

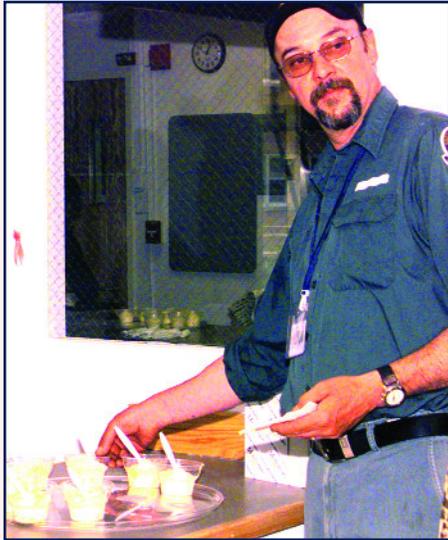
North Chicago VA News



North Chicago
VA Medical Center
3001 Green Bay Road
North Chicago, Illinois 60064

April/May 2004

NewsBits



***Springfest Ice Cream Social-** Steve Staton, Facility Management, enjoys a sundae Thursday afternoon, May 6th. Community Affairs sponsored the make your own sundae day.

***National Alcohol Screening Day (NASD)** is a program designed to educate the public about the dangers of alcohol and allow individuals to seek help in a non-threatening, easily accessible manner. Alcohol is the most widely used substance in the US. In 1998, alcohol abuse cost this country an estimated \$185 billion, including health care costs, productivity losses, traffic crashes, and alcohol related crimes. Free anonymous screenings were held Thursday, April 8, 2004 at the North Chicago VA Medical Center.

***All Employee/Volunteer Picnic** July 15th from 11am to 4pm in Bldg 134-1C and courtyard, weather permitting.

North Chicago News

North Chicago News is published for staff and volunteers of the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Submissions can be sent to douglas.shouse@med.va.gov

Contributors for this issue:

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VA Doctors Are the Heart of Healing

In celebration of National Doctor's Day on March 30, 2004, NCVA honored our physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, and residents with a celebration centered on the theme "VA Doctors Are the Heart of Healing". Thousands of veterans each year receive quality health care at the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Dr. Tariq Hassan, Chief of Staff, presented certificates of outstanding service to Dr. Salwa Parhad and Dr. Catherine Haberland for their years of outstanding contributions. A memorial plaque was presented for Dr. Deshmukh's distinguished service to this medical center, which was accepted by Dr. Ashok Fulambarker, on behalf on Dr. Deshmukh's family.



Special guest, K. Michael Welch, MB, ChB, FRCP President and Chief Executive Officer, Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science and Dr. Parhad look on as Dr. Haberland cuts the Doctor's Day Cake.



Catherine Haberland, M.D. received a Certificate of Outstanding Service from Dr. Hassan for her continuing care of Neurology Clinic patients and her unique service of Neuropathology and teaching.



Salwa Parhad, M.D. received a Certificate of Outstanding Service from Dr. Hassan for her clinical excellence and devotion to geriatric mental health patient care needs.

NCVA applauds these physicians who strive each day to treat the sick, discover new cures, prevent illness and set benchmarks for future excellence in health care.

Doctors' individual and shared efforts make an immeasurable contribution to the veterans we serve. Thanks to all of our VA doctors - they truly are the heart of healing!



A reception to celebrate and thank our physicians, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists and residents was held in Building 134. The canteen provided a wonderful buffet of a variety of mini finger sandwiches, chips, sodas, and cake.

Quality System Survey (QSS) Results

Thank you for participating in the Quality System Survey (QSS). This employee survey was conducted in October 2003 to identify strengths and weaknesses in the quality of service we provide here at North Chicago VA Medical Center. The QSS is different from other surveys because it focuses on the quality of the processes versus employee satisfaction. Because of your participation and dedication to improving our facility, we are utilizing the results of this survey to develop plans to improve our processes and systems. Following is a summary of the results:

Out of a possible 1000 points, North Chicago VA Medical Center a scored 721 points This score is just slightly lower than private and

