

# VA Puget Sound NEWS

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Veterans of the  
Northwest



VA Puget Sound Health Care System • American Lake & Seattle

Winter 1999

## VA Awards Transitional Housing & Shelter Grants

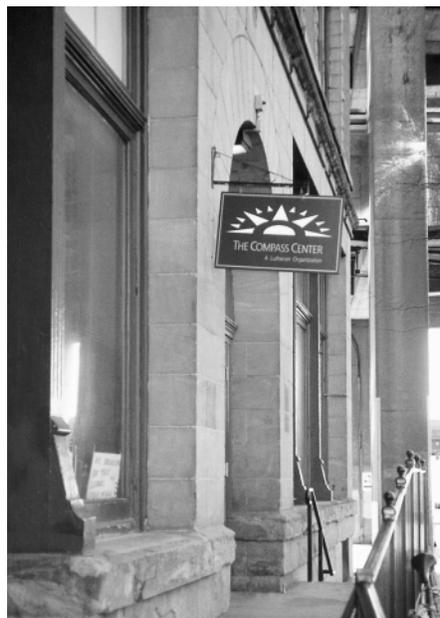
Homelessness is a growing reality for some veterans, yet effective outreach is not new to staff at Vet Centers and VA Puget Sound Health Care System. A new collaboration recognizes the efforts of two Seattle groups, the Lutheran Compass Center and the Salvation Army for addressing the growing needs of homeless veterans. Both agencies have a long track record of working with homeless populations. Both recently received major grants to establish additional transitional housing for homeless veterans.

The awards were made possible by the Department of Veterans Affairs under its Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Programs. The Compass Center will receive over \$1 million to build a new transitional building in Seattle. As a result, homeless veterans will find 25 new beds available. The Salvation Army will receive \$275,000 for renovation of the William Booth Center, which will result in the addition of 30 transitional beds for homeless veterans.

These two groups were among 51 public and private nonprofit groups competing and receiving grants totaling nearly \$15 million. The grants range from \$25,000 to almost \$1.5 million. The funds will provide up to 65 percent of the cost of acquiring or renovating facilities for use by the nation's homeless veteran population. It is estimated that there are over 250,000 homeless veterans nationally and 3,000 living in the Puget Sound Area. Nearly 100 organizations had

applied for this year's national VA grants program.

Nationally, approximately 4,000 community-based beds will be available to veterans when this program is fully implemented. VA has assisted 178 public and private nonprofit grant recipients in 42 states and the District of Columbia. VA has awarded more than \$41 million in grants since the program's inception in 1994 and is the only federal agency providing substantial assistance directed to homeless veterans. More than \$100 million has been apportioned to its specialized homeless assistance program in fiscal year 1999. Additionally, VA administers specialized assistance programs, including health care, rehabilitation, and outreach and counseling programs for homeless veterans. ♡



## Comments from the CEO

As we launch this New Year and enter a new century, I would like to acknowledge the dedication of our staff, our volunteers and the many trainees who pass through our doors each year. You have demonstrated once again that your deep commitment to our mission yields great results.



We launched VA's new enrollment categories and dispelled myths about eligibility. We gained national and international recognition for many research breakthroughs including the discovery of a new dementia gene; new partnerships in diabetes research; implementation of a new abdominal aortic stent grafting procedure; new gene therapy discoveries aimed at helping cancer patients and more. We opened our first Community Based Outreach Clinic (CBOC) and saw the departure of well-respected colleagues.

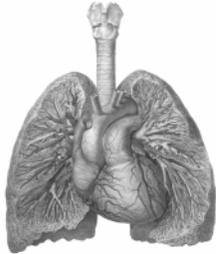
This past year brought us many awards recognizing excellence and innovation in performance of duties, creative teamwork and customer service. We worked closely with veteran's organizations and employee groups during an uncertain budget scenario that we thankfully did not need to implement. We saw the creation of the Northern Alliance with our participating VA medical centers, as we increased partnerships throughout the region. VA Puget Sound took a leadership role in computer technology, planned for Y2K, and advanced the use of computerized record systems, telecommunications and telemedicine utility.

As a result of these factors, our organization is stronger. We are an integrated medical center with one focus on our mission and a greater sense of accomplishment in serving veterans.

I am pleased to have Dr. Gordon Starkebaum join the operations team as our new Chief Medical Officer. He brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the position.

