



Venture

04-01

Purple Heart Honorees

Narcotics Addiction Treatment

People Making a Difference

"In the Company of Heroes"

Psychosocial Resident Treatment

New Dental Clinic

VANTHCS Stars

Venture

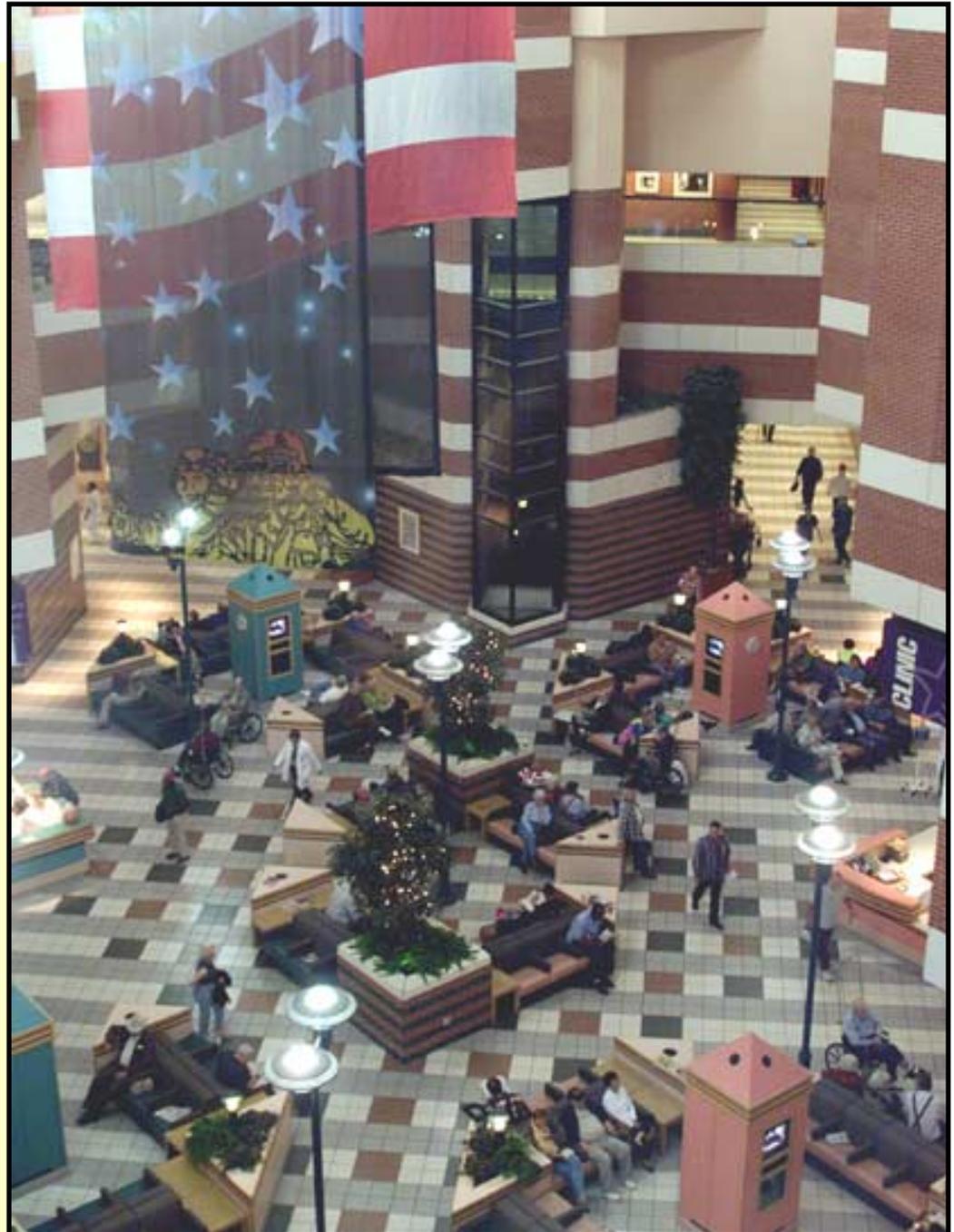
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Alan G. Harper

