



# Venture

Summer 2002

## *VANTHCS Shows Off for Honored Guests*



### Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Secretary Leo Mackay Visits Dallas VAMC

Director Alan Harper escorted Dr. Mackay through the Dallas facility during a recent visit where he toured several clinical areas and saw the outpatient robot dispenser in Pharmacy Service. Dr. Mackay visited with patients and met with Executive Leadership. He also spent time to congratulate staff members who were named among the 2002 Great 100 Nurses for the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.



L-R: Dr. Cronin, Andrew Christie, Mr. Harper, and Dr. Mackay



L-R: Governor Perry, Ray Perry, Denis Simonneau

**Texas Governor Rick Perry** joined approximately 550 others June 6, 2002, at Dallas VA Medical Center to commemorate the Allied invasion of Europe on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Four World War II veterans were guest speakers in a panel discussion at the 14th Veterans Forum held since 1999. After the panel, Gov. Perry assisted Denis Simonneau, French Consul General of France in Houston, in presenting 'Thank you, America' certificates on behalf of the French government. Approximately 45 veterans were honored for their service in the liberation of France, including Ray Perry of Paint Creek, Texas, Gov. Perry's father. 

**The Honorable  
Pete Sessions  
attends program  
at DVAMC**

**Former Senator  
Bob Dole visits  
vets**

**On the  
Front Lines**

**Research and  
Medical  
Technology**

**We do make a  
difference...**

**Letters from  
veterans and  
their families**

**Helpful  
Resources**





**Alan G. Harper**

## *From the Director*

As VANTHCS moves forward through difficult fiscal obstacles, I am constantly reminded just how much of what we do depends on caring and dedicated employees and their attitude toward our veterans. If you need a good reality check, attend one of the Memorial Services or a Veterans Forum. These programs honor veterans, past and present, and truly put into perspective why we have freedom and those who fought and died to defend it. As employees, let me encourage us to help each other—instead of saying, "that's not my job." Going the extra mile is certainly a road less traveled, and from the many letters I receive, some of which are shared in this newsletter, many of you are 'going the extra mile.' As Director, I hope we remember each day why we're here and strive together to improve health care for the veterans who gave so much for our freedom.

### **Congressman Pete Sessions attends Tribute at DVAMC**

Mr. Harper made a special presentation to Congressman Pete Sessions who served as keynote speaker recently at "A Tribute to Heroes – Past and Present" benefit program for Circle Ten Council Boy Scouts of America. VANTHCS honored veterans, local police and firefighters. The evening featured Band of Brothers veteran J.B. Stokes, and VA Medical Explorer Post 2024 sponsored by VANTHCS performing a patriotic medley and veteran tribute.



L-R: Congressman Sessions and Mr. Harper

### **Congressman Sam Johnson Speaks at DVAMC**



Greater Dallas Veterans Council and Korean War Commemorative Partners held a 50th Anniversary program at DVAMC July 28, 2002. The Honorable Sam Johnson gave the memorial address.

### **Congresswoman Kay Granger tours FWOPC**

The Honorable Kay Granger, Texas 12th District of the US House of Representatives, toured FWOPC August 1, 2002. Ms. Granger wanted to discuss the impact on space and human resources due to the rapid growth rate of patients using the Clinic.



## ***We do make a difference ...***

"I am writing to tell you what a fine group of people you have assembled here. Their patience, their care, their courtesy is extraordinary. They are to be congratulated. I have seen people in the x-ray, Lab, EKG, Doctor's Admin, Pharmacy and Outpatient Info, and each person appears to be cut from the same mold. I truly appreciate all of their help."

**Joseph C. Spiegel**

"There was a male nurse who took care of my dad the week before his operation. He treated my dad with respect and dignity while keeping him and the family up to date with the latest medical plans. This nurse came to the family's waiting area and spoke to us one last time before he would transport my father to the operating room. He appeared careful not to raise any doubts about the family's decisions, but he did speak calmly and firmly. He encouraged my sisters and I to spend a few moments 'one on one' with my dad. He termed it, this is the time to get 'mushy' with your dad – tell him thanks for those "special times" that only he could have provided, 'use the love word.' The nurse insured us when this was all over, either way we would be glad we had had this private time alone with our father. I know now that if this nurse had not pushed me, my dad would have left this earth without hearing what I told him that morning. When the surgery people called for my dad to be taken to the operating room, the nurse alerted my family. He then, on the way to surgery, pushed my dad in his bed out of his way and through an empty hall where I and all the grand kids waited. This was a time of hugs and smiles and kisses and this would be these kids' last time to see their Grandpa."

