



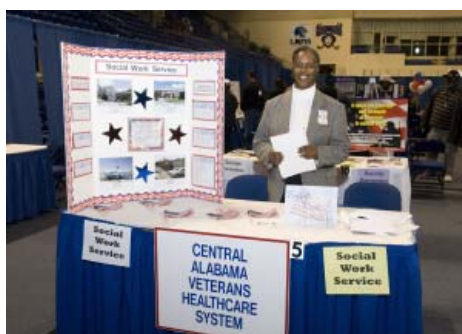
## CAVHCS Reaching Out to Veterans

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) continued an approach of being actively involved in outreach events to engage and educate veterans by supporting Supermarket of Benefits events in Alabama and Georgia in November and December.

CAVHCS once again attended the Georgia Veterans Services' Supermarket of Benefits in the Columbus, Ga. Civic Center in December, but this year's event featured expanded support ranging from medical screening in blood pressure, blood glucose and flu shots to providing immediate information and support in Seamless Transition, Suicide Prevention, Veterans Industries and even Eligibility and Enrollment.

"Our approach to events like these is to make sure we have as many of our assets available for the veteran," said CAVHCS Chief, of Social Services,

Iva Davis. "It's a great opportunity for us to provide veterans with a comprehensive look of what is available. Plus, veteran needs are so varied, having a wide range of capabilities at an



CAVHCS Chief, Social Work Services Iva Davis readies a table full of information that was provided to veterans who attended the recent Georgia Supermarket of Benefits held in the Columbus, Ga. Civic Center. CAVHCS regularly participates in outreach efforts to ensure veterans are aware of the wide array of services and

event called the 'Supermarket of Benefits' only seems logical."

With a name like Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System it may come as a surprise that CAVHCS supports more than 6,500 Georgia veterans annually, and that number is continually growing. Attending the Georgia Supermarket of Benefits were representatives ranging from Health Care for Homeless Veterans and Residential Treatment Programs to Social Work Services and Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Programs.

Whether supporting Supermarket of Benefits, Homeless Veterans Stand Downs or providing counseling to returning deployed veterans where CAVHCS' OEF/OIF Coordinator is featured, CAVHCS enjoys a productive and actively outgoing reputation in support of veterans.

## SecVa Encourages Veterans to Enroll in Direct Deposit

**WASHINGTON**—Every month, 730,000 veterans or survivors look for their compensation, pension checks or educational assistance payments in their mailboxes. Nearly all receive them, but theft and mail delays cause problems for some veterans, which can be prevented by direct deposits.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is urging those veterans and family members now receiving paper checks to join nearly 3.1 million others whose VA payments are safely deposited electronically. "VA is teaming up with the Treasury Department in a new campaign to

protect government beneficiaries against the theft of funds and of their identities," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Veterans earned - and rely on - the financial support we send them every month. I urge them to help VA ensure they get those funds reliably and safely by signing up for direct deposit."

Peake cited several easy ways to sign up for direct deposit - calling VA toll-free at (800) 333-1795 or enrolling online at [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org). Veterans, and family members who receive VA payments, also can sign up by contacting a VA regional benefits office or their financial institution.

Information about direct deposits will be included in VA's monthly compensation and pension envelopes throughout 2009.

The VA Secretary urged veterans to remember that direct deposits relieve worry about mail delivery being delayed by severe weather or natural disasters. The deposits also eliminate trips to banks or credit unions to deposit checks, while providing immediate access to money at the same time each month.



# From the Director

**Shirley Bealer, MS, RN, CNA, BC, CPHQ**

This time of year usually leads us to focus on family, loved ones, year-end accomplishments and yes - even New Year's resolutions. Many of us have been working side-by-side in support of veterans for so many years that the term family has become to include the understanding that we all have immediate as well as an extended CAVHCS family and loved ones. And, that level of compassionate care for one another has served us all very well. I am very proud of our accomplishments in a wide range of areas from Customer Service and Integrated Ethics to expanding services and safeguarding quality.

Unfortunately when it comes to New Year's resolutions - if you're like me - they come, and they go. However, this year I want to challenge you to join me in keeping a few New Year's resolutions throughout the year.

We have three promises that we continually work

to keep with our veterans; provide care second to none; maintain and expand service; and to ensure every veteran is personally satisfied. Of course throughout the year we all exemplify our commitment to keeping these promises with everything we do, but what I hope you will resolve to do this year, is to never allow these promises to become cliché.

They encompass why we are here. In three simple statements and promises our mission is clear. As with most New Year's resolutions, you may start off with a strong, well-defined commitment...only to have that commitment wane as the year goes on. Fortunately, our mission is supported by two classes offered here at CAVHCS - Treating Veterans with C.A.R.E. and Reaffirming the Commitment. If you feel yourself

losing steam you can ask to attend these classes and get re-charged. Together, let's resolve to keep all three promises throughout the year. Our veterans deserve it.



