



NETWORK DIRECTOR'S  
FAREWELL MESSAGE

A new year – A new beginning –  
A Career of Memories -  
The End of an Era

As we turn the chapter in a never-ending challenge, I turn my thoughts to the evolution of a magnificent program that you and I built together to honor our nation's heroes – her veterans.

With your help, we built a sound cornerstone to assist veterans who are in need of health care. Your help to mold an outstanding health care program that now becomes the model for the other 21 Networks across our country. In climbing an enormous mountain to achieve our pinnacle of success, words cannot express my gratitude for your countless and selfless hours rendered in helping us to achieve our goals with the CARES process.

Every day of every year, those of you who are in the veterans' arena need strength and vigilance. It is your assumed duty to protect those least able to protect themselves, America's disabled heroes. You are the voice of those who defend us today and those heroes of yesterday and tomorrow. As you prepare for the New Year with all its challenges and opportunities, pause for a moment of prayer for their safety and well-being. As you start this New Year, remember those "who even now guard the gates of freedom" to make that possible. Now that the calendar for 2004 has fallen away into history, know that the lives of millions of American service members and veterans have

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***Dr. Joan E. Cummings***

***Thank you and best wishes  
on your retirement  
from  
VA Great Lakes Health  
Care System employees***

been and are still being enriched through your efforts. I am grateful for all you do each and every day and am proud to have been associated with each of you. As 2005 dawns, you will, together, work even harder for those heroes because that is who and what you are and because you know they deserve no less. May all your efforts succeed.

## TWO LEADERS TO LEAVE VA

Dr. Joan E. Cummings is no stranger to "Putting Veterans First" and is multi-tasked in serving veterans in 7 major markets that are encompassed by three states in the Midwest portion of the United States.

Dr. Cummings was appointed Network Director of VISN 12 on October 15, 1995. Her career as a physician and administrator began with her attaining a B.A. Degree from Trinity College in Washington, D.C., in 1964, followed by her receiving a Medical Degree from the Stritch School of Medicine, Loyola University of Illinois, in 1968. Dr. Cummings then served as an Intern at the Saint Vincent's Hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts, from 1968 to 1969, and as a Medical Resident at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital in Hines, Illinois, from 1969 to 1971. This was followed by her serving as a Nephrology Fellow at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital, from 1971 to 1972. She is board certified, including her being a Diplomate, American Board of Internal Medicine, and a Diplomate, Geriatric Medicine.

Dr. Cummings went on to serve in progressively responsible positions in the VA, beginning with her appointment as the Chief, General Medical Section, Ambulatory Care Service at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital, from 1971 to 1984. She then served as Medical Director of the Hospital Based Home Care Program from 1972 to 1987. In 1984, she became Chief of the Intermediate Care Service and established and became the first chief of the Hospice Unit at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital. In 1987, Dr. Cummings was appointed as the Associate Chief of Staff for Extended Care and Geriatrics at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital, and served in this post through 1990. During this period, she also served as the Medical Director of the Extended Care Center. In 1990, Dr. Cummings was appointed as the Director of the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital. She served in this post from 1990 to 1995. Then, following the approved reorganization of VHA into twenty-two VISNs, Dr.

Cummings was appointed as VISN 12's first Network Director. Under the leadership of Dr. Cummings, the CARES program has evolved.

Dr. Cummings retired on January 3, 2005 after 36 years of dedicated service.

## Secretary Principi



He is a true veterans' advocate," said one veteran service organization in reaction to Anthony J. Principi's recent announcement that he will step down as the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

With 230,000 employees, the VA is the second largest department in the federal government. Known primarily as a healthcare provider, the VA also oversees all veterans' benefits programs that range from educational assistance and home loans to vocational rehabilitation and service-connected disability compensation.

"During his tenure, Secretary Principi constantly challenged his staff to improve their services to America's 25 million veterans," "And his work to address the needs and concerns of today's newest generation of veterans who are fighting the war on terrorism typifies his vision and leadership."

"Secretary Principi wore his compassion and commitment to veterans on his sleeve, a personality trait that forged extremely strong ties with all of America's veterans and their families," "We applaud him for his service to our country and wish him and his family the best of futures. He will be missed but not forgotten."

