



Under Secretary for Health Resigns



Jonathan B. Perlin, M.D., Ph.D., MSHA, FACP announced his resignation as Under Secretary for Health, effective August 11, 2006. Perlin advised that “it has been an exceptional privilege to serve as Under Secretary, the culmination of many years of personal and professional service to our Nation’s veterans. I share with you all a great sense of pride and accomplishment for all we have achieved together. Please accept my personal thanks for your support for me personally, and for your hard work, dedication and committed service to our Nation’s veterans.”

Acting Under Secretary

On August 12, Secretary Nicholson asked Michael J. Kussman, M.D., M.S., MACP to serve as Acting Under Secretary for Health while a search is conducted for a permanent Under Secretary.



Dr. Kussman said Tuesday, August 29, in the keynote speech at VHA’s 2006 Senior Management Conference that he will stress leadership and an increased emphasis on patient care as his two major themes during his tenure as the Agency’s Acting Under Secretary for Health.

In his first major speech since he took over as top official on August 11 following the departure of Dr. Jonathan Perlin, Dr. Kussman reaffirmed VHA’s commitment to its vision and to its four missions: patient care, education, research and support to the nation and the Department of Defense during national emergencies- though he stated that patient care is the most important of these, and that other missions are in support of patient care.

“For me – and I hope for you – patient care is job Number One. Some of you know Morgan Stanley’s advertising slogan: we take care of all our clients, one investor at a time.” Dr. Kussman continued: “In our organization, we need to provide the best possible care

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for all our enrollees – one veteran at a time. This must be our most important goal. It's the reason VHA exists.”



Dr. Kussman addresses leaders at VHA's Senior Management Conference in Las Vegas.

Dr. Kussman called on everyone attending the conference to take what they have discussed and learned while in Las Vegas and apply it to enhancing patient care for veterans.

“What we talk about this week must go back with each and every one of us to the clinics, medical centers, networks and headquarters offices in which we work,” Dr. Kussman concluded.

“What we learn this week must be shared with our coworkers, our partners in the veterans’ service organizations and with veterans themselves,” he concluded. “And we must use that information to improve our ability to lead VHA during the time it has been given to us to be leaders; and to accomplish our sacred mission: to provide better patient care for the men and women we are privileged to serve.”

Network News

Hines

BBC Visits

A team of journalists from the British Broadcasting Company in the UK visited Hines in August; shooting footage in the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) and Blind Rehab Centers, as well as in the Mental Health Center. The BBC team interviewed several Hines physicians, staff members and patients as part of a documentary comparing the veterans’ healthcare system in the United States to the national health care system in Britain. VA Secretary Nicholson was interviewed by the BBC journalists earlier in the week when he came to Chicago for the DAV Convention.

Doctors Yvonne Lucero, Bernard Nemchausky, Chirag Raval and Jerry Schutter, Chief of the Blind Rehab Center, were all interviewed for the documentary and provided the journalists with a very positive impression of VHA and Hines. The team was very impressed with what they saw and obtained some excellent interviews from two Iraqi veteran inpatients who were extremely enthusiastic about the care they are receiving at Hines. The documentary is due out in early 2007.

PGA Wives Reach Out to Vets

While Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson battled it out at the PGA Golf Tournament at Medinah in August, a group of PGA players’ wives visited patients at Hines, passing out hats, American flags and cheerful hugs to as many patients as they could find. The wives of 16 PGA players took a bus over to Hines and visited patients in the Spinal Cord Injury Unit, Residential Care Facility and Extended Care Center. Recreation Therapy staff met them at the front gate and toured them around the hospital, stopping in enthusiastic patient rooms and meeting many fans along the way. The wives, who routinely visit VA facilities while their husbands play golf, were very well-received by patients and staff alike and promised to return again in the future.

Opioid Substitution Clinic Receives Rave Reviews

The Opioid Substitution Clinic in the Hines Mental Health Service Line recently had a very successful Joint Commission survey. Following an unannounced JCAHO visit, the Clinic received very positive feedback from the surveyors and the news that they would receive accreditation.

Iron Mountain

Internship Students Welcomed

The Department of Veterans Affairs celebrated America's diversity by mentoring college students in various internship programs such as the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) National Internship Program at the VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain this past summer.

Since 1992, HACU has placed over 5,800 students in several government agencies and private corporations across the country including the CIA, NASA, National Science Foundation, Department of Veterans Affairs, The GAP, Sallie Mae Foundation and Department of Defense.

Maryanne Gibler, VAMC Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist, said, "Mentoring is a key strategy for helping develop and retain talent, and is an important tool for facilitating diversity. We are very happy that our facility was given the opportunity to work with such bright students."



Rosemarie Moxley and Krystal Castro have been selected by HACU and screened by the VA staff in Iron Mountain. The students worked throughout the summer on various projects at the facility. They ended their internship by giving a PowerPoint presentation to key staff on all that they experienced both professionally and personally. Both students state they will go back and encourage students to seek employment at a VA medical center.

Annual Patient Carnival



The great grandchildren of NHCU resident, Leo Beauchamp, enjoyed the Iron Mountain patient carnival which was held on Thursday, July 6, 2006. The children's father, Tech. Sgt Andrew Wells, is currently serving in Okinawa, Japan. The children, veteran and many other family members and veterans participated in the annual event. The staff looks forward to putting on this event every year because of all the cheer they can bring to our patients. Clowns, games, musical entertainment and food were provided at this important event.

Annual Employee Recognition Picnic

The VA employees at the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center were honored at the Annual Employee Appreciation Picnic on Thursday, September 7th.



Pictured: L-R Shelly Brown, Mary Jo Vitton, Rita Rosen and Sharon Lies from Patient Administration Service.

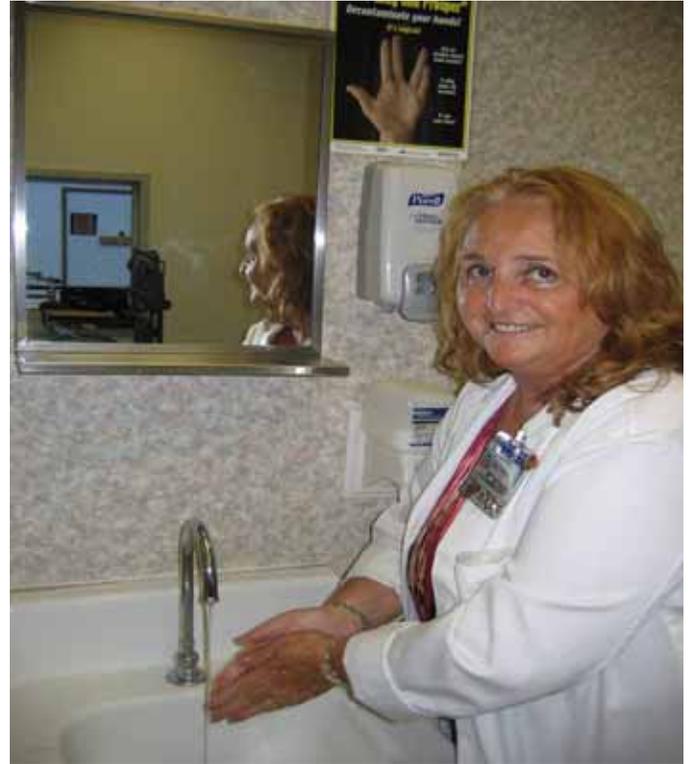
The Director presented the Hands and Heart Award as well as the Director's Team Awards to employees. The staff enjoyed a complimentary lunch. Employees on off-tours were served breakfast and dinner by the Executive Leadership Team. Employees were encouraged to wear Hawaiian shirts and join in on the fun.

Jesse Brown

Pilot Hand Washing Campaign Initiated

The Jesse Brown VA Medical Center (JBVAMC) has launched an aggressive Hand Washing campaign in order to improve its performance related to the 2006 National Patient Safety Goals and prepare for the upcoming Influenza season.

