

Voluntary Service Newsletter

Edition 1 Volume 3

November 2009

Greetings from the Chief

As you may have heard by now, we are temporarily limiting patient visitation to help protect our patients, staff, and our volunteers, and to help reduce the spread of the flu. Currently, visitors under age 18 are not allowed to attend clinic appointments with patients or to visit patient care areas of the hospital.

Additionally, those who are feeling sick or who have been exposed to someone who is ill should refrain from visiting patients.

This applies to all clinics and hospital settings at our Cooper and Leestown divisions. This decision was based on guidance from national experts as well as the prevalence of seasonal influenza and increasing development of H1N1 in our own area.

Many of you may be wondering when the H1N1 vaccine will be available. As soon it becomes available for volunteers, I will let you know. In the meantime, I encourage you to get a seasonal flu shot, be diligent in hand washing, and use common sense when it comes to your overall health. Please review the healthful tips included in this issue so you can continue to protect yourself against influenza.

I also wanted to let you know that by the end of the year - all Primary Care will be located at our Leestown Division, which is more easily accessible for patients.

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who donated to General Post Fund #49 for the Gifts for Veterans Project.



Thanks to your generosity, all inpatients at both divisions along with the Veterans on the Homeless Veterans Transition Unit at Leestown will receive gifts on Christmas morning in a special travel bag.

I would also like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of our Annual VAVS Bake/Arts & Crafts Sale and Hot

Dog Luncheon on October 29th. Pictured from left to right are George Fritz, Wilma Malone, Judy Rittenhouse, and Mava Branham who helped with the luncheon. I am happy to report that we made a profit of over \$1,500.00, which will support special recognition activities for our VA volunteers.

Lastly, you can play a vital role in making sure Veterans who need mental health assistance receive the help they need before they leave. If any veteran asks for mental health services, please assist them in getting to their appointment. If they do not have an appointment, you should page the Mental Health Immediate Response Team by dialing 66 and paging 777. When prompted leave the extension from which you are dialing. Tell the staff member you reach the situation, stay with the Veteran—do not leave them unattended. A warm hand off is very important—please escort the Veteran to the team member.

You are cordially invited to attend (and I hope to see you all there) the Annual Volunteer Holiday Pot Luck on December 12th at noon in the Cooper Auditorium. Until then, thank you for all that you do each and every day. I wish you all a safe and happy holiday season.


Greg Anderson

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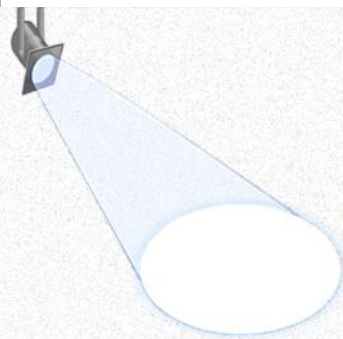
10 Tips to Protect Yourself Against the Flu

- ☉ **Wash your hands often** using warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Hand cleaning stations are located throughout the medical center.
- ☉ **Cover your cough and sneezes** with a tissue.
- ☉ **Throw tissues away** immediately after use.
- ☉ **Wash your hands immediately** after disposing of tissues into waste receptacle.
- ☉ **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.**
- ☉ **Clean surfaces with an approved disinfectant.**
- ☉ **Stay away from others when you are sick.**
- ☉ **Distance yourself from those who are sick,** when you are well.
- ☉ **Get a yearly flu shot.**

If you do get the flu, there are antiviral drugs that can help. These prescription drugs should be started within 48 hours of getting sick. Flu symptoms include a fever (usually high), headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. If you get any of these symptoms, call your VA health care provider right away.

Volunteers can receive a free flu shot through Employee Health. Contact Judy Stivers at (859) 233-4511, ext. 5270/4659 if you would like to schedule a flu shot.

Donation Spotlight



One of the General Post Fund (GPF) accounts for which Voluntary Service accepts monetary donations is the Social Work Quick Fund (GPF #7). VA Social Workers use this fund to assist Veterans with particular urgent financial needs. Some examples of

these needs, as determined by Social Workers, include transportation home and meals. Social Workers respond to approximately 20 requests per month from Veterans who have urgent needs. The current state of the economy has led to an increase in requests for assistance although we do not receive a lot of donations for this fund. Therefore, your consideration and support are appreciated. The current balance in this fund is currently about \$300.00.