## CARES UPDATE

### *Tomah Bldg. 400 Open House*



The Tomah VAMC received \$10 million in CARES funding for the remodeling of two floors in Building 400. The third floor was designed for an expansion of primary care and specialty clinics, and the fourth floor will be the home of a new 17 bed medical unit. Construction began in September 2003 and by November 2004, the pounding and jackhammering of a year ago were hard to remember.

On November 12, invited guests, volunteers and staff gathered for the ribbon cutting and open house for the "new" Building 400. The crowd was greeted by Dr. Joan Cummings, Network Director. Due to illness, Dr. Cummings could not attend, but she telephoned into a speaker phone and offered her congratulations to staff and veterans of the Tomah VA.

### **Groundbreaking and Enhanced Use Lease at Jesse Brown**

The long-anticipated groundbreaking ceremony for the Jesse Brown VAMC's new inpatient care facility turned into a dual ceremony as Secretary Anthony Principi used the occasion to announce the enhanced-use lease of VA's Lakeside property to Northwestern Memorial Hospital and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago.

The 75-year enhanced-use lease is expected to generate \$50 million in revenue, with significant additional savings and cost avoidances. Those funds will be used to provide veterans' health care services in the VA Great Lakes Health Care System.

Under the terms of the lease, VA can continue to use the Lakeside property until December 2007. By that time, the new \$99.5 million inpatient care facility will be operational. The 43,000 square foot structure will include 200 patient beds, seven operating rooms, an

intensive care unit, a surgical supply processing unit and a chapel, and will connect to the existing facility at the Jesse Brown VAMC's main campus.

"With this new bed tower, Illinois veterans are an important step closer to having 21<sup>st</sup> century health care in a 21<sup>st</sup> century facility," Secretary Principi said.

The groundbreaking for the new inpatient care facility fulfilled the VISN 12 Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) plan announced by Secretary Principi on February 8, 2002. As part of the plan, VA had shifted inpatient services from its Lakeside facility and consolidated them at the Jesse Brown VAMC campus in August 2003.



*Following groundbreaking ceremonies for a new inpatient care facility at the Jesse Brown VAMC, Secretary Principi presents a commemorative shovel to members of Secretary Brown's family, including (from left) Mrs. Lucille Brown (Jesse's mother), Carmen Stewart (Jesse's daughter) and family friend Josie Dumas.*



*Breaking ground for the new inpatient care facility at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago included (from left): Dan Walsh, President, Walsh Construction Company; Richard Citron, Director, JBVAMC; Dr. Joan Cummings, Network Director, VISN 12; Secretary Anthony Principi; Lonnie Fountaine (representing all veterans served at JBVAMC) and Thomas Fromm, Project Manager, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.*

## ***Hines Partnership with Catholic Charities***

Hines is teaming up with Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago in a project that will enhance the quality of life and provide some valuable assistance to hundreds of area veterans every year. An enhanced-use lease agreement signed by the two parties last year will result in a new Catholic Charities transitional housing program opening on the Hines campus in the Spring of 2005.

Under this agreement, Catholic Charities has been renovating Building 14, which was largely vacant. The newly-renovated space in that building, which will be complete in the next couple of months, will ultimately consist of short-term accommodations that can house up to 40 veterans. Many of these veterans will be recent graduates of other Hines programs in the Mental Health Service Line. The Catholic Charities transitional housing program will provide much-needed accommodations to these veterans as they reenter the community.

"Veterans make up a very high percentage of the homeless population in the Chicago area," said Mary Ann Romeo, VISN 12's Homeless Coordinator. "This program will fulfill a critical need for veterans who otherwise might be on the street."

Hines began working on this faith-based initiative with Catholic Charities several years ago. As the successful working relationship developed, the project has expanded and will include enhanced-use agreements for the use of two other vacant buildings on the Hines campus. These buildings will be used to house an assisted-living program, as well as low-income senior housing.

"We are very enthusiastic about this project," said Jack Hetrick, Hines Director. "Catholic Charities is able to lease some underutilized and/or vacant space in a key Chicago-area location, the VA is able to put some of its vacant buildings to good use and receive reimbursement from Catholic Charities for the space, and finally and most importantly, our veterans who take advantage of these programs will be the ultimate winners."

