



Wiregrass Outpatient Clinic Opens on Ft. Rucker

Veterans in Alabama's Southeastern, "Wiregrass" Region saw their medical support double with the recent opening of Central Alabama Veteran's Health Care System's (CAVHCS) Wiregrass Outpatient Clinic, located in Lyster Army Health Clinic, Fort Rucker, Ala., and also learned that the expansion of services in their area will continue.

"Last August we promised veterans that we would get as many of them off the road to Montgomery and Tuskegee as possible by expanding services right here in the Wiregrass Region," said Ms. Shirley Bealer, CAVHCS Acting Director. "Today we're delivering on that promise. In fact, we're committed to even further expansion, because we've also received approval for a \$2.9 million Joint Incentive Fund (JIF) project to renovate

additional spaces here in the Lyster Army Health Clinic."

The Joint Incentive Fund program has been an effective means of expediting CAVHCS' responsiveness to



Ozark's Wilbur Sullivan, the first patient seen at the new Wiregrass Clinic, has his vital signs taken by Michelle Medley, LPN.

the Wiregrass Region veteran community's expanding needs. "The Wiregrass Region is growing and our expansion efforts are designed to keep up with the veteran population in the entire region," said Dr. Robert Ratliff, Interim Director, Birmingham VA Medical Center - who is expected to return to his duties as CAVHCS Director following the ongoing process to hire a new Birmingham Director. "Our approach has been to expand our existing sharing agreement, which has been working very well, and access JIF funding. Together, we've been able to shorten what is usually at least a 24 to 36 month process."

"The 2003 Defense Authorization Act required that DoD

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Celebrating History

Tuskegee Looks Back on 85 Years of Service

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) recently celebrated 85 years of service to our nation's heroes at Tuskegee VA Medical Center (VAMC) in a ceremony that featured choral performances, fellowship with community leadership and the special recognition of Tuskegee's rich heritage.

"Today we celebrate 85 years of service," said CAVHCS Acting Director Shirley Bealer. "It's almost impossible to fathom the lives involved during that timeframe. From veterans and providers to support staff and family members, Tuskegee Veterans Medical Center has directly affected literally tens of thousands of lives."

Tuskegee VA Hospital's history began following World War I, when the Treasury Department Hospitalization Committee found that it was almost impossible to secure proper treatment for Negro soldiers in mixed hospitals for war veterans in the South.

Congress authorized the U.S. Treasury to build a hospital solely for the care of more than 300,000 black

veterans in the South. The hospital, which was constructed at a cost of \$2,500,000, featured 27 permanent buildings on a total of 464 acres of land adjoining the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute campus.

The dedication ceremony of the Tuskegee VA Hospital, which was then known as the Hospital for Sick and Injured Colored World War Veterans occurred on February 12, 1923. The institution was passed, in authority, from the U.S. Treasury to the U.S. Veterans Bureau (which later became the Veterans Administration on July 21, 1930).

"Despite it's origin in a turbulent, segregated South - Tuskegee has grown with our nation," said Bealer. "Together, we have evolved to provide both opportunity and quality care to our nation's heroes regardless of race, creed, sex or socio-economic status."

The 2008 ceremony featured a new award presented in recognition Dr. Toussaint T. Tildon, one of the first six African

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From the Director

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

It's been awhile since I was able to "speak" with you through the Salute, and we have all been extremely busy accomplishing a wide range of goals.

Flu Season has come and gone and we literally came within one-tenth of a percentage point of meeting our CAVHCS-wide goal. Your hard work - whether during remote outreach efforts, communicating to veterans the importance of receiving vaccinations and following up and ensuring veterans were vaccinated - was both extraordinary and successful.

Extraordinary efforts were also brought to bear to condense a process that is often 24-36 months down to a fraction of that time, which allowed us to successfully open our new Wiregrass Clinic in Fort Rucker, Ala. on March 21. Many of you worked long and hard to ensure our grand opening was the unqualified success that it was. And, while that was extraordinary in and of itself, the level of teamwork and mutual support to problem solve and get things done was truly amazing. Judging by the turnout at the grand opening ceremony it's clear that the veteran community in the Wiregrass Region is as impressed with your efforts as I am.

Dr. Biro was equally impressed with your efforts to host the VHA All Alabama Stakeholders meeting in Tuskegee's theater March, 20. Hosting stakeholders on behalf of the VISN is always an undertaking, but your commitment to success was readily evident. Congressional staff, VAMC Directors, VISN staff and most importantly several of our veterans all approached me to sign your praises.

In upcoming months I'm sure you'll continue to raise the bar. In the next few weeks you'll see a new product called the CAVHCS Plan of the Week. This is in support of our continuing effort to bolster communication and focus on what will help us achieve our collective goal of not needing to be the biggest, we want to be the best. Speaking of which, we have a new feature in this edition of the Salute – The CAVHCS All-Stars. It's about you at your best.



