Augusta Pulse

Summer 2008 For the employees and friends of the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center www.va.gov/augustaga

This Issue:

Systems Redesign Making a Positive Impact

Team River Run Augusta

Employee Honors

CHARLIE NORWOOD VAMC
AUGUSTA GEORGIA

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Aiken, SC CBOC

Athens, GA CBOC

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John S. Goldman
Associate Medical Center Director

Thomas W. Kiernan, MD
Chief of Staff

Jawel Lemons, RN, MS, FNP-C
Associate Director
Patient/Nursing Services

David Pattillo
Assistant Director

Director's Message

As we move past the mid-year mark on the calendar I am honored to share with you some of the many outstanding accomplishments that have occurred in our medical center so far this year. It has been an extremely busy time and the staff of the Charlie Norwood VA should be proud of their outstanding achievements.

We opened the Seamless Transition Center late in 2007. This unique center is dedicated to helping OIF/OEF veterans understand their benefits and integrate back into civilian life. In February 2008 our second Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) opened in Aiken, South Carolina. The clinic and staff have received many compliments from the veterans in the Aiken community.

One of our latest successes is the Fisher House. We have now received over $500,000 in donations which includes a generous gift of $250,000 from the Augusta National Golf Club and $100,000 from the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Alliance. We are now on schedule to have the ground breaking for the Fisher House in April 2009.

I am also proud to announce that Augusta Magazine recently published their list of Augusta's Best Doctors and 15 of those listed practice at the Charlie Norwood VA. Six of the physicians are located in Specialty Care, five in Surgery, three in Primary Care, and one in Geriatrics. Congratulations to this outstanding group! In addition, the Augusta Nurse of the Year for the CSRA is from the Charlie Norwood VA. This confirms once again the caliber of staff working with our veterans and the outstanding care provided.

It's easy to see why I am so proud and honored to work with an incredible team of people each day.

Rebecca J. Wiley
Director, Augusta VA Medical Center

On the cover: Members of Team River Run Augusta assist OEF/OIF service members on the Augusta Canal.

To submit articles or story ideas for possible publication, contact Janice Kennedy, (706) 823-1733 or via e-mail at Janice.Kennedy@va.gov.

P.A.L.s Make Inpatient Stay More Pleasant

Some of you may be wondering what is a PAL? The PAL Program is an initiative to help meet the needs of our veteran patients. The Patient Assistant Liaisons (PAL) consists of employees who volunteer to spend time with our veterans on the acute care inpatient units. PALs may provide a variety of different services for the patient and/ or family.

This unique group of dedicated and specially trained employees are assigned to a newly admitted veteran by a PAL leader. No PAL is assigned more than 3 patients at a time to guarantee that proper attention is given to each veteran. The PAL visits their patient within the first 24 hours of admission to ensure the patient has everything they need and also checks on them daily until they are discharged from the hospital. PALs work closely with the nursing staff and act as a friend touching base daily with the veteran to let them know that they are not forgotten. If specific issues do come up, the PAL will make sure that the charge nurse is aware of the issue and help see that it is resolved in a timely and appropriate manner. PALs have coordinated special recognitions such as birthdays and anniversaries for patients and their families. For more information on the PAL Program, contact Erica Williams, (706) 733-0188, extension 6551.

PAL David Yarbrough discusses a patient need with Nurse Manager Geri Frazey

Systems Redesign

Making A Positive Impact

One of the basics in modern health care is a fact of life known as the wait: doctor's appointments may not always begin on schedule; a person with new, troubling medical symptoms may face a two-month wait or longer for an initial appointment with the Specialist; surgical candidates may have to wait weeks until an operating room becomes available; and emergency room waits may stretch into countless hours. Even scheduled hospital admissions do not always guarantee that a bed is available, and at the end of a hospital stay, when a patient hears the welcome news, "You can go home tomorrow morning," the discharge process may not happen until late afternoon.

But wait! At the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center, these issues are being examined and addressed in a very practical initiative known as Systems Redesign. In this effort, a number of self-directed teams of healthcare professionals are collaborating to streamline processes for our patients and to address roadblocks such as those described above.