**A Patient's Son**

"We have chosen just a few months ago to avail ourselves of the many benefits of the veterans administration. We feel that those of you in the leadership roles and administration positions do an exemplary job and would you accept our personal gratitude and thanks for giving us this five star beneficial operation. May we particularly commend your doctors and the folks in the pharmaceutical area. They are all polite, thorough and unquestionably capable professional people."

**A FWOPC Veteran Couple**

"When it became apparent that I would need additional tests and procedures, I had some reservations about continuing my care with the VA. I have good insurance and can be cared for anywhere I choose. I know excellent specialists in private practice who utilize some of the best facilities in the Dallas area. Because I know the quality of care we provide, I chose to continue my care here, to endorse my belief that our care is as good as anyone's. Except for time delays, I found my care experience was far superior to any providers I have ever had personal experience with in the care of my family or myself. The staff of 3C was courteous and professional as they took me to my procedure and later recovered and admitted me. The surgical team and recovery staff provided excellent care and managed my pain control effectively. The nursing staff of 8A and SICU were outstanding in meeting my personal needs at various stages of hospitalization, and they were very considerate of the needs of my family. I am thankful that I chose to continue my care with the VA because I found it to be the best care provided in our area."

**Veteran/Employee**

"Whenever I had a need, we turned to your office. Never did we feel we were ignored or resented. Such is hard to find. I have to say thank you to those who endured my phone calls, my requests, and my loss."

**Patient's Spouse**

## **Thomas J. Stranova Network Director VISN 17**



Secretary Anthony Principi released his "State of VA" remarks not too long ago, and I thought you might find it interesting to see how his comments relate to what we are seeing in VISN 17.

**The Secretary remarked, "Our challenge will be to avoid becoming victims of our own success. Since 1995, the number of veterans enrolled for VA care has increased three million, and the number is expected to increase dramatically." We're seeing unprecedented increases in the number of veterans seeking care in VISN 17. Many veterans enrolling at CBOCs are being told they must travel to medical centers or larger outpatient clinics miles away to be seen. You don't need me to tell you that our medical centers and outpatient clinics are stretched to the breaking point – and veterans must often wait too long for an initial appointment. Simply put, we provide an expanding population of veterans with an increasing array of services on a fixed budget.**

**Secretary Principi also said, "VA is nothing but hollow shells of bricks and steel without the people who embody our commitment to veterans." Nowhere is that more true than in VISN 17. Despite the challenges we face, the quality of care and diversity of services have remained intact. We will continue to look for ways to improve, but we will also be mindful of our obligation to protect the enormous strides we have made as a network over the last five years. Remember, our compassion for the veterans we serve is not measured in the number of dollars we spend but in the outcomes we achieve.**

**Let me conclude the same way the Secretary did with the words of Gen. Omar Bradley. "We are dealing with veterans, not procedures – with their problems, not ours."**

### **Employer of Choice for the Disabled**

*I want to thank those responsible for providing me with all the accommodations in my office. People have gone above and beyond the call of duty, from Quick Response to carpenter personnel in Engineering who made a 9' long desk.*

*To employee health workers who give me a shot every day. I can not begin to let you know how much easier it makes my job, and everyone I have come in contact with seemed like it was a pleasure for them to help and that I wasn't putting them out.*

*Anonymous*



## Veterans Get Dose of Dole

Former **Senator Bob Dole** had some free time while speaking at a recent SMU lecture series and wanted to visit some World War II veterans. Dole was injured in 1945 by Nazi machine gun fire and spent 39 months in Army hospitals. At the lecture that evening, Dole asked World War II veterans to stand and suggested the SMU undergrads visit World War II veterans who are dying at a rate of 1200 a day. Dole is known to stop at VA medical centers during his travels, and we were honored to have him speak with our veterans, offering encouragement 'vet to vet.'



