

Augusta Pulse

Summer/Fall 2007

For the employees and friends of the Augusta VA Medical Center

www.va.gov/augustaga

This Issue:

**Augusta Hosts Senate
Field Hearing**

Meet Our Director

**Domiciliary
Serves Returning Vets**





One Freedom Way
 Augusta, GA 30904-6285
 1-800-836-5561
 (706) 733-0188

Rebecca J. Wiley
 Medical Center Director

John S. Goldman
 Associate Medical Center Director

Thomas W. Kiernan, MD
 Chief of Staff

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

The Augusta Pulse is published quarterly for the employees, volunteers, partners and friends of the Augusta VA Medical Center. To submit articles or story ideas for possible publication, contact Janice Kennedy, (706) 823-1733 or via e-mail at Janice.Kennedy@va.gov.

Editorial Board

- Janice Kennedy, MEd**
Community Relations Coordinator
- Rosalie Bell**
Public Affairs Officer
- Ellen Harbeson, CPHQ**
Quality Management Coordinator
- Sherry Elias**
Human Resources
- Karen McBride**
Staff Photographer
- Will Tullis**
Staff Photographer
- Brian Brockway, MS**
Medical Illustration/ Graphic Design

On the cover:

Senator Johnny Isakson; Dr. Dennis Hollins, Medical Director ADR Unit; Brigadier General Donald Bradshaw, Commander SERMC and EAMC; and Rebecca Wiley, Medical Center Director, tour the ADR Unit

Director's Message



As the new director of the Augusta VA Medical Center, I have been asked to describe my philosophy for successfully leading a large medical center. My philosophy is simple, I count on each employee to do their job to the best of their ability, while being respectful to each and everyone they interact with.

I expect each person to do no more or no less than I would do myself; and want each employee to understand whether their job is clinical or administrative, they can have a positive impact on the services we provide.

I feel that it is an honor for us to serve our nation's heroes. We are in the business of making veterans feel better, and they deserve the highest quality health care available provided by a caring, friendly staff.

I am proud to have been selected as the new director for the Augusta VA Medical Center. It takes a dedicated team to keep this large and complex hospital operating, while delivering quality and compassionate care to our patients. In the few short months I have been in this position I have already determined what an outstanding staff is in place at this medical center. I look forward to our future as we work together and remain vigilant to continually improve the services we provide.

Rebecca J. Wiley
 Director, Augusta VA Medical Center



Downtown Division



Uptown Division



27th National Veterans Wheelchair Games

The Augusta VA was proud to have 16 veterans competing with over 500 disabled veterans from across the country in the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. Veterans competed in track and field, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, bowling, hand cycling, quad rugby, power soccer and many others sports. The National Veterans Wheelchair Games held this year in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is presented each year by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

The games are open to all U.S. military veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. This event is important for veterans to participate in as sports provide much needed rehabilitative therapy, used to treat many disabilities. For many injured veterans, the wheelchair games provide their first exposure to wheelchair athletics.

A special thanks Suzanne Kenrick and Valerie McNary, Recreation Therapists, for preparing, training and coaching our veterans before and during this special event. With their assistance our veterans were able to participate in this memorable

occasion that showcased their talents and abilities. The result was an awe-inspiring 59 medals out of a possible 88. Included in the team this year were three novice and three Iraqi war veterans.



For additional information and photos, please visit www.wheelchairgames.org.

DOMICILIARY SERVES RETURNING VETERANS



“My experience with the program has been extremely positive, as well as my experience overall with the Augusta VA. The professional level of the OEF/OIF staff has taken an experience that for me lead to anxiety to an experience that is manageable.”

- OIF Veteran

Many returning Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans are expressing this same sentiment about the Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program at the Augusta VA Medical Center.

The OEF/OIF Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program began in June 2006 as part of a continuum of care proposal submitted to the national VA Mental Health Strategic Health Care Group. Research literature, VA and Department of Defense best practice guidelines were used in program development. Since the inception of the

veterans has been depression and PTSD. However, any OEF/OIF veteran who feel they could benefit from a readjustment rehabilitation program can be evaluated for treatment. No mental health diagnosis is necessary.

The Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program at the Augusta VA is operated within the Mental Health & Geriatrics Service Line. Program staff include: Social Workers, Psychologist, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Recreation Therapist, Chaplain, Physician Assistant, and Health Techs. These clinicians use a team management approach while

program 42 patients have been treated; of these, 17% were female. The primary diagnose for the majority of

providing individual case management with the veteran as a patient participant in all areas of their care and treatment. Individual psychometric testing is done along with the clinical assessment to provide the most up to date information on each veteran. When a unique problem is identified that doesn't fit into the program arena consults are sent to specialized clinics such as dietetics, physical therapy, substance abuse, or specialized medical/surgical clinics. The focus is on improvement of short-term adjustment difficulties and prevention of chronic disabling conditions.

The program serves veterans, reservists and National Guard deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and/or Operation Iraqi Freedom. Family members and significant others of post-deployed veterans are encouraged to participate in outpatient groups. Members of an interdisciplinary treatment team collaborate to facilitate the veteran's transition from military to

civilian life, with emphasis on successful reintegration into interpersonal and occupational roles. Individual and group treatment is provided using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as a core treatment modality. Cognitive Behavioral Therapies are

Veterans are referred from various sites throughout the medical center, including Primary Care and the Seamless Transition and Mental Health Clinics. Emails and telephone requests for assistance from other VA Medical Centers

“Get Here! If you are battling with PTSD you need to be here. The doctors and staff are top notch and the facilities are even better.”

empirically based short-term focused psychotherapy that is action-oriented, practical, rational and help the veteran gain independence and effectiveness dealing with real-life issues. Exposure Therapy is also provided on an individual basis. This is also a behavioral oriented treatment where the veterans get to confront a feared situation, object, thought or memory. The goal of this treatment is to reduce physical or emotional distress felt in certain situations. In addition, clinicians offer classes in the areas of Personal Growth & Wellness, Resuming Life after Deployment, and Family Dynamics. Specifically targeted classes included in the program are: Triggers, Anger Management, Relationships, Grief & Loss/Moving on & Letting Go, Health Education, Relaxation, Domestic Issues, Vocational Rehabilitation and Benefits, and Leisure Education & Awareness. It is evident that this program has been developed to address issues specific to the returning veteran’s needs. As new issues become apparent, new classes and interventions are offered.

and VET Centers are also accepted. Kathleen Scott, Program Manager, states “In this program, the veteran is the most important member of the treatment team and is actively involved in all aspects of the treatment. Each patient is asked to give input and evaluation of the program. We receive many word of mouth referrals from veterans who have completed the program.” As one veteran shared with a friend, “Don’t let shame or guilt prevent you from coming into the program or the VA.”



“It’s almost like a way of becoming a better civilian. They teach ways to become successful in the civilian sector. It helps in the transition from soldier to civilian.”



Anger management group therapy in progress



AUGUSTA HOSTS SENATE HEARING

Senator Johnny Isakson held a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee field hearing at the Augusta VA Medical Center on August 28, 2007, aimed at providing better medical care for combat troops wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. Three distinguished panels of witnesses were called to testify.

On the first panel were two patients who are currently receiving care at the Active Duty Rehabilitation (ADR) Unit – Sergeant First Class Thomas Morrissey, Illinois National Guard and Specialist Jason Capps, U.S. Army.

“In June 2006, I was on my third combat tour in Afghanistan when I was caught in an enemy ambush,” testified Sgt. Morrissey. “As a result, I received eight direct hits from an AK-47 in all four extremities,” he continued. “I was in the air on a medical evacuation flight 45 minutes after the ambush and into my first surgery within two hours.” He went on to talk about arriving at Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical (DDEAMC) at Fort Gordon and being reunited with his family in the emergency room. At the end of August 2006, Sgt. Morrissey was

transferred to the Augusta ADR Unit where he stayed as an inpatient for ten months. Morrissey ended his testimony, “The health care I’ve received from the U.S. Army and Veterans Affairs has been exceptional. My family has been treated with respect and compassion always. I will be forever grateful.”