The teams are small and have an interdisciplinary membership of four to six staff members that usually include a doctor, nurse, pharmacist, unit clerk, environmental management personnel, social worker, business manager and/or other health care representatives. Because these staff work closely with the patients, they know and understand these processes best, thereby providing a valuable grassroots expertise. Equipped with firsthand knowledge and the conviction that they can make hospital processes more efficient for our veterans, each team identifies and takes ownership of a process needing improvement within their own area of patient care. Because a bottleneck in the efficiency of one process might impact everything downstream, teams sometimes include members from several departments and disciplines in recognition of that fact.

Systems Redesign is a data-driven program. It requires methodical research of a process and the analysis of statistics drawn on a daily basis. Teams meet regularly to monitor this feedback and to evaluate the findings of their research. Progress is carefully measured to ensure that specific changes will actually result in an improved process. Once a team finds an efficient solution or improvement recommendations are initiated to hospital administration and/or appropriate service line executive. Although these recommendations for improvement come from the grassroots level, hospital and service line management also play a vital role in Systems Redesign. They appoint a representative to each health care team and overall act as a conduit or facilitator in support of the teams, providing resources, equipment, or people, as necessary. They also may assist team efforts by negotiating contracts to augment innovations or even by formulating new policies, if needed.

A very small but highly enthusiastic Systems Redesign staff oversees multiple team efforts. Kim Foss has been the program coordinator since the inception in August 2007. Mr.

Systems Redesign staff left to right: David Yarbrough, Vicki Mercier and Kim Foss

Kim Foss demonstrates the "white board" to a Systems Redesign team.

Foss, formerly the business manager in Primary Care, which is the area where the forerunner of Systems Redesign began about eight years ago. Clearly he takes pleasure in the growth and energy of the program as it evolves and gathers momentum.

Mr. Foss is assisted by two staff members. David Yarborough, Systems Redesign Analyst, is relatively new to the VA. He is responsible for the creation of the excel spreadsheets needed to manage quantities of daily data as well as assisting the patient units with gathering this data. His recordkeeping provides the systems redesign teams with needed insight into the effectiveness of their ongoing efforts to find solutions. Vicki Mercier, RN, the third member of the Redesign team, holds the title of Patient Flow Coordinator. She has the hands-on job of facilitating the flow of patients through the hospital.
Systems Redesign evolved from an earlier program known as Advanced Clinic Access (ACA). ACA began with the single goal of improving healthcare services and delivery in the VA's Primary Care Outpatient Clinics throughout the nation. ACA's goal was to ensure timely appointments to Primary Care patients within 30 days for both new and established patients, with the recognition that there is always the exception for urgent needs.

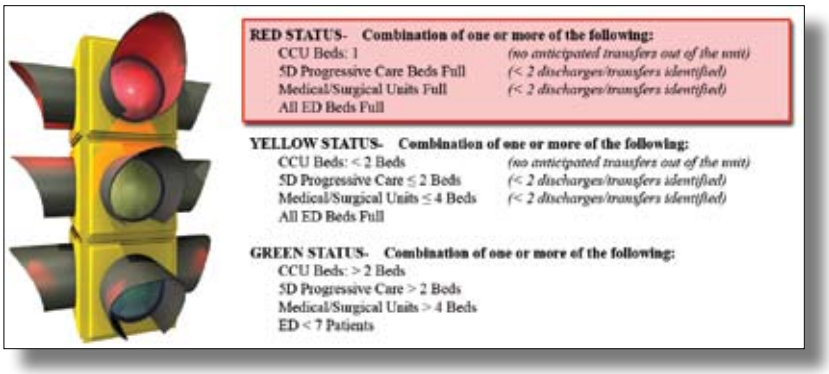
The ACA effort was successful and increased interest in this bottom up process and approach to making improvements. By the end of fiscal year 2007, ACA evolved into the far more ambitious initiative now known as Systems Redesign. The term Systems Redesign was coined to reflect the more expansive application of ACA concepts, tools and lessons learned to areas outside of Primary Care, to include medical/surgical/mental health outpatient care, emergency department, operating room, the entire continuum of inpatient care, long-term care and administrative support of the healthcare system.

