



THE VISN VOICE



I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW—Mr. Garfunkel

At this special time of the year, I would like share a poem called "A Soldiers Christmas." The author is not known, but I am sure the poem will have significance to all. I wish you all a very Happy and Healthy Holiday Season and a Very Happy New Year!

*TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS, HE LIVED ALL ALONE,
IN A ONE BEDROOM HOUSE MADE OF PLASTER AND STONE.
I HAD COME DOWN THE CHIMNEY WITH PRESENTS TO GIVE,
AND TO SEE JUST WHO IN THIS HOME DID LIVE.*

*I LOOKED ALL ABOUT, A STRANGE SIGHT I DID SEE,
NO TINSEL, NO PRESENTS, NOT EVEN A TREE.
NO STOCKING BY MANTLE, JUST BOOTS FILLED WITH SAND,
ON THE WALL HUNG PICTURES OF FAR DISTANT LANDS.*

*WITH MEDALS AND BADGES, AWARDS OF ALL KINDS,
A SOBER THOUGHT CAME THROUGH MY MIND.
FOR THIS HOUSE WAS DIFFERENT, IT WAS DARK AND DREARY,
I FOUND THE HOME OF A SOLDIER, ONCE I COULD SEE CLEARLY.*

*THE SOLDIER LAY SLEEPING, SILENT, ALONE,
CURLD UP ON THE FLOOR IN THIS ONE BEDROOM HOME.
THE FACE WAS SO GENTLE, THE ROOM IN SUCH DISORDER,
NOT HOW I PICTURED A UNITED STATES SOLDIER.*

*WAS THIS THE HERO OF WHOM I'D JUST READ?
CURLD UP ON A PONCHO, THE FLOOR FOR A BED?
I REALIZED THE FAMILIES THAT I SAW THIS NIGHT,
OWED THEIR LIVES TO THESE SOLDIERS, WHO WERE WILLING TO FIGHT.*

*SOON ROUND THE WORLD, THE CHILDREN WOULD PLAY,
AND GROWNUPS WOULD CELEBRATE, A BRIGHT CHRISTMAS DAY.
THEY ALL ENJOYED FREEDOM EACH MONTH OF THE YEAR,
BECAUSE OF THE SOLDIERS, LIKE THE ONE LYING HERE.*

*I COULDN'T HELP WONDER HOW MANY LAY ALONE,
ON A COLD CHRISTMAS EVE IN A LAND FAR FROM HOME.
THE VERY THOUGHT BROUGHT A TEAR TO MY EYE,
I DROPPED TO MY KNEES AND STARTED TO CRY.*

*THE SOLDIER AWAKENED AND I HEARD A ROUGH VOICE,
"SANTA DON'T CRY, THIS LIFE IS MY CHOICE;
I FIGHT FOR FREEDOM, I DON'T ASK FOR MORE,
MY LIFE IS MY GOD, MY COUNTRY, MY CORPS."*

*THE SOLDIER ROLLED OVER AND DRIFTED TO SLEEP,
I COULDN'T CONTROL IT, I CONTINUED TO WEEP.
I KEPT WATCH FOR HOURS, SO SILENT AND STILL
AND WE BOTH SHIVERED FROM THE COLD NIGHT'S CHILL.*

*I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE ON THAT COLD, DARK, NIGHT,
THIS GUARDIAN OF HONOR SO WILLING TO FIGHT.
THEN THE SOLDIER ROLLED OVER, WITH A VOICE SOFT AND PURE,
WHISPERED, "CARRY ON SANTA, IT'S CHRISTMAS DAY, ALL IS SECURE."*

*ONE LOOK AT MY WATCH, AND I KNEW HE WAS RIGHT.
"MERRY CHRISTMAS MY FRIEND, AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT."*

Congratulations !

The winner of the Contest to name the VISN 5 Employee Newsletter is Monica Aiken, Medical Instrument Technician from Washington DC VAMC.

