



Veterans, DoD benefit from 'Healthy' Relationship

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) and the 42nd Medical Group, Maxwell AFB have enjoyed a long, healthy relationship of professional support, but when a new Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) unit came on line recently in the Montgomery VA Medical Center, that relationship grew stronger, because Active Duty service members and Veterans alike will be able take advantage of what has become the gold standard for diagnostic imaging.

"Today's opening of the new MRI unit represents a tangible example of the commitment made by the Department of Defense and VA to actively seek opportunities to work together to directly benefit our beneficiaries," said Ms. Shirley Bealer, acting director of CAVHCS. "We will literally co-operate this unit for the

benefit of Active Duty servicemembers, Veterans and even the taxpayer - by realizing a cost avoidance of \$1 million dollars annually.

In the past both medical providers were dealing with the constantly growing expense of



Col. Brian Witt, commanding officer, 42nd Medical Group, signs the MRI sharing agreement as CAVHCS Acting Director, Ms. Shirley Bealer looks on.

outsourcing MRIs in the community to the tune of more than \$1.4 million annually. Faced with the daunting task of justifying a cost of more than \$3.5 million to fund and staff an MRI unit exclusively, leadership pooled their requirements and accessed the Joint Incentive Fund - a fund established with a collaborative project like this in mind.

The 2003 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) required the establishment of a Joint Incentive Fund (JIF) to provide incentives for creating innovative DoD/VA sharing initiatives at the facility, regional and national levels. DoD and VA contributed \$15M each to the Fund in FY04; and a similar

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CAVHCS Mental Health defining Recovery

By: Bernice Baharanyi

CAVHCS Mental Health Services

Mental Health Services at CAVHCS is being transformed to a more recovery-oriented model of care. This move is part of the VA Undersecretary's Action agenda "Achieving the Promise, Transforming Mental Health Care in the VA system."

CAVHCS is in the process of implementing this national commitment on the local level by requiring that all Mental Health Services and programs be recovery oriented. Although recovery in mental health has been around a long time, there remains a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion about exactly what recovery in mental health means.

In order to understand recovery in mental health, one must first differentiate between mental health recovery and recovery as defined in physical medicine. Mental health recovery does not necessarily equate to cure, or symptom alleviation, or return to pre-morbid state of being. Rather, recovery in mental health is a process and a treatment philosophy that is driven by the belief that each individual has the right and responsibility to be actively involved in his/her care.

In 1999 the Surgeon General stated that recovery-oriented care is first and foremost patient driven and patient focused with recovery as its primary aim. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

(SAMHSA) has defined recovery as "a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with mental health problems to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential."

CAVHCS Mental Health (MH) is well on its way to incorporating recovery-oriented activities into the various treatment programs. Prior to the Under Secretary's Action Agenda CAVHCS MH had already developed several programs based on the recovery principles and model.

New recovery-oriented initiatives continue to be introduced

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From the Director

Robert W. Ratliff, PH.D., FACHE

It's hard to believe that we're rapidly closing in on the end of the year. We've all been so engaged that time seems to fly by. Usually, this is the time of year to look back at our accomplishments and laud those who have achieved so many goals. However, I am experienced enough to know that listing accomplishments and identifying personnel – while tempting – is far too slippery a slope. I will not kick myself later for omitting someone's noteworthy accomplishment.

I will take this opportunity to thank each of you for putting us on the right track. Your commitment to excellence is a joy to see. Our collective commitment to our three promises, as well as our daily, routine duties is clearly evident. We've had outside sources validate your efforts time and time again, and I am proud to say we are steadily moving toward our overall goal of being the best.

As we head into the New Year we will continue to find ways to provide services where veterans live, while identifying more opportunities to work with our Department of Defense medical counterparts to identify ways to work together to provide a Seamless Transition for new veterans moving from active duty to the VA.

One examples of this strategy realizing direct benefits are the grand opening of our new MRI unit that you'll read about in this edition of Salute.

Another success story is the opening of our new Primary Care clinic in the Lyster Army Health Clinic aboard Fort Rucker sometime after the New Year.