From the Director

As we closed fiscal year 03, VANTHCS was in good shape. Over \$33 million in revenue was generated, and veterans enrolling for health care increased over 8%. While backlog issues with long waits and delays continue in several clinic areas, additional staff and expanded programs have been implemented to address these challenges. As always our greatest asset is the workforce we have at VA North Texas Health Care System. Our top priority is to recognize and reward our employees because they strive to treat others with respect. That is what makes the organization strong. It's one thing to know every aspect of your job and do it well. The other is to show kindness and use the Golden Rule – treat others as you would like to be treated.

Some of our deployed employees have returned after tours in Operation/Enduring Iraqi Freedom, and if necessary, may receive orders to return. We keep these military employees in our prayers and are proud of their service to our veterans here at home and for answering the call abroad.

Purple Heart Recipients Honored



Whenever 150 Purple Hearters, two Medal of Honor recipients and five congressmen are in the same place at the same time, it becomes an historic event. And such was the case at Dallas VAMC July 2, 2003, with the unveiling ceremony of the US Postal Service Purple Heart stamp. It was standing room only as Purple Heart recipients were honored along with a tribute to Gold Star Mothers as well as participation by Medal of Honor Recipients Brig. Gen. Robert Galer (USMC-Ret) and Col. James Stone (USA-Ret), two of only 137 living nationwide. Congressmen Martin Frost, Pete Sessions, Dr. Michael Burgess, Jeb Hensarling and Sam Johnson each recognized recipients of the Purple Heart in their districts. Johnson, who received two Purple Heart medals, delivered the keynote address.



Treatment Expanding for Veterans with Narcotics Addiction

VANTHCS opened the Johnnie M. Hawkins LAMP Clinic recently in Fort Worth to provide treatment for veterans with narcotics addiction. Using space provided by Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Bluebonnet Chapter 20, the Clinic is named in honor of Johnnie Hawkins for his lifetime contributions to VA on behalf of DAV. VANTHCS currently provides this service at Dallas VAMC, and this additional location in Fort Worth will expand these efforts into Tarrant, Parker, Johnson, Denton, and other surrounding counties. Hawkins dreamed of a place dedicated to help veterans overcome addiction, and in memory of Johnnie M. Hawkins, the LAMP clinic will enable these veterans to live a fulfilling life with their families and friends.



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

We do make a difference ...

"Thank you so much for the beautiful birthday party for my 106 year old mother. It was truly something special for her. I also want to add my thanks for the supreme care she is receiving at TCU. It was her desire to 'retire' there and even though I would have liked her closer to home, the care and love she is getting from the staff could not be better. Thanks again for all."

Sincerely,
Marilyn Brooks

The members of the Dallas Metroplex Chapter of American Ex-Prisoners of War, their wives, and guests were very pleased to have you as our guest and hear you speak... "After you left, one of the wives of an ex-POW stood up and told us that her husband only a week ago had a successful kidney operation at the Dallas VA Medical Center. She told us how pleased she was with the doctors, the hospital, and how well things went and how well she and her husband were treated. She recommended the Dallas VA Medical Center to all of us as being a top superior quality medical center, equal to any."

Sincerely,
Herb Sheaner

"I would like to commend you on the excellent staff you possess. I have recently been hospitalized at your medical center. In comparison to other hospitals in the metroplex, your medical center rates one of the best in vicinity. I've been in most of the medical centers here in North Texas. I am grateful and thankful for the professional services that were provided to me. I believe your staff needs more than a pat on the back. So please inform them that their performance is top notch in the metroplex. Thank you."