**2009**

## CAVHCS All-Stars

**Dear Director:**

I just wanted to send a letter of thanks to you and your staff for the kind, quick and special attention I received as I visited your facility to have a Basal Carcinoma removed from my back. From my initial visit, to the removal of my stitches every staff member I encountered was very professional and expressed for my care. People always write when things are bad, but I wanted to express my thanks and let you know what a great staff you have in place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and the Surgical floor. I will pass on my pleasurable experience with fellow vets. -- Jeff A. Greenville, GA

**Dear Director:**

My compliments to the Ward 2A and Surgery Staff. They were very professional and personable at the same time! Having served this great country for 20 plus years it is very comforting to experience the level of care and attention I was afforded today! My sincere thanks. -- Evan B. Enterprise, AL

**Dear Director:**

Special thanks to Eddie Mae Scott, Nurse, who helped me to not only getting my medicine refilled without going through the routine of waiting hours to see my doctor for five minutes of work. She also helped me to possibly find employment with the VA Hospital. For that I want to thank her for going above and beyond the call of duty.

Thank you Green Team for your generous and gracious help. Dr. Taylor, Bill Johnson, Dolores Reed, Richard Weary, Sandra Jones, Marie Harris, Cynthia Davis, Barbara Geneux, Felisha Cooper and Annie Moore-Smith. -- Sincerely, Anthony Mitchell

**Dear Ma'am**

It is my great pleasure to tell you that the staff listed here (A. Gosha, Mee Chin Ho, M. Allen and Dr. J. Bannister) have gone above and beyond. I encountered here at the hospital, went out of their way to make sure my visit was great. Everyone I spoke to here and thru out the hospital were kind and helpful. Keep up the good work and thank you so much. -- John E. J. Autaugaville, AL

To Ms. Echols, Thanks so much for your words of encouragement. God Bless. -- Charmaine B.

## The CAVHCS Salute



Accredited by  
The Joint Commission

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Interim Director  
Associate Director  
Chief of Staff  
Public Affairs Officer

Shirley Bealer, MS, RN, CNA, BC, CPHQ  
Judith L. St. Onge, PhD, FACHE  
Clifford Robinson, MD  
Al Bloom

## Employees of the Month



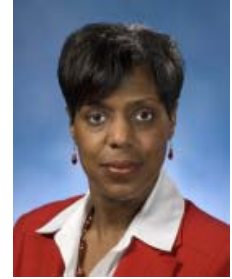
**Montgomery Campus  
Ms. Christy Thomas**

I would like to nominate Christy Thomas. Ms. Thomas demonstrates excellent customer service on every occasion in which I have had the opportunity to observe her in the performance of her duties. I visit the retail store at least once a day and on each occasion that I have encountered Ms. Thomas she always has a ready smile and an eagerness to help everyone no matter the assistance needed, be the task big or small. Last week a veteran asked Ms. Thomas for a coffee cup with a particular military branch insignia on it, not only did she help him in his search, but she asked him to wait while she went to the surplus stock room to check and see if this cup was indeed available. I thought to myself that it would have been much easier for Ms. Thomas to tell the veteran that this item was not currently available, but she went beyond that to ensure that she exceeded this veteran's expectations; I have witnessed her on several occasions interacting with our Veterans in this manner.

As a Veteran myself, I appreciate the exceptional customer service that Ms. Thomas exemplifies. She is personable, professional and a shining example of how all VA employees should conduct themselves towards one another and towards the Veterans we daily serve.

It is my honor to make this nomination and should she not be chosen, she should certainly be commended as it is my opinion that such exemplarily service often goes unrewarded but should not go unrecognized.

Respectively,  
Judy D. Secretary



**Tuskegee Campus  
Mrs. Janice Watts**

Mrs. Janice Watts is a native of Cleveland, Ohio and a graduate of Ohio State University. She has been proactive in volunteering her time and offering service as a resource to address certain issues and topic which affect CAVHCS veteran and employee population and the community. She is actively involved in many activities that include: Co-facilitating a Restorative ROM In-service to new long term care nursing staff; presenting a Backpack Safety Awareness Strategies workshop to parents, teachers, and over 400 students during the Opelika, AL Community Back to School Pizza and Prayer Party; and participated in the CAVHCS Safety Fair on the West campus. Information was distributed on ergonomic strategies/prevention techniques for workplace and nursing home environment.

Janice, husband and two children, ages 3 and 4 were also featured in the KEYSTONE College of Education Magazine, A Keystone in Building a better Future for All, Auburn University Vol. V, 2008. She is an Active member of St. Mark A.M.E. church where she serve on the Pastor Aid Board and Women's Missionary. She is a member of the Auburn Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. where she serves as the Coordinator of Delteens and co-chairperson of the physical and mental health committee.