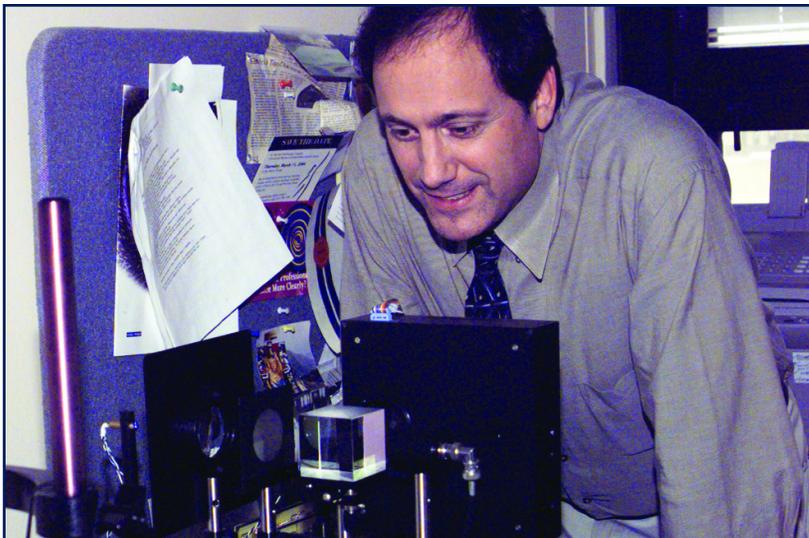
public facilities that have won the Malcolm Baldrige award for Quality. Compared to our previous QSS surveys we scored either the same or 1 or 2 point lower. These results coupled with our previous results further validate your feelings/perceptions regarding the quality of services we provide our customers. Our results also demonstrate we are doing significantly better than other VA facilities that have utilized the QSS Survey.

Our top three high scoring areas were Leadership, Customer and Market Focus, and Business Results. Even though our scores were high there were five areas, which showed opportunities for improvement. These five areas are: (1) Poor quality work done by

one service affects quality in my service; (2) front line staff not participating in quality improvement teams; (3) front line staff do not have input into the planning process for the facility; (4) the quality of our work suffers because different services don't cooperate; (5) supervisors and staff need to work together to improve the quality of the service.

Please visit the North Chicago VA Medical Center homepage for the complete PowerPoint presentation on the QSS results. Again, thank you for taking time to participate in this survey. Your input and feedback is essential in achieving our goal to be the Employer of Choice.

Landmark Research By Dr. Richer At NCVAMC



Study Published in Optometry Journal First of its Kind. The antioxidant supplement lutein may be an effective approach in improving symptoms of age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of vision loss among older Americans. The LAST study (Lutein Antioxidant Supplementation Trial) is the first published clinical trial to record actual improvement in several key visual functions among patients with "dry" AMD, the most common form of the disease. The data appears in this month's issue of *Optometry - Journal of the American Optometric Association*.

Stuart Richer, O.D., Ph.D., Chief of Optometry at the North Chicago VA Medical Center and Associate Professor, Family Medicine at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science, is the LAST study lead investigator. The study involved patients from the North Chicago VA Medical Center and Hines VA Hospital. Prior to the

study, lutein and other antioxidants were widely believed to be purely a preventive measure in reducing risk in the onset of AMD among high-risk patients.

"Our findings show that AMD symptoms may be reversed through purified lutein supplementation or a supplement mix of lutein and other antioxidants such as vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, and beta carotene," said Dr. Richer. "By no means a cure for AMD, the study does show improvement among several disease symptoms in AMD patients."

"Because one in eight Americans over the age of 60 has this untreatable disease, the results of the LAST study demonstrate the crucial need to conduct larger studies over a longer period of time of lutein and antioxidant nutritional therapies," added Dr. Richer.

Dr. Richer earned his undergraduate degree in 1977 from the Rochester Institute of Technology, after which he completed a dual OD MS (physiological optics) program at the University of California at Berkeley in 1981. A one-year residency in low vision / hospital

based optometry followed at the Kansas City, Missouri VA Medical Center. He has been Chief of Optometry at VA Medical Center, North Chicago, IL since 1983. He has been actively involved in teaching optometry and medical students as well as postdoctoral fellows of all disciplines.

In 1996 Dr. Richer earned his PhD in human physiology and biophysics from Chicago Medical School following 15 years of practice. He's an Associate Professor of Family and Preventative Medicine at Chicago Medical School and Clinical Optometry at ICO and UMSL. Dr. Richer has authored papers in *Current Eye Research*, *Experimental Eye Research*, *FASEB*, *Vision Research*, *Optometry & Vision Science*, *Optometry*, and *International Ophthalmology Clinics*. He has presented his research to the US Department of Defense, the Spanish Ophthalmologic Congress (Granada, Spain 1996), Schepens Eye Institute Retina (Harvard, 2000 meeting), the Peking University Eye Center (China 2002), ARVO Retinal Section (Ft Lauderdale 2003), and the Canadian Society for Cataract and Refractive Surgery (Montreal 2003).