## **Veterans' New ID Cards Help Battle Identity Theft**

With identity theft as the major fraud reported by Americans in 2003, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has designed a new identity card for veterans that will safeguard confidential information.

"The new identification card ensures veterans' personal information is protected," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "It also helps prevent the theft of important benefits and services from veterans that they earned by their service to our country."

The card, formally known as the Veterans Identification Card (VIC), will have veterans' photos on the front and identify them as enrollees in the VA's health care system. The card includes the words "service connected" under the photo if the veteran has a service-connected disability.

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the nation. The Federal Trade Commission listed identity theft as the number one fraud reported by consumers in 2003. Requests from veterans and their congressional representatives were instrumental in bringing about these latest changes.

"The new VIC ensures the security of veterans' personal information as well as ensuring that only eligible veterans receive the benefits and services they've earned," said Kristin Cunningham of the business office for VA's health care system.

Veterans should request the new card at their local medical center. Processing will take five to seven days once eligibility is verified. The existing cards will remain valid until veterans receive their new cards.

## **Above and Beyond**

### ***Hines Heroes***

Several Hines employees recently stepped up to provide a veteran with some much-needed extra assistance. On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, the winds were blowing and the snow was falling and everyone was trying to get home for

the holiday. Unfortunately, during some particularly heavy snowfall, an elderly gentleman fell ill in one of the parking lots and crashed his car.

Dr. Chirag Raval, Kim Elkins, RN, and Latonya Webb, an employee in the ENT clinic, were among a group of employees who stopped to help the gentleman. Thanks to these very dedicated employees for going above and beyond for one of our patients and getting soaking wet in the process. Notably, Dr. Raval, who actually performed CPR on the veteran, left a few days later to serve as a Reservist in Iraq.

Malcolm Banks, a Health Care Tech who was recently recertified in CPR this fall at Hines' Joliet CBOC, put this training to good use earlier this month. While eating breakfast in a local restaurant, Malcolm noticed a fellow patron choking on some food. He immediately sprang into action, performing a successful Heimlich maneuver and potentially saving the woman's life.

### ***Hall of Heroes at Madison***

Patients, visitors, staff, and volunteers at the Madison VA Hospital are reminded daily of the hardships and bravery our veterans have endured for our nation. The facility dedicated a "Hall of Heroes" in November of 2002 which includes information about the personal award and citation for heroism or valor and a photograph of each inductee.

"We are anxious to pay tribute to America's heroes that are our patients or are from the area served by our hospital and clinics. It is especially gratifying to see how much the veterans and their families appreciate this special recognition. Family members from as far away as Virginia have traveled to see their loved one receive this well deserved recognition," according to Nathan L. Geraths, Director.

The first two inductees into the "Hall of Heroes" were both Silver Star recipients along with other decorations. Robert Botts served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II, receiving a battlefield commission for his actions. Colonel Donald Heiliger, USAF (ret), was a U.S. Air Force fighter pilot who was shot down over North Vietnam and

was held as a prisoner of war for over five years.

In November of 2003, two more veterans were inducted into the "Hall of Heroes." James Stephenson, a U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant, was awarded the Navy Cross on Iwo Jima in 1945. David Brenzel was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart during World War II while he served in the U.S. Army. He was taken prisoner after the fall of Corregidor in 1942, survived the Death March, was held for over three years as a prisoner of war and was a forced laborer in Japan.

The concept for the Hall of Heroes came from Dr. John Hofer, Chief of Dental Service at the facility. While he was a staff dentist at the VA Medical Center in Chillicothe, Ohio, he established a similar program of recognition for America's veterans there in 1999. Hofer served in Vietnam as an enlisted Army combat medic with the Americal Division. During the 1990's, as VA was undergoing significant changes in care and appearances, he felt veterans and staff should be reminded of the sacrifices the combat veterans had endured in service to their country. He finds it very rewarding to see veterans, visitors, staff including young medical residents, volunteers, and others stopping to read the citations.

An eye-catching large cherry wood plaque that includes the full color seals of the five branches of military service and brass lettering is permanently displayed on a wall near the Main Entrance Lobby of the hospital. The plaque was manufactured by Veterans Industries at the VA Medical Center in Tomah, Wisconsin. Donated funds were utilized to cover the cost of the plaque and emblems.