Sincerely,
Danella Pagobo

"The VA-Fort Worth Branch has been a great help for my husband. I have been coming with him for the clinics, lab work, x-rays, therapy, dental, etc. Everyone is very efficient in performing their jobs. ... Really you are all to be commended for your positive attitudes and willingness to help others in many situations. Please continue to be patient with others who may require your repeating and/or demonstrating procedures or instructions and orders. It means so very much. God bless you all."

Mrs. Richard Toth

"You have a great staff at this (Bonham) facility. Too often we overlook the people who do a good job, thinking they are just doing their job, which they are. But then there comes the special person, T. MA, who consistently does a great job who needs to be given praise for going/doing above and beyond what is expected of them. ... really cares about her patients – will see a patient any time they are experiencing problems. I would appreciate you giving her a 'well done' for her extra caring."

Thanks,
Jim Harper

A veteran called me regarding his C&P exam (cold injury protocol requested by Waco). He was clearly sobbing and had a hard time speaking on the phone. He said he was seen by "the most thorough and compassionate doctor he had ever encountered in his life (Jim Kokel, PA)" and wanted someone to know. He said when the exam was done, Mr. Kokel leaned close to him and said "I just want you to know that I really appreciate what you did for us over there!" The patient said that was the first time he can recall anyone ever thanking him for serving in the military.

Mark Nelson, MD



Wheelchair Athlete “Fins” to Victory

Meet Cleveland Greene, a double amputee veteran who also has diabetes. When his treatment team suggested water aerobics to strengthen his muscles, Mr. Greene was not too thrilled as he is very uncomfortable in the water. Each day, therapists would ease him into the SCI pool using a lift. His confidence grew, and he graduated to entering the pool on his own.



When he heard about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, he was excited to begin swim training but had a huge problem - he couldn't paddle!

Greene wondered if there were prostheses that would be compatible with his bilateral below knee amputations, so he asked Prosthetics for help. Dan Balcom, CP, developed 'swim fins' by duplicating the fit of Greene's walking legs. He changed the materials to polypropylene plastic and the attachment at the bottom so that it would fit a child's swim fin. All the materials had to be water friendly, and several ideas and prototypes were thrown out until the final concept was finished.

He began training for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and won three medals: two silver in track and one bronze in swimming. Balcom said, "I was surprised at how much better he could swim the first time in the pool. It was very rewarding being part of the unique project and having such a good outcome."



Meal Preparation Goes High-Tech

After several years of planning and preparation, VANTHCS has converted its food service operation from a conventional cook-to-serve system to a cook-chill, advanced meal system. Meal assembly is now performed ahead of the time, allowing all three meals of the day to be assembled by one shift of employees. Patient meals are assembled while the food product continues to be held in a chilled state. The product is plated and placed directly onto a specially designed tray with cold food items on one side and food items to be heated on the other side. Within the tray cart, an insulated barrier separates hot and cold food items. Completely assembled meal trays are stored in delivery carts under forced cold air refrigeration until the thermalization process begins. Prior to mealtime, hot air is circulated around the food to be served hot while cold air maintains the cold foods.

This system better maintains food quality as well as nutritional value and improves timeliness of patient meal service. In the past, patient meal trays were assembled while trying to keep hot food hot and cold food cold, filling a cart with



l to r: Kenneth McQuirter and Maggie Irving assemble refrigerated food for patient meal trays. The meals will be rethermalized on the tray delivery cart docking stations.

trays, and then taking one cart at a time to patients in the units. With the new advanced meal system, multiple carts of patient meals are ready at the same time, hence more timely meal service for our patients. Implemented first in Bonham, approximately 75% of the food items used in Bonham and Dallas facilities are convenience products. Items that cannot be obtained as a convenience product are prepared in Bonham and transported to Dallas five days a week using a refrigerated truck, just like those used to transport refrigerated/frozen foods to restaurants, grocery stores, etc. This new technology has improved meal service for our patients at an average cost savings of \$500,000 a year.



Patient meal tray delivery carts at docking stations where cold food is kept cold while hot food is thermalized to proper serving temperature.