The campaign will run for six months through February 2007. Each month will feature a special focus to augment campaign efforts. The campaign chairperson is Anna Ortiz, RN a lead nurse in the medical center's primary care Red Clinic who has been with JBVAMC for 16 years and has served as its Infection Control Facilitator for the past four years. This VISN 12 pilot project will assist health care providers, ancillary staff, patients and visitors to improve their hand washing efforts and is expected to reduce infection rates during the upcoming flu season.



Anna Ortiz, RN, stands under a sign placed at all medical center sinks as a reminder of the importance of effective hand washing.

Infection control practices require multidisciplinary participation. Facility leadership has designated all needed support towards the campaign and service chiefs from Medicine, Surgery, Nursing and Environmental Management have pledged their support to make improvements quickly.

The campaign goal is to assist staff, patients and visitors to take basic steps to prevent infection, whether occurring daily, seasonally or during infectious disease emergencies (natural or manmade). Basic public health measures, such as decontaminating your hands and covering your coughs (hand and respiratory hygiene), can make a huge difference in reducing the spread of infection and save time, money and lives. Serious infections may necessitate emergency health measures, particularly the use of personal protective equipment.

The medical center will be monitoring the campaign and expects hand washing compliance to increase while overall infection rates decrease.

Bike to Work Week



Over a dozen employees from JBVAMC and its Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) participated in Chicago's annual "Bike to Work" week in June, including (from left) Albert Almonte, Martha Williams, Jenny O'Donohue, Glenn Shalton, Jennifer Burke and Heidi Westbrook. A number of bicycle-related prizes were awarded to the riders, courtesy of Canteen Service. In addition, Lakeside CBOC employees Robert Nathan, Charles Irvén, Juan Martinez and Robert Hayes participated in the annual Multiple Sclerosis Tour de Farms on June 24 & 25, riding 126 miles and raising over \$1,300 to benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Madison

VA Physicians Providing Medical Services in Homeless Shelter

Madison VA physicians are making a difference in a very unique way by donating their services to provide supervision of medical students in area homeless shelters.

In 1990, medical students wanted to provide some basic health services to the under-served of the Madison area. The students' days were very busy, but they did have some free time in the evenings. Dr. Theodore

Goodfriend, Madison VA's Associate Chief of Staff for Research, became the founding advisor to the student group. The group became known in the community as the MEDIC Program. The group, comprised of first and second year medical students, began conducting a field station for care of homeless men at Grace Episcopal Church Homeless Shelter one evening per week. Many of the individuals served by this shelter, as well as others in the Madison area, are veterans.

The program is presently active at five clinic sites in the Madison area, serving homeless men, women, and children. All sites are served once per week, with at least one supervisory physician at each site. Medical residents participate at the clinic sites as well. Each site serves between 5 and 12 patients per evening. Common issues treated include skin problems, infections of all kinds, and trauma, the products of years of medical neglect, psychological problems, and substance abuse. Most of the medicines provided are free samples, and most diagnostic testing done is rudimentary. Individuals with serious medical issues are referred to area emergency rooms including Madison VA.

The response to the MEDIC Program is tremendous. The clients are grateful for the medical attention they receive, otherwise they would have no medical care at all; and medical students are so enthusiastic there are not enough openings to accommodate all the students who want to participate.

Madison VA physicians who participate in the program include: Dr. Goodfriend; Dr. Marsha Reiner; Dr. Michael Seibers; Dr Steven Barczi.

Standardized VA Emergency Department Nomenclature

Universal access to appropriate emergency services is a cornerstone of basic healthcare in the United States. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is committed to providing timely and high-quality emergency care. VHA is also committed to providing eligible veterans with access to emergency care that is prompt, safe, appropriate, and cost effective. The veteran should be able to obtain emergency care that meets a single standard for similar VHA facilities nationally.

Standardized nomenclature is needed to ensure that patients seeking emergency care in any VHA facility can readily identify the appropriate location for such services. There are a variety of names presently in use for units that provide acute undifferentiated care to veterans across the veterans healthcare network. While *Emergency Room* and *Emergency Department* are common terms, others are frequently used in VA, including *Life Support Unit*, *Urgent Care Unit*, *ESA (Emergency Services Area)*, and *Acute Evaluation Unit*. Such variation leads to ambiguity and may be confusing to veterans seeking care, especially when in unfamiliar facilities.

Changes in the nomenclature are taking place in VISN 12; one example would be Madison recently changing from Urgent Care to Emergency Department. Changes such as this will help to assist our veterans and their family members in their time of need.

New Wisconsin Women Veterans Task Force

Gail Hunt and Jennifer Jaqua, social workers at VA Madison, are members of a new Wisconsin Women's Network Task Force focusing on the concerns, needs, and stories of women veterans of military service, particularly those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of the key issues facing women veterans identified at the first meeting of the task force included: physical and mental health issues; the need for job reintegration programs; sexual harassment; pay inequity; documenting women veterans' experiences; underused benefits; and veterans with disabilities.

VA Gets Specialty Coffee Shop

Through a contract with the Veterans Canteen Service, the EVP Coffee Company now has a shop in the Madison VA. Strategically located with a 200 square foot presence on the hospital's ground floor adjacent to one of the access points to University Hospital and Clinics, EVP has generated an influx of new business, without any decrease being seen in the previous sales levels for Madison VA's Canteen Service. A percentage of the EVP gross sales goes to the Canteen Service, helping

generate additional profits which Canteen Service provides back to the hospital as well as supporting national events such as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, National Creative Arts Festival, and more.



Committed to providing fresh, great tasting coffee along with specialty pastries and sandwiches, EVP is a woman-owned business that opened in Madison in 1997 and has two other locations in the city. EVP stands for "Etes Vous Prets" (pronounced et-voo-pray) which means "Are You Ready?" and is the traditional starting command of rowing races. The two founders of EVP met while rowing for the University of Wisconsin.

Milwaukee

Honoring Their Service

American Ex-Prisoners of War, Milwaukee Barbed Wire Chapter, raise the flags (American and POW/MIA) in front of the Milwaukee VA Medical Center on POW/MIA Day surrounded by applauding staff and veterans. (See photo on next page)

Members of the organization also spoke with cadets in the chapel of St. John's Northwestern Military Academy, Delafield, WI, and received an extended, thunderous, standing ovation.



American Ex-Prisoners of War, Milwaukee Barbed Wire Chapter, raise the flags (American and POW/MIA)

the NVWG. We have many strengths to rely on; the most important is a LOC and a medical center staff that is truly enthusiastic about hosting the NVWG.”



Gus Sorenson gives a wave as Wisconsin athletes and their friends' parade through the streets of Anchorage, Alaska on the Fourth of July – the first day of competition of the 2006 Games. Mr. Sorenson is the government relations director for the Wisconsin Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He returned to Milwaukee with five gold medals. By media reports, the parade attracted close to 40,000 cheering supporters.

Site Visits the Next Step

The 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, to be held in Milwaukee June 19-23 of 2007, are fast approaching. In fact, the number of days on the countdown clock in the south lobby of the Milwaukee VA Medical Center has dropped to under 240+ days.

From September 19-21, the first of four site visits was conducted at the medical center by the national games planning team. The team members met for two days in the Matousek Auditorium and one day looking at community venues.

The purpose of the three remaining site visits is to have the local organizing committee (LOC) present operations plans and ask questions. “The site visits shape our plans and the meetings are beneficial,” said Brian Walker, Milwaukee local games coordinator. “This gives us the opportunity to show off what we have done. The national leaders simply want to see that we are giving the proper amount of thought and preparation into every aspect of

Those who made the Milwaukee visit included those from the Paralyzed Veterans of America national office in Washington, DC: Brian Zeranski, information technology; Geoff Hopkins, corporate marketing; Mike Delaney, marketing director; Shirleen Roberts, room accommodations for athletes; and Doug Beckley, associate director of sports. From the VA, Tom Brown, director, National Veterans Wheelchair Games; Judy Stuts, administrative officer; Kim Byers, public affairs coordinator for special events; Joe Nguyen, web operations and network administration and Dan Scott, MD, medical director.

The next site visit is scheduled for mid November.

Recovery Coffee House

Every four to six weeks the third floor auditorium at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center pulsates with live music, drama and occasionally some dance. For just over two hours, veterans and volunteer support staff present an informal stage show known as the VA Recovery Coffee House.

