

## Veteran makes friends with VA secretary during visit

One-on-one time with the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs is in high demand around veteran communities, but a resident of the Eagle's Nest Community Living Center (CLC) has had the opportunity, held a detailed conversation and realized a common bond. Both Vietnam veterans were part of an elite group of Soldiers: Army Airborne Rangers.



Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, sits with Eagle's Nest CLC resident, McDonald Valentine during the secretary's brief visit to Atlanta Feb. 25.

McDonald Valentine has been a resident for 10 months and has been sharing his experiences and rich history with patients, staff and residents the entire time.

"I was very glad to meet the Secretary," Valentine explained. "During the discussion, we realized we both attended school in Hawaii, are Rangers and spent time in Vietnam."

Secretary Eric K. Shinseki was in Atlanta Feb. 25 to attend a VBA leadership workshop. Following the meeting, the Secretary vis-

ited the Atlanta VA Regional Office, where he received a briefing by the medical center and regional office directors.

After the meeting, Valentine found himself in the right place at the right time for a brief trip down memory lane with Secretary Shinseki.

While this was their first meeting, Valentine felt he already knew Secretary Shinseki. "We all know him as the great Soldier and great leader. He called the situations the way he saw them and he was right and he will continue to do what's right for veterans also."

Valentine originally thought he would join the Naval Academy but ended up graduating from the University of Tennessee with an ROTC commissioning as an Army second lieutenant. He served as an airborne Ranger infantry officer and Vietnamese Ranger advisor. Later, he commanded the 317th Military History Detachment and became a military historian. He created a photographic record of some of his encounters in a novel titled, *Black Tigers*.

The retired lieutenant colonel was born in 1945 to a 24-year-old U.S. Navy aviation machinist mate, who was part of the crew of the USS *Hornet* when it was sunk at the Battle of Santa Cruz in October 1942 and a mother of English, Choctaw and German descent.

While his dad's career was injected with a famous battle, Valentine's meeting with the Secretary may add an interesting chapter to his Ranger memories.

## Briefly ...

### Flu shots still available for staff, patients

The latest Center of Disease Control (CDC) report shows there is widespread flu in the Atlanta area and the flu medicine used in the past - Tamiflu - is not working against the type of virus predominately treated here.

Therefore, it's even more important for VAMC employees to get their flu shot! If you do, you will also receive an Atlanta T-Shirt. Flu shots are given in Occupational Health, Room 1B160.

For more information, call Dr. Michael B. Miller at ext. 3221.

Patients should see their primary care physician prior to March 31 for vaccination information.



### Nursing symposium planned

The second annual Nursing Assistant Symposium, featuring various VAMC presenters, is scheduled for April 17 from 7:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. in Room 9C131.

The day-long symposium is designed to enhance the nursing assistant's training. Breakfast and lunch will be served.

For more information, call Lamarr Jeffries at ext. 6875.

### Free coffee ready for patients

The Voluntary Service staff provides a coffee cart service for patients and their family members only.

Medical center employees may purchase their cup of java at the Canteen or the Mocha Delights coffee shop.

For more information, call Mary Lou Pittman at ext. 7728.



# From the Director's Desk ...

## Atlanta VA Medical Center widens communication lines

Dear Patients, Family, Visitors and Staff:

Welcome to the March issue of the Atlanta VA Medical Center Newsletter

We strive to continuously improve our ability to provide up-to-date information on the many important initiatives, services and changes occurring at the medical center. In an effort to enhance information flow and maintain effective communication, the Public Affairs Office is undergoing several important changes.

Most recently the office has hired a new Public Affairs Assistant. I am pleased to welcome Mrs. Robin Brown. Mrs. Brown joins us from Fort McPherson where she served as editor for three years following a twenty-one year enlistment in the Army. Throughout that time she held various assignments as a print and broadcast journalist. Mrs. Brown will be responsible for expanding our internal information program and providing support to Mr. Greg Kendall, Public Affairs Officer.

Another exciting change is our revised newsletter. The newsletter will now be a four-page spread available in hard-copy or electronically via email or on our website. Additionally, in the coming months we will introduce a full-color magazine packed with VA news, features and staff recognitions.

This month's issue features two Eagle's Nest CLC residents. Mr. Valentine is a veteran who found a service connection with our new Secretary of Veteran Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki during his recent visit to Atlanta. The other Mr.

Goddard received a personal visit from Lt. Gen. Thomas G. Miller, Commander of First Army at Fort Gillem. The issue concludes with a feature on our Black History Month guest speaker, Dr. David Satcher, former U.S. Surgeon General and Director of the Centers for Disease Control.



James A. Clark

Atlanta VAMC leadership truly values our ability to reach and communicate with our entire VA family. We are committed to maintaining open communication with the widest possible audience. I hope that you will enjoy the changes and new features that we have planned.

We are always interested to hear your feedback, so if you have any comments or would like us to cover a particular topic in a future newsletter, please e-mail us at [robin.brown5@va.gov](mailto:robin.brown5@va.gov).