Actively involved in primary care optometry and clinical antioxidant research, Dr. Richer has special interests in aging, prescribing nutrients in the intervention of age related macular degeneration, low-tension glaucoma, prevention of cataracts and dry eye.



Employee Wellness Fair Fosters Health Care Self-Responsibility

The first annual All Employee Wellness Fair was held on Tuesday, March 23, 2004. We had an outstanding response to this event with 525 total attendees! A wealth of information was available for all employees to take away with them. Staff was able to visit over thirty informative and interactive booths arranged throughout the entire wing of 134-1C. Also, available to those who attended, was an opportunity to have their blood pressure, glucose and body mass index checked. Clinicians were on hand to provide staff with guidance on ways they could try to better manage the findings to improve their health and well being.

Eleven speakers were scheduled throughout the day to provide presentations on a variety of subjects relating to health, well being, awareness and prevention. Topics offered were selected as a result of staff's input from a recent survey. Guest speakers from the American Cancer Society, Lake County Health

they are more productive at their jobs, less on the job injuries occur, absenteeism is lowered and the overall workplace environment and morale is improved.

The newly formed Employee Wellness Program Planning Committee is currently developing an Employee Wellness Program. The goal of the employee wellness program is to improve the health and wellbeing of all North Chicago VA employees. An All Employee Fitness Walk will be held at the medical center on June 15, 2004. Mark your calendars! Additional information about this Employee Wellness Program event will be forthcoming. For further information about the Wellness Program or the Fitness Walk please

contact Sonia Fulambarker, at extension 81230 or Stephanie D'Angelo, at extension 84216.

Medical Center Leadership would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to all staff that contributed to the planning and execution of the Wellness Fair. It

Department and the Naval Hospital Great Lakes, as well as, professionals from within our medical center community were invited to share their knowledge and provided additional approaches to improving quality of life.

was a resounding success due to the wonderful creative participation of so many!! This was truly a medical center wide initiative where staff members from all across the medical center came together for the good of their fellow co-workers!

Statistics gathered at the Wellness Fair, and through a recent staff survey, found that North Chicago VA Medical Center employees are at high risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. These findings are alarming. Professional staff members and Medical Center Leadership are committed to assist staff in improving their health and fitness. Statistics show that if employees are more fit physically



Canteen Recognized as One of the Best in the VA



Canteen Staff with certificates of recognition from left: Mr. Sullivan, Medical Center Director, Gregory Baptiste, Jill McKenzie, Chief, Canteen Service at NCVA, James Vandervoort, Ralph Shalda, Chief Operating Officer VCSCO, John Lyons, Terrance Crockett, Thomas Flynn, Trinidad Ala, Susan Kaires, Valerina Robinson, Annie Easley, JoAnn Ivory, Jane Speno, Angela Coleman Kneeling: Tamiko Miller, Gabriel Brabant, and Kim Wasilewski.

and their senior staff members who visit the facility and confer with medical center management.

Over the years, as canteen services have improved, the competition has become more demanding - with only slight margins separating the winners and their closest competitors.

The following are winners of the VCS 2003 Outstanding Canteen Awards:

Large Category:

- Minneapolis
- San Diego
- New Orleans
- Durham
- Tampa/Orlando
- Seattle
- West Palm Beach

Medium/Small Category:

- Columbia, SC
- El Paso
- Mather
- North Chicago

Each year the Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) conducts a competition to select our "Outstanding Canteens." The competition is a two-step process. The first phase is financial performance. To pass this hurdle, Canteens must be profitable and rank in the top 30% of similar sized Canteens.

Then comes the more difficult part of measuring customer service from front-line associates and managers. This evaluation is based on adherence to VCS customer service standards and the personal interaction of their staff members with their customers. For this evaluation feedback comes from VCS Regional Managers, auditors,

Congratulations to all the Staff in our Canteen for their commitment and dedication to award-winning customer service.

Bring Your Child To Work

"My Mom works hard!" says Jordan Becker, son of Susan Becker, Director's Office, who came to work with his mom on Thursday, April 22. The medical center held the yearly event "Bring Your Child To Work" which is an excellent opportunity for children of NCVA staff members to visit the VA Medical Center and experience the environment in which their parent works. Many employees took advantage of this opportunity to



Karen Fleming, Recreation Therapy and daughter Kaitlyn



Ruthie Walker with her granddaughter

From Left: Devin and Dalton with father Tim Gackle from Occupational Health and Safety; Brittney, goddaughter of Gannice Davis-McAllister, Facility Support and Jordan, son of Susan Becker, Director's Office

educate their children on the important role we have in serving our Nation's veterans. Participants were welcomed to the medical center by Mary Roseborough, and were treated to breakfast in the Canteen.