Several of the performers have musical or performing backgrounds and have rediscovered their art and craft in a new way as it relates to their recovery. Others are working within a group musical context for the first time.

Before the program, there is an opportunity to practice at a weekly jam session. Many of the songs sung relate to personal stories of recovery and are originally composed or written. Others reinforce a personal sense of honor, patriotism and sacrifice involved with their military service.



Jamming at the Milwaukee VA's Recovery Coffee House can be more than fun. Performers have a chance to show off their talent as well as bolstering their self confidence before an always appreciative audience. The talent has also received attention in Milwaukee area media

There is something to do for everyone to make the show a success. Veterans are involved in running a full sound board, video camera, a follow spot and other lights and props.

The mental health recovery model involves more than abstinence from drugs and alcohol. It is about mental health, wellness and veterans taking advantage of as

much potential and responsibility as possible regardless of diagnosis or disability label. The coffee house provides an opportunity for the renewal of health, happiness and spirit within the VA mission of making lives whole once again.

Caring for Combat Wounded

The Hyatt Regency in Milwaukee was the site recently of the timely conference, "From Battlefield to Home Front: Caring for Combat Wounded." It was jointly sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs Employee Education System, Military Order of Purple Heart, the Wisconsin Army National Guard (WIARNG), and the VA Great Lakes Health Care System (VISN 12).

The purpose of the two-and-a-half-day conference was to educate health care professionals about the treatment of combat wounded veterans and military personnel from Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

Close to 100 conferees from Illinois, Wisconsin and other states were welcomed by Glen Grippen, Milwaukee VA medical center director and Brigadier General Kerry Denson, deputy adjutant general, WIARNG.

The conference was unique in that the majority of the presentations involved speakers who were combat veterans and were able to provide their moving and insightful comments about their combat experiences. A highlight was a discussion by two female veterans and sisters of a Wisconsin female Purple Heart recipient who had been killed in action. Their message was to keep trying to reach out to our returning veterans – keep attempting contact and offering help.

Sessions were also provided on the role of the combat medic, combat stress, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, polytrauma, traumatic brain injury, post traumatic stress disorder, the seamless transition process and OEF/OIF case managers.

At the conclusion of the intensive and informative conference, participants felt a heightened understanding of the personal sacrifices that these brave men and women have made.

North Chicago

North Chicago VA Medical Center Host 3rd Annual Car Show

The North Chicago Veterans Affairs Medical Center held its 3rd Annual Car Show for veterans on Saturday, July 8th. The sun shined all day for veterans and employees to take in the 89 vehicles spanning 9 full decades of rides from 28 manufacturers and 6 countries around the world. The oldest entry was Waukegan Fire Department's 1921 Stutz Fire Engine all the way through automotive history to a modified 2005 Corvette Z06. The various clubs in the area took time out of their busy schedules to participate including the United States Marines of Marine Air Control Group 48 who displayed a "HUMVEE" and an enormous 7-Ton tactical vehicle.



All the vehicles were stunning and mixed together blending the various years and styles. The vast array went on and on throughout the parking lots. Five staff from North Chicago VA brought in cars for the show. Grant Evert from Facility Support brought his 1923 Model T Roadster. Dr. Mary Lange-Alberts, Leader of Skilled Geriatrics/Intensive Medicine brought her 2002 Harley Davidson "Trike". Cathy McBride of Patient Administration and her father Michael McBride brought a 1933 Ford Vicky. John Manczko from the Associate Director's Office and his wife Penny Manczko, drove their 2005 Ford Mustang GT Convertible. Haley McLaughlin of Patient/Nursing Services, who created and coordinates the car show and her mother Paulette

McLaughlin brought their 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO-R and 2002 Chevy Monte Carlo SS Dale Earnhardt "Intimidator" respectively. Also, Dave Warstler of the Special Education District of Lake County (SEDOL) program brought his 1987 Formula Firebird.

Donations were made from Jewel Foods, Kosco Flags, Coca Cola, Jelly Belly Candies, Ocean Spray, the B.P.O. Elks, The McLaughlin family, Roy Ozark and the Volo Auto Museum. At the end of the day the Director's Choice Award, and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place Veterans Choice awards were presented as well. Many thanks also go to the staff of Recreation Therapy, Community Affairs, and Nursing Service.

The wonderful gathering of special vehicles was only topped by the smiles and laughter of many generations and backgrounds of the patients, employees and drivers as they all mingled, shared stories and remembered cars. The driver's hearts were touched by what they saw at the VA and truly enjoy spending a day here to give our Nation's Heroes a special day to remember and cherish. One of the owners said that he came here instead of going to "Scoop the Loop" in Waukegan because "this is for our vets."

A Surprise Birthday Gift!

As people arrived on Monday, August 28th at the front entrance to the medical center grounds, the front sign had an unusual message. It read:

Happy Birthday Maureen

Love, Roy from Iraq

Maureen Quinn is a medical technologist in the Lab. She has been at North Chicago for a little over 2 years. Prior to this she did an internship at Hines VA Hospital for a year.

Roy Wine is enlisted in the Navy and holds a rank of HM2. He works for the Navy Blood Donor Center that is located across the hall from the Lab. Roy was deployed to Iraq on April 18th with four other men from the Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes to be Corpsmen for a Marine Reserve Unit. Roy is on a six month tour and is expected back at the end of October.



Roy called North Chicago VAMC on Wednesday, August 23 and also sent an e-mail requesting to have the Happy Birthday message placed on the front sign. Since Roy was not able to be here he wanted to send a "special birthday wish" to Maureen. Needless to say, Maureen was thrilled to arrive Monday morning and see the message from Roy on the front sign.

Having the VA Lab and the Navy Blood Donor Center right next to each other allowed Maureen and Roy to meet. In March they became engaged and took a trip to Jamaica where on the last day of their vacation they found out that Roy would be going to Iraq soon.

Maureen is so grateful that she is able to talk with Roy almost every day. Maureen states, "It is nice, with all the new services via e-mail such as skype and msn and yahoo messenger, they provide service for phone conversations, so we actually get to talk every night through the computer and it does not cost anything except for the use of the internet. We are going to be getting married when Roy gets back and will also be doing a family/friend ceremony in Cancun, Mexico in February."

Everyone wishes Roy a speedy and safe trip back home and wish him and Maureen much happiness as they begin a new life together.

Employee/Volunteer Picnic

Several North Chicago staff took time out from work to enjoy a hot dog with all the trimmings during their annual picnic on July 20th.



North Chicago staff enjoying the hot dog and the outdoors

Tomah

Flag Day

Members of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks in Wausau, Wisconsin, provided a Flag Day program on Sunday, June 11.



The program consisted of music from the Elks Choir (pictured), patriotic readings from Elks officers and a historical review of the United States Flag. Members of Boy Scout Troop 285 of Tomah assisted with the program. A reception was held afterwards, sponsored by the AMVETS and AMVETS Auxiliary.

Tribute To Deployed Soldiers

The Tomah VA has instituted a new "Tribute to Deployed Soldiers" display to honor loved ones of employees and

volunteers who are serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom.

To include a family member in the tribute, VA employees and volunteers submit a photo of their soldier, along with information such as rank and name; military unit in which they are serving; brand of service; as well as whether they are in the National Guard or a Reservist; and the country in which the soldier is deployed.

PLAV Day

“PLAV” is the abbreviation for the Polish Legion of American Veterans. Each year, the PLAV and their Auxiliary host an activity for our patients at the Tomah VA.



The state officers attended and presented Jerry Molnar, Associate Director (center) a fistful of checks from various chapters across the State. The donations totaled \$265 and are earmarked for recreational activities for Tomah VA patients.

VFWA Day!

Another annual event at the Tomah VA is VFWA Day – Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Up until last year, this event was a hospital-wide cookout. Now, the good folks of Nutrition and Food Service provide a delicious and memorable picnic meal without all the smoke and heat!



The day began with a tea for the lady veterans. Petit fours and a variety of teas and coffee were served to the women veterans by the State President of the VFWA.

