



Venture

Winter 2002

VANTHCS Observes National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week



Salute Week gives local celebrities and dignitaries a chance to visit veterans. Pictured clockwise from top left: Congressman Martin Frost; Country Music Entertainer Janie Fricke; Congressman Sam Johnson; Miss Teen Texas 2002 Brittany Wellsfry; and Joe Macko of the Texas Rangers.





Alan G. Harper

From the Director

We are in for some great things in 2003, and the future looks bright for VANTHCS. Our second state-of-the-art linear accelerator is scheduled for operation in late April that will provide technology to better treat patients with brain tumors as well as offer other options for treatment of certain cancers. The new Dental Clinic is complete and features state-of-the-art equipment, including water purification system, digital radiography and sterilization system that will accommodate more patients in a more pleasant environment. VANTHCS is also one of five sites selected nationally for a Fisher House to provide short-term living accommodations for families of hospitalized veterans. While we are working on new programs as well as improvements, reducing clinic wait times remains a high priority.

I want to take a moment to remember our troops supporting the war in Iraq. VANTHCS has several employees involved. While some were deployed and have returned safely, others remain in harm's way. We honor our active military employees in this edition and hope you will keep them and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

Eddie Bernice Johnson "Cuts the Ribbon" for Texas Tech School of Pharmacy



Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, Texas 30th District, spoke recently at the dedication ceremony for the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) regional Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex School of Pharmacy. The facility previously used by Central Dental Lab was renovated to accommodate a state-of-the-art classroom, group conference rooms and faculty offices. This affiliation is the first of its kind in the nation, and TTUHSC hopes relocating the School of Pharmacy to southern Dallas will help alleviate the severe shortage of pharmacists in the metroplex. Providing this program at our Dallas campus will enhance recruitment efforts for top-notch Pharmacy staff to benefit health care for north Texas veterans.

North Texas Celebrates Veterans Day!

Lt. Col. Jeffrey S. Smiley, Commander of the 301st Operations Group, USAF Reserve, NAS Joint Reserve Base Fort Worth, Texas was principal speaker at the



Regional Veterans Day ceremony held at Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center (SRMVC). Smiley made four deployments flying a total of 31 combat missions enforcing the no-fly zone over northern and southern Iraq and fighting the war against terrorism in the skies over Afghanistan in Operation Enduring Freedom. Activities included a T-37 flyover from Sheppard AFB and performances by the 77th Army Band from Fort Sill, Oklahoma and the Lone Star Paralyzed Veterans of American wheelchair rifle team from Dallas. Military equipment displays included the 361st training squadron, Sheppard AFB; Charlie Co. 112th Armor, Texas National Guard in Denison; military vehicle preservation and historical club, Sherman; and the 345th psychological operations from the U.S. Army in Dallas. Veterans Day parades were held in Dallas at City Hall and downtown Fort Worth. Supported by veteran service organizations, both were well attended by parade watchers as well as local school groups and other private companies in the parade route.



Paul Fisch presented Mr. Harper a check for \$22,814 from the VAEA Veterans Day Golf Tournament and Silent Auction activities that support travel costs for veterans to attend National events.

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Published quarterly by
VA North Texas Health Care System
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Dallas, Texas 75216

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We do make a difference ...

"I am very sorry I couldn't attend the Memorial Service for my son, Easter Lucas, and the other deceased veterans. Thanks so much for remembering my son. Your kindness will never be forgotten. The program is very nice. I just loved the responsive reading. I say to all the Chaplains, Police Honor Guards, Readers, and Director – thanks to all of you. May God forever bless and keep you."

Dorothy Lewis

"Just a few lines to thank you and all the people that make up the hospital care at VA. My brother, Doyle Ray Akins, registered with VA Hospital in September 2002, and he was in and out of the VA Hospital until his death on January 20, 2003. He received excellent care, and he spoke of how much better care he was getting than the HMO he was on prior to VA. I appreciate everyone at VA Hospital. Doyle's complications were overtaking all the treatments, and at the end there was nothing else to be administered to him to save his life here on earth. I am so grateful to you all for his care. When I retire I hope to volunteer at VA Hospital."

