



Integrated Ethics Initiative Bringing Culture Change

Washington, DC—Every day, in every one of the 1,400 locations where the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provides health care, VA patients and employees face difficult and potentially life-altering decisions. That’s the nature of health care professions, where uncertainty or conflicts about values—ethical concerns—inevitably arise.

The ability to make sound ethical decisions is essential to VHA’s ability to provide world-class health care to the veterans we serve. When ethical concerns aren’t resolved properly, mistakes are almost inevitable—and bad decisions that can harm patients, employees and our entire organization often occur.

VHA has long been among the leaders in the health care industry in creating and maintaining a healthy ethical environment and culture. The Department’s National Center for Ethics in Health Care provides ethics consultation to VHA leaders and ethics programs at every VA medical center. The Center develops national ethical policies; produces reports and guidance on ethical issues; publishes regular newsletters and other publications; and offers educational programs including regular teleconferences to help VA employees understand ethical issues and how to respond to them.

On May 21, the Center kicked off an initiative that will help extend VA’s leadership among health care organizations—and improve the quality of ethical behavior among all of VHA’s 198,000 employees. The initiative is called “Integrated Ethics,” and its goal is nothing less than to establish a national, standardized, comprehensive, systematic, and integrated approach to VA health care ethics.

“We’ve learned in the past few years that VHA employees regularly experience ethical concerns,” said Dr. Ellen Fox, VHA’s Chief Ethics in Health Care Officer, and Director of the National Center. “They want more tools and support to address their concerns, and they perceive that VHA hasn’t always treated ethics as a priority. The Integrated Ethics program is a response to those issues.”

According to Dr. Fox, the ethical decisions and actions a health care organization makes; the systems and processes of that organization; and the ethical environment and culture of an organization—the values and assumptions people in the organization “know” about but rarely discuss—together define the quality of a health care organization’s ethics.

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CAVHCS Patient Advocate

VFW Healthcare Performer of the Year

Everyone appreciates a little recognition for their efforts, but for one CAVHCS employee that recognition came in the form of national recognition, a monetary prize and affirmation that she was indeed on the right track.

“I was elated,” said CAVHCS Patient Advocate Cheryl Hayden describing her initial feelings after being told she had been selected as the 2007 Veterans of Foreign Wars Outstanding VA Healthcare Employee of the Year. “They caught me a little off guard, because it had been a while since I was nominated and I didn’t put the two together right away.”



CAVHCS Patient Advocate Cheryl Hayden was recently selected as VFW Outstanding VA Healthcare Employee of the Year.

Hayden’s selection began several months back when a volunteer in a different Volunteer Service Organization felt strongly enough about

Hayden’s efforts to nominate her for the honor. “We had a gentleman working here on the Tuskegee Campus who was working with the Disabled American Veterans as a volunteer,” explained Hayden. “He was also a member of the VFW and told me one day that he was going to nominate me. I thought it was a nice gesture, but I never thought I’d really hear anything else...until I received the call from the VFW national headquarters in Washington, letting me know that I’d been selected.”

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From the Director

Robert W. Ratliff, PH.D., FACHE

In last month's CAVHCS Salute I spoke to you about momentum. We - as a team - had seen some recent successes and I challenged you to maintain our focus and direction. Well I am very proud to report to you that your commitment to excellence has clearly answered that challenge and the most recent Facility Aggregate Report proves it.

Our Facility Aggregate ranking has gone from 133 to 120. In doing so, you have closed the gap on the top ranking facility in our VISN. In fact; we are less than two (2) percentage points from breaking into the Top 100, and only five (5) percentage points from becoming the top-ranked facility in the VISN, which would also vault us into the Top 75.

Our aggregate rankings in Quality were 78th, 103rd in Access and 132nd in Satisfaction. This is clearly a CAVHCS-wide, team effort. However, I do want to mention a few specific areas where we've seen dramatic improvement.

Congratulations are in order for **Inpatient Medicine** for meeting the SHEP Performance Measure for "Inpatient Overall Quality" at the Exceptional level! They improved a whopping 15.3 percentage points from 66.5% in the 1st quarter to 81.8% in the 2nd quarter, surpassing both national and VISN7 overall scores.

Congratulations also go out to **Outpatient Ambulatory Care** for meeting the "Outpatient Overall Quality" Performance Measure at the Fully



Celebrating Information Security Awareness Week CAVHCS Information Security Officer Patricia Cross and Julio Flores presented ideas, tips, quizzes and prize give aways recently - all in an effort to raise your security awareness.

