



A Presidential Visit



President Barack Obama visited the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital Fisher House on Memorial Day, Monday, May 31st. The President met with the Veterans and families staying in the hospital's Fisher House, which is a home away from home for the families of Veterans receiving treatment at the Hines VA Hospital.

President Obama thanked the Veterans and their families for the sacrifices they made in their service to our nation. "It was truly a phenomenal event," said Sharon Helman, Hines Director. "The President was so gracious and very sincere in his appreciation for our Veterans and their families. It was an honor to be a part of such a heartwarming and special visit."

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The White House requested that the President's time at Hines be private and low-key so that he could see the hospital's new Fisher House and spend time with some of the Veterans and their families who are staying there. He joined the Hines staff and Fisher House residents for a Memorial Day barbecue that was taking place at the House all afternoon. Although, the visit was closed to the public and the media, more than 1,000 news stories around the country mentioned his visit to the Hines VA Fisher House. After getting rained out during his Memorial Day speech at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, the President traveled directly to Hines in his official motorcade.

In addition to the family members and Veterans staying at the Hines Fisher House, those who were honored to be present for the visit included members of the Fisher family and Fisher House Foundation; Hines Director Sharon Helman, Fisher House Manager, Holly Wright; three Hines Housekeeping staff, Valerie Brown, Steve Capiz and Ora Jackson; and two volunteers who were there preparing a Memorial Day barbecue for the residents.

During the visit, President Obama thanked Hines VA Hospital staff for the “amazing work they do in caring for our country’s heroes.” He said that on Memorial Day we pause to recognize those Veterans who are no longer with us, but we should also remember to thank the Veterans who are still with us. He also expressed his appreciation to Hines staff for “giving back to those who have given us our freedom.” Before departing the Fisher House, the President took a minute to sign the Hines Fisher House Guest Book.

“It was such an honor for me to meet and shake hands with the President of the United States,” said Ora Jackson, Hines Fisher House housekeeper. “Hearing him thank us for serving the Veterans here was very moving. Days later, I am still overwhelmed at the whole thing. It was a moment that I won’t ever forget.”



Hines VA Fisher House housekeepers from left Ora Jackson, Valerie Brown and Steven Capiz were thrilled to pose with the President.

Since the President’s visit, Hines has been buzzing with excitement and enthusiasm. “Events like this remind us of the importance of what we do here at Hines,” said Director Helman. “It tells us that the President values our work so much that he came to

see it and hear about it directly from our Veterans and their families. What a great way to honor our incredible employees for the work they do every day.”

This was the first Presidential visit to the Hines campus, as well as President Obama’s first visit to any of the Fisher Houses during this Presidency.

Network News

Hines

Official Opening of the Hines VA Fisher House



Hines kicked off Memorial Day weekend 2010 with a very special ceremony marking the official opening of the Hines VA Fisher House. Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, Senator Richard Durbin, Lieutenant General David H. Huntoon Jr, Director of the Army Staff, Tammy Duckworth, VA’s Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, and Mr. Kenneth Fisher, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Fisher House Foundation, joined a crowd of almost 800 who witnessed the official dedication of the Fisher House to the Hines VA. Holly Wright, Fisher House Manager, accepted a ceremonial key to the house from Dave Coker, President of the Fisher House Foundation.

“It is a proud day for the state of Illinois,” said Governor Quinn. “I want you all to know that there are some very special people at the Hines VA Hospital who treat the heroes from our state who put their lives on the line for our country. Opening this Fisher House in Illinois is a dream in which I feel lucky to play just a small part.”

There was standing room only at the dedication ceremony, which was held in a large tent in a field directly across from the Fisher House. A group of 40 motorcyclists from the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association (CVMA) attended the event and stuck around after the ceremony to get autographs from Tammy Duckworth, who received a standing ovation from the crowd following her remarks at the ceremony.

“Ms. Duckworth is a true American hero,” said Ryan Hennessey, a member of the CVMA. “As Veterans, we are so thankful that Hines will have a Fisher House for the families of people like her. They deserve nothing but the best.”

Sharon Helman, Hines Director agreed. “Veterans and service members seeking care at Hines VA Hospital often travel as far as 200 miles to take advantage of the many specialty services we proudly provide. These Veterans are often accompanied by their husbands, wives, children or parents. Offering them the beautiful accommodations in our Fisher House is nothing less than they deserve.”

More than 75 families have already been served by the Hines Fisher House, which has 20 bedrooms, a fully stocked kitchen and several common living room and dining room areas for families to gather and offer each other support and friendship while their loved ones are hospitalized at Hines.

“I was overwhelmed by the generosity and compassion that I felt every day that I stayed in the Fisher House,” said Ellie Whiteman, the daughter of a World War II POW Veteran and former resident of the Hines Fisher House. “It really brought home to me how much our country appreciates the sacrifices of our military men and women.”

Hundreds of Veterans, Veterans service and community supporters of the Hines Fisher House attended the dedication ceremony. Many of these groups, including Operation Support our Troop, IL (OSOT-IL), have pledged their ongoing financial support to the Hines Fisher House in the future.

“We plan to come out and cook dinner for the residents of the house regularly and support them in any way we can,” said Deb Rickert, President of OSOT-IL. We consider it a true honor to support them in any way that we can.”

Director Travels to Kankakee

A new outreach initiative, specifically aimed at educating eligible Veterans in the more rural areas about their benefits and encouraging them to sign up for VA healthcare, is underway at Hines. Hines Director Sharon Helman kicked off the new initiative by traveling to Kankakee, Illinois in April to meet with a group of 100 Veterans and Veterans service organizations. The meeting was covered extensively by media in the Kankakee area and resulted in a number of Veterans signing up for VA healthcare.

“Raising the VA’s profile in the rural areas can only help us in terms of encouraging Veterans to sign up for our services,” Helman said. “There are so many Veterans out there who, for whatever reason, do not take advantage of our services. We are going to reach out to those Veterans and bring them in.”

To further this effort, Hines is planning to unroll a new transportation network between the main campus and the hospital’s six community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs). Drivers, with handicapped accessible vans, will be stationed at each CBOC and will make a trip to and from Hines VAH each day. Hines will be proud to offer our Veterans the use of this transportation network by the end of the calendar year.

The staff in Hines CBOCs has taken a very active role in outreach to the Veterans in rural areas. Lynnette McLaughlin, the Manteno CBOC Charge Nurse, developed a detailed outreach plan and she and Manteno clinic staff have already participated in a number of community events, including a Gun Show, and a “Pause for Patriotism” parade on Armed Forces Day.

“Veteran response to us being out on the community has been great,” McLaughlin said. “The Veterans were very appreciative of the information we provided them and many said they didn’t realize all the benefits that were available to them.



Manteno CBOC staff (from left) Lynnette McLaughlin, Marie Hergenroeder and Dana VanVoorst participated in the 17th annual Pause for Patriotism/Armed Forces Day event out near Manteno, Illinois. They marched in a parade and set up an outreach table to educate Veterans about their benefits and encourage them to sign up for VA care.

"The Manteno team designed and distributed information folders to Veterans about the many aspects of Hines VA healthcare available to them.

The Manteno staff involved in the outreach, were very proud to participate in these events and look forward to doing more of them in the future. "How wonderful that the simple gift of our time could have such a great impact on the men and women that are so deserving of our services," McLaughlin said. "We are very blessed to work in such a fantastic community."

Ribbon Cut for New Women's Health Center

Women Veterans coming to the Hines VA Hospital will now receive their care in a brand new Women's Health Center. Sharon Helman, Hospital Director and Illinois Congresswoman Judy Biggert cut the ribbon to officially open the new Center on June 7th. The new Women's Health Center is located in a completely renovated section on the 12th floor of the Hospital's Main Bed Tower, Building 200.

"Our new Hines Women's Health Center is three times the physical size of the hospital's previous Women's Clinic space," said Sharon Helman, Hospital Director. "The new Center is designed to accommodate our growing female Veteran patient population in a modern and private environment that, as our nation's heroes, they most definitely deserve."

The new Women's Clinic includes:

- Enhanced patient privacy accommodations
- Spacious waiting area
- Wheelchair accessibility throughout clinic
- Adjoining restrooms for each patient exam room
- More patient exam rooms
- Patient education stations (including conference room for groups)
- Lactation room and changing tables for mothers
- Children's corner

Women Veterans represent a rapidly growing population in VA. Currently, women make up 15% of the Armed Forces and women Veterans currently comprise 1 of every 16 VA enrollees. This is projected to increase to 1 in 7 enrollees in the future. In Fiscal Year 2009, Hines treated approximately 2,500 women Veterans. Many of the women Veterans treated at Hines are Veterans getting off active duty after serving in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"We are committed to providing our Veterans with exemplary care that is both comprehensive and convenient," said Dr. Sudha Bhoopalam, Medical Director of the Women's Health Center. "Our staff consists of an interdisciplinary team dedicated to addressing women-specific health care needs."



Maureen Dyman, Public Affairs Officer, Congresswoman Judy Biggert, Diane Shearod, Women's Program Manager, Dr. Sudha Bhoopalam, Medical Director of the Hines Women's Health Center, and Sharon Helman, Director, cut the ribbon to open the new Hines Women's Health Center.

