

VOL. 1 • ISSUE 4 • AUGUST 2023 • JESSE BROWN VA MEDICAL CENTER • CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Jesse Brown Pulse



Our People make the difference!



WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU!

Jesse Brown Public Affairs Communications Task Force Team needs your help! This newly formed team is seeking individuals who are:

- Creative individuals
- Interested in making a difference
- Proud of your organization
- Excited about sharing good news!
- Great Communicators
- Excellent listening skills

Participation in the communications task-force will serve as protected time and count toward your 40-hour work week schedule.



For more Information, please contact
Catrina.Francis@va.gov

MISSION

The Jesse Brown Pulse seeks to celebrate all the amazing things our employees do, in and out of work, as well as highlight resources across the medical center for our Veterans.

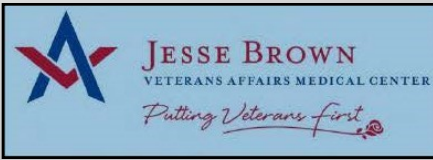
NEWSLETTER STAFF

Publisher
Rick A. Ament, Medical Center Director

Editor-in-Chief
Catrina Francis, Public Affairs Officer

COMMUNICATIONS TASKFORCE

The Communications Taskforce is a group of your peers who volunteered to search out and tell the stories of our medical center and the Veterans we are honored to serve.



CONTACT

This newsletter is for you, so if you have a story you want to share, please reach out to CHSPAO@va.gov.

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Jesse Brown VAMC | Receives four-star CMS rating

Catrina Francis – Public Affairs Officer

Last month, for the first time ever in Veterans Health Administration hospitals, Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center received a four-star rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The Overall Hospital Quality Star Rating summarizes a variety of measures across five areas of quality into a single star rating for each hospital, according to data.cms.gov. Once reporting thresholds are met, a hospital's Overall Star Rating is calculated using only those measures for which data is available.

During a JB employees town hall on July 27, Dr. Sarah Unterman, the JB Chief of Staff, said the CMS star ratings were historically published for quite a few years now for hospitals that accepted Medicare.

“VA hospitals do not get paid by Medicare, therefore, they were not included in the quality metrics a few years ago,” said Unterman.

This release was highly anticipated not just because Jesse Brown wanted to see where the medical center stacked up, but also because JB wanted to see where the entire system stacks up, said Unterman.

“Our overall quality star rating is four starts out of five and our patient experience rating is three stars out of five,” she said during the town hall. “We are now one of the elite hospitals for Chicago in terms of our clinical quality.”

Unterman pointed out that in the past the VA didn't have the ability to compare its quality of care to the quality of care of a



Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center received a four-star rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Photo by Kenny Jones

community facility. “Having the CMS star rating now includes the VA and allows for a direct comparison between us and other facilities in our geographic area,” explained Unterman. “The fact that we have a four-star rating

“**We have a plan to get to five star and stay at five stars, which will really mark us as premier within Chicago.**”

**Dr. Sarah Unterman,
JBVAMC Chief of Staff**

means that we are in the premier group of hospitals in the Chicago area because there are very few four- and five-star hospitals in Chicago. It shows that directly compared to other hospitals around us, we provide fantastic care.

“We are showing the quality of our clinical care is in the top tier [that's] available in this geographic area.”

Although the rankings are reposted

with new data each summer, Unterman said Jesse Brown is on the trajectory of achieving a five-star rating.

“We have a strategic plan to get us to a five star we hope within three years,” said Unterman. “Some of the specific areas we are focusing are health care associated infections and procedural complications.”

The four-star CMS rating is just one of the ways Jesse Brown is showcasing quality health care. The medical center also has one of the best 30-day mortality rates in the entire VA system.

Unterman said she's extremely proud of the hard work people have put into the medical center having a four-star rating.

“We have a plan to get to five star and stay at five stars, which will really mark us as premier within Chicago,” Unterman said. “There are only two five-star hospitals within the city limits right now, and we will keep working until we are there.”

