

# Jesse Brown Pulse



Dr. Hazel Johnson-Brown as a Brigadier General, circa 1979

## JESSE BROWN VA SALUTES

**Brigadier General Dr. Hazel Johnson-Brown was born on October 10, 1927 in West Chester, Pennsylvania to Clarence L. Johnson Sr. and Garnett Henley Johnson.**

**She was an exceptional student but was denied admission to Chester County Hospital School of Nursing due to racial discrimination. She was accepted into the Harlem School of Nursing in 1947 and entered the Army Nurse Corps in 1955. While working at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, she became an exemplary surgical nurse and trained other nurses on their way to Vietnam.**

**In 1979, she was promoted to Brigadier General and Army Nurse Corps Chief. Not only was she the first black woman General, but also the first to hold an earned doctorate.**

**According to the Brigadier General, "Race is an incidence of birth. I hope the criterion for selection did not include race but competence." She proclaimed that she was never a "quiet dissenter" when it came to slights she suffered as a black woman, both in and out of uniform.**

**The Brigadier General served honorably from 1955-1983 and was awarded distinguished medals, including the Army Distinguished Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and the Army Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf cluster.**

**She was also awarded Army Nurse of the Year twice. After the Brigadier General retired from the Army in 1983 she headed the American Nurses Association's government relations unit as well as the George Mason University's Center for Health Policy as a professor.**

**At 63, she also volunteered in support of Operation Desert Storm. She spent her remaining years in Wilmington, Delaware, with her sisters, Marie and Gloria, and transitioned on August 5, 2011 at the age of 83. She was laid to rest at the Arlington National Cemetery.**

**Commissioned by the Jesse Brown 4 Black Lives Taskforce, 2023.**

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



**Dr. Clifford Smith**  
Director,  
Jesse  
Brown VA  
Medical  
Center

Happy New Year! As we begin 2024, I know some of you have made resolutions for the new year. You may have vowed to lose weight, eat healthy, or even stop smoking.

According to Forbes Health/One Poll survey, the average resolution lasts just about 3.74 months. Only 8% tend to stick with their goals for a month, while 22% last two months, 22% last three months, and 13% last four months.

When looking at those numbers it seems a little disheartening that most don't stick to a plan of just being healthier. For some the goal might be too large while for others they really aren't ready for a change.

However, here at Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center the Employee Whole Health program is available to assist employees. Employee Whole Health is part of the larger Whole Health Program which also assists Veterans in living a healthy lifestyle. Whole Health empowers and equips people to take charge of their health and well-being and live their life to the fullest. JBVAMC has information available online for its Employee Whole Health program at:

- SharePoint site (internal): <https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VHAOPCC/ewh>
- Website (external): [www.va.gov/wholehealth/professional-resources/ewh-resources.asp](http://www.va.gov/wholehealth/professional-resources/ewh-resources.asp)

The program offers an early morning boot camp Monday through Friday from 5 to 6 a.m. in the Wellness Center; a VISN 12 mindfulness break Monday through Friday from noon to 12:15 p.m. on Teams; intro to mindfulness meditation Wednesdays from 4 to 5 p.m. in the Brig. Gen. Dr. Hazel Johnson-Brown conference room, formerly known as the Prescription Room; mid-day reset yoga Monday and Friday from noon to 12:20 p.m. on Teams as well as other programs. Health coaching, nutrition counseling, and tobacco cessation support are

available by appointment by calling (312) 569-5361 or by emailing Shari Pollack at [shari.pollack2@va.gov](mailto:shari.pollack2@va.gov).

Another resource available to employees is the Employee Assistance Program. EAP is available to employees and their immediate family because sometimes problems at home may affect your work life. EAP is a voluntary and confidential program that helps employees work through various life challenges that may adversely affect job performance, health, and personal well-being. Services can include assessments, counseling and referrals for additional services. For more information on EAP, call (800) 222-0364 or (888) 262-7848 for hearing impaired. Use Jesse Brown VAMC to identify the agency. Telephone assistance is available 24/7. EAP is also available online at [www.FOH4You.com](http://www.FOH4You.com) and scroll down and click enter site to access information and resources.

As you continue to work on your goals for the new year, don't become discouraged. Take each day one step at a time and create attainable goals. Doing so will make sure you stick to your goals, and you will exceed that 13% who continue with their goals beyond four months. Good luck and I wish you continued success!

## 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.



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## NEWSLETTER STAFF

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### Editor-in-Chief

Catrina Francis, Public Affairs Officer

## CONTACT

This newsletter is for you, so if you have a story you want to share, please reach out to [CHSPA0@va.gov](mailto:CHSPA0@va.gov).

