

Earthquake in VISN 20

On Wednesday, February 28, 2001, a 6.8 magnitude earthquake hit the Puget Sound area about 10-11 miles northeast of the state capital at Olympia, WA. The quake, which was felt, as far as 870 miles away in Salt Lake City, resulted in significant damage over the Puget Sound region.

Two VISN 20 facilities were in a 20-50 mile radius of the quake's epicenter. Hardest hit was the American Lake division of VA Puget Sound Health Care System, while the Seattle division sustained minor damage. Minor damage was noted as far away as the Portland VA facility about 150 miles south of the epicenter.

Most important, there were no injuries to patients or employees. I must say that I was very proud to be part of VA during this event. The staff at the facilities in Puget Sound had a lightning quick response with an emergency operations center being activated in Seattle within five minutes of the earthquake. Every step of the response was coordinated and expertly carried out. The patients, the facilities and the equipment were quickly assessed in one smooth operation that got things back to an operational level very quickly. I cannot begin to enumerate all the episodes of quick thinking and very sound responses that were carried out in these busy facilities that were full of patients when the earthquake was occurring in the middle of the workday. There were simply outstanding responses on everyone's part.

I want to especially recognize the employees of all the disciplines whose first thoughts were for the veteran patients. In the face of real personal peril, they stayed with the patients making sure they were protected, cared for and calmed.

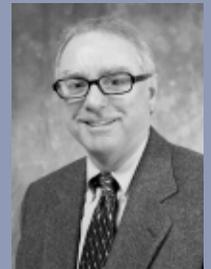
We had the great good fortune of having a civilian structural engineer on site doing some VA contract work for us. He is a Korean War veteran. He spent two days with engineers at the American Lake facility crawling over, under and around buildings assessing the damage for us at no charge. He took me aside at a quiet moment and said, "You know, I never knew what great care you all give to veterans out here. These people here, all of them, are passionate about caring for veterans. I see it everywhere, and I want you to know how impressed I am with the care and concern I saw here during and after this earthquake."

Thanks for the offers of support and help from Loma Linda, Hines and a number of other centers out there. Knowing you were there to help was great. We are safe, well and recovering quickly. Now the work really begins in earnest to get back full capabilities to care for America's veterans in the northwest.

Wm. Ted Galey, MD
Network Director, VISN 20

CMO Comments

How can we encourage patient participation in decisions affecting their healthcare? Simply by asking if patients have any questions sends a message that we are interested in what they understand and how they feel. Our ability to communicate is a critical factor in determining how well we manage the health problems of our patients. Here are common issues that arise between patient and provider, and thoughts about possible remedies:



*Dr. Starkebaum,
Chief Medical Officer*

- How can the emotional needs of our patients be met and allow them enough time with their provider to resolve questions and/or concerns? This issue is a constant challenge in a busy clinic. Sometimes just a few extra minutes can make a world of difference in how patients perceive their care and their caregivers. Sometimes I promise to resume the conversation at the next visit, and make a reminder in the record.
- What can be done to improve our patients' understanding about the benefits and potential side effects of medications prescribed for them? Since therapy often depends heavily on proper use of prescribed medications, it is very important for patients to understand why they are taking their medications and what to watch for regarding side effects. Again, this may be addressed by asking if patients have any questions about the medication, and explaining what they can expect from it, and what types of side effects might they experience. I usually review this issue at every visit.

(Continued on page 8)

Quality in Action

Quality

March is Social Worker Month

Within the Department of Veteran Affairs, there are over 4300 social workers. Puget Sound Health Care System has over eighty-six full time social workers and twelve interns. Social Workers are involved with providing services in almost all of the programs at VA Puget Sound. Areas in which social workers are most active include: Primary & Specialty Medical Care, Mental Health, Addiction Treatment Programs, the Homeless Veterans Program, Geriatrics and Long Term Care, Rehabilitation Services and Spinal Cord Injury Service. Social workers provide a variety of services from helping patients and families to cope with their illness, helping veterans navigate the VA system, provide advance care planning assistance, discharge planning and helping veterans access community resources.

