



# THE VISN VOICE



August 2008

## I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

Mr. Garfunkel

One of the issues on my mind a lot lately is communications. I thought that I would share with you some of what I have been thinking about and working on it that area.

First of all, being a Network Director creates all kinds of communications issues that are new to me. As the VISN 5 Director, I have about 6,800 employees at 19 different locations. While I try to get to each medical center as often as I can, I also have to do a lot of traveling for my other Network Director assignments; and even when I visit a medical center, there is a limit to how many employees I can actually see and speak to.

Before I discuss a couple of methods of communication that I am implementing, I wanted to tell you that one of my other assignments as a VISN Director is Co-Chair of the National Leadership Board's Communications Committee. I won't go into great detail other than to let you know that enhancing communication in a large organization is a very necessary but a very difficult task. It is one we struggle with at the national level all the time.

That being said, I want you to be aware of two communications initiatives. One is sort of a revival. That is, as I visit each medical center in the coming weeks and months, I will be having Town Hall Meetings. At these

meetings, I will be presenting some information from the VISN perspective. Most importantly, I will open up the floor to listen to you. I am looking forward to trying to answer your questions and to hear what is important to you. Please try to attend if you can.

Secondly, VISN 5 is moving into the Blogosphere. That is a fancy word meaning that I will begin shortly writing a Blog. (As a footnote, according to Wikipedia, the term "blogosphere" was actually coined on September 10, 1999, by Brad L. Graham, as a joke.) In any case, I will attempt to write a short blog, once or even twice a week. One of the nice things about a blog (a paragraph or two to let you know what I am thinking about) is that any employee can actually respond to the blog, so I can see what you have to say. In some cases (not all) the responses will be posted for all to see.

I welcome any other ideas that you may have to enhance communications in our VISN.

### **Special points of interest:**

**Fresh Eyes on Service  
VA E-Payroll Initiative**

*News From Around  
the Network*

**Washington DC VAMC**

**VAMHCS**

**Martinsburg VAMC**

**VISN 5 Service Area**

### **Editors Note: How to contribute to THE VISN VOICE NEWSLETTER**

The VISN Voice is a monthly Network publication, and a source of educational and informational articles for employees, volunteers, and veterans of the VA Capitol Health Care Network. Submit your information via outlook e-mail to [VISN5 Employee Newsletter](mailto:VISN5_Employee_Newsletter) by the end of the month for the following month's publication. Please do not send PowerPoint or Published documents—use Word. Please include the following information: name, title, service, facility, and reason for submission. Submissions should not exceed 350 words. The editor reserves the right to make edits to any submission chosen for publication, and not all submissions will be chosen for publication. Ken Sliker—Editor



## What is it?

### What is this new program?

The Fresh Eyes on Service Program (FEOS) has been conceived as a means to learn, share, promote and improve successful VHA customer service programs. It has the potential also to encourage and reinforce a new direction in the evolution of customer service; that is, transitioning from courtesy being the goal to the new goal of building veteran loyalty one encounter at a time. The foundation of this advancement is the development of a nation-wide focus on inspiring acts of compassion in the workplace, not just courtesy and to enhance attentiveness to the patient's entire experience with the VA and its staff. The program is based upon a patient focused perspective and is intended to provide valuable information that can be used to enhance VHAs operational systems.

The Fresh Eyes on Service Program will be the first of many approaches to inspire organizational growth in customer service. This is a method to directly observe interactions between staff and patients as well as identify and share successful practices.

### What does this mean?

A FEOS observer will be coming to our medical center. Only the Director will be notified! The observer may show up at any time unannounced to staff.

### What should you do?

Everyday provide the best care and excellent customer service to all veterans, family members, visitors and staff.

### VA E-Payroll Initiative

As part of the President's Management Agenda, the e-payroll initiative was designed to save tax dollars and streamline government operations. E-payroll is one of the five e-government initiatives managed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Department of Defense (DOD), Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), was chosen to be the sole payroll provider for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). DFAS will use the Defense Civilian Pay System (DCPS) to accomplish this goal. To ensure all VA employees receive their paychecks accurately and timely, time cards must be certified and in Payroll by 11:00 a.m. the last Friday in the pay period. The VISN 5 conversion will be occurring on November 9, 2008. This conversion should be relatively seamless for employees with subtle changes in the appearance of Earning & Leave statements. As the conversion date approaches, information will continue to be shared with all employees.