VCS Celebrates 77th Birthday!

Catrina Francis – Public Affairs Officer

On Aug. 7, Jesse Brown Veteran Affairs Medical Center's Veteran Canteen Service celebrated its 77th birthday with a cake cutting ceremony in the medical center's cafeteria.

In 1946, VCS was established by law to provide comfort and well-being to America's Veterans. With many retail stores, cafés, and coffee shops across the country, VCS serves those who have served the country.

VCS has also partnered with local Whole Health to provide better health outcomes and provide comfort and well-being for Veterans and those who provide for their care. VCS has also joined with the VA to operate with the ICARE core values — Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect,



(Left to right) Kristen Lake, VCS Chief, Ryan Landi, Acting Associate Medical Center Director, Maryam Basemenji, Acting Assistant Medical Center Director, and VCS employees Luschona Hill, Angela Cruz, Shanell Cook, Veronica Onate, and Byron Washington.

Photo by Julian Calderon

and Excellence.

VCS is instrumental in giving back to the VA community, which includes the National Rehabilitation Games, Fisher House, reducing/eliminating Veteran homelessness,

suicide prevention, women Veterans, disaster relief, along with donating \$80,000 yearly to JB for employee recognition, picnic, and holiday celebrations.

Highlights | Veteran Celebrates 104th Birthday



On Aug. 18, Jesse Brown Veteran Affairs Medical Center employees paid homage to John Jones, a Veteran, who celebrated his 104th birthday. Jones bravely served his country as a member of the U.S. Army during World War II. Throughout his military career, he demonstrated unwavering courage, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to protecting the ideals of liberty and freedom. During the birthday celebration, JBVAMC Chief of Staff Dr. Sarah Unterman, presented Jones with coins from the Secretary of Veteran Affairs the Honorable Denis McDonough and JBVAMC, a letter from the Secretary who wrote Happy Birthday on the letter. Jesse Brown also gifted Jones with a plaque, a cap that read World War II Veteran, and a bag full of goodies.



While honoring Jones, Unterman said she had never talked to a person who was 104 years old. She asked what his secret to longevity was, Jones answered with a resounding, "God, God is good!" Jones is part of the "Greatest Generation," those who served during World War II, and the number of Veterans alive are dwindling with about 100,000 and about 3,700 in Illinois.

Photos by Kenny Jones



Facility Leadership Development Program employees are shown Aug. 16 after they received their certificate for completing the program.

Photo by Kenny Jones

Jesse Brown VAMC | 12 Employees Complete the Facility Development Leadership Program

Derrick Matthews - Supervisory Public Affairs Officer

The Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center is proud to announce the successful completion of its seven-month leadership training program called the Facility Leadership Development Program.

This comprehensive initiative was designed to equip Jesse Brown VAMC employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in leadership roles, improving the overall quality of care and services provided to the nation's Veterans.

While speaking to the graduation attendees, Jesse Brown Medical Center Director Rick Ament provided his thoughts on the leadership program.

"I wanted to infuse our Jesse Brown Strategic Vision into this training," said Ament. "Our future leaders come from a wide range of diverse backgrounds. These Jesse Brown future leaders are well positioned to help us go forward."

Over the course of seven months, 12 participants engaged in a variety of training activities, including workshops, seminars, group projects, and mentorship opportunities. The curriculum covered a broad range of topics,

such as strategic planning, team building, decision making, conflict resolution, and change management.

The program concluded with the participants sharing a final group project, which was designed to influence a positive change at the Jesse Brown Medical Center. The final projects consisted of improving the in-processing times for new employees and looking at different strategies for improving employee morale and wellness. The program also emphasized the importance of ethical leadership and the VA's core values of integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence.

The FDLP at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center was a rigorous training program that aimed to identify and cultivate the potential of high-performing employees. The program focused on enhancing leadership competencies, fostering innovative thinking, and promoting a patient-centered approach to health care delivery.

Valerie Reid, the Jesse Brown Chief of Education, provided remarks at the graduation ceremony.

