



Promoting equity in engagement, access, and quality of mental health care for Veterans facing barriers to care

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Communiqué

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RECOVERY CORNER

Military Culture and Recovery

By Leigh Ann Johnson, LCSW
Mental Health Recovery Coordinator
VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System

Recovery Oriented Practice builds on a Veteran's strengths, facilitates support from Veterans' families and peers, promotes community integration, and recognizes the role of spirituality and culture in the healing process. Mental health providers who serve Veterans can increase their effectiveness by learning about and demonstrating respect for military culture in their clinical practice. The VHA T-21 Initiative requires VA facilities to provide training to community providers on military culture, readjustment issues, and deployment-related mental health conditions. Key elements of military culture include the values of courage, strength, discipline, chivalry, respect, honor, tradition, commitment to duty, and loyalty to comrades. Rituals and ceremonies are used to convey these values, celebrate accomplishments, and assist in coping with tragedy. Community-based recognition events that incorporate military culture are a powerful tool in promoting peer support, reducing stigma, facilitating healing and strengthening resilience for Veterans. The Gulf Coast Vietnam Veterans Salute held on Saturday, March 31, 2012 in Mobile, Alabama, is a recent example of such an event.



March 2012 Gulf Coast Vietnam Veterans Salute

For the past few years, local, state and federal governments have issued special proclamations in honor of Vietnam Veterans. The date for these proclamations usually falls in late March based on when the last U.S. Troops officially left Vietnam. Titles vary, such as "Vietnam Veterans Day", "Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Day", and others. Regardless of the title, these events encourage local communities to hold long overdue recognition events for Vietnam Veterans. Sponsors for such events vary. Former VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System Director Thomas Wisnieski, MPA, FACHE, recognized the need for such an event and asked his staff to work with local Vet Centers, Veteran

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RECOVERY (continued from page 1)

Service Organizations, and community partners to develop such an event. USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park was selected as the ideal venue for the event: <http://www.ussalabama.com/>.

Incorporation of Military Culture

The Gulf Coast Vietnam Veterans Salute began with a motorcycle parade coordinated by Rolling Thunder Alabama Chapter 1. Vietnam and Vietnam-era Veterans from across the Gulf States gathered in Mobile, Alabama, for an “Honor Ride” parade of motorcycles, military vehicles, vans, and buses to a special celebration at USS ALABAMA Battleship Memorial Park. At the park, Veterans, their families and friends enjoyed a moving ceremony that incorporated military traditions. The Posting of Colors and National Anthem were followed by a military flyover from the local Coast Guard unit. Special speakers included Alabama Governor Robert Bentley, who served during the Vietnam Era, followed by distinguished local Vietnam Veterans who served in combat. Former Mobile Mayor Mike Dow, who served as a door gunner in Vietnam, provided a special message that honored the sacrifices and celebrated the resilience of Vietnam Veterans. Following the ceremony, Vietnam Veterans were provided with live music, reunion activities, resource tables, military displays, and free admission to the Battleship Museum. The event concluded with the Missing Man ceremony, a Wreath Laying, and playing of Taps.

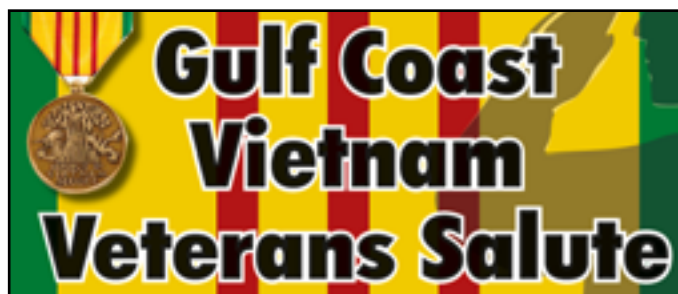
Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement was vital to the event’s success. Veteran leaders provided guidance for event content, helped with fund raising and media publicity, and distributed flyers to their fellow Veterans. Key Veterans groups included The South Alabama Veterans Council, and local chapters of Vietnam Veterans of America; Disabled American Veterans; Veterans of Foreign Wars; American Legion, Military Order of the Purple Heart; the Marine Corps League; Military Officers Association; the Alabama State Defense Force; and the newly formed Coast Guard Retirees Association. Key Motorcycle Associations included Rolling Thunder Alabama Chapter One, Vietnam Legacy Riders, Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, the Patriot Guard, and more. Veterans groups at local churches also provided support for the event.