Mary Lou Parker

"...I have been using the Dallas and Forth Worth facilities for nigh on to 20 years now and have yet to come up with a legitimate complaint, other than the fact that a lot of very needy veterans are taking a back seat and waiting for ridiculously long periods of time for treatment due to some less needy vets taking up the appointments. Most of my ailments are not life threatening or disabling and so the long waits do not affect me. I also use Tricare Standard and a Supplement with a local physician, and he and I are equally happy with it. Other parts of the country say Tricare is a big scam. Problems at VA facilities and health care, in my opinion, are regional. Some parts of the country have problems and others don't. I think Fort Worth and Dallas are very lucky to have the facilities we have. This is due largely in part to Alan Harper, Director of the Dallas VA Hospital, Paul Fisch of the Fort Worth Facility, Bertha Hall from DAV, and Robert Van Riper, the Tarrant County Service Officer - all very dedicated and knowledgeable persons."

Lonnie Vessell USN-ret

"... I wanted to pass along has to do with the registration or signup process. I had been dreading it. I figured it would be some really royal pain in the rear. Not so. A lady named Esther processed my application. She was unusually courteous and helpful even though the first time I brought the wrong forms. Since was the first nonexecutive VA employee that I had dealings with, it left a positive first impression. I believe all these type things are a big deal in how the public perceives an organization. ... how impressed and pleased I was with the treatment I received at the VA Medical Facility. Everyone was polite, professional and efficient. That goes for my trip to the emergency room and my follow-up visit."

Houston S. Carr

Thomas J. Stranova Network Director VISN 17



An old Chinese philosopher was asked what was the greatest joy he had found in life. "A child," he said, "going down the road singing after asking me the way." I use this to illustrate the virtue of using our wisdom, education and experience to pave the way for those who will follow, or if you will, "succeed" us. Showing the child who will succeed us the road to take is succession planning.

Of course, a "child" is a metaphor for someone new to the VA whom we can encourage and groom for success. The "old Chinese philosopher" isn't old at all; he's simply a metaphor for the 90 percent of supervisors and managers in VA who are currently or will soon be eligible to retire. We were one of the first Network's to embrace the idea of succession planning. Just in the last two years, we have funded 15 trainee positions in the Network. Trainees in these positions have completed the program and are currently employed by our health care systems:

Supervisory Contract Specialist	VA North Texas HCS
MAS Supervisor	VA North Texas HCS
Supervisory Personnel Specialist	VA North Texas HCS
Accountant	VA Central Texas HCS
Laundry Plant Manager	VA North Texas HCS
Prosthetics Representative	VA South Texas HCS
ACNS Nurse	VA South Texas HCS
Engineer	VA Central Texas HCS

Our success has caught the attention of VA leadership in Washington and we were recently recognized for our efforts to attract men and women who will form the nucleus of tomorrow's VA. We plan to build upon our accomplishments and each one of you can play a part.

It's never too early to start and we can never be too diverse in the people who will be selected to make the commitment to become the future of VA. Just ask Ms. Christina Hinkson, who is currently an Administrative Resident in the Network office and will soon be profiled in an upcoming issue of Vanguard. I encourage you to consider taking advantage of this opportunity. Please contact your HRM office and let someone know that you are interested in becoming our future and "going down the road singing".



Battle of the Bulge – Up Close and Personal

The Veterans Forum in December featured Battle of the Bulge. Three Infantrymen: (l to r) Alvin Holdcraft, Herbert Sheaner, Jr., and Alexander Bolling, Jr. (USA Ret.), all former prisoners of war, participated in a panel discussion sharing their personal experiences from the front lines on December 16, 1944. This was the day the Germans made their counter-attack through American lines in Belgium, Luxembourg, and France.



FWOPC Patients Can Now Watch TV While They Wait

Several area veteran service organizations donated funds to purchase televisions for waiting rooms at FWOPC to entertain veterans waiting to see their provider. Contributions were made by the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) Chapter 1867 and Auxiliary, MOPH Chapter 1849, Tarrant County Veterans Council, and Jewish War Veterans Post 755.