"Leadership is not about the title but the example you set," said Reid while sharing her perspective about

“Leadership is not about the title, but the example you set.”

Valerie Reid
JBVAMC Chief of Education

the program to the graduates and event attendees.

The successful completion of the FDLP by Jesse Brown VA Medical Center employees will have a positive impact on the lives of the Veterans they serve. The program's emphasis on patient-centered care ensures that Veterans will receive high-quality, compassionate, and personalized services. FDLP graduates are equipped with the skills to lead multidisciplinary teams, promote innovative solutions, and create an environment that prioritizes the well-being of Veterans.

Investing in the professional development of its employees, the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center demonstrates its commitment to continuously improving the quality of care for Veterans. The FDLP not only enhances the leadership skills of participants, but also fosters a culture of excellence and continuous learning within the organization.

Your Jesse Brown | Employee Survey Empowers Voice, Enhances Working Experience

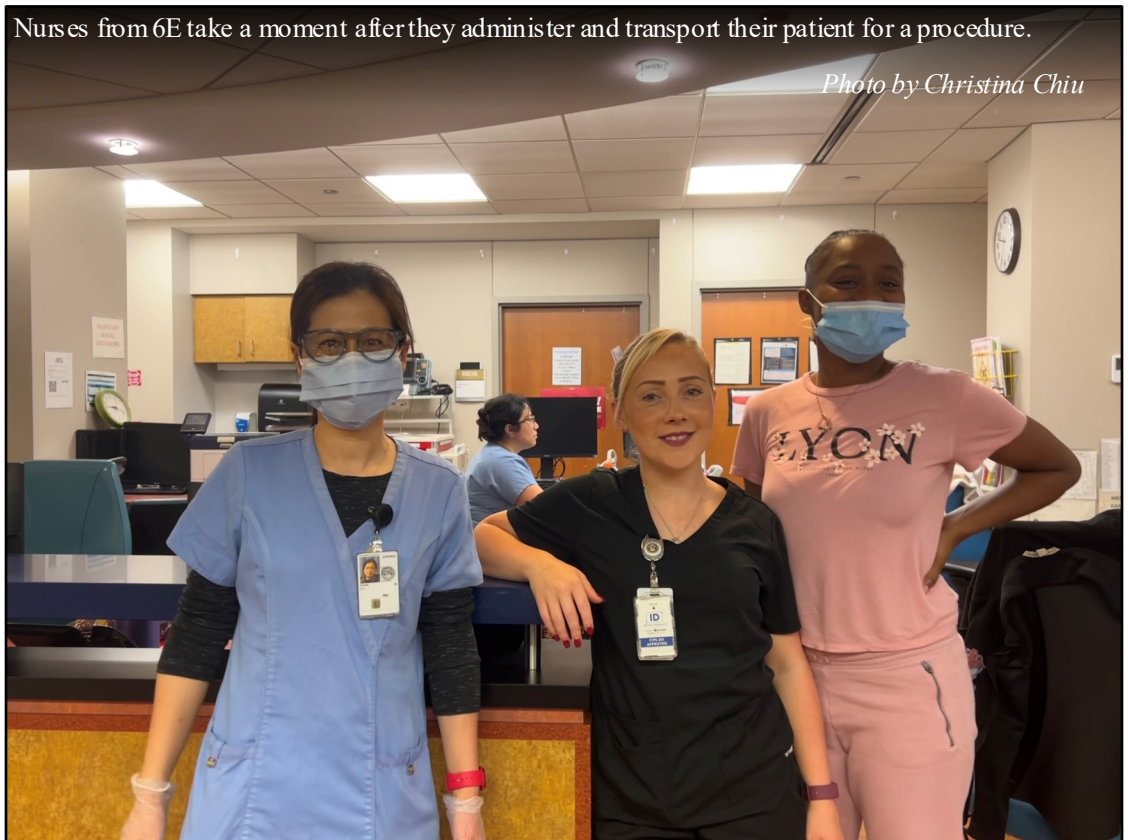
Christina Chiu – Training Specialist

The All-VA Survey was launched in 1997, rebranded as the All-Employee Survey in 2001, and Veteran Affairs has administered the AES every year since 2006. Although the questions and framework have evolved to match VA's specific needs, the overall purpose of improving employee engagement has remained consistent.

The Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center is committed to create an exceptional work environment. In building a thriving and supportive work environment lies in understanding the experience of its employees. The AES is a powerful tool that enables the medical center to gain insight and receive anonymous feedback from the entire workforce.

Dr. Tokar, Chief of the Employee Experience Office, said that the value of the AES data is important to leadership.

“The data from AES is an invaluable resource that allows the organization to create action items and drive positive change within our control, fostering an even better place to work for all,” said Tokar.



Nurses from 6E take a moment after they administer and transport their patient for a procedure.

Photo by Christina Chiu

The AES survey, a nationally created survey, is distributed to all VAs across the nation, including Jesse Brown. This comprehensive survey serves to gauge burnout levels, staff engagement, staff involvement, sentiments toward leadership, as well as other critical aspects such as diversity, equity and inclusion.

“It provides us with a deeper understanding of the experiences of our workforce, enabling us to tailor our efforts towards improving their overall employee’s happiness, satisfaction and well-being,” explained Tokar.

Tokar added that it’s vital to understand the importance of ensuring anonymity to encourage honest feedback. Tokar said that an employee’s response will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, allowing an individual to freely express his or her opinions and experiences. This collective feedback will provide leadership with a comprehensive understanding of the workforce’s sentiments and drive positive changes accordingly.

The AES survey data forms the foundation for meaningful action. Dr. Juliet Dinkha, Jesse

Brown’s Organizational Development Psychologist, utilized this information to identify areas of improvement and develop actionable plans that address the specific needs of the workforce. Jesse Brown’s goals encompass mitigating burnout, nurturing staff engagement, promoting staff involvement, fostering a culture of inclusivity and diversity, and providing leadership and growth opportunities to empower every employee.

The AES survey has proven instrumental in driving positive changes within the organization.

Employee feedback has directly influenced various initiatives prioritizing employee well-being and addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the creation of the Employee Experience Office resulted from AES feedback, allowing Jesse Brown leadership to allocate more resources toward supporting employee well-being post-COVID.

Moreover, AES survey data has played a pivotal role in justifying the allocation of additional full-time employees toward diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

“With valuable insights from the survey, we were able to secure approval from the director’s office to dedicate more resources to these important areas,” said Tokar. “Collaborating closely with Dr. Dinkha, our organizational development psychologist, we worked with different service areas to develop service-level plans and implement targeted interventions. This included providing specialized training such as DiSC, Crucial Conversations, and Unconscious Bias training to various service groups. Additionally, workplace assessments were conducted to identify areas for improvement

and enhance the overall culture within each respective area.” Jesse Brown leadership is thrilled to witness the positive response and engagement from employees in these initiatives. The workforce’s interest and willingness to actively participate in driving positive change within the organization are clear. The AES survey has become a catalyst for fostering an environment of continuous improvement and growth.

Employee participation in this year's AES survey played a crucial role in shaping the future of our organization. Employee

input contributes to the collective effort of building a better workplace. Together, the workforce can create an environment where each employee’s well-being and satisfaction are prioritized, said Tokar.

“We remain committed to utilizing the AES survey as a powerful tool for understanding employee experiences and shaping our organizational strategies,” said Tokar. “Your feedback is not only valued but essential in our journey toward creating an even better workplace for all.”



CHICAGO HEIGHTS PACT ACT EVENT On July 29, the Chicago Heights VA Clinic hosted a PACT Act event. The event provided Veterans with an opportunity to enroll in VHA health care, receive toxic exposure screening and file PACT Act claims.