The picnic lunch followed – veterans were surprised to just sit down in the dining room and have their lunch served to them by a large cadre of volunteers. On the wards, volunteers assisted patients and staff by opening milks and serving the patients their lunch.

It seems a VA activity just isn't complete without some kind of game or prizes and Bingo is the all-time favorite, so the volunteers sponsored a super-sized Bingo in the dining room.

Creative Arts Festival Results Are In!!

Three Tomah VAMC veterans have been invited to attend the 2006 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The Festival will be held in Rapid City, South Dakota this month.

Dan Krehbiel won national recognition in the Vocal Solo Pop category with his rendition of “New York, New York.”

Chris McGillis won in the Vocal Solo Patriotic category with the song, “Some Gave All.”

Steve Hensley won in the Vocal Solo Religious category, singing “I May Never Pass this Way Again.”

Although Tomah VA visual artists were not gold medal winners and, therefore, not invited to the Festival, they represented the facility very well and should be extremely proud.

They are:

John Barnes, "Snake that Killed my Horse," in Stained or Painted Ceramics (Silver Medal)

Robert Hammer, "Cycle of Flames," in Scrollsaw/Fretwork (Bronze Medal)

Joel Kresier, "The Royal King" in Glazed Ceramics (Silver Medal)

Marvin Radke, "Beauty," in Beadwork (Bronze Medal)

Brian Schoeberle, "Mind, Body, Soul," in String Art Kit (Silver Medal)

Richard Shuckhart, "Mountain Stream," in Latch Hook Kit (Silver Medal)

Bill Smith, "Largemouth Bass 13," in Applied Art Mixed Media (Silver Medal)

Veterans and Volunteers Celebrate the 4th of July!



About 100 volunteers came together to celebrate our country's birthday on July 4th

The volunteers provided over 20 different game and food booths for hospitalized veterans.

Veterans and civic service organizations donated about \$2500 in food and prizes for this annual event.

VETS Day XI – July 15

For the eleventh year, volunteers from across the Midwest came to the Tomah VA to provide a hospital-wide picnic and all-round special day for our veterans.



In 1996, this event started out as a pig-roast and after a few years, it became known as Vets Day. "Vets Day" is now incorporated and similar events are held in Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota! So, Tomah is the "Birthplace of Vets Day!"



Volunteers line up to sign in and receive their patient escort assignments.

This year, 87 volunteers visited with and escorted patients to the activities, grilled meat, staffed game booths, and helped serve meals both on the wards and in the Main Dining Room. Everyone at the facility enjoyed the event as all patients and staff working that

day received their Vets Day meal. Members of the Veterans of America Motorcycle Club rode their motorcycles to the VA and encouraged veterans to come out and see their bikes. A DJ was provided by the group, so everyone enjoyed great music.

At the conclusion of the afternoon, leaders of Vets Day presented a multitude of checks to Sandy Gregar, Administrative Assistant/Medical Center Director. Almost \$7,000 was received – all of it earmarked for the medical center's DirecTV programming.

Air National Guard Band Concert

The Tomah VA's 402 Patio was filled to capacity on Friday, July 21, when the Air National Guard Band of the Midwest, "Harmony in Blue," performed for patients, staff, volunteers and visitors.

The jazz band played and sang a variety of favorites, such as "Georgia," "Sunny Side of the Street," "Chattanooga Choo-Choo," and "Route 66." Many instrumental and vocal solos were performed.



An unusual and entertaining number was performed by the tuba player, who played and sang a song about someone who enjoys playing the rumba on his tuba in Cuba!

VA and the "DEMOb"

In August, two local units returned to Wisconsin after deployment in Iraq. Soldiers from the 127th and 32nd National Guard units went through processing at Fort McCoy before being discharged; about 550 were expected to go through their last military exercise for a while.

Tomah VA staff spent the weekend (Friday – Monday) at Fort McCoy, meeting with each soldier to explain their VA benefits and enrolling them for VA healthcare. Staff were from Health Administration Service and Mental Health Service.

Jeanne Button is the medical center's point of contact for returning soldiers from Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF). She relayed that the main thing that stood out for her is the comments soldiers made regarding getting off the plane, smelling the fresh cut grass, seeing the trees and how they had taken it all for granted before going to Iraq. One even said he enjoyed the humidity! When just mingling with them while they waited for the next demob station, they talked about hugging their children, looking forward to eating food that did not taste like sand, sleeping in their own beds.

Jeanne told the story of one of the soldiers she had seen on Saturday to get enrolled. When she arrived on Sunday morning, he was waiting for her. On Saturday, Jeanne talked to the soldiers about the adjustments they would face returning home. This soldier said he had a nightmare on Saturday night and woke up looking for his weapon. He revealed how frightening it was not to be able to find it, and he talked to Jeanne about having to re-orient himself to his new surroundings.

This soldier also talked about losing four of the young soldiers who served under him in Iraq. The soldier felt it is now important for him to get involved with the Army's Warrior Training Program. This is a program that helps train soldiers who are being mobilized for combat. He felt that he could offer them better training and strategies for combat in hopes that they will know exactly what they are going into and can learn better skills to survive.



Soldiers listen intently to directions from Jill Welch, Medical Administrative Assistant, Bob Karpinski, Social Worker; and Tammy Worzala, Patient Services Assistant, during demob activities on August 18.

Jeanne said most of the soldiers were just tired and wanted to get through the demobilization process so they could get back to a normal life.

VA'S Stormy Night

The night of August 23, saw some wicked storms come through Tomah and the surrounding area. Although there was no significant damage to the VA buildings, the facility's 173 acres took a mighty beating.

Chuck Cleveland, Roads and Grounds Supervisor, estimates that 50 trees were downed and that another 50 were damaged, half of those sustained life-threatening damage and most likely will be cut down.



Trees were down everywhere – some were uprooted, others just snapped at their base.



Clean-up started in earnest on Friday due to the storms that continued through the area on Thursday. The clean-up crew consisted of the “regulars” from Roads and Grounds, as well as additional help from Zone Engineers, Facilities Service Line administrative/office staff, carpenters, maintenance staff, etc., as well as veterans in the Compensated Work Therapy program.



Because of the Tomah VA's extensive grounds, the facility is well-equipped to handle the job required this week. This “sky-worker” came in handy when cutting down broken or weakened branches.

Talk about recycling! The new chipper unit followed the workers and ground up the fallen trees and branches to make mulch for the trees and plants around the grounds.



The weekend after the storm, soldiers staying at Fort McCoy golfed on the facility's nine-hole golf course and were distressed to see the many fallen trees on the grounds. They called the medical center on Monday and offered their assistance in cleaning up the grounds. Over a dozen soldiers volunteered their time – on their day off – to continue the clean-up process.

Legacy Stone Placement Ceremony at the High Ground

The Tomah VA was well represented on August 26 at the Veterans Memorial at the High Ground in Neillsville, Wisconsin.

At the facility's Memorial Day Program, it was announced that the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Executive Committee had purchased a Legacy Stone in honor of Wisconsin's soldiers killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Volunteers attending the ceremony included Pat Flanders Chairman, VAVS Executive Committee, Cindy Gluch and Clinton Culpitt, VAVS Executive Committee members; and Shirley Grant and Pat Soulier, volunteers. Family members of five soldiers killed in OIF/OEF attended the ceremony.



The High Ground has vowed not to forget our latest group of soldiers and veterans. Following the legacy stone placement ceremony, the names of the soldiers lost in OIF/OEF were read. As each name was read, the High Ground's large Liberty Bell tolled. Pat Flanders, American Legion Auxiliary (left, above) and Cindy Gluch, Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, had the emotional honor of reading the names.

Many of the families were deeply touched by the tribute the Tomah VA volunteers paid their loved ones.

Great Lakes Acquisition Center

The term HUBZone comes from the phrase, "Historically Underutilized Business Zone." The HUBZone Empowerment Contracting Program is designed to stimulate economic development and create jobs in urban and rural communities by providing federal contracting preferences to small businesses. These preferences go to small businesses that obtain HUBZone certification by being located in a HUBZone designated

area or employing staff who live in such an area. The program is administered by staff in Washington, D.C. in cooperation with field staff located in SBA District Offices around the country.