New Volunteer Orientation Schedule

Individuals interested in volunteering at the Lexington VAMC should plan to attend one of the New Volunteer Orientation sessions listed below. Attendees will receive information about the VA, the medical center, volunteer opportunities, the application process, and various training topics. The sessions last for about one and a half hours, and **will be held in the Cooper Division Auditorium, 2nd Floor (take the main lobby elevators—across from the Parking Garage elevators—to the 2nd floor).**

- Saturday, November 21 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, December 5 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, December 19 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, January 9 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, January 23 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, February 6 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, February 20 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, March 6 at 10 a.m.
- Saturday, March 20 10 a.m.

Please contact the VA Voluntary Service office at (859) 281-4930 if you would like to be scheduled to attend a session or you need additional information.

National Recognition for Van Driver

Earsel King was recognized at the American Legion's National Convention on August 22, 2009, in Louisville for his exceptional volunteer service at the Lexington VA Medical Center. He was presented a certificate in honor of his selection as the Sons of the American Legion's VA Volunteer of the Year Award. Earsel has been a volunteer van driver since 1998 and has served over 10,000 volunteer hours in transporting Veterans from the Olive Hill area to the Lexington VA Medical Center to attend their appointments. Earsel also drives Veterans to the Huntington VA Medical Center.



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Christian Trent and Mayor Newberry

Special Recognition for VA Teen Volunteer

One of the Lexington VA Medical Center's teen volunteers, Christian Trent, was recognized at a special program on September 3, 2009, held at Central Baptist Hospital. Christian was selected as an outstanding volunteer for our medical center and was recognized along with outstanding teen volunteers representing each of the hospitals in the Lexington area. All the volunteers received a copy of the Mayor's Proclamation and a \$50.00 gift certificate for the Fayette Mall. Pictured in this photo is Christian being recognized by Lexington Mayor Jim Newberry at the program.

Christian had, also, been recognized in April as the recipient of a \$7,500.00 scholarship from the national DAV's Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program in recognition of his exceptional volunteer service at our medical center.

Caught in the Act Award

Edna Robinson became the first VA volunteer to receive a "Caught in the Act Award," This award is for employees who perform a special act of extraordinary service while performing their duties at the medical center. Edna volunteers on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Surgical Waiting Room at the Cooper Drive Division. While volunteering on August 25, Edna ended up staying over until 8:45 PM that evening so that she could stay with a family that had someone that ended up having a late surgery. Since Edna's tour generally starts at 7:30 AM, we felt that Edna's service the day of the 25th was "extraordinary" and worthy of special recognition.



Edna Robinson and Greg Anderson



Annual Volunteer Holiday Potluck

All volunteers are invited to attend! Join us Saturday, December 12th at noon in the Cooper Auditorium. Please bring your favorite food item to share.

TB Skin Testing

Effective immediately, volunteers who serve at least once a week at the medical center are no longer required to receive an annual TB skin test.



Pictured is a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve saluting a former prisoner of war held at the Annual POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony held on Friday, September 18, 2009 at Lexington VA Medical Center, Leestown Division. More than 40 former POWs attended the program.



(Pictured left to right—Sandy J. Nielsen, John Sallee, Troy Bowling)

Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 2021 presented the Director with a donation of \$2,500 on October 15th for the Gifts for Veterans Project.



Pictured are attendees at the 3rd Annual OEF/OIF Welcome Home Celebration held on October 24th at Lexington VA Medical Center, Cooper Division. Approximately 250 individuals participated in this special event that honors returning troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.



Lexington VA Medical Center

Attention All Volunteers



**Annual Holiday
Potluck**

**Saturday
December 12th
Noon
Cooper Auditorium**

**Bring your favorite
food item to share**



*All volunteers are invited to join us for a
delightful and delicious time!*

Monetary Donation Needs

Personal Care Items: to purchase comfort kits of personal care items and other assorted individual-sized personal care items (toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, body powder, nail clippers, shaving cream, disposable razors, body lotion, etc.) for Veterans who need them while receiving care as inpatients. A \$187.00 donation will purchase a case of 100 comfort kits. We use 40 cases annually at a cost of about \$10,000.00 annually for the comfort kits and other assorted personal care items. (GPF #93).

Recreation Fund: to purchase recreation items in support of activities for patients (bingos, picnics, parties, community outings, refreshments, paper products, popcorn supplies, etc.) Recreation Therapy uses about \$2,500.00 annually, which includes popcorn that is provided to patients. (GPF #1066).

Social Work Quick Fund: to provide patients in urgent situations with travel when no other transportation is available or other urgent financial situations that cannot be met by any other means. (GPF #7).

