



THE VISN VOICE



June/July 2008

I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

Mr. Garfunkel

I want to use this space to tell you about a very rewarding experience that I just had. I am relaying this story because it made me very proud to do what I do, and I hope it makes you just as proud.

I don't always admit it, or perhaps I just don't say it enough, but sometimes I think that I have the easiest job in the Network because often, I get to just stand before groups and brag about the wonderful things that you, the employees of VISN 5, do for our veterans. In fact, to tell you the truth, I often receive much praise, on your behalf. This happens a lot at this time of the year, as I and the Medical Center Directors attend the state conventions of so many Veterans Organizations.

Recently, however, I attended my first meeting as a member of the Board of Governors of the American College of Healthcare Executives. Being the only VA representative on this group, I did not know what to expect. After all, to be honest, the VA went thru many years when we were not that highly regarded by the private sector. Well, I am thrilled to report back to you that based on my recent experience, the VA is viewed with respect, gratitude, and maybe even a little bit of envy, by our private sector counterparts.

On several occasions, in both Board discussions and private conversations, I was told of how during their local hospital and health care organization

meetings, the VA is often referred to in the highest terms, for everything from our electronic medical record, to the quality of care we provide as shown by the scores on our performance measures, to the incredible job we are doing in treating veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Even if the excellent care that we provide is not always reflected in the media, you should know that as employees of the VA, you have the respect of the entire health care community. Once again, you have all made me very proud.

Special points of interest:

*News From Around
the Network*

Washington DC VAMC
VAMHCS

Martinsburg VAMC

My HealthVet Fact Sheet
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

Welcome Karen E. Burton

by

David Nocera, VISN 5 Health System Specialist

VISN 5 Employee Newsletter

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[VISN5 Employee Newsletter](#)

VISN 5 would like to welcome **Karen E. Burton** who joined the VA Capitol Health Care Network on June 23, 2008, as the Workforce Development Program Manager. Karen will focus not only on the VISN 5 Workforce Succession Strategic Plan, but will provide liaison support for the Human Resource Program throughout VISN 5. She will also serve as the Designated Learning Officer which includes the VISN 5 Employee Education Board, Leadership Development, New Supervisory Training, and other educational programs throughout the VISN.

Karen began her federal career in 1976, working as a civilian for the Air Force in Military Personnel; she then moved into the Employee Relations section of Civilian Personnel. In 1990, Karen began her VA tenure as an Employee and Labor Relations Specialist in Chicago. Karen has also worked as an HR Generalist, an HR Assistant Chief, and an HR Chief at VA Medical Centers in Jackson, Mississippi; Atlanta, Georgia; Fayetteville, Arkansas; and Alexandria, Louisiana. In addition to her work with VHA, Karen served as a consultant for 13 Regional Offices for the VBA consolidated HR Office in Jackson, Mississippi. Karen also served as the Network HR Manager for the VA Mid South Healthcare Network (VISN 9) in Nashville, Tennessee. She then moved on to the position of HR Consultant (Staff Development) with the VHA Workforce Management and Consulting Office. In this role, Karen was responsible for Human Resources training in the VA "Nuts and Bolts" Supervisory Training, development and presentation of training for human resources related topics in the field, and numerous other staff development initiatives. Karen has served as the agency representative on several adverse action cases before the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), with a 100% agency sustained record. In addition, Karen has often been called upon to serve in investigative, advisory, and educational roles related to Human Resources and training across the VA. Karen obtained her certification as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) from the Human Resources Certification Institute in May 2003.

We are delighted to have Karen join us and bring with her such superb knowledge and expertise. Please join us in Welcoming Karen to VISN 5.

WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS

DCVAMC Nurses Recognized as Best in the Area

Twenty-two nurses from the Washington DC VAMC were recognized by Sigma Theta Tau International Inc., as among the “Top 100 Extraordinary Nurses” in the metropolitan DC area during a ceremony on May 6 at Howard University.

Gamma Beta, the local chapter of Sigma Theta Tau, nursing profession’s only Honor Society, annually recognizes nurses for their dedication to excellence. The Society singles-out those whose performance reflects extraordinary achievements in clinical practice, education, research, administration, publication, or community service. Making Sigma Theta Tau’s “Top 100 Extraordinary Nurses” list is one of local nursings highest honors.

The DCVAMC nurses recognized were: Sandra Stockton, Nely Balancier, Kathleen Bixby, Sarah Boxley, Derwin Bryant, Helen Choi, Karen Clark-Stone, Kathy Coleman, Lori Cook, Ruth Michelle Cruz, Francios Daniels, Norma Fraser, Sherre Gordon, Raymonna Jean, Joy Laramie, Peggy Limehouse, LaTara Miller, Doris Ogunwumi, Maritza Perez-Gonzalez, Brenda Stidham, Patricia Toles and Robin Woods.



Nely Balancier, RN was one of the 22 DCVAMC nurses recognized.



Dr. Ruby Wesley-Shadow (center) congratulates La Tara Miller and Derwin Bryant named as among the DC areas “Top 100 Extraordinary Nurses” by Sigma Theta Tau.

WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS

Crisis Communications Covered at Third EEO Executive Leadership Training



Executive Leadership Training was held on June 24 at the DC VAMC. Presenters included (Left to right:) Daniel Devine, Director, Office of the Deputy Secretary and Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional & Legislative Affairs; Derek McGinty, WUSA9 TV co-anchor; and Matt Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs.

The Washington DC VAMC EEO/AEP office presented its third Executive Leadership Training session on Crisis Communications on June 24.