The Company of Heroes

I am not a hero, but I serve in the company of heroes. As I walk the corridors, the floors, and the grounds of the Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center, I am greeted by the faces of men and women who took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. Men and women who fought upon foreign soils such as WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and Persian Gulf. Some with missing limbs using wheelchairs, and walkers. As with military veterans, some may carry the scars of combat in one form or another, physically or mentally. When some Americans turned their back on America, these men and women proudly stepped forward to protect our freedom, the freedom of those who seek freedom and the American democracy. Some fought and died so we may enjoy the liberties of freedom as we do today. Some never returned to be buried on American soil and lay at rest atop the shores of Normandy and in cemeteries of foreign soil. Let them not be forgotten. And to the mothers and fathers of these proud American men and women, you can rest assured that you too can step forward and share the honor, for you belong to this special group of brave Americans.

Freedom is not free, nor is America's. Can we forget "flight 93" and the brave Americans who gave their life to save the lives of many? Can we forget the billowing dust that smothered New York City and the thousands of lives lost? Can we remain complacent as we were once without fear? Can we let American blood stain American soil again? The brave men and women of our armed forces today are fighting for the liberation of Iraq and their cry for freedom. The majority are not seeking military careers but volunteering to serve their country and what they believe in. They are America's best. Our founding fathers would be proud that they produced from their seed Americans that are willing to volunteer to give their lives if need be for their country and to countries seeking freedom. The beat of the drum for freedom echoes on.

The veterans I meet at the medical center are a constant reminder that my problems are small compared to theirs. I am reminded every day that it is because of their sacrifice that I am free. I am reminded each day that without them, I would not be here. I am reminded that I am here to serve those who have served me. In the words of General Omar Bradley, "we are dealing with veterans, not with procedures, with their problems, not ours." Therefore, my friend, we are here by choice. We have chosen to serve our country by serving our veterans. Treating, healing, and serving our men and women who served our blessed America. Using the words of our late President, John F. Kennedy, in a similar application if I may, "ask not what our veterans can do for you, but what you can do for our veterans." Without our military and military veterans would we have a country as we know it today? Would millions of people in other countries enjoy their freedom if it were not for our veterans? Who are these people we call veterans? How do you recognize them on the street or in a crowd? You don't. They quietly go about living their lives without seeking recognition for they know in their hearts that they have served their country well.

Pray for those who are in combat and their safe return, pray for those who are missing in action and for our prisoners of war. Pray to God to give them the faith and courage to endure their pain and should their fate be death, may it be swift. Pray for their families for some have paid the ultimate price of giving the life of their son or daughter. A thank you or a prayer is a small price to pay compared to the price that our veterans have paid for us. And I might add, paid in full.

Display your yellow ribbons, raise our flag proudly to full mast and let it wave, and cast your eyes to the heavens for the eagles fly high above America. Dare to dream of what your country means to you and should you be called upon to defend her, do so proudly. Second to God, the greatest oath an American can make is to defend and protect the Constitution of the United States of America. And in the words of Capt. Nathan Hale, "I regret that I have but one life to give to my country." God, Country, Duty - the thoughts of those with the courage to defend our freedom.

For those who enjoy the freedom from the blood of our brave American men and women do not speak against what they are defending America from. If you are not going to stand beside her, then step aside for the ones who believe in her. Lay down your greed and self-serving purpose and pray for their victory for they are fighting for your liberties by keeping the disease of tyranny from American soil.

Within the word AMERICAN there are two very important words I CAN. As an American I CAN worship as I please, I CAN vote as I please, I CAN as I choose as I wish, I CAN pursue my dreams, I CAN express free speech. As an AMERICAN, I CAN. Freedom paid in full in combat with the blood of Americans. No, freedom is not free. America's success as a democracy is envied the world over and millions upon millions of people wish THEY COULD as WE CAN.