Special points of interest:

[Mr. Garfunkel's Thoughts](#)

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MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS



Martinsburg Vet Center staff walked as a group

Veterans Day 2007 Road to Freedom:

It was a rainy, frosty Saturday morning, November 10, but it did not deter participants for the VA Medical Center's Annual Veterans Day 5K Walk/Run/Roll. More than 250 participants...runners, walkers, and rollers, including strollers and roller skates, were part of the record turnout! The Medical Center hosts this annual event in honor of our Nation's veterans. All proceeds benefit Martinsburg's veteran activities. In addition the Veterans Canteen Service challenged veterans and staff to walk/run/roll "100 miles in 100 days" in the "Champions Challenge."



5K participants prepare for start of Walk/Run/Roll

MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS



Hospice of Panhandle display

By Barbara Corbin

Hospice & Palliative Care Open House....As part of National Hospice and Palliative Care month, on November 16, Martinsburg staff invited community hospice programs from West Virginia, Virginia, and Maryland to join together to celebrate and educate. Many participated in the event to learn how hospice can help them *live* with serious illness.

Chinese Visitors

Martinsburg staff familiarized themselves with Chinese custom as they prepared to host a group of 30 Chinese government officials. On November 19, the Director of Workforce Development at Kaplan College in Hagerstown, Maryland, lead the Chinese visitors and their interpreter on a tour of the Medical Center. There they were provided an overview of Medical Center operations, which included electronic medical record, performance measures and collecting from third party insurance companies. The Chinese visitors are government officials who are rotating throughout the country and have an interest in organizational structure and efficiency improvement.



Chinese visitors touring primary care area

Hundreds of Returning Veterans Attend VAMHCS's First Welcome Home Event



Ripken Stadium, Aberdeen Maryland, taken from the Blackhawk helicopter when landing

By Michael Dukés

In honor of Veterans Day 2007, the VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) hosted its first annual Welcome Home Celebration for veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The event was a resounding success, with more than 300 returning veterans and their family members attending the celebration at Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen, Maryland.

“The Welcome Home Celebration was a great opportunity for the VA and local community members throughout the state to say ‘thank you’ to our military veterans who answered the call to duty and selflessly served their country as part of the Global War on Terror,” said Dennis H. Smith, VAMHCS Director. “It was especially fitting to be

recognizing this new generation of American heroes on Veterans Day weekend as communities across the country came together to recognize and honor those who have served in the United States Armed Forces.”

In addition to the returning veterans and their family members, approximately 150 VAMHCS employees and volunteers joined together to provide logistical support and assistance throughout the Welcome Home Celebration. Also on hand to recognize and thank Maryland’s returning veterans were Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley and U.S. Congressmen Wayne Gilchrest and John Sarbanes, who were joined by VAMHCS and VISN 5 leadership to present all veterans from Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom with a commemorative coin that was

designed for the celebration.

Once inside the stadium, attendees had the opportunity to visit over 30 VA and community sponsored information tables to learn about health care benefits, education and financial assistance and employment opportunities. A major highlight during the event was the landing of a Blackhawk helicopter, in addition to appearances by local celebrities including Jason Brown from the Baltimore Ravens, several Baltimore Blast soccer players and cheerleaders, and former Baltimore Orioles baseball player Billy Ripken.

Local musical sensations Mr. Greengenes and Blues Unchained provided free concerts for the attendees during the Welcome Home Celebration.

Hundreds of Returning Veterans Attend VAMHCS's First Welcome Home Event (Continued)

The children of the returning veterans who attended the event also enjoyed a Kid's Zone area that featured face painting, balloon figures, and a moon bounce.

In addition to free food, entertainment and information tables, each returning veteran received a "Welcome Home" hat and t-shirt in recognition of their dedicated service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Our main goal during the Welcome Home Celebration was to show our returning veterans that we appreciate their service and to provide them with information about the benefits they have earned," said Chris Buser, the VAMHCS Returning Veterans Program Manager. "Our military veterans have

made many sacrifices while serving their country in a time of crisis, and we owe it to them to show that we are thankful for their service."

We want them to know the VA is here to help with any health problems they may be experiencing as a result of their military service."