Clinical Pastoral Education Receives Accreditation

The Chaplain's Office recently received full accreditation to conduct programs of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), thereby designating VA Puget Sound as one of the area's elite training centers for clergy, seminarians, and qualified lay people. Since 1995 CPE has been offered to approximately 14 interns a year, yet the accreditation of our program provides the coordinator, Chaplain Steve Spencer, with the foundation to further develop CPE throughout our system. Under supervision, students are placed throughout the medical center providing ministry to veterans and their families, while respecting all faith traditions and religions. CPE students are integrated into existing treatment teams and work alongside other healthcare professionals.



Chaplains Steve Spencer and Chris Morton

Chaplain Chris Morton, the program's first year-long resident, 1999-2000, provided a ministry presence and expertise to mental health patients, PTSD patients, female veterans, and to patients in the GIMC. This allowed Chaplaincy to expand its services to veterans, and provided Chaplain Morton with a unique context to learn and develop as a professional.

Rehab Medicine Receives CARF Accreditation

The Medical Rehabilitation Program, and Comprehensive Integrated Inpatient Rehabilitation (CIIRP) has been awarded a 3 year accreditation by CARE, the rehabilitation accreditation commission. This represents the highest level of accreditation, awarded to organizations that show substantial fulfillment of the standards. This is the second CARF award received by VA Puget Sound, SCI previously received a 3 year award. This achievement is an indication of an organization's dedication and commitment to improving the quality of the lives of the people receiving services. The staff who were committed to obtaining this accreditation worked as a team to develop new service delivery processes. Their efforts were exceptional and were achieved at a time when the program was undergoing numerous changes. Their hard work is to be commended.

JCAHO is coming!

As we look forward to another visit from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), we will have multiple opportunities to share our focus on excellent patient care. In preparation, we are working with other facilities within our Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) to complete ongoing assessments for perpetual readiness. VISN 20 operates in an environment of significant oversight from external agencies. Included among these are:

- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Inspector General (IG)
- Government Accounting Office (GAO)
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)
- College of American Pathologists (CAP)
- Office of Research Compliance Accreditation (ORCA)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Congressional offices

In the past, we have used external consultants to assess our readiness. Now we are utilizing the expertise of our own experts who will be visiting each facility within the VISN to assess our strengths and weaknesses. The goal is that each facility will always be ready for any external agency that decides to drop in for a visit. In the future, JCAHO is making plans to visit healthcare facilities at any time including weekends and evenings without announcing their arrival. This program will allow us to prepare for these unannounced visits from any agency.

National Orthopaedic Award

Bruce Sangeorzan, M.D., has received the 2001 Orthopaedic Research and Education Foundation (OREF) Clinical Research Award from the orthopaedic research and education foundation and American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. The prestigious award, which includes \$20,000 in research support, recognizes outstanding clinical research related to musculoskeletal disease or injury.

Dr. Sangeorzan, who directs the VA Puget Sound Center of Excellence for Limb Loss Prevention and Prosthetics Engineering, is widely known for his leadership in research to prevent amputations through understanding foot function. He and his colleagues received the OREF award for a project in which they documented the impact of fractures and deformities on the joints of the hindfoot. This information helps explain how the disorders create mechanical problems in the foot and provides guidance to physicians on treatment options.

World Class Cancer Center

VA Puget Sound announces an open house to celebrate its newly designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. The event will be held at the Seattle Division on Wednesday, March 21st, from 12 Noon to 2:00pm in Building 100, Room BB-108 and is open to staff, patients, volunteers and the public.