Ms. Bealer presents an Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Ken Carter following the Community Living Center's recent Flag Dedication Ceremony

CAVHCS All-Stars

"Dear Ms. Fillion: I would like to take this opportunity to share my appreciation for the services I received March 14, 2008 at the VA Clinic in Columbus, Ga. I would like to extend a special thank you to: Bruce Cline, Patricia Todd, Maria Acobe, Sylvia Funderburk, Neicy Hicks, Java Phillips and Yvonne Dyson."

"Thank you. I brought a veteran into the Emergency Room. She was not registered yet. Your staff (Elizabeth Baldwin) provided expert assistance. She helped get my friend registered in the system. She was sp pleasant to deal with. This is what the VA system is about. Your staff is fantastic."

"Lindsay Osborne is truly a professional and very good at what he's doing. I didn't feel very good at this time, and not only did he uplift me, he also did a very good job in taking blood from my arm. I didn't even feel it. Thank You VA."

This letter of appreciation is intended to bring credit upon several key individuals whom I have had the great pleasure of being served by. Yesterday I had the most thorough, professional medical treatment I'd ever received in my entire life, while undergoing a Compensation and pension examination at the Tuskegee VAMC. All of the personnel I came in contact with, from the receptionist; Mrs. Pace, to the actual C&P examiner; Dr. Gayle, demonstrated the height of competence and courtesy.

On March 14 Mrs. Jacqueline Ross in Eligibility Office did an outstanding job . She was Courteous, very prompt and compassionate beyond the call of duty. She should be commended.

Ms. Beverly Carter, VISTA System Manager, was a co-author of an abstract, entitled Patient Satisfaction Survey: Understanding the Patients Perspective that was submitted to the recent International Conference on Communication in Healthcare and accepted as a post board exhibit. Congratulations Ms. Carter.



Accredited by
The Joint Commission

The CAVHCS Salute

The CAVHCS Salute is produced by the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care (CAVHCS) Public Affairs Office. CAVHCS Salute is an unofficial, internal communications publication.

Acting 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

Employee of the Month



April
Ms. Kimberly Watson
Social Work Service

April
Ms. Tonya Collins, LPN
Outpatient MHC

No
Picture
Available

March
Mr. Rickey Brown
Nutrician and Food Service



March
Ms. Jeannie P. Newman
Imaging Service



February
Ms. Tonnetta Flennoy, RN
*Nurse Case Manager,
OIF/OEF Veterans*

February
Mr. Larry Ray
Special Exam Unit



January
Ms. Lesia Anthony, LPN
Ambulatory Care



January
Ms. Rhonda Grimes
Business Office



April is Occupational Therapy Month

By: Linda Echols, OTR/L
Occupational Therapy Supervisor

Each year in April, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students in practice, education, research, and science host a month long celebration showcasing the importance of Occupational Therapy. It's the time of year when everyone in the profession goes out of their way to tell the world about what we do.

The person needing occupational therapy could be your father or mother facing changes because of aging. It could be your child, frustrated with being unable to do the seemingly simple things the other children at school can do. It could be you or your spouse coping with illness or the results of an accident. It could be anyone who, for whatever reason, can't do the things in life they want or need to do.

Occupational therapy focuses on enabling people to do the activities of daily life. The very word "occupation" – means an activity which "occupies" our time. A child in CAVHCS Salute - April 2008 Edition

grade school has the occupation of learning. An adult may need to learn how to write after a traumatic injury. A senior may want to continue driving safely in order to stay active in their community. All of these things are occupations and participating in them is vital to maintaining overall health and wellness.

Occupational therapy is skilled therapy based on performing the meaningful activities of daily life (self-care skills, education, work, or social interaction), dedicated to the improvement and maximization of function, performance and independence, despite impairments or limitations in physical or mental functioning. Occupational therapy is for individuals of all ages – to prevent injury, restore function and reduce disability to help them perform daily tasks at home and at school, at work and at play.

To find out more about occupational therapy and how it might help you, visit your local CAVHCS OT department or the American Occupational Therapy Association's Web site, www.aota.org.

Catching up from while we were gone

Images by:
Eric Johnson,
Robin Johnson



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and VA establish a Joint Incentives Program, which in turn created a DoD-VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund," explained Col. Michael S. Kaminski, Commander, U.S. Army Aeromedical Center, Fort Rucker. "The intent of the program was to identify, fund and evaluate creative local, regional and national sharing incentives. The additional \$2.9 million renovation project will result in expanded services to active duty soldiers as well as our veterans."

New Wiregrass Region veteran enrollees will be directed to enroll at the new Wiregrass Outpatient Clinic aboard Fort Rucker. Current enrollees from throughout the entire region will also have an opportunity to enroll in the new clinic as well starting Monday. All they have to do is visit the new clinic and fill out an available form to transfer enrollment.