*continued on page 6*

# Quality in Action



## New Lung Volume Reduction Surgery

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), or emphysema as it is more commonly called, is a highly debilitating illness among veterans. A joint study by VA Puget Sound and Boise VAMC is testing a new surgical treatment known as lung volume reduction surgery. To date, seventy-three patients have undergone the procedure. The study will compare the outcome of lung volume reduction surgery with the current standard therapy. The Department of Veteran's Affairs Health Services Research and Development funds the study. Investigators include Eric Vallières, MD; Richard Goodman, MD; S. Lakshmi, MD; Stephan Fihn, MD, MPH; Hugh Huizenga, MD, MPH; and Normal Charan, MD.

Any patients diagnosed with COPD may be evaluated for this new procedure; however, only patients with severe emphysema who have quit smoking are likely to benefit from the procedure. Further information may be obtained by calling Kelley Kierland at (206) 762-1010 ext. 61234.

## What is MCCR?

The Medical Care Cost Recovery (MCCR) program bills third party carriers for the cost of medical care delivered by VA Puget Sound. By bringing dollars back into the Medical Center, MCCR's efforts help offset any budget shortfall. Furthermore, MCCR offers guidance to providers in discharge planning using other than VA funds

What can VA staff do to assist MCCR? First, identify patients with private insurance and second, provide documentation that supports and reflects the care provided.

When in doubt, let MCCR figure it out. Call (206) 762-1010 Rogene Shinpaugh at ext. 62314 or Lynn Curry at ext. 62303.

## Ensuring Staff and Patient Safety

The safety of our patients, employees and volunteers is very important and it is the reason the Behavioral Emergency Committee is looking at new ways to reduce the risk of injury related to behavioral incidents. The committee has initiated a two-pronged approach to ensure a safe environment for staff, patients and visitors. The committee's first approach to ensure a course of action is to conduct monthly safety rounds in high-risk areas. Secondly, mock code greens are practiced to provide staff an opportunity to learn the steps needed to ensure safety. For more information, call Richard Pollard at American Lake, (206) 762-1010 ext. 76276, or Penny La Sac in Seattle, (206) 762-1010 ext. 62175.

## First Governor's Award

The Addictions Treatment Center (ATC) and the Center of Excellence in Substance Abuse Treatment and Education (CESATE) were presented with the Governor's Award for Service and Quality Improvement, recognizing state agencies and teams who have demonstrated excellence in cutting red tape, improving customer service, expanding efficiency and reducing costs. VA Puget Sound has joined with the State Department of Veterans Affairs and King County to form the Veterans Incarcerated Program Team. The program helps veterans incarcerated in the King County Correctional Facility and gives them alternatives to incarceration. This is the first time a federal agency has received an award from the Governor. This joint effort has resulted in a 10% decrease in recidivism and a savings of \$835,000 from June 1998 to May 1999.

*Dr. Porte Retires  
from Federal Service*

Dr. Daniel Porte, Jr., retired on December 20<sup>th</sup> after 35 years of federal service, addressing the needs of veterans as Director of Research &

Development program at VA Puget Sound, and as Professor of Medicine at the University of Washington. Dr. Porte's distinguished career is reflected in his national and international prominence in the fields of endocrinology and metabolism.

Dr. Porte graduated from the University of Chicago Medical School in 1957, and completed his internship, residency and a fellowship at the University of California and the VA Hospital in San Francisco from 1957-1963. He also

served as a Medical Investigator with the US Navy from 1959-1961. He came to Seattle in 1963 as a Research Fellow in the Division of Endocrinology, and joined the faculty at VA Medical Center as a Clinical Investigator in 1965. He has lead the Seattle division's Research & Development program as its Director since 1971.

Under Dr. Porte's leadership VA's research & development program rose to become one of the leading VA research programs in the country, addressing a broad spectrum of diseases that afflict our nation's veterans, and the general population. He developed strong components not only in Biomedical Research, but also in the areas of Health Services, Rehabilitation and Clinical Research as well. This prominence and success is largely due to Dr. Porte's leadership and devotion to the program; he is particularly known for mentoring and supporting young investigators.

As a scientist, Dr. Porte's research is highly original and has been extremely important to the field of metabolism. His initial observations frequently led to new areas of investigation. This led to new understanding, identification and treatment of diseases in metabolism, specifically obesity and diabetes. He was the first to propose that insulin regulates body weight by acting on the brain. He demonstrated the presence of insulin receptors in specific regions of the central nervous system, and that insulin directly affects a potent stimulator of food intake called neuropeptide y.

Dr. Porte has received numerous awards and honors, including the David Rumbaugh Award from the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation International, the Banting Medal for Outstanding Scientific Achievement and the Albert Renold Award from the American Diabetes Association, and the VA's highest award for research, the Middleton Award. 