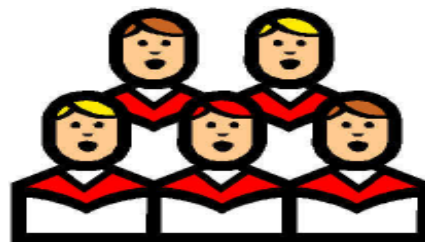
Mrs. Watts have great pride in her job and loves her veterans. She goes beyond the call of duty to make sure that the veterans/residents receive services to improve their quality of life and her favorite team is Ohio State (Buckeyes). Go...Buckeyes

## Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

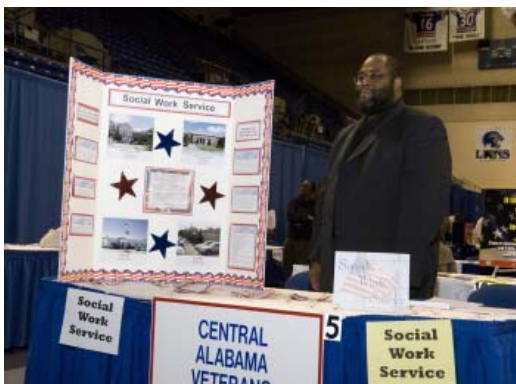
### VA musicians and singers -"A Few Good Notes" Wants You!

All VA employees are invited to volunteer their talents to the "A Few Good Notes" program this holiday season. The program was founded by Dr. Mary C. Rorro, a psychiatrist at the VA New Jersey Health Care System's James J. Howard VA Outpatient Clinic. In addition to being a psychiatrist, Dr. Rorro is also a violist and violinist who created the program in which she has played musical selections for patients through the years. She recognizes that the healing power of music is therapeutic for all patients, and, says, "It's also a meaningful way to connect with them." Dr. Rorro would like to expand the program nationally this year in VA through a volunteer organization called "Give an Hour." Dr. Rorro hopes that this can deliver more joy to veterans and staff during the holiday season. Interested

employees should contact their VA Voluntary Service Office to arrange a date and time to perform at their VA facility. Any questions may be directed to Dr. Rorro through her e-mail address at [mary.rorro@va.gov](mailto:mary.rorro@va.gov). Show your appreciation for our veterans in a musical way!



Supporting a proactive approach to veteran and family member benefits education, CAVHCS recently participated in Supermarket of Benefits efforts in Alabama and Georgia.



If you are planning to travel to Washington, D.C. to attend the 56<sup>th</sup> Presidential Inauguration the VA has put together some (not all) ideas to ensure your experience is as positive as possible.

## Plan Ahead

### Think about your health status

- Speak to your doctor before you travel
- Would this trip put your health in jeopardy?
- Do you have any special health needs?
- Remember, January is flu season—have you had your flu shot?
- Learn about inaugural events in the Nation's Capital
- Secure lodging prior to travel
- DC area transportation: [www.wmata.com](http://www.wmata.com)
- Local inaugural information: [www.inauguration.dc.gov](http://www.inauguration.dc.gov)

Anticipate large crowds; expect long periods of standing outdoors, walking long distances, and potentially cold weather.

## Prepare

### Pack Smart

- Health Travel Kit: All prescription and non-prescription medicines you take; Veterans Identification card
- Strict security measures will be in place: No bags exceeding size restrictions (8"x6"x4") will be allowed along parade route; no surrendered items will be returned, nor available for pick-up later
- Check local forecasts at [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) Keep head, hands and feet warm and dry.
- Know what to do if you become sick or injured on your trip
- Washington VA Medical Center  
50 Irving Street, NW  
Phone: (202)745-8000  
<http://www.washingtondc.va.gov>

Ask a family member, friend or employer to be your emergency contact while you are traveling, and carry contact information and a list of medications with you in case of emergency

## Protect yourself

### Pay attention to your health during your trip

- Drink plenty of water or liquids to avoid dehydration
- Keep your hands clean; consider carrying hand sanitizer
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Limit alcohol intake, and do not drink alcohol and drive

# President-elect Obama Selects new SecVa Nominee

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

President-elect Barack Obama has selected retired Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric K. Shinseki as his nominee to be secretary of veterans affairs.

“As we seek a new national security strategy that uses all elements of American power, we must also remember those who run the greatest risks and make the greatest sacrifices to implement that strategy – the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America,” the president-elect said in announcing his choice.

Obama echoed the words of Abraham Lincoln when he said the nation has a sacred trust to serve those who have borne the cost of battle. “We must show them and their families the same devotion that they have shown this country,” he said.

If confirmed by the Senate, Shinseki will succeed retired Army Lt. Gen. (Dr.) James B. Peake in leading the second-largest federal department, with 240,000 employees. Some 23.4 million veterans are alive today, and the department is their point of contact for compensation and pensions, medical care, education and training, home loans and other benefits. Last year, the VA had a budget of \$93.4 billion.