Currently, Systems Redesign teams are (or have been) working on active process issues such as: Missed Opportunities, Day Before Discharge, Instant Bed

Status, Express Admissions, Daily Bed Briefing, Inpatient Flow, Phlebotomy, GI, Dermatology, and Emergency Department.

The Phlebotomy Team is examining the processes and exploring ways to shorten the wait time for patients needing to have blood drawn. Significant inroads in streamlining inpatient health care processes have been made also. In the Emergency Department a team is working to find ways to better manage patient caseload as well as to reduce the percentage of patients having to wait six hours or more. Remarkable progress has been made in the operating room (OR). Thanks to the restructuring of sub-specialty block schedules, changes to the scheduling policy the Chief, Anesthesia can ensure rooms are fully utilized. Process improvements in the Pre-operative Clinic have also improved OR room utilization and increased the number of surgeries performed. All of this has resulted in better utilization of available operating rooms to meet the demands of the eight surgical specialties that vie for space. New data show that the daily surgical caseload in the OR has risen from 10 surgeries to 15 for a 50% increase. This efficiency means a shorter wait for patients requiring surgery.

Another ongoing initiative is improvement in the efficiency of the discharge process for the acute care units. Dedicated teams have made significant inroads in shortening the time needed to prepare a patient to go home. Attention has been paid to creating a well-orchestrated process that occurs the day prior to a patient's discharge. This process requires an inter-departmental effort that includes doctors, nurses, unit clerks, the EMS, labs, transportation, pharmacy, and even home health services. Encouraged by their progress, team members are well on their way to achieving the FY 2008 performance measure goals of having 50% of patients discharged with a discharge appointment, 60% of patients leaving within 1 hours of that discharge appointment and 30% of patients discharged before noon.



The new efficiency in the patient discharge process has also resulted in improvement in the admission process. The ultimate goal is to have bed-turnover in 60 minutes from the time a patient is released until a new patient is admitted and assigned to that same bed. Aligned with this is the rollout of new electronic whiteboards that use a VA bed-management software package. The whiteboards provide crucial real-time data on every patient. These will be invaluable in helping staff track information that will be available from the desktop as well as LCD monitor. The results of Systems Redesign are encouraging and continue to improve processes not only in clinical services but have also spread to administrative and business areas. Self-directed grassroots teams in those two areas have begun to examine processes and issues involving such topics as the recruitment and retention of nurses and pharmacists, as well as fiscal and supply issues and processes.

On a regional level, enthusiasm for Systems Redesign has led to the formation of the Southeastern Collaborative, which currently involves eight VA facilities in our VISN working together for the benefit of veterans. Systems Redesign has assumed a vitality and life of its own. As it evolves and changes, it will continue to examine, streamline and improve healthcare processes that will significantly make hospital visits better for all veterans.

NEW CARDIOVASCULAR CLINIC OPENED

Dr. Mandawat, Chief Cardiology, proudly shows new clinic to hospital leadership.

Charlie Norwood VAMC, Director Rebecca Wiley, recently inaugurated the second Interventional Cardiovascular Laboratory. Cardiac disease is the largest cause of death and disability in our veteran population. This state of art laboratory equipped with latest technology will expand the invasive cardiovascular services for local and VISN 7 veterans. According to Dr. Mahendra Mandawat, Chief of Cardiology, this additional laboratory will significantly enhance the capacity for doing complex cardiovascular procedures likes coronary angioplasty/ stents, pacemakers and defibrillators as well as electrophysiology studies at this medical center. It is expected that several hundred additional patients with advanced heart disease will be treated each year at this medical center.