The SBA administers two particular business assistance programs for small disadvantaged businesses (SDBs). These programs are the 8(a) Business Development Program and the Small Disadvantaged Business Certification Program. The 8(a) Program offers a broad scope of assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged firms, SDB certification strictly pertains to benefits in Federal procurement. Companies that are 8(a) firms automatically qualify for SDB certification.

The new and improved 8(a) Program has become an essential instrument for helping socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs gain access to the economic mainstream of American society. SBA has helped thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs over the years to gain a foothold in government contracting.



L to R: Wayne Simpson and Mr. Roseborough accepting the awards

On August 8, 2006, Wayne Simpson, Deputy Director of the Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, formally presented awards to the Great Lakes Acquisition Center, VISN 12 for their achievements in two socioeconomic categories for fiscal year 2005. They ranked first in the VA contracting offices for Section 8(a) Awards and 2nd for HUBZone awards. The Awards were accepted by

Veterans Integrated Service Network Director, Mr. James Roseborough.

Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Product Line

The Commission on Laboratory Accreditation of the College of American Pathologists (CAP) recently awarded the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service accreditation after recent on-site inspections at two VISN 12 facilities. The laboratory at Hines was recognized for providing quality laboratory services; one of a select group of laboratories found to be in compliance with the CAP accreditation standards. The CAP's program is a respected laboratory accreditation program that has long been considered the "gold standard" against which others are measured.

VAMC Iron Mountain Laboratory, Iron Mountain, Michigan, has also been awarded accreditation based on the results of an on-site inspection.

The laboratory's director was advised of this national recognition and congratulated for the "excellence of the services being provided." VAMC Iron Mountain laboratory is one of the more than 6,000 CAP-accredited laboratories nationwide.



Laboratory staff from Iron Mountain.

The CAP Laboratory Accreditation Program, begun in the early 1960s, is recognized by the federal government as being equal to or more stringent than the government's own inspection program.

During the CAP accreditation process, inspectors examine the laboratory's records and quality control of procedures for the preceding two years. CAP inspects also exam the entire staff's qualifications, the laboratory's equipment, facilities, safety program and record, as well as the overall management of the laboratory. This stringent inspection program is designed to specifically ensure the highest standard of care for the laboratory's patients.

The College of American Pathologists is a medical society serving nearly 16,000 physician members and the laboratory community throughout the world. It is the world's largest association composed exclusively of pathologists and is widely considered the leader in laboratory quality assurance. The CAP is an advocate for high-quality and cost-effective medical care.

CARES Update

Hines

Construction Update

There are a number of ongoing construction and remodeling projects at the Hines VA. The facility is committed to providing patients with newer, more modern facilities in which to receive top quality health care.

In the last two years, construction has been completed on the brand new Blind Rehabilitation and Spinal Cord Injury Centers; both fully equipped with new equipment, modern design and patient courtyards. The facility has also relocated and remodeled the primary care and subspecialty outpatient clinics, now located on the third and fourth floors of the main hospital building. Both of these high-volume clinics are now brand new and offer patients a professional and user-friendly environment during their outpatient appointments. Hines is also proud to offer their patients new Eye and ENT Clinics and earlier this year we opened a new Surgical Intensive Care Unit (SICU) was opened on the second floor of the main hospital building.

In addition to these highly visible projects, there are a number of ongoing projects that will make a big difference in the look of the facility. These include:

Modernizing and expanding the Emergency Department

Remodeling and relocating the Operating Rooms

Opening a new Medical Intensive Care Unit; co-locating it with the recently opened SICU on the second floor.

Complete renovation and remodeling of two acute inpatient wards

Renovation of all passenger and service elevators in the hospital

Construction on a new Angiography Suite

Purchase of a new Open MRI Machine

Patient and visitor feedback about both the ongoing and completed construction projects has been overwhelmingly positive.

Jesse Brown

JBVAMC to Relocate CBOC to Auburn Gresham Community

Jesse Brown VAMC is relocating its Beverly Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) to 7731 S. Halsted Street in the Auburn Gresham area of Chicago to better serve the large population of veterans who live on the city's south side and, especially, veterans who will be residing in a new transitional housing center developed by Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago.



The new Auburn Gresham Clinic will open its doors in January of 2007. Hours of operation will be Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The clinic building will have two floors. Primary Health Care, Mental Health and part time Podiatry, Diabetic care and Education will be offered on the first floor. Medical, Nursing and Mental Health staff will be onsite to provide management of chronic and acute physical and mental health needs.

The second floor will be comprised of the Veterans Resource Center and offices for the U. S. Department of Labor, Veteran's Benefits Administration and AMVETS. Job training skills and computer training will be available for veterans in preparation for employment. The Auburn Gresham Clinic will be staffed by employees relocating from the medical center's Beverly CBOC.

One block away, at 7750 S. Emerald Avenue, Catholic Charities is opening the St. Leo's transitional housing center – one of several pilot projects in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The center, also opening during the late fall of 2006, will include 141 studio apartments for veterans and provide supportive services and counseling with the goal making residents self-sufficient. Each veteran will also be required to seek/obtain/maintain employment and adhere to strict guidelines about sobriety.

Veterans interested in applying for housing at St. Leo's should call its leasing office at (773) 651-9970 or toll-free at (866) 445-0025.

Madison

Emergency Department Grand Opening



A grand opening was recently held following the renovation of approximately 6,000 sq. ft. of the previous Urgent Care, Blood Draw, and Admissions areas of the Madison facility as well as the creation of an additional 1,000 sq. ft. for the new and expanded Emergency Department which replaced Urgent Care.

These improvements were multi-phased to allow the continued operations of the Admissions, Blood Draw, and Urgent Care functions over the two-year project duration.

Madison VA's Emergency Department has evolved from a daytime walk-in clinic seeing small numbers of patients per day to a complex 24/7 department, taking about six percent of their patients from local EMS services and caring for about 10,000 patients per year. The acuity levels have increased tremendously. The services provided, education, equipment, and staffing have become commensurate with emergency department care.

Prior to this project, the facility had an Urgent Care Suite with a single life support room and three gurneys separated by ceiling mounted curtains. This renovation initiative created a new, private, monitored six-bed Emergency Department, with negative pressure isolation rooms, new triage and exam spaces, and an improved nurses' station.

Separate physician provider space was created, along with a new nourishment station, private patient and staff restroom facilities, and dedicated medication, detention, and decontamination rooms.

Access to the new suite is now managed through the use of employee ID badges, cameras, and remote door operators. These new spaces provide significant patient privacy enhancements, staff efficiencies, physical security improvements, and allow for significantly expanded capabilities.

The phlebotomy portion of the project relocated the phlebotomy lab, doubled the available blood draw stations, and included provisions for bariatric and wheelchair accessibility. Additionally, renovations improved patient check-in efficiency and provided additional waiting areas.

North Chicago

OR/ER Dedication Ceremony

North Chicago celebrated the opening of the new emergency and surgery departments modernization and expansion with a dedication ceremony on July 10th.



Congressman Mark Kirk from the 10th District of Illinois along with Deputy Secretary Gordon Mansfield tour one of the 4 new operating rooms



Deputy Secretary Gordon Mansfield along with Congressman Mark Kirk and VISN 12 Network Director Jim Roseborough visit with staff and tour the new operating rooms and emergency department space at North Chicago VAMC.

Network Awards/Recognition

Hines

Positive Publicity

Doctors **Scott Pawlikowski** (Medicine and Neurology Service Line) and **Chirag Raval** (Mental Health Service Line) were both quoted in an article featured in the American College of Physicians newsletter last month. The article, which can be found at <http://www.acponline.org/journals/news/july06/ptsd.htm?hp>, discussed post-traumatic stress disorder. A photo of Rob Smith, a social worker who runs the special Hines war trauma group set up specifically for OEF/OIF veterans, was also featured in the article.

Father **James Burnett**, Acting Chief of the Hines Chaplain Service, appeared on a recent Pritzker Military Library webcast. Father Burnett was interviewed as part of a panel discussion on the impact of chaplains on the battlefield.

