



# Gateway News

## In this Edition:

- ◆ 28th National Wheelchair Games
- ◆ Operation Homecoming
- ◆ Construction Update
- ◆ Suicide Hotline
- ◆ MRSA What you can do
- ◆ Flu Shot Time
- ◆ Valet Parking

## Upcoming Events

**John Cochran**  
◆ V-Day Program  
Nov. 7th, 2008

- ◆ VAWS Meeting  
Nov. 21st, 2008
- ◆ Tree Lighting  
Dec. 2nd, 2008
- ◆ Letters to Santa  
Nov. 17th-Dec. 12th

### Jefferson Barracks

- ◆ V-Day Program  
Nov. 11th, 2008
- ◆ Media Sale  
Dec. 3rd and 4th
- ◆ Tree Lighting  
Dec. 5th 2008
- ◆ Inpatient Holiday Party  
Dec. 19th 2008



St. Louis was well represented at the 28th National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Thirteen employees, 18 athletes and numerous volunteers and family made their way to Omaha, NE to attend the 2008 National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) from July 24-30. This annual event that was held in St. Louis in 2004 attracts disabled veterans from across the country to participate in four days of vigorous competition and camaraderie.

The St. Louis team was coached by Recreational Therapists Jean Ferguson, Matt Luitjohan and Amy Will plus volunteer Victor Ganz. They brought home 22 medals collectively and for several of the veterans this was their first time attending the games. All of them said they will come again.

Another group of St. Louis VAMC staff members served as officials for the events. Rocky Buchanan, Abbey LeCroy, Karen Wait and Jackie Wolz assisted anywhere needed in this capacity. Among their many assignments Rocky helped ensure that the courts and fields were made to regulation. Karen officiated the air gun competition. Abbey and Jackie set up slalom courses and assisted with the races.

Also attending were April Renfro and Sylvia Bellmon who served as attendants for two of our veteran athletes. Maura Campbell and Connie Young were part of the Public Affairs team. Maura helped with media support and Connie was a photographer. Finally, Linda Smith and Megan Tooley came up as volunteers to the event. Linda assisted with the air gun competition and Megan helped with track and field as well as anything else that needed done. All worked long hours but said the experience was worth it and they were inspired by what they saw.

## Operation Homecoming

### Writing the wartime experience

Ten years ago the VA Hospital at Jefferson Barracks created a weekly writing group where veterans were encouraged to write about their every day life experiences. No one could have anticipated the revelations to come.

An example of the power that was revealed in one of these writings was astonishing. During one of these sessions the Veteran wrote of his only wish, to be reincarnated to the likeness of his father. After having the opportunity in reading this piece the father was so deeply moved by the writing that he thanked all those who made this medium and outlet possible for his son.

Writing can also bring an understanding to the mindset of the feelings otherwise locked within. Creative Writing offers Veterans an opportunity to express these feelings, explore experiences and present the world with their own unique perspectives in their own words and in many instances begin a healing process.

Is there something you would like to say, but might have difficulty verbalizing these thoughts? Try writing! Operation Homecoming, a Program sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts and Boeing Company recently made this opportunity possible to

active-duty troops and veterans of both current and past conflicts. This program proved to be positive, it gave a free opportunity to improve veterans writing skills and learn from prominent bestselling authors.

Most veteran's lives are marked by their military experiences, usually referenced as before and after military service. What's your story?

**Classes Begin**  
October 23rd-24th

Contact;  
Rita Reichter to  
Enroll at  
314-652-4100  
EXT:63286



# Gateway News

## NATIONAL SUICIDE CRISIS HOTLINE 1-800-273-TALK

To ensure veterans with mental health crises have immediate access to trained coordinators, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has established a 24-hour, National Suicide Prevention Hotline, **1-800-TALK (8255)**

The hotline staffed by mental health professionals, operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The hotline counselors that take the calls are professionally trained in crisis intervention in order to deal with any and all situations. When a veteran calls the hotline, the veteran is to press #1 and they will be linked with VAMC staff in New York who have access by remote data to the veteran's medical records if the veteran is enrolled for care. Families of veterans may also call the national suicide prevention hotline if they are concerned about a veteran.