Therapeutic Aspects

The Gulf Coast Vietnam Veterans Salute provided many opportunities to promote Recovery. When plans for the event were first announced, most Vietnam Veterans were excited. However, some Vietnam Veterans initially expressed

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Below are links to coverage of the Gulf Coast Vietnam Veterans Salute, as well as other information on Veteran recognition events. For more information about Military Culture and Mental Health, contact your Local Recovery Coordinator.

EVENT COVERAGE

- **VA Gulf Coast Website:** http://www.biloxi.va.gov/news/Gulf_Coast_Vietnam_Veterans_Salute_Event_.asp
- **Vietnam Veterans of America Newsletter:** <http://www.vva.org/News/ReportToAction.pdf>
- **Local Media Photo Gallery:** http://blog.al.com/live/2012/04/vietnam_veterans_appreciate_ce.html
- **Video clips:** <http://www2.wkrg.com/news/2012/mar/22/vietnam-veterans-salute-ar-3460196/>

LEARN ABOUT VIETNAM VETERANS

- **Education Packet:** The South Alabama Veterans Council is a local coalition of Veterans Groups and Community Members who advocate for Veterans. Their organization developed an education packet about the Vietnam War that they use when speaking to school groups. Their website is www.savc.net. Email savcmail@savc.net to request an electronic copy.
- **Link to Virtual Wall:** <http://www.virtualwall.org/iStates.htm>

LEARN ABOUT RECOGNITION EVENTS

- **VA Gulf Coast:** <http://www.biloxi.va.gov/vietnam.asp>
- **Charlotte, North Carolina:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaokyvbrNSs&feature=related>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z42LiC9cPJg&feature=related>
- **Fayetteville, North Carolina:** <http://www.heroeshomecoming.com/>
- **Ft. Campbell, Kentucky:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qp0LYc4IHnY>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5e19LvmbHBQ&feature=related>
- **Green Bay, Wisconsin:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30ydwPYppiM&feature=endscreen&NR=1>
- **Tulsa, Oklahoma:** www.operationoklahoma.org

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negative emotions. VA Mental Health Staff used counseling appointments and group sessions to help Veterans process negative emotions. They helped Veterans explore beliefs that “it’s too late”, deal with bitterness, face concerns about crowds, and consider the benefits of attending the event. Veterans who worked on preparations for the event said it gave them a renewed sense of purpose to help the community honor Veterans and help their peers experience that honor, and that they have a mission to make sure their comrades are not forgotten. Some Veterans even reported that it helped them manage symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. A number of Veterans shared that

they derived great satisfaction from educating the younger generation about the Vietnam War, and teaching them to honor Veterans. Active Duty service members and younger Veterans who provided assistance at the event said it gave them a special sense of meaning to ensure that their elders received the long overdue honor they deserved. Following the event, Vietnam Veterans and their families expressed deep appreciation for the celebration. Even months later, the VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System continues to receive positive comments from Veterans who attended the celebration. ♦

FY2013 Clinical Educator Grants Call for Applications

Do not miss your chance to submit a proposal for the FY2013 SC MIRECC Clinical Educator Grant program. These small grants (up to \$10,000 for multi-site projects) are designed to help clinicians develop innovative clinical education tools that benefit the mental health care of rural and other under-served Veterans. The SC MIRECC is especially interested in funding projects that involve collaborations between medical centers and community-based clinics.

Examples of past projects include a CD-ROM compendium of pain management information and tools for clinicians who treat Veterans with substance abuse, a manual to conduct psychoeducational workshops for returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans and their families about readjustment issues, and a DVD of ex-POWs telling their stories about internment and their struggle with PTSD symptoms and how they have managed to survive and thrive in their lives. The Clinical Educator Grants program has produced more than 30 excellent clinical education products that the SC MIRECC makes available to clinicians free of charge. Additional products can be found at <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/clinicalEducationProducts.asp>.