Successful level on the Montgomery Campus and at our Dothan CBOC, where we achieved an Exceptional level during the second quarter. In fact; Dothan also saw success in **Outpatient Ambulatory Care** for meeting the "Provider Wait Time," measure at the Fully Successful level.

Clearly, we've pulled together to identify ways to refocus our efforts and realize improvement. I am confident that your continued commitment and focus on quality of care will translate to improved, sustainable performance measures.

No Floors; no Ceilings and no Quadrant Threes. We don't want to be the biggest - we want to be the best. And you're on your way!



Smiling for the camera following Tuskegee Campus' recent blood drive where 21 productive pints of blood were donated, are (l-r) Sadie Nash (Blood Drive Staff Nurse), Carolyn Moffett, Lisa Sparks, Gloria Brown (Blood Drive Coordinator), Zandra Bulter, Sharon Finley and Abraham Tweatt.

We're on the Web
www.centralalabama.va.gov

CAVHCS



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The CAVHCS Salute

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EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
Tuskegee Campus

JAMES BELL, Jr.

Although this employee has provided clinical services in PM&RS, and DRRTP, it is with Veterans Industries (VI) that Mr. James Bell, Jr.'s hidden skills began to shine. As a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, and a CAVHCS employee for more than 25 years, it is expected for Mr. Bell to provide clinical and referral services to our patient population. However, he has accepted three special projects within Veterans Industries that have led to enhanced quality services to our program participants.

The first project was assisting the Program Manager with enhancing the financial processes of VI due to the expansion of program contracts from three to 15. The developed processes helped the VI STRAF account move from \$120,000 in the red to over 60,000 in the black, based on the profits from existing and past contracts. The on-going monitoring of these funds led to saving the medical center monies on travel and



training programs for the VI staff, since funding could now be paid from the improved STRAF account.

The second project was in conjunction with the CWT/TR program, which was having difficulty with the timely payment of utility bills for three separate residences in Auburn, Alabama. In fact; there had been several episodes of threats to disconnect services for these residences. Once Mr. Bell was delegated to coordinate payments with Fiscal Management, the incidents of potential disconnects have been reduced to zero.

The third project was accepting the Northeast Program Evaluation Center's training on electronic Performance Improvement data for the Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Work Experience program, and then providing this training to the VI Program Support Specialist and the VI CWT/TR manager. This training was pertinent to the accurate collection of data to be submitted for on-going program evaluation, and this data collection was crucial to the submission of two program proposals that led the enhancement of VI staff from 5 FTEE to the current 12 FTEE.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
Montgomery Campus

CHERRY RODGERS

Cherry Rodgers is dedicated and "ever ready," helping to ensure that Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System's mission of providing quality care to our veterans, is fulfilled. Cherry, a Licensed Practical Nurse, is constantly sought out for her skills as a nurse and an educator.

Although assigned to the Ambulatory Care clinic, because of her clinical expertise and versatility, she frequently provides additional staff coverage either in the Life Support Unit, Intensive Care Unit or on the Medical/Surgical ward. However, her talents and dedication extends beyond service to the veterans.

As a BCLS instructor, she is also a valuable resource for the medical staff at



CAVHCS. Due to her flexibility with scheduling classes, on numerous occasions, she has been contacted by members of the medical team to provide Basic Cardiac Life Support recertification classes. She has held BCLS classes on weekends and after work hours to ensure that medical staff

members of CAVHCS are retained and working according to the guidelines of their practice. Because of Ms. Rodgers' dedication, CAVHCS is on target for achieving 100% compliance in regards to BCLS certification. Ms. Rodgers is worthy of recognition for her dedication and service to the veterans and staff members of CAVHCS.

Fore!(th) Annual Voluntary Services Golf Tournament



Images by: Robin Johnson

‘Ethics’

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Integrated Ethics works to improve ethical quality in three ways:

- ✓ By creating a step-by-step approach, called CASES, to ensure that all VA ethics consultations provide high quality information. (The CASES acronym stands for Clarify the consultation request; Assemble the relevant information; Synthesize the information; Explain the synthesis; and Support the Consultation Process);
- ✓ By creating a systematic approach, called ISSUES, to identify, prioritize, and address ethics quality concerns, thereby addressing underlying ethics issues. (ISSUES stands for Identify an issue; Study the issue; Select a strategy; Undertake a plan; Evaluate and adjust; and Sustain and spread;) and

- ✓ By calling on VHA leaders to make clear through their words and actions that ethics is a priority for them, clear expectations for ethical practice, to practice ethical decision making themselves, and to support their facility’s ethics program.