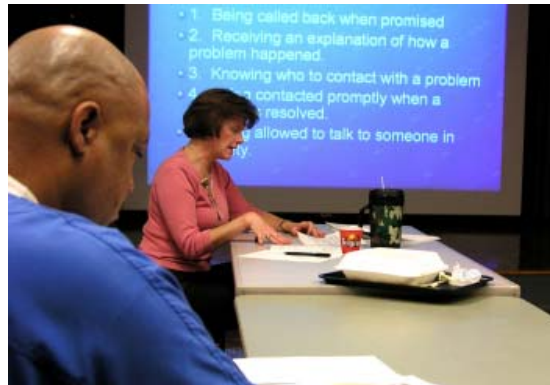
We will also build upon our re-commitment to patient satisfaction. Our

first Customer Service Agent (CSA) training is now complete. And, while they will represent an approach to resolve issues at the lowest level possible, the fact is that each of us is empowered to resolve issues without engaging a Customer Service Agent. In fact, each of us has the responsibility to do exactly that.

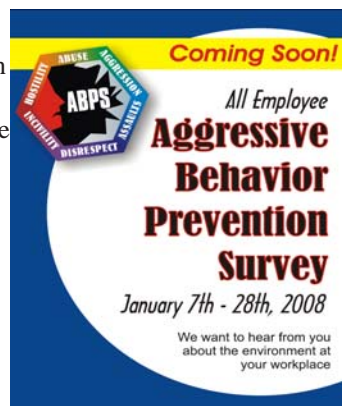
Meanwhile, we all have an upcoming survey that is akin to the All Employee Survey. The Aggressive Behavior Prevention Survey is part of an ongoing effort to evaluate workplace intervention programs, to assess employees' satisfaction, and to eliminate barriers to employees'

effectiveness, as we become an employer of choice for our employees. Much like the All Employee Survey, there will be a link on our intranet site for you to take the survey. Completing the survey is completely voluntary and your help in responding to the survey is very important. By voicing your opinion you can influence your work destiny and assist all of us in making changes where needed. Your responses are confidential and anonymous.

Finally, many of you have not seen a great deal of me of late, because I've been wearing a few extra hats. During the past few weeks I've been sitting in for Dr. Biro at network headquarters, and it looks like I will remain out of the office for a little longer. Longtime Birmingham Director, Y.C. Parris recently decided to retire from VA service. Starting January 3, I'll be detailed to serve as Acting Director, Birmingham VAMC while his successor is identified. This is not a transfer, but a detail designed to end as soon as the hiring process is successfully completed. While I am detailed to Birmingham Ms. Bealer will serve as Acting Director here at CAVHCS. I fully expect that Ms. Bealer will be able to count on your continued support and professionalism. And, I also fully expect that we will carry our momentum into the New Year. As you've heard me say – we don't want to be the biggest, we want to be the best!



Ms. LaDonna Golden facilitates a recent CSA training in Montgomery VAMC Multi-purpose room.



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EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

MRS. DONZELLA BOZEMAN

Vocational Rehabilitation

Tuskegee Campus



Mrs. Donzella Bozeman, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, was selected as the Employee of the Month for October 2007 for the Tuskegee Campus. Mrs. Bozeman was recognized for helping a female veteran who was experiencing some domestic issues at the time. She went above and beyond her assigned duties as well as risk her own safety to provide the needed support and assistance to this veteran.

Mrs. Bozeman began her federal career, April 12, 1982, as a Nursing Assistant at the Tuskegee VA Medical Center. In June 1984, she became a Licensed Practical Nurse and in January 2004, she was promoted to her current position as Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist in Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences.

Married to Charlie Bozeman, Jr., Physical Therapist Assistant she enjoys traveling and music.

MR. BILLY COOK

Housekeeping Aid

Montgomery Campus



Mr. Billy Cook, Housekeeping Aide, was selected as the Employee of the Month for September 2007 for the Montgomery Campus. Mr. Cook was recognized for his exceptional job performance, dedication, caring, friendly and cooperative demeanor by co-workers, supervisors, veterans and family members. Mr. Cook is a highly motivated employee that is committed to and fully supports the Health Care System's standard of excellence by consistently exceeding expectations.