As I walk atop the burial grounds of where veterans lay at rest I am reminded that I am not walking above them. I am reminded that they have ascended above me and their spirit continues to watch over America. That they will be raised again into a world of faith, and kindness under the rule of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. That they will be rewarded with eternal life for their sacrifices in their fight for freedom of America and what America stands for. I am reminded that the music and words to Taps pay a final tribute to an elite group of men and women that share an unspoken bond, a bond that can never be broken.

It is an honor, not a job, that I can serve my country, by serving our military veterans. Now you my friend are part of an elite group of American men and women, in the service of your country. When you are called upon to step forward, you can step forward proudly with honor, for you have served your country well. And my friend, I will stand proudly beside you.

No my friend, I am not a hero, but I serve in the company of heroes.

Larry C. Waldrop, Engineering Service



Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (PRRTP)

An open house was held November 5, 2003 at the VANTHCS Bonham facility Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program. The PRRTP is located in building 5, the existing Director's quarters.

The five bed PRRTP is designed to assist veterans who suffer from substance abuse disorders and/or psychiatric disorders and homelessness to:

- Remain sober and/or improve their mental status.
- Obtain and sustain employment and stable housing in the community.
- Manage their lives in an independent and productive manner.
- Minimize their reliance on institutionalized care.
- Become a productive and involved member of the community.

Residents are responsible for household daily living activities including shopping, cooking, housekeeping, yard maintenance and minor household upkeep.

Program costs are funded through payment of a "program fee" by the residents. A multi-disciplinary treatment team serves as a screening team and provides assessment of treatment and medications needed to attain their discharge planning goals.

Greta Mankins, Director, Comprehensive Homeless Center; Johnny Ortiz, Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Manager and Larry Holland, CWT Assistant, organized and manage the program.

CFC 2004 began November 1, 2003 with the following goals for each facility. If everyone participates, we can meet our goal!!!



Bonham – \$19,000
Dallas – \$155,000
Fort Worth – \$10,000

Virginia Hall Honored by VA Secretary

Virginia Hall, Nutrition & Food Service employee in Bonham, was flown to Washington, DC, recently by invitation of VA Secretary Anthony Principi. Ms. Hall completed 120 courses in the VA Learning Online (VALO), a web-based campus that brings training to employees' desktops. No other VA employee completed more than 98 courses. Virginia was recognized for demonstrating outstanding commitment to learning and enhancing her knowledge, skills and abilities that benefited her position at VA each workday. She completed a wide range of courses from home as she does not have web access at work. Ms. Hall showed tremendous self-discipline to achieve higher learning, a goal to be emulated by all VA employees.

Marie Johnson Honored on Her 106th Birthday

Navy veteran Marie Odee Johnson, one of the last surviving women veterans of World War I, celebrated her 106th birthday recently in the Transitional Care Unit. Members of the local chapter of Navy League of the United States made a special presentation. Ms. Johnson served as a secretary in Washington, DC during World War I and has made her home in the TCU at Dallas VAMC since 1998. Her family joined the party as Mr. Harper presented Ms. Johnson a commendation that read, "In recognition of your military service in the U.S. Navy during World War I. Your service to this great nation is a testament for all veterans who answer the call to preserve and defend our country's freedom."



Patriots Day Remembered

The terrorist attacks on America September 11, 2001 have forever changed our everyday routine. Things or people we took for granted have become close to our heart – we fly the American flag or attend a special memorial service. A special ceremony was held this September 11th that paid special tribute to our employees who are members of the Reserves or National Guard as well as a Veterans Forum that featured three veterans who shared their military experiences in the Italian Campaign of 1943.

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.

VANTHCS Has New Dental Clinic



Dallas VA Medical Center hosted an Open House recently for its new Dental Clinic. Last renovated in the 1970s, the new clinic features state-of-the-art equipment, including WaterClave water purification system, digital radiography and Conex sterilization system as well as 12 dental operatories, 3 oral surgery operatories, dental laboratory and spacious waiting area. Dental providers hope these enhancements will accommodate more patients in a much more esthetically pleasing environment.