Best wishes,  
James A. Clark, MPA  
Director

## VISN 7 plans virtual Town Hall Meeting in April concerning patient care

The VA Southeast Network is hosting a second virtual Town Hall Meeting April 20 at 1 p.m. in the Pete Wheeler Auditorium to continue discussing the transformation to Patient/Family Centered Care (PFCC).

Veterans and VAMC staff are invited to attend the meeting hosted by the VISN 7 network director, Mr. Larry Biro.

The goal of Patient/Family Centered Care is to provide care that considers each patient's cultural traditions, personal preferences and values, family situations and lifestyles.

This journey began in September

with a hospital-wide virtual town hall featuring Mr. Biro and Mr. William Feely, Deputy Under Secretary for Health.

"We are in full swing with implementing the Patient and Family Centered Care initiative," said Anika K. Doucette, Customer Service Program Manager. "We began by identifying the best ways to implement those practices. The 9th floor now serves as the inpatient PFCC pilot area. The medical center staff has provided patients and their families internet use to help them find more information about their diagnosis and medications. The

computers also allow patients to stay in contact with others during their inpatient stay."

There are also plans in the works on the 9th floor to have patients select their meal choices from a menu during breakfast, lunch and dinner.

In the outpatient arena, Doucette explained that staff teams -- which will include a representative who receives input from patients -- will focus their efforts on improving care delivery.

Doucette said, "The medical center leadership wants to make sure patients have a say and provide feedback on the care they receive."

# Former Surgeon General challenges nation to include all in quality health care, change behavior

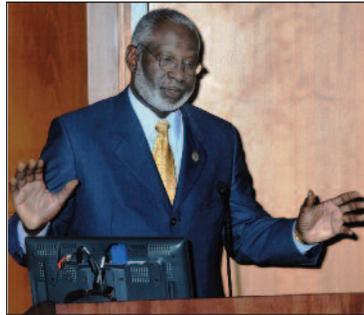
The Pete Wheeler Auditorium was the place to be Feb. 25 if you wanted to hear the wisdom from a former U.S. surgeon general and current director of the Satcher Health Leadership Institute and Center for Excellence on Health Disparities Poussaint-Satcher-Cosby Chair in Mental Health at Morehouse School of Medicine.

Those in attendance of the final Black History celebration honoring the past contributions of African Americans came to hear from a man who has dedicated his life to eliminating health disparities and promoting optimal health outcomes for all Americans.

Dr. David Satcher stood tall in his dark-colored suit to speak confidently and with a touch of humor concerning this year's theme of Honoring History and Focusing Forward. He said it is still important during Black History Month, but not just in February, to focus on the fact that the system is not equal. He said he is in pursuit of "getting the nation to commit to the elimination of a disparity in quality health care."

"Eliminating the disparity in health care is a must," Satcher said referring to a recent study revealing that if disparities in health care had been eliminated over the last century, there would have been "83,500 fewer African-American deaths in the year 2000.

"There could have been 22,000 fewer deaths from diabetes, and 5,000 less African American babies to die, if



Dr. David Satcher

African Americans had the same mortality rate as Caucasians.

"The issue is people dying unnecessarily and prematurely," he said. "That's what we're trying to reverse. Each one of us has a role to play in changing history."

Healthcare is not the only concern in living to a ripe old age. One might think genetics is the most important of factors. Not so, said Satcher. "Everyone has unique biogenetics and some diseases are predisposed. However, it doesn't mean you will get the disease."

"We also need to improve the lifestyle that people have," Satcher said which includes improving behavior or lifestyle by increased physical activity, eating better, avoiding toxins in your physical environment and responsible behavior in the social environment.

Lifestyle is a major concern, especially since statistics show only 20 percent of America get the recommended 30 minutes of physical exercise at least five days a week, relayed Satcher. "Regular physical activity is underrated. I've been a long distance runner for 35 years; the last event I entered was a Marine marathon covering 26.2 miles." The folks in the auditorium might not be up to that challenge, but Satcher encouraged them to at least take up dancing, try jogging, join a cycling course or even consider rowing as a form of exercise.

In addition to the exercise regimen Satcher suggested you increase portions of fruits and vegetables and eat less "salts, meats and sweets."

## Resident gets "heart" replacement from local general Evangelist plans to head back out on soul-winning trail

"I believe someone must have stolen my heart," explained a gentleman resident of the Eagle's Nest Community Living Center.

Until Feb. 25, his chest would rise and fall from the natural flow of oxygen, but his heart was missing. Sounds strange I know, but it's true.

To get a first-hand account of this 86-year-old's ordeal, I made an appointment with him to learn more. On the couch in the cafeteria, I sat close to him to hear the words describing his misfortune.

His name is Earl E. Goddard. There are probably numerous stories in the universe about men losing their

hearts to women, but this isn't one of them.

Goddard's heart didn't pump blood to sustain his life, but life wasn't the same without it.