Photo by Kenny Jones

Available programs, training opportunities at Jesse Brown

Cynthia Robertson -Administrative Officer

School at Work and Expanding Your Career and Health care Opportunities

The objective of the program is to advance entry and mid-level employees into allied health, nursing, and advanced positions in clinical and support areas, maximizing the employer's return-on-investment. The benefits are to improve performance and engagement in the current job, prepare employees for advancement into critical positions, better employee retention, reduce risk of negative patient satisfaction outcomes, and increase diversity in the management and clinical areas. The school at work was reimplemented at Jesse Brown last fiscal year. Here are testimonies from a few of its participants.

Winona Turner: "I needed something aggressive to optimize my overall performance in [the] health care industry and in my current position. From anatomy to medical terminology, email writing, proper punctuation usage, and math. It provided me with the core skills I needed to be more effective at my job. Anyone in the health care industry, regardless of their level of experience, should take advantage of the course opportunities."

Devan Knox: "I feel more comfortable at work knowing certain terminology and

certain roles everyone plays. There was also a section that helped you with resume writing and patient safety. I truly feel like I fit in, and I am being who I am at work. When you love what you do it isn't work anymore — it's your passion."

AO Academy

The AO Academy's mission is to standardize and improve the administrative functions within Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center. This is done by providing administrative officers with the skill set and competencies to be successful in their positions. AO Academy kicked off at Jesse Brown in June 2022. AO Academy's second edition was in April. Each month learning, innovation, and leadership development hosts a professional development skills day to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and the abilities of Jesse Brown's business managers. Workshops are held the third Thursday of each month. The individuals in AO Academy were excited to present its academy to Mid-Con as a standard of practice for all VA facilities.

Cynthia Robertson: "AO Academy offered [the] administrative officers and me a professional environment to help prepare us for the duties required for our jobs. They



gave us the tools, support, and confidence to be able to perform our job more efficiently. There were subject matter experts there to assist us with the different duties and tasks an administrative officer might have to perform. Kudos to the LILD team for starting this AO Academy."

The education portal is the one stop-shop for local education opportunities, VISN, and national. Visit the Jesse Brown intranet's education learning portal for growth and development opportunities.

Training opportunities in FY2023

Professional Development Training Series: Hosted by experienced professionals and subject matter experts who present on wide range of topics such as leadership, coaching, mentoring, and more. Please log into TMS item # 4642599 for a list of the workshops, please sign up as soon as possible. Class size is limited to 25 participants.

DISC: DISC assessments can uncover an individual's personal strengths, challenges, and improve his or her communication in the workplace. If an individual is interested in having a DISC Assessment, visit LEAF and submit a request.

The Facility Leadership Development Program: This program is designed

for health care professionals with a passion for leadership, a commitment to excellence, and a desire to make a positive impact in the lives of Veterans. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from experienced leaders in the health care field, including experts in health care administration, policy, and clinical practice. Through a combination of interactive lectures, hands-on exercises, and practical will gain a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities in health care leadership.

Supervisor Focus Group:

This group is held the second Tuesday of each month.

Crucial Conversation for Leaders:

Coming soon.

Crucial Conversation for Frontline Staff:

This workshop will be held every other Tuesday, the second week of the pay period. It is now a one-day, eight-hour workshop. Please log into TMS (#4643184) to register.

Unconscious Bias: This workshop will be held every other Wednesday, the second week of the pay period. It is now a one-day, eight-hour workshop. Please log into TMS (#4643178) to register.

Financial Literacy: This workshop will be held twice monthly. Training will take place via Microsoft Teams and registration is in TMS # 4621714.

DID YOU KNOW?

Francis Agyei - Medical Instrument Technician

Despite the diverse, multifaceted skills at various levels of service at Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center, some go beyond to make life less challenging at the clinical level. One such person is Randy Wesley, an Occupational Therapist at JBVAMC since 2013, inventor of the hinged tub bench.

“Whenever you design something, you seek to improve equipment that currently exists,” said Wesley. Wesley’s equipment is a tub bench for people that have difficulty stepping into a tub for bathing. Instead of stepping over the tub, an individual sits on a full-sized bench and then lifts his or her legs over the tub from a seated position. This bench is excessively large

and causes water to get outside the tub.