L-R: VANTHCS Volunteers Dick Grissom, Frank Havlak, Eileen Miller, Cecil Gilliam and former Senator Bob Dole



L-R: Dennis Kilmer, Joyce Dye, Alice & Eldon Armstrong, Mr. Harper and Paul Fisch

Thanks to DAV Texas Bluebonnet Chapter 20 who donated this transport van for use at Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic. Others to recognize for donations to VANTHCS include Pfizer Pharmaceuticals for a \$10,000 grant to support a Mini Medical School.

The Purple Hearters also made a donation during a recent Circle Ten Scouting program at Dallas VAMC.

## Bonham's Gary Stone Speaks to International Space Station

An amateur radio operator (ham) has always been part of the crew on the International Space Station. Very rarely, however, do they find time to make unplanned voice contacts with ham operators on the ground. Gary Stone, Mental Health Addiction Therapist in Bonham, was lucky to be one of the HAM operators who spoke with the Space Station. The "window of opportunity" for contact is at most about 10 minutes before the Space Station is out of range, traveling at 225 miles altitude. The radio contact is very brief - only a minute or so. Gary used a computer program to know when the Space Station would be in range and finally got lucky after many, many passes. Radio call signs and signal reports were exchanged, and Gary was answered by Valery Korzun, Russian Commander of the crew. Gary said, "It was great to hear Commander Korzun giving out voice contacts during this pass on July 6, 2002."

# CFC

Combined Federal Campaign 2002, "Embracing the Needs of Others" begins September 9-November 22, 2002. This year's goal for VANTHCS is \$150,000. Information is coming soon how you can contribute. Everyone is encouraged to be part of CFC .

## September Events

### 2 HOLIDAY

- 9 & 20 10:00 am-3:00 pm: Drivers License Express, Avenue of Flags
- 11 • 9:00 am-10:30 am:  
September 11, 2001 Memorial, Atrium (DAL)
- 12:00 am, 8:15 pm, 2:00 pm:  
A Service of Remembrance, Chapel (DAL)
- 10:00 am:  
A Service of Remembrance, Chapel (BON)
- 10:30 am: A Service of Remembrance,  
Main Lobby (FWOPC)
- 18 1:00 pm: Memorial Service, Chapel (BON)
- 19 2:30 pm: Memorial Service, Atrium (DAL)
- 24 8:00 am, 3:00 pm: All Employee Meeting,  
Bldg. 3 Rec. Room (BON)

## October Events

- 2 • 2:30 pm, 3:30 pm: All Employee Meeting,  
MHC Group Rm. (FWOPC)
- 10:30 am: All Supervisors Meeting, A136 (DAL)
- 3 • 9:00 am, 3:30 pm: All Employee Meeting,  
Medical Service Conf. Rm (DAL)
- 7:00 pm: All Employee Meeting, Chapel (DAL)
- 4 • 5:00 am: All Employee Meeting, Chapel (DAL)
- 5 • 9:30 am: All Employee Meeting, Chapel (DAL)
- 7 10:00 am: Open House -  
Texas Tech School of Pharmacy, Bldg. 7 (DAL)
- 10 6:00 pm: Patient Carnival, Nursing home (BON)
- 12 10:00 am-4:00 pm: EEO Community Health Fair,  
Atrium, (DAL)
- 17 6:00-9:00 pm: Patient Carnival, Gazebo (DAL)

## ON THE FRONT LINES WITH VA RESEARCH

Research studies performed by **Dr. Kosaku Uyeda** and his team have identified a protein that appears to trigger the conversion of excess carbohydrates into fat. As reported in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the protein ChREBP, carbohydrate response element-binding protein, may influence long-term fat accumulation that results from a high carbohydrate diet. "Studies indicate ChREBP triggers a sequence of events important in regulating the metabolism of carbohydrates and fat synthesis," said Dr Uyeda, Research Career Scientist at VANTHCS and Professor of Biochemistry at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. When people eat desserts, pasta, potatoes or other sugar- and starch-laden foods beyond the body's energy and nutritional needs, the carbohydrates become a flood of glucose. The liver converts this surplus glucose to fat. Glucose then reaches a level that signals ChREBP to start a chain-reaction along a series of genes that, in turn, activates the synthesis of a dozen enzymes that catalyze the transformation of the excess glucose into fat to be stored in the body. Dr. Uyeda said all the enzymes involved in carbohydrate metabolism and fat synthesis contain this protein. When the enzymes sense a high level of glucose in the bloodstream, they detect the protein and bind to it, triggering the sequence of events that leads to the conversion of glucose to fat. Although the general process or pathway has been known, this study is the first to identify a precise biochemical trigger. Rat livers were used in this study, but the results are believed to reflect the human body's functions. Dr. Uyeda says the identification of ChREBP creates the potential for developing a drug that can interfere with the conversion process. "If we can change the ability of this protein to bind or not bind, we can control the conversion of sugar to fat.