Iron Mountain

60 Years Young

On March 5, 1950, the first Veteran was admitted to the Iron Mountain Veterans Affairs Hospital for care. In celebration of the Oscar G. Johnson Veteran Affairs Medical Center's 60th year, the 60th Anniversary Committee has been formed to honor this event throughout 2010.

The kick off celebration was a golf outing held on August 8, 2009, at the Spread Eagle Club. There were 35 golfers and golfing included 9 rounds of golf along with a putting contest. There was a potluck brunch, donuts and coffee along with prizes awarded. Each employee in attendance had their name entered into the grand prize drawing to be held at the dinner/dance in September 2010.

A logo contest was held in October 2009 where employees and volunteers were encouraged to submit a logo to be used on merchandise and other uses for the 2010 celebration. There were 26 logo entries to choose from. Merchandise with the winning logo is now for sale and on display in the Canteen that includes long and short sleeve t-shirts, aprons, tote bags, lanyards, and hats. T-shirts are being worn by employees on Fridays if they choose to purchase them.

A bowling outing was held on October 16, 2009 at the Recreation Lanes in Iron Mountain. It included 2 games of bowling, shoes and pizza. There were 34 bowlers who participated in 9-pin tap as well as a strike/spare contest.

The 2009 VA Employee/Volunteer Christmas party was hosted by the Anniversary Committee. It was held at the Elks Lodge on December 11, 2009. There were 144 in attendance with much food, and games as well as music and dancing.

A basket drawing is being held each month from February through September 2010 and items in the basket are being provided by different services in the hospital.

A diamond search at the VA and CBOC's was held on March 5, 2010. Diamonds were hidden by Anniversary Committee members throughout the building

and for each diamond found and turned in, an entry into the grand prize drawing was given.

Another bowling event was held on March 26, 2010, at the Recreation Lanes in Iron Mountain and included 2 games of bowling and shoes. There were 32 bowlers who participated in 9-pin tap as well as a strike/spare contest.

A Rummage Sale was held on May 1st in Quinnesec. The committee collected donations from employees the week of April 26-30 to be sold. Items donated were all sorts of clothing, dishes, housewares, pictures, lamps, tools, decorations, toys, books, and pet items.

Future events include the following:

- A family picnic is being planned for August 18, 2010
- September 17, 2010 there will be an open house with tours of the facility and an ice-cream social being sponsored by the Norway Credit Union, and hosted by the Anniversary Committee.
- The Diamond Jubilee Dinner/Dance celebration will be held at the Encore Ballroom in Florence, Wisconsin on September 18, 2010.

Employees Lose Big During National Nutrition Month

Ninety-five Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center employees lost big and improved their health this spring. In honor of National Nutrition Month[®], the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center Registered Dietitians offered the 2nd Annual Biggest Loser Competition. Individuals and teams competed to become the Biggest Loser, Biggest Mover, and Wellness Champion.

The point-based wellness challenge awarded *HealthPoints* for daily healthy choices such as exercise, fruit and vegetable intake, stress management, adequate sleep, weight loss and more. New this year was a point opportunity for walking 15 minutes during the workday. A daily *Nutrition Jeopardy* e-mail question provided a spirited point opportunity. Prizes were awarded in the following categories; Biggest Loser: the participant and team with the highest percent weight loss; Biggest Mover: the participant and team with the most activity minutes; and Wellness Champion participant with the most *HealthPoints*.



2010 Co-Biggest Losers Aimee Roberts/Patrick Millan

Aimee Roberts joined last year's winner Patrick Millan as the 2010 Co-Biggest Losers. Aimee and Pat both lost 8% of their body weight. In addition to Co-Biggest Loser, Patrick was also crowned Biggest Mover and Wellness Champion with an average of 120 minutes of daily activity and 606 *HealthPoints*. Their individual success helped to bring their team to the top as well.

The 4-East Calorie Kickers team of Aimee Roberts, Patrick Millan, Debra Millan, Barbara Hehn, Louise Faymonville, Sue Balkum, Tracy DeBidart, and Helga Anderson won the team prize for Biggest Loser and Biggest Mover. Together, they lost an amazing 79.9 pounds; an average weight loss of 5%. They also logged 603 activity points; an average of nearly 90 minutes per day and they have not stopped. Team members have continued their healthy habits by walking a fast 2 miles on their daily lunch break.



4-East Calorie Kickers: Helga Anderson, Tracy DeBidart, Aimee Roberts, Patrick Millan, and Debra Millan. Not pictured Barbara Hehn, Louise Faymonville, and Sue Balkum.

The wellness challenge was a success with 95 participants and 12 teams achieving a total of 217.3 pounds lost; an average loss of 2.3%.

Re-Creation

Re-Creation's **"LOVE!"** show made an appearance at the Oscar G. Johnson Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Iron Mountain on Wednesday, June 2, 2010 under the Pavilion.

The group of performers represented Re-Creation USA, Inc., which provides a national program of live entertainment for America's hospitalized Veterans in VA medical centers and State Veterans Homes. Re-Creation performed in front of approximately 100 hospitalized Veterans, guests, staff and the community. The performance was filled with dancing and singing and entertained all those attending the event. It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day and the entertainment lightened the spirit of the crowd and added a melancholic ambience to the surroundings. The performance was enjoyed by all and they look forward to their next visit.

Help Hospitalized Veterans has recently joined in a primary way to help present Re-Creation in the VA Health Care System. The BVL Fund, Re-Creation's longest-running sponsor and a Bowlers of America charity for hospitalized Veterans, also helps to underwrite tour costs. The Elks National Veterans Service Commission, in conjunction with local BPOE lodges, house Re-Creation touring groups' nation-wide. The Veterans Fund provides tour cost assistance and support in placing Re-Creation media materials in all the Veterans Affairs medical centers and State Veterans Homes. And the entire tour is produced in co-operation with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Re-Creation **"LOVE!"** spotlights great songs and great stars as America's young ambassadors to hospitalized Veterans focus on this nation's best loved music. Dynamic vocal renditions are enlivened by intricate, disciplined dance and choreography as the stage...and the entire room...virtually erupt with Re-Creation excitement.

Re-Creation was founded in 1976 and performs in all 50 states. Credits include appearances at some of the nation's most prestigious fairs and festivals, at local, regional, state and national corporation banquets and conventions, and at major resort areas. Civic clubs, fraternal groups, schools, and

public and private organizations now keep Re-Creation booked for more than 300 concerts each year.

Re-Creation travels with comprehensive sound equipment and staging materials. Each Re-Creation performance is a full variety production designed to provide unique and satisfying musical entertainment.

Red Cross Grant



(Left to Right): Front Row: Kathleen Truax, OEF/OIF Program Manager; Susan M. Kube, Occupational Therapist; Back Row: William J. Caron, PT, MHA, Medical Center Associate Director; Dawn Comer, Iron Mountain Red Cross Chapter Representative; Paul Fruit, Oshkosh Red Cross Chapter Representative; and Gregory Weiss, Chief, Voluntary Service.

In the summer of 2009, the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center submitted a proposal for a Red Cross grant which if selected would allow them to get assistance workbooks for both returning and active duty troops and would also purchase equipment for the Recreational Therapy department. They were notified in December that they would be recipients of a grant worth approximately \$12,000. The items for returning OEF/OIF Veterans and their families included books on coping with traumatic brain injury (TBI), workbooks for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), TBI, memory building, and stress and relaxation, and workbooks for active duty service members on PTSD and stress. The items for Recreational Therapy included two 27" computer monitors and two large print computer keyboards for visually impaired Veterans, a specially designed adaptive joy stick to use in place of a computer mouse, wheelchair mounted tripods for photography, and a table-mounted arm stabilizer for Veterans with ataxia.

Paul Fruit of the Oshkosh Red Cross chapter and Dawn Comer of the Iron Mountain Red Cross chapter presented these items to the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center several weeks ago.

Public Service Recognition Week

Eight employees of the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain, Michigan were presented with 2010 Unsung Hero/Heroine awards during Public Service Recognition Week. The awards were presented by Michael J. Murphy, Medical Center Director, after the employees had been nominated by their peers for unselfishly giving exceptional energy and effort in serving the public and show a deep sense of character and commitment to the highest ideals of government service.



Pictured from left: Gene Leslie, Engineering Service; Erin Mundy, Imaging Service; Susan Kerr, Mental Health Service; Barbara Robinson, Nursing and Patient Care Service; Margaret Baciak, Mental Health Service; Elaine Burke, Nursing and Patient Care Service, and Lisa Patterson, Nursing and Patient Care Service.



Pictured from left: Barb Kocha, Human Resource and Management Service, and Michael J. Murphy, Medical Center Director

Jesse Brown

New Approach to Cardiac Cath



A new method of inserting a catheter into a patient's wrist instead of the groin during cardiac catheterizations is

being used at Jesse Brown (JBVAMC) VA Medical Center and presented in workshops to physicians and other clinicians nationwide.

Known as the TransRadial approach to catheterization, this method is less invasive, results in fewer complications and provides for a quicker recovery for patients.