Fisher House Coming to Dallas VAMC

Dallas is among five VAMCs selected nationally for a Fisher House, which provides temporary lodging for families of veterans receiving care at VA medical facilities. Similar to the concept of Ronald McDonald House for children, Fisher House will provide a 'home away from home' in their time of need. The Fisher House Foundation pays for construction and all furnishings. They are built on government property then donated to VA for operation and maintenance.

Valentines for Vets



Every February, the Ann Landers column now known as Annie's Mailbox requests readers to support the 'Valentines for Vets' program during National Salute Week. This year, VANTHCS received over 25,000 valentines from individuals as well as local school groups. South Garland High School has participated for several years, first visiting veterans and more recently helping to decorate the Clinical Addition with valentines. Many organizations send representatives to deliver their valentines in person as pictured above.

Bonham - DAV dedication



The Disabled American Veterans Department of Texas, Inc. recently relocated their state headquarters from Waco to SRMVC. The state office is responsible for the operations of the department and the service officers that assist veterans wishing to file claims for compensation. Mike Baker, DAV State Adjutant, is also a Radiology Technologist at SRMVC. Bonham Area Chamber of Commerce also honored the DAV relocation with a ribbon cutting.

Excerpts from the Perspective of a Military Doctor

As a military doctor training in my specialty, I work long hours, and the pay is less than glamorous. One tends to become jaded by the long hours, lack of sleep, food, family contact, and the endless parade of human suffering passing before you. The arrival of another ambulance does not mean more pay only more work. Most often, it is a victim from a motor vehicle crash. Often it is a person of dubious character who has been shot or stabbed. Even with my enlisted service and minimal combat experience in Panama, prior to medical school, I have caught myself groaning when the ambulance brought in yet another sick, elderly person from one of the local retirement centers that cater to military retirees. I had not stopped to think about what citizens of this age group represent. I saw "Saving Private Ryan." I was touched deeply - not so much by the carnage in the first 30 minutes but by the sacrifices of so many. I was touched most by the scene with the elderly survivor at the graveside asking his wife if he'd been a good man. I realized that I had seen these same men and women coming through my Emergency Department and had not realized what magnificent sacrifices they had made. The things they did for me and everyone else that has lived on this planet since the end of that conflict are priceless.

Situation permitting, I now try to ask my patients about their experiences. They would never bring up the subject without the inquiry. I have been privileged to an amazing array of experiences recounted in the brief minutes allowed in an emergency encounter. These experiences have revealed the incredible individuals I have had the honor of serving in a medical capacity; for many, their last admission to the hospital.

There was a frail, elderly woman who reassured my young enlisted medic, trying to start an IV line in her arm. She remained calm and poised, despite her illness and the multiple needle-sticks into her fragile veins. She was what we call a "hard stick." As the medic made another attempt, I noticed a number tattooed across her forearm. I touched it with one finger and looked into her eyes. She simply said, "Auschwitz." Many of later generations would have loudly and openly berated the young medic in his many attempts. How different was the response from this person who'd seen unspeakable suffering. Also, there was this long retired Colonel, who as a young officer had parachuted from his burning plane over a Pacific Island held by the Japanese. Now an octogenarian, his head cut in a fall at home where he lived alone. His CT scan and suturing had been delayed until after midnight by the usual parade of high priority ambulance patients. Still spry for his age, he asked to use the phone to call a taxi to take him home then realized the ambulance had brought him without his wallet. He then asked if he could use the phone to call his daughter who lived seven miles away. With great pride we told him that he could not - as he'd done enough for his country. The least we could do was get him a taxi home, even if we had to pay for it ourselves. My only regret was that my shift wouldn't end for several hours, and I couldn't drive him myself. I was there the night MSgt. Roy Benavidez came through Emergency for the last time. He was very sick. I was not the doctor taking care of him, but I walked to his bedside and took his hand. I said nothing. He was so sick he didn't know I was there. I'd read his Congressional Medal of Honor citation and wanted to shake his hand. He died a few days later. The gentleman who served with Merrill's Marauders, the survivor of the Bataan Death March, the survivor of Omaha Beach, the 101 year old World War I veteran, the former POW held in frozen North Korea, the former Special Forces medic - now with non-operable liver cancer, the former Viet Nam Corps Commander. I remember these citizens.