VA's Suicide Prevention Program is unique because the hotline counselors can deal with the immediate crisis and refer callers to the local suicide prevention coordinator who can help the veteran receive needed mental health services or be admitted for treatment. Jane Tomory is the St. Louis VAMC Suicide Prevention Coordinator. For non-emergent situations, she can be reached at (314) 652-4100 ext. 54879 and through beeper 905-3353.

This program provides a unique opportunity to deal with the immediate crisis and to conduct follow up to make sure the veteran's mental health issues are dealt with on an on-going, long-term basis to help prevent future situations from arising.

## 2008 National Hispanic Heritage Month

*Getting Involved: Our Families, Our Community, Our Nation*

National Hispanic Heritage Month will be observed from September 15th, 2008 through October 15th, 2008.

*'Hispanic Heritage Month' is the period to recognize the contributions of Hispanic Americans to the United States and to celebrate Hispanic heritage and culture. The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week. September 15 was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. They all declared independence in 1821. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively.'*

In recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month,

*Guest Speaker*

**Jorge Oliver**

*Associate Professor and Chairman,  
Film & Media Department, Webster University*

**Thursday, October 23, 2008 10:30am**

John Cochran

Building 2-Education Wing, Room 141

## Youth Fun Day!



**A Youth Fun Day was held at America's Incredible Pizza Company on July 31st. This event was to show our appreciation to the 41 young people at both divisions who donated over 3119 hours this summer to the St. Louis VA Medical Center.**



**SPEAKER:**

**MR. JOHN FOPPE**

*(Author, Motivational Speaker and Entrepreneur)*

Thursday, 20 November 2008

11:30a.m. To 1:00 p.m.  
St. Louis VA Medical Center  
John Cochran Division  
Rooms 140 and 141 –  
Education Wing

Employees and patients are invited to participate in this program.

Employees working at the Jefferson Barracks Division may view the program in Building 24 - Microwave room.

For more information contact  
Bonita Bernaugh, EEO Specialist, (314) 894-6660.

# Gateway Update

## Construction

### JC

**Remodel Open Heart Unit, B-1, JC**-The demolition of 5 Center is complete and renovation of this area for open heart surgery has started. Open heart surgery will be a new program for the St. Louis VAMC.

**Renovate GI on 6 South, JC**-This project will create a recovery bay for GI that will allow efficient oversight of patients from an adjacent nurse station. The project construction award will occur prior to October 1st. Construction is expected to start this fall.

**Remodel Pharmacy for USP 797 Compliance, JC**-This project will renovate the 4th floor pharmacy to provide Sterile Preparations for Pharmaceutical Compounding. USP 797 is the first set of enforceable sterile compounding standards issued by the United States Pharmacopeia (USP). USP Chapter 797 describes the procedures and requirements for compounding sterile preparations and sets the standards that apply to all settings in which sterile preparations are compounded. The project construction will occur prior to October 1st. Construction is expected to start this fall and will impact one room on the 8th floor and several rooms on the 4th floor.

**Halls & Walls, JC**-As an ongoing project with numerous phases, the current phase includes areas on the 1st floor, 4 North (weekends), operating rooms, and 7 South. This project, as evidenced by previous phases (basement, etc.), installs new walls and ceiling to better the environment of care for our Veterans.

**Remodel Former Red Clinic for Mental Health, JC**-This project will totally remove the existing architecture of the former Red Clinic on the 1st floor. A completely new Mental Health Clinic will be constructed to meet the increasing needs of our Veteran population. The project construction award will occur prior to October 1st. Construction is expected to start this fall.

**Remodel Space for Clinics, JC**-This project will be phased over 2 years. Design for this project was completed in 2008. The 1st phase will relocate Dental from the 1st floor to 9 North. Construction on 9 North is expected to begin early October. All existing architecture on 9 North will be removed and new architecture constructed for the new Dental Clinic. Once the Dental Clinic has been relocated to 9 North, the 2nd phase of the project will start. The 2nd phase will totally renovate the former Dental Clinic and Human Resources areas on the 1st floor in order to become the new Hemodialysis Clinic. Once complete, the Hemodialysis Clinic will be relocated from the 5th floor to the new space on the 1st floor.