*Dr. William Hazzard joins VA as Chief of Geriatrics & Extended Care*

**D**r. William Hazzard's recent move to the Northwest brings him full circle, having launched his academic medical career at the University of Washington. Dr. Hazzard spent his residency at the UW and then served a fellowship in endocrinology and metabolism and then went on to serve thirteen years on the faculty, rising to professor in 1978. Dr. Hazzard most recently was on the

Wake Forest Medical School Faculty in Winston-Salem N.C. where he was Professor and Chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine and was founding Director of the J. Paul Sticht Center on Aging. He received his MD from the Cornell in 1962, and stayed on for his medical internship. Dr. Hazzard founded the Division of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine at the UW. In 1982 he joined the faculty

of Johns Hopkins as Associate Director of the Department of Medicine and founder of their gerontology and geriatric medicine program. While at Johns Hopkins, he also helped establish a new Center on Aging and a similar continuum of geriatric care at the Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Southeast Baltimore (now the Hopkins Bayview Campus).

# In the News

## 1999 Clinical Program of Excellence

VA Puget Sound's Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) program was recently named a 1999 Clinical Program of Excellence by the Acting Under Secretary for Health. Of the 112 applicants, only four SCI programs nationally were included in the list of 43 winners. These high performing clinical programs meet the strictest standards of clinical care, patient satisfaction and resource utilization, and also serve as a model for Department of Veterans Affairs.

Factors scored in rating SCI Centers included excellence in clinical care outcomes; excellence in structures and processes; excellence in cost effectiveness, excellence in teaching and research; excellence in use of human resources.

Other national SCI Centers selected were Tampa, Milwaukee and Augusta.

## Advance Practice Award



Cynthia Dougherty, ARNP, PhD, recently received the Advanced Practice Nurse of the Year award from the American Association of Critical Care

Nurses. Cindy has been a critical care nurse for 20 years with an emphasis in cardiology. The cardiac symptom clinic has been successful in managing patients with severe heart disease, significantly improving their quality of life. This nurse practitioner case management model is being used to design other systems of care for those with chronic illnesses.

## Ms. Manning receives National Award

Frankie Manning, RN, Nurse Executive was in Washington DC earlier this fall to receive the prestigious Congressional Black Caucus Brain Trust Award for her contributions to veterans. Ms. Manning is well known for her personal and professional dedication to veterans, her involvement in community outreach, and her leadership role with our school partnership programs.

## CEO Announces New Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Gordon A. Starkebaum assumed the responsibilities of Chief Medical Officer for VA Puget Sound Health Care System, December 1, 1999. Dr. Starkebaum is well known to the staff at VA Puget Sound, having served as a rheumatologist on staff since 1980 and Acting Director of Primary and Specialty Medical Care for the past year. He is Professor and Acting Vice Chairman for the Department of Medicine at the University of Washington. With Dr. Starkebaum's leadership, we can anticipate continued growth in the quality and strength of VA Puget Sound's clinical, academic and research programs and collaborative efforts within the Northern Alliance and VISN.

Many thanks are extended to Dr. Paul Nichol for his service as Acting Chief Medical Officer for the past three months. As anticipated, he provided a smooth transition and ongoing support of our clinical, research and academic activities during this assignment.

## Northwest Network

### Northern Alliance Referral System (NARS)

The Northern Alliance Referral Team (NARS) is up and running! The concept of NARS is to provide "One Stop" service for transfers (acceptance of a patient for admission) and referrals (acceptance of a patient for outpatient care or consultation) within the Northern Alliance. Facilities in Alaska, Idaho and Washington began processing inpatient transfers from other Northern Alliance and non-VA facilities October 4, 1999.

NARS ensures a seamless process of care for the veterans being treated within the Northern Alliance. The various members of the Northern

Alliance are developing and sharing information in support of this consolidated process.

Operating during regular business hours, NARS coordinates activities which include initial acceptance of a patient for admission through return of the patient and medical information to the referring facility for appropriate follow-up. Continued automation of the information systems will be key in implementing the outpatient referrals with improved tracking and reporting between facilities. Outpatient referrals will begin in January 2000.

# Veterans

*Our*

*family,*

*Our friends.*

*Reclaiming a Life*



**A**lcohol and drugs are not the only thing that can be addicting. Ask Anne Gresham. Ask her about the television ads for casinos and winning big in the Washington State Lotto. Ask her how this can be a problem for some people. It's been a long road to recovery, and thanks to an intensive program at VA Puget Sound's Homeless Domiciliary (the "Dom"), Anne has no interest in gambling again.