“I combined the concept of the lip of the tub being able to support a person and the risks of water getting outside of the tub,” explained Wesley. “Hence the hinged tub bench. The hinged tub bench rests on the lip of a tub. The [person] sits on it, slides over, raises the platform, closes the curtain, and then bathes.

“Thanks to the Technology Transfer Program at the JBVAMC, the Advanced Platform Technology center in Cleveland, we tested a prototype. The VA was granted the patent US/11,647,869 with me as the inventor.”

Kudos Randy!

JESSE BROWN VAMC | OT improves equipment

Randy Wesley - Occupational Therapist

I have been an occupational therapist at Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center since 2013. I am the inventor of the hinged tub bench. Whenever you design something, you seek to improve equipment that currently exists.

The current equipment is a tub bench for people who have difficulty stepping into a tub for bathing. Instead of stepping over the tub they sit on a full-sized bench and then lift their legs over the tub from a seated position. This bench is excessively large and causes water to get outside the tub.

A Veteran told me that he was getting into the tub by sitting on the lip of the tub and swinging his legs over. While that technique is unsafe, it gave me the idea that the lip of the tub could support a person’s weight. I combined the concept of the lip of the tub being able to support a person and the dissatisfaction/risks of water getting outside of the tub. Hence the hinged tub bench. The tub bench rests on the lip of a tub. The user sits on it, slides over, raises the platform, closes the curtain, and then bathes.

I didn’t know what to do with my idea, so I found out that the VA has a program for developing inventions from VA staff members called the Technology Transfer Program. They filed a patent

application for me. The technology transfer team liked the idea and put me in contact with engineers from the Advanced Platform Technology center in Cleveland. Of course, this was during COVID-19 lockdown, so our collaboration was done using video conferencing.

We developed and tested a

prototype and Veterans have been rating it favorably. The VA was granted the patent US/11,647,869 with me as the inventor. My goal is to get it licensed so that this is beneficial for Veterans across the country.



A tub bench for people who have difficulty stepping into a tub for bathing.

Photo by Randy Wesley

VA Technology Transfer Program | Unlocking Innovation for Veterans

Jessica Gardner - Research Health Science Specialist

Dr. Rebecca Holmes - Field Technology

The Department of Veterans Affairs employs more than 375,000 people, including some of the nation's most innovative minds.

VA employees work with Veterans every day and understand their needs, common struggles, and triumphs. If an individual believes he or she has developed an innovative idea that impacts patient outcomes, assists VA staff in caring for veterans, or that helps staff perform their jobs more safely, the Technology Transfer Program provides a gateway for transforming those ideas into impactful products.

TTP has experts to evaluate each idea that is submitted and guides a person through the technology transfer process, including prototype development through TTAP, intellectual property protection, and licensing to industry partners. TTAP helps VA employees bring their ideas to life through three prototyping facilities across the U.S. These include the Human Engineering Research Laboratories in Pittsburgh, the Minneapolis Adaptive Design & Engineering Program,



The prosthetic hook mouse, a computer mouse designed specifically for people who use prosthetic hooks to make a traditional mouse usable.

Courtesy photo

and the Cleveland Veterans Engineering Health Innovations Center.

Some examples of VA-developed technologies include:

- Hinged bathtub transfer bench developed by Randall Wesley, an occupational therapist at Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center.
- The Habit Camera helps people monitor their skin in parts of the body that are difficult to see, such as their backsides and the bottoms of their feet.
- Prosthetic hook mouse, a computer mouse designed specifically for people who use prosthetic hooks to make a traditional mouse usable

The benefits of working with TTP are numerous:

- Make an impact: Contribute directly to the betterment of Veterans' lives by translating the ideas into tangible solutions.
- Access to resources: TTP has access to experts, researchers, and contact with industry leaders, offering guidance and support throughout the technology transfer process.
- Individuals can protect their intellectual property: leverage expertise in intellectual property



The Habit Camera helps people monitor their skin in parts of the body that are difficult to see.