Thanks to all who participated in this program. We hope that this event will inspire the children and open their eyes to new possibilities and encourage future careers in the health care field.

Our Volunteers Get Involved



Members of the Amvets and Amvets Aux. conducted their annual gift distribution to our veterans in observance of National "Because We Care Day". Send in the clowns.



The employees of the Patient Financial Services Department at the Madison VA wanted to do a community service project, so they decided to do a food drive for needy veterans and their families. Sixty employees decorated food baskets and collected over \$1,300.00 worth of food items. They chose to share these items with the North Chicago VA and delivered large baskets for 17 needy veterans and their families. Pictured are Corina Blanchetti and Lauren Miller, Patient Financial Services of Madison with Mary Roseborough, Associate Director, Patient Services/Nurse Executive, and Marianne Semrad, Associate Director/Facility Support with the overflowing bounty of food.

The baskets were received by our veterans with awe and amazement. They were genuinely and deeply thankful and in many cases had tears in their eyes. We salute the employees of Patient Financial Services at the Madison VA for the huge enthusiasm they showed in doing this project and for sharing it with our veterans. You are commended for your heartfelt giving that touched the lives of so many. You truly made a difference.



The students from Maple Park Academy (pictured) came all the way from Chicago to sponsor and conduct a bingo for our veterans in Bldg. 134. They did a great job and a good time was had by all.

VETERANS STORIES: Invasion of Italy

For most of us, landmark dates from World War II: December 7, 1941 and June 6, 1944 these days need no explanation. There were so many other points on the calendar that rang with significance during the war years; however, to those of us who weren't there, these dates are lost in the shuffle. It is left to those who were there to find them for us. And so, we are reminded of the invasion of Italy through the eyes of Herman Rosenthal.

Mr. Rosenthal stated "it was a long time ago but he still remembers it well. Mr. Rosenthal spent most of his time as a radio operator assigned to a captain but he added that he began Army life with a much more unique job assignment. He was a bugler with the 36th division of the 142nd infantry and had unknowingly been trained for the battle in Oran North Africa. Mr. Rosenthal said he didn't even know how he got selected for that because he never played a musical instrument in his life--He had to learn to play it.

On September 3, 1943 the 36th division boarded the SS Barnett. The decision to land at Salerno, 40 miles south of Naples was a logical one. US

fighter planes didn't carry enough fuel to travel farther into Italy. The Germans, followed the same strategy and sent their troops to the beach to wait.

Mr. Rosenthal said "that night on the ship we were told that Italy had surrendered and we thought we wouldn't have that rough a time; we didn't know the Germans were there waiting for us. The ship's chaplain came in and told us it wasn't going to be easy." Mr. Rosenthal said he tried to sleep but his thoughts were of home, his family and his buddies.

Mr. Rosenthal said the Germans were well-prepared for the American landing. There was little cover-scrub brush and shallow ditches and the Germans were well-prepared. Germany's famous Panzer division set up barbed wire and land mines in the sand and placed their tanks and machine guns in the hills beyond the beach. Mr. Rosenthal recalled "We landed in eight waves. I landed with the second wave at 3:37 am. We had the Germans outnumbered but ... I lost a lot of my buddies."

Mr. Rosenthal continued "Our objective was to take a particular hill but the Germans kept driving us back to the beach. It was a terrible thing. We'd go a few feet on the beach and then get pinned down. I was really scared. I never thought I was going to make it. I hadn't prayed much before, but I sure prayed then."

After 12 days of "fierce fighting", the Germans retreated. The Americans, after being driven back many times, secured Salerno. After 60 years, Mr. Rosenthal looks at the battle with mixed emotions. "It helped shorten the war, in my opinion, but it's a funny feeling knowing that I'm alive today and a lot of my buddies aren't. Sometimes I'll recall vivid memories. Other times it's like I was in another world. I guess you wouldn't trade the experience for a million dollars but you wouldn't want to do it again either."

Thank you Mr. Rosenthal for reminding us of a day worth our attention and serving our country! What a fabulous recount of history that most of us probably wouldn't know if it wasn't for special individuals like Mr. Rosenthal to tell their stories.