The criteria for induction are as follows: Veterans should have been decorated with a personal award and citation for heroism or valor. Awards are reviewed and authenticated with a release form signed by the veteran to authorize the required verification. Awards are ranked following military ranking, i.e. Congressional Medal of Honor being the highest possible decoration. Multiple awards for bravery, receipt of a Purple Heart, and prisoner of war status are also considered.

Submissions of potential honorees are received from individual veterans, their family members, county veterans service officers, service organizations, and others. This is an on-going project, so submissions can be sent at any time. The liaison for application forms and submissions for consideration by the Hall of Heroes Committee is Scott K. Krueger, Public Affairs Officer. Each submission includes copies, not originals, of awards and citations, a completed authorization for verification form, and a completed submission coversheet. Submissions are reviewed for authenticity of awards through the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs which has its headquarters in Madison.

"Response to the Hall of Heroes has been outstanding," according to Dr. Hofer.

### ***Milwaukee's Hero***

Steffen Smith, a police officer, at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center was conducting vehicle patrol when stopped by a woman asking for directions. As Officer Smith exited the patrol car, the woman collapsed. He checked and determined she was not breathing and pulseless. He called dispatch and immediately began CPR. In his office, police sergeant Tim Janz overheard on the dispatch radio what was transpiring. He rushed to the scene and assisted with CPR. He then retrieved an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) applied it to her chest. They continued CPR after she was defibrillated twice resulting in her regaining a pulse and respirations. When medical personnel arrived, she was brought to the emergency room and stabilized. This was a team effort as the dispatchers directed the medical team to the remote area of the parking lot while other officers assisted and provided traffic control. Less than three weeks after the incident she penned a thank you card with more than one "thank you." She was discharged with a stent and a pacemaker and a grateful husband. The team members have been nominated by their deputy chief for awards from the American Police Hall of Fame & Museum.

*(Reporters note: This incident occurred on October 6, 2004. The Medical Center has several AEDs and one in each patrol car. The AEDs were purchased about 18 months ago)*

## **VA Provides Care for Medical Holdover Soldiers**

Soldiers must be physically fit to undergo military missions. To ensure readiness for duty, soldiers are medically evaluated prior to being deployed. When a soldier is found to have medical issues that may compromise the mission, they are designated as a Medical Holdover Soldier for their medical conditions to be evaluated and/or treated. When a soldier on a mission becomes sick or injured, they deserve the best medical care available to obtain optimal healing. Medical care begins on the battlefield when the medic and soldiers are transported back from the conflict area to receive more extensive care, some requiring transport back to the United States for definitive care, also placing them in Medical Holdover status.

Since March 2003, in support of the global war on terrorism, over 12,000 army soldiers have been evacuated from overseas. A concern arose when in the fall of 2003 it was noted that soldiers were delayed in receiving care at an army medical facility in the United States secondary to the larger than expected volume of soldiers requiring treatment. The Community Based Health Care Organization (CBHCO) is the Army's overall initiative to allow, when appropriate, Reserve Component soldiers having served in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom to receive treatment on active duty and be allowed to recuperate at or near their homes using local health care options. Presently, there are approximately 3,000 – 5,000 soldiers in a Medical Holdover status at any time in the U.S.

The CBHCO concept is a pilot study in which the National Guard from 13 states, including Wisconsin, volunteered to support this mission. Currently five states, including Wisconsin, have been activated to begin this process, with the option of activating more states as the need arises. The concept is to provide the best and most appropriate health care expeditiously in the region where the CBHCO is located, for 300 possible soldiers. Each CBHCO is composed of a physician, ten case managers, administrative personnel and others. Soldiers are

screened to determine if they are appropriate to enter this medical treatment program. If ineligible, the soldier must remain at the fixed medical treatment facility which may be hundreds of miles from his/her home of record. If eligible, the soldiers are assigned a duty location commensurate with their limited duty profile according to their military occupation specialty to continue to be gainfully employed while undergoing medical care. The soldiers in Wisconsin perform active duty tasks at the Army Reserve Centers.