It was the Purple Heart Medal this Soldier earned during his military service in Sicily, Italy, in July 1943. No one's sure exactly when the medal disappeared, but hearing of Goddard's desire to have one, Lt. Gen. Thomas G. Miller, commander of First Army at Fort Gillem, stopped by to present him a new one. Miller met Goddard and heard of his loss during a previous event held at the medical center.

See **Goddard** on next page



Lt. Gen. Thomas G. Miller, commander of First Army, shakes hands with Earl E. Goddard, Eagle's Nest CLC resident, after presenting him with a new Purple Heart Medal.

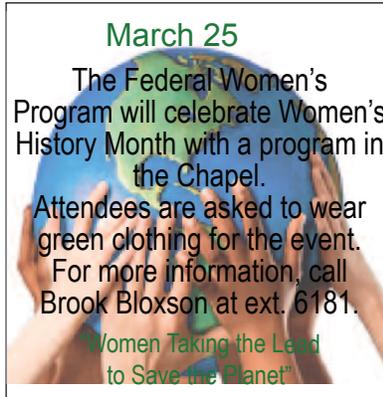
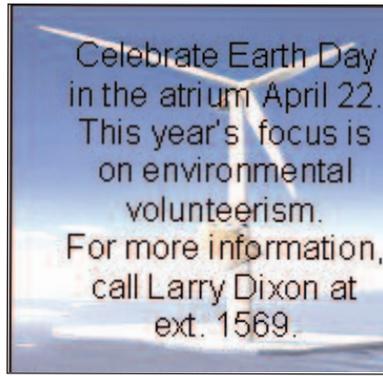
## Join in for **IDEAL** fitness

VA Medical Center employees are invited to participate in The Atlanta VAMC Fitness Mile Run/Walk March 20.

Sponsored by the 2008 Leadership Class **IDEAL** (Individuals Determined To Excel As Leaders), the ribbon cutting ceremony starts at noon in the Community Living Center breezeway followed by the first official walk. Light refreshments and giveaways will be available.

For more information, call Geraldine Moore at ext. 7602.

With March being National Nutrition Month, this is the perfect time each year to highlight the importance of good nutrition. For more information, call Betty Sellers at ext. 6834.



## Reminder

### Voluntary Leave Transfer Program –

The following are approved participants in the VLTP and are eligible to receive annual leave donations.

Atlanta Vet Center-Anita Salamon.

Logistics-Omega Dunn, Harold Bacon.

Patient Care-Lavandrious Clark, Brandy Davis.

Primary Care-Shereta Jones, Hadiyah Oluremi-McCutcheon.

Pharmacy-Sharita Reese.

To make a leave donation, call Freida Philpotts at ext. 6306 or

Marie Robinson at ext. 4376 for help completing form OF-630A.

### Dial-A-Prayer- VAMC's Chaplain Service

provides a Dial-A-Prayer service/ministry. Dial-A-Prayer is always available. If calling from an outside telephone, dial 404-321-6111, ext. 4161.



## Goddard from previous page

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"It's a good day for me to be able to do this for you," Miller told Goddard, as

he opened the standard blue case revealing the oldest military decoration in the world and the first American award made available to the common Soldier.

"My four tours to combat zones pale in comparison to even one day of the fighting you veterans did in combat," Miller expressed. "You preformed a tremendous service to this country in World War II, and we are all proud of you."

Assigned to the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg, N.C., from June 1942 until July 1945, PFC Goddard served as a pioneering infantry paratrooper, who stood up, hooked up and leaped from C-47 transport plane. He injured his right elbow, which required reconstructive surgery, and sustained shrapnel wounds in his chest and shoulder.

With extensive rehabilitation, Goddard recovered but with surgical tattoos to show for it.

The Soldier also received a Combat Infantry Badge and a Bronze Star during his three years of service.

Listening to the white-haired, granddad tell of his four-day stay in Italy didn't take long, but by story's end he was invigorated enough to move on to his favorite topics: evangelism and his wife, who he calls a "Doll."



Goddard also has a hearing loss, so as we both leaned in inquisitively to hear the other; he reflected on the 25 years he spent soul winning.

"I was so busy back then," the old salesman explained, "between my door-to-door-sales job and going out every Wednesday leading folks to the Lord, the personal time I have now to

spend with him is a blessing. Why people don't accept a higher power is beyond me. Don't they realize that those souls that refuse to accept him will ultimately have to answer to their maker.

The more he spoke, the more his own regrets surfaced. "All I can do now is pray for them, but my current wife, Mary, does," Goddard said with boldness in his tone.

"I wish I had met her 60 years ago. I would have been very good to her, just as good as she is to me now," Goddard said. He and Mary have been married for five years. She has lived with her daughter in Atlanta, since Goddard became a resident one year ago. Goddard said he looks forward to her weekly visits on Saturdays.

With his "Doll" and a new heart, Goddard says he may go back to evangelizing. "I've got plenty of time for the Lord now," he said.