The National Center has created reference materials and video courses, assessment and administrative tools, communications materials and online learning modules, to provide a wide array of resources to help facilities successfully implement the Integrated Ethics program—a program that has already received considerable attention and interest from other health care systems in the United States and throughout the world.

“Integrated Ethics provides a new way of thinking about ethics in health care,” Dr. Fox concluded. “It will refocus VHA’s approach to ethics in health care. And it will empower our employees to ‘do the right thing,’ because it’s the right thing to do.”

Vet to Vet Celebrates Year of helping

The concept is straight forward. If you have a shared frame of reference – it’s easier to communicate. And, if you can communicate, it’s easier to convey that there’s something that works. This is the concept is at the very core of CABHCS’ Vet to Vet program.

“We’re able to talk to a veteran in a different way than a clinician,” explained Vet to Vet Volunteer Liaison Ed Drew during an interview with a local television station during the recent celebration on the Tuskegee Campus. “As a fellow member of the military, we have similar or maybe even shared experiences. Once a vet understands that he or she is with someone that also understands what they’re going through, and that we have a effective way to help, they’re more inclined to talk with a clinician who can then offer their expertise.”

During the celebration members of CAVHCS staff and local, supporting agencies offered words of encouragement and admiration for the Vet to Vet program’s success. However, some of the more moving testimonies were from veterans who have benefited from the program directly. During this part of the ceremony a flag was passed from generation to generation.

Veterans from World War II through Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom were willing to share their

personal experience. The common thread was the importance of the initial steps.

“The military is unique in the way people count on each other,” said Acting Chief of Psychology Services and Vet to Vet Staff Supervisor, Dr. John Campbell. “From boot camp through a deployment they are reliant upon each other to survive. This program is an extension of that relationship.” The teamwork involved with the Vet to Vet program is unique indeed. “The Veteran Liaisons are essential for this type of program to function,” explained Campbell. “They are the first step. They bring

veterans into the program, assist in counseling and then provide support once a veteran is discharged. In fact that’s probably the most enduring aspect of the Vet to Vet program. We may discharge a veteran, but

the Veteran Liaisons never discharge anyone. If they’re needed...they’re there for one another.



Images by: Eric Johnson

‘VFW’

From Page 1

While Hayden’s selection is a national honor, she only had to travel to Birmingham, Ala. to receive her award. “I was asked to go to the VFW State of Alabama meeting in Birmingham to receive the award,” said Hayden. “It was nice to see some faces I knew while I was there. They presented me with a wonderful award – plus a check for \$1,000 which was very nice too!

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“Then they asked me to say a few words, which surprised me a bit,” added Hayden. “But I told them how I feel about veterans and how proud I was of their sincerity as they continue to reach out to help their fellow veterans.”

Sincerity is a continual theme when it comes to Hayden’s efforts. With a son in the Air Force and another relative in the National Guard her sincere concern about veterans is easily recognizable. “What I do deals with someone’s health,” said Hayden. “I think we all have a few health issues and I do too, so I try to put myself in

their place when they come to me for assistance.”

When asked how a national honor like the 2007 Outstanding VA Health Care Employee of the Year makes her feel – professionally, Hayden’s response was equally sincere. “It feels wonderful,” said Hayden. “Recognition like this gives me a sense of confirmation that I’m on the right track and doing the right thing.”



Symbolic of our nation's heritage, Parris Island, Marine Corps Recruit Depot helps ring in America's birthday at the Peatross Parade Deck. The Parris Island Marine Band entertained hundreds of spectators who were also treated to a dazzling fireworks display.

July

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 Fourth of July	5 OIT Training Excel – Level 1 Formatting Cells 10:00 - Noon	6	7
8	9 OIT Training Excel Charts 3 1:30 – 2:30 pm	10 OIT Training Access Database Concepts & Tables 10:00 – Noon	11	12 OIT Training Access Queries 1 & 2 10:00 - Noon	13	14
15	16 OIT Training Access Reports 10:00 - Noon	17 OIT Training PowerPoint 1 10:00 - Noon	18	19		
22	23	24	25 OIT Training Vista Automated Access Request 9:30-11:00; 11:30-1:00; 1:30-3:00	26 OIT Training Outlook Folders 10:00 - Noon	27	28
29	30 OIT Training Outlook Calendar 10:00 - Noon	31 OIT Training Remedy - Change Management 10-11 am; 1-2 pm			Congratulations OIT for re-opening the newly re-modeled training room, located across from the Montgomery Campus Multi-purpose Room	

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. Submissions are not guaranteed to be published. Considerations will be made for propriety, promptness and print space.