I may still groan when yet another ambulance comes in, but now I am much more aware of what an honor it is to serve these particular men and women. I have seen a Congress who would turn their back on these individuals who've sacrificed so much to protect our liberty. I see later generations that seem to be totally engrossed in abusing these same liberties that were won with such sacrifice. It has become my personal endeavor to make young nurses and enlisted medics aware of these amazing individuals when I encounter them in our Emergency Department. Their response to these particular citizens has made me think that perhaps all is not lost in the next generation.

My experiences have solidified my belief that we are losing an incredible generation, and this nation knows not what it is losing. Our uncaring government and ungrateful civilian populace should all take note. We should all remember - we must "Earn this."

Cpt. Stephen R. Ellison, MD

MAY Asian/Pacific-American Heritage / Mental Health / Women's Health Care

- 1-3 National Volunteer Week continues
- 5 10:00 am-2:00 pm: Nurse Fair, Atrium (DAL)
- 6-12 National Nurses Week
- 7 1:30 pm: Memorial Service, Chapel (BON)
- 11-17 National Hospital Week
- 11-17 National Nursing Home Care Week
- 11-17 National Police Week
- 13 11:00 am-12n: Women's Health Week, Atrium (DAL)
- 14 11:30 am: Employee Awards Banquet, SCI Multipurpose Room (DAL)
- 14 12:00n-2:00 pm: Kinesiotherapy Week display, Atrium (DAL)
- 15 2:30 pm: Memorial Service, Atrium (DAL)
- 16 8:00 am-2:00 pm: Pain Awareness Days, Atrium (DAL)
- 19 7:30 pm: GDVC-VSO (DAL)
- 20 Memorial Day Veterans Job Fair, Atrium (DAL)
- 21 9:00 am-2:00 pm: DAV Volunteer Recruitment, One VA Mall (DAL)
- 21 10:30 am: CSO, VA Community Center (DAL)
- 21-31 Early Voting, Joint run-off [subject to change], CA-main concourse (DAL)
- 22 11:00 am-1:00 pm: Asian Pacific Islander program, SCI Multipurpose Room (DAL)
- 25 2:05 pm: VA Day at the Ballpark in Arlington-Rangers vs Orioles
- 26 **HOLIDAY - MEMORIAL DAY**
- 27-30 Quality Improvement Fair, Atrium (DAL)
- 31 11:00 am-2:00 pm: National Cancer Survivors Day, Atrium (DAL)

JUN National Safety / Flag

- 1-3 Early Voting continues, CA-main concourse (DAL)
- 1 National Cancer Survivors Day, Atrium (DAL)
- 8-14 Flag Week
- 14 Flag Day
- 22-28 National Deaf-Blind Awareness Week
- 23 7:30 pm: GDVC-VA Community Center (DAL)
- 24 7:30 am: Residents Breakfast, SCI Multipurpose Room (DAL)
- 25 Korean War began 1950
- TBA Service Pin ceremony, SCI Multipurpose Room (DAL)
- TBA 2:00 pm: Veterans Forum highlighting D-Day, Atrium (DAL)
- TBA Juneteenth Celebration



Bank of America Partners with Veterans Industries/Compensated Work Therapy (VI/CWT)

John Purkey, CWT job developer, contacted Bank of America recently regarding employment opportunities for the program. What began as a simple email inquiry has become a very successful joint venture of a national strategic alliance between the Department of Veterans Affairs, VI/CWT programs, and America/Works.

Careful attention is paid to evaluate the aptitudes and skill level of veterans participating in CWT prior to even referring the veteran to Bank of America. This pre-placement screening has been a factor in insuring the success of referred veterans, according to both CWT staff and Bank of America staff: "VA counselors have already worked with them to gain a good understanding of what that veteran's attributes are, what the attributes of our work are, and insure that there's a good match before they come in." said William Neinst, Treasury Management Services senior vice president at the Dallas Bank of America. In addition veterans have been carefully prepared through 7-12 months of Veterans Industries program participation to be successful in employment settings. During this time veterans are taught to practice good work habits, including punctuality, attendance, cooperativeness, meeting deadlines, producing accurate work and an adequate quantity of production, accepting supervision and getting along with co-workers.