Courtesy photo

ty rights, and patenting to safeguard a person's ideas.

- Royalty distributions: If an individual's idea results in a licensed product and royalties are received, the VA policy ensures royalties are split equally between the VA inventor(s) and the inventor(s) home VAMC.

Frontline employees such as nurses, occupational therapists, and prosthetists have a unique perspective when it comes to Veteran needs and hold huge potential to shape the future of Veteran care. Together, VA employees can make a lasting impact on the lives of those who have selflessly served the nation.

For more information or questions about getting started, contact Rebecca Holmes, the field technology transfer specialist, in Illinois by emailing Rebecca.Holmes@va.gov.

ICARE Award honors outstanding staff members

Lacretia Henderson - Administrative Officer

The Jesse Brown Veteran Medical Center, honors outstanding staff members monthly with an ICARE Award.

These awards are given to seven individuals nominated by their peers and submitted to the Employee Recognition Taskforce for review. Jesse Brown aims to recognize and appreciate its staffs hard work and dedication.

After the submission of a nomination, a unique identification number is assigned to each nominee. The Jesse Brown team then casts their votes for nominees in all seven ICARE value categories: advocacy, commitment, excellence, integrity, respect, and employee of

the month. The employee who garners the most votes in each category will be declared the winner. The victor will be rewarded with a

tograph featured on the first floor of the Damen building.

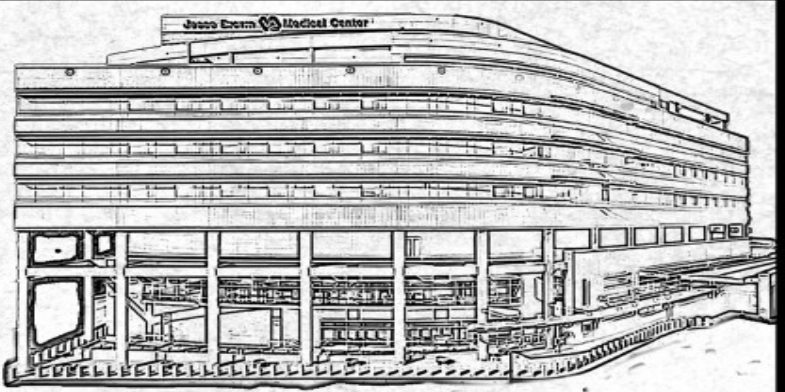
Individuals can visit the Jesse Brown rockstars on the first floor to view the award recipients. The ICARE awards for May have been awarded to the following outstanding individuals: Jennifer Etheridge, clinical dietitian, for Advocacy; David Lewis, food service, for Commitment; Michael Dozian, for Excellence; Kristen Deshida, dietitian, for Integrity; Jeannetta Harris, program support assistant, for Respect; and Angela Carter, health technician, for Employee of the Month.

These winners have demonstrated exemplary qualities in their respective fields, and the Jesse Brown team is proud to recognize their achievements.





range of gifts, including monetary compensation, a certificate of appreciation, a designated parking space, paid time off, attendance at an award ceremony, and their pho-

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**Jesse Brown
VA Medical Center**

SCAN ME



CFC campaign begins for federal employees

There are many fundraising efforts out there, so why give through the @USOPM CFC?
Four great reasons that you can:

- Give through payroll deductions
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- Give happy to people and communities in need

Why give through the CFC...

Give through
**PAYROLL
DEDUCTION**



Give to
**MULTIPLE
CHARITIES**



Give together for
**GREATER
IMPACT**




GIVE HAPPY

JBVAMC celebrates Women's Equality Day

Compiled by Catrina Francis - Public Affairs Officer

On Aug. 23, Jesse Brown Veteran Affairs Medical Center celebrated Women's Equality Day in the Prescription Room. This year's theme is "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality." Allison Hyzy demonstrated how to make healthy and quick recipes. Dr. Hema Krishna explained the benefits of healthy eating, exercising, maintaining a healthy BMI, among other things that will lead to decreasing the chances of having a heart attack or heart disease. The program ended with Rochelle Crump, an Army Veteran, who talked about her time in the military and the problems she's encountered in the workplace as a woman. She told attendees that the fight for equality isn't over.

