

Pulse

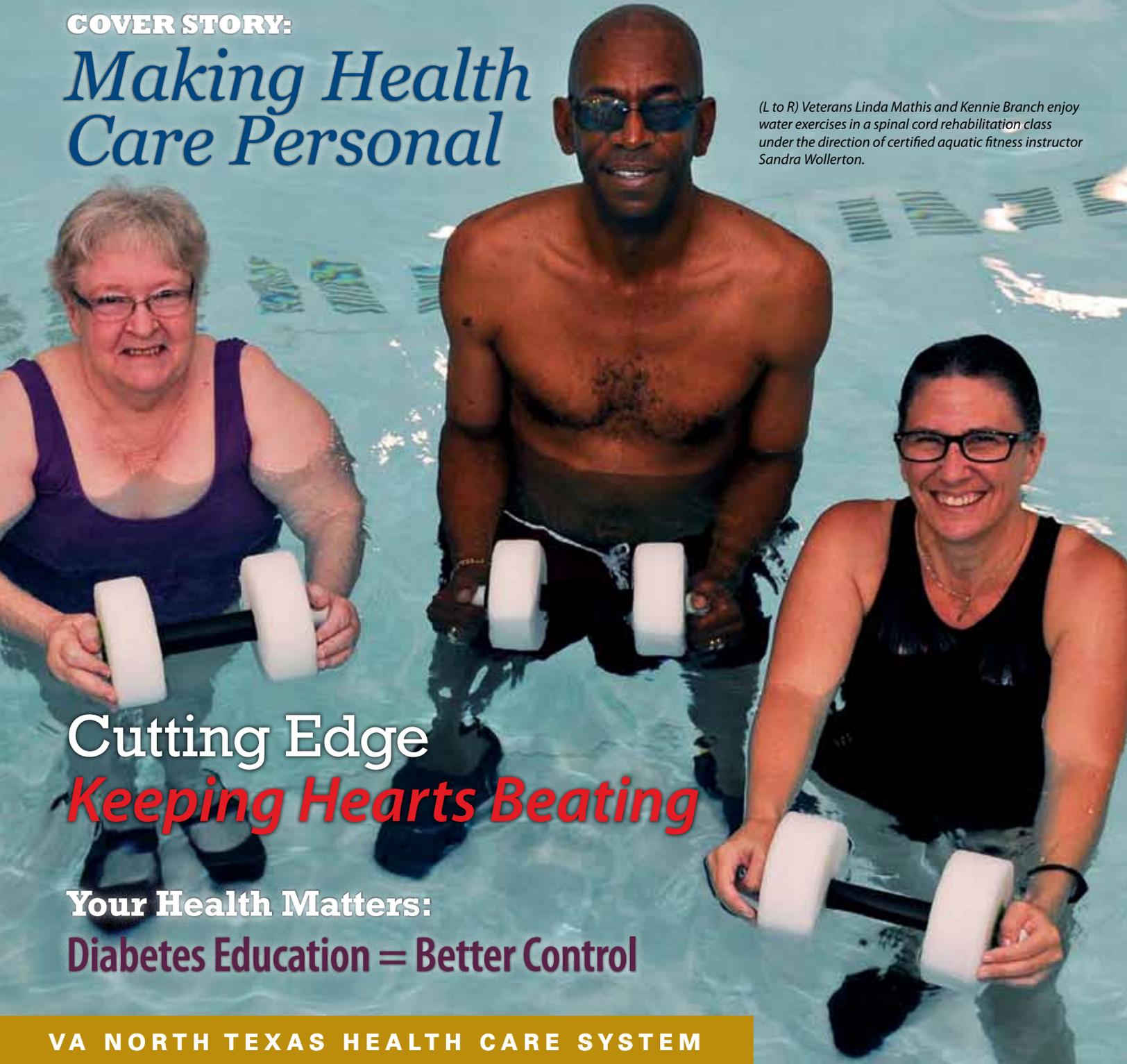
MAY 2012 EDITION 3

Tasty Food Choices

COVER STORY:

Making Health Care Personal

(L to R) Veterans Linda Mathis and Kennie Branch enjoy water exercises in a spinal cord rehabilitation class under the direction of certified aquatic fitness instructor Sandra Wollerton.