## 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.

## COMMUNICATION TASKFORCE MEMBERS

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Jessica Gardner	Catrina Francis
Tenena Soro	Vanita Williams
Lacretia Henderson	Febin Mattahil
Kristen Lake	Cynthia Robertson
Helen Morrison	Shari Pollack

# JB renames medical center to honor first African-American Army general

Vanita Williams – Social Worker

On Feb. 1, Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center kicked-off Black History Month with an event honoring the first Black woman general to hold an earned doctorate degree, Brig. Gen. Dr. Hazel Johnson-Brown.

The event commissioned by the Jesse Brown 4 Black Lives taskforce aimed to recognize the excellence and accomplishments of Hazel Johnson-Brown by renaming the Prescription Conference Room on the second floor of the Damen building in her honor.

Johnson-Brown was born Oct. 10, 1927, in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and excelled in her studies. Despite racial discrimination, which barred her from attending the local school of nursing, she graduated with her nursing degree from the Harlem School of Nursing in 1947. Johnson-Brown would go on serve in

the Army Nurse Corp from 1955 to 1983, where she impacted the lives of countless individuals.

Following her retirement from the Army Nurse Corp, Johnson-Brown continued her life of service as the head of the Government Relations Unit within the American Nurses Association's and as a professor for Health Policy at the George Mason University Center in Fairfax, County, Virginia. It was noted throughout the event by various speakers that Johnson-Brown never shied away from "reaching back and



(Above right front row) Members of the Brig. Gen. Dr. Hazel Johnson-Brown's family pose with members of JB4BL during the ribbon cutting conference room renaming ceremony Feb. 1.

(Above) (Center) Dr. Clifford Smith, the JBVAMC Acting Medical Center Director, cuts the ribbon for the conference renaming ceremony Feb. 1.

Photos by Kenny Jones

sharing her wisdom."

In attendance were former mentees of Johnson-Brown as well as surviving family members who shared their experiences. Joanne Johnson-Thompson, niece of Johnson-Brown succinctly stated, "She was instrumental in helping to open doors for so many women and especially women of color, so on behalf of the entire Johnson family, I again say thank you."

Upon her death Aug. 10, 2011, Johnson-Brown was laid to rest at the Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

During the ceremony, Chaplain Derrick Harris said, "Her life has become a torch, shining a light on a new era of dignity and opportunity. We thank you for raising up a new generation of leaders. We'll pick up the torch the (Brig.) Gen. Johnson-Brown carried."

# Jesse Brown completes annual PIT count in Chicago

Catrina Francis – Public Affairs Officer

Each year Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center conducts a Point-in-Time count, which is a collaboration done all over the United States. The PIT count is done to get an accurate snapshot of the homeless population, not just Veterans, but all the homeless population.

The PIT count is an effort led by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to estimate the number of Ameri-

cans, including Veterans, without safe, stable housing, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. It is one of the tools used to assess progress each year toward VA's priority goal of ending homelessness among Veterans. The count is among the ways VA estimates the homeless population to direct resources based on need.

Cynthia King-Myers, a JBVAMC Social Worker, said the PIT count helps the medical center gear funds,

identify services or gaps in services to apply for funding. She added that the count is done each year the third Thursday in January because it's normally the coldest day of the year, however, this year that was the total opposite. She hopes this doesn't affect this year's numbers.

homeless Veterans and their families find and sustain permanent housing and access the health care, mental health treatment, substance use counseling, and other supports necessary to help them in their recovery process and their ability to maintain housing in the community.



Fifteen JBVAMC Veterans (10 from the ED and five Inpatient), HUD-VASH volunteered Jan. 18 for the annual PIT count.

*Photo courtesy of Christina Maldonado*

“We receive federal funding through our homeless program, our HUD — HUD-VASH, VA supportive housing,” explained King-Myers.

VA Supportive Housing program, HUD-VASH, is a collaborative program which pairs HUD's Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance with VA case management and supportive services for homeless Veterans, according to HUD-VASH. These services are designed to help

“We collaborate with HUD, and we receive vouchers to house Veterans, it's like a regular Section 8 voucher,” said King-Myers.

If King-Myers and her volunteers identify a homeless Veteran there is a virtual dispatch team which consists of a homeless program coordinator, Veterans Benefit Administrator representative, and one of their homeless program staff who can conduct a dispatch to find placement.

King-Myers pointed out that volunteers along with other social workers use a map that is split up into certain sections of Chicago with the Chicago Police Department count those who are homeless in the city.

“I had a staff of 11 (who) went out and we get a piece of the map, and we have surveys, and we (ask) if they (are) willing to participate in the survey (and) let tell them (tell) their answers. (This) will be used to help gain more funding services for (those who are) homeless,” said King-Myers.

The data that was collected during last month's count will become available later this year.

# Jesse Brown VAMC Richie doesn't let hearing impairment hinder position in JBVAMC's Reproduction

*Cynthia Robertson - Administrative Officer*

Some people are new to Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center, while others like Marcus Richie have been working at JBVAMC since 1996.