### VISN 5 Employee Newsletter

Editor-Ken Sliker  
VISN 5

#### Contributing Editors

Dawn Miller  
VISN 5

Michelle Spivak  
Washington DC VAMC

David Edwards  
VAMHCS

Michael Dukes  
VAMHCS

Margaret Hornberger  
VAMHCS

Barbara Corbin  
Martinsburg VAMC

### VA Capitol Health Care Network, VISN 5

**849 International Drive,  
Suite 275**

**Linthicum, MD 21090**

**Phone: 410-691-1131**

**Fax: 410-684-3189**

**E-mail:**

**[VISN5 Employee Newsletter](#)**

# WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS

## Quality Fair July 24



DCVAMC employees were given a chance to openly brag about their services' success at the second annual DCVAMC Quality Fair held on July 24. Each service was given a "booth" to display their three-panel poster and demonstrate their service's improvements. This year's theme, "Power of Performance," promoted positive health care outcomes specifically in the areas of access to care, quality of care, and patient satisfaction. The event was organized by the Performance Management Team of Bill Sivley, Chief, Patient Advocate Office; Pam Rachal, Performance Measure Coordinator; and Paula Roychauduri, Access Administrator. According to Pam Rachal, "The fair fosters teamwork, creativity, and stewardship and the friendly best poster contest helps boost enthusiasm."



## WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS

### Chief of General Surgery Honored for 50 Years of Service

Most of his colleagues from medical school have been retired for many years, enjoying their golden years on the golf course and with the grandkids, but not Dr. George White. He is still fulfilled and finding new rewards in his position as Chief, General Surgery, at the Washington DC VAMC. It's been 50 years since Dr. White signed on for this VA "tour of duty," and he was recognized for this milestone anniversary in a July 21 ceremony at the Washington DC VAMC—his home for most of that time.

"I love it too much to stop," he says with an unmistakable genuine honesty when asked about retirement.

He humbly points to the wall of the hospital's surgical library where photos of past chief residents line the walls. There he is in a 1963 photograph, alongside other aging, black and white photos in the room. There is also the original Washington DC VA hospital building where he started his career, a hospital in Austria where he hails from, and his favorite historical figure, Dr. Theodor Billroth, the 19th century Viennese surgeon. Besides medicine, clearly his other love is history, specifically medical history.

It's no coincidence that he has made a bit of history himself.

"The first 50 years were wonderful, the next 50 will be even better," he said to the Medical Center Director, Fernando O. Rivera, upon receiving his 50 year service pin and other gifts for the occasion.

After completing George Washington University Medical School, an internship at DC General Hospital, and a year of Surgical Pathology residency at George Washington University Hospital, he began his

government career as a surgical resident at DCVAMC's original location, Mount Alto on Wisconsin Avenue.

"During the Vietnam era, I joined the Air Force and was sent to Chateauroux Air Station, France, where I served two years as Chief of Surgical Service. The VA held a clinical research job for me until I came back," he said, with a bit of amazement as if he still didn't believe it after all these years.

"It was remarkable, I came back right into a job; I never forgot that," remarked White. "I came back to VA because I had a job. I stayed at VA because it became family."

"It's a wonderful environment, working with such a special group of people who aren't motivated by finances, but are truly interested in taking care of veterans," he said.

His eyes light up when he talks about one of his favorite parts of the job, supervising the residents. One can catch him daily at 6:45 a.m. accompanying residents and students on rounds. He aptly takes credit for helping the young doctors become fine surgeons.

"Residents actively take care of patients—under strict supervision of course. In the operating room, we teach them judgment and technique, but mostly we lead by example."

Dr. White has been leading by example for years. At DCVAMC, he is an icon of what vision, dedication, compassion, and hard work can produce.

Beginning in 1965, Dr. White coordinated DCVAMC's role in the National VA Surgical Oncology Group study which investigated various treatments for esophagus, gastric, pancreas, colorectal, and

pulmonary cancers. The twelve-year study of 300 randomized patients at the DCVAMC yielded findings that paved the way for future cancer treatment options.

In 1986, he started one of the first VA Breast Clinics. The Breast Clinic was a progressive idea as breast disease was thought of as strictly a female disease, and the veteran female population was relatively low compared to today. Prior to its opening, patients were seen in the general surgery clinic which was not very private. DCVAMC's Breast Clinic is now a comprehensive diagnostic and treatment center screening more than 400 patients a year for diseases of the breast. "Men and women both," Dr. White is quick to add. The DCVAMC's breast cancer screening rate is consistently higher than VHA standards and even better than the best reported results in the private sector.