Specialist Capps was a U.S. Marine from 1990 to 1993 and was deployed overseas the first time during Desert Storm. In 2006, he joined the U.S. Army as a Combat Medic and was deployed to Iraq in May 2007. “On June 10, an Iraqi suicide bomber drove a civilian vehicle packed with explosives under our bridge and detonated the device. The bridge along with our squad fell to the ground. Within 20 minutes I was on a Blackhawk helicopter heading for Baghdad.” As a result of the blast, Spec. Capps received two spinal fractures, six pelvic fractures and multiple facial lacerations. He was transferred from Fort Benning to the Augusta ADR Unit and, as of August 20, no longer requires the use of a wheelchair. “I believe I would still be in a wheelchair if I would have gone anywhere else. To the employees of the Active Duty Rehab Unit, I say “thank you.”

The second panel consisted of Major General Eric Schoomaker, Commander, North Atlanta Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Brigadier General Donald M. Bradshaw, Commander, Southeast Regional Medical Command (SERMC) and Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center; and, Dr. Dennis Hollins, Medical Director, Active Duty Rehabilitation Unit, Augusta VAMC.

General Schoomaker preceded General Bradshaw as the Commanding General at DDEAMC. “It was during my years in Augusta, at the outset of the current phase of the Global War on terrorism – Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom – that this unique medical and rehabilitation unit was created,” he said. He continued his testimony by noting instances where DDEAMC and the Augusta VAMC entered into numerous business agreements sharing resources.

General Bradshaw highlighted recent resource sharing achievements between SERMC, VA Southeast Network 7, DDEAMC and the Augusta VAMC. He also spoke to the computerized patient record systems at both VA and

cont. on page 10



Rebecca Wiley, Augusta VAMC Director, Larry Biro, VSN 7 Network Director during Nat'l Hospital Week

Augusta VA Welcomes New Director

On February 18, 2007, Rebecca J. Wiley was appointed as Director of the Augusta VA Medical Center. Prior to her appointment to Augusta, she was the Associate Director of the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VAMC in Jackson, Mississippi. Ms. Wiley led the Jackson VA Medical Center as acting Director during one of the worst natural disasters to ever hit the nation. In 2006, she played a key role in VA's response to Hurricane Katrina as she directed efforts from VA's nearest hospital not directly affected by that killer storm.

Prior to her work in Jackson, Ms. Wiley served as Deputy Director for VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Commission. In that position, she played a key role as VA developed its blueprint for how it will care for tomorrow's veterans in future decades.

Ms. Wiley is from a town near Grinnell, Iowa. She received an undergraduate degree in nursing from the University of Iowa and a graduate degree in public health from Indiana University. Ms. Wiley's family includes a son who is a student at the University of Georgia and a daughter who is in high school.

We asked the new director to respond to a few questions identified by employees. Here are her responses:

Q. Was there anything in particular that made you want to come back to Augusta?

A. I remember when I worked at Augusta several years ago how vibrant the hospital was and the wide diversity and complexity of the programs. The staff seemed to enjoy their work and the patients were grateful for all of the

outstanding services provided here. Even though I thoroughly enjoyed the community and the hospital, I never really thought I would be back here.

Q. What do you see as your biggest challenges?

A. I think because there are so many special programs at the Augusta VA, it is a challenge ensuring they all remain excellent and receive the resources and attention that maintaining excellence requires. We must continue to build on the successes that Augusta has achieved and remain attentive to hiring and retaining competent and compassionate staff. The Augusta VA has had an 8% growth rate over the past year. Improving access to care and maintaining our high standards for providing services to an increasing number of veterans is critical.

cont. on page 10

AROUND THE

Memorial Day Ride

The sounds of thunder could be heard throughout both divisions of the Augusta VA Medical Center as more than 168 motorcyclist rode in support of hospitalized veterans being treated at the Augusta VA. Sunday, May 27, marked the 5th year of the Memorial Day Bikers Ride co-sponsored by the Southeastern Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)

and District 8 ABATE of Georgia. Personnel care items and over \$1,400.00 in cash was donated through generous donations by the riders. Many patients were also able to view the eclectic assembly of motorcycles, enjoy the bands, "Sassy Brass" and "Steel Dreams", eat grilled hot-dogs, and meet a lot of caring compassionate bikers.