Recovery: Transition from Patienthood to Personhood.

The VAMC - North Chicago welcomed in excess of 115 clinical staff, representatives from community agencies, and veterans/consumers, Tuesday, April 20, 2004, to the Second Annual Mental Health Recovery Conference. Co-sponsored by the Day Treatment Center (DTC) and the Mental Health Intensive Case Management Program (MHICM), Amy Long, LPN, nationally and internationally acclaimed speaker and keynote speaker at the 2004 International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services, brought her message of recovery for the seriously mentally ill during her workshop entitled: Recovery: Transition from Patienthood to Personhood.

Ms. Long is a person who received four or five different diagnoses while in the mental health system several years ago. She refused to be seen through those labels and

fought to regain her voice and take charge of her healing journey. She is herself a "survivor" of the mental health system and its accompanying personal trauma. Amy firmly believes that the "healer lies within" each individual and she spoke to accessing that healer and keeping hope for recovery alive. By struggling to regain her sense of confidence and dignity, she was able to hold on and never give up her spirit!

Amy's personal story of recovery was delivered with passion and



Amy Long, LPN, nationally and internationally acclaimed speaker and keynote speaker at the 2004 International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services

humor. It challenged both mental health staff and veterans/consumers to "push the envelope" within the system today so as to provide an environment where healing can and will happen.

National Prisoner of War Recognition Day



April 9th was National Prisoner of War Recognition Day. Mr. Sullivan expresses deep appreciation from all of our employees to the three inpatient veterans, who were prisoners of war, for their sacrifice in service to our nation. The three veterans who were honored were Arthur Karnowski from 134-1B, Bernard Brooks from 134-2C (pictured), and Vincent Marino from 134-3B.

Exceptional Customer Service

We received a wonderful letter from an individual who wanted to share their experience with the North Chicago VA Medical Center. The letter reads: "I am writing you today regarding a patient that had been at your facility for the past year and a half. We came to your hospital in July of 2002 and primarily was in Building 134-2C. I wanted to express my appreciation to your staff there.

The staff had been told that I was his daughter; we thought it would be easier to deal with his health issues if a family member were involved.

However, he had no family or blood relatives, but was a family friend of my husband's father for over 40 years. He made me Power of Attorney after he was brought to the VA, to help him keep track of his medical issues. He came into the nursing home with many health issues and as time went on the list became longer and longer. His love for life and living it up had taken a toll on his body.

I was made aware of the quarterly reviews, at which time I was blessed to be able to meet Mr. James Harris. From that point on, I was no longer in the dark or misunderstood changes in his declining health. Mr. Harris became a great teacher to me as well as an advocate. He was extremely patient, informative and knew that when I didn't understand things or had a discrepancy with a

doctor from another part of the hospital, I could make one phone call to Mr. Harris and I could rest easier understanding what was happening as well as what was coming next. He was a great asset to have in my life as the health of the veteran began to decline further. And in the end, he was still by my side in the emergency room, helping me to understand the severity of the health problems and decisions that had to be made to alleviate any further suffering. I am 34 years old and have been to many funerals in my days, however never was responsible for the entire process of a person losing a battle against such severe health problems. I want to commend him for his compassion, patience, and understanding throughout the stay at your hospital, as well as his entire staff on the second floor.

Your staff made him feel less alone in this world, they befriended him and made him feel cared for when I was unable to be there.

I also would like to mention all of the same compliments for Dr. Maldonado. He was very patient and helped me to understand some very serious issues. He made me understand the decisions I had to make and as well as made me feel comfortable with the ones I did make.

I am comforted in these trying times to know that in a time of crisis, there are still compassionate people within our community that pull together. It has made this entire experience in my life an easier one. Thank you."

Federal Employee of the Year: The Gold Standard of the American Workforce

The 47th Annual Federal Employee of the Year Awards Program was held on April 29th at Navy Pier in Chicago. Federal employees throughout the Chicago Area were honored for their exemplary job performance and outstanding contributions to public service. Nominated from the NCVA for Outstanding Professional Employee was Pat Tydell, OPI. Outstanding Supervisory Employee nominees



were Michelle Tanner, Mental Health; Kathryn Willis, Pharmacy; Katherine Dong, Speech and Audiology; Jadwiga Olejniczak, Mental Health.

Outstanding Technical or Program Support Employee Nominees were Judith Hamby,

Mental Health; Naomi Lewis, Mental Health; Colleen Smoger, Patient Services. Colleen was selected as a finalist in her category.