Charlie Norwood VAMC Doing Its Part for Energy Security

The Office of the Federal Environmental Executive announced the recipients of the 2008 White House Closing the Circle (CTC) Awards on April 29, 2008. This annual program is required by Executive Order 13423, Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management, and recognizes outstanding Federal agencies and their employees for environmental stewardship The Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center Facility Management Service Line Team received an Honorable Mention in the 2008 Closing the Circle Award for Alternative Fuel and Fuel Conservation in Transportation. By using biodiesel fuel (and ethanol), the Medical Center is not only doing right by the environment, but helping to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil, thus increasing our energy security.

In late 2006, the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center started using a biodiesel blend in its diesel fleet. Biodiesel is a cleaner burning alternative to petroleum-based diesel, made from renewable resources like natural fats and oils. In this case the biodiesel is made from chicken renderings. It works in any diesel engine with few or no modifications.

The Medical Center operates a diesel shuttle bus service between the Uptown and Downtown Divisions of the VA (approximately 3 miles) and makes 16 round trips a day. The shuttle, as well as more than a dozen other pieces of diesel equipment, is running on this fuel alternative. In addition, a 10,000 gallon diesel underground storage tank was converted. Diesel fuel consumption has been reduced by 80 percent.

Left to right: Mike Dobbins, Green Environmental Systems Coordinator (GEMS) Vernon Harrison, Supervisor HVAC/ Pipefitters/ Transportation, and Willie Downs, M&O General Foreman

Charlie Norwood V
Celebrates National

VA MEDICAL CENTER
L HOSPITAL WEEK

2008 Employee of the Year

Tom Harris, the 2008 Employee of the Year, exemplifies the mission of our medical center, "To do everything we can for veterans." Mr. Harris serves as the Recreation Therapist on the Nursing Home Dementia Unit and also the Mental Health Community Resource Group. He comes to work daily with a smile on his face and a "can-do" attitude. Mr. Harris not only has had to be flexible when programming to meet the therapeutic and quality of life needs for this very difficult patient population but also has to provide care outside of the normal "job description" regularly. The nursing staff on the unit sing Tom's praises for his initiative to resolve patient care needs and willingness to assist them in providing care for the residents special needs.

Because Tom cares about people, his contributions to the medical center are innumerable. It is his daily acts of service, going out of his way to assist a veteran, a co-worker, a volunteer, or visitor that he contributes to the overall positive working environment. Mr. Harris currently serves as co-chair for the Employee Wellness Committee, is a member of the Employee Enhancement Group and National Hospital Week Committee. Congratulations to this special employee!

Nursing Honors

The Secretary's Award Program for Excellence in Nursing annually honors one registered nurse in a staff nurse role and one in a non-staff nurse role, i.e., advance practice nurse, nurse manager, instructor, etc.; a licensed practical nurse and a nursing assistant actively engaged in the care of patients at a Department of Veterans Affairs facility. The recipients' are recognized for contributions to the care of patients in a VA health care setting, which are patient-centered and demonstrate such excellence as to merit recognition from their peers.

Tamika Glenn
Registered Nurse
(Staff Nurse Role)
Currently is the RAI/MDS Coordinator, was working on Unit 1C when nominated

Donna Bledsoe
Registered Nurse
(Expanded Nurse Role)
Clinical Nurse Specialist for General Psychiatry II Team

Vivian Carpenter
Licensed Practical Nurse
Unit 4A, Acute Care

Fartu Diagne
Nursing Assistant
Unit 2F, Psychiatry

Charlie Norwood VAMC Nurse Recognized as Community Nurse of the Year

Lisa Waller was awarded the 2008 Nurse of the Year Award for the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). Lisa has been an employee of the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center for 28 years, and has been the Case Manager for the PTSD Outpatient Clinic for the past 20 years.

It is an honor for her to have been chosen for this prestigious award especially since the nominations came from the patients she has served. Ms. Waller was recognized by her peers from the community at a special recognition ceremony held during Nurses Week.

Ms. Waller discusses a case with Lisa Logan.