Women's Equality Day is Aug. 26, and the nation will celebrate its 52nd anniversary. This date was designated by Congress in 1971. Aug. 26 was selected because of its significance of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote. This year will be the 103rd anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.



Jesse Brown employees sit at information tables during the medical center's Women's Equality Day observance in the Prescription Room Aug. 23.

Photos by Derrick Matthew

For women to receive equal pay, it would again take an act, which was passed June 10, 1963. The Equal Pay Act said it was illegal to pay women lower rates for the same job strictly based on their sex.

There were two court cases in the 1970s, which not only strengthened the Equal Pay Act, but the cases would also define what it meant.

I still wonder if there is a disparity between men and women in the workforce. Are women still being treated as second-class citizens? The answer isn't a simple yes or no, because I'm often told I have the same opportunities and equality as my male counterparts. However, there is a part of me that believes I'm still not totally equal or have the same opportunities.

The gender pay gap – the difference between the earnings of men and women – has barely closed in the United States in the

past two decades, according to the Pew Research Center. In 2022, American women typically earned 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. That was about the same as in 2002, when they earned 80 cents to the dollar. The slow pace at which the gender pay gap has narrowed this century contrasts sharply with the progress in the preceding two decades: In 1982, women earned just 65 cents to each dollar earned by men.

Although those numbers are disheartening, some of the gap is attributed to the jobs women are working. Women are more likely than men to become teachers, and teachers are paid less than other college graduates. In addition, a woman's choice to start a family is a factor in the gender gap. Once a woman decides to have a family, she might work less hours during her pregnancy and take time off after giving birth. If she decided to take a few years off, doing so will

also widen the gap.

Taking time away from the workforce or working fewer hours are more common for mothers than fathers and hurts earnings. The American Association of University Women found that 10 years after graduation, 23% of mothers were out of the workforce, and 17% worked part time. Among fathers, only 1% were out of the workforce, and only 2% worked part time.

Although women are CEOs, judges, and vice president of the United States, we still have many strides to make. However, all of this has made me optimistic about the future. If men continue to support us and remain our ally, I know my two daughters have a fighting chance of being seen equal to men in the workforce, and maybe we will no longer need an act or amendment to treat women equal to men.



On July 29, employees from the Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center participated Chicago's annual Fiesta Del Sol's four-day family friendly Latino festival. Fiesta Del Sol, located in the heart of Pilsen, spans an eight-block space down Cermak Road with more than 100 booths showcasing some of the best tacos, tamales, and tostadas. JB was on hand to provide information about the medical center for Veterans who attended the festival.

Photos by Kenny Jones

Union Update



AFGE

American Federation of Government Employees Local 789, representing professional federal workers, held a Membership Benefits Fair July 24 in the Prescription Room. Assistant Medical Center Director Ryan Landi stopped by to talk with AFGE members. Attendees learned about worker rights and the benefits of union membership.

AFGE ratified a new contract. AFGE's new collective bargaining agreement rolls over and strengthens worker rights in representation, safety, and changes to working conditions.

For more information about benefits for AFGE members, contact Jared Bush at jbush@benefitarchitects.com.

For more information about the contract, individual rights, or how to become a member, contact AFGE Local 789 at (262) 358-9992, afge0789@gmail.com or visit room 6412 in the Damen building Wednesdays and Thursdays.

AFGE Holds Membership Drive



(Center) Ryan Landi, the Jesse Brown Veteran Affairs Medical Center Assistant Medical Center Director, is shown with members of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 789 during a membership drive July 24 in JBVAMC's Prescription Room.

*Photo courtesy of
AFGE*