



# Office of Dentistry Homeless Veterans Dental Program NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2011

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## From the Director's Desk...



**Elizabeth Nuñez, DMD,  
MST  
Director, HVDP  
VHACO Office of Dentistry**

**H**appy Holidays to All!

As it's been a while since our last issue of the HVDP newsletter, I hope you'll find the included articles worth the wait. I'm pleased that we had so many submissions from the field. Please take the time to read about the stories of outreach and volunteerism.

This time of year is particularly busy for all of us. We are pulled in so many directions - school programs, family get-togethers, gift shopping, end-of-the-year deadlines and constant alerts by email and text. It seems that the virtues of this season (charity, service, peace, and love) can get lost in wrapping paper, cards, and Scotch tape. The best gift we could give ourselves, our families, and our communities is to take time to slow down and enjoy the meaningfulness of the season. As you read the articles about your colleagues and what they've done to support homeless Veterans and other charitable organizations, I hope you are inspired and reminded to shift your energies. Spend a moment remembering those who are less fortunate. See if you can carve out some time in your busy schedule to roll up your sleeves and use your special talents to offer a helping hand. Service is truly the gift that keeps on giving. You'll enjoy the benefits that volunteerism can bring. Apart from having a positive impact on your community, you will meet a diverse range of

people, have new experiences, and come away with a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

Thanks for letting me preach to the choir. Best wishes for a peaceful and safe holiday season!



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**Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Clinical Operations and Management**

# LATE-BREAKING NEWS...!!!



On December 13, 2011 the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development announced that a new national report shows homelessness among Veterans has been reduced by nearly 12 percent between January 2010 and January 2011. The 12 percent decline keeps the Obama Administration on track to meet the goal of ending Veteran homelessness in 2015. According to the 2011 supplement to the Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 67,495 Veterans were homeless in the United States on a single night in January 2011 -- a significant reduction from last year's single night count of 76,329.

## AGD Supports Successful Outreach in San Diego

By Dr. Tim Verceles

The Academy of General Dentistry and the AGD Foundation sponsored a very successful dental outreach program for homeless Veterans titled *Nation of Smiles, One Smile at a Time* at its annual meeting in San Diego, California on July 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 2011.

Thirty California-licensed dentists participated and 8 out-of-state dentists helped in non-clinical capacities. We had 3 dental hygienists, one dental student (UCSF), 26 pre-dental students (UCSD and SDSU), 5 RDAs, 4 dental assistants, and a few other dental office staff for a total of 80 volunteers.

The mobile dental clinics, with seven dental treatment rooms, were supplied by *Onsite Health*. Nursing students provided medical screenings which included blood pressure and blood

glucose evaluations.

Based on the 80th percentile UCR fees for the San Diego region, we furnished approximately \$80,000 of dental services, and treated 123 patients over the 1-1/2 day event. Volunteers



Onsite Health provided the mobile clinics for dental treatment.

provided 630 procedures, averaging over 5 procedures per patient, with a value of more than \$625 per patient.

The patients were pre-screened homeless Veterans from the Veterans Village in San Diego. Follow-up care has been arranged and will be available at local dental offices and community

clinics from the San Diego Dental Society.

Many thanks are due to the AGD Outreach Task Force, chaired by Dr. Carol Wooden (Georgia), and to the local outreach coordinator, Dr. Harriet Seldin (San Diego) and the San Diego Dental Society. The event was made possible by sizable donations from Advocates for Access, Inc. and the Northern and Southern California components of the Academy of General Dentistry.



Dr. Tim Verceles  
Exec. Director, Advocates for  
Access, Inc.  
2011 Treasurer, California AGD



# VA 2K for Homeless Veterans



VACO Office of Dentistry Staff:  
Dr. Pat Arola, Theresa Leonetti,  
Keyvan Ebrahimi-Farokh and  
Dr. Jose Colon



**V**A held its first nationwide 2K event supporting National Employee Wellness Month on June 2nd at VA health care facilities around the country. The 1.2 mile walk and roll encouraged VA employees and Veterans to step up their fitness levels and have some fun. Festivities included resources for homeless Veterans, exercise tips, fitness games, refreshments and give-aways. Registration was not necessary, but participants were encouraged to donate items such as toiletries, bug spray, sunscreen, bus passes, socks, back packs and gift cards for homeless Veterans. Thanks to all who participated this year. Next year's VA2K is planned for May 16th, 2012, so get your sneakers ready!