### JB

**Replacement of Hot Water Generators, JB**-This project is being administered as a "turn-key" project. The scope includes replacing the antiquated generators in Buildings 1 and 52. Construction award will occur prior to October 1st with construction to begin this fall.

**Halls & Walls, JB**-The 1st phase of this project will begin the fall. Areas in Building 1, including the lobby, will have new walls and ceilings installed to better the environment of care for our Veterans.

**Remodel Medical Rehab Areas, B-53, JB**-This project was designed in fiscal year 2008. The project will renovate existing Medical Rehab areas in B-53 to improve patient privacy, replace obsolete shower equipment and fixtures, refinish walls, floors and ceilings, replace obsolete HVAC systems, replace light fixtures, replace communication systems, and upgrade patient treatment facilities. The project construction award will occur this fall with construction to follow shortly thereafter.

**Replace Stucco Finish Buildings 1 & 2, JB**-Due to the existing stucco finishes being severely deteriorated which, allows moisture to infiltrate buildings, the stucco finishes on Buildings 1 & 2 (JB) are being replaced. The stucco replacement on Building 2 has started. The stucco replacement for Building 1 will begin in the next 45 days.

**SCI-Domiciliary Renovations, Buildings 3 & 52, JB**-This project will be phased over 2 years. Design for this project was completed in 2008. The 1st phase which, should begin late fall or early winter, will renovate vacant Building 3 in order to become a new space for the Domiciliary. The Domiciliary currently resides in Building 52 and will be relocated to Building 3 once renovation is complete. The 2nd phase will renovate the space in Building 52 vacated by the Domiciliary program. The renovation will allow SCI to double patient space in Building 52. Construction will begin in Building 52 once the Domiciliary program has been relocated to Building 3.

### JB/JC

**Replace Roads & Parking Lots, JB/JC**-This is the 1st phase of this project. Initial funding will allow the creation of a new parking lot west of Building 18, JB. The project construction award will occur prior to October 1st. Construction is expected to start this fall.

**Modular Buildings, JB/JC**-The medical center has assumed ownership of 5 modular buildings; 1 at JC and 4 at JB. Construction for these buildings started the winter 2008. The buildings are currently being cabled for telecommunications and will have stairs & ramps installed within the next 60 days. At that time, the buildings can be occupied. A 6th modular building, located at JB, was awarded as a separate contract this summer. Initial site clearing for construction is currently underway.



## ZERO IN ON MRSA

MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that can cause infections in humans. It is difficult to treat with common antibiotics such as oxacillin, methicillin, penicillin, and amoxicillin. MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. MRSA can cause serious infections or just colonize in the nose without causing infection. While 25-30% of the population is colonized with staph, about 1% are colonized with MRSA. Most serious staph infections occur in people with weak immune systems, such as patients in hospitals and long-term care facilities. In recent years, MRSA infections in people not considered high-risk have increased. These infections, known as community-associated MRSA, occur in otherwise healthy people who have no history of hospitalization in the last year or had a medical procedure such as dialysis, surgery, or catheters. An increasing

number of infections have occurred among individuals who share equipment or personal items (such as towels or razors). Factors that favor the spread of MRSA skin infections include close skin to skin contact, cuts or abrasions, contaminated items or surfaces, crowded living areas, and poor hygiene.

Staph skin infections normally cause a red, swollen and painful area on the skin. Serious staph infections have symptoms that include rash, fever, chills, chest pain, muscle aches, and fatigue.

To help prevent community-associated MRSA health care providers recommend that you:

- Practice good hygiene
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages
- Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, washcloths, razors or clothes
- Wash soiled sheets, towels, and clothes in hot water with bleach and dry in a hot dryer

Anyone can get a MRSA infection, but the risk is greatest among people treated in hospitals and health care facilities, such as nursing homes and dialysis centers, with weakened immune systems. These health care-associated staph infections include surgical wound infections, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections, and pneumonia.