## Medical Technology

People with visual impairments who have difficulty reading prescription labels are at increased risk for error when taking medications independently. To limit this risk VANTHCS is providing a new technological device to provide a 'talking label' for visually impaired veterans. Scrip-Talk, from En-Vision America Inc., is a device equipped with a microchip to read the special label aloud. The device is placed within an inch of the label to convert the information into synthesized speech. **Vance Wilson, LMSW-ACP**, Visual Impairment Services Team coordinator, reports there are over 800 blind veterans at VANTHCS, and many of them will benefit from this device. There are three components to the system: the label itself, the Scrip-Talk reader, and a special label printer for the pharmacy. VANTHCS is one of the first VA medical facilities to provide Scrip-Talk for visually impaired veterans. The device may help decrease the occurrence of medication errors, thus enabling many veterans to continue living independently.

## VA DEDICATES SPECIAL DEMENTIA UNIT IN NURSING HOME AT BONHAM FACILITY

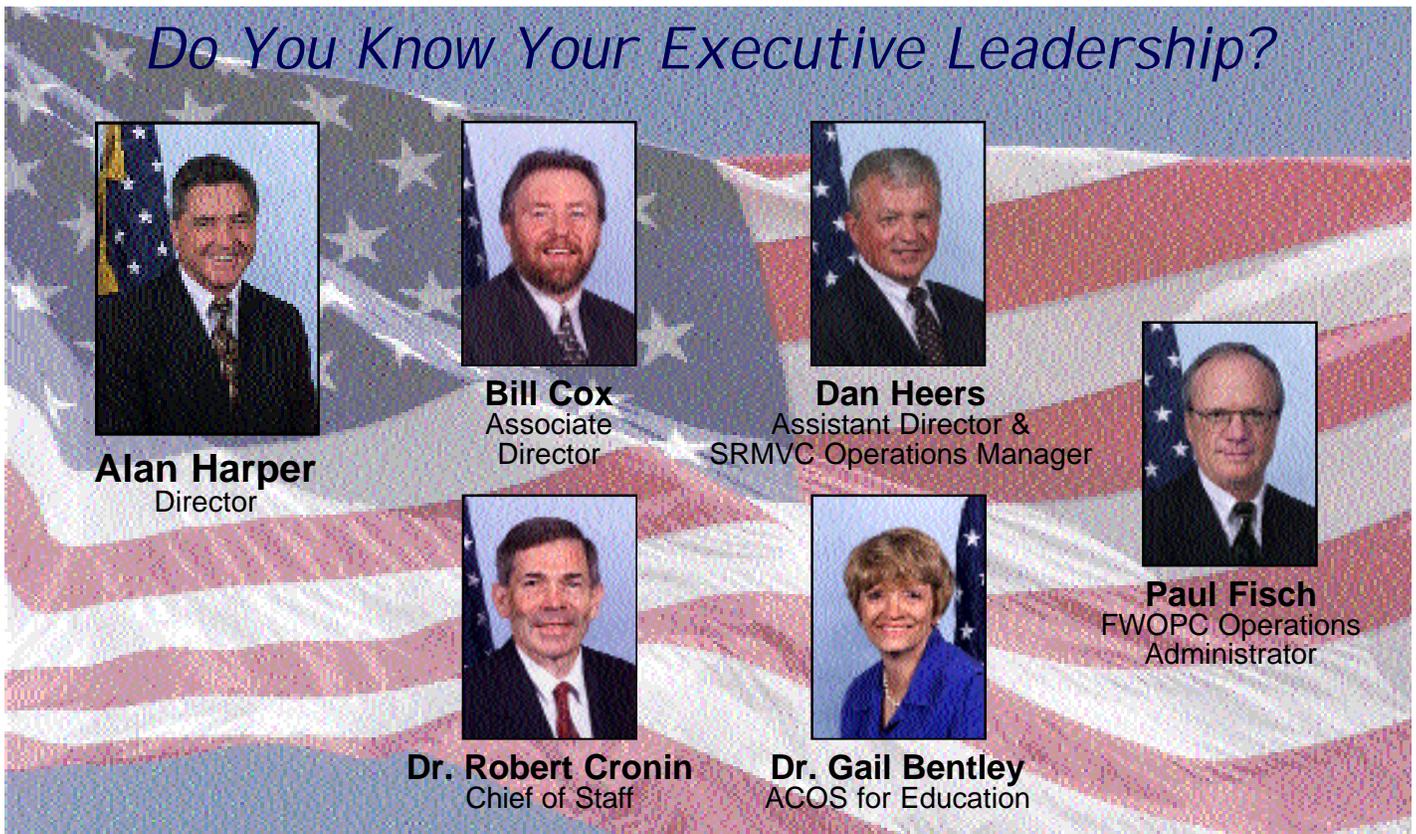
VA North Texas Health Care System (VANTHCS), Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center (SRMVC) recently dedicated the special dementia unit in the Nursing Home Care Unit in memory and honor of **Mrs. Billie Charles**, former Licensed Vocational Nurse. Mrs. Charles, who passed away suddenly after thirteen years of service at the SRMVC, was highly praised by veterans and their family members as a courteous, caring and dedicated nurse. She was truly an outstanding nurse and daily demonstrated her compassion for veterans diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer disease.