"The Open House is to let everyone know that the VA is dedicated to providing state-of-the-art cancer treatment for veterans of the Pacific Northwest," said Kevin Billingsley, MD, surgical oncologist, and director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center. The project was recently designated as a "Comprehensive Cancer Center / Teaching Hospital Cancer Program." This is a hard-earned recognition and requires rigorous performance standards and evaluation. The designation was built on strong ties with the University of Washington and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

"Cancer is a devastating diagnosis, which requires multiple and complex services," said Billingsley. "The Center here at Puget Sound serves VA's Northern Alliance Medical Centers at Anchorage, Boise, Spokane and Walla Walla, offering a comprehensive approach to cancer treatment. By way of teleconferences, patient cases can be presented to a multidisciplinary team of physicians at one session (for example, oncologists, radiologists, otolaryngologists (head and neck specialists), and urologists. The idea to do as much work up front as possible at the veteran's home facility.

"Services are coordinated so that diagnostic test results such as CT scans, MRIs, etc., can be sent forward, minimizing patient time spent waiting for appointments in Seattle. An added benefit is that now patients may be able to be treated entirely at their home facility with the assurance of knowing that their cases have been presented to a multidisciplinary treatment team."

"There is an educational component to the Cancer Center as well," according to David Schwartz, MD, radiation oncologist and assistant director for the center. "We have been hosting a monthly Oncology Conference via live teleconference since last May. This conference is available to staff and patients at any of the facilities in the Northern Alliance." Continuing medical education credits will soon be offered for the conference. Topics span a wide range of oncology issues. Past topics have included "Prostate Seed Brachytherapy," "The Role of Chemoprevention in Breast Cancer," and "Palliative Care." For more information call (206) 764-2255.

Hepatitis C - VA's Leadership Role

Jason Dominitz, MD and Edward Boyko, MD, MPH have been awarded a \$1 million grant from VA Cooperative Studies Program to study the prevalence of hepatitis C infection among veterans. The study will begin April 1st and continue for 18 months, involving twenty participating VA medical centers across the nation.

Estimates of the numbers of infected patients are unreliable, ranging from a low of 2% up to 10%, with some VA medical centers reporting estimates as high as 20%. It is important to determine accurately the risk of this disorder among veterans, to assess their future needs, since effective therapy exists for some persons with this infection.

Dr. Dominitz is a staff physician in Gastroenterology at VA Puget Sound, and assistant professor of medicine at UW. Dr. Boyko is director of both the General Internal Medicine Section and the Epidemiologic Research and Information Center at VA Puget Sound, and professor of medicine and adjunct professor of epidemiology at UW.

For more information on hepatitis C outreach, testing and education, contact the Hepatitis C Information Line at 206-764-2843.

IV Nurse of the Year

Congratulations to Tim Royer, nurse manager, intravenous team (IV). Tim was selected by the Puget Sound Chapter of IV Nurse's Society as the IV Nurse of the Year. This selection includes Tim's advanced work with the Site Rite instrumentation to reduce interventional radiology. This will soon be published nationally. This is a great tribute to the excellent contribution that Tim makes consistently to improve services to patients and the practice of nursing. This is a significant honor for Mr. Royer and VA Puget Sound.

ON THE NEWS

Recognize *Quality* Job Performance-

Nominate your peers

VA Puget Sound has several ways to recognize and award its employees.

- The SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION AWARD recognizes employees for a specific contribution, act, service or achievement through a cash or time off award.
- The EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH Program recognizes employees who take pride in a job well done and who contribute in a special way to serving our veterans, fellow employees, and our community. The employee selected receives a cash award, designated parking space, and a pen/pencil set.
- The EMPLOYEE SUGGESTION/INVENTIONS PROGRAM recognizes suggestions or inventions by an employee or group of employees that benefit the government and/or public through a cash award.
- The ON-THE-SPOT AWARD recognizes employee for a one-time contribution to excellent customer service with an award pin.

For more information contact Brenda Chapman in Human Resources at 206-277-6194 or at ext. 6-6194.

