*

Mr. Charles Wilkins has been selected as the employee of the Month for the Tuskegee Campus.

Mr. Wilkins is a clerk in the Business Office Beneficiary Travel Section. He has performed admirably in his duties despite his section being undermanned for well over a year and the dramatic increase in Veteran traffic to his office.

Mr. Wilkins processes on average, more than 300 pay vouchers totaling in excess of \$12,000 per day for our Veterans. He also arranges ambulance transportation to and from Montgomery and Tuskegee, to other VA Medical Centers in the Southeast, and to local health care facilities.

Mr. Wilkins is also responsible for all Patient Funds for our facility. His "can-do" attitude is an inspiration for all. Never a groan, always a smile and a willingness to get the job done whatever it takes.



Mr. Rachard McCallum

*Pharmacy Technician,
Montgomery Campus*

Rashard McCallum has been selected as Employee of the Month for the Montgomery.

Mr. McCallum is Montgomery Pharmacy's telephone technician and although he is one of our newest employees, he has already made a significant impact on our service to veterans. He recently received a written compliment from one of our Veterans.

Quite often I hear compliments from others on our staff about the reduction in phone calls and the extent to which Mr. McCallum goes to solve the patients' problems. During the rare times when he is not on the phone, he always manages to keep productive and to seek out ways to help out. I think recognizing Rashard McCallum as Employee of the Month would be a fantastic way to reward him for doing an excellent job in the sometimes thankless duties of telephone customer service.



Scams on the Rise

Mortgage Modification offers, some 'Too good to be True'

The VA Office of Security and Law Enforcement would like to pass on the following from the National White Collar crime Center in regards to a new mortgage rescue fraud:

You're having trouble paying your mortgage bill. The possibility of foreclosure is weighing heavily on your mind. Sitting at your computer, you think all hope is lost until you come across an email that reads: "Get the professional help you need to keep your home and have peace of mind. What if I told you that we have plenty of lenders who can lower your rate so drastically that when all is said and done, you wind up paying only 1/3 of what you're used to paying!" What do you do? Some individuals see this as the perfect opportunity to solve all of their problems. Instead, they fall victim to mortgage rescue scams.

Mortgage modification and rescue scams are still on the rise. Typically, these scams take place via emails and phone calls. They all promise the same thing: modifying mortgage rates, rescue from foreclosure, help in stopping bankruptcy or just help getting your home sold.

Scammers claim they can do wonders for any mortgage problem but, of course, they charge a fee up front. They say they will talk to lenders for you as well. But once the fee is paid, everything changes. Some scammers have victims sign what they think are new loan papers. Instead, they are documents that sign over the ownership of the property. Others have you simply surrender your home in order to help sell it faster. Most, though, are simply after the money.



As with most scams, there are dire consequences associated with falling for any type of mortgage scheme. Victims will be asked to give personal and tax information which provides scammers with the ammunition they need to commit identity theft. If the scammers do talk to lenders, they will most likely misrepresent the victim, causing more harm than good. Some victims will be led to believe that everything is going smoothly until they start receiving default notices in the mail for missing their required monthly payments. Communication stops and scammers suddenly become inaccessible. Last but not least, victims will ask scammers for refunds but all they'll get is the run-around.

According to data pulled from the Internet Complaint Search and Investigation System (ICSIS), there were 241 mortgage-related complaints from January 1, 2009 to February 26, 2010. Of those 241 complaints, 114 involved actual monetary losses. A closer examination of those complaints showed one case that generated 18 complaints and losses totaling \$93,075. Another one triggered 21 complaints and losses totaling nearly \$58,000. Further investigation could reveal an even greater number of complaints and much higher monetary losses.

For information on avoiding scams, go to www.ic3.gov and click on Internet Crime Prevention Tips or Internet Crime Schemes.

CAVHCS Photo Gallery

Images by Eric Johnson
& Robin Johnson



Staff and Veterans enjoyed informative displays and presentations when CAVHCS conducted Women's History Month observances at both of CAVHCS' VA medical centers.



CAVHCS celebrated the fourth anniversary of the Vet-to-Vet program in March. The CAVHCS/Vet-to-Vet program provides peer group support by combining Vet-to-Vet facilitator-guided sessions and CAVHCS clinical guidance.



About My HealthVet

My HealthVet is VA's award-winning online Personal Health Record (PHR), located at www.myhealth.va.gov. It offers Veterans, active duty Service members and others anywhere, anytime Internet access to health care information, resources, and tools. Launched nationwide in 2003, My HealthVet is the gateway to web-based tools that empower Veterans to become active partners in their health care. With My HealthVet, users access trusted, secure, and informed VA health and benefits information at their convenience.

My HealthVet Mission

The mission of My HealthVet is to improve health care for all Veterans, independent of where they receive care, by providing one-stop, online access to better manage their overall health, make informed health decisions, and record and store important health and military history information. It is access to VA health care and information 24/7.

My HealthVet Features at a Glance:

- ' Refill VA prescriptions online**
- ' View personal VA Wellness Reminders*
- ' Access On-line Medical Libraries
- ' Keep track of personal health information
- ' Self-enter military and family health histories
- ' Track illnesses, accidents, or other events
- ' Enter and track over-the-counter medications, immunizations, and tests
- ' Record, track, and print (if desired) important vital statistics
- ' Explore the Healthy Living Centers and Diseases & Conditions Centers
- ' Future features specifically for VA patients include Secure Messaging between VA patients and their participating VA health care providers, receiving VA laboratory results, viewing VA appointments, and more.