Augusta VA Receives Blue Star Memorial Marker



A ceremony was held on June 20th to unveil a Blue Star Memorial Marker placed at the entrance to the Uptown Division of the Augusta VAMC. The Blue Star Memorial Marker Program was adopted in 1946 by National Garden Clubs, Inc. to honor the men and women who served in World War

II. The program has now expanded to pay tribute to "all who have served, are serving and will serve." Today these memorial signs are placed at veterans' facilities, national cemeteries, parks and other civic locations.

Fisher House

The Augusta VA is one step closer to having a Fisher House. The sign is now up marking the spot where the three million dollar Fisher House is to be built at the Uptown Division.



Reynolds Plantation Veterans Association

presented a 32 passenger bus to the Active Duty Rehabilitation Unit during a

cookout celebration held at the Uptown Division on June 27.



GROUNDNS

National Hospital Week



Associate Director for Patient & Nursing Services

Jawell Lemons began her career with the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1991 at the Milwaukee VAMC as an IV Therapist. She replaced Cathy Rick (now the Chief Nursing Officer in VACO) as the Nurse Manager for the Telemetry Unit and Ms. Rick became her Associate Chief Nurse. She spent approximately 12 years at the Dallas VAMC in the roles of Nurse Manager of Telemetry, Coordinator of the Heart Failure Clinic and finally as the Associate Chief Nurse Medicine/Surgery which included seven inpatient

units, IV Team, Bed Control, Transfer Nurse, GEC, Escort Service, Case Managers, and Clinical Supervisors.

Mrs. Lemons is an Army veteran having served in the medical corp, first as a medic and then went into the 911C20 program which is the same as the LPN. Upon discharge from the Army, she enrolled in Holy Cross School of Nursing and then received her BSN from Indiana University. She received her Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP-C) and MS from Texas Woman's University. Her

clinical specialty is Cardiology and she opened the Heart Failure Clinic in Dallas, managing those patients and performing workups for heart transplant patients.

She is a native of South Bend, Indiana, and has moved several times during her career. She is married to Al and has four daughters, Yvette, Brenis, Dee and Carman; four grandchildren, Darrein,



Lauren, Mickayla, and Edward. Mrs. Lemons said, "I am very happy to be in Augusta and look forward to working with everyone."

2007 Employee of the Year

Rebecca J. Wiley, Director, Augusta VA Medical Center, has proudly announced the name of the 2007 Employee of the Year. Denise Whitten, Recreation Therapist, was the recipient of this prestigious award revealed during a luncheon held to honor all the nominees who had received the Employee of the Month recognition during the past year.

Denise Whitten's passion is serving others. She consistently demonstrates this with her co-workers, the veterans she cares for, and the volunteers at the medical center. She has been the primary and leading force behind the home-like environment for the Social Model (Alzheimer's/Dementia Unit). Over the years, she cultivated relationships with volunteer and service organizations to foster their support for making culture changes to the nursing home environment. These relationships resulted in the creation of a leisure lounge and family room, beautiful

murals on the wall depicting familiar scenes such as a park, garden, and even an old fashioned barber shop (with real barber chairs). By garnering the support of these organizations, she has helped to transform the Social Model into an environment of care that is recognized as a vanguard for dementia care units. The Therapeutic Recreational programs and activities that Denise provides on the unit have been featured numerous times in local news and VA literature.

Denise Whitten also makes a positive impact on employee moral. She is the chairperson for the Employee Enhancement Group which is dedicated to sponsoring activities throughout the year for employees.

Being the mother of an eight year old boy and a seven year old girl and working full time would leave most people with little free time; however, Denise makes time to



participate in community activities such as Relay for Life, the Alzheimer's Walk, and PTO.

*The Augusta VA Employee of the Year receives a certificate of appreciation, \$1,000 cash award, time off award and a designated parking space at the medical center for one year.



Q. What do you feel are the strongest assets of the Augusta VA?

A. Everyone that comes to the Augusta VA is pretty overwhelmed by the amount of space and beautiful facilities. I hope every employee takes pride, just as I do, in the beautiful grounds and sparkling clean facilities. Our Facility Management Service Line staff does an excellent job in maintaining a very large space. The Augusta VA is also fortunate to have highly specialized and unique staff with specific expertise in a variety of areas which makes us more marketable in the services we can provide. Also, Augusta has potential for future leaders through a core group of young energetic staff. Through numerous mentoring and training programs these future leaders are able to gain valuable experience.