Presently, only about 5 percent of cardiac catheterizations performed in this country use the TransRadial approach, but there has been major interest by many clinicians to attend the training program established by JBVAMC in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Medicine. Due to its popularity, a closed circuit camera broadcasts the procedure into a large conference room for attendees to watch.

JBVAMC uses this new approach in about 60 percent of its cardiac catheterization procedures, including IV ultrasounds, angioplasties and stents. Patients who had previously received coronary bypass grafts or dialysis are not good candidates for the TransRadial approach. All patients are evaluated to determine their arterial flow prior to the procedure.

Bernadette Speiser, nurse manager for the Cardiology Department at the medical center, says patients are pleased by this new approach.

"Patients are sitting up as soon as the procedure is finished. We give them something to eat or drink while we watch them for a couple hours and then

they are on their way home," Speiser said. "We always follow up the next day with a phone call and we have never had a patient show any complications after receiving the procedure this way."

Beside patient comfort, TransRadial angiograms provide greater safety, compared to femoral (groin) artery angiograms. Radial artery angiograms substantially decrease the risk of bleeding, especially for patients who are obese or require anticoagulation therapy. In addition, radial artery bleeds are easier to see and more readily controlled than bleeding from the femoral artery.

Given the option, patients almost always choose the TransRadial approach.

Crown Point CBOC Breaks Ground for Expanded Facility

April 30th was Groundbreaking Day at JBVAMC's Crown Point Clinic as preparations began to build a 70,000 square foot replacement facility for the original Adam Benjamin, Jr. VA Outpatient Clinic that opened in 1988.

The ceremony included remarks by Congressman Pete Visclosky, Colonel Ross Waltemath, Director of Civil Military Operations for the Indiana National Guard, and Dr. Jeffrey Murawsky, Network Director for the VA Great Lakes Health Care System. Michael Puente, a reporter with Chicago Public Radio's satellite office in Chesterton, IN, served as Master of Ceremonies.

Jill Carley, clinic director, said the new building would be necessary to serve the continually expanding number of Veterans who have enrolled for services at the Crown Point VA Clinic. Over 13,000 Veterans receive their health care there.

"We have outgrown our present facility and we continue to attract new Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan," said Carley. "The new clinic will be about 75 percent larger than our current building and assure we can meet the future needs of our Veterans residing in northwest Indiana."

Dr. Murawsky lauded the clinic and its employees for the high quality of care it provides and for reaching out to Veterans within its community. "This clinic has increased the number of Veterans it serves by 65 percent over the past 10 years. That is phenomenal growth."

Although the Crown Point Clinic already provides more comprehensive services than typically seen at VA freestanding clinics, the new building will allow for the expansion of primary care, mental health, rehabilitation, dental, pharmacy, laboratory, optical, audiology and specialty services including podiatry. It will also provide space for a new Women's Health Care suite with five dedicated examination rooms and a segregated waiting area.



Participants in the Crown Point VA Clinic's groundbreaking ceremony included (from left) Michelle Blakely, Medical Center Associate Director; Brice Johnson, VA Project Engineer; Jill Carley, Clinic Director; Dr. Rustom Khouri, President of Carnegie Management & Development Corp; Colonel Ross Waltemath, Director of Civil Military Operations for the Indiana National Guard; James S. Jones, former Medical Center Director; and Dr. Jeffrey Murawsky, Network Director for VISN 12

The new clinic will be constructed adjacent to the current facility and is expected to be completed in the summer of 2011.

Madison

Infusion Clinic Grand Opening

A new state-of-the-art Infusion Clinic has opened at the Madison VAH. The clinic has gone from 800 sq. ft. of space with nine treatment chairs to 3000+ sq. ft. with 11 treatment chairs, an isolation bed with ante room, patient nutrition center, pharmacy, and a nurse's station.

The Infusion Clinic staff treats patients with illnesses ranging from cancers to infectious diseases, Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, and a variety of other problems. They give chemotherapy, biotherapy, blood products, antibiotics, hydration,

and most other outpatient IV infusions. They also access and draw labs from peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) lines and Infusaports for the outpatient clinics.



Ribbon cutting at the Infusion Clinic grand opening

1st Annual Talent Show



The 1st Annual Madison VAH Talent Show, hosted by the Workforce Enhancement Committee, was a major success.

A total of 11 acts provided a variety of musical performances and comedy skits. Veteran Bob Thompson was the first place winner for his stirring rendition of "On That Rocking Chair." Nurses Stacy Thomas and Katie Antonson won second and third place respectively for their musical performances.

Earth Day Art Contest

In celebration of Earth Day, the Madison VAH Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) Committee sponsored an art contest. All the entries were made of recycled materials and were very creative. The projects help bring awareness to staff, patients and visitors about recycling and protecting natural resources.



Everyone attending the art contest display was able to cast a vote for their favorite entry. The first place winner, "Poppies" by employee Pam Dunkel, was made of soda cans and bottles, a plastic milk jug and wire.

Former POW Recognition Day

Each year, April 9th is set aside to honor the commitment and sacrifices made by this Nation's Prisoners of War (POW). April 9th commemorates the fall of Bataan and Corregidor during World War II, the largest capitulation of American forces in history. Thousands of these prisoners died in captivity due to the infamous Bataan Death March and other inhumane treatment at the hands of their captors.

Madison VAH holds an annual recognition event every year. The event includes guest speakers, introduction of all the former POW's in attendance, acknowledgement of their families, musical selections, and refreshments.



Veterans Affairs and his presentation of the Governor's Proclamation as well as music by the Sauk Prairie High School Singers. This year's guest speakers were Clyde Nachtigal (pictured above) of Baraboo, WI, and Grant McMillan of Elkhorn, WI.

This year's event was held on Friday, April 9th, in the hospital's Auditorium. The program included remarks by Jose Leon, Executive Assistant, Wisconsin Department of

Nachtigal was drafted into the U.S. Army after high school. After landing on Omaha Beach, he was later captured during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. He was held as a POW in Germany for five months.

McMillan enlisted in the U.S. Army at age 18. During the Korean War he was captured at the Chosin Reservoir and was held as a POW for 32 months.

Musical Interlude Contests



Graduate students from the University of Wisconsin - School of Music - Piano Outreach Program, performed for the Veterans, visitors and staff in a lunchtime concert in April at the Madison VAH. A series of selections of Spanish-influenced music for the classical guitar and classical music on the

violin were performed with piano accompaniment.

The concert was held in the Auditorium with the doors open to draw in passersby. The concert allowed people to stop in as their schedule permitted. The idea for this type of event started with the Patient Centered Care Committee with a goal of the performances creating a more healthful and healing environment.

National Nutrition Month Celebration

Nutrition and Food Services (N&FS) at Madison VAH sponsored an event in celebration of National Nutrition Month. Homemade vegetable soup, pork, and yucca root were sampled by those that attended. N&FS staff provided presentations on ways to incorporate root vegetables and less commonly used grains into diets, and tips for eating healthier by returning to more traditional eating patterns.



The “Guess the Veg” challenge was an additional feature as well as displays celebrating traditional food from Asian, Latino and Mediterranean diets.

Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day

The Federal Women’s Program (FWP) sponsored Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day at the Madison VAH in April. Incorporated into this day-long event were service tours and interactive presentations highlighting numerous employment specialties and opportunities.



Event participants wait patiently in a hallway during the state-wide tornado drill.

Students selected from a variety of offered tours including: Radiology, SICU, CCU, Call Center, Laboratory, Nutrition & Food Services, Interior Design, and Engineering. In addition to the tours, presentations were provided to all the students on Veterans, hand hygiene, community relations, nutrition and occupational therapy. The community relations presentation included an activity in which the children wrote a thank you letter or get well note to a Veteran. These notes were then distributed to the patients by the hospital volunteers. The occupational therapy

presentation included a demonstration of the Nintendo Wii which is used in patient rehabilitation. Lunch was provided by the VA Employees Association and FWP.

This event provided a wonderful opportunity for the students to learn about a variety of occupations, learn a little more about Veterans, and that a hospital practices for emergencies, just like they do in school.

Milwaukee

Hopping Activity at the East Entrance

There’s a hopping blur of activity at the east entrance of the Zablocki VA Medical Center. A man needs his keys – fast – because he has a medication bottle attached to the ring. Someone else is in wheelchair, but didn’t get valet parking, but Rob Scheve smiles and pushes him all the way to his car in lot five, anyway, before running back and picking up where he left off a few minutes earlier.

As cars line up – and they usually do – Scheve is back and a little out of breath, but directing more valets to strategic positions at the east entrance, while others look like they’re filming a commercial for “Nike” as they run back and forth.

“It used to be Tuesdays and Thursdays were our busiest, but now Mondays are starting to pick up,” Sveve said. “It can happen at any time. We might get cars backed up to National Avenue, but we’re always running to clear it out. I’m out there running, too. I won’t do anything I don’t ask anyone else to do. We don’t want anyone waiting more than five minutes, if we can help it.”

Advantage Valet offers curbside service for any patients, regardless of condition, from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Cars pull up and get a ticket while a valet takes the car to Lot No. 3. When they’re done with their appointment, the goal is to get them back in their car as soon as possible.