Thanks a Latte!

Mr. Williams, CEO, recently launched a new “Thanks a Latte” program to reward staff for excellence on the job. When an employee is recognized by name in patient’s thank you letters, the employee will receive a coupon good for up to \$2.50 in purchases at the latte stand or canteen store at either division. This is a little gift to say, “thanks” for your efforts.

For information contact: Marilyn Campise at 206-277-6192, ext. 6-4950.



Northwest Network News

After-Hours Pharmacy Program Launched

Pharmacy Service at VA Puget Sound Health Care System, with the help of Information System Services, has started a new service in the Northern Alliance to improve patient safety.

Beginning this past January, Seattle Division pharmacists have been utilizing network computer connections to review and verify inpatient medication orders written after hours at Walla Walla VA Medical Center. We will soon extend this after-hours support to Spokane VA Medical Center. Prescribers at American Lake Division have been receiving this after-hours support since implementation of the Computerized Patient Record System in September 1997.

One of the immediate benefits to VA Puget Sound Pharmacy, is the purchase of robotics for inpatient dispensing to support this program. In addition, participating sites will provide funding for pharmacy technician staffing that will help improve speed and efficiency of local pharmacy services.

The benefits to Walla Walla and Spokane include immediate review of new pharmacy orders and improving patient safety. Previously, these orders were verified by the local pharmacy the following day, often after the drug was administered. Of equal importance, now nurses and providers have access to a pharmacist 24 hours a day, seven days a week to discuss any drug related questions that may arise during the evening and night hours.

VISN 20 benefits from this program in a number of ways:

- Patient safety is improved as a result of more immediate review of new pharmacy orders
 - Services are provided at a fraction of the cost that would be needed to add evening and night pharmacists on shifts at locations where 24-hour service doesn't currently exist
 - Communication is enhanced between Northern Alliance sites
- Computer routines, policy and procedures established by VA Puget Sound are instantly available to other sites.

Liz Burris

Running to recovery

Liz Burris has traveled many roads. Today you might meet her walking or running on the road as she trains for the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society Benefit Maui Marathon in March 2001. She looks fit and determined to meet this challenge. Her electric smile and enthusiastic presence greet you, but they do not reveal where she has been on her road to recovery. It is amazing even to her as she reflects on the past ten years of her life.

In 1990, she was a US Army captain. "I was super strong and running everyday. I thought I could do anything." In August of that year, she was one of 679,000 troops deployed to the Persian Gulf for Operation Desert Shield, subsequently Desert Storm. She left behind her husband and children. She was the commanding officer of a petroleum transportation unit that trucked fuel over a million miles of desert roads in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The official groundwar lasted only four days in late February 1991, but the smoke and fumes from the burning oil fields persisted, blocking the sunlight and coating every surface with a black oily film. She and her troops were given vaccines and medications, which rendered little solace for the constant threat of physical or chemical attack in their desert tents. She fell off a truck and ruptured a disc. By the time she returned home, she could barely

walk. She experienced depression and had nightmares of the desert inferno. Symptoms of chronic fatigue, rashes, joint pain and bacterial and sinus infections became part of her life. She wondered if she would ever feel better.

When she left active duty, she went back to school at the University of Puget Sound to pursue a master's degree in occupational therapy. She often lay on the floor to listen to lectures as sitting in a chair was too painful. She graduated in 1996 and now works for the Tacoma school district serving children with special needs. She is also a consultant to the occupational therapy faculty at the University of Puget Sound.

Despite a few unexplained neurological issues, she feels great when compared with her 1991 "Yellow Ribbon" homecoming. She credits much of her progress in battling her symptoms to her care at VA Puget Sound Health Care System. Especially helpful was the psychiatrist who treated her symptoms of depression. More recently, she participated in VA's nationwide Gulf War study focusing on exercise and/or cognitive behavioral therapy. As a result she is now on the "road to the Maui Marathon." Liz is quick to point out that this may not work for everyone, but she feels healthier and excited about life again. In a note to her provider she wrote, "Your attitude and



Liz Burris

compassion for veterans shows in all you do. Please remember your 'acts of kindness' are not unrecognized and are appreciated."