Q. What is your vision for the future of the Augusta VA?

A. I see a very bright future for the Augusta VA. I see us continuing to reach out to communities such as Athens and the new Aiken Community Based Outpatient Clinic. I also see expansion and growth in Home Based Primary Care, mental health services, and our specialty programs. As technology continues to change, I see us aggressively using those advances to improve services, access to care, and quality. I want us to take advantage of as many opportunities

as we can to continue to educate and develop out staff. I feel strongly about the need to ensure a well prepared workforce for today and in the future.

Q. What can we, the staff, do to help work toward that vision?

A. As our new VISN Director, Larry Biro says, "we need to provide care second to none". To do that I need all employees to keep current with your education and maintain a level of excellence in everything you do. It is also important to speak proudly of the Augusta VA and the work you do here. I ask each employee to remember our mission: "To do everything we can for veterans", it's a simple statement but a very powerful one! The goal, "to provide care second to none" is easily met every day by living by and interacting with our veterans and each other with our mission always in mind. We want to be recognized in the community as a leader in health care; by providing compassionate, courteous, and kind services to each other and the patients we serve.



SENATE HEARING CONTINUED

DoD asking Senator Isakson for continued congressional support for deployment of a single entry data system for both VA and DoD.

Dr. Hollins spoke to the success of the unit. "This project is a success because VA and DoD staff communicate openly and directly. Warrior in Transition commanders at Eisenhower attend our weekly team conference meeting and once a week the (ADR) unit's medical staff attends the orthopedic surgery rounds at Eisenhower. This cooperation and integration demonstrate what VA and DoD can do for our wounded service members and veterans when we work together."

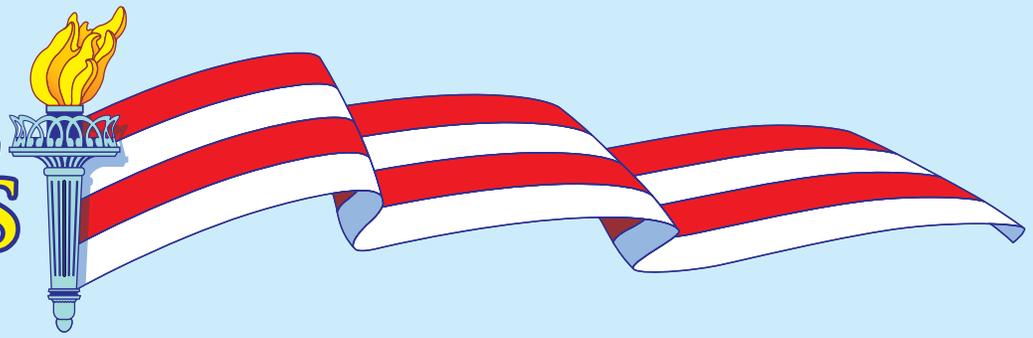
Dr. Michael Kilpatrick, Deputy Director, Force Health Protection and Readiness, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (DoD) and Mr. Lawrence Biro, Director, VA Southeast Network (VISN 7), Veterans Health Administration, were on the final panel.

Dr. Kilpatrick highlighted programs that the two Departments (VA and DoD) have put in place to provide world-class medical care for the men and women who serve.

Mr. Biro commented on the accomplishments of the ADR Unit to include being recognized with the Olin Teague Award, the highest award in VA. "The Active Duty Rehabilitation Unit represents the best of VA and DoD medical care, and represents the fulfillment of our promise to veterans and service members."

A copy of each testimony will be published in the Congressional Record.

SERVICE AWARDS



EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH:

Denise Whitten
Allied Health
(February)

Kim Holmes
Nursing Services
(March)

Rosemary Griffin,
HIMRA
(April)

Duane Taylor
Acquisition & Material
Management Department
(May)

Cora White
Health Administration
Department
(June)

LaDonna Jenkins
Nursing Services
(July)

STAR TRECC AWARDS:

Mary Forbes, RN
Nursing Services
(February)

Ernest Erdman
Mental Health &
Geriatrics Service
(March)

Denard Brown
Allied Health
(April)

Anthony Maye
Nutrition & Food Service
Department
(May)

Kenneth Cordy
Nursing Services
(June)