The government must do everything it can to help those veterans

who suffer “from the signature injuries of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury,” Obama said in Chicago.

Obama also promised to help those who leave the service to find work. The United States needs to modernize the VA, cut red tape there and eliminate shortfalls, the president-elect said. “That is the kind of VA that will serve our veterans as well as they have served us,” he said. “And there is no one more distinguished, more determined, or more qualified to build this VA than the leader I am announcing as our next secretary of veterans affairs - General Eric Shinseki.

“No one will ever doubt that this former Army chief of staff has the courage to stand up for our troops and our veterans,” he continued. “No one will ever question whether he will fight hard enough to make sure they have the support they need.”

Shinseki retired as chief of staff in 2003 after a four-year term. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and served two combat tours in Vietnam as a young officer. He lost part of his foot in Vietnam, was awarded three Bronze Star awards and two Purple Hearts.

Shinseki said today’s veterans “are a part of an unbroken line of heroes that stretches back to



the American Revolution.” Still, there are veterans worried about keeping their health care or homes, he said.

“Veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular, are confronting serious, severe wounds - some seen, some unseen – making it difficult for them to get on with their lives in this struggling economy,” he said. “They deserve a smooth, error-free, no-fail, benefits-assured transition into our ranks as veterans, and that is our responsibility, not theirs.

“A word to my fellow veterans: If confirmed, I will work each and every day to ensure that we are serving you as well as you have served us,” Shinseki continued. “We will pursue a 21st-century VA that serves your needs. We will open ... new doors of opportunity so you can find a good job, support your families when you return to civilian life. And ... we will always honor the sacrifices of those who have worn the uniform, and their loved ones.”

## SecVa Recognizes Wreath Donations at Arlington

**WASHINGTON** – When tractor-trailers arrived at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia recently laden with 10,000 holiday green wreaths with red bows to decorate veterans’ graves, they were greeted by some of the 3,000 people who volunteered to place the wreaths.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake joined them to express the government’s appreciation to our nation’s veterans and to the business whose generosity brought more than 100,000 wreaths to every VA national cemetery and to private veterans’ cemeteries recently.

“This is one of the most beautiful efforts I’ve seen to honor our nation’s heroes,” said Peake. “Morrill Worcester is a source of inspiration for others at this holiday season, and deserves thanks for demonstrating the respect we owe to those who defended us.”

Worcester, who was presented a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) certificate of commendation by Secretary Peake, is owner of Worcester Wreath Company in Harrington, Maine.

This is Worcester’s 17th annual donation to Arlington National

Cemetery, which is operated by the Department of the Army, and their third year of contributing wreaths to VA national and state veterans cemeteries. This year, all of VA’s 125 national cemeteries received at least seven wreaths, one for each branch of service, one for Merchant Marines, one for former prisoners of war, and those missing in action.

Wreath laying ceremonies will be held at many of approximately 350 locations across the country where veterans are buried.



CAVHCS Minority Veterans Program coordinator, William Wheat (r) discusses some of the programs and support available to veterans with an active duty Army soldier during the recent Georgia Supermarket of Benefits in the Columbus, Ga. Civic Center. (CAVHCS photo by Eric Johnson)

# January

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
						3
Cervical Cancer Screening Month - <a href="http://www.cervicalcancercampaign.com">www.cervicalcancercampaign.com</a> Cervical Health Awareness Month - <a href="http://www.nccc-online.org">www.nccc-online.org</a> National Clean Up Your Computer Month - <a href="http://specterweb.com">specterweb.com</a> National Glaucoma Awareness Month - <a href="http://www.preventblindness.org">www.preventblindness.org</a> National Poverty in America Awareness Month - <a href="http://www.povertyusa.org">www.povertyusa.org</a> National Volunteer Blood Donor Month - <a href="http://www.aabb.org">www.aabb.org</a>						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	11 <sup>th</sup> Congress Assembles					
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	VA Staff Influenza Vaccination Week					
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Observed)	CAVHCS Stakeholder Meeting				
		44th Presidential Inauguration		Healthy Weight Week - <a href="http://www.healthyweight.net">www.healthyweight.net</a>		
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Intravenous Nurses Day <a href="http://www.ins1.org">www.ins1.org</a>			National Data Privacy Day			
	National Nurse Anesthetist Week - <a href="http://www.anaa.com">www.anaa.com</a>					

The CAVHCS Community Calendar is not intended to be an all-inclusive, official calendar. It is intended rather to provide a medium for CAVHCS Salute to share upcoming events.

If you would like to add a CAVHCS event please email details directly to [alan.bloom@va.gov](mailto:alan.bloom@va.gov). Submissions are not guaranteed to be published. Considerations will be made for propriety, promptness and print space.