If you are interested in contributing to the Leukemia/Lymphoma Benefit Maui Marathon, contact Liz Burris at cburris@aol.com.

To contact the Gulf War Clinic:
Seattle division 206-277-5293
American Lake division
253-582-8440, ext 76228

Essential Items Sought for Homeless Vets

Each year the Disabled American Veteran's (DAV) Service Organization spends thousands of dollars purchasing personal hygiene items for distribution to both in-patients and homeless veterans that seek services through our medical center. The DAV has found that demand for such items is increasing but the costs are also rising.

To meet the increasing demand for these essential items, Social Work has joined the Disabled American Veterans by encouraging employees and friends to donate their surplus travel size hygiene supplies. These items will be used to

replenish the existing stock of individual sized shampoos, toothpastes, hand cream, etc. that are maintained on each floor of the hospital by the DAV. In addition, these same personal hygiene items will also be used to make "comfort kits" that are distributed to homeless and low-income veterans on an as needed basis. For a needy veteran, these simple toiletries can represent a first step in their quest to regain personal dignity. Will you help?

Questions regarding this program should be directed to Linda Gillespie-Gateley, GIMC Social Worker at 206-762-1010, ext. 6-5474.

Personal hygiene items can be:

- Dropped off at the Social Work Administrative Offices located in Building 1 on the 2nd floor;
- Deposited in one of the numerous collection bins located throughout the hospital;
- Brought to the GIMC Social Workers' office located in Building 1, Room 128;
- Picked up personally by calling 206-762-1010, ext. 6-5474; or
- Given to any DAV representative in the hospital.

Veterans

Our family, Our friends

Veteran, Volunteer, Hero

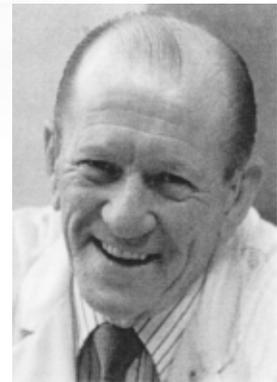
Brownie Braunsteiner

It is rare that we get a chance to say all we should to those we care about before they leave us. As difficult as this is to do, we want to take the time given us to thank “Brownie” Braunsteiner for his valued service to this country and for his selfless advocacy on behalf of veterans and the local community. Recently, Brownie was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer.

Brownie’s life began in Vienna, Austria. As a youth, he survived the physical and emotional trauma of growing up during the Hitler regime. In 1939, at age 12, he emigrated to the United States; and in 1944, at 17, Brownie enlisted in the U.S. Army. After serving in WWII, Korea, the Berlin Crisis, and Vietnam, he retired as a First Sergeant in 1971. Gifted in languages and speaking fluent German, Brownie served as an interpreter and translator during the 1945 Nuremberg Trials. He also tutored President John F. Kennedy in pronouncing “Ich bin ein Berliner” for the President’s famous 1961 Unity Speech in Berlin.

Following his army career, Brownie began another phase of service — service to his fellow veterans and local community. “I wanted to give back to this country for the freedom it has given me, so I started volunteering.” And so he did! For over 24 years Brownie has volunteered at the American Lake division as a member and VA voluntary service representative for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). He also serves as an educator and outreach worker for the Diabetes Association of Pierce County, chairs the Pierce County Veterans Association, and is a member of the board for Veterans Independent Enterprises of Washington (VIEW).