Medical care is sought at the closest federal facility (military medical treatment facility or VA medical facility). When these services are not available, local civilian medical care is contracted. Reasonable distance to travel to medical appointments is considered when determining where medical care is arranged. The endpoints of a Medical Holdover soldier include return to active duty, release from active duty or return to the medical treatment facility from which they were initially referred. Soldiers currently enrolled in a CBHCO have spoken highly of their situation. They are happy to have a job to do while recuperating from their injury and are also pleased to be back home with family and friends.

Currently CBHCO-Wisconsin has 127 soldiers actively enrolled. Thus far, Madison VA has agreed to treat three soldiers; Milwaukee VA, ten soldiers; and Chicago VA, one soldier, in support of this initiative.

## Network News

### *Hines*

Jack G. Hetrick, Director of Hines VA Hospital, is now serving a dual role in the VISN. In addition to his duties at Hines, Mr. Hetrick is the Acting Director of the Jesse Brown VAMC. "I am enjoying working with the staff at Jesse Brown and taking on the challenge of managing two Medical Centers," he said. "Each of the two facilities is very unique."

### *NFL visitors*

If you were watching football on Thanksgiving Day, you might have been surprised to see Hines staff and



veterans appearing in an NFL public service announcement at halftime of the Chicago Bears/Dallas Cowboys game. Two Chicago Bear players, Brad Maynard the punter and Pat Mannelly the long snapper, visited patients at the facility in early November. While they were here, a cameraman filmed the visit and taped a short spot encouraging the public to volunteer and visit a VA Medical Center. To the delight of the Hines veterans, the spot appeared in the NFL's national announcement.

### *Successful Visit*



Deputy Secretary Gordon Mansfield (pictured right) visited Hines in early December. Hines staff, including Jerry Schutter, Chief of the Blind Center (pictured left), as well as Dr. Bernard Nemchasky, Chief of the Spinal Cord Injury Unit, took him on a tour of the new Spinal Cord Injury and Blind Rehabilitation Center buildings. The Deputy was favorably impressed with the progress on the new buildings, which will open for patient use sometime this spring.

## **Survey Success**

Hines was the lucky recipient of a Joint Commission Random Unannounced Survey of Home Care late last month. Among the areas reviewed were organizational structure, communication, information management, staffing, infection control, medication management and patient safety.

The surveyor received an overview of the program from Dr. Margaret Baumann, Terry Mikovich, Holly Wright, Mary McKinstry, Sharon Sancken, Teneshia Hudson and other key staff. He then observed two home visits. According to the surveyor, the documentation was extremely thorough and he was impressed with what he saw. His comments were extremely positive and no requirements for improvement were identified.

Congratulations to the Home Care staff who have been very involved in addressing a variety of program and process issues and in doing the self assessment to ensure compliance with standards. Their hard work and dedication paid off in a big way.

## **Iron Mountain**

### **Leadership Development Program for 2004**

Five Iron Mountain VAMC employees recently completed their year-long experience with the Leadership Effectiveness and Development (LEAD) program. This is a training opportunity offered to employees for their own personal/professional development. The program serves as the facility-level component of the National Succession Plan.



L-R: Judy Sielaff, Education Coordinator. The graduates include: Elaine Burke, Nursing Service; Kelly Babbitt, Primary Care Service; Connie Engel, Patient Administrative Service; Paul Arndt, Clinical Support Service; Tammy Schill-Pavlat, Housekeeping and Food Service. Also shown (on right) is Janice M. Boss, Medical Center Director.

## **Town Hall**

Recently, Dr. Cummings visited the VA medical center in Iron Mountain and had the opportunity to share in the presentation of two employee of the month awards during a Town Hall meeting.



Janice M. Boss, M.S., CHE, (left) along with Dr. Cummings, are shown with Maryanne Gibler, Patient Advocate, and David Carlson, Pharmacy Technician, who were co-recipients of the award. Gibler and Carlson worked tirelessly on behalf of a veteran and his family in getting his son transferred from a burn center in Milwaukee in order to spend time with his dad who was terminally ill. The son, who was called home while serving in Iraq, was seriously burned in an accident requiring his transfer to Milwaukee. The two were cited for their compassion and exemplary customer service.