Father Burnett is a retired Air Force Chaplain and has many years of experience providing spiritual guidance and support to military service members as well as our veterans. He did a great job on the broadcast and managed to give Hines some positive publicity during the panel discussion as well. You can see Father Burnett on the internet at the Pritzker Military Library's Website at <http://www.pritzkermilitarylibrary.org/>

Congratulations to **Avinash Patwardhan**, Ph.D., who was featured in a profile in a recent edition of "Orthopedics This Week." The article can be found at:

<http://www.ryortho.com/newsletters/volume2/issue23/07-18-06-Success-Patwardhan.htm>

Jesse Brown

Audiology Chief Receives Top Award for Clinical Education

Denis Moore, Au.D, Chief, Audiology & Speech Pathology Service at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, is the recipient of the 2006 Outstanding Clinical Education Award from the Illinois Academy of Audiology (IAA), which cited Dr. Moore's "commitment to providing high quality clinical education and vision for tomorrow's professionals."

The IAA includes over 400 members throughout the State of Illinois. Dr. Moore was especially pleased when he learned that some of his former students had nominated him for the award.



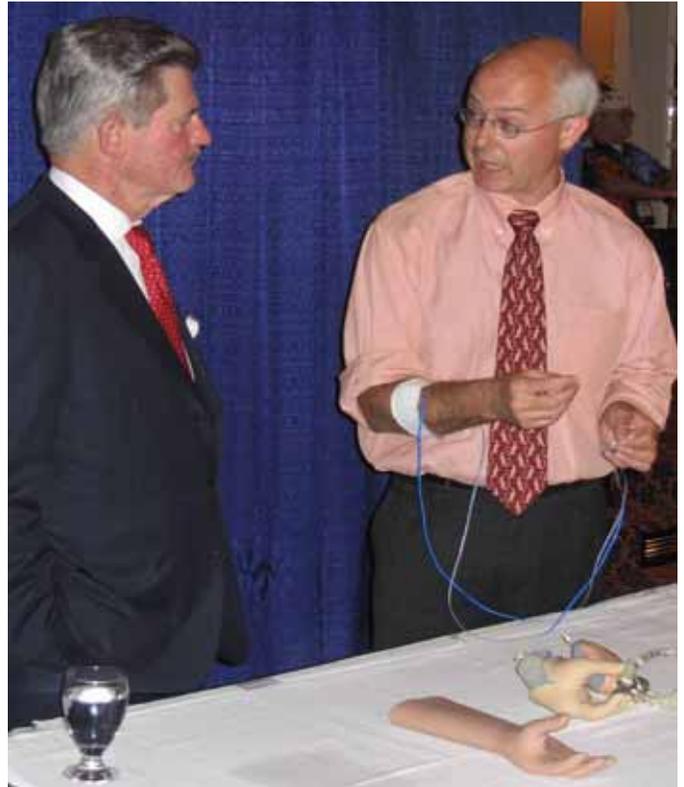
"A major part of VA's mission is the education of health professionals," he said. "I tell my staff that our positions give us the perfect opportunity to be stewards of our profession. It's an honor that some of our students thought so highly of the training they received at this medical center that they nominated me for this award."

Dr. Moore joined the West Side VAMC as a staff audiologist in 1985 and was named Chief, Audiology & Speech Pathology Service, in October 2000.

Researcher Demonstrates a New Type of Prosthetic Hand

Dr. **Richard Weir**, A JBVAMC researcher who has developed a new type of prosthetic hand, demonstrated the device for VA Secretary R. James Nicholson during a media conference held on August 12, at the National DAV Convention in Chicago.

Dr. Weir's high-tech prosthetic hand can be opened and closed through sensors placed on existing arm muscles. Secretary Nicholson, along with media and DAV members, watched as the artificial hand, which was attached by electrodes to the flexor and extensor muscles in Dr. Weir's forearm, mimicked the actions of his real hand.



Dr. Weir's goal is to develop an artificial limb that will feel, look and perform like a real arm, with near-human strength and a natural-looking cosmetic covering that uses nerves and muscle for control.

Statistics show the advent of highly protective body armor has helped about 90% of men and women injured in combat to survive compared with a 70% rate in past wars. However, it is often at the cost of losing a limb. Current prosthetic technology is much more advanced at replacing a leg compared to an arm.

However, Dr. Weir is working towards a more sophisticated prosthesis that will use implantable sensors to receive input from all 19 forearm muscles involved in controlling the human hand and develop “fuzzy logic” – artificial intelligence to translate the signals into commands – which will enable a person to control the wrist, thumb and eventually individual fingers. He is optimistic that, within four years, soldiers who have lost arms will be able to perform many of the same activities, like playing a guitar or threading a needle, they could do previously.

Surgeon Receives Highest Honor from College of Podiatric Medicine

Dr. **Matthew G. Garoufalis**, Associate Chief of Podiatry at the Jesse Brown VAMC, has been selected by the Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine to receive its highest accolade, The Presidential Honor. This award goes to the podiatric physician that best demonstrates outstanding personal and professional qualities that earn them the respect of their peers and their community. Because of his distinguished career as a teacher, residency director and leader in his profession, Dr. Garoufalis has also been selected as the college’s 2006 Alumnus of the Year.

Dr. Garoufalis serves as Assistant Director of JBVAMC’s Podiatric Surgical Residency Training Program, is a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Podiatric Medical Association, which he serves as Chairman of the Clinical Practice Advisory Committee. He is also the past president of the Illinois Podiatric Medical Association and was selected earlier this year as one of America’s 150 most Influential Podiatric Physicians by the editors of *Podiatry Management Magazine*.



Dr. Garoufalis is also a noted author and an internationally known lecturer on topics dealing with surgery, diabetic foot and wound care, laser technology, and practice management.

Madison

VA Clinicians Receive Honors

Jamie Adler, Ph.D., Manager, Psychosocial Recovery Division of the Madison Mental Health Line and Chair, VISN 12 Addictive Disorders Task Force, was recently installed as the President of the Association of VA Psychologist Leaders (AVAPL). AVAPL is a non-profit association of psychologists who hold local, VISN, and national leadership responsibilities within the VA (program managers, service chiefs, directors of training, VISN & CO mental health, senior mental health researchers, etc.). AVAPL works with its membership, with other VA staff, and with outside resource agencies (e.g. the American Psychological Association - APA) to improve the quality and availability of evidence based mental health practice within the VA system. Dr. Adler was installed as President at the APA Convention in New Orleans. One of his presidential initiatives is to provide the training and tools needed for psychologists to adapt their leadership skills to the major changes that have occurred within VA Mental Health over the last few years.

David Wakely, Ph.D. is a psychologist who recently transferred to Madison from the Dallas VAMC. He was recently honored by the VA section of American Psychological Association’s (APA) Division of

Psychologists in Public Service as their Outstanding Clinician for 2006. Dr. Wakely, who works in Madison's new PTSD program, was honored for his innovative and dedicated work in integrating mental health and medical services at the Dallas VA. The award was conferred at the recent APA Convention in New Orleans.

North Chicago

Employee Receives Honor



Stuart Richer, OD, PhD, FAAO, the Chief of Optometry Department at the North Chicago Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and his team of eye and health specialists have received international recognition for their research studies on age-related macular degeneration (ARMD). ARMD is the most common cause of blindness among U.S. adults, accounting for 45 percent of all visual disability in the United States. Age-related macular degeneration is the number one cause of disability among U.S. veterans. Dr. Richer and the research team, consisting of employees from the North Chicago VA Medical Center, have worked diligently for over 15 years on ways to treat and cure ARMD. The team has conducted three clinical trials. The first trial in 1996, demonstrated that patients taking antioxidant multivitamin capsules without lutein tended to stabilize vision loss and help people maintain their vision; however, vision was not improved. In 1999, Dr. Richer's team evaluated the effect of consumption of spinach on vision, and found significant improvement in contrast sensitivity, glare recovery and distortions of central

vision. The great breakthrough came in 2004, with the release of findings from the team's third trial. This trial demonstrated that the nutrient lutein, commonly found in spinach, may actually reverse symptoms of macular degeneration. This discovery has the potential to be life-altering for millions of Americans. This concept is now being evaluated by the National Eye Institute.