Anne is a friendly, outgoing 52-year old woman who will soon return to her career as a LPN in Oregon. She served in the US Army from December 1970 through July 1973.

Several years and tears ago, she was living in the Mandela House, a homeless shelter in Tacoma. At that time, Anne was suffering from an infected toe, a bruised self-image, and feelings of despair. Thanks to Lance Longworth, a member of the Homeless Domiciliary Outreach team, Anne was accepted into the Dom program.

In May 1996, Anne entered the Homeless Domiciliary program at the American Lake Division of VA Puget Sound. Working through a specialized treatment program at the Domiciliary,

Anne developed ever-increasing levels of personal responsibility. Besides learning the root causes of addictive personalities, Anne also learned to set goals and focus on her strengths. Three weeks into the program, she was sent to Cleveland VA Medical Center's Brecksville Division for a five-week program geared specifically toward individuals with gambling addictions.

On her return to American Lake, Dave Glickman, a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, assisted Anne in acquiring the skills she needed to return to her

life in the community. Dave developed strategies that would support Anne in achieving full employability. These included interviewing skills, marketing abilities, and targeting potential employers. The Homeless Domiciliary program has assisted other persons like Anne, to survive – and thrive – again.

Anne was discharged from the "Dom" in December of 1996. Today, Anne is working in the community, has her own apartment, and is resuming her dreams. ♡



## Vets Helping Vets

This past year, VA Puget Sound received over \$500,000 in monetary and in-kind donations. Of this amount, over \$120,000 in cash and equipment was contributed by veterans service organizations such as the Alliance of American Veterans (AAV) and Disabled American Veterans. The alliance also donated \$38,500 in cash for wheelchairs, picnic tables, park benches, computers for the Spinal Cord Injury Unit, a patient welfare fund, Christmas ornaments, and lights for the traffic circle garrison flag at American Lake.

The Disabled American Veterans and contributors from other service organizations provided four shiny new transport vans for the patient DAV Transportation Network. Thousands of veterans who have no other means of transportation to either campus of VA Puget Sound are provided this service each year.

## Award Supports Winter Sports Clinic

The Greater Seattle Womens Bowling Association, a long-time supporter of disabled veterans, presented VA Puget Sound with a \$5,000 check to support the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. The sports clinic aims to promote veterans' health and effective adjustment to disability.



(L-R) Kristie Kvitle; Kendra Betz; Sandy Symons; Alice Spencer, Dave Tostenrude; Sandy Nielsen, COO; Muriel Pfeiffer; Marie Osborne; JJ Conavad; and Elaine Mulronev.

## Comments from the CEO (continued)

In FY 2000 and beyond, our challenges will be to eliminate the waiting list for primary care; increase our workload in category A patients; develop comprehensive Hepatitis C screening programs; strengthen our integrated care system within the Northern Alliance; build on the One VA concept; and implement the Millennium Health Care Act.

## VA Puget Sound NEWS

VA Puget Sound News is published quarterly, each autumn, winter, spring and summer by the Office of Public Affairs. VA Puget Sound Health Care System proudly serves veterans throughout the Northwest with facilities located in Seattle and at American Lake. VA Puget Sound is part of the VISN 20 network of health care facilities.

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## Influenza Immunization Campaign

Every year, serious illness associated with influenza takes a heavy toll on persons who are 65 years of age or older, and those with chronic health problems (diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, etc). The yearly influenza immunization campaign runs from September 1999 through March 2000. We encourage patients to obtain the vaccine before the first outbreak. It takes about two weeks to build up resistance to the disease after vaccination.

- ❖ How effective is the vaccine? About 70-80% effective in preventing influenza. If you get influenza despite being vaccinated, you may experience a milder episode of illness than you would have without the vaccination.
- ❖ Will I need to take the vaccine again? Some people confuse the flu vaccine with the pneumonia vaccine. Flu viruses change often; therefore, it is recommend that the flu vaccine be taken yearly.
- ❖ Will it make me sick? Some individuals may experience soreness at the injection site and/or low-grade fever within 24-48 hours after receiving the vaccine.
- ❖ Will it give me the flu? No, the vaccine will not cause you to get the flu.

## Veteran's Web Survival Kit

<http://www.va.gov/kids/>  
<http://www.homefrontmag.org>  
<http://www.vnis.com>

<http://www.wwiimemorial.com>  
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