Although you will never hear him talk about his selfless giving and involvement, Mr. Braunsteiner is well known in Washington state and across the nation. He is a member of many veteran, civic, and fraternal organizations and has been presented with over 20 awards, including the Washington State Governor’s



Outstanding Volunteer Award, the Military Order of the Purple Heart and AMVETS Volunteer of the Year awards, and the Department of Defense Community Volunteer Award. Those who know him often jokingly say, “Brownie! Get a life!”

Brownie Braunsteiner will be the first to tell it as it is, and we, at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System, are pleased that he has often stated, “This is the best health care system, I wouldn’t want to be treated anywhere else.”

From the veterans, the volunteers, and the staff of VA Puget Sound Health Care System, thank you, Brownie Braunsteiner, YOU ARE OUR HERO!

Veteran, Volunteer, Hero

Providing Job Opportunities

That Make a Difference

Do you know what it takes to help someone through vocational rehabilitation to become employable again? The Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) and Incentive Therapy (IT) programs at VA Puget Sound provide job opportunities for disabled veterans by pairing them with professionally trained vocation rehabilitation staff. These staff work with veterans to determine their strengths and employment skill sets. Counselors help employable veterans to rejoin the competitive labor market, and work with veterans when their disabilities impact full-time employment. Wendy Willats, vocational rehabilitation specialist, coordinates a wide variety of hospital-based and community job assignments to ensure that veterans receive valuable, paid, on-the-job training. Garfield Brooks, incentive therapy coordinator, evaluates and places disabled veterans in part-time jobs at various sites at American Lake and Seattle. Assignments for both programs are as varied as the range of full-time occupations found at the Medical Center and in the community and include food service, housekeeping, medical supply, nursing service, maintenance, clerical, and administrative jobs.

Each year nearly 400 veterans find meaningful work experience through CWT/IT positions. Pay rates range from \$2.25 per hour to \$5.70 per hour. Veterans placed in community positions through the VET TEMPS Program may receive prevailing community wages. For some veterans, that may include a housing component through the community-based Therapeutic Residence Programs managed by Willis Farless, veterans residential services. Transitional Residences (TR) is residential recovery program for homeless, unemployed veterans who have recently completed a substance abuse treatment program. The goals of the program are for veterans to establish a community-based sobriety support system, obtain competitive employment in the community, and leave the program independently housed in the community. These programs have proven to be beneficial to the medical center as well; during periods of financial constraint, when manpower shortage exist, these workers have made the difference. In 1999, CWT/IT workers provided more than 204,000 man-hours to American Lake and Seattle. The CWT and IT Programs represent the true meaning of serving those who served us well.

Contact Wendy Willats (CWT) at 253-582-8440 ext. 7-6908 or Garfield Brooks (IT) at ext. 7-6888, Building 148 at American Lake.



Veterans Comments about CWT/TR

“Transitional Residence/Compensated Work Therapy was a wonderful concept and a lifesaver for a person like me.” “I was at the end of my rope, and believe me I had enough rope to hang myself ten times over. I had lied to my family, stolen from my friends and had blamed everyone and everything for the way my life was going.”

The CWT/TR program can be a motivating factor, which can reunite a person with the “real world” and give them a sense of responsibility and purpose.

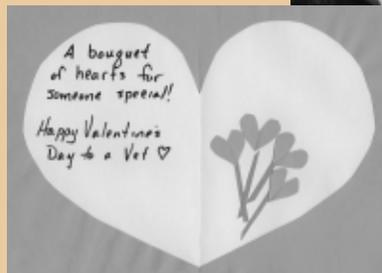
“I did not complete my contract with the program.” “No program is suited to everyone, but I thank the CWT staff for working with me and helping me realize what kind of help I really needed and being there when I needed help the most.”

“I am working full time, while continuing counseling with the ATC and PTSD groups at American Lake and Seattle. I am once again becoming a responsible, productive and happy person.”

National Salute to Hospitalized Vets



Thunderbird, “Blitz” Seahawk and Mariner Moose visit veterans Thomas Wright and Benito Busto during National Salute.