Cutting Edge *Keeping Hearts Beating*

**Your Health Matters:
Diabetes Education = Better Control**

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Pulse is published for the staff, volunteers and patients of VA North Texas Health Care System. We welcome your story ideas and suggestions. Send to ntxpublicaffairs@va.gov.

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Director's Message

It continues to be a fantastic experience to see our employees show courtesy, dignity and respect to our Veterans. Whether I am in Bonham, Dallas, Fort Worth or Tyler, I see staff interacting with Veterans and their families in a kind and compassionate manner.

At the recent former Prisoner of War (POW) luncheon, we had the pleasure of hosting 50 former POWs. Three of the attendees were survivors of the 1942 Bataan Death March. Those three gentlemen were all over 90 years old. It was an honor to interact with living history and it is an honor every day to care for individuals who have such a strong commitment to our great country.

As we continue our journey to provide more personalized care to these legends, we can no longer practice medicine with only science and technology. We must feel, understand and connect to what our Veterans want and need. The question is—how do we link hope to life improvement? We do that by being more personal and practicing a softer side to medicine.

The softer side of medicine has to do with wellness of mind, body and spirit. It's not just the physical, but it focuses on relationships and establishing a healthy circle of life. I encourage staff to talk to our Veterans and hear their life goals. Ask if we have provided everything they came in for that day. Even if you do not work in a clinical setting, you can help. Find out how we can make their experience better. And ensure patients we are personally

committed to their good health, wellness and happiness.

Never forget, as employees who serve at VA,

we have one of the most honorable missions to provide our Nation's noble men and women with health care that is second to none.

And by offering a softer and more compassionate side to healing, we can leave them with an experience that has them feeling satisfied and welcomed.

Though there will be challenges, we must find new ways to override them and capitalize on what we do best. We have a devoted staff and a committed leadership team who genuinely care. I know we can go far and finish this fiscal year off better than ever.

Let's continue to work together to see VANTHCS shine. You have my support, and I know I have yours too.

Sincerely,
Jeffery L. Milligan



With Diabetes, Education is the Key 

Diabetes is a chronic disease characterized by elevated blood sugar. People with diabetes do not produce enough insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas.

There are three major types of diabetes, each with different risk factors.

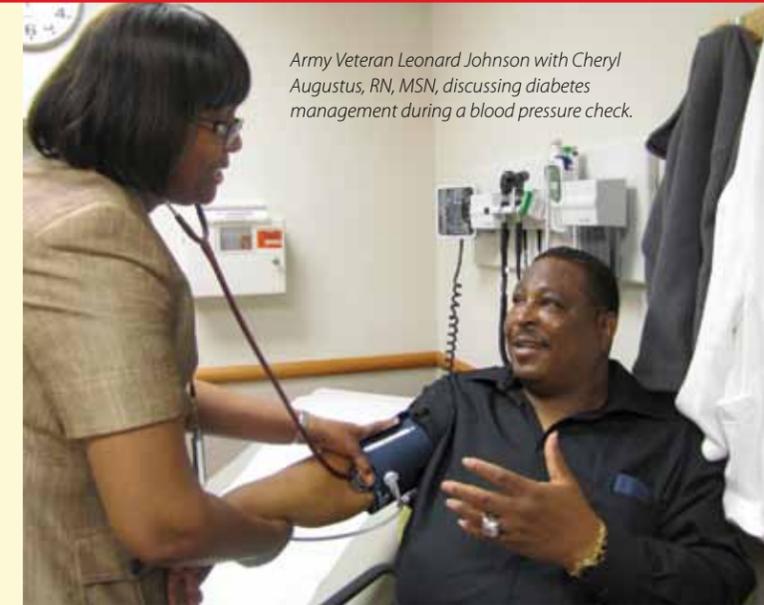
- **Type 1 Diabetes**—usually found in young children, teens and young adults, but can occur at any age. The body produces little or no insulin.
- **Type 2 Diabetes**—commonly found in mature adults. The body either does not produce enough insulin or does not use the insulin it produces correctly to help control blood sugar levels.
- **Gestational Diabetes**—diagnosed during pregnancy and usually resolves after the pregnancy ends.