"This honor bestowed on Mrs. Charles will ensure her care of residents and families in the dementia special care unit will not be forgotten", stated Mr. Daniel Heers, Operations Manager of the SRMVC.

Mrs. Charles was well known for her tremendous love for family and work. They were her life. Her family was all present for the dedication ceremony including her son-in-law, Neil Boatright, a Bonham Engineering Service employee.

### What is CARES?

Phase II of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process began June 6, 2002. CARES is a plan to redesign our medical system to continue to bring VA health care into the 21st century. To accomplish this, it may be necessary nationally to shift some services and to find other uses for buildings that are not suitable for delivering modern health care. The goal is to give veterans the care they need, when they need it, and in the most appropriate location. The restructuring of VA health care reflects veteran demographic changes over the next 20 years. These decisions will not be made lightly or in a vacuum. There is a comprehensive 9-step process for gathering necessary data, analyzing gaps between available services and needs, and developing a plan for matching VA facilities and services with veterans' future health care needs. Your input as well as the input of veterans, academic affiliates, and others will be sought and considered throughout the process. As VA employees, we are dedicated to the mission of taking care of veterans. CARES will assure that we are positioned to do that now and in the future. It is too early in the 2-year process to speculate what health care realignments and enhancements will be made. You can be assured that open communication is a critical part of the CARES process. Watch for continued local and national CARES updates.

A graphic featuring a background of the American flag. At the top, the text "Do You Know Your Executive Leadership?" is written in a blue, serif font. Below this, six individual headshots of executives are arranged in two rows. Each headshot is accompanied by the executive's name and title in a black, sans-serif font.

*Do You Know Your Executive Leadership?*

 <b>Alan Harper</b> Director	 <b>Bill Cox</b> Associate Director	 <b>Dan Heers</b> Assistant Director & SRMVC Operations Manager	 <b>Paul Fisch</b> FWOPC Operations Administrator
 <b>Dr. Robert Cronin</b> Chief of Staff	 <b>Dr. Gail Bentley</b> ACOS for Education		

# Helpful Resources

## Employee Resources

Employee Education System (EES) - VA Learning Online is an exciting new product that EES has partnered with VA Learning University (VALU). The online campus will be accessible to VA staff through the VALU website or internet when staff are home or out of the office. VA Learning Online will feature more than 1,500 courses ranging from GED to college credit with topics such as basic math and grammar to financial management and Microsoft Office. Most courses can be completed in an hour, however they can be taken in 15-30 minute increments and their progress bookmarked so they can return to the course later at a time and place that is most convenient for them. We are encouraging employees to browse the course descriptions and see what will soon be available. Log onto the VALU website, <http://vawww.valu.irm.va.gov/elearn.asp>

## Access the Library for Help

This past year we have created a Library homepage on the VANTHCS intranet that allows employees to access a wide variety of materials from their desktops. Various kinds of information is available, including safety, pain management and customer service. Other resources online include UpToDate and MDConsult, which give physicians valuable treatment information as well as patient education handouts.