** *Requires In-Person Authentication (IPA)*



CAVHCS was recently visited by a cadre of American Legion National Office representatives who conducted an 'A System Worth Saving,' fact finding survey. Members were provided CAVHCS in-depth responses to a detailed questionnaire a week before their arrival, and conducted extended interviews with CAVHCS leadership and specialists during their visit.



CAVHCS was recently visited by members of the veterans of Foreign War, Department of Alabama Ladies Auxillary.

VA, Forum Focusing on Women Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will invite women Veterans and their advocates to a forum in July to discuss the quality of VA health care, the provision of benefits for women, and ways to improve access to the care and benefits for women Veterans.

“This forum will continue our identification of how best to serve this growing population of Veterans through our quality health care, benefits for service-connected disabilities, mental health services, or supporting their community, said Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki. We must constantly reevaluate and solicit input on our performance as measured against the needs of our women Veterans.”

This forum will build on the momentum from 2008 quadrennial National Summit on Women’s Veterans’ Issues and expand the dialogue necessary to enhance VA’s benefits and services available to women Veterans. The forum will not only help VA learn more from women Veterans who depend on VA for care, but will also develop tool kits for strengthening women Veteran networks through work with local VA facilities.

Health care improvements include comprehensive primary care and specialized medical care at every VA medical center, enhanced mental health care specifically for women

Veterans, staffing every VA medical center with a women Veterans program manager, a mini-residency on women’s health for primary care physicians, and a multi-faceted research program on women’s health.



The Department’s 2011 budget provides \$217.6 million to meet the gender-specific health care needs of women Veterans, an increase of \$18.6 million (or more than 9 percent) over the 2010 level.

VA’s 2011 budget proposal will enable the establishment of a peer call center and social networking site for women combat Veterans. This call center would be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

There are about 1.8 million women Veterans among the nation’s total of 23 million living Veterans. VA estimates women Veterans will comprise 10.5 percent of the Veteran population by 2020.

Know your IP IQ

Approximately 72.8 million Americans shopped online during the 2008 holiday season *while they were at work!* According to the VA Network and Security Operations Center (VA-NSOC), online shopping is the third most common Internet activity undertaken by the VA workforce.

While online shopping is not prohibited by VA, it does increase the vulnerability of the Department’s IT systems to dangerous intrusions, such as bots, viruses, and malware. It’s everyone’s responsibility as a VA employee to ensure that our IT systems - which contain Veterans’ personal and sensitive information - are protected, particularly during the holiday online shopping season.

VADirective 6001, Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment Including Information Technology, allows limited personal use of government office equipment, including online shopping, provided the usage:

- * Involves minimal additional expense to the government and is performed on the employee’s non-work time;
- * Does not interfere with VA’s mission or operations;
- * Does not violate standards of ethical conduct for Executive branch employees. If you choose to shop online, keep the following tips in mind:
 - * Use secure Websites (URL should display “https:”);
 - * Review the Website’s privacy and security policies;
 - * Be aware of phishing emails (fake messages attempting to gather personal information); and
 - * Use anti-virus and firewall software.

Visit [OnGuard Online](#) for more information on Internet safety. To learn more about how you can help raise VA’s IP IQ, send your questions or comments to IPRM.Communications@va.gov.

Malware on the Rise

Do you know what information security risks you face every day? According to Internet security researchers, malicious software programs or “malware” are on the rise – over 640,000 web sites and 5.8 million pages were infected with malware in the third quarter of 2009 alone.

What to Expect in 2010

- * **More scams against social networking Websites, such as Facebook and Twitter.**
- * **Increase in “Scareware” from websites that advertise fake anti-virus programs. These messages claim your computer has been infected and then try to sell you phony and harmful anti-virus programs**
- * **Increase in malware directed at smart phones – iPhones and BlackBerries beware!**
- * **Large amount of unsolicited spam coming through instant messages. According to Symantec, 1 in 12 hyperlinks within instant messages will be considered suspicious or malicious.**

Tips for Reducing Your Risk

- * **Be aware of popular threats and use common sense when surfing the Internet**
- * **Keep all security software patches up-to-date, since they remediate vulnerabilities and provide protection (this typically happens automatically on the VA network; however, remote users must connect to the VA network every 90 days to get the patches)**
- * **Don’t open suspicious emails or attachments**
- * **Use strong passwords and change them frequently (VA network policy is to prompt users to change passwords every 90 days)**
- * **Don’t respond to emails asking for personal information**
- * **If you MUST send sensitive information via email, encrypt the email using Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) or Rights Management Services (RMS).**



Information tables, panel discussions and targeted work groups were highlighted when CAVHCS recently hosted a two-day OEF/OIF Seamless Transition Workshop attended by representatives from VA Central Office, Department of Defense and Department of Labor.

APRIL						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 28	29	30	31	April 1	2	3
Alcohol Awareness Month www.ncadd.org National Donate Life Month www.organdonor.gov National Occupational Therapy Month www.aota.org Injury Prevention Month www.aaos.org Counseling Awareness Month www.counseling.org Stress Awareness Month www.stresscure.com				Medication Safety Week www.womensheart.org		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
 National Public Health Week		National Public Health Week www.nphw.org		 National Alcohol Screening Day	 POW/MIA YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
 Patient Advocacy Week www.shca-aha.org		 National Radiology Nurses Day		 Health Information Privacy and Security Week	 National Stress Awareness Day	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Administrative Professionals Week National Volunteer Week Medical Fitness Week National Medical Laboratory Professionals Week			 Administrative Professionals Day	 Earth Day 40th Anniversary (1970)		
25	26	27	28	29	30	May 1
 Malaria Awareness Day		 Research & Development	VA Research Week www.research.va.gov			

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.