Information Security, Why You Need to Care-

In our continuing effort to improve information security, VA Puget Sound has recently expanded the Information Security Office. A new full-time information security officer, Eileen Gormly, will work with two assistant security officers to improve the quality of our security measures and ensure full compliance with all regulations.

Information Security protects automated and hard-copy information systems against unauthorized disclosure, modification or destruction of the system and/or the data and includes all printed matter pertaining to patient and employees, radiology films, networked video conferences, the telephone system and even conversations between providers about patients in their care. VA Puget Sound is dedicated to making sure that veteran and employee information is safe and secure. As employees and patients, you will be hearing more about the ways in which VA Puget Sound will continue to ensure security and privacy of all patient and employee information.

(CMO Comments continued from page 1)

- If patients are dissatisfied with referral outcomes, or are anxious about the next step in their health care, how should those concerns be addressed? Open a dialog with your patients to find out why they are dissatisfied or why they don't know what they can anticipate in their treatment plan. Effective listening often involves paraphrasing what he/she said, such as saying, "If I understand correctly, you are upset about ..."
- When patients lack confidence or trust in a caregiver, what can be done to restore that faith? This may not have a simple solution, and will often require ongoing effort. Taking the time to find out why patients lack confidence shows that we are interested in them. Perhaps they just have unanswered questions or have fears that have not been addressed. Sometimes spending a few extra minutes with the patient can make the difference.

You may have noticed that my response to each issue involves dialog - communication with the patient. The more information the patient has about his/her condition, prognosis, treatment plan, medication and potential outcomes, the less likely the patient will be fearful or misunderstand. Communication emphasizes one of the most obvious means to assess quality of care: how satisfied is the patient? Communication, at least from a patient's viewpoint, is the extent to which we convey an attitude of caring. Communication is key to patient satisfaction with their care and with their caregivers. When patients are satisfied with their care, ultimately this results in better health and improved performance measures.

One VA Update

It's time to update you on what is happening with the One VA initiative. Remember, One VA is a common theme among all of us in VA's service - whether cemetery, benefits, health - to better coordinate services in a more efficient and customer-oriented way. One of the first steps is to help employees see the big picture, no matter what their job is, to see themselves as part of the whole. To that end, here is what's going on:

- A slide presentation has been developed for use in New Employee Orientation. Now all incoming staff will have a sense of the big picture and will know about our VA partners all around Washington state.
- Some learning materials have been received to begin training employees in interactive groups. If you have ever heard of "Learning Maps" it's a great new way to gain knowledge while having some fun along the way.
- Watch for your own One VA reference card, coming in March. You can attach this card behind your identification badge and have access to all the 1-800 contact numbers. When someone asks you a question about, for example, education benefits under the GI bill, you will now be able to take charge, be in the know and give them a phone number right to that office. "Yes, I can help you."

Fasten your seat belts...we're moving forward...as one VA.

Back Issues of VA Puget Sound News are available on the VA Puget Sound Web Site

www.Puget-Sound.med.va.gov

Veterans Art Competition

The 13th Annual Veterans Creative Arts Competition and Show was held at American Lake on Friday, March 2, 2001. There were over eighty entries in twenty-six categories, with artwork submitted by veterans from both Seattle and American Lake divisions. This year's Veterans Art Show was sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary. Washington state president Janet Easley chose the American Legion Auxiliary Best of Show Award out of the twenty-six first prize winners. The award was presented to Clifton Johnson for his chess set, board, and cover in applied art mixed media called "From Pharaohs to Celtics-Games Across Cultures" which took over 900 hours to complete.

Winners of this competition will be invited to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival held October 15-22, 2001 in Prescott, AZ. We are always looking for new veteran artists and craftspeople. For more information, contact Vicki Booth at (253) 582-8440, ext. 76198 or Todd Thomas at (206) 764-3461.



Puget Sound Health Care System
American Lake & Seattle

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