Delores Nacoste
Mental Health &
Geriatrics Service
(July)

30 Year Service Awards

Timothy R. Askren
Jean L. Bacon
Brenda B. Corley
Shedericka D. Edwards
Paulette F. Fulghum
Robert L. Glover
William J. Hall
Alma B. Hinton
John P. Joe
Carlos E. Layne
Charles E. Murray
Carey Andrew Pickett
Lena M. Presswood
Michael T. Rule
Barbara T. Taylor
Sallie M. Taylor
Linda D. Tharin
Fred Turner Jr.
Kathleen C. Winger

25 Year Service Awards

Jaunita C. Bain
Wanda F. Calhoun
Phillip Carrington
Earline Corder
Robert F. Erickson
Sheryl I. Feltner
Va Fletcher-Greene
Arnold R. Harris
Henry J. Harris
Sheila P. Hunt
Cynthia L. Irizarry
Ruth C. Jackson
Herman D. Jefferson
Jo Louise M. Johnson
Vickie B. Jones
Carolyn F. Lee
Steven A. Morris
James K. Smith
Gloria B. Stone
Jose E. Torres
Todd J. Turansky
Dianne P. Yost

20 Year Service Awards

James Beard Jr.
Hubert D. Burden
Anthony B. Cresci

Onie B. Downs
Susan L. Erickson
Kathy S. Evans
Myrtle B. Franklin
Thomas L. Garnett
Billie Carol Gibson
Bruce N. Gulko
Frances R. Harmon
Thomas J. Hartney
Jerry Houston
Maura L. Kerr
Janet L. Long
Kimberley J. Lowe
Myra L. Maxey
Dare F. Meadows
Cleveland Mitchell
Diane M. Neely
Mark A. Sargent
Michelle C. Stroman
Joyce M. Taylor
Jonnie V. Whitfield
Sandra R. Williams
Shelia R. Williams
Sara B. Wittschen

15 Year Service Awards

Jenney L. Brigham
Lelia R. Brigmon
Eleanor G. Brown-Jones
Paul Coppett
Spencer C. Dixon
Julia A. Dudley
Susan E. Francis
Fernanda F. Gordon
Sridhar Gowda
Patricia D. Granberry
Susan L. Haverstock
Linda Y. Holman
Shawn Holt
Sheila L. Huffman
Dennis M. Johns
Heidi E. Johnson
Mary E. Johnson
Linda L. Kellam
Charles Lokas
Janet T. Markle
Judith McCaskill
Elaine D. Miles
Richard L. Myers

The following employees have reached a special milestone in their years of government service during the months of February 2007 through July 2007.

50 Year Service Awards:
Bernard J. Burawski

45 Year Service Awards:
Terrance J. Moore

40 Year Service Awards:

Katharine F. Gibson
Charlie J. Jones

35 Year Service Awards:

Thomas G. O'Berry
Salvador C. Reyes
Bobby L. Shuman
Katherine W. Sneed
Carolyn B. Ware
Grace B. Whisenant
Linda H. Young

Richard L. Myers
 Tiffany M. Myers
 Darnell A. Nickerson
 Teresa E. Padgett
 Lemuel Devon Patterson
 Christina J. Patton
 Raymond D. Picklesimer
 Thomas W. Prevette
 Christine A. Reece
 Angie D. Rollins
 Debra S. Sanders
 Donna J. Savage
 Pauline Scott
 Norman, Smith
 Pauline N. Stewart
 Terry E. Walker
 Manuel I. Weisman
 Barbara P. Welcher
 Rebecca B. Wyles

10 Year Service Awards

Sharilyn R. Avery
 Mary E. Brouillard
 William B. Crapps
 Cynthia J. Daggett
 Juan M. Delecuona
 Linda G. Dinkins
 Pamela J. Fall
 Mary K. Forsyth

Shavonne W. Garrett
 Diana L. Gilchrist
 David W. Hattaway
 Contrina L. James
 Andrea F. Jones
 Darlene S. Klein
 Jennifer Magee
 Laura L. Mulloy
 Alan R. Myres
 Doris Nelson
 Mary L. Patterson
 Shirley G. Pearson
 Justen E. Peckham
 Stephanie Shepard
 Angela P. Williams
 Erica L. Williams
 Lovoria B.W. Williams

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

Earline Corder was selected as the new Chief Financial Officer (CFO) for the Augusta VAMC. May 14th was Ms. Corder's first day on the job.