Mr. Cook was in the United States Army from 1972 to 1986. After leaving the army, Mr. Cook took a federal civilian position in 1989 in Germany as a Chef. He lived in Germany for 15 years and returned to the United States and settled in Chicago, Illinois for three years working as a Chef in five star hotels. Mr. Cook joined the CAVHCS family, May 18, 2003, as a Housekeeping Aid.

He enjoys playing basket ball, bowling and tennis.

Employee of the Month

MS. TONYA SPANN-DAVIS

Nurse Manager

Geriatrics, Long-Term Care

Tuskegee Campus

No image available

Ms. Spann-Davis leads by example to fulfill the many obligations of the Nurse Manager position. On any given day, she can be seen feeding our veterans, giving them personal care, or answering to any other needs they may have.

In addition to being Nurse Manager of 129-1B and CIIRP/Rehab, in September 2007, she was given the added responsibility of Acting Nurse Manager on 129-GB, our Dementia unit.

Approximately three weeks ago, Ms. Davis fractured her ankle when she ran outside to assist one of our veterans. The injury, however, has not slowed her dedication to our veterans, her position, nor her staff. She can be seen each day using a motorized chair going from one destination to another.

MS. BRENDA SWEENEY

Management Program Assistant

Primary Care

Montgomery Campus



Ms. Swinney was recognized by a Veteran Service Officer in Houston County for her willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty in ensuring the enrollment and needs of veterans in the Dothan area are being met. Below are some of the comments.

"Her willingness to view each veteran as a person and not a number has endeared her to not only the veterans that she serves but the staff of both the Dothan Clinic and the Service Officers."

"No matter what time of day or what day of the week 'Brenda' is there with a smile and a professional attitude to get the job done".

"She is not a person that makes excuses but continually amazes me with her effort and passion for veterans. I could think of no one more deserving than her, because she is truly a "Woman that has changed America."

'Recovery'

From Page 1

into the various MH programs. One example is the Veteran Industries (VI) Program, under the day-to-day operation of Ms. Valarie Ledyard-King, Manager and the ACOS, Mental Health Dr. Arthur Soule, III.

One of the latest components of VI is the Compensated Work Therapy/ Transition Residence (CWT/TR) Program, which utilizes Motivational Interviewing and the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP). Motivational interviewing is a counseling technique that is patient centered and patient focused, goal directed and carried out in a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect. WRAP is a self help program developed by Mary Ellen Copeland, PhD designed to help veterans learn to monitor uncomfortable

and distressing symptoms, and plan responses in order to reduce or modify those symptoms.

Both treatment models are run by Shawn Clark, PhD and are designed to encourage and empower veterans to take responsibility for their own progress and recovery. Dr. Clark meets veterans in a group setting to help them incorporate the ideas and practices of WRAP and motivational interviewing.

CAVHCS' Supported Employment (SE) Program also operates under the VI umbrella with Ms. Donzella Bozeman serving as the Employment Specialist (ES), and Mr. Arthur Powell, as the Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS). SE, which is an evidence-based practice that helps people with serious mental illness (SMI) identify, acquire, and maintain competitive employment in their local communities.

SE has been shown through research and best practice models to be an effective way to help veterans in their recovery. The program helps these veterans by providing rapid job searches to acquire competitive employment within their local community. This treatment modality helps to promote self sufficiency, self determination, and reduces stigma by enabling veterans to work side by side with others in the work force.

This program has helped veterans manage their mental health symptoms to the point of being able to obtain full time employment, and becoming a productive contributing member of his community. This directly illustrates the SAMSHA meaning of achieving recovery through working and living life to its fullest potential.

'MRI'

From Page 1

amount has been deposited to the fund at the beginning of each fiscal year through FY 07.

A call for JIF proposals has been made at least once and sometimes twice each year since then. Proposals are required to be jointly developed between the DoD and VA entities and submitted through their respective management structures, ie: Service Surgeon General or Veterans Network. Proposals were submitted directly to the Joint Incentive Fund Financial Management Work Group (FMWG), and ultimately approved by an Executive Council.