Augusta Leaders In Action

The 2008 Augusta Leaders In Action (ALIA) Program is underway. ALIA, a comprehensive five–month program, provides training to employees interested in enhancing their skills. The classes cover Self-Assessment and Professionalism, Communication, Customer Service, Business Writing, Time Management, Conflict Management and Critical Thinking. The targeted group for this program includes VISN 7 employees with one-year permanent employment status in grades GS-5 through GS-9 or wage-grade equivalent and Registered Nurses I or II.

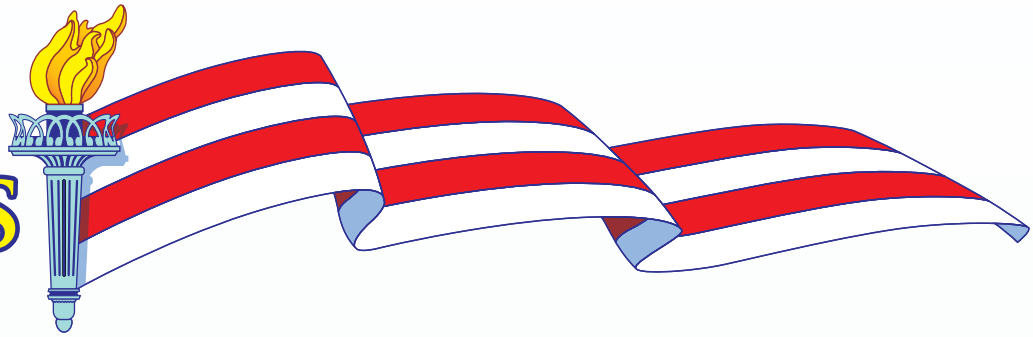
Congratulations to the following 14 candidates selected from a highly competitive field:

Lisa Arnold, Ken Cordy, Alexzine Cox, Shanetta Franklin, Dorothy Griffin, Monicia Jackson, Eric Johnson, Thelma Lynch, Duane Taylor, Elsie Terrell, Wendy Lacy, Cora White, Harry White, and Dotie Williams.

Stay tuned to hear more about ALIA's 2008 facility projects. The Application period for the 2009 ALIA course will begin this fall. The ALIA Course, coordinated by Mary Smith in Education and Staff Development, incorporates The Mentoring Program, coordinated by Ed Shepherd.

ALIA

Service Awards



EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH:

Zenobia Boyd
(March)

Margaret Greene
(April)

Becky King
(May)

Doris Keith
(June)

STAR TRECC AWARDS:

Annie Cobb
(March)

Carlton Hughes
(April)

Patrick Simmons
(May)

Marjorie Sammons
(June)

Retirements (March-May)
We would like to wish the following employees enjoyment in their retirment!

Freddie L. Dunn
HAS
Leroy Finklin, Jr.
HIMRA
Jennifer Wedincamp
Radiology
Rosalie Bell
Public Affairs Officer
Eddie Hasty
Facility Management
Robert Kilmer
Respiratory Therapy
Robert Webster, Jr.
Facility Management

The following employees have reached a special benchmark in their years of government service during the months of March, April, May and June.

45 Year Service Award:
Patricia J. Loo
Timothy R. Young

40 Year Service Award:
Earlene M. Morton
John W. Walker

35 Year Service Award:
Gregory L. Blount
Timothy Chappelle
John P. Clements, Jr.
Charles V. Davis
James E. Kearley
Jerry L. Pafford
Alan M. Perano
Fran R. Rollins

30 Year Service Award:
Brady P. Barton
Nancy C. Branch
Elaine P. Hulsey
Catherine G. Johnson
Reul D. Martin
Jamie A. Mims
Gilbert R. Montano
Donald R. Morant
Carolyn D. Rainey-Jones
Felise T. Shultz

25 Year Service Award:
Alvin B. Beard
Patricia G. Beard
Gregory A. Bryant
Jeanette Coleman
Douglas W. Glidewell
Vernon W. Harrison
Floria B. Haynes
Viane M. Hill
Keith L. Johnson
Elaine M. Neary
Rudolph Reed
Richard D. Renew
Lisa S. Sanders
Saundra L. Smith
Jerry W. Spradley
Thomas E. Sprague
Stanley J. Stearns
Sineal M. Thomas
Walter D. Washington
Rebecca J. Wiley
Rosie H. Young