The type of work offered through Bank of America is ideally suited for many CWT participants, for whom the median age in the Dallas program is 49 years. It can be an entrance into clerical "white-collar" career-track employment positions. Skills in clerical areas or data input or customer service are particularly helpful. Veterans employed by Bank of America have the opportunity to establish careers with good pay and benefits and in which advancement through successful job performance is very possible. Throughout the time following their employment by Bank of America the Dallas CWT program staff remain accessible to assist in problem solving if the needs arises.

Bank of America has expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the individuals they have hired through the Dallas CWT program and the CWT program has expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with Bank of America to create opportunities for veterans.



The CFC 2002 Campaign was a great success!! The goal for Dallas was \$155,000 with \$178,000 raised; Bonham surpassed their goal of \$18,000 by collecting \$22,000; and FWOPC reached their goal with \$10,500. Hats off to everyone who contributed to CFC!!!



DART has opened several new stations across the metroplex, and with the recent icy weather, many employees took advantage of the 'free' ride. Using DART makes your commute more pleasant, especially no hassle with parking. Your employee E-pass lets you ride DART free and is also good to 'Ride the T' in Fort Worth. For route and schedule information, visit DART.org or call 214 979-1111.

Capital Assets Realignmant for Enhanced Services (CARES) UPDATE

The deadline for VISNs to submit their Draft Market Plans, which will identify how they plan to meet veterans' health care needs through 2022, has been moved to April 15, 2003. The new deadline will allow for an extra six weeks of collaboration between facilities and their veterans and other stakeholders. Additionally, the time will allow the CARES Program Office to rerun data with Census 2000 information. CARES staff will then compare the new enrollee numbers against earlier data to determine if there are any changes significant enough to require revisions in the Planning Initiatives, which identify the gaps in health care today versus 2022. CARES staff anticipate that the new data will have only marginal impact. The new deadline for draft Market Plans will not reduce the time allotted to the CARES Commission and its public hearings across the country, nor will it affect the October dead-line for the Secretary's decision on a National CARES Plan.



Helpful Resources

Patient Safety Reporting System (PSRS) is a confidential program developed by VA and NASA that collects, protects, and uses event data to improve patient safety in VA medical facilities. Employees are encouraged to use PSRS to report: "close calls" that could have resulted in accident, injury, or illness but did not either by chance or through timely intervention; unexpected serious occurrences that involve death, physical injury, or psychological injury of a patient or employee; and lessons learned or safety ideas. Any safety-related event may be reported to PSRS. However, the following intentionally unsafe acts are not included: criminal, alcohol or substance abuse that impairs staff or provider, and alleged or suspected patient abuse. PSRS forms are located throughout the facility in nurses stations, staff lounges, and Speak to the Director displays or may be downloaded off the internet at www.psrns.arc.nasa.gov.

VA Learning Online (VALO) gives employees essential course training from a central place. In addition to convenience and diversity of subject matter. Over 1,100 courses are available, ranging from personal development to information technology and management skills. VALO is accessible at work with your supervisor's permission, or employees can work at their own pace from home. Consider VALO if you need additional hours to fulfill the mandatory 40 hours of training. Take a look, www.vcampus.com/valo.

Veterans History Project: A great learning opportunity can be found by participating in the oral histories project developed by the Library of Congress. Instead of trained historians or researchers, the project enlists sons, daughters, friends, and students to do the work, gathering oral histories as well as photographs, letters, and war diaries from war patriots of old. Some were quite surprised at the willingness to share information after the many years of silence, and veterans have said they found it easier to talk about their military experiences when you think you're helping someone with a school assignment. Remembering the carnage of war for many is therapeutic and often introduces a part of

history never learned in the classroom. There is no limit on how many oral histories may be accepted by the Library of Congress, and more information is available at www.loc.gov/folklife/vets.