“We have 120 spaces in that lot, and maybe 40 to 50 in the overflow, and on a typical busy day, they are all filled, and we have to double park,” said Scheve, the general manager of the Zablocki operation.

Anyone can park a car, but Scheve said the job requires a lot more. “We know we are the first and the last people the patients see, so we greet as many of them as possible, and we make sure they get the service and respect they deserve.”

That hasn’t gone unnoticed by those who use the service, and those who happen to be watching from above. “We on the 7th floor GU clinic have a bird’s-eye view of the activities in the parking lot and on numerous occasions have seen the valet employees go above and beyond their normal duties,” an anonymous person recently wrote on the medical director’s blog.

“Just this morning, one of the valets held up a frail gentleman until his wife could get him a wheelchair. During the last snowstorm, we could see them wiping off windows without benefit of a scraper. They open doors, get wheelchairs, physically assist patients and the list goes on. What a great service this is for our vets.”

Their work is also recognized by the people who use the service. Scheve said it’s strict policy not to accept tips. While most customers already know that, they come prepared with homemade cookies, doughnuts and other treats. “That’s kind of nice,” Scheve smiled. “And believe me, the way we run, we work it all off.”

Strategic Asset Management Project

Tick, tock, tick ...

The numbers are counting down in red, by the second, inside the hospital canteen, and in building 6 where a large chunk of the work is being done to make it happen.

March 29, 2011, they’ll make it so.

Tick, tock, tick...

That’s when the Zablocki VA Medical Center is scheduled to go live with its Strategic Asset Management project, which is part of FLITE – the Financial and Logistics Integrated Technology Enterprise.

While it might seem like an overwhelming amount of jargon to some, the point is to make everything from changing a light bulb to ordering a prosthetic limb or tracking biomedical projects into one streamlined, Windows-based program that is easy to use.

Katie Niederjohn and Amy Tyger are overseeing all facets of the implementation at Milwaukee, which is the test pilot. From here, it is expected to go to the next level of testing at six other medical centers before it’s implemented VA-wide.

Tick, tock, tick ... The countdown doesn’t bother Neiderjohn or Tyger.

On the contrary, both said they are focused on getting everything together and are looking forward to the actual launch.

“A lot of people are hearing a lot about SAM but don’t realize how it will integrate so many different programs,” Tyger said. “We are being very careful here, and making sure everything is done right, so when we go live, everything works the way it is supposed to.”

Right now that means combining numerous different programs and systems that don’t always link up with one another.

“When it’s done, it will be an easier interface,” Neiderjohn said. “People will have a program that is easy to use.”

Eventually FLITE, which encompasses the SAM project, will integrate financial and logistical data across all VA offices. It will also provide management with timely and accurate information at the stroke of a key.

When all is complete, SAM will affect as many as 500 employees at Zablocki who use it on a regular basis, and impact even more employees and patients in a peripheral way. Training will take place about two months before the project goes live in Milwaukee.

“We’re excited because we see all the hard work that’s going on that other people don’t always see every day,” Neiderjohn said. “This is a big change, and you can’t deny there are people who don’t understand it. You have ‘change blockers’ and ‘change zealots.’ This is a big change, and it’s a good change for the VA.”

Nursing Home or Community Living Center

Close your eyes and think of the words “nursing home.” What comes to mind? Inactivity? Bland décor? Tasteless meals? The Zablocki VA Medical Center is changing trends and mindsets by shattering the name and misconceptions surrounding long-term care, and it starts with the name.

Don't call it a “nursing home” at the Zablocki VA -- it's the Community Living Center (CLC).

That name has been adopted to show the vibrancy and options offered in long-term care. A resident-centered focus is showcased as opposed to the medical model that was the standard for so long. Given a choice, most would probably not want their residence to be known as a floor number or be told that dinner was either Salisbury steak with mashed potatoes or a tuna sandwich.

Instead of dictating to patients how their days will be spent, the Cultural Transformation movement points toward facilitating resident's choices to be as close as possible to the experience of living in a traditional house.

In this vein, the areas known to many as 8AS, 9A and 9C have been renamed “Hero's Corner,” “Valor Point,” and “Independence Hall” respectively — names submitted and voted on by the residents.

The revolution was very evident at the April 21 “Spring Forward” CLC Kickoff held in the Veterans View Dining Hall.

“Here's your chance to bowl,” one resident happily remarked as he offered me the console for Wii bowling. Several took him up on the invitation. At another table, the “VA Gourmet” showed the dedication and teamwork of the staff from Nutrition and Food Services, Dietary and the Community Living Center. Some of the options include “pretzels with a twist,” liver and onions, and pizza by the slice.

Throughout the week, the smell of fresh bread and chocolate chip cookies baked right in the CLC wafts through the air, as nurses are able to tailor the choices to fit special diets.

In another area, the STAR Program -- Social Time with Activities and Recreation -- gave examples of the many options available to the residents. The long list includes exercise, yoga, trivia, active and

table games, coffee klatch, Brewers games, fish fries and much more. The brightly-colored activity calendar is filled with things to do both on site and outside of the center.

Ed Lewis, Glenda Riggs and Mattie Murry, restorative aids in the CLC were also on hand to explain how they help residents every day.

The restorative aid position is fairly new in the VA and these staff members help residents function at the highest level by assisting with range of motion, splint and brace assistance, ambulation, transfers and dining.

One of the most intriguing exhibits was Dee Klingbeil's Snoezelen (pronounced “Snow-ze-len) Therapy. Snoezelen is thought to be derived from the Dutch words “snuffeln (to sniff or snuffle)” and “doezelen (to doze).” It was originally geared toward calming those with severe handicaps. She said using multisensory stimuli such as vibration, scent and light can create a feeling of well-being, which in turn creates security. Because it does not rely on verbal communication, Snoezelen Therapy may be effective treating those with severe brain injuries or dementia that cannot be reached in another manner.

This is just a small example of the many changes taking place at our VA and VA Community Living Centers throughout the country.

This new culture -- the product of the effort, energy and collaboration of so many -- is changing the world and benefitting all involved.

North Chicago

Cultural Transformation Brings Change

Like our Milwaukee VA Medical Center to the north, the North Chicago VA Medical Center's Community Living Center (CLC) is undergoing a transformation of culture in a move away from the traditional nursing home model and more towards a new way of doing things. This new approach is built on the notion that the attitude of staff and residents towards their environment contributes to well-being and positive outcomes of care.

“We are striving to create a ‘home-like atmosphere’ which fosters respect, empowerment, relationships, choice and community, the principles of culture transformation,” said Dr. Jan Clarke, North Chicago VA Medical Center Chief of Geriatrics and Extended Care. “These principles of culture transformation extend to Veterans and staff alike.”

Clarke explained that residents are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They are provided a variety of choices in their daily lifestyle; these choices can range from what to eat for dinner to which activities to attend during the day.

“One of our main goals is to provide as many different options to residents as possible,” said Karen Fleming, North Chicago VA Medical Center Recreation Therapist. “When people live at home, they can choose from a variety of things to do in their free time. Since this is their home, we want that to continue.”

Fleming noted that the culture transformation team is comprised of representatives from several disciplines who are seeking to foster transformation among both the residents and staff of the CLC. The team meets monthly to discuss new methods and ideas of transformation.

“We try to both educate and motivate the residents and staff on the importance of culture transformation,” said Mary Gollings, North Chicago VA Medical Center Social Worker. “We’re part of a larger effort with both the Veterans Integrated Service Network and the national teams to implement change across the VA.”

Gollings, who is also the co-chair of the Culture Transformation Team, noted that the goal of care is to restore the resident to maximum function, prevent further decline, maximize independence, and/or provide comfort when dying. She explained that most VA Community Living Centers are well suited to providing short-term, restorative and rehabilitative care and longer-term care for Veterans who meet eligibility criteria.

“We have an outstanding nursing team which is dedicated to providing the highest quality care for our Veterans,” said Pamela Sanberg, RN Associate Chief Nurse of Geriatrics and Extended Care. “Our staff not only takes care of the physical needs of residents, but the emotional needs, as well. They really have a personal relationship with residents and care about them as people.”

Volunteer Hydrate Residents Through Innovation Program

For nearly a year, a group of volunteers at the North Chicago VA Medical Center have been serving water to patients at the Community Living Center (CLC) through an initiative called the “Hydration Project.” While the seven-person group is certainly helping to hydrate those people they meet, the volunteers are quick to point out that the visits are larger than just providing water.

“When I retired from the phone company about a year ago, I really just wanted to help Veterans,” said Bob Crouch, North Chicago VA Medical Center Volunteer and U.S. Army Veteran. “I see it as another way to serve my country.”



Crouch explained that the project allows him the opportunity to hear stories from

many years ago. “This is much more than just delivering water, although that’s pretty important too,” he said. “It’s about hearing their stories -- and they all have amazing stories to tell. The first time I went up there, I really felt like I was going back in time with their stories. I know that we’re there to deliver water, but I get wrapped up in their stories.”