This research study has given recognition to Dr. Richer and the members of his research team as finalists among the Service to America Medals recipients. The Atlantic Media Company (publishers of [Government Executive](#), [National Journal](#) and [The Atlantic](#)), and the nonprofit, nonpartisan [Partnership for Public Service](#), co-sponsor the Service to America Medals. This prestigious national awards program recognizes the accomplishments of America's public servants. The awards pay tribute to America's dedicated federal workforce, highlighting those who have made significant contributions to our country. Dr. Richer and the research team were recognized under the category Science and Environment Medal which recognizes a federal employee(s) for a significant contribution to the nation in activities related to science and environment (including biomedicine, economics, energy, information technology, meteorology, resource conservation and space).

In honor of this accomplishment, Dr. Richer and members of his team were invited to a black-tie gala held at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium in Washington, DC on September 27, 2006.

Employee Receives Award from VFW

Denise Lear-McLain received an award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) on June 30th. The award read as follows:

"In special recognition of your nomination as the Outstanding VA Healthcare Employee of the Year. This certificate honors the exemplary service and assistance you have provided veterans and their families within your state."

It was signed by James R. Mueller, Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Denise has worked for the VA for 25 years. She currently works in Patient Administration Service as an Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD). The award was given to Denise for the outstanding customer service she provides to everyone she comes in contact with on a daily basis. When Denise worked in Primary Care if a patient did not show up for a scheduled appointment she would personally call them to make sure they were alright. She would also send letters and cards to the spouse of a deceased veteran. Denise is also known for recognizing most patients and calling them by their name.

The VFW has found out what the employees at North Chicago have known for years: Denise is a caring and loving individual who works hard at her job to assure the veterans receive the care and attention they deserve.

Tomah

Chief Nurse Receives 2006 Nurse Executive Scholarship

The American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) Institute for Patient Care Research and Education honored **Patricia (Trish) Ten Haaf**, RN, MCN, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, at the Tomah VA with the 2006 Nurse Executive Scholarship.

The scholarship was awarded for the completion of her dissertation titled "Nurse Manager Competency and the Relationship to Staff Satisfaction, Patient Satisfaction, and Patient Care Outcomes."

This award was presented on April 21, 2006 at the AONE National Convention.

VA Employees Come to the Rescue

Employees from two facilities in VISN 12 recently proved that their dedication to helping people does not end when their shifts do.

While dining out in a local restaurant one night this summer, **Fran Jiracek** from Hines Spinal Cord Injury Service noticed a person in distress at a nearby table.

Fran approached the elderly man and thought he may be choking. Hearing that the man had not begun breathing, Fran suggested to the waitress that they needed to get the man on the floor and begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). They did just that until the Emergency Medical Rescue came and took over the life-saving task. While giving information about the incident to the emergency personnel, Fran learned that she had provided life-saving services to one of Hines VA Hospital's patients!

On July 10, 2006, **Tammy Studzinski** and **Diane Renfrow**, both LPNs in Outpatient Clinics at Madison VA came upon an accident involving three vehicles, one of which was on fire. No emergency personnel were at the scene. The nurses stopped to offer assistance to other passers-by who were already rendering aid. They were directed to the only victim whom they could help. A young man had been pulled from his truck which had rolled over. There was fear of additional fire. He wanted to move but was instructed by the nurses to lay still. He was concerned that he had heard other people calling for help. The nurses instructed him to think only about himself, to lay as still as possible and to breathe evenly.

The young man asked them to cover his ears when the sirens of the fire trucks and EMS caused pain. The nurses had already asked him about other injuries--back pain, left wrist pain, ankle pain. This information was passed to the EMS upon arrival.

Images of the accident replayed in their minds through the next day. When asked what might help ease these thoughts, the nurses said, "We can't stop thinking about how the young man is doing." He was located as a patient in the neuroscience unit of University of Wisconsin hospital. With permission, they visited with both the young man and his father. The nurses were informed there was a fracture of a vertebra in his back; but the spinal cord was intact. The contact was brief, but not before thanks was offered both for the visit, and for the care provided at the side of the road.

Hines Holds OIF/OEF Outreach Fair

More than 100 National Guard and Reserve soldiers who recently returned from a tour of duty in Iraq visited the Hines VA Hospital on Saturday, September 9th.



The soldiers learned about VA services, met Hines staff members and in many cases signed up for VA healthcare on-the-spot at an OIF/OEF Outreach and Benefits Fair sponsored by the hospital.



Hines enthusiastically welcomed these dedicated servicemen and women to the hospital with festive banners, patriotic decorations and professional and upbeat employees. Information about Hines' women veteran programs, combat stress services, eligibility

guidelines, dental services, recreation therapy activities, kinesiotherapy and physical therapy programs and of course, the seamless transition program, was on the hand at the fair. The fair also offered on-the-spot enrollment stations for those interested in signing up for care.



The soldiers who attended the fair were very impressed with what Hines has to offer.

"I have driven past the Hines VA many times and I knew that I was eligible for some things, but I never really considered coming here since I'm not sick," said Staff Sgt. Glenn Thomas, who came to the Fair. "After meeting the people here today and hearing about all these services, I definitely plan to enroll."



Serviceman waiting his turn for on the spot enrollment.

Representatives from the VBA regional office, the local Oak Park Vet Center and the Department of Labor were also on hand at the fair to discuss benefits and services with the soldiers.

“It was wonderful to see so many dedicated staff donating their time, skills and efforts to this fair,” said Monica Steiner, MD, Chairperson of a special Hines OIF/OEF Outreach Committee. “The attendees really appreciated getting to know us and ask questions about our services. The fair was a resounding success.”

Massage therapists from the Illinois School of Health Careers set up massage stations throughout the fair, offering free massages to the grateful soldiers, who lined up waiting for these treatments.



Outreach to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan was identified as a top priority for the facility at least year's hospital leadership retreat. Hines has redesigned its website to include a special section for returning veterans and has sent outreach letters to more than 2,000 local servicemen and women encouraging them to sign up for VA care. According to Ivy Bryant MSW, Hines' Case Manager and point of contact for OIF/OEF veterans shown in photo below, Hines has developed a Seamless Transition Program to meet the needs of these returning soldiers and outreach is one of the main components of this program. The facility is committed to

reaching out to returning service members and ensuring that they are aware of the benefits they have earned by serving in Iraq.

“Hines is working to increase our visibility in Chicagoland area so that these veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan know that we are here and feel comfortable coming to our facility,” she said. “We worked with our National Guard and Reserve partners as well as WBBM Radio to publicize this fair and we are planning even more outreach efforts in the future.”

More than 35 soldiers took the time to sit down with Patient Administration representatives at the fair and enroll for VA care.

Several soldiers were offered immediate appointments at the facility and a number of others took time at the fair to talk with Hines mental health professionals about some of the issues and problems they have faced while readjusting to civilian life.



Dianne Shearod, Hines Women Veterans program manager, greeted soldiers at the fair.

“Working at this fair was extremely rewarding,” Steiner said. “It was a pleasure to see the gratitude and in some cases, the relief, on their young faces as we helped link them up with our staff and our services.”

Two VISN 12 Facilities Get Vans

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Stars & Stripes Chapter 83 donated a new 7 passenger Ford E-350 Super Duty XL Club Wagon to the North Chicago Veterans Affairs Medical Center to help transport veterans who live in the local communities to and from their medical appointments. They raised the entire \$18,807.20 by selling forget-me-nots flowers one by one for a dollar each outside local stores in all kinds of weather. This is the third van that Chapter 83 has donated.



Pictured are John Kligris and Frank Richards of the DAV presenting the van to Patrick Sullivan, Director

The Tomah VA also received two new vans this summer from the DAV to support their transportation program.

The new 12-passenger van will remain in Tomah and will take veterans to the VA Hospital in Madison. This van will make the trip five days a week.



Cindy Gluch, DAV Transportation Coordinator, right, presents the keys to two new vans to Stan Johnson, Medical Center Director (center) and Chuck Cleveland, VA Transportation (left).