VA Hits Another Home Run

The North Texas Chapter of Chosin Few recently surveyed their membership of 122 veterans regarding cold weather injury. Survey results indicate:

- 14 awarded 40-80% compensation and were satisfied with the award
- 9 awarded 70% compensation and have filed for unemployability
- 50 awarded 100% compensation – represents 45% of the membership eligible for war-related injuries such as cold or PTSD or other service-connected injuries
- 17 pending retiree claims, filed for Combat-Related Special Compensation
- 11 pending claims for those who have refiled for additional compensation – originally awarded 20-40%. One was denied and has now filed an appeal through a veterans county service officer.
- 10 pending claims for those who have recently filed or are awaiting cold weather injury exam
- 11 have no cold weather injury or did not wish to file

The Chosin Few expressed appreciation to several county service officers for their support as well as Dr. Mark Nelson and Alan Harper for their efforts to establish and promote a working environment in Compensation and Pension to more effectively serve veterans.





VANTHCS STARS

Penny Eskuevaldez, rheumatology clinic coordinator and infusion nurse, was honored recently being invited to speak at the Arthritis Foundation's Joint Effort Against Rheumatoid Arthritis held this year at the Dallas Westin Galleria.

Between patients at Dallas VAMC and Baylor College of Dentistry, Dr. Linda Niessen is the reporter for Dental Health Check that airs locally on WFAA-TV channel 8 and TXCN. The show was honored recently by Chicago Dental Society with the Callahan Award for educating the public about oral health.

Christina Frias, MS, RN was honored recently with the highest honor given to a Hispanic Nurse. The National Association of Hispanic Nurses 2003 Janie Menchaca-Wilson Leadership Award recognizes exceptional leadership.

Pamela Bunch in IRMS was selected as Texas Veteran Commission's employee of the month for August 2003 for her outstanding support and professionalism.

Barbara Crittenton in MAS was selected as Texas Veteran Commission's employee of the month for April 2003 for her dedication and service to veterans.

Staff in Mental Health received excellence in education and educational support as "Shining Stars" of academic medicine at UT Southwestern's Department of Psychiatry. Dr. Michael Lambert-Medical Student Full Time Faculty Teaching Award; Angela Guerrero, Sofia Aeschlimann, Kip Queenan, Kevin Majeres, and Erich Swafford-Medical Student Teaching Award for Residents; Jackie Howard-Rodgers-special recognition by geriatric fellows; Raj Bakshi-PGY1 Teaching Award; Susan Best-PGY2 Teaching Award; John Talmadge and Raj Bakshi, PGY3 Teaching Award; Brinda Rhodes and Cassandra Womack-special recognition by residents to staff. VA Gold Team was also nominated for best teaching site.

Winners of the 2003 Nursing Excellence Awards: Clinical Care, Jewel Lemons, MS, RN, FNP-C; Innovation/Creativity, Graciela Reyes, RN, CRRN; and Mentoring, Maureen Washburn, ND, RN, CPHQ

Verdell Marsh, PhD, was recently promoted to Colonel during a ceremony at the 94th General Hospital in Seagoville.

VANTHCS salutes the 2003 Great 100 Nurses: Carrie Marcelo DeLeon, RN; Sue Sivess Franks, RN; David S. Mackie, APRN; Curtis Jay Purser, RN; Virginia L. Warren, RN; and Frances S. Wasserman, APRN.

VANTHCS received the Pacesetter Award for Combined Federal Campaign 2002-2003 employee participation. Hats off to Sue Olsen in Fiscal Service also recognized as Outstanding Campaign coordinator.

CIA recognition includes Jeanne Conner (HRMS), Susan Tanowitz (Mental Health), Melissa Whatley (Nursing Service), Thomas Jordan (Mental Health), Glenn Street (Voluntary Service).

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