## **Jesse Brown**

### **EMS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

The Environmental Management Service at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary by donating \$2,500 to the "AnySoldier.US" program that provides recreational and personal care items to military troops stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait. EMS staff raised the money through a raffle and employee carnival that included a "dunk tank." For \$1 a ball, employees had the opportunity to dunk their supervisors and members of top management, including Medical Center Director Richard Citron. The Jesse Brown VAMC had previously initiated an "AnySoldier.US" Committee to raise awareness for this program and solicit donations of items to send overseas. To date, they have mailed 500 pounds of merchandise and countless personal letters to military troops through the "AnySoldier.US" program.

### **2004 Excellence in Teaching Award**

Dr. Apolonio, Section Chief of General Internal Medicine at the Lakeside Clinic, was a recipient of the 2004 "Excellence in Teaching" Award from the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine for her outstanding efforts in resident education. An employee at Lakeside for the past 10 years, Dr. Apolonio directs the general medicine clinics and is responsible for house staff and medical student education for over 100 residents.

A Lakeside physician who regularly volunteers at a soup kitchen located on the south side of Chicago recruited a group of staff and resident physicians, nurse practitioners and PharmD's in late October for a painting party. The group volunteered their Sunday to paint the entire facility, which included two kitchens and two large dining rooms. The project took them six hours. "The soup kitchen is frequented by a number of homeless veterans and others who deserve to eat their meals in a more appealing environment," the physician said.

### **Farewell for Director, Jesse Brown VAMC**

After serving for five years as Director of the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, Mr. Richard Citron announced he had accepted an assignment as Director of the VA Medical Center in Wilmington, Delaware, effective November 28. At a farewell reception in his honor, Renee Oshinski, Deputy Network Director of the VISN 12 office, presents a plaque on behalf of Dr. Joan Cummings, Network Director.



### **Madison**

#### **Nurse Executive**

Rebecca Kordahl has been named Nurse Executive of the Madison Veterans Hospital. She received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Augsburg College in Minneapolis, MN.



She received her Master of Business Administration from St. Thomas University, St. Paul, MN. Most recently Kordahl served as the Chief Nurse Executive at Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield, IL.

### **Outstanding Medical Information Technology Publicity**

The Madison VA Hospital was quick to respond when an opportunity for unique, positive publicity was presented. A very satisfied outpatient, who was also the publisher of *M.D. News*, was in need of a program to feature in his upcoming issue. *M.D. News* is a business and lifestyle magazine for all physicians in southern Wisconsin. Hospital management saw this as an excellent opportunity to provide information about how VA is leading the way in patient care through medical information technology.

The topics of the computerized patient record system (CPRS) and bar code medication administration (BCMA) were selected. A group of hospital subject matter experts and key support staff was assembled for this project, which had an extremely short deadline. The dedicated effort of the group met the deadline with a high quality product to the delight of the editor.

The magazine cover featured Dr. Jeffrey Jones, Madison's Chief of Staff, working on a computer terminal in a patient care setting. The article text explained VA's leadership role on CPRS and BCMA with supporting photographs, data charts and other graphics. The magazine also contained these glowing comments from the publisher in his column: "This month *M.D. News* welcomes the

William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital to our publication. I am especially pleased and excited to have them as our feature cover story. As a disabled veteran, I have experienced for many years the top-notch and compassionate services provided by the Madison facility. The new technology discussed in the article showcases the VA's commitment to the ongoing health care of our veteran service men and women. We salute the VA hospitals across the country for providing ongoing quality treatment and care for our nation's Vets."

Reprints of the article were secured by the hospital for future use. An article reprint was sent to a local television station with an open invitation after they had done a story about an area private sector hospital just starting to work toward CPRS. The television station followed up on the invitation and was very impressed with what they saw. Their coverage emphasized VA's leadership roles in CPRS and BCMA.

## ***Milwaukee***

### ***Milwaukee Selected Site for 2007 National Veterans WHEELCHAIR GAMES***

"The gathering place by the waters," as named by Native Americans, and today known as Milwaukee, will be the site of the 27<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games in 2007. Nearly 500 veterans will meet to compete in the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the nation June 18-24, 2007.

The games, presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America, are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs due to spinal cord injury, neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments.

The Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans Association are hosting the games.