By working shifts, the group is able to cover the project every Monday through Friday. Crouch is quick to point out that the project would never have been possible without the leadership of Pam Hrabak, North Chicago VA Medical Center Speech Pathologist.

“We saw a need to increase patient hydration, and knew that we had fantastic volunteers, so making the connection was easy,” said Hrabak. “The idea was to supplement the nursing staff by having the volunteers pass water pitchers to every patient in the CLC. What we didn’t anticipate was that the socializing would be such a large part of it.”

U.S. Air Force Veteran Adriane Burke, who is a skilled artist, explained that while the delivery of the water certainly reminds her to hydrate, the conversations with the team are just as important to her. “When they come visit me, I just know we’re going to have a great chat,” she said.

For Crouch, he summarized the experience for him in a single sentence: “Every person in the CLC is an American hero to me, and it’s a privilege to go up there.”

Telehealth Offers Patients Technological Solutions to Traditional Visit



In an era when everything from shopping to entertainment is catered to the needs of the consumer, medical care is falling in line with services that relate to the specific needs of the patient. While there

are many names for these types of progressive care, one of the programs offered at the North Chicago VA Medical Center is called Telehealth.

The program, offered for patients through the Home and Community Based Services, provides care coordination services via a computer and telephone line. According to Mary Schatz, Telehealth Registered Nurse, the program is becoming a popular alternative to traditional physician office visits.

“Most of the people I’m working with are patients who can truly benefit from this,” she said. “Essentially, these are the patients who are caring for long-term, chronic diseases, and I’m the nurse monitoring their progress at home.”

“Telehealth puts the patient in control of their medical care,” said Schatz. “They can stay in the comfort of their homes and have direct contact with a registered nurse familiar with their situation. It is not just the patient and the machine. There is always a voice and face associated with it. We are ready to speak with the patient regarding their progress and provide that personalized care.”

Qualified patients are provided VA-purchased equipment and are educated on the process. Schatz noted that many patients using Telehealth are monitoring chronic diseases such as diabetes, congestive heart failure and mental health illnesses. Along with the Telehealth nurses, the patients develop an understanding of the symptoms and behaviors specific to their medical condition.



Schatz explained that not every patient can use the technology, either due to their condition or by choice, but those who do typically find it to be a great alternative to routine medical center visits.

Golden Fork Award

The North Chicago VA Medical Center serves more than 35,000 Veterans, caretakers and staff every year. The 18-person staff goes through more than 4,000 cups of coffee a week to keep the medical center buzzing. While they have received accolade and awards for their day-to-day accomplishments, they now hold another unique title: The nation’s first Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) to win the coveted “Golden Fork Award” twice.

“This was truly a surprise and is only a reflection of the outstanding canteen staff we have working here,” said Kim Wasilewski, North Chicago VA Medical Center’s VCS #556 Assistant Chief. “The men and women serving our Veterans and staff everyday are passionate about what they do. Always serving with a smile, and always delivering quality.”

The “Golden Fork Award” is a national culinary competition among the 172 VA Medical Centers across the nation. It is intended to highlight outstanding talents of VCS food services in the area of creative catering, food special events and excellence in daily food service. Competitors are judged on appearance, taste, variety and quality of their food.

The North Chicago VA Medical Center Canteen won the award for their 2009 All Employee Celebration, which had a Halloween theme. Wasilewski pointed out that the quinine was anything but standard.

“Everything we put out for the event has some type of ghoulish or goblin theme to it,” said Wasilewski. “We had a ton of ideas, but went with things like eyeballs on forks (doughnut holes), bat wings (giant chicken wings in soy barbeque), graveyard cake, toxic punch, and many other. Creating it was just as much fun.”



(Center) “Eyeballs on Forks,” also known as carefully designed doughnut holes, were a hit at the North Chicago VA Medical Center’s 2009 All Employee Celebration. The event won the Veterans Canteen Service the coveted “Golden Fork Award” for the second year.

Wasilewski noted that the facility won the award in 2007 and 2009, making it the first VCS to win the award two times. “Our staff works very hard every day to provide the best possible service to our guests,” he said. “The Golden Fork Award is amazing recognition, but the best acknowledgement comes from the faces of those we serve. We are always on-target when we keep them happy.”

Veterans Operate Veterans Thrift Store



Julie LoCoco of Lake Forest, IL., summarizes her purpose for opening businesses rather simply: “We’re all about the Veterans here, and I can’t think of a better way to show our appreciation for their service.”

LoCoco, who is the director of the non-profit organization U.S. Veterans Industries, took her passion for helping Veterans and turned it into a small Waukegan, IL., thrift store called “Route 66.”

Aside from LoCoco, the store is completely run by Veterans, including homeless Veterans. In fact, LoCoco explained that the store received its name from the Veterans living in the Homeless Domiciliary at the North Chicago VA Medical Center, which happens to be Bldg. 66.

“This store is truly a Godsend for me at this point in my life,” said U.S. Air Force Veteran Terry McKay of Chicago, IL. “I mean, I’m 68 years old and there are no jobs to be had by anyone out there. Where else would I get a job at this point? This place is a chance for me to help other Vets, and it’s a great job.”

McKay and four other Veterans help set up the store with donations from the community. LoCoco explained that any profits made at the location are being used to open future Veteran-run stores.

“When we were in the military, we were always watching each other’s backs,” said U.S. Army Veteran Shawn Crown of Northbrook, IL. “Now that we’re out, it hasn’t changed. This is Vets helping other Vets.”

LoCoco got the idea of the store while she was living in Virginia and noticed the large number of homeless Veterans living outside of her home.

"I wanted to do something that would make a difference," said LoCoco. "What I learned later was that the Veteran homelessness was not due to a lack of housing, but more a lack of jobs."

U.S. Marine Corps Veteran Jim Zbonski of Chicago, IL., agreed with LoCoco's statement and made it clear that he was there for the long haul. "This is my opportunity for a second chance. They came to us with this idea, and I'm just not quitting," said Zbonski. "For me, I love the idea of getting an honorable discharge one more time."

DoD, Navy and VA Secretaries Sign Lovell FHCC Executive Agreement

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The law required the leadership of the new federal health care center to have a signed Executive Agreement by the Secretaries of the Department of Defense, U.S. Navy and Veterans Affairs, outlining specific portions of the integration. The Executive Agreement was signed April 23 by all three Secretaries.

"The Executive Agreement outlines some very important parts of the law within the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010, including the transfer of DoD civilian personnel and how we will operate with a single-governance structure and a combined budget," said Patrick Sullivan, North Chicago VA Medical Center Director.

The 33-page agreement is outlined in nine areas: governance, patient priority categories, budgeting, staffing and training, construction, physical plant management, contingency planning, quality assurance and information technology.

"Although we had half a year to get the agreement signed, it really represents a culmination of years of hard work from our integrated team," said Kelvin Parks, VA/DoD Integration Team Member. "We've been collaborating on this both locally and nationally for quite some time, and having it signed now is truly a huge step towards the success of our integration."

Father-Daughter Veteran

U.S. Army Veteran Eduardo Torrez Lopez and his daughter, U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Arlene Walsh, share a common bond. As father and daughter, this bond is often assumed. However, as soldiers, the bond is only strengthened as they both support one another through their physical therapy at the North Chicago VA Medical Center.



"He often says, 'She is my right hand,'" said Walsh about how her father refers to her. "That's what my dad always calls me, and he's mine."

Lopez began his military service with the Puerto Rican National Guard in the communications field and was the first in his family to serve in the U.S. military. While serving, he developed some service-connected injuries. While he has been seen at many medical centers for his rehabilitation, Lopez had very clear feelings about his medical care at the North Chicago VA Medical Center.

"They're doing an amazing job at the North Chicago VA," said Lopez during his physical therapy session. "They treat me so great, and are healing my daughter and I together."

"Similar to her father, Walsh was the first female to come back from a deployment in Iraqi Freedom and returned home October 2008. Like Lopez, she too developed service-connected injuries while deployed.

In the beginning, Walsh explained that she was frustrated with the system, and then she was connected with an OEF/OIF Transition Patient Advocate.

"I really felt like I kept running into red tape," said Walsh of the initial military process. "Then I met this Angel in the OEF/OIF transition office: Miss DeMario. She led me to the right people so I could get the help I needed, and I can't thank her enough."

DeMario, North Chicago VA Medical Center OEF/OIF Transition Patient Advocate, had similar notions of Walsh, and was impressed by her drive to get the help she deserved.

"When I first met Ms. Walsh, she was limping and clearly frustrated," said DeMario. "I was so impressed with her motivation to get help, that it really wasn't difficult to assist her. I knew that anything I set up for her would be accomplished. It's really an honor to serve Veterans like her."

After months of rehabilitation, both Walsh and Lopez are feeling much better. Walsh sees the process as simple. "I'm a staff sergeant in the military; I have to lead by example," she said. "So if I'm broke, I need to make myself better so I can lead again."

Although clearly a strong leader, Walsh also admits that her father remains her "go-to person" for inspiration and values: "My dad always tells me, 'live each day of your life as if it were your last.' And I live by those rules."