20 Year Service Award:
Jeffery B. Benson
Sandra L. Blackwell
Everett B. Cooper
Marie B. Cooper
Henry S. Davis
Valerie L. Davis
Debra B. Fallen
Kung-His Fung
Mable L. Jacobs
Sandra L. Judge
L J Kimble-Leverett
Robert H. Peek
Patrick E. Pyle
Owana T. Rogers
Melissa E. Simmons
Thomas F. Smith
Catherine Taylor
Robert M. Tudor

15 Year Service Award:
Angela Y. Boggan
Wayne G. Chandler
Ann M. Cooper
Carmen T. Cromer
Betty J. Erby
Gedora A. Frazey
Amy E. Helton
Sandra M. Ludwikowski
David P. Marana
Wanda G. Miller
Susan Noe
Iris Pace
Agatha S. Palmer
J. Singleton-Price
Melinda A. Smith

10 Year Service Award:
Danielle R. Anderson
Cesario V. Borlongan
Rita M. Brigan
Fartu L. Diagne
Troy A. Elliott
Beverly V. Federick
Sidney A. Hursey
Laurie R. Osborne
Doretha S. Peay
Anthony B. Riley
Harold M. Szerlip

Congratulations to the following outstanding staff for their significant contributions, acknowldegements and recognitions:

Dr. Dennis Hollins
was named Service Line Executive for the newly formed Rehabilitation Service Line.

Dr. Elpidio J. Stincer was named the new Service Line Executive for Spinal Cord Injury Service Line.

Jawel Lemons, RN, MS, FNP-C, Associate Director for Patient/Nursing Services, was featured in the Spring 2008 edition of Minority Nurse Magazine, a career and educational resource for minority nursing professionals. The article discussed ways Ms. Lemons is working to empower minority veterans to take control of their health, focusing on a protocol developed she developed to teach low-literacy patients how to take their medications correctly using pictures instead of words.

Dave Hill, Ph.D., Research Physiologist, and his Research Laboratory Staff were recognized for their poster on stem cell work and its potential for stroke injury repair. The poster won "First Place" in the poster competition at the Georgia Stem Cell Initiative meeting on May 22, 2008. This is the same poster that was presented at the VA Research Week poster session in May 2008.

Mrs. Edie Lamar, NP Augusta VAMC, Aiken CBOC received the Legion of Merit award upon her retirement from the South Carolina National Guard on Sunday, August 3, 2008. This is an extremely high honor.

Marie Andrews, Administrative Officer for Research, recently graduated from Leadership Augusta as part of the Class of 2008. She successfully completed the year long program whose goal is to identify and educate potential, emerging, and existing community leaders.

Dr. Nancy McNair, Chief of Neurology, was selected by the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) Junior Medical Student class to receive the "Excellence in Teaching" award. **Dr. Laura Mulloy**, Part-time Nephrologists and interim chairman of Medicine at MCG, was named "Teacher of the Year". These awards highlight the quality of teaching provided by the faculty in the Specialty Care Service Line.

Left to right: VISN 7 Director, Larry Biro; Director, Charlie Norwood VAMC Rebecca Wiley; Chief Chaplain, Ron Craddock; Chaplian Michael L. McCoy, Associate Director of Chaplain Service

Ron Craddock, Chief Chaplain Service, accepted the VA Chaplain Service Best Practice Award for the Seamless Transition Chaplain Support Program during a special luncheon ceremony. This program works to help men and women who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) transition from active duty to civilian life by addressing the unique needs of our returning combat veterans. This special recognition was presented by Chaplain Michael L. McCoy, Associate Director of Chaplain Service for VISN's 6,7,8,9, and 16.