One element of the CAVHCS service expansion that is of particular importance to veterans from the southern part of the Wiregrass Region's Dothan area is the opening of a

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American doctors to begin treating veterans in Tuskegee. Dr. Tildon arrived in Tuskegee after graduating from Harvard with a Medical Degree and started his career as a young doctor working in psychiatry. Thirty four years of dedicated service later, Dr. Tildon retired after serving for nine years as Tuskegee's Director.

"In 1923 young African American health care professionals were drawn to Tuskegee," said Bealer. "They knew the nation would take stock in their ability and they knew they would not only be able to provide care for black veterans, but they would also serve as beacons for other young African Americans. Their commitment and professionalism would be scrutinized, measured and compared to the highest standards."

First to receive The Dr. Toussaint T. Tildon Memorial Award for Outstanding Service was Air Force Master Sgt. (Ret.) Leon Crayton. "On behalf of the Tuskegee Airmen, Tuskegee Chapter I accept this presentation," said Crayton. "Time is a very important factor. It is written in the scripture, that there is a time for everything. So, if I were to leave you with a thought it would be this. When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. So God bless America. God bless Tuskegee and God Bless this VA institution."

According to the citation on the Tildon Memorial Award, "Recipients of this award are recognized for sharing Dr. Tildon's sense of purpose, resolve and professionalism. It is intended that in doing so, bestowing this award will not only serve as a tangible connection to a proud heritage, but

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new contract to operate the existing Community Based Clinic in Dothan to prospective contract providers. "One of the three primary promises we make to all veterans is to expand while maintaining services," explained Bealer. "Today's opening, while simultaneously maintaining services in Dothan, allows us to deliver on that promise."

"We've been able to be responsive to Wiregrass veterans," added Ratliff, who spoke with hundreds of veterans in a Town Hall meeting in the Dothan Opera House last March. "Today's grand opening, as well as the upcoming continued expansion, is a direct result of a concerted effort to continually identify and resolve veteran needs."

Michelle Medley, LPN takes the vital signs of the first patient seen at the new Wiregrass Clinic.



will also serve to point the way as we move forward. 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."

In keeping with the design to point toward a bright future, next to receive the Tildon Memorial Award were the CAVHCS 2007 Employees of the Year, Mrs. Donzella Bozeman and Mr. Billy Cook. "I was almost brought to tears," said Cook. "The ceremony itself was wonderful, but when they gave me this award...it was touching. To serve for 34 years here at Tuskegee - to do anything for that long - Dr. Tildon must have loved what he was doing. I think that's something we have in common."

For one attendee the ceremony was equally moving. "I thought the ceremony was just beautiful, but to me it was so special, because my father was Toussaint T. Tildon," said Elizabeth Tildon Wood. "For him to be honored like this today was just so moving."

The presentation of the inaugural Tildon Memorial Award was a surprise to Dr. Tildon's third child and served to culminate an emotional morning. "Nobody told me, but I was just so happy," said Wood. "I didn't have any idea. I walked in to the auditorium and saw a picture of daddy at his desk with some other gentlemen. I haven't looked at the program yet. I just knew I'd cry if I read the program. I'm waiting until I get home."

"For the past eight decades we have been woven into the very fabric of the Tuskegee and Central Alabama communities," said Bealer. "Today - as we celebrate a rich heritage of service, we can also look forward with confidence that our future is bright. That future is not only ensured by our staff's commitment to excellence, but also by our established regional centers of excellence in Geriatric, long-term care, Rehabilitation and Mental Health."

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North Kingstown, R.I. (June 26, 2003)
 The U.S. Navy's Flight Demonstration Team, "Blue Angels," soars over Old Glory as they perform the "Delta Formation" during an air show in North Kingstown, R.I., celebrating the centennial of powered flight. U.S. Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Saul McSween. (RELEASED)

April

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5th Annual Voluntary Services Golf Tournament (May, 2nd) Occupational Therapy Month (www.promoteot.org) Stress Awareness Month (www.stresscure.com)		1	2		3	4
6	7 World Health Day www.who.int/world-health-day	8	National Former POW Recognition Day	10 National Radiology Nurses Day (www.arna.net)	11	12
National Public Health Week --		www.apha.org				
13		14	15	16	17	18
Health Information Privacy and Security Week --		www.ahima.org		Patient Advocacy Week		
20	21 Medical Laboratory Professionals Week	Earth Day	23 Administrative Professionals Day www.iaap-hq.org	Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work Day	25	26
27	28	29	30	Alcohol Awareness Month (www.ncadd.org) Cancer Control Month (www.cancer.org) Injury Prevention Month (www.orthoinfo.org) Counseling Awareness Month (www.counseling.org) National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (www.rainn.org)		
National Healthcare Volunteer Week						

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.