Tomah

Medical Imaging Coming in July



Nearing completion of the \$1.1 million Site Prep Radiology renovation project it was time to get the gear. So early Monday morning on April 19, 2010 contractors delivered over \$1.5 million worth of two new diagnostic Medical Imaging systems: the Toshiba Aquilion 64 computed Tomography (CT) scan and the Toshiba Kalare Radiographic and Fluoroscopic (R&F) Digital Imaging System.

These two medical imaging systems will help bring services closer to our Veterans. The entire project is slated for completion July 31, 2010. In the past, Medical Imaging services were outsourced (fee basis) or Veterans were sent to the Madison VA—a 1.5 hour drive from Tomah.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at WI Rapids VA Clinic



Veterans Vern Baiert and Al LaBelle share a laugh just after cutting the ribbon at the Wisconsin Rapids CBOC Open House. The Clinic in Wisconsin Rapids, located at 555 W. Grand Avenue inside the Rapids Mall hosted an Open House on Tuesday, May 25, 2010, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. American Legion Post #9 provided the Color Guard and students from Lincoln High School performed the National Anthem and Taps.

On April 1, 2010, the Wisconsin Rapids VA clinic reopened fully staffed with VA employees. Since 2003, primary care services for Veterans enrolled at the clinic were provided by two contracted medical providers. The transition to a clinic fully staffed with VA employees was critical in order to expand services. The 8500 square foot clinic will provide primary medical care and behavioral health care services to Veterans and within the first year, Audiology, Nutritional Care, Tele-medicine, Social Work and Women's Health services will be added. The WI Rapids clinic was the last clinic in VISN 12 to convert from a contracted staff to full-time VA employees.

Pow-Wow for Veterans

“Hainipi! Wazaniwina naga hicakorowina, hapte’e hanicawira haipi. Hizakisana hinikaragiwi!”

Translation:

“Good morning! Relatives and friends, it is good to see you all. I greet all of you!”

Priscilla Cleveland, B.S., ME-PD, (pictured below) a member of the Buffalo clan of the Ho-Chunk nation and the Indian Education Coordinator-Teacher for the Tomah Area School District, declared as she opened the mini Pow-Wow for Veterans in the Tomah VA Chapel with her friendship greeting



Over 100 Veterans, volunteers and employees attended the Pow-Wow sponsored by the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Minority Veterans Program Coordinator, Sheila Johnson.



Elliott Funmaker served as the Master of Ceremonies



Ho-Chunk Veterans Service Officer, Robert Mann (*holding flag above*) lines up the dancers in preparation for the grand entrance, “The Ho-Chunk Flag and Friendship Song.”

The unique and colorful attire worn by members of the Ho-Chunk Nation represent native American heritage and their specific clans.

2nd Annual Country Inn ‘Senior’ Prom

The Hospice/Palliative Care staff held its 2nd Annual Senior Prom for Veterans and their families Saturday, May 8th. Eighteen Veterans and fourteen family members joined staff for a night of dancing, reminiscing and socializing. Many Veterans shared how they hadn’t danced in years.



Medical Center Director, Jerald D. Molnar and wife Terry were guests of honor for the evening and



crowned our 2010 Prom King, Don Dohms (*right-with Daughter Angie*) and 2010 Prom Queen, Mary Dooley

20th Annual Veterans Fishing Tournament



What do you get when you take about 100 7th graders pair 'em up with 100 Veterans after stocking over 1,000 fish in your pond on a beautiful sunny day? You might just get a great event if it all works out right. Pour into one big bowl, mix in a fish fry, entertainment and visit from the State Commander of the American Legion. Add these moving parts to include equipment, volunteers, escorting Veterans, getting enough fishing poles, bait, organizing the fish fry, set-up and clean-up. Then don't forget the Chaplains, because if the weather doesn't cooperate it all comes tumbling down.....but the weather did cooperate as the photo depicts.

Awards and Recognition

On May 6, 2010, **Dr. Dinesh Ranjan** was installed as the 2011 President of the United States Section of the International College of Surgeons during its annual meeting in Denver. Dr. Ranjan is currently the Chief of Surgical Service at the **Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center** in Iron Mountain, MI. and will assume the office of President on January 1, 2011. Dr. Ranjan has also been the U.S. Section's Vice President, Treasurer and Chairman of the Council of Specialty Groups as well as a State Regent for Kentucky and the founding Chair of the Section's Transplant Division.

"As I prepare to take office as president, I feel humbled by the legacy, history and the global presence of the college," noted Dr. Ranjan. "As a surgeon practicing in the Veterans Affairs (VA) system, I feel

committed to quality and monitoring standards that I have experienced firsthand; these can be applied and implemented in hospitals anywhere. I wish to work with the college leadership to initiate this process for our global membership. Additionally, my goals as the leader of the college will be to advance the cause of surgical education and global philanthropy. We are also beginning the preparations for our next annual meeting in Portland, Oregon where the primary focus will be Trauma and Critical Care."



(Left to Right): Dinesh, Ranjan, M.D. and Jay Bachicha, M.D., 2010 International College of Surgeons President.

The International College of Surgeons (ICS) is a world federation of general surgeons and surgical specialists founded in Geneva, Switzerland in 1935 by Dr. Max Thorek. Headquartered in Chicago, ICS has over 60 organized national Sections around the world with approximately 7,000 members that speak over 40 languages and represent over 100 countries. The U. S. Section is the largest national chapter.

Dr. Ratnabali Ranjan, M.D., spouse of Dr. Dinesh Ranjan and Chief of the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center Compensation and Pension Section and Employee Health Service, is also involved with the International College of Surgeons. She will serve as the 2011 President of the U.S. Section Alliance. The alliance is an affiliated family group that supports the activities and mission of the ICS. The Ranjan's have been working together as partners in life and medicine and now, as part of the VA and ICS, they are both fulfilling their personal goals to provide medical care to those in need.

"We are delighted to have two VA employees, a husband and wife team, appointed to these prestigious positions, and especially elated that they are from the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center," said Michael J. Murphy, VAMC Director.



Todd R. Silverstein, Psy.D., clinical psychologist who joined the **Iron Mountain VA** staff in March of 2006, was recently awarded the Hands and

Heart Award. “This award recognizes Dr. Silverstein as a compassionate person whose dedication to Veterans is marked with the highest standards in care,” noted Michael J. Murphy, Medical Center Director.

The Heart and Hands Award was established in 1980 and is given to a VA employee that administers direct patient care and does the most each day to exercise professional expertise as well as emotional support, help, and guidance.

When presented with the award, it was noted that Dr. Silverstein is highly respected by his patients and by all who know and work with him. His devotion to his patients and the medical center is evident. As a clinician, he is often sought out by others for his guidance. He sets an example for others, going above and beyond the call of duty in responding to Veteran medical needs.

Wade Ebersole, Administrative Fellow at the **Madison VAH**, won first place in the Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program poster competition at this year’s American College of Healthcare Executives Congress on Healthcare Leadership. His poster was on beneficiary travel. As a result of winning this competition, Ebersole gave a presentation at the VA Session for an audience of over 150 senior VA leaders, including the Under Secretary for Health, the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations & Management, VISN and Hospital Directors.

Mary Falls, Nurse Manager of the **Madison VAH** Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, has been selected for the position of co-chair of the Advanced Practice Nursing Advisory Group (APNAG). APNAG focuses on establishing, implementing and evaluation the strategic plan for advanced practice nursing in VA.

Kevin Kohlhagen, Police Lieutenant at the **Madison VAH**, was selected as the Police Supervisor of the Year for a police unit with no greater than 15 officers by VA Central Office Police Service.

With more than two decades in law enforcement, Police Officer **Anthony Everett** of the **North Chicago VA Medical Center** Police Department has seen his fair share of crisis situations. He has been deployed around the world with the U.S. Army Reserves, and spent the last two years protecting Veterans with the VA Police Department.



Like most days in law enforcement, Everett spends much his time upholding the law and keeping people

safe. On April 21, he and his fellow officers had the opportunity to do both when Everett pulled a Veteran to safety just before he attempted to take his life.

“When we arrived on the scene, my partner told me that he saw the Veteran writing a note and we both knew then how serious the situation was,” said Everett. “Because of my previous job, I’ve seen this type of situation many times over, but I’ve never lost anyone. I guess I’ve been pretty lucky.”

Immediately following the incident, people began calling Everett a hero, but he is quick to point out that there were actually a large number of people who saved this Veteran’s life.

“This was not an uncommon act,” said Everett. “Take a look at any police department around the nation; you’ll see a group of people there who really care for their community and put themselves in harm’s way to keep them safe. I was just doing my job that day, and the only reason it was me is because it was my call. Honestly, any of the other guys would have done the same thing.”

Although humble about his act, leaders within the Department of Veterans Affairs were very impressed with his actions. The next day, Everett received a personal phone call from Jose Riojas, Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness.

"I was quite surprised when he called," said Everett, who was only told that he had to return to dispatch to take a phone call. "Policemen aren't commonly thanked for their efforts because we're really just doing our jobs. I was shocked that someone in his position would actually take the time to thank us. It was really a pleasant surprise."