VACO Homeless Re-entry & Justice Program Directors: Jim McGuire and Jessica Blue-Howells



National GPD Program: (above) Deputy Director, Chelsea Watson (foreground) and Budget Analyst, Michelle Lewis (below) Clinical Manager, Jeff Quarles



Muscogee, OK: Leona Wicks, COS Secretary; Susan Chitwood, RDH; Nan Hayes, EA to COS; Dr. Wendy Martin, Dental Chief and Acting COS; Lacey Messer, DA; Dr. John Conti DMD, Peggy Judkins, DA



Jayne Spencer, Tampa CWT Director; Carol Yakimo; Rozana deCarvalho, CWT Program Support Assist.; and Dr. Elizabeth Nunez



VACO Homeless Program Staff: Shamika Johnson, Sean Clark, and Seth Bridge





# Louisiana's New Dental Clinic Aids Homeless Veterans

By Kimberly Gearhart,  
Writer-Editor, Community & Public Relations

In November 2009, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki laid out a five year plan to end homelessness among Veterans. The plan includes aggressive outreach, medical services, education and dental care.

Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System's (SLVHCS) Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program served over 1,200 enrolled Veterans in Fiscal Year 2011.



Dr. McDonald discusses dental treatment with Army Veteran Sandy Broussard

It is estimated that in the Orleans and Jefferson parishes alone, between 1,500 and 2,200 Veterans are homeless. Through outreach and educational efforts, the number of enrolled Veterans continues to expand.

Newly-enrolled homeless Veterans are offered a full array of medical services, including a full dental exam and focused treatment. Dental services had previously been handled through three small clinics located in Mandeville, Metairie and Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"We see about 100 homeless patients in a year, and getting them to those outlying clinics can be problematic," said Dr. Georgia McDonald, chief of dental medicine for SLVHCS.

In response to that geographic challenge, SLVHCS opened a new specialty care dental



Lashonda Hulbert, Dental Assistant, checks blood pressure on Mr. Broussard

service in New Orleans in July in which a dentist serves homeless Veterans three days a week.

"We'll be much closer to the other homeless services VA offers and also very near several of the community shelters. We should be able to better serve the Veterans most in need of our help," McDonald said.

With the new clinic, SLVHCS will also be able to better utilize a \$250,000 homeless dental initiative grant.

"A lot of that money had been spent on fee-basis exams. Now we can do them more affordably in-house, freeing funds for lab work and more complex fee-basis care," McDonald explained.

Army Veteran Sandy Broussard, a homeless Veteran enrolled in HCHV, appreciates the new dental clinic location.

"I love coming here to see Dr. McDonald. It's close to my other appointments and everyone is so good to me," Broussard said.

For more information, visit [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless) or call local HCHV Coordinator Ken Rocky at 985-690-6903.



# CWT Program Helps Veterans Get Back to Work

By Carol Yakimo, RDH MA GWCPM

Did you know that *Veterans' Industries* offers reasonably priced items that anyone can purchase?

As part of the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital complex, the *Veterans' Industries* Program, one of many Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) opportunities through VA, offers Veterans work experience and the opportunity to learn new skills.

Program participants, many of whom were previously homeless, gain valuable on-the-job training with the latest industry software for embroidery, engraving and graphic design. Assistance is also provided to Veterans for re-establishing positive work habits and understanding Quality Assurance measures.

*Veterans' Industries* produces a variety of products and services as part of its programming activities.



Michael Byrd, CWT Operations Supervisor, and "Bob" Pruiett, Health Technician, pose in front of some of the T-shirts they designed.

Some of the products available include banners, signs, business cards, buttons, embroidered shirts and bags, and laser-engraved wooden plaques, pen desk sets, and key chains. Finished products always meet or exceed industry standards.

The staff at *Veterans' Industries* provides hands-on training and is fully qualified within the industry. Upon completion of their programs, Veterans are then employed locally.

Local organizations and businesses have recognized *Veterans' Industries* for quality and service, but the achievement doesn't stop there. Nationally, the organization is also acknowledged for its progression in program development.