In 1992, Dr. White performed the first laparoscopic surgery at the hospital. Laparoscopy surgery offers patients a less invasive surgery and faster recovery time for surgeries such as gall bladder removal.

Approximately ten years ago, he created the Same-day Surgery Program.

"Creating the Same-day Surgery Program was a lot of work because we had to set up a Preoperative Evaluation Clinic, and it took a lot of coordination with different services. It works beautifully now, thanks to lots of people who make it happen," he said.

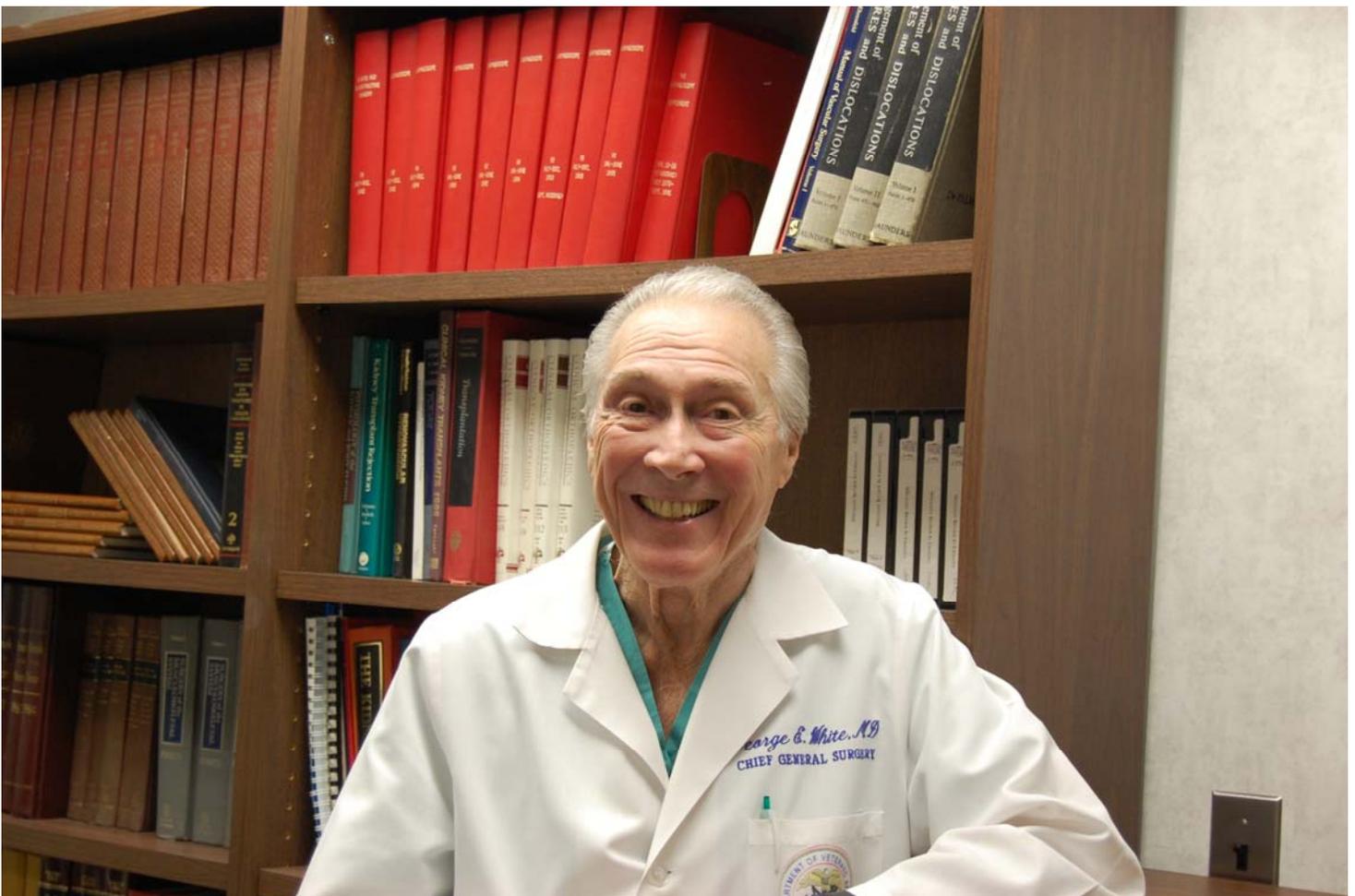
Dr. White continues to work tirelessly, yet still enjoying the work he's been doing for half a century. He set the bar high for those that follow and luckily for the Medical Center, he has no plans to retire.

## WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS



“It was remarkable, I came back right into a job; I never forgot that,” remarked White. “I came back to VA because I had a job. I stayed at VA because it became family.”

Dr. White as DCVAMC's Chief Resident in 1963.



Dr. White today still enjoying his work after 50 years.

## VA MARYLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (VAMHCS) NEWS

### Driver Rehabilitation Program Helps Get Veterans Back on the Road to Independence

*By Michael Dukes*

The VA Maryland Health Care System is pleased to announce that renovations to the driver rehabilitation suite are complete and the program has resumed its services to help disabled veterans get behind the wheel again.

The renovations included relocating the program from a small office at the Baltimore VA Rehabilitation & Extended Care Center to a larger suite in a new section of the Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic. The new suite is complete with contemporary furniture, meeting space for veteran consultations, and a new projection screen for driver simulator scenarios. Additional improvements to the driver rehabilitation program include the addition of a new vehicle to assist those veterans who are ready to test their driving skills on the road.

The driver rehabilitation program helps veterans with a variety of disabilities and age-related health conditions learn to drive again. Additionally, veterans with prosthetic arms or legs and those who suffered brain injuries or stroke can also regain their independence through this unique program. When a veteran begins the driver

rehabilitation process, the program coordinator evaluates individual limitations and needs with the use of adaptive driving equipment, driver simulator training, and a series of driving evaluations on the simulator and behind the wheel of a car. "We first evaluate veterans to determine exactly what type of limitation they have and what type of equipment they will need to be a safe driver again," says Lyonel Benjamin, driver rehabilitation coordinator for the VA Maryland Health Care System.

Veterans are able to experience the feel of a car in the program's driver simulator. Complete with a driver's seat, adapted accelerator and brake pedals, and a steering wheel, the simulator allows veterans to react to virtual driving situations that are project on a large screen. The simulator helps Benjamin test a driver's reaction times and to better determine what adaptive equipment works best for each veteran.

Through the driver rehabilitation program, a veteran's vehicle can also be fitted with a variety of adaptive equipment from strategically placed mirrors, to digital steering devices for amputees. After veterans have successfully demonstrated they can safely drive using their adaptive

equipment, they are one step closer to getting back on the road to a more independent lifestyle.



Chad Watson, a Marine Corps veteran who lost his right leg to a blast injury while serving in Fallujah, Iraq, last year, receives instructions on using adaptive gas pedal controls from Lyonel Benjamin, driver rehabilitation coordinator for the VA Maryland Health Care System. The Department of Motor Vehicles requires drivers who suffered traumatic injuries, like an amputation or a neurological disorder, to successfully complete a driver rehabilitation program in order to earn a driver's license.

## VA MARYLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (VAMHCS) NEWS

### Eaglet Rescued During Native American Festival At the Perry Point VA Medical Center

*By Margaret Hornberger*

“It is a humbling and spiritual experience to rescue an eagle, America’s national symbol,” says Rob Jenkins, the head singer and drummer for the Southern Heart Drummers of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. While participating in the Native American Festival held at the Perry Point VA Medical Center on June 7, 2008, Jenkins and some representatives of neighboring Native American tribal affiliations took a walk through the woods on the medical center’s campus in an attempt to capture a glimpse of the eagles that have nested in a large tree.

While approaching the area near the eagles’ nest, the group discovered an eaglet on the ground. Since the eaglet didn’t try to fly away, the group feared that it might have injured a wing. Jenkins and his associates captured the eaglet and called the Delaware Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research Center who

responded immediately.

After a thorough examination by a veterinarian, the eaglet was found to be in good health with no broken wings. According to the veterinarian, the eaglet may have just ventured out of its nest too soon and was not yet strong enough to fly off the ground.

“An eaglet left on the ground becomes very vulnerable to attack by other predators,” said Diane Korolog, wildlife rehabilitation volunteer with the rescue center. “To increase its chances of survival, it is important to return the bird to its natural habitat.”

With the assistance of Phung Luu, an experienced rescue center volunteer, the eaglet was hooded for safety and carried up a ladder to a

platform on a tree close to the eagles’ nest where its call could be heard by its parents. Luu selected a nearby tree in order to avoid undue disruption to the adult eagles and their nest containing another offspring.