Richie initially started at Lakeside VA Medical Clinic in 1996 with the Veterans Canteen Service and later was hired as a mail room clerk in 1999 in the Logistics Department. Now, Richie works in Reproduction as a reproduction technician.

Richie thoroughly enjoys his work at the VA because he finds joy in assisting people daily, and seeing their smiles and satisfaction with the services he provides. He would like for everyone to know that he has a hearing impairment and that he can read lips very well, and it does not affect the work he performs for the VA.

During his tenure at Jesse Brown VAMC, Richie has been recognized with an ICARE award, which showcased his dedication and commitment to his

job. He provides service to various locations, including JBVAMC Community-Based Outpatient Clinics Auburn Gresham, Crown Point, Indiana, Lakeside, the Harrison building, and he also provides services to Hines VAMC.

Richie provides services such as creating booklets, packets, pamphlets/brochures, postcards, lamination, business cards (special request only), small posters, large posters

(supervisor's discretion), and fixing Ricoh printers, copy/fax machines. Despite facing obstacles and limitations, Richie has managed to overcome them while working at the VA. He extends his support to all staff members at JBVAMC, ranging from medical support staff to executive leadership team members. Marcus always responds promptly to every request and does so with a smile on his face, exemplifying his positive attitude and willingness to assist. Overall, Marcus Richie is an outstanding member of the Jesse Brown VAMC team and truly embodies the essence of being one of Jesse Brown's great employees.

Valerie Reid, the JBVAMC Chief of Education, has worked with Richie on numerous occasions.

"Despite facing limitations, Marcus Richie has consistently demonstrated unwavering dedication and resilience," said Reid. "Serving as a pillar of support for colleagues and Veterans, Marcus never hesitates to step up when needed. His refusal to say no and consistent willingness to go above and beyond, exemplify a commitment to ensuring everyone has the necessary support for success. In overcoming barriers, Marcus not only showcases admirable perseverance, but also contributes significantly to a positive and inclusive work environment."



Marcus Richie works on a reproduction project for the JBVAMC Education Department. Richie is hearing impaired and has not let that prevent him from working on reproduction tasks.

*Photo by Cynthia Robertson*

# Get cooking! ‘Monthly Healthy Teaching Kitchen Live’

Jessica Gardner – Research Health Science Specialist

Healthy eating can be tough, especially during the winter months. As a new year begins, individuals often make new resolutions, which may include focusing on eating nutritious meals.

Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center offers several resources to make healthy eating easier and fun for Veterans and employees.

Allison Hyzy, a Clinical Dietitian and the Healthy Teaching Kitchen program coordinator at JBVAMC, leads weekly and monthly cooking classes where people can learn how to prepare delicious healthy meals. Fun fact — Hyzy is a classically trained baking and pastry chef and has experience working at a Michelin star restaurant.

Veterans and employees can join Hyzy and her registered dietitian colleague, Stephen Lovell, for the monthly “Healthy Teaching Kitchen Live” on the Chicago VA Medical Center Facebook page. Each month has a theme, January focused on kidney friendly recipes — including garam masala broccoli salad with jalapeno and cilantro, fennel and arugula salad, and herb celery salad for two. Veterans can also attend virtual weekly cook-along classes where recipes are emailed ahead of time so individuals can be prepared with

the needed ingredients. Hyzy focuses on using cost conscious and seasonally available ingredients for the featured recipes — estimated nutritional information is also provided for each dish. Hyzy also mentioned she is a part of the national work group which is writing a new cookbook focused on low-cost recipes.

If an individual knows a Veteran who may be interested in weekly or monthly cooking classes, reach out



to Allison Hyzy on Microsoft Teams or email her at [Allison.Hyzy@va.gov](mailto:Allison.Hyzy@va.gov).

## Apple, date, and kale salad

Recipe by: Allison Hyzy, RD, LDN  
Yield: six servings  
Serving Size: about 2 cups

## Ingredients:

- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup or honey
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon coarse kosher salt
- Pinch black pepper
- one large bunch or two medium bunches of kale (about 14-16 ounces total), ribs removed, leaves torn into bite size pieces
- two apples, cored and large diced
- 1 cup dates, pitted and sliced lengthwise
- one medium avocado, pit removed, large diced
- ¼ cup + 2 tablespoons toasted walnuts
- ¼ cup + 2 tablespoons pepitas

## Preparation:

- Add the lemon juice, oil, syrup, mustard, salt, and pepper to a large mixing bowl. Whisk well to create the dressing.
- Add the kale to the bowl. Use your hands to toss the kale in the dressing, firmly squeeze, and massage the leaves.
- Add the apple, dates, avocado, walnuts, and pepitas to the bowl and toss to mix.