Health experts say MRSA is responsible for more than 100,000 hospitalizations each year. When MRSA is introduced into a hospital, it tremendously increases the total burden of infection for the patient and increases the risk of death four-fold. These patients have hospital stays lasting two and a half times longer than the average patient.

In response to the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) initiative to reduce/prevent the spread of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) infections, VHA established a MRSA Prevention Initiative to ZERO in on MRSA. This initiative requires every VA facility to test patients upon admission, transfer and discharge with a simple and painless nasal swab test for MRSA.

### **St. Louis VAMC has implemented several changes to help staff and veterans win this battle we.**

- Place patients with MRSA in a private room or with other patients who have the same germ.
- Post a sign outside of the room where MRSA patients are housed to remind every person going into the room about how to prevent these germs from spreading.
- Teach veterans and the VA community how to stop the spread of these resistant germs.
- Test patients for the MRSA germ.

### **You will see VA health care workers:**

- Wash their hands or use hand cleaner before and after caring for every patient.
- Wear gloves and gowns when caring for patients with MRSA.

Prevention of MRSA infections is possible and prevention is everyone's responsibility. Hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to protect yourself and others around you.

### **You can help ZERO IN ON MRSA by --**

- Using foam alcohol dispensers – they are located throughout the building including inpatient rooms, outpatient exam rooms and treatment rooms. Use them, they are there for you. As you leave and enter the room, wash your hands.
- Making sure to wash your hands before and after participating in group activities such as physical therapy, exercise, etc.
- Remind health care workers to wash their hands before attending to you.

## FLU SHOTS ARE HERE!



According to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) each year in the United States, an average of 5% to 20% of the population get the flu and each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications and about 36,000 people die from the flu.

Influenza— the flu — is a contagious respiratory illness caused by an influenza virus. It can be spread by coughing, sneezing, or nasal secretions. The single best way to protect yourself and others against influenza is to get a flu vaccination each year.

### **Influenza vaccine can prevent influenza.**

It is highly recommended that the following people receive the “flu shot” each year in October or November since most influenza activity occurs in January or later in most years:

- All children from 6 months through 18 years of age
- Anyone 50 years of age and older
- Women who will be pregnant during influenza season (December through March)
- Anyone with long-term health problems or a weakened Immune system
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities
- Anyone who lives with or cares for people at high risk for influenza-related complications, including healthcare workers, household contacts of persons at high risk from complications from the flu and household contacts and out of home caregivers
- Of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated.)

### **Flu Shot Clinics: (NO Appointment Necessary)**

#### **Jefferson Barracks**

Building 1 Room C-113  
8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

#### **John Cochran**

Ambassador Suite  
8:00 a.m.- 3:00 p.m.

### **Community Based Outpatient Clinics**

1:00 p.m. -3:00 p.m.

### **Weekend Walk in Clinic**

9:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m.

JC- Building 1 Front Lobby November 1st and 2nd  
JB Building 1 Front Lobby October 25th and 26th

For More Information Please call the Flu Clinic  
Hotline at:314-289-6300

### **Symptoms of Influenza:**

- Fever (over 101°)
- Sore throat
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle aches

## 2008 Enrollee Survey Announcement

The VHA's Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) for Policy and Planning is conducting the 2008 update of our national VHA telephone Survey of Enrollees. The purpose of the survey is to provide information that is incorporated into annual VHA projections of enrollment, utilization, and expenditures, as well as into a variety of high level VHA budget and policy related analyses.

The survey provides critical and essential information on veteran utilization of health services, used in projecting the resources and services needed in VHA, and in developing our budget. The survey collects information on a random sample of 42,000 veterans enrolled in the VA system, who participate in an approximately 15-30 minute telephone survey. Each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) will have approximately 2,000 enrollees surveyed. The survey will be fully initiated the week of September 22, 2008. Interviewing will continue for 10 weeks.

Your support in this survey will help ensure that we provide the best care possible, where it is needed, when it is needed, and by whom it is needed.

Previous survey reports are available at <http://www.va.gov/vhareorg/reports.htm> — the VHA's Office of the ADUSH for Policy and Planning internet Web site.