A few days following the phone call, Everett was flown to the National Police Chief's Conference in Florida and presented the "Heroes Award for Life Saving." He is the nation's first recipient of this honor.

"Part of why I became a police officer is because I really wanted to help people," he said. "Knowing that it was a Veteran who needed the help that day makes this one even more important to me. It gives me a greater satisfaction."

Everett pointed out that the best part of the situation hasn't been the awards nor the recognition, but more the response he received from the Veteran he saved. He explained that just two-hours after the situation, the Veteran was hugging and thanking him for saving his life.

"When you prevent someone from using a permanent solution to fix a temporary problem, that's the best," he said. "It's better than catching a criminal or stopping a crime. Those are certainly a nine, but this is definitely a ten."



(Lane and VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Robert Petzel)

(Pictured from l to r: VA Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management, William Schoenhard, Toby

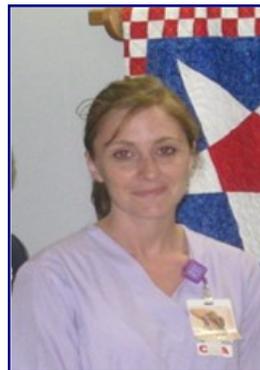
Congratulations to **Toby Lane**, Administrative Assistant to the Associate Director at **Tomah VA Medical Center**, for completing the Executive Career Field (ECF) Training Program. ECF is a two-year training program. He was presented his graduation diploma at the American College of Healthcare Executive Council's VA day.



Sue Schmitz, RN, **Tomah VAMC** was the local recipient of the annual Hands and Heart Award, a national VA award for direct care health professionals at each VA medical center. This award recognizes a VA employee who consistently exercises professional expertise; and demonstrates exceptional, sustained, and compassionate patient care. Eligibility for this award encompasses the whole spectrum of healthcare professionals involved in direct patient care.

Schmitz has served as the Mental Health Clinic Coordinator for the past four years and also acts as the clinic liaison for Veterans to help coordinate care with other healthcare professionals. Among her other duties, Schmitz serves on the Nurse Professional Standards Board, Clozaril Clinic, Para-Suicide Committee, the Employee Satisfaction Committee and as a preceptor for nursing students from Western Technical College.

"We are very fortunate to have a nurse of Sue's caliber working at our VA," said Acting Nurse Executive, Lynda Everson. "Our staff look to her for leadership and know she works tirelessly for Veterans."



Rebecca Knutson, CNA, **Tomah VA** won the prestigious Secretary's Award for Nursing Excellence. The Excellence in Nursing Award annually honors four individuals: two Registered Nurses, one in a staff nurse role and one in an expanded nurse role, (e.g., advanced practice nurse, nurse manager, nurse researcher,

instructor, etc.); a Licensed Practical Nurse or Licensed Vocational Nurse; and a Nursing Assistant or HCT. Awardees must be actively engaged in the care of patients at a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility. The recipients' contributions to the care of patients in any VA health care setting must be patient-centered and demonstrate such excellence as to merit recognition from peers. She will travel to Washington D.C. on June 30 to receive the award.

Farewell to Two of our Leaders



When **Jesse Brown** VAMC Director **James S. Jones** walked out of his office to attend his retirement tea on the other side of the medical center on April 29, he found hundreds of employees lining the hallways and applauding him every step of the way.

After 37 years of federal service, with a VA career that began and ended at the same facility, Mr. Jones retired on May 3rd. His second tour at JBVAMC had lasted slightly more than four years.

But it was a very productive four-year span that saw the medical center activate its new Inpatient Bed Tower, dramatically improve its performance measures scorecard, enhance customer service, establish an aggressive outreach program and move towards its goal of being an "Employer of Choice" for staff and a "Provider of Choice" for Veterans.

"I began my career here as a Management Systems Analyst back when this facility was called the West Side VA Medical Center," Jones told his employees. "My office back then was only about 40 feet from the office I've sat in the past four years. This was the

perfect medical center to begin and end my career and I will always be grateful I had the opportunity to serve as Director for a medical center named in honor of VA Secretary Jesse Brown."

In between his two stints in Chicago, Jones also served as Associate Director at Hines VAH, Medical Center Director at Danville VAMC and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management at VA Central Office.

After nine years as the Hines VA Hospital's Chief of Staff, **Barbara Temeck, M.D.** has accepted a clinical leadership position at the St. Louis VA Medical Center. Dr. Temeck's colleagues and co-workers gathered in early June to wish her good luck in her new position.

"Hines is well-known as a leader in VHA," said Sharon Helman, Hines Director. "Much of this success can be attributed to Dr. Temeck and her commitment to patient care. She will be greatly missed by Hines staff and patients."

Dr. Temeck took over as Hines Chief of Staff in 2001. The hospital rose steadily in performance measure rankings during her tenure and now sits in the top three nationwide. "I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish at Hines and I will greatly miss the staff and patients," said Dr. Temeck.

Someone You Should Know

Associate Medical Center Director in Iron Mountain



On January 31, 2010, William J. Caron PT, M.H.A., was appointed Associate Medical Center Director at the VA Medical Center in Iron Mountain, MI. He received his Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy Degree in 1991 from the University of New England and began his career

as a Physical Therapist in Phoenix, AZ and then in the United States Air Force (USAF).

Mr. Caron came to Iron Mountain in 1996 and worked at Dickinson County Healthcare System as Rehabilitation Department Manager with oversight of associated outreach clinics and multiple department programming expansions through 2004. He was then assigned to area management roles including Rehabilitation Services, Respiratory Care, and Cardiac Diagnostic Services. Mr. Caron received his Master of Science degree in Healthcare Administration in 2007 through the California College of Health Sciences and is a member of the American College of Healthcare of Executives.

National Nurses Week

VA healthcare facilities throughout the country pay tribute once a year to their 77,000 nurses. This year's theme was "Nurses: Caring Today for a Healthier Tomorrow."

Following are some of the activities celebrated throughout our Network in honor of our dedicated nurses.

Hines Nursing Service is working hard toward achieving magnet status. The hospital's Nurses Week Committee incorporated a number of magnet-related activities into their Nurses Week activities to emphasize the hospital's commitment to working toward and then achieving this very important milestone.

Hines kicked off Nurses Week with the Hospital's Chaplain Service offering "Blessings of the Hands" a special prayer for nurses. The "blessings" took place around the hospital on various units.

Next, Irene Stemler, RN, who wrote a book called "Heroic Acts in Humble Shoes: America's Nurses Tell Their Stories" gave a series of speeches to nurses, summarizing some of the stories she included in her book.

Throughout Nurses Week, Hines RNs and LPNs from all over the hospital were featured on the hospital flat screen TVs and a "14 Forces of Magnet" Poster fair took place in the hospital's Auditorium.

"Nurses week is a great opportunity for us to recognize the great work that our nurses do every day," said Carol Gouty, Associate Director for Patient Care Services. "I am proud of the professional, caring and committed nurses that work here at Hines."

The Hospital's Nursing Week Recognition and Award program was held May 12 and nurses were encouraged to wear all white uniforms and nursing caps to the ceremony. Hines Secretary Award nominees were recognized and Hines winners were announced in four categories: Nicole Williams, HCT; Sylvia Woodhouse, LPN; Maria Somera-Leyson, RN (Direct Care) and Eileen Collins (above), RN, PhD (Expanded Role).



Left to right: Barbara Te-meck, M.D., Chief of Staff, Eileen Collins, RN, PhD and Carol Gouty, Associate Director for Patient Care Services

Also, during Nurses week, each unit was presented a poem written by Veteran and Hines patient, Billy Burden, USAF. Mr. Burden traveled 110 miles to attend the recognition program and be presented an official copy of the poem.

To tie the Hospital's Magnet journey in with nursing recognition, the Hines Magnet Steering Council announced it will provide Magnet Journey t-shirts to all nursing staff. Forest green with tan printing saying "Supporting our Journey," the shirt will be worn by nurses to show the movement toward Magnet status is in place across the campus. Matching lanyards "Hines VA on the Journey to Excellence" were also distributed to staff.

"I have no doubt that Hines will be successful achieving Magnet status," said Sharon Helman, Hines Director. "We have an impressive group of dedicated nurses at Hines whose commitment to our Veterans is truly second to none."

Three members of the nursing staff at the **Iron Mountain** Veterans Affairs Medical Center were honored with Excellence in Nursing Awards.



Patrick Millan, a health aid, was cited for always providing outstanding care to Veterans. He has an excellent bedside manner and goes above and beyond his duties every day. He works well with

other staff and patients; he is truly a team player in every way. His peers are truly impressed with his work ethic and think that more employees should be modeled after him. He is an asset to the medical center and to the Veterans that he serves.



Janice S. Irish, RN, was cited for her willingness to do what needs to be done for both the patient and the medical center. Her nursing practice is an example for all. She is a patient advocate, consistently keeping the patient at the center of her focus. Her daily work ethics proves she is a nurse you would want caring for you.

She seeks out opportunities to expand the knowledge of nurses and impacts nursing practice at all levels within the medical center. She shares knowledge both formally and informally and challenges nurses to step up and take responsibility for their daily practice.