To find out more about the *Veterans' Industries* program or to check out their products and place an order, visit their website at <http://www.tampa.va.gov/vetind/index.asp>.



John Proll, Program Technician, readies poster area for program participants.



Check out some of the high-quality products that *Veterans' Industries* makes!





# GPD Liaison Expresses Gratitude to American Lake Dental Service

By Erin Horner, LICSW, GPD Liaison

You've probably heard this before—how wonderfully helpful the dental team is at a VA facility. But, here at Puget Sound—American Lake Division—it's clear through the work they do that their #1 priority is serving Veterans. From the Fee Service representative, Kerry Tynes, who answers all of my questions about how/why/what was approved, to the schedulers who manage to squeeze my Veterans in at a



Michael Casaway (PSA), Teresa Tucker (Admin. Assistant), Arthur Demaala (PSA)



Angel R. Santiago,  
Claims Examiner

moment's notice, to providers like Dr. Billman, Dr. Gonzalez, and Dr. Fili who provide excellent care and customer service to the Veterans and to me, I

continue to be impressed and thankful to have them!

Recently a Veteran in one of the GPD programs called me to thank the GPD program for changing his life. When asked what had the greatest impact, the first thing he mentioned was that he was proud of his smile again.

After years of homelessness and neglected teeth, receiving dental care was a dream come true. It made me feel so proud to work here, and to work with wonderful folks associated with the dental clinic. They've probably heard this before, but thanks again!



Dr. Michael Kim, Wilma R. Quayano (Dental Assistant), Dr. Paul Billman, Dr. Robert Fili, Dr. Paul Belusko



# On-Station Homeless Dental Program a Success at Bay Pines

By Dr. Larry Scheitler

For the past five years, Dr. Roberto Libhaber has dedicated much of his dental practice to treating homeless Veterans on-station at the Bay Pines Dental Clinic. In fact, Dr. Liz Nunez was still here coordinating the national program when he started.

Working two days a week since 2006, Dr. Libhaber has been able to treat over 2,000 homeless Veterans in the Grant and Per Diem and Domiciliary Programs while stretching our allotted homeless funding way beyond what we could have afforded had we used private providers off-station. The average cost per Veteran treated at Bay Pines is well below \$1,000 including laboratory costs, and last year alone Dr. Libhaber's RVU production was valued at over \$460,000!

Averaging 400 patients per year, Dr. Libhaber and his fee-basis assistant (Gladis Beltran) work 10-hour days to meet the demand from Tarpon Springs to Fort Myers to Sebring,



**Dr. Roberto Libhaber and  
Dental Assistant Gladis Beltran**

Florida. And between the Standowns and community outreach programs locally, it has become clear to us that quality dental care can be provided at reasonable or even wholesale cost, not to mention the convenience of having their medical providers accessible after dental appointments. Dr. Libhaber can monitor the quality of the work produced on-station, and he feels the program is a win-win for both patient and provider.

Access to dental specialists is another added plus for Dr. Libhaber. He is able to expedite treatment because Bay Pines has oral surgeons, prosthodontists, endodontists and periodontists close at hand. Couple that with a local laboratory contract, which turns his work around rapidly, and his practice has become a successful model for VA dental clinics treating homeless patients.

Bay Pines also employs a dental hygienist. In FY 2011, Ms. Maggie Pallett, solely treated eligible homeless Veterans. She also provided



**Maggie Pallett, Dental Hygienist**

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# Northwest Stand Downs

By John Davis, Spokane VAMC Homeless Programs Coordinator

The Spokane VA Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program and the VA Dental Clinic provided access to dental care at five rural and remote Stand Downs in Northwest Montana, Northern Idaho and Central and Eastern Washington in 2011. More than 5,000 Veterans and their family members attended these events and each was offered an oral screening exam.

At the Coeur d'Alene, ID event local dental providers joined with the nonprofit DIRNEY Community Clinic (which normally treats our GPD Veterans) to provide exams. In Sand Point, ID our VA dentists teamed up to render a wide range of services with the help of many local dentists and dental technicians. A bus transported Veterans from the event to a local dental office where exams and treatment were rendered free of charge. Other donations included medical supplies and other items that were provided by partners in the community.

## Bay Pines cont'd

weekly oral hygiene training and orientation lectures for domiciliary-resident Veterans.