The open forum format allowed participants to interact with professionals in the communications field. The panel, made up of experts from the Department of Veterans Affairs and a keynote speaker from a local television station, provided participants with valuable information about communicating with the media and Congress during emergency situations.

Presenters included Matt Smith,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, VACO; Daniel C. Devine, Director, Office of the Deputy Secretary and Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional & Legislative Affairs; Derek McGinty, WUSA9 TV co-anchor; Michelle Spivak, Director, Community Relations & Public Affairs; and Marvin Cornish, Director, Consumer Affairs and Protocol.

The 63 participants learned basic risk communication principals such as: speaking with one voice, telling the truth, deferring to experts, and cycling information while maintaining facility

operations.

The quarterly training consists of four two-hour modules that address topics suggested by managers in the medical center. Previous Executive Leadership Training sessions included handling EEO complaints, Human Resources, and employee award programs.

VA MARYLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (VAMHCS) NEWS

Hundreds Celebrate as Veteran Amputee Finishes Cross Country Run at Baltimore VA Medical Center

By Michael Dukes

Hundreds of VA employees, veterans and onlookers cheered, waved U.S. flags, and shed tears of joy as Marine veteran Eugene Roberts, Sr., turned from West Baltimore Street into the Baltimore VAMC to finish his more than 3,200-mile cross country run on April 7, 2008.

Baltimore City Police led the way for Roberts' final five miles to the medical center, clearing intersections to allow him to pass unimpeded. Members of the Maryland Chapter of Patriot Guard Riders, a veteran's motorcycle group, acted as an escort with U.S. and prisoner of war flags mounted on their bikes. People on the streets stopped and stared in amazement as Roberts sprinted the final block.

While any cross country run is a feat worthy of celebration, what made this Vietnam Veteran's trek so special was that he has two prosthetic legs. Inspired by his love of Jesus, and in the spirit of the Marine Corps motto "Semper Fidelis," which means always faithful, Roberts began his

incredible journey in early July 2007 from Marine Corps base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and crossed nine southern states to Parris Island Marine Corps Depot, South Carolina and then back to the VAMC in Baltimore.

Early in his journey, Roberts faced 120 degree temperatures while navigating the desert highways of Southern California and Arizona. Even the torrential southern rain storms could not deter his spirit or keep him from running.

"Running on these prosthetic legs wasn't easy," Roberts said to the crowd of supporters after he crossed the finish line. "But my faith in Jesus kept me going each day." He also admitted that he would not have been successful without the loving support of his wife of more than 40 years, and continual assistance from the VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) prosthetics team.

Prosthetics Specialist, Charlene Grant, supported Roberts from day one. Instead of providing basic prosthetic legs, Grant made sure that Roberts had the latest athletic prostheses that were up to the task. She also worked with Roberts to

coordinate health care "pit stops" at VA Medical Center's along his journey across the country. These medical centers quickly accommodated the VAMHCS patient during his cross country journey. Due to the unprecedented use of his prosthetics, VA medical staff needed to make regular adjustments to his legs and sockets, and the soles of his prosthetic feet had to be replaced after the constant pounding on the pavement. As with any distance runner, Roberts also had his share of blisters and minor injuries.

"This is a great example of how the VAMHCS and the VA as a whole is going the 'extra mile' to provide world-class health care services to our nation's veterans," said Dennis Smith, Director of the VAMHCS.

"Veterans like Roberts are an inspiration to other amputees, veterans, health care providers, and just about anybody who learns of his amazing story," Smith added. "His 'never surrender' attitude is an example to people of all walks of life that no matter how bad things might seem, having the right attitude can lead you down the road to personal accomplishment and fulfillment."

MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS

National Police Week , May 11-17

Police Week activities began May 12, when Police Officer Shelly Hughes and McGruff the Crime Dog visited Little Eagle Day Care Center. Later in the week, Officers Porter and Griffith assisted employees with the VA Police's Firearms Simulator competition using a laser pistol. A golf cart was used for employees to drive through an obstacle course wearing eye goggles simulating various levels of intoxication. Police Week concluded with an Open House and displays of training and tactical gear, along with a collection of evidence material.



McGruff the Crime Dog with friends



An officer from the local Berkeley County Sheriffs Department and K9 named Bear demonstrated to employees and patients their drug identification and protection abilities.



Police Officer Shelly Hughes and McGruff the Crime Dog visited Little Eagle Day Care Center.

MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS

18th Annual God Bless America Ride



Led by an 83-year old veteran of three wars, bikers arrived at the beautiful Martinsburg VAMC for the 18th Annual Operation God Bless America Motorcycle Ride.

By Barbara Corbin

On Sunday, June 1, over 1700 motorcycles and 2100 registered motorcyclists celebrated the 18th Annual Operation God Bless America Motorcycle Ride.

Bikers included a number of current and former medical center employees. The bike brigade traveled about 40 miles through three states to the medical center. They entered the facility through the patriotic Avenue of Flags. Each flag, representing a deceased veteran, was gracefully flying along the facility entrance road, creating a truly inspiring scene as the bikers entered, circled the medical center, and parked.

Volunteers representing various Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) hosted a lunch and socialization period for the bikers. Afterwards, a ceremony was held which featured the presentation of a record-setting \$55,000 check to be used for medical center patient

A.J. and Mary Ann Davenport, Coordinators for the Ride, state that planning for this event starts in January of each year and involves a committee representing eight or nine different motorcycle clubs.

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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