Events will take place at different venues in and around Milwaukee. The games will have an estimated economic impact of \$2.8 million to the

Milwaukee area with participation of more than 1,000 athletes and delegates.

The staffs of the Zablocki VA Medical Center and the Wisconsin PVA have been working with the Milwaukee Convention & Visitors Bureau for several months to bring the games to Milwaukee. The games in 2005 will be held in Minneapolis, MN and in 2006, Anchorage, Alaska.

Milwaukee was chosen as the host city because their VA Hospital has a long standing tradition of care for spinal cord injured veterans and the strong support of the Wisconsin Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Milwaukee also demonstrated it has the venues and facilities needed to host an event of this magnitude.

Wheelchair sports promote the rehabilitation and wellness through rigorous sports competition. For many newly injured veterans this event is their first exposure to wheelchair sports. The Wheelchair Games gives the newly injured veteran the opportunity to meet many experienced wheelchair athletes, in fact the camaraderie of fellow veterans sharing their experiences is as valuable as the competition.

Veterans will compete in track and field, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, softball, air rifle, quad rugby, nine ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, wheelchair slalom, power soccer, motorized rally and handcycling.

Sponsors include the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America, with financial assistance from corporate, civic, and veterans' service organizations.

**About VA:** The Department of Veterans Affairs is a world leader in rehabilitation, with rehabilitation therapy programs at each of its 163 medical facilities. VA's goal is to provide excellence in patient care, veterans' benefits and customer satisfaction. VA employees continue to offer their dedication and commitment to help veterans get the services they have earned. To learn about VA and programs for veterans, visit VA's web site at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

**About PVA:** Founded in 1946, Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of individuals with spinal cord injury or disease. PVA is a dynamic, broad-based organization with more than 20,000 members in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. To learn more about PVA, visit its web site at [www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org).

## **North Chicago**

### ***Proud to Care***

Recently, North Chicago VAMC kicked off their "Promise Kept" for their customer service program. There was a contest for the staff to submit what they thought North Chicago's "Promise Kept" should be. The phrase "Promise Kept" is a way of describing what the staff at North Chicago VAMC are all about and what patients can expect of them. The contest received numerous submissions and after much review, the "Promise Kept" selected was "PROUD TO CARE." Racquel Mordini from the Skilled Geriatric Rehab Center submitted "Proud to Care." The original logo was designed by Mary Waterman, North Chicago's medical illustrator.

During an employee celebration in May, North Chicago unveiled the "Proud to Care" poster, talked about the importance of providing great customer service to patients as well as to co-workers. Each staff at North Chicago received a lanyard that identifies the "Proud to Care" promise. "When I became Director one of my top priorities was and always will be providing outstanding customer service," says Patrick Sullivan. Sullivan states, "Everything we do starts and ends with our patients and our staff."

To promote exceptional internal customer service North Chicago implemented an awards program titled the OSCARS for "On-the-spot Superior Customer Assistance Recognition" and the WOW awards, which recognizes stand out OSCAR award recipients on a monthly basis. The OSCAR award allows any staff at North Chicago to nominate another staff member. Nominations are based upon a staff

member doing something above and beyond their normal day-to-day duties to assist a fellow staff member. Each OSCAR recipient will receive a \$20 American Express gift certificate. Winners also have their names placed on the electronic bulletin board and newsletter.

The WOW awards are to recognize stand out OSCAR award recipients on a monthly basis. There are three award recipients each month that are provided a \$50 gift certificate and a parking spot for one month, along with a traveling trophy.

These are two of the ways North Chicago VAMC tries to recognize their staff and a small way of saying THANKS for being "Proud to Care."

### ***Chest Foundation Award***

Ashok Fulambarker, MD, FCCP, Chief, Pulmonary Disease Section received the 2004 Governors Community Service Award of THE CHEST FOUNDATION for his community service project "Child Abuse and HIV Prevention Through Promotion of Responsible Parenting." He received a grant of \$5,000 for "Love Humanity," a non-profit charitable organization.

Dr. Fulambarker was officially recognized during the "Making a Difference Award" Ceremony at the American College of Chest Physicians annual meeting, October 23, 2004, Seattle, California.