## Estimated per serving:

352 Calories, 40.1 g carbohydrate, 21.6 g fat, 2.8 g saturated fat, 7.1 g protein, 9.4 g fiber, 227.6 mg sodium

## Tip:

- If pepitas aren’t available, sunflower seeds make a great substitute.

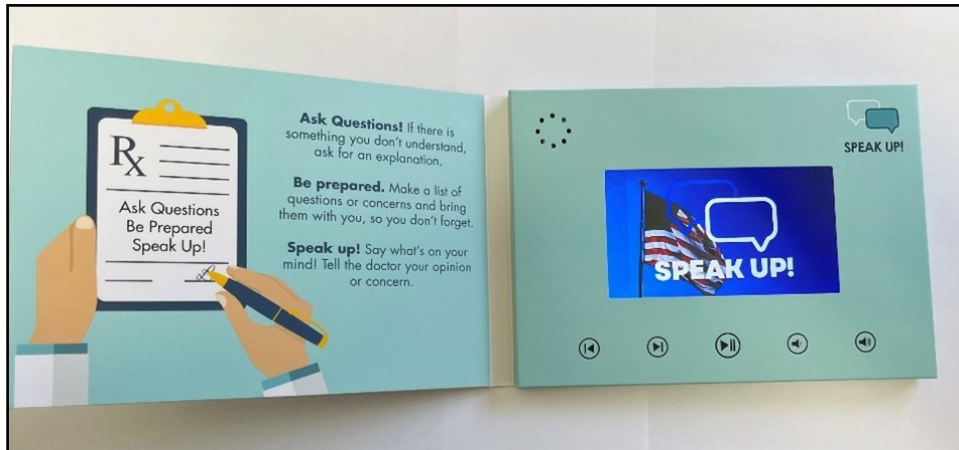
# 'Speak Up!' video: Helping patients have a more fulfilling medical visit

Jessica Gardner, Research Health Science Specialist

Research shows patients who actively communicate during medical visits have better health outcomes such as: More personalized treatment plans, patient satisfaction, improved functional status, and adherence to treatment plan.

A 10-minute patient education video, "Speak Up!" was developed to help patients use active communication in their medical visits by demonstrating three patient scenarios and reinforcing the importance of being prepared, asking questions, expressing concerns, and making requests.

The "Speak Up!" video was developed through a Veterans Affairs Health Service Research and Development funded study, "Empowering Veterans to Actively Communicate and Engage in



"The Speak Up!" video automatically begins playing once opened

Shared Decision Making in Medical Visits, a randomized controlled trial" where the effectiveness and implementation of the video is being tested simultaneously. Though the study focuses on patients with Type 2 diabetes, these active communication behaviors are universal to all patients and any patient could

benefit from watching the video. Previous studies showed better outcomes (e.g., self-efficacy was higher and hemoglobin A1c was lower) in patients who watched the "Speak Up!" video compared to those who did not.

Implementation and measuring the effectiveness of the "Speak Up!" video is continuing and is

currently being conducted in primary care clinics at Jesse Brown VAMC, Crown Point, Indiana, Community-Based Outpatient Clinic, and Hines VAMC during routine primary care visits. Implementation has been championed by licensed practical nurses and registered nurses at each site where they offer the video to patients before they meet with their doctor by giving them a video card to watch the video or by sending them a link to the video via MyHealthyVet. Patients give favorable reviews of the video and have described it as "a class in assertiveness" and that it "gives you the confidence to speak up to your doctor."

For questions about the "Speak Up!" video, please contact Dr. Howard Gordon by email at [howard.gordon2@va.gov](mailto:howard.gordon2@va.gov), staff physician and researcher at JBVAMC. Watch the "Speak Up!" video by scanning the QR code below or by visiting <https://bcove.video/3jEBVS2>.





American Federation of Government Employees Local 789 represents professional positions at Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Did you know that as an AFGE member you are entitled to have a union representative accompany you if you are asked any questions by a manager or have a formal meeting with management? In this circumstance, inform management you would like a union steward present and contact us. For more information about AFGE including membership and your rights, contact Local 789 by email at [afge0789@gmail.com](mailto:afge0789@gmail.com) or by calling (312) 569-7078 and leave a message. Our office is located in the Damen Building room 6412 and is staffed Thursdays.

# Jesse Brown welcomes Nala



Nala is Jesse Brown's new facility dog. She is an Irish Wolf Hound/Poodle Mix and comes to us from an organization in Peoria, Illinois, called Paws Giving Independence. Her hobbies are playing fetch, having wild zoomies, imitating grasshoppers, and shopping for new sweaters. Her job here at JB is to make the Veterans and staff feel comfortable, safe and happy. She is looking forward to meeting each and everyone of you.

*Photos by Kenny Jones*