Outstanding Team nomination was In-Patient Pharmacy Staff.

Congratulations to all of our nominees and finalist.



NCVA Hosts Women Veterans Program Managers



While most women veterans receive their primary care through special women's health clinics, providers in specialty clinics and in CBOCs are now seeing increasing numbers of women patients. Consequently, in 2003, the VISN 12 Women Veteran Program Managers (WVPMs) sponsored their first clinical update on women's health issues. The program was so successful that a second clinical update was held on April 23rd at the North Chicago VA. Approximately 70 attendees from every medical center in the VISN and from Naval Hospital - Great Lakes came together to learn about state-of-the-art health care for women. Among the topics presented were management of breast masses; evaluation of the infertile couple; an update on the Women's Health Initiative and a multi-disciplinary panel on depression in women. The keynote address was provided by Carole Turner, MSN, Director of the Women Veterans Health Program in VA Central Office. Entitled "When

Ginny Comes Marching Home," the presentation outlined the health concerns faced by women returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Ms. Turner reported that more than 2,300 women Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans have received health care from the VA system to date. While a wide range of both medical and psychological conditions were reported, the most common complaint was of musculo-skeletal ailments, primarily joint and back problems.

Attendees rated the program highly and appreciated the opportunity to exchange information with providers at other facilities who provide health care for women. Copies of the hand-outs and other relevant information on women veterans health are now available on the VISN 12 intranet at the following web address: http://vaww.visn12.med.va.gov/Patient_Care/HTwomen.asp. Special thanks to VISN 12 Education and the Minneapolis Employee Education Center for their help in making this program a success.



From left to right: Julie Wright, MSW; Women Veterans Program Manager Trainee, Iron Mt; Connie LaRosa, RN, MSA, Deputy Field Director - Central Region, Women Veterans Health Program; Carole Turner, RN, CNA, Director - Women Veterans Health Program; Katherine Dong, Lead WVPM, VISN 12; Kathy Breunig, WVPM - Milwaukee; Gail Hunt - WVPM - Madison; Diane Shearod - WVPM - Hines; Jill Feldman, WVPM - VA Chicago; and Anne Starr, WVPM - Iron Mt.



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VAVS VOLUNTEER AWARDS



From Left: Sam Madonia, Dick and Fran Eirich from the Elks



Stan Nathanson, JWV receives his 3,750 hour Appreciation Award and 4,000 Hour Presidential Award from Patrick Sullivan, Medical Center Director

North Chicago VA Volunteers became stars for the Performing Arts on April 15th at the Country Squire Restaurant in Grayslake, where over three hundred volunteers, guests and staff were in attendance at the 2004 Annual Volunteer Awards Program. The theme "Lights on Broadway" highlighted this year's program, including a Playbill listing the awards and a cast of over 1100 volunteers. Singer Karla Beard, of Chicago, entertained the audience with Broadway tunes from a variety of hit shows.

The volunteers, starring in their own



Dorothy Waters receives the 50,000 hour Jade Crystal Tower honoring her 50 years and 50,531 hours from Patrick Sullivan, Medical Center Director

roles, were honored with awards for their many hours of devotion and dedication to our veterans.

Acclaiming a grand performance was Dorothy Waters, Wilmette, who was presented a special jade crystal tower award for 50,000 hours and 50 years of service.

Other prestigious VAVS

awards followed with Richard Kutz, McHenry, who received a 15,000 hour medallion award; Floyd Eubanks, Jr., Waukegan, John Reis, Jr., Round Lake, and Herman Rosenthal, Waukegan, a 10,000 hour silver bowl award; Victor Belec, Grayslake, Roy Burns, Waukegan, and Otis Norsworthy, North Chicago, a 8,750 hour plaque Also, 4,000 hour Presidential Awards borne from President Bush's initiative encouraging all Americans to serve volunteer hours to community and country were



From Left: May Haidy and Dorothy Schmuldt from the VFW AUX. and Mildred Becker from the Fleet Reserve.

presented to Charles David Ayers, Robert Ayres, Emma Corcoran, Dean Englehart, Elizabeth Korbai and Stan Nathanson. Other volunteer awards ranged from 6,250 hours to 50 hours. Overall, 73,000 hours were served by 1110 Regular Scheduled Volunteers this year.

The National theme "Volunteers Inspire by Example" couldn't be truer of our VA volunteers. Congratulations and a special thank you to each and every volunteer for your service to our Nation's veterans.