Her work consisted of screening the patients, charting, taking digital panorex and basically getting the patients ready for Dr. Libhaber to examine and formulate treatment plans. Ms. Pallett was with us on fee-basis for almost 6 years, and most capably coordinated and directed the program when Dr. Libhaber was off station.

Lastly, the success of the program comes from the Homeless Program Coordinator, Carrie Meo-Omens, who works closely with Dr. Libhaber and personally directs the patients our way via consults. A diplomate in Clinical

In rural Northeast Washington our dentist met every Veteran that came through the line - all 1,100 of them! In addition, the Veterans Outreach Center provided its mobile Vet Center bus where the exams could be done in a rural environment. This was a really good year for our Veterans and we are honored to project our services into the rural and remote areas.



Idaho Stand Down: Dr. Randall Altmann, Spokane VAMC, Drs. Justin Rader (US Army Veteran), Cheri Bloom, and Jon Smith (US Army Veteran), Volunteers  
Not pictured: Dr. John Coburn, Volunteer

Social Work, Carrie well knows the dental needs of her patient population. She makes sure they get the dental care they need to become self sufficient and pain free as they seek jobs or new places to live or just to boost their self esteem.

In closing, the Bay Pines Homeless Dental Program has been a success in many ways. The purpose of this article is to give you a few ideas as to what you can do in your dental clinic to reduce the dental needs of your homeless population, at reasonable cost and minimal frustration to your full-time staff. Dr. Libhaber can be contacted on Mondays and Wednesdays at (727) 398-9396 if you have any questions.





# MOM & DAD Treat Dental Needs of Underserved

By Lois Bell, CDA, CPDA, FADAA

We dress and quietly leave the hotel to drive to our first *Mission of Mercy (MOM)* dental project worksite. Our location is Sparta, NC a small community nestled in the mountains of the North Carolina-Virginia border. We pull into the parking lot of the local high school and are greeted by the long line of people standing silently in the dark morning hours waiting for the doors to open. A few offered smiles and ‘good mornings’ as we walked past. We were told that some had come the night before and camped out to secure their places in line.

Dental care is either unavailable or an unaffordable luxury for many adults living in both North and South Carolina. It is common to find residents in severe pain or discomfort and feeling embarrassed due to poor oral health.

As dental assistants with the South Carolina Dental Association (SCDA) *DAD* (Dental Access Days) Project Committee, Lori Paschall, CDA, FADAA and I felt it necessary to visit and volunteer with the established and highly-successful North Carolina *MOM* project in order to learn firsthand what to expect with our own South Carolina *DAD* event to be held later that sum-

mer. During our one-day volunteering with the *MOM* project, our group ended up treating over 300 patients in a high school gym with 35 mobile dental units.



*DAD* volunteer signaling for next extraction patient

Armed with volumes of notes and pictures, stories of the people we treated, and the volunteers with which we worked, we returned to Columbia immensely excited about our day and thinking of the potential of what *DAD* could do for South Carolinians.

*DAD*, a dental access initiative focusing on adults primarily needing extractions and restorative work, was organized in 2009 by the SCDA for the purpose of addressing access to care for many indigent South Carolinians. The main goal is to bring crucial care to different areas of the state on an ongoing, rotating basis. Pat-

terned after the successful *MOM* programs in North Carolina and Virginia, the SCDA formed alliances that lifted the vision into reality. Our sister-district states provided support and equipment. The rest is history.

Charleston, SC was to be the site of our first event. Mayor Summey of the city of North Charleston learned of the *DAD* project and donated the Charleston Convention Center as a venue. He also helped with EMS and the police for the event. The Virginia Dental Association and the North Carolina Dental Society each brought a truck of equipment along with experienced dentists who have organized these events before. We set up 80 mobile dental chairs in a 25,000 sq foot area of the exhibit space.

In addition, local churches offered their assistance as did the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Dental School faculty and over 100 students. Each day, nearby restaurants donated food for the workers. Volunteers rolled in from across the state. On Friday morning, we awoke again to long lines wrapped around the convention center, clearly visible via the bright, weekend-long media

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# MOM & DAD cont'd

lights. That weekend alone, nearly 1,500 patients were treated with almost \$600,000 worth of free dental care!

