



## CAVHCS celebrates Veterans Day...Week

Throughout the year there are national celebrations and observances that naturally fit for the Department of Veterans Affairs: none more so than Veterans Day. In keeping with tradition, in early November CAVHCS conducted the 59th Annual Tuskegee Veterans Day Parade and then a more somber commemoration in Montgomery.

"90 years ago today, on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the guns fell silent in Europe," said CAVHCS Interim Director Shirley Bealer explaining the significance of the date and time of the observance to more than 150 veterans, active duty and family members gathered outside the Montgomery VA Medical Center. "The Armistice ending World War I – the Great War, the War to End all Wars – was signed.

"...today is still Armistice Day," added Bealer. "...because the world has not yet freed itself of war, we meet today on Veterans Day to thank nearly 24 million living American veterans and



Veterans of all services and ages, active duty, Junior ROTC and family members from throughout the River Region attended CAVHCS' Veterans Day Commemoration November 11th that featured patriotic music from the Capitol Sounds Band, the laying of a Memorial Wreath, the playing of taps and a 21-gun Salute.

honor the service of those of generations past who protected and preserved our nation."

Veterans Day activities at CAVHCS were held throughout the week leading to the ceremony in Montgomery. Many of the week's activities like the crowning of Mr. and Ms. CAVHCS and a Coronation Dance were directed toward inpatient and outpatient veterans enrolled at CAVHCS. Other events like Tuskegee's hosting of the 59th Annual Veterans Day and a Women's Wellness Veterans Program in Montgomery were public events involving the Tuskegee and Montgomery communities.

Tuskegee Airman, Colonel (USAF Ret.) Ernest Craigwell, Jr.,

Please see 'Veterans'

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### Travel Reimbursement

## SecVa Announces Increases for Eligible Veterans

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on November 17, that eligible veterans will see an increase in the mileage reimbursement they receive for travel to VA facilities for medical care.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake announced today that he will use his authority to raise the mileage reimbursement from the 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile for all eligible veterans.

"We owe it to our veterans to give them the best care possible," said Peake. "The increase will once again provide assistance to our veterans, especially in these difficult economic times, to help offset gasoline costs and to assist veterans with access to the VA's world-class health system."

Congress, which mandates such increases, recently provided funding to VA to increase the reimbursement rate, which goes into effect on November 17,

2008. Service connected veterans, veterans receiving VA pensions, and veterans with low incomes are eligible for the reimbursement.

"As I have travelled the country and spoken with many of our veterans, they have expressed the need for such an increase," added Peake. "We are pleased to be able to provide them with the increase needed and we will continue to work with our veterans to ensure they receive the quality care they need."

While increasing the payment, the current deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements will remain frozen at \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, and capped at a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. On January 9, 2009, these deductibles will decrease to \$3 for a one way trip, \$6 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$16 per calendar month. Deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

# From the Director

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

The holiday season is upon us and there are a few areas I'd like to discuss as we first celebrate Thanksgiving. I hope all of you have a happy, healthy and safe holiday season. We all have plenty to be thankful for as an organization, but I hope each and every one of you can spend the time to realize and recognize what you have to be thankful for – individually.

We just celebrated Veterans Day and last month we recognized Customer Service Month. So I hope these observances will serve to lead us all comfortably into taking the time to let our veterans know that their service to our nation is something we are all thankful for. In fact, especially during the holiday season, I'd like to challenge you to do more than verbalize your appreciation. I hope all of us will find some way to demonstrate our appreciation.

During this season of gatherings and expressions of love and appreciation we must be even more vigilant to

recognizing when co-workers, loved ones and of course veterans are down. As we know the holidays can unfortunately amplify these feelings and we need to be both tolerant and mindful of those who may need our help and attention.

Finally, the Employee Association is planning on holding a Holiday Celebration the night of December 20<sup>th</sup> in Montgomery's RSA Activity Center. Tickets are already on sale, and I hope to all of you there. Happy Thanksgiving.



Enjoying the 59th Annual Tuskegee VAMC Veterans Day Parade, Ms. Bealer is joined by Grand Marshal Col (USAF Ret.) Ernest Craigwell - a Tuskegee Airman.

## CAVHCS All-Stars

I was returning to my office a few minutes ago when a gentleman extended his hand and state, "Ma'am, I just wanted to tell you my experience here has been phenomenal." I invited him to my office and he stated, "The horror stories are a lie especially for this place. Courtesy is good. Service is good. This is a good place." I thanked him for the compliment and reiterated our mission. His name is Robert (Bob) C. This was his first visit to CAVHCS. In perusing his chart he had an audiology C&P today. -- Iva Davis, LMSW, ACSW Chief, Social Work Service

### To Whom It May Concern,

Fannie O'Neal is an excellent worker and since my stay here from September 8, 2008 until September 26, 2008, she has gone far and beyond her duties to serve the Veterans. I would like to express my gratitude of thanks. -- Shalawn R.