### ***FMS Holds a Clothing Drive For VAMC North Chicago Homeless Veterans***

Facilities Management Service (FMS) held a clothing drive for the homeless veterans at VAMC North Chicago. The clothing drive commenced in July and continued until August with flyers and messages going out to all FMS employees and a message being placed on the computer web site for all employees of the medical center.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs states that the majority of homeless veterans are mostly males (2% are females). The VA estimates that more than 299,321 veterans are homeless on any given night.

The vast majority are single, most come from poor, disadvantaged communities, 45% suffer from mental illness, and half struggle with substance abuse problems. Homeless veterans have served in WWII, Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, or the military's anti-drug cultivation efforts in South America. Forty-seven percent of the homeless veterans served in the Vietnam Era.

These veterans require a coordinated effort that provides secure housing and nutritional meals; essential health care, substance abuse aftercare, mental health counseling, personal development and empowerment. Veterans also need job assessment, training and placement assistance. The most effective programs for homeless veterans are community based, non-profit, "veterans helping veterans" groups. FMS took on the challenge to support our homeless Vets.

When FMS contacted Bill Flood, Chief Domiciliary Service, to inquiry about what is most needed, he stated "There is always a need for all types of clothing. The major need is for coats in the winter months. This kind of clothing drive has not been done here in a long time. It is vitally needed for our homeless veterans."

FMS took on the challenge head on. Due to a large number of FMS employees who work in the outside environment, they have seen many homeless veterans with inadequate clothing for the harsh winter months and felt this clothing drive would be in their best interest. Expectations that were placed prior to the start of the clothing drive were met and far exceeded. Numerous coats, sweaters, shirts and pants were donated by FMS and medical center employees with an open generosity. Support was given by FMS employees on making flyers, providing clothes racks, hangers and providing space for collection of these much needed items. This was truly a program for "veterans helping veterans."

## Holiday Spirit

### ***Iron Mountain Party***

The VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain recently held their annual holiday party for employees and volunteers. Part of the entertainment included a "Name that (Christmas) Tune" contest. Employees split up into four teams and they mastered the game in no time at all. Mark Miller, Chief, Mental Health Service, was the captain of the winning team and he is shown in the photo below being congratulated by Santa's Elves, Deb LaCourt and Nikki Clawson of the Canteen Service.



### ***Tomah Christmas Gift Store For Veterans***

For 57 years, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and DAV Auxiliary of Wisconsin have provided the annual Christmas Gift Store at the Tomah VA.

Patients prepare a list of family to whom they wish to send a gift, then they either come to the "store" or the gift cart goes to the wards.

Volunteers help the veterans select the gifts, then the gifts are wrapped in festive holiday paper and the presents are wrapped for shipping.

This year, over \$11,500 was spent on the gifts and an additional \$4,000 was spent for shipping. Over 1,000 hours of volunteer service were donated by volunteers from all over the state.

Santa's hardest-working elf, Alpha Jean Gaede, has coordinated this event since 1975. She is also a housekeeper at the Tomah VA. In this picture,



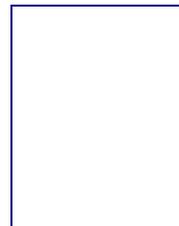
she passes boxes through a window to the waiting UPS truck. This stack of packages was shipped out after just one day's work!

## ***Madison Helps Needy Vets***

For the eighteenth year, the employees and volunteers of the Madison Veterans Hospital have combined their efforts for Operation Care and Share, to provide food packages to needy veterans and their families. There was a five week collection period when individuals brought in the food items they chose to donate. Monetary donations were also received as part of the campaign, this year totaling \$2,911. Those monetary donations were utilized to purchase nearly 900 pounds of frozen turkeys and other basic holiday meal items to accompany the turkey. Seventy-five food packages were then assembled. The Social Work staff determine which patients become the recipients of a large box of non-perishable food items and a frozen turkey. Each box contains enough food for numerous meals for several family members. Approximately 25 more food packages will be assembled after the initial allotment have been delivered to patients when they are at the hospital for their appointments or at their homes. The staff of the Rockford VA Primary Care Clinic prepared and distributed 11 food packages to some of their patients in need as well. For more information on Operation Care and Share, contact Scott Krueger at extension 17030 or (608) 280-7030.



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