Kimberly Barry, Chief, Audiology and Speech Pathology, was elected to serve on the National Audiology Awareness Campaign Board of Directors. The mission of this group is to raise awareness and educate the public on the value of hearing healthcare.

Paul Whitten, Chief Blind Rehabilitation Center, was selected as an Official CARF (Commission of Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) Surveyor.

The Board of Directors for the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) recently approved the appointment of **Dr. Martha Terris**, Chief, Urology Department, to the Residency Review Committee for Urology.

Lisa Sanford, Social Worker Primary Care Team D, was named the 2007 Social Worker of the Year during the Annual Social Work Month Educational Meeting sponsored by the Association of VA Social Workers and the Augusta Social Work Education Committee. At the same meeting, **Judith Kriegel**, Program Assistant, Allied Health Service Line, was selected as the 2007 Friend of Social Workers.

Stephanie Barton has been selected as the new Health Systems Management Trainee and will be working out of the Executive Office under the guidance of Dr. Kiernan, Chief of Staff.

2007 Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing



Anne Cooper, RN
 Staff Nurse Role
 Critical Care Unit



Elizabeth Cumbee, RN
 Non-staff Nurse Role
 Nurse Manager,
 Ambulatory Surgery Center



Phyllis Pollard-Henley
 License Practical Nurse
 Domiciliary

The 2007 Excellence in Nursing Awards were held on May 9, 2007. These awards annually honor two registered nurses, one in a staff nurse role and one in a non-staff nurse role; a licensed practical nurse or licensed vocational nurse; and a nursing assistant (NA), all of whom are actively engaged in the care of patients at a VA facility. The recipients' contributions to the care of patients in a health care setting must be patient-centered and demonstrate such excellence as to merit recognition from peers.

Thomas Jones
 Nursing Assistant/ Health
 Tech Category
 SCIU
 (Currently Deployed)

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS NEWS

EMPLOYEES ARE BIG WINNERS IN WEIGHT LOSS COMPETITION

THE LUCKIEST LOSER

3 4 5 6 7 8

About 90 VA employees recently celebrated being losers. The employees participated in the hospital's Luckiest Loser contest, a 12-week weight loss competition that began February 6. At an awards ceremony held during Hospital Week, the group celebrated having lost a total of 1,031 pounds. That was 5.3 percent of the participants' total weight, which exceeded the goal of losing 5 percent of the total

weight. The competition started with 90 participants divided in 18 teams, which raised \$5,400 through weekly weigh-ins. The money was divided into 40, 20 and 10 percent portions to the three top winning teams and 15 percent each to the Top Male and Female Losers. The 1st place team, the *Blind Center Losers*, lost 13 percent of their total body weight and split \$2,170 in prize money. *Four Briefs and a Boxer*, coming in at second, lost 12.1 percent of their total body weight and split \$1,085 in prize money. *Hidden Treasures*, rounding out third place, lost 9.7 percent of their total body weight and split \$542.50 in prize money. The Top Male Loser was Scott Johnson who is a Blind

Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROSE) on the Blind Rehabilitation Unit. Scott lost a total of 53.6 pounds and 21.7 percent of his total body weight. For being the Top Male Loser Scott took home a cash



prize of \$813.75. The Top Female Loser was Anne Arnold, Voluntary Services Specialist. Anne lost 24 pounds and 17.6 percent of her total body weight. She took home a cash prize of \$813.75 for being the Top Female Loser. There were 38

participants who lost 5 percent or more of their total body weight and each received a \$30.00 gift certificate to the Veterans Canteen Service store. Participants lost weight through methods including increasing water intake, making healthier eating choices, cutting back on sugar and exercising more. Recreation Therapy Assistant, Dave James, who lost 17 pounds as a member of the Six Pack team said, "This was the best \$60.00 dollars I've ever spent." Most participants would agree with him, though not winning the money, they "gained" a whole lot more – weight loss, friendship and getting their health back in check. Way to go Losers!!