Mary A. Meadows from Radiology was extremely kind and compassionate during my X-ray. This was my second trip. My first visit was very brusque and painful. She was very patient and put me at ease. Hazel and George from the Emergency Room were also compassionate and very professional. It is so nice to be treated like a patient instead of just a number. Despite my injury they made this as pleasant as an experience as possible. Thank you! -- Christy T.

In an age when most of us have come to expect no more than minimal expertise and general indifference from customer service people, it is a truly rare and pleasurable experience to deal with the staff of the Central Alabama Veteran's Health Care facility in Tuskegee, Alabama. I have visited the facility for one type of service or another on 6-8 occasions over the past several years and never once has my treatment been anything but courteous and helpful. My recent visit on November 3<sup>rd</sup> was an exception only in the sense that the service I received on that day was so special that I feel compelled to pass along my appreciation to you.

I saw Mrs. Deborah Ellis of the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation unit in order to be evaluated for a motor driven scooter. Mrs. Ellis explored and discussed with me my relevant medical history. She asked many questions in order to ensure that she was fully aware of why the scooter would be important to me. Her understanding of my need, her knowledge of systems available to deal with that need, and her kind and empathetic manner were truly remarkable. She unquestionably epitomizes what customer service should be all about.

I am truly grateful for all the care and assistance that I have received at your facility, and I am particularly grateful to Mrs. Ellis for her kindness, her knowledge, and her compassion. -- Robert H.

## The CAVHCS Salute

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## Employees of the Month



**Montgomery Campus  
Barbara Geneux, LPN**

I would like to recommend Barbara Geneux, LPN for the Employee of the Month. I have worked with her or around her for almost 18 years.

She is the kind of person that looks out for others and treats everyone the same. She is considered family by many patients. She works closely with her Provider, and forms a tight professional bond as they work together as a team to give quality care to all her patients.

Her assignment has changed many times due to doctors retiring or leaving, she has worked with eight different providers in the last three years. She likes to promote a family atmosphere in whatever area she is working in and willingly helps anyone who asks.

When she worked in the inpatient setting she would cut hair for the unkempt veterans and keep them clean shaven to help bolster their self esteem. She is a high energy person who comes to the VA to work; she has the initiative and insight to help other co-workers before they ask. Her patients are comfortable with her and know that they have someone looking out for them, this helps them to trust the doctor, and the VA system, and therefore they are more compliant with their medications and treatments. She is an asset to the VA; she pours herself into her job and is a joy to work with.

## Rendering Salutes more accessible

WASHINGTON -- Veterans and active-duty military not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the national anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect this month.

"The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in the nation's armed forces," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake was quoted in a recent military trade publication. "This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our nation's flag."

The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the national anthem. Last year's provision also applied to members of the armed forces while not in uniform.

Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the national anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official head gear.



**Tuskegee Campus  
Mattie Davie, LPN**

I am recommending Ms. Mattie Davie for Employee of the Month. Ms. Davis is one of our most experienced Licensed Practical Nurses. Ms. Davie has been with CAVHCS for twenty-seven years. She has worked on many units. She was assigned to 120-3W and after consolidation of the units, volunteered to be assigned to Ward 129-1B. Mrs. Davie delivers high quality nursing care to a diverse population of residents with various disabilities and diseases. She assists the RN in numerous duties and serves as co-leader when the RN is off the unit. She assists with the orientation of new staff to the unit and provides excellent customer services to the residents and their family members.

Mrs. Davie establishes constructive relationships with individual residents to elicit feelings and attitudes and to promote positive relationships, communication and socialization skills. Mrs. Davie is to be commended for the commitment to quality care of our nursing home residents, as well as the professionalism and courteous manner she has demonstrated as Staff Nurse of 129-1B.



The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel during the raising, lowering or passing of the flag was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which took effect Jan. 28, 2008.

Meanwhile, the American Legion has opposed the saluting of the U.S. Flag when it is being raised, lowered or is in passing by those who are not in uniform. At its National Convention in Phoenix last August, the Legion passed a resolution against the practice, saying that "it causes confusion leading to breaches of flag etiquette with regard to proper conduct during the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance."

In responding to numerous phone calls and e-mails on the issue, the Legion's Americanism Commission offers this advice: "The law does allow veterans to render the right hand salute, but does not mandate it. If you feel uncomfortable in any situation where the flag is being raised, lowered or is passing in review, the traditional right hand over the heart — with hat removed — is still a viable and very respectful alternative to the new law."

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## 'Veterans'

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served as Grand Marshal of the parade and Keynote Speaker of the commemorative ceremony.