If you have a great idea for an educational tool to improve care delivery, this may be the opportunity that you are looking for! **The deadline for submitting a proposal is August 1, 2012.** For more information about the Clinical Educator Grants, contact Dr. Geri Adler at Geri.Adler@va.gov or Dr. Michael Kauth at Michael.Kauth@va.gov.

- Download Application at <http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/CEGApplication2013.pdf>.
- Download Example Application 1 at http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Sample_application_I.pdf.
- Download Example Application 2 at http://www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/docs/Sample_application_II.pdf. ♦

ATTRIBUTION: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF MIRECC RESEARCH SUPPORT/EMPLOYMENT

SC MIRECC researchers and educators have a responsibility to ensure that the SC MIRECC receives proper credit for SC MIRECC-supported studies or projects in articles, presentations, interviews, and other professional activities in which the results of those projects are publicized or recognized. All investigators should credit the SC MIRECC if they receive either direct or indirect support from the SC MIRECC. For example, "This work was supported in part by the VA South Central (VISN 16) Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center." If you receive salary support from the SC MIRECC, you should list the SC MIRECC as an affiliation.

SC MIRECC ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SC MIRECC Welcomes New Program Site Assistants in Houston and Oklahoma City

Please join us in welcoming Sarah Pollard and Jonathan 'Jon' Scott as new program support assistants at the Houston and Oklahoma City anchor sites, respectively.

Ms. Pollard received a Bachelor of Science in Technical Management (concentration Health Care Administration/Management) and a certificate in Accounting from DeVry University. She is also working on a Master of Business Administration at DeVry and expects to be finished by this summer/fall. Ms. Pollard has been with the VA since 1999 and is excited about the great coworkers and interesting adventures ahead in her new position at the SC MIRECC. Her hobbies include cooking, participating in family gatherings, and working on home projects. She describes herself as being friendly, polite, compliant, easy to get along with and flexible.

Originally from Roanoke, Virginia, Mr. Scott received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Thomas Edison State College in 2009 and a Master of Science in Addiction Counseling from Grand Canyon University in 2012. He is also working on a Master of Science in Professional Counseling at Grand Canyon University and is under supervision as an Oklahoma Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor. Mr. Scott retired in January 2012 after 22 years as a Navy Chief Petty Officer (Naval Aircrewman) with over 3,500 flight hours in four aircraft platforms (anti-submarine warfare and nuclear TRIAD command and control). He has been stationed in Florida, California, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and the United Kingdom. He's currently adjusting to civilian life as 19 of his 22 years with the Navy were either on sea or overseas duty.

Mr. Scott has been married for 18 years and his hobbies include upland game bird and waterfowl hunting and training upland gun dogs (Weimaraners). He also provides substance abuse and addiction counseling for teens and their families and volunteers for the Oklahoma Regional Food Bank, the Wounded Warrior Project, and the Oklahoma City Thunder Basketball team. Mr. Scott is excited about learning about the clinical research side of the mental health field and serving Veterans and their families in his new position with the SC MIRECC. ♦

VISN 6 and 16 mental health providers are invited to attend the next SC MIRECC CBOC Mental Health Rounds titled "Blast Brain Injury and PTSD for (Crash-Test) Dummies" on Wednesday, August 8, 2012 at 8:00-9:00 a.m. (CST). This LiveMeeting session will be presented by Bruce Capehart, MD, MBA.

Call 1-800-767-1750 and use access code-26461# to participate. For registration information and links to the LiveMeeting, email Ashley.McDaniel@va.gov.



Attention all VA mental health providers!

Visit the VISN 16 Mental Health Practice, Research and Education Portal (MH PREP) to interact with other mental health providers about clinical care issues, access educational products and services, and discover the latest continuing education opportunities. The MH PREP is accessible from a VA computer at <https://vaww.visn16.portal.va.gov/SiteDirectory/mhp/default.aspx>. ♦

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