Alfred Milliner, Chairperson of the Perry Point VA Medical Center’s Equal Employment Opportunity Native American Committee, credits representatives of the Native American tribal affiliations and the Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research Center of Delaware for their immediate actions to protect and ensure the well-being of the eaglet. “The eaglet is back with its parents and other offspring where it now has a chance to mature and learn to fly and hunt successfully,” Milliner said.

## MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS

### Annual Employee/Volunteer Picnic and Diversity Fair

The annual picnic, combined with the EEO Diversity Fair, was held on a beautiful July day in the employee parking lot. Tents provided shade for hundreds who participated in the great food, wonderful talent, games, and prizes. Employees are saying, “this was the best ever,” and special thanks are extended to the EEO Program Committee.



Employees enjoy the entertainment of the clowns at the Annual Picnic.



Martinsburg’s Director, Ms. Ann Brown, presents framed photograph to Ms. Washbourne for winning the Heroes Serving Heroes logo contest.

During the event, Ms. Ann Brown, Medical Center Director, announced Kimberly J. Washbourne as the winner of the Heroes Serving Heroes employee logo contest. Thirty-nine logos were submitted by employees, patients, and patients’ relatives for the contest to design a logo that represents Martinsburg VAMC and dedication to the veterans being served as “Heroes Serving Heroes.” Ms. Washbourne receive a cash award, framed photograph for display in the lobby, award certificate, and a logo prototype.

## MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS

### West Virginia MOM Project

Staff from the Martinsburg VAMC Dental Clinic recently participated in the United Way of the Eastern Panhandle Mission of Mercy (MOM) Healthy Smiles community project. More than 500 patients and about 800 volunteers took part in this two-day free dental clinic for adults as part of an ongoing initiative to improve the oral health of the Eastern Panhandle residents. MOM is an all-volunteer service program which was started in 2000 by a dentist in Virginia. Martinsburg VAMC event was the first MOM project to be held in West Virginia.



(Left to Right) Dan Hancock, DDS; Mary Marshall, RDH; Ella Clevenger; Shawn Young, Dental Assistants; and Jack Capriolo, DDS

### Mr. & Mrs. Ron Crawford during their Wedding Reception at the Martinsburg VAMC.



Ron Crawford and Sarah Reitz had been life partners for nearly 20 years. When Ron was diagnosed with terminal cancer and admitted to the Palliative Care Unit, a section of the Medical Center's Community Living Center, his last wish was to marry Sarah. Ron made his wish known to Bob Smith, MSW, LSW, and Jack Tennant, BSN, Nurse Manager, and within a very short time, arrangements were finalized. The couple, in the presence of family and friends, was married in the facility chapel in July by Chaplain Dennis Jackman. The Wedding Reception followed on the Living Center patio.

# VISN 5 Service Area



## Facility Numbers

### VA Maryland HCS

1-800-865-2441

Baltimore VAMC Medical Care Line

1-800-463-6295

Perry Point VAMC Medical Care Line

1-800-949-1003

Baltimore Rehab & Extended Care Center

1-800-463-6295

Prescription Refill

1-800-463-6295, ext 7395

### Martinsburg VAMC

(304) 263-0811

Medical Advice Line

1-800-817-3807 or (304) 262-4855

VETS Information

(304) 263-0811, ext 3758/3757

Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Or ext. 3050 after 4:30 p.m.

Prescription Refill

1-800-817-3807, prompt # 2

### Washington DC VAMC

(202) 745-8000

Medical Advice Line

(202) 745-8247

VETS Information

(202) 745-4046

PTSD Clinic Number

(202) 745-8591

Prescription Refill

1-888-553-0242

### Cambridge, MD

(410) 228-6243

### Fort Howard, MD

(410) 477-1800

### Hagerstown, MD

(301) 665-1462

### Alexandria, VA

(703) 313-0694

### Franklin, WV

(304) 358-2355

### Charlotte Hall, MD

(310) 884-7102

### Glen Burnie, MD

(410) 590-4140

### Loch Raven, MD

(410) 605-7650

### Harrisonburg, VA

(540) 442-1773

### Petersburg, WV

(304) 257-5817

### Cumberland, MD

(301) 724-0061

### Greenbelt, MD

(301) 345-2463

### Pocomoke City, MD

(410) 957-6718

### Stephens City, VA

(540) 869-0600

### Washington, DC

(202) 745-8685

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