LOG ON AND STAY INFORMED: A web site has been designed to help you and every member of the Executive branch better serve the American people. Visit www.results.gov, "The President's Management Agenda" for the latest management scorecard to track how successfully VANTHCS is implementing the President's Management Agenda, a strategy for improving management and performance of the government.

All VANTHCS merit promotion job announcements can be viewed on our Intranet. Click on the icon "Internet Explorer", then click on either "Human Resources" or "Hot Links" to view all VANTHCS local job announcements.

VA FORMS WEB SITES - ONE STOP SHOPPING FOR VETERANS AND EMPLOYEES: Veterans and VA employees can now find and print electronic copies of VA, VBA, VHA and NCA forms through two VA web sites. The internet site, www.va.gov/vaforms/, has forms for use by veterans and VA customers to apply for benefits and services and transact business with VA. The intranet site, vaww.va.gov/vaforms/, provides access to the same forms as the internet as well as additional forms employees use to transact business internally. Both sites can be searched using the form number, keywords, or title. Links to other useful forms web sites are also provided. VA has invested in technology which will allow forms to be filled and printed and eventually be electronically transmitted. Forms will be added to the site as they are redesigned with this capability. The site is maintained by VA forms managers from VBA, VHA, and OA&MM.

*If you have an idea for Venture ,
contact Public Affairs in Dallas at x 71155
or x 36214 in Bonham*





VANTHCS STARS

Hats off to the CIA 2002 winners (listed alphabetically): Dennis Brink, (BON); Nagaleela Chandra, (BON); Mark Daniel, (BON); Jackie Dixon, (DAL); JoAnn Fanning, (BON); Tina Fisher, (BON); Penny Greathouse, (DAL); Wayland Green, (BON); Cliff Gregory, (BON); Mollie Hamilton, (DAL); Beverly Herndon, (BON); April Jones, (BON); Julie Lambert, (FWOPC); Karen Lowery, (DAL); James May, (DAL); B.J. Parker, (DAL); Rhonda Reyna, (BON); Wanda Sanders, (FWOPC); Gary Slack, (DAL); Nora Stewart, (DAL); Billy Teague, (BON); Diane Valentine, (DAL); Robert Waldrop, (BON); John Weed, (DAL); Minnie Wooten-Bredenbough, (DAL);

Dr. Mark Nelson was recently named Honorary Member of Chosin Few by their North Texas Chapter (DAL)

Cleo Washington was selected as CWT 2002 Veteran of the Year (DAL)

Virginia Poffenberger won Outstanding DAR VAVS Representative from the State of Texas (DAL)

Dr. Michael Lambert's article, 'Linking Mental Health and Addiction Services: A Continuity-of-Care Team Model,' was cited in the national group of VA Mental Health Leaders (DAL)

Drs. Susan Best, Chandramouli Iyer, and David Wakely presented lectures recently about pain management at Temple VAMC that were simulcast to VAs in Waco and Austin

Advance Magazine recently named Radiology Service 2002 Imaging Facility of the Year

Director Alan Harper was named Outstanding VA Health Care Employee of the Year 2002-2003 by The National Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

We remember our fellow employees called to active duty in Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom

Rhonda G. Steward activated 11/02/01 returned 11/04/02

Euna Wright activated 1/22/02 returned 1/25/02

Timothy MacCartney activated 1/14/02 returned 12/26/02

Gary K. Cravens activated 7/29/02

Alicia Sanders activated 1/25/03

Jan Bird activated 1/27/03

Peter Todd Trotter activated 2/6/03

Terrance Wickman activated 2/3/03

Michael Hoffman activated 2/10/03

Rafael Rodriguez activated 2/24/03

Nicole Duckwall activated 2/24/03

Toni L. Allen activated 3/3/03

Kevin Roberts activated 3/3/03

Kathie R. Wegner activated 2/10/03

Betty Pettway activated 3/10/03

Josefina Paling activated 3/10/03

Virginia Warren activated 3/10/03

Erroll Hampton activated 3/10/03