Since the war on terror began, over 4,100 returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have successfully transitioned from the military to the VAMHCS. In an effort to ensure that all veterans receive the care they deserve, the VAMHCS continues to explore new and creative ways to reach out to military veterans throughout the state to provide them with information about their VA health care eligibility.

The Welcome Home Celebration is an example of one of the creative ways the VA and the VAMHCS is reaching out to this new generation of veterans.

The Welcome Home Celebration was made possible thanks to the hard work and dedication of the employees and volunteers throughout the VAMHCS. They worked countless hours to assure that the event was a rewarding and enjoyable experience for Maryland's returning veterans and their family members. Additionally, numerous community associations, local business, and veterans service organizations provided financial contributions to support the event and the needs of returning veterans from Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.



Exhibitors discuss benefits with veterans providing them with current information

WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS



Medical Center leaders were among the first to get their flu shots via the WAIMO, right in the Director's Office.

Keep Those Wagons Rolling: Taking the Flu Campaign on the Road

WAIMO is the "nom-de-guerre" (war name) of one of two fighting vehicles stationed at the Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC). It stands for Wagon Against Influenza and for Mobile Outreach. This mobile flu vaccination center is a powerful weapon in the fight against the flu. It provides on-site immunizations and also offers in-service education through a multimedia platform.

The training includes a power point presentation and video ads (with photos of many of our employees).

WAIMO was developed by the DCVAMC Occupational Health team headed by Dr. Patrick Joyce. The team received two \$5,000 grants to develop the mobile carts from the VACO Public Health Strategic Healthcare Group.

Medical Center leaders were among the first to get their flu shots via the WAIMO, right in the Director's Office. And, the carts have already hit the road, traveling to Silver Spring to immunize VA employees.

In addition to being a fully self-contained vaccination center, WAIMO offers education and literature. By the way, cart number two has its own name – POWIE. That stands for Pandemic Outreach Wagon for Immunization and Education.

So, welcome WAIMO and POWIE to the medical center



WAIMO and POWIE

WASHINGTON DC VA MEDICAL CENTER CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING OF NEW ALEXANDRIA CLINIC AND VET CENTER

On Monday, November 19, the Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC) opened its new Alexandria, Virginia, community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC). The clinic is co-located with a Veterans Readjustment and Counseling Center (Vet Center). Virginia Delegates Mark Sickles and Kristin Amondson participated in the ceremony, as did Mayor of Alexandria William Euille. Veterans' service organizations were well represented at the event.

The Alexandria Community Based Outpatient Clinic will provide primary care and some specialty care to veterans enrolled with the DCVAMC who reside in Northern Virginia. "I am confident that Northern Virginia veterans will be well-served by this new clinic and will appreciate the continued excellent health care offered by VA," commented Fernando O. Rivera, Director, Washington DC VA Medical Center. The medical center is charged with oversight for the community clinic, as well as similar neighborhood clinics located in Greenbelt and southern (Charlotte Hall) Maryland and in southeast Washington, DC. Dr. Alfonso R. Batres, who heads the Office of Readjustment Counseling at VA headquarters, agreed. "We needed the increased space that is available at the new location and we're pleased to provide Northern Virginia combat veterans and their families with a beautiful new facility for their readjustment needs." The Vet Center offers an array of readjustment counseling services, including individual, group, family, military sexual trauma, and bereavement counseling, including PTSD counseling. Vet Centers also provide outreach services for homeless veterans. The counseling is designed to help combat veterans readjust to civilian life. The new location of the CBOC and Vet Center is 6940 South Kings Highway. This facility is significantly larger than the previous location, providing space for another clinician to serve the growing health care needs of veterans who live in Northern Virginia. The new location is accessible to metro and bus lines, and provides abundant parking. The clinic has all new furnishings and equipment.

For more information visit the medical center website at www.washingtondc.va.gov or contact the Office of Public Affairs at 202-745-4037.

In search of excellence

VA Visionary Brings Radiology Out of the “Dark Ages” and Into 21st Century

When Dr. Elliot Siegel was in medical school studying radiology and medical imaging, the way radiologists viewed x-rays was relatively the same from when it was invented by German physicist Wilhelm Roentgen in 1895. Until recently, radiologists mostly used film image negatives on a light box to form their diagnoses, which was the time tested process used for over 200 years.