Polytrauma Veterans Fund: a newly established GPF account for monetary donations to benefit severely wounded Veterans who have served in Afghanistan or Iraq who are receiving medical care at the VA. This fund will be administered by some of our Social Work staff. (GPF #1158).

Coffee Fund: to purchase supplies including coffee, cups, creamers, sugars, sweeteners, stir sticks, and cup lids) so that free coffee is available to Veterans and family members on designated inpatient units and in outpatient waiting areas. Approximately 400 cups are served daily Monday—Friday at the Cooper Division. Coffee is provided at an annual cost of \$10,000.00. (GPF #59).

Patient Bowling Program: to assist in paying fees for Recreation Therapy staff to take inpatients at the Leestown Division bowling several times each month. (GPF #24).

Gifts for Veterans Project: to purchase assorted gift items that are placed in a specially-marked travel bag and given out on Christmas morning to every Veteran hospitalized as inpatients and those Veterans receiving care on the Homeless Veterans transition Unit at LD. We spend around \$5,000.00 each year to provide the specially marked travel bags and the assorted gift items that are packed in the bags that are given to approximately 200 inpatients on Christmas Day. (GPF #49).

Welcome Home Celebration: to purchase food, t-shirts, recognition pins, entertainment, etc. for an annual event honoring recently returning service members and Veterans who have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. (GPF #160)

General Purpose Fund: to purchase various items that help to enhance the personal comfort, morale, and general well-being of Veterans receiving care through the Lexington VA Medical Center. (GPF #59).

Homeless Veterans Program: to provide needed assistance to homeless Veterans. (GPF #157).

**Checks should be made payable to: Lexington VA Medical Center and mailed to:
Voluntary Service (135-CD), VA Medical Center, 1101 Veterans Drive
Lexington, KY 40502-2236**

Material Donation Needs

Various Individual Size Personal Care Items

Individual sized shaving cream, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant, disposable razors, hand lotion, combs, liquid soap, body powder, chap stick, and non-alcohol mouthwash can be donated that will be handed out to inpatients who need them.

Clothing

All sizes of adult male and female clothing items (especially 2XL and 3XL sizes) shirts, sweaters, jackets, pants, shoes, underclothes; as well as, gloves, socks, hats, etc. can be donated that will be made available to patients who need them through the VA Clothing Room. These items can be new or used if in good condition.

Toll-Free Phone Cards

Phone cards are needed for Veterans who need to make calls to their family while receiving care in the hospital.

Lex-Tran Bus Tokens

Can be purchased directly from the Lexington Transit Authority and then donated to Voluntary Service. Tokens cost \$1.00 each and will be used to assist Veterans in the Lexington area who need transportation to/from the medical center.

Coffee Pots

Coffee is provided to patients and visitors in designated inpatient and outpatient waiting areas of the medical center. 90 cup, 45 cup, and 12 cup coffee makers are needed.

Recreation Items

Large print word search puzzles/crossword puzzles books, playing cards, Wii electronic games, DVD movies, and plastic headphones that can be issued to patients as needed.

Coffee Supplies

Regular coffee, decaffeinated coffee, coffee creamer (canisters/packets), sugar (canisters/packets), artificial sweeteners, stir sticks, etc.

Snack Foods

Individually wrapped snack crackers/granola bars/candy, etc.

Various Other Items

Assorted gardening tools, guitars, and a music stereo system.

Thank you for your generous support.

Please contact Voluntary Service at (859) 281-5280/4930 if you need additional information or if you are interested in donating any of these items.

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American Red Cross Donation

Members of the Bluegrass Chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC) delivered approximately \$12,000.00 worth of supplies and electronic equipment to the Leestown Division. Susan Temmermand, VAVS Representative for the ARC submitted a grant proposal to the Department of Defense that identified particular items that would directly benefit Veterans receiving care at our medical center. Susan's proposal was accepted and allowed the ARC to provide a very generous donation. Our thanks to the ARC for their efforts in providing this large donation.



The ARC donation included coffee, phone cards, Lex-Tran bus tokens, personal care kits, and electronic equipment.

Outdoor Recreation Areas at LD Get A Face Lift

Bryon Boehmke, Voluntary Service Specialist, took the lead in coordinating a refurbishing initiative to give the outside basketball court, horseshoe pits, and miniature golf course at Leestown a fresh new look. Bryon, the patients on Units 29-1 and 29-2, and Environmental Management Service employees spent over 100 hours to reseal the basketball court, paint, and weed these areas so patients can use and enjoy them once again. Special thanks to everyone who worked so hard on this project. Your efforts are very much appreciated!

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