Augusta's Best Doctors

The summer issue of the Augusta Magazine highlighted the Best Doctors in the Augusta area. The Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center is proud to have the following top doctors serving our veterans:

Allergy/Immunology
Phillip H. Smith

Dermatology
Loretta S. Davis
Jack L. Lesher

General Surgery
Talmage A. Bowden, Jr.

Internal Medicine
Robert R. Collier, Jr.
Kerry C. Diver
Charles G. Green, Jr.
Michael L. Willoughby

Nephrology
Pamela J. Fall
Laura L. Mulloy

Orthopedic Surgery
Raymond Scott Corpe
Timothy Young

Plastic Surgery
Kenna S. Given

Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine
E. Clark Garner

Urology
Martha K. Terris

Team River Runner Augusta

Team River Runner, a volunteer based organization, provides therapeutic and adaptive kayaking to injured Veterans. When increasing numbers of injured OIF and OEF service members were being treated at Walter Reed Memorial Hospital, Joe Mornini saw an opportunity to further the physical and mental rehabilitation of these men and women by encouraging them to participate in challenging new activities. Thus, Team River Runner (TRR) was established to help these service men and women heal, rediscover a sense of self accomplishment, and challenge themselves through whitewater boating. Since its creation in 2004, this program has grown tremendously with programs in cities such as Seattle, San Antonio, Sacramento, and many more.

On June 11-13, 2008 Joe Mornini and Ralph Marsh, founder of TRR Boston came down to the Charlie Norwood VA to assist in the development of Team River Runner Augusta. Both paddlers and non-paddlers came from all over Augusta and surrounding cities to participate in this three day training session. Representatives from the Lexington and Tampa VA Medical Centers also attended in hopes of starting a program of their own. The three days of training were broken up into a classroom session, a pool session and the most exciting, a session on the water.

The first day of training we were blown away when over 50 volunteers showed up to learn more about the program being initiated for our wounded warriors. The classroom setting consisted of instruction which included outfitting boats for different disabilities, volunteer roles, and overall organization of the program. By the second day we had increased our numbers to over 60 volunteers for the pool session. The basic progression of paddling a kayak and water safety was the focus as we worked with some of our participating veterans. By the third day, we had 50 boats, 70 paddlers and over 100 total volunteers and participants out on the Augusta Canal for a great final day of training. The participants' disabilities varied from spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries, to visual impairments and other orthopedic impairments. Over and over Joe Mornini kept pointing out that water heals and that is exactly what we have seen through the development of Team River Runner Augusta.

Since the training things have gotten even more exciting. Team River Runner has been pushing forward with kayak football played every Tuesday night, kayak skills training sessions every Thursday night and river trips to surrounding lakes and rivers. The program has been life changing for the many participants and has made a profound difference in their lives. We hope to continue to grow and provide a positive outlet to anyone willing to give it a try.

Pulse Points

Preventive Care Saves Lives!

Cancer screening is a key component of preventive healthcare in VA. Colorectal cancer screening can reduce cancer-related mortality by 80 percent compared to no screening. Regular mammograms for women ages 50 to 69 can reduce breast cancer mortality by up to 35 percent through early detection. Screening for cervical cancer (Pap test) for women ages 21 to 64 reduces cervical cancer mortality by up to 80 percent. Check out the results of screening at the CNVAMC for FY2008 (through 3rd quarter)!

	CNVAMC	HEDIS 2006*
Colorectal Cancer Screening	81%	55%
Breast Cancer Screening	89%	69%
Cervical Cancer Screening	95%	81%

*Source: *The State of Healthcare Quality 2007*, NCQA

Important Information

If you have any concerns about patient care and safety in the medical center that have not been addressed by the staff, you are encouraged to contact medical center management. This is most easily done by contacting a Patient Advocate. If your concern is still not addressed, you are encouraged to contact the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). The JCAHO toll-free number is 1-800-994-6610. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Don't Miss Your Clinic Appointments!