Thank you for your assistance in this project.

## September

Name	Service	Division
<b>10 Years</b>		
Patrick O. Chatman	EMS	JC
John M. Gerstner	NURSING	JC
Katina L. Kinnel	NURSING	JB
Jeanette L. Long	NURSING	JC
Mary J. MacKenzie	NURSING	JB
Shirley A. Saunders	NURSING	JC
Wanda L. Toler	NURSING	JB
John J. Wehlermann	FES	JB
<b>15 Years</b>		
Patricia A. Booker	VCS REG 7	JC
Stephen M. Landon	VCS REG 7	JB
<b>20 Years</b>		
Lenora V. Brown	MHS	JB
Willia M. Clayborn	NURSING	JC
Patricia A. Harris	PCS	JC
James T. Knox	NUTRITION & FOOD	JC
Martha R. Kratzer	CLINICAL NUTRI'	JC
Roxanne Landmann	FMS	JB
Tracy D. McCaw	NUTRITION & FOOD	JB
Brenda R. Wright	REG COUNSEL	JB
<b>25 Years</b>		
John D. Ahearn	FES	JC
Howard J. Buggs	RESEARCH	JC
Michael A. Gluesenkamp	PCS	JC
Barbara J. Green	NURSING	JC
Mary L. Gross	NURSING	JC
Tony L. Lantzer	OFC OF DIRECTOR	JC
Daniel F. Marsh	NURSING	JC
Janet E. Verzal	NURSING	JC
<b>30 Years</b>		
Jose A. Carrillo	FES	JC
Candace D. Cebulski	OI & T Region 2	JC
Craig H. Hollenbeck	CEOSH	JB
Mary J. Lohse	FMS	JB
Steven R. Menke	NURSING	JB
Tars Montgomery, III	NUTRITION & FOOD	JB
Mary L. Nygard	SCS	JC
<b>35 Years</b>		
Carolyn Cook	VCS REGION 7	JB
James E. Hyde	SCS	JC
Michael G. Wagoner	FES	JB
J. H. Wallhermfechtel	MHS	JB
<b>40 Years</b>		
John J. Lyons	FES	JB
Lester N. Prater	NUTRITION & FOOD	JC

## October

Name	Service	Division
<b>10 Years</b>		
Adam K. Carlile	NURSING	JC
Kathryn K. Freese	NURSING	JC
Pratibha Gurusiddaiya, M.D.	MHS	JB
Clarie Jefferson	NURSING	JC
Karen A. McKelphin	NURSING	JC
Fredric A. Metzger	MHS	JB
<b>15 Years</b>		
Kendra E. Berg	NURSING	JC
Marsha E. Brown	NURSING	JC
Kathylen S. Liverar	PROSTHETICS	JB
Ravonne J. Pleasant	SCS	JC
Anglea T. Ross	MHS	JB
<b>20 Years</b>		
Patricia A. Malone	NURSING	JB
<b>25 Years</b>		
Diane M. Baldetti	CLIN' NUTRITION	JC
Richard C. Beckman	HAS	JC
Ricky L. Garrett	FMS	JC
Cheryl L. Slayden	FMS	JB
Melissa A. Zuccarello	SCI	JB
<b>30 Years</b>		
Herman J. Lugge, Jr.	EC & RS	JB
Gregory L. Simpkins	OFC OF DIR	JC
Candace M. Williamson	FMS	JB
<b>35 Years</b>		
Joseph Galmore	EMS	JC
David W. Hill	FES	JB

## Retirees

Mary B. Foster	CEOSH	JB	41
John C. Doren	EMS	JB	10
William J. Burke	RES	JB	35
John Heywood	CEOSH	JB	34
Donna M. Thomas	EMS	JC	35
Julia F. Byas	NURSING	JC	23
Sandra M. Garcia	VCS	JC	6
Patricia J. Hawkins	NURSING	JC	40
Marilyn D. Todd	PROST	JC	17
Kenneth F. Meyer	P&L	JC	16

**Valet Parking available at John Cochran**

**Monday – Friday**  
6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Drop off location Ambassadors Entrance