"Veterans Day is about family to me," said Craigwell during the Veterans Day ceremony attended by veterans of all services, Junior ROTC units and active duty members from Maxwell Air Force Base – including the Maxwell Honor Guard. "Everybody involved in serving our nation is of equal importance. I may have been the one flying combat missions, but without the support of mechanics, supply lines and even loved ones at home we would not have been able to do what we did.

"Without support from every level we would not have been able to succeed," added Craigwell, who was awarded 26 medals of valor during more than 400 combat missions as a fighter pilot. "It's important that we remember all those who served and came home; those who served and did not come home and those who served and returned home, but have suffered either physically or mentally to the point that they will never be the same."

Craigwell demonstrated his commitment to that ideal by visiting inpatient veterans in Mental Health and the Community Living Center prior to the Tuskegee parade and again in the inpatient clinic prior to the Veterans Day Ceremony in Montgomery.

During the Veterans Day ceremony those in attendance learned about how the Department of Veterans Affairs has looked at past experience to guide how best to respond to the needs of veterans today.

"Just as millions of veterans of the World War II changed the face of the VA, so too are today's returning combat veterans," Bealer said.

"Ensuring their smooth transition from military to civilian life is a VA priority. We reach out to them rather than wait for them to come to us. We don't wait for problems to develop. We take action to anticipate and prevent crises; like screening veterans who enroll in VA health care for the wounds of a new kind of war – traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder.

We are also working hard to meet the needs of growing numbers of women veterans. Fourteen percent of

today's active duty soldiers serving along side men as pilots, gunners, warship commanders and military police are women. We in VA will see them in increasing numbers in the coming years. Our goal is full-service women's primary care at every VA medical center. Here at CAVHCS we already have primary Care Clinics that cater our Women's Wellness program. Our women veterans will not be forgotten.

Nor will we forget our homeless veterans. This past Friday CAVHCS co-sponsored a Supermarket of VA Benefits with the Alabama State Veterans Affairs Department in Dothan. VA has partnered with other federal agencies and



nonprofit organizations to coordinate a comprehensive program designed to not only get homeless veterans off the street, but to get them into programs that will restore their health, rekindle their spirits and give them the skills and jobs they need and want.

Since 2001, VA health care funding has increased more than 100 percent. Three million more veterans are enrolled in VA health care.

Combat veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan are entitled to five years of free VA health care.

Well over 700 community-based outpatient clinics have been established. One of those included a new VA Wiregrass Outpatient Clinic on Fort Rucker. And VA will also increase the number of Vets Centers significantly. In fact - the new Montgomery Vet Center on Atlanta Highway held an Open House just last night.

This coming year, VA will introduce a new GI Bill education benefit program rivaling the original passed in 1944; one that offers our Post-9/11 veterans a generous and flexible path to a college degree at any public school.

And, VA will honor our final promise to veterans, as well. Twelve new national cemeteries have been dedicated to enshrine our nation's heroes throughout this century."

The Veterans Day commemoration featured patriotic music performed by the Capitol Sounds Band, a placement of a Memorial Wreath and crisp presentations of Colors, a 21-Gun Salute and Taps by the Maxwell Color Guard.

Before ending the ceremony, Ms. Bealer surprised Craigwell with a presentation of CAVHCS award. "I do have one more form of recognition to present," Bealer said. "And,

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while it's not designed to compete with a Congressional Gold Medal – it is designed to recognize the individual embodiment of the untiring commitment and dedication to service displayed by its namesake.

“Dr. Toussaint T. Tildon began service in the newly built Tuskegee VA Medical Center in 1923, shortly after graduating from Harvard Medical School. For the next 34 years he cared for our nation’s heroes. During that time he ascended through the ranks before retiring after serving as director for almost a decade.

Dr. Tildon’s devotion to duty, community and compassionate treatment of the human spirit serves to inspire us today as it most assuredly did when he served. Recipients of this award are recognized for sharing Dr. Tildon’s sense of purpose, resolve and professionalism. It is my distinct privilege to present the Tildon Memorial Award of Service to Colonel Ernest Craigwell, Jr.”





Col. (USAT Ret.) Earnest Craigwell, Jr. receives the CAVHCS Dr. Toussaint T. Tildon Memorial Award of Service from Interim Director Ms. Shirley Bealer (l,r) during the CAVHCS Veterans Day Commemoration November 11.

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# December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
 7 <b>National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (1941)</b>	8	<b>Islamic New Year</b> 	9 10 <b>Human Rights Week</b>	11 12 <b>December 10-17</b>	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
 21 <b>Winter Begins</b>	<b>Chanukah Begins at Sundown (Continues thru Dec. 29)</b> 	22 23 	24	<b>Merry Christmas</b> 	<b>Kwanzaa Begins (Dec. 26-Jan. 1)</b> 	25 26 27
28	29	30	<b>New Year's Eve</b> 			<b>Exercising a well-earned Right</b> CAVHCS Voluntary Service & Transportation assist patients from the Community Living Center to vote November 4.

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.