The new seven passenger van will be used by volunteers in the Stevens Point area. This van will make trips to the Tomah VA and the Madison VAH, depending on where veterans have appointments. This van also makes daily trips.

Farewell to Director



Hines director Jack G. Hetrick will be leaving the facility and VISN 12 early next month to take over as the Network Director of VISN 10 in Cincinnati. Mr. Hetrick, who was appointed as the medical center director of Hines in

2002, has been the cornerstone of the many accomplishments achieved at Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital in the past several years.

“I have been very proud to serve as the Director at Hines for the past four years,” Hetrick said. “During my tenure we have experienced great changes that have modernized our campus and its facilities and I am proud of the many accomplishments of the staff related to overall organizational performance.”

Under Hetrick’s leadership, Hines successfully completed construction of new Blind Rehabilitation and Spinal Cord Injury Centers on the campus that are providing state-of-the-art facilities for these special emphasis programs. Simultaneously, Hetrick ensured effective working relationships were developed with VA Central Office, veteran service organizations, and the surrounding communities in order to integrate their input into the process. He also provided the leadership that led to a nearly seamless activation of both buildings during the period of May and June, 2005.

Also under his leadership, Hines collaborated with the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago in establishing an enhanced use faith-based (Bldg. 14-

transitional living) center on the Hines campus. Recently, Catholic Charities also renovated and established a low income senior living facility in Bldg. 53. This achievement greatly enhances services to veterans while simultaneously creating a positive relationship with the community.

Hetrick's support of these initiatives has ensured their success and has gained the VHA a high level of positive attention at the Secretary level. Hines was named the winner of the GSA Achievement Award for Real Property Innovation earlier this year. This national award recognizes our faith-based enhanced use initiatives with the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago to transform under-utilized and vacant buildings into renovated residences to serve veterans.

Hetrick was the Deputy Network Director of VISN 12 for several years before coming to Hines and has been very active in numerous VISN initiatives and improvements over the past several years.

"Working in both VISN 12 and at Hines has been a very challenging and rewarding experience," Hetrick said. "I have always been impressed by the quality of employees in the Chicago area and their commitment to serving the veterans."

While at Hines, Hetrick was a highly visible presence in the VHA and Chicago communities. He was named the 2006 VHA Preceptor of the Year, the Chairman of the Chicago Federal Executive Board, Chairman of the Chicago Combined Federal Campaign, achieved fellowship status in the American College of Healthcare Executives, testified at U.S. Senate Field Hearings in downtown Chicago, served the Acting Director of the Jesse Brown VAMC for a short period of time and was the Chairman of the VISN 12 Capital Management Council and the VISN 12 Position Management Committee.

"Due to Mr. Hetrick's leadership and dedication, Hines pursued and accomplished many initiatives that have enhanced organizational effectiveness, productivity and compliance with accreditation standards. Under his leadership, Hines has accomplished much, while elevating the level of teamwork and camaraderie in the

organization," said Jeff Gering, Hines Associate Director. "I think one of the most outstanding attributes that Jack has demonstrated is an unquenchable desire to help

others including our veterans, staff, volunteers and community stakeholders. He will be sorely missed."

Looking Back at Anchorage

By Tim Deacy

Tim Deacy spent seven days at 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Anchorage, Alaska as a volunteer. These are his reflections. If you are interested in volunteering for the 2007 Milwaukee Games, call 414 389-3999 and leave your name and contact number. Volunteer recruitment is underway for the June 19-23 Milwaukee competition.

I have been involved with service organizations for many years and have volunteered for many activities – all have been very rewarding personally. As we approach the start of 27th Veteran Wheelchair games here in Milwaukee, I reflect back two years ago when I was asked to be involved with this great event. Prior to getting involved, I worked in the VA for 18 years was not familiar with the games. I am now proud to be one of many to get the word out.

Since being involved with the preparation for the Milwaukee games, I had the privilege of attending the games in Minneapolis and Anchorage to learn and be a volunteer. Volunteering at the Veterans Wheelchair Games has been extremely rewarding to me. These veteran athletes strive and push through challenges that seem overwhelming at the time. Watching them achieve success instilled in me the value that goals can be achieved and perseverance is needed to move forward.

Volunteering has given me a chance to make a connection with these athletes and personalizes these events as I watch them compete.



Tim Deacy assists an athlete as he uses a bus ramp in Anchorage. Transportation and accessibility are a major logistical focus of the Games. School buses were used to transport athletes to several different venues. Mr. Deacy says he learned much from the Anchorage experience. Today, as executive assistant to the associate directors in Milwaukee, he has another duty as he prepares for the 2007 Games.

In Anchorage, I watched a young veteran who lost both legs and an arm in Iraq compete in the slalom for the first time. It was amazing how he pushed himself through the obstacles. Several times he was stopped by these barriers, and he had to reposition himself and then drive forward. His time through the course was not very good, but he finished in a hail of cheers.

What a life lesson these veterans show us. When obstacles block a path to our goals, reposition and move forward. A volunteer offers time and service freely. That is true in the monetary sense; however, the personal rewards are grand.

Brewers on Deck for 2007 Wheelchair Games

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) have announced that the Milwaukee Brewers Baseball Club will be a major corporate underwriter for the 27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games, taking place in Milwaukee next summer. "The 2007 National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be a great event for the City of Milwaukee

and our veterans," said Rick Schlesinger, Brewers Executive Vice President for Business Operations. "The VA medical center and staff have long been terrific neighbors, and we have great appreciation for their service to veterans."

Phil Rosenberg, Wisconsin PVA chapter president said, "WPVA is highly gratified by the wonderful donation and enthusiastic support shown by the Milwaukee Brewers. It is our understanding that the Brewers are the first major sports franchise to provide significant support to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games." VA medical center director Glen W. Grippen was equally impressed: "Miller Park is adjacent to our medical center, and the Brewers have once again demonstrated what Milwaukee neighbors do — support each other. We are grateful."

The Games will be held in Milwaukee June 19-23, 2007, and are the largest annual wheelchair athletic event in the world, attracting teams from nearly all 50 states as well as Puerto Rico and Great Britain. The 16 sports venues will be held throughout the metropolitan area, with the Games headquartered at the Midwest Convention Center.

During the upcoming year, the Brewers will be working with Games organizers from the VA medical center and the Wisconsin Chapter of PVA, to raise awareness of the upcoming Games and encourage the community to embrace this opportunity to salute America's veterans.

The 2006 National Veteran Wheelchair Games were held in Anchorage, Alaska. More than 500 athletes attended including 17 wheelchair athletes from Wisconsin who won 54 medals at the week-long competition.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Local hosts this year are the Milwaukee VA Medical Center and the Wisconsin PVA Chapter.



GreatGames on a GreatLake



Arron Powless
Air Force Veteran
Shawano, WI



Alan Lewis
Army Veteran
Milwaukee, WI
Veteran of Operation Iraqi
Freedom



Russell Worth
Navy Veteran
Brown Deer, WI
Veteran of WWII

The first time the National Veterans Wheelchair Games were held in Milwaukee was 25 years ago in 1982. The staffs of the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America are pleased to affirm our dedication to the therapeutic value of the Games once again.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are the world's largest annual wheelchair competition!

For questions about the 27th NVWG:

Brian Walker, Local Coordinator
27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games
brian.walker@va.gov
(414) 389-4009

**27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games
Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

June 19-23, 2007

www.wheelchairgames.org

Department of Veterans Affairs
Network Director (10N12)
PO Box 5000, Building 18
Hines, IL 60141-5000



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address
Street Number and Name
City, State 98765-4321

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Contributors for this issue:

Linda Schmidt, Webmaster; Maureen Dyman, Hines VA Hospital; MaryAnne Gibler, Iron Mountain VA Medical Center; Ray Leber, Jesse Brown VA Medical Center; Scott Krueger, Madison VA Hospital; John Zewiske, Milwaukee VA Medical Center; Douglas Shouse, North Chicago VA Medical Center; Laura Bishop, Tomah VA Medical Center; Kevin Rys VISN 12 Office