

### Good Day VA at St Albans

by Raymond P. Aalbue, Public Affairs Officer

BROOKLYN, NY --- Ernie Monteleone had an idea. He wanted to start a cable show for the men and women who served their country and are now hospitalized. It took five years and today, Good Day VA has quickly become an important part of life for mostly WWII and Korean War veterans at the St. Albans Primary and Extended Care Center in Queens.

Monteleone is the General Engineer of the St. Albans facility. A local contractor was upgrading the nurse call system in the fifty seven year old building so Monteleone seized the moment. He put together a crew of volunteers who ran cable wire throughout the facility. "We used conduits that were no longer needed so it was real easy to run the cable," Monteleone said. And run cable they did....for over 350 televisions. The beauty of it is that it didn't cost the VA a dime.

Initially, Wide Area Communications loaned the equipment Monteleone needed to run the show. "They were very generous," he said, "but we were going to have to return the equipment if a benefactor didn't step up to the plate. Bottom line was we needed to buy our own equipment." The local Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Executive Committee donated the money to buy the equipment and the rest has now become a part of St. Albans history.

Good Day VA is broadcast 2 times a day, 5 days a week at 10:30 in the morning and 2:00 in the afternoon. Wherever you are in the hospital, you can catch the show. Premiering about a year ago, it is aired in every patient's room, the waiting rooms and solariums throughout the facility. You can even watch the show while you are eating in the cafeteria.

The show runs for two hours. The first 15-20 minutes is devoted to keeping patients and visitors alike abreast of the weather, safety issues, hospital programs and general information. The rest of the time is a smorgasbord of music, mostly geared to the 40's and 50's. Monteleone is also the DJ for the show. He has a great time entertaining the veterans. "If during my minutes on air, I can make one person smile and forget the hardship they are going through, it is worthwhile and a blessing," he said.

Patients can send in requests and if you watch the entire show you may be able to win a prize if you answer the hidden question correctly. A piece of trivia is brought up during the airing and if you watch and listen closely, the answer is given during the same show. If you answer correctly, you win a prize that is donated by Voluntary Service.

Monteleone didn't do this entirely on his own. Bill Kosel, Sally Bright-Philpot, Melanie Wagner, Arlinda Rose and Mary Ann Regazzi-Riedl all pitched in. Monteleone has interviewed the Executive Senior Management of the VA NY Harbor Healthcare System and many of the staff from the various St. Albans services. He even had students from Adelphi on the show.

Watch out American Idol and Military Idol. There may be competition ahead. Why not St. Albans Idol?



**On Air** - Ernie Monteleone on the right, interviews two of the people who volunteered to help put Good Day on the air, Bill Kosel and Melanie Wagner.