"Today's opening also represents the culmination of months of planning, meetings and cooperation between our respective staffs to initiate, process and secure the approval of this project," said Bealer. "Joint Incentive Fund requests are extremely competitive and challenging. Without the level of cooperation displayed by our staffs – we would not be here."

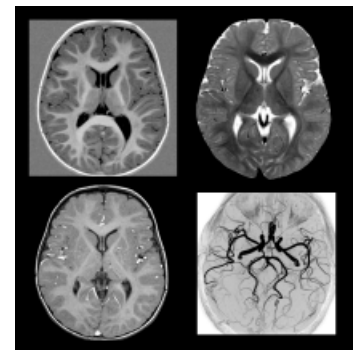
CAVHCS has developed a strong track record of cooperation with DoD medical counterparts, as well as successfully accessing JIF funding. In September CAVHCS culminated another JIF project in the Wiregrass



Region, which will result in the opening of a new VA Primary Care Clinic after the New Year. The new clinic will be located inside the Lyster Army Health Clinic, Fort Rucker, Ala.



MRI Technician Ms. Julie Bare, (l) sits in an adjacent room to operate the MRI unit (above) to produce state-of-the-art imagery similar to this image of the brain (r).



New VA Secretary to ease Health Care Transition

By: Patrick Yoest, Congressional Quarterly

Newly minted Veterans Affairs Secretary James B. Peake recently vowed to improve the transition from military to veterans' health care and benefits for wounded service personnel.

Peake, confirmed by the Senate on Dec. 14, was sworn in Dec. 20. He has little more than a year to address an array of challenges at the Veterans Affairs Department (VA), which has been criticized for its slow response to a huge backlog of veterans' disability claims, a ragged hand-off from military to VA health care, and the high incidence of mental health problems among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Peake, who served as Army Surgeon General from 2000 to 2004, said he would focus on easing the transition of service members from the military to the VA.

"I don't want 'seamlessness' to be a buzzword – I want it to be our way of doing business," Peake said. "I know we can do that together." Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates attended the swearing-in to underscore the vow of cooperation.

Peake said the recommendations of a presidential commission led by former Sen. Bob Dole, R-KS, (1969-96) and former Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala offered "a powerful blueprint to move forward."

President Bush, who also spoke at the ceremony, made clear that he intends to move quickly during his final year in office to make changes at the VA. He told attendees that his administration is "not going to tolerate bureaucratic delays."

Bush struck an accommodating note on draft legislation sent to Congress to implement Dole-Shalala recommendations, saying that Peake "is going to work with members from both sides of the aisle to get me a good bill that I can sign into law."

The biggest challenge will be a restructuring of the veterans' disability benefits system. While Dole pushed for immediate action to overhaul the system, House Veterans' Affairs Chairman Bob Filner, D-CA, and Senate Veterans' Affairs Chairman Daniel K. Akaka, D-HI, have said that an overhaul will require lengthy study and consultation with lawmakers.



Veterans Affairs Secretary James Peake testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. Dec. 5, 2007.

Happy Holidays

Congratulations to the CAVHCS Employee Association. Their hard work ensured the success of this year's Holiday Party in Tallassee. A thank you goes to Ms. Patricia Cross for the images.





ARLINGTON, Va. - Christmas wreaths adorn head stones at Arlington National Cemetery. The 14th annual wreath-laying event is the result of Worcester Wreath Company's owner Morrill Worcester's childhood dream of doing something to honor those laid to rest. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Jim

December

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Identity Theft Prevention and Awareness Month—www.identitytheftinfo.com * National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month— www.nhtsa.dot.gov * Safe Toys and Celebrations Month— www.aao.org * Spiritual Literacy Month—www.ons-river.com * Universal Human Rights Month— www.friendshipandgoodwill.org 							 World AIDS Day 1
2	3	4	5 Chanukah begins at sundown (Dec. 5- 12)	6	7  National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (1941)	8	
9	 AMVETS Founded (1942)	11	12	13	14	 Bill of Rights Day (1789)	
16	17	18	19	20	21	 Winter Begins 22	
23	Federal Day Off	Merry Christmas	Kwanzaa begins (Dec. 26-Jan. 1)	27	28	29	
30		<p>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.</p>					