In 2010 the scene was replicated on a slightly larger scale in Greenville. Nearly 2,000 patients were treated with over \$750,000 worth of donated dental care. Michelin and Chick-fil-A were among the major sponsors; churches and other community groups provided the non-dental volunteers. Monetary and product donations helped cover the cost of equipment and supplies. Participating were over 147 dentists from SC and neighboring states, 46 hygienists, 82 assistants, and over 85 office staff and other volunteers that made the weekend possible. At a time when more people than ever need help, this was an opportunity for the community to unite in a common cause. Florence, SC was the venue for



Charleston DAD Project in full swing



Dr. Dana Parker with a senior MUSC student

2011. The event was held at the Florence Civic Center and ran from August 25 – 27. Patients came from 9 counties, despite hurricane conditions, and 1,622 were treated for an estimated total of \$1,059,648 of donated dentistry (using UC insurance reference). For the first time, anterior root canals and acrylic flippers were part of the services rendered. There were 120 mobile chairs, 187 dentists, 67 Hygienists, 123 dental assistants, 25 office staff and 85 MUSC students who worked long hours to make a difference in the lives of these patients.

For those of you who have

volunteered in projects such as DAD, you know the pride and satisfaction of being able to give back using the talents and gifts you possess. I truly have never been prouder of my profession.

To learn more, download a volunteer form, or get *You Tube* links to videos from past projects, visit the website at [www.scda.org](http://www.scda.org). We hope to see you at an upcoming event!

Lois Bell,  
CDA, CPDA,  
FADAA  
SCDAA President



# HVDP Veterans' Success Stories

Submitted by John Shebek, GPD Liaison (Retired)



**Jeffrey T. Byrd**  
**U.S. Navy Veteran**

**T**he VA Dental Program is the very best! It gave me a whole new outlook on life. Being without teeth is very hard, and when I got my new teeth the world seemed to open up.

Greeting someone with a smile instead of not having one (smile) is more than great...it is the best feeling a man or woman could have. I want to thank all the people responsible for this. Thank you for changing my life.



By Richard Leatherman, LCSW— GPD Liaison



**Ron Kennedy**  
**U.S. Army Veteran**

**R**on Kennedy served in the United States Army from 1976-1982. He was stationed in West Germany as a radar crewman and was honorably discharged. He has two daughters, one son and three grand children.

When I first had contact with Mr. Kennedy several years ago, he shared with me that, as part of his new life, it was important for his self esteem and health to have nice teeth. The Homeless Veterans Dental Program (HVDP) was able to restore his dentition and give him back his smile.

Some of Mr. Kennedy's accomplishments since then include the following: He was located by his daughter that was born in Germany after being separated for 29 years. They now enjoy a close relationship.

He is currently post commander of American Legion Post 526, which is the first homeless American Legion Post to become nationally chartered and one of the largest posts in Western North Carolina. He has been interviewed in numerous magazine articles sharing his life story from homelessness.

Mr. Kennedy is currently employed by Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministries where he serves as desk supervisor and intake coordinator for Veterans Restoration Quarters. This is among one of the largest VA Grant and Per Diem programs in the country serving up to 220 homeless or formerly homeless Veterans on any given day.

Thanks HVDP for letting me share Mr. Kennedy's remarkable journey with you.





# Bay Pines VAHCS, Lee County Stand Down Team Makes a Difference

The Lee County Stand Down Team (pictured below), led by Carrie Meo-Omens, Homeless Coordinator for the Bay Pines VAHCS catchment area, meets annually to serve homeless Veterans. The Lee County Stand Down is one of five that Bay Pines participates in annually. These outreach events are the result of collaborative efforts between the VA and our community-based partners. Typical VA services offered are Enrollment, Claims & Benefits, Medical, Dental, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Housing, Case Management, OEF/OIF services, Minority Veterans Program services, Vet Center services, and transportation assistance. Many community partners accommodate Veterans as well. Sixty to 70 Veterans are served each year at the Lee County Stand Down. The 2012 event is scheduled for January 28th at the Broadway Community Church, Ft. Myers, Florida. Please contact Carrie Meo-Omens at 727-398-6661, ext. 4711 if you would like more information.



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!!!

Don't delay... Send us your articles and

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