As the only nurse educator, she is responsible for identifying and providing needed education to a nursing staff of more than 150 along with providing education to providers as well as support staff when needed.



Aimee L. Roberts, RN, was cited for her compassion, knowledge, and the warm caring attitude that she displays to veterans. She shows expertise in not only an emotional/behavioral

aspect to the patient, but also expertise in the clinical aspect. Aimee L. Roberts, RN, was cited for her compassion, knowledge, and the warm caring attitude that she displays to veterans. She shows expertise in not only an emotional/behavioral aspect to the patient, but also expertise in the clinical aspect. She approaches the providers in a very professional and kind manner to update them on important information or changes in the patient's condition. She is actively involved in facility committees and monitors which require data collection and follow up. She encourages other staff members to participate in a positive and upbeat manner. She receives many compliments from her peers and other staff regarding her professional and kind manner towards patients.



*Intensive Care Unit registered nurses (From l to r) Liza Cudiamat, Angela Sekosan, Sika Asima and Jun Xia celebrate National Nurses Week at **Jesse Brown** VA Medical Center.*

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The weather May 6th was perfect for the 5K Walk/Run with approximately 90 participants. Included were three "superheroes" who wore signs on their backs that read, "Nurses are Heroes."



Nurses Day was celebrated hospital-wide on May 7th with ice cream sundaes for all. Pictures and memorabilia from "Nursing Through the Decades" were posted for the attendees to enjoy. Nursing Employees of the Month for the past year were recognized as well as the recipients of the Nursing Excellence Awards.



Nurses Week 2010 was an exuberant celebration of how the **Milwaukee VA** nurses are "Caring

Today for a Healthier Tomorrow" for our Veterans. Using the annual theme from the American Nurses Association, the nursing staff planned events during the week that showcased the impact they have on care.

At **North Chicago VA**, the week started with a "Wear White to Work" day, showing the core or roots of who nurses were, and ended with a "Wear VA/Armed Forces Day" to show where nurses are headed—being on the cutting edge in healthcare. Also included in the week was a "Nurses Lamplight Walk" and a "Nursing Tea" to recognize and celebrate the Secretary's Awards for Nursing Excellence.



The annual "Nursing Education Celebration" was held in the Auditorium, highlighting nursing research, education, and hospital wide updates. "This is not a mandatory education fair – this is really nursing at its best," said Rose Stetzer, RN, MSN, CNS, coordinator of the event. "We will celebrate again next year for sure!"

North Chicago culminated National Nursing Week at a ceremony May 6, honoring its annual nursing award recipients.



Lori Stensberg (center) of Franksville, WI, is presented the Nursing in an Expanded Role award by Patrick Hull (left), Medical Center

Assistant Director, and Dr. Sarah Fouse (right), (Acting) Associate Director of Patient Services. Myna Jenkins (center) of Waukegan, IL., is presented the Staff Nursing award



Myna Jenkins (center) of Waukegan, IL, is presented the Staff Nursing award

Special activities were held at the Tomah VAMC



Natalie Hackbarth, RN (right) performs a Blessing of the Hands for Julie Nutting, MSN prior to the official Nurses Week celebration held in the Chapel.

Robin Tellez (right), of Las Vegas, NV., is congratulated by Dr. Sarah Fouse for being the 2010 "Excellence in Nursing" Licensed Practical Nurse award recipient.



Nursing units made a variety of baskets for raffle.



Julie Nutting, MSN and Deb Thiel, RD, Administrative Assistant to the Associate Director for Patient Care Services sport their new baskets they won in the raffle.



Doris Moore (second from left) of Gurnee, IL., is presented the Nursing Assistant award

"Words cannot express the heartfelt appreciation and honor it is to serve with such an impressive body of people at the North Chicago VA," said Dr. Sarah Fouse, North Chicago VA Medical Center (Acting) Associate Director of Patient Services. "Our nursing staff is truly the compassionate backbone of VA's world-class health care system, and I feel blessed to work with nursing professionals who are passionate about the Veterans and Department of Defense patients and families they serve."



Nurse Recruiter Doris Bernette (second right) presents National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Host Site Coordinator Jean Calhoun (ctr) with a check for \$560.00. Also pictured: Julie Nutting, Lynda Everson and Laura Bishop



“Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence.”

-- Vince Lombardi

An Experience of Transformation

Beginning on October 7, 2009, nineteen (19) Tomah VA employees embarked on a journey into servant leadership. They committed to sixteen, four-hour sessions every other week. Ten other Tomah employees volunteered to serve as coaches and mentors. Led by Education Coordinator Catherine Kemmerling and Associate Professor Tom Thibodeau from Viterbo University both students and mentors discovered the concept of servant leadership as a philosophy, not a theory, about service and the practice of leadership. Representing disciplines from every corner of the medical center, they graduated on Wednesday, May 12 armed with the knowledge that we are in fact doing incredible work and the belief that the future does indeed look bright.

What is Servant Leadership?

The phrase “Servant Leadership” was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1970. In that essay, he said: *“The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions... The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.”*

Employing an eclectic collection of learning techniques, the training sessions not only had real-life application, but as in the words of one student, “I got to know me!”

Here are a few:

On the Road to Abilene:

This story is about a family in Texas who ‘decides’ to drive 40 miles to Abilene for dinner. Nobody really wants to go, but they all go anyway, because they each think everyone else wants to go, and then they each complain about it later. The training program demonstrates how groups of people can go along with an idea that nobody believes in, just because they don’t want to say anything for fear of hurting someone’s feelings, or alienating the boss. Identifies ways to prevent getting on the road to Abilene, and what to do if you find yourself on the Road to Abilene.

The Apple:

The Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment determines what personality preferences people have. Part of it is learning how different people can view the same thing, and have very different interpretations. Two people (each sequestered individually) viewed and described the same apple. One type of personality is very literal; “red, round, stem, etc”, another type of personality is conceptual; “good for baking, my favorite fruit, used to throw at cars, etc”.

Seattle Fish Market:

The study of how some folks at the Seattle Fish Market made their otherwise boring, physically demanding and customer-intense jobs fun, engaging and meaningful. Now they can’t keep customers away. Their principles: Choose to make today a great day, find ways to play, be there, and make their day.

Class VIII Leadership Development Projects:

A Salute to Veterans Cookbook
Freedom Honor Flights
A Caregiver’s Book
Integrated Ethics Fair

Memorial Day Programs

City of Chicago's Memorial Day Parade



Approximately 75 Veterans and staff from **Jesse Brown** VA Medical Center either rode or walked alongside the JBVMC float during the city of Chicago's Memorial Day Parade on May 29. The JB Patient chorus (seated in the first row on the float) delighted the crowd by singing a chorus of service medleys.

WWII Veterans Honored at Annual Memorial Day Program

In honor of the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II, The **Tomah** VA hosted a special "Victory Parade" for World War II Veterans from the VA Chapel to the front of Building 400.



Retired Lieutenant Colonel and Tomah VA Education Coordinator, Catherine Kemmerling led the parade on her horse, Lentho, while US Navy Veteran John Elliott played the Bagpipes as the parade marched.



This year's guest speaker was Steve Bradley (shown below). Mr. Bradley, a Vietnam Veteran, is the son of Iwo Jima flag raiser, Jack Bradley from Antigo, Wisconsin.



The Steuben American Legion, Post 446 from Boscobel conducted a reenactment of the flag raising to close the ceremony.

Memorial Day Ceremony Hosting the President of the United States

On Monday, May 31st, twenty Hines Veterans and leadership from Jesse Brown VA medical centers had the honor of attending the annual Memorial Day Ceremony at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL. The event hosted a very special guest, The President of the United States, Barack Obama. The day began sunny and very warm. The Veterans were given front row seating and were provided lunch by a local church. They enjoyed music, meeting Illinois politicians (Governor Quinn and Senator Roland Burris) and hearing a speech by President Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd Lincoln.



Hines Veteran posed with Illinois Governor Pat Quinn prior to the ceremony and the downpour on Memorial Day at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery.

Excitement built as several military helicopters landed signaling the arrival of the President. As the crowd waited for the President's motorcade to arrive, the sky became overcast bringing a welcome cool breeze. Shortly after, a light rain began to fall, but nothing was dampening the spirits of our Veterans waiting to see the Commander in Chief! Finally, the President arrived at the ceremony.

The Hines group was located nearest to the President and was able to take some wonderful pictures. The President stood only thirty feet from the Hines group! The rain continued and began to fall harder, the National Anthem was played and the crowd anticipated the President taking the stage. Mother Nature however, had a different plan and the sky broke open, lightning flashed, thunder rolled and the wind blew hard.

The President took the stage and stated they were very concerned about everyone's safety and were postponing the ceremony in hopes the weather would clear. Unfortunately Mother Nature continued with her alternate plan and the ceremony was cancelled. Despite the rather wet turn of events, the Veterans were thrilled to have had the rare opportunity to see the President in person!

The Great Lakes News is published for employees and stakeholders in the VA Great Lakes Health Care System. Submissions can be sent to linda.deraad@va.gov. Electronic subscriptions are available through our web site at <http://www.visn12.va.gov>.

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