## More Education Info

Ten educational modules aimed at helping VA health care providers improve the care to veterans with military-related health problems are now available online. **Dr. Susan Mather**, VA Public Health and

Environmental Hazards Chief Officer, says the modules are designed to fill a gap VA providers may have in their training or experience. Module topics include Agent Orange, Gulf War Injury, Hearing Impairment, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Prisoner of War, Radiation, Spinal Cord Injury, Visual Impairment, Traumatic Amputation and Prosthetics. Continuing medical education credit for completing the modules is available. The modules are available on the Veterans Health Initiative web site, [vawww.va.gov/VHI](http://vawww.va.gov/VHI). Printed versions are also available in Library Service.

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.

Do you enjoy walking or bicycling? You may be interested in joining *Pace & Pedals*. Contact Cheryl Rowder at x70230 or Tina Eudy at x71277

The Weekly Bible Study Group meets each Wednesday at 12 noon in CA-Chapel (DAL).

The Weekly Jewish Study Group meets each Wednesday at 12 noon in Continuing Education Rm. D (DAL).

*If you have an idea for  
Venture ,  
contact Public Affairs at x 71155*





## Take a bow, VANTHCS!!

Congratulations to each of you for a successful Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations survey. Our scores from a possible 100 were:

HAP (Administrative) - 92  
Long Term Care - 93  
Behavioral Health - 98  
Opiate Program - 98  
Behavioral Health - 96  
Home Based Primary Care - 96

The scores we received in this entire survey process were outstanding. Your dedication to provide veterans the highest quality of care is what sets VANTHCS apart. Thank you all for the team effort and a job well done!!!

## Game Time

Each year VANTHCS sponsors our veterans to participate in National Games. Here's the scoop so far. Be watching for results of the Creative Arts Festival in late October.

The Wheelchair Games were held July 9-13, 2002, in Cleveland, OH. Thirteen of our veterans participated and brought home 30 medals - 15 gold, 14 silver and 1 bronze. West Los Angeles, CA hosted the Golden Age Games August 10-17, 2002, and 35 VANTHCS veterans participated, bringing home 33 medals - 9 gold, 17 silver and 7 bronze.

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*Editors*  
 Allen Clark  
 Deloris Clemons  
 Paul Fisch  
 Penny Kerby

*Photo Editor*  
 Gene Davies

## VANTHCS STARS

Texas Veterans Commission's Outstanding USDVA  
2001 Employees of the Month  
January – Pamela Acker  
August – Wanda Lee (DAL)

2001 Outstanding Pharmacy Employees  
Johnny Joe, Shirley Johnson, Amie Tankersley  
(DAL)

Fourth Annual "Eckerd 100" Top Female Volunteers  
Dallas Area Agency on Aging Volunteer  
Christina Frias (DAL)

2002 Catholic Foundation McGill Award for  
Contributions within the Catholic Community  
Fr. Timothy Gollob (DAL)

Celebration Recovery Award for Significant  
Contributions in the Psychiatric Disorder Recovery  
Mental Health (Mood Disorders Team)

2002 American Academy of Nursing  
Deborah Antai-Otong (DAL)

2002 Great 100 Nurses for DFW Metroplex  
Tara Armitage Clark, Shirley Conley, B.J. Hidalgo,  
Wanda Payne, Brinda Rhodes, and Fe Tipay (DAL)

The University of Texas Southwestern Medical  
Center at Dallas 2002 Internal Medicine Awards  
Debbie Walker, Kim Fite, Dennis Polland,  
Dorothy Dureen, John Foster, Sharron Hartless,  
Carl Otto, Will Woods (DAL)

2002 University of Texas School of Nursing at  
Galveston Alumni Hall of Fame  
Christina Frias (DAL)

FEB Outstanding Community Service Award  
Carol Amlin (BON)

Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing  
Lawanna May, N. A. (BON)

Appointed to Texas Rehabilitation Commission by  
Gov. Perry  
Dr. Lance Goetz (DAL)