Pulse Points

Quality of Care Update

High blood pressure affects about 50 million Americans and one billion people worldwide. According to recent estimates, one in four U.S. adults has high blood pressure, but because there are no symptoms, nearly one-third of these people don't know they have it. According to the current report from the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure, new recommendations for tighter control of high blood pressure may drastically reduce

the number of individuals who die each year from hypertension-related illnesses.

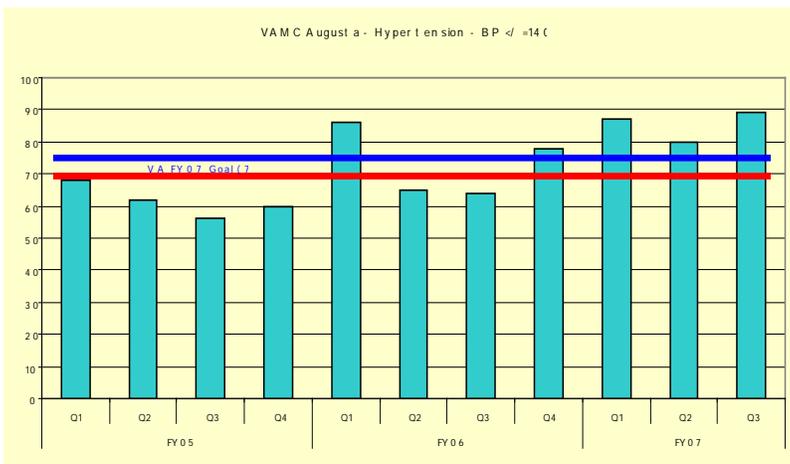
Our standard is that blood pressure control for patients with an active diagnosis of hypertension should have a blood pressure reading of less than 140/90. The VA system-wide goal is that 75% of patients meet this standard. For the current year, 85% of our patients meet this standard!

Patient Safety

At the core of our Patient Safety Program is the proper identification of patients particularly during medication or blood product administration, taking specimens for clinical testing, or preparing for treatments or procedures. At this medical center, it is the policy to use patient name and full Social Security number to assure accuracy of patient identification.

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.



RECOGNITION OF OUR PROGRAMS

Our **Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Department** recently was surveyed by the Laboratory Accreditation Program of the College of American Pathologists (CAP). This is an internationally recognized program and the only one of its kind that utilizes teams of practicing laboratory professionals as inspectors.

Designed to go well beyond regulatory compliance, the program helps laboratories achieve the highest standards of excellence to positively impact patient care.

Thanks to Dr. Jeff Lee and the staff in Pathology and Laboratory Medicine for a very successful review!

Our **Cancer Registry** was recently surveyed by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer. The American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer is a consortium of professional organizations dedicated to improving the survival and quality of life for cancer patients through standard-

setting, prevention, research, education, and the monitoring of comprehensive quality of care.

Thanks to Lisa Arnold, Tumor Registrar, and her staff and to all the members of the Cancer Committee for a very successful survey!



MAIL
CALL

Dear Va A. Hospital
Thanku for taking care of my daddy!



Please let whoever is in charge know that the services I got today were impeccable. From the time I arrived at 9:45 a.m. until now, 12 noon, everything has gone smoothly. All the personnel I come in contact with are exceptionally pleasant. My appointment was on time, the hospital clean and cafeteria great! Thanks for all the extra effort that the staff puts in.

Keep up the good work.

MW

Dear Augusta VA:

I would like to say thank you very much for the excellent care and concern I was given during my last stay for prostate cancer. Dr's, nurses and all in the hospital involved with my care were extremely nice, courteous and helpful to me, my wife and members of my family. May God bless them all and thank you again.

RFA



Dear Ms. Wiley,

I recently had a procedure to correct a sinus problem at the Ambulatory Surgery Center on the 3rd floor downtown. I have been operated on for numerous conditions at three separate private hospitals over the years and I would like to say that none of those hospitals compare to the care I received at the VAMC Augusta. The staff, nurses, and doctors provided me with very compassionate and professional care. During the time of pre-op, surgery, and recovery I also observed that each and every veteran was treated with the same excellent care and respect.

The staff and doctors and nurses went above and beyond and I would like to take this opportunity to say I salute them for making my surgery a most pleasant experience.

Thank You,

SDL