A missed opportunity occurs when a veteran is not seen for a scheduled appointment. This not only impacts efficiency but, more importantly, limits our access when we are not using every available appointment time to take care of our patients. Reduction of missed opportunities has been a focus for the CNVAMC this year. Assurance that patients are aware of clinic appointments through reminder telephone calls and through postcards has been proven to have the most impact. Here are our improvement results for this year:

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Clinic	Target	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	FYTD
Audiology	7%	7.3%	7.2%	4.7%	6.7%	9.2%	6.7%	4.7%	7.0%	6.7%
Cardiology	12%	13.7%	15.4%	19.4%	19.4%	15.7%	10.6%	8.4%	10.9%	14.2%
Dermatology	12%	16.1%	13.9%	17.8%	21.7%	20.4%	12.7%	11.0%	9.9%	15.4%
Eye Care	13%	12.8%	16.9%	17.3%	15.9%	14.6%	8.7%	9.1%	11.3%	13.3%
Gastroenterology	17%	17.2%	28.7%	17.7%	20.8%	27.7%	16.2%	17.4%	18.7%	20.6%
Mental Health	17%	18.3%	18.1%	20.7%	17.8%	14.5%	13.8%	12.5%	13.1%	16.1%
Orthopedics	12%	10.6%	9.6%	11.0%	9.8%	8.6%	10.1%	10.4%	8.3%	9.8%
Podiatry	12%	18.3%	15.2%	16.8%	17.1%	17.9%	10.5%	6.5%	11.7%	14.2%
Primary Care	11%	9.9%	11.8%	12.3%	12.9%	11.7%	9.9%	8.3%	7.6%	10.5%
Urology	13%	8.5%	11.7%	13.5%	8.7%	11.6%	7.9%	7.9%	5.9%	9.5%

MAIL CALL

Dear Ms. Wiley:

I am a service connected veteran that uses the VA as my primary care provider. I just wanted to bring to your attention the great work of your staff. In May I entered the ambulatory surgery unit. From the start, this was a great experience. Beginning with the prep nurses and ending with my dismissal the center and its staff were truly showing their belief in your mission statement.

I was so fortunate to have these people administer the best in health care to me. I know our VA system takes a lot of lumps, but I know the real story. I just wanted to tell everyone at the Charlie Norwood VA how much they mean to us, the veterans. Please convey my thanks and gratitude to them.

Sincerely,

RMR

Dear Director:

It was my pleasure to have the opportunity to be assigned to the new Augusta VA outpatient clinic in Aiken, South Carolina. I kept hearing the news about how the GI veterans are being treated in VA hospitals all over. If they could have a chance to visit our Aiken Clinic their attitude would change. Not that I did not get good service from our Augusta VA, it was also good and many thanks to the personnel that took care of me there. Now I go to the Aiken clinic and my Augusta nurse transferred there too.

The nurse had time to go over all my medications with me, explaining all the options I had. From the receptionist to the lab it was a great experience being served at the new clinic. I may have walked in the Aiken Clinic as a PFC, but with such good care I came out a 5 star general!

Thanks again to everyone in the Aiken Clinic.

Regards,

WJM
Korean Army Vet

To Whom It May Concern:

Recently my father had an extended stay in the Augusta VA. Not only was I concerned about my father's heart condition, but my mother has dementia and is in a wheelchair. I am writing this letter to voice my thanks to everyone involved in helping during this stressful time in our lives.

Prior to my father having the heart Catherization he had been very nervous and anxious. Even though we do not live in the area, my father requested to use the Augusta hospital. I realized immediately why he felt this way. The entire staff was absolutely wonderful! From the nurse who explained what the day held and what to expect once my father was taken back for the procedure to the doctor who was just extraordinary. He went to great lengths to be sure that the entire family understood my father's case. The support staff was also great. It was reassuring to know my father was in the hands of such compassionate, skilled professionals.

I just wanted to take the time to say thank you for allowing my family the comfort and assurance at such a chaotic time for us. Far too many people are in too much of a hurry to acknowledge others. My family wanted to be sure that the staff at the Augusta VA know what a great job we think they are doing. They are a blessing in the manner in which they care for not only the patients, but the family as well!

Sincerely,

MNW