In a profession that serves as such a critical part of medical diagnosis and treatment around the world, radiology lacked a visionary to take the profession and medical technology out of the “Dark Ages” and into the 21st Century.

In the 1980s when Dr. Siegel completed his medical degree and radiology residency at the University of Maryland, his whole career was ahead of him. Armed with a bachelor of science in computer science and a medical degree, he was ready to “change the world.”

Noticing Dr. Siegel’s expertise, drive and potential, the Baltimore VA asked him to lead the Nuclear Medicine and Imaging Service at the medical center. He accepted, and the world of radiology would never again be the same. At the Baltimore VA, one of Dr. Siegel’s first major accomplishments revolutionized radiology through VA and around the globe.

Dr. Siegel helped to design, implement and run the world’s first enterprise-wide filmless radiology department when the replacement facility for the Baltimore VA Medical Center (VAMC) opened in 1993 by using a Picture Archiving and Communications System (PACS). Dr. Siegel had the foresight to collect data before and after the transition to a filmless operation so that he could conduct and publish many studies sharing the impact on productivity, image interpretation and other key issues that impacted the field of radiology. His experience transforming the Baltimore VAMC into a filmless radiology department may have accelerated the transition to PACS and digital imaging throughout the United States. Representatives from around the world have visited the radiology department at the medical center in effort to learn how to transition to digital imaging. In 2004, President George W. Bush visited the Baltimore VAMC to announce his plans to improve health care technology and to move the country to a computerized patient record system. The President selected the Baltimore VAMC as the backdrop to make his announcement in part because of Dr. Siegel’s advancements in the field of

medical imaging.

Taking filmless radiology a step further, Dr. Siegel worked with his team of radiologists to create the “radiology reading room of the future.” The new reading room that he helped to design at the Baltimore VAMC is a working experiment that incorporates the latest in display technology, furniture design and privacy controls. All aspects of the environment were designed to help enhance the functionality of the area including noise canceling wall panels, neutral paint colors, adjustable workstations, and individual lighting and temperature controls. Every element of the reading room was meticulously selected to enhance the performance of radiologists who stare at thousands of images each day.

Siegel’s work has earned him many accolades from his peers around the world. The Smithsonian Institution named him a “Laureate for Improving Health Care Operations Through High Speed Networking.” He was also named as one of the “Medical Imaging Industry Top 10 Radiologists” in the April 2007 issue of Medical Imaging Magazine.

Dr. Siegel’s current research grants include digital image optimization, security systems, workstation interface optimization, economic implications of PACS, SPECT brain imaging in patients with fever and hypertension, and PACS design optimization. He has chaired or has been a key player on multiple committees and subcommittees nationally for the VA, the National Institutes of Health, the National Academy of Science, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Ever keeping an eye on the future, Dr. Siegel plays a major part in the VA’s Radiology Residency and Fellowship programs. Because of Dr. Siegel’s accomplishments, the VA Maryland Health Care System’s radiology program is a magnet for the nation’s brightest radiology residents and fellows.

Although his rapidly expanding scope of work and accomplishments have made Dr. Siegel a virtual ambassador for VA health care and an internationally recognized expert on imaging, he maintains a level of enthusiasm and a spirit of inquiry that serve as a model for his colleagues and trainees. He is an exemplary representative of the best that VA health care has to offer in serving the needs of our nation’s veterans.

VISN 5 Employee Newsletter

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VISN 5 Service Area



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Perry Point VAMC

1-800-949-1003

Prescription Refill & Clinic Appointment

1-800-463-6295, ext 7395

Baltimore Rehab & Extended Care Center

1-800-463-6295

Martinsburg VAMC

(304) 263-0811

Medical Advice Line

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

Patient Eligibility

(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

(304) 263-0811, ext. 4870 (all hours)

Washington DC VAMC

(202) 745-8000

Patient Service Center

(202) 745-8247

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