Veterans at VA North Texas have support to help with diabetes management. Primary care providers, chronic disease managers, certified diabetes educators, patient education specialists and certified dietitians are available to help manage diabetes. There are a variety of access points like one on one interviews, group classes, inpatient bedside assessments and telephone services. The chronic disease nurses manage nine to 12 patients each day, either face to face or by telephone, through the new e-consult program.

VA North Texas follows the American Association Diabetes Educator guidelines to educate Veterans. The seven guideline principles are: healthy eating, being active, monitoring, taking medication, problem solving, reducing risks and healthy coping.

More than 30,000 Veterans in VA North Texas live with diabetes, each with their own unique stories. Leonard Johnson is a one of those Veterans. He has type 2 diabetes.

When he first found out he had diabetes, Johnson said he was surprised because to his knowledge, no one in his



Army Veteran Leonard Johnson with Cheryl Augustus, RN, MSN, discussing diabetes management during a blood pressure check.

family had diabetes. Johnson falls into a category of people who are high risk for developing diabetes. He is African-American, has an elevated body mass index (BMI), was not following a healthy diet and was leading a sedentary lifestyle.

Utilizing the education and support he received, Johnson made lifestyle changes that proved beneficial to his health. "I had to change the foods I ate, how my food was prepared, the time of my meals and also portion sizes," he said.

Johnson takes insulin to manage his disease. He was reluctant at first, but said when his nurse and doctors explained how insulin would help, he felt better. Johnson also learned that when he sticks to his diet, he does not have to take as much insulin.

Looking back, Johnson said making lifestyle changes was a challenge at first, but now he's thankful. He plans to continue on his diet, lose more weight and "enjoy life to the fullest."

You should contact your primary care provider if you have any of the following possible symptoms of diabetes:

- EXCESS THIRST
- FREQUENT URINATION
- BLURRY VISION
- HUNGER
- FATIGUE

Cover Story

Making Health Care Personal

What REALLY matters to you in your life? What do you value? These don't sound like the typical questions providers ask patients during visits. Veterans get ready. VA providers are moving away from: 'What brings you here today?' to 'What brings you joy or happiness?' Yes, providers are still concerned about why patients are coming to see them and to diagnose and treat them properly. But, VA North Texas is treating patients on literally a "whole" level.

While some illnesses and diseases consume a good amount of a patient's time or energy and their overall health and wellness, VA providers are on a mission to help Veterans understand they are not defined by their disease. And empowering Veterans to take charge of planning their goals puts them in charge.

VA North Texas has implemented a number of methods designed to treat the whole person and not just their disease.



Harry Scher, MS, APRN, BC, discussing healthy living goals with a patient.

(right) Rosemarie Resendez, M.D., consults with a Veteran during his podiatry appointment.

First there's PACT- Patient Aligned Care Team.

With PACT, patients are assigned to a team that includes a medical provider, registered nurse, licensed vocational nurse and a clerk. Patients are able to build relationships and identify with the same four team members at every visit. PACT also offers shared medical appointments in which patients are able to visit with their health care team in a group setting. This concept proves helpful for the management of diabetes and other chronic diseases.

Next there's secure messaging.

This unique communication tool is available through My HealthVet. It offers a variety of benefits for patients as well as health care professionals. Patients can contact their primary care physician and health care team to communicate with them about any health-related concerns. They can request consultations, appointments and renewals of medications. Patients can also request test results and receive a doctor's explanation.

Then there's Telehealth.

Telehealth is a technology that significantly improves the delivery of health care services to patients who may have a difficult time accessing care at a local facility. With the use of Telehealth equipment, health care providers come to the patient electronically either in their home or at a local clinic in their area.

The latest is the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP) program.

This program is another way VA North Texas is making health care more personal. The goal of HPDP is for health care providers and Veterans to work in partnership to identify personal goals for Veterans as patients. When patients play a part in the decision making, greater achievement is expected.



Patients meet with their provider and are given a questionnaire that outlines health choices. They are encouraged to set realistic goals for their health and choose the most important to them from among nine healthy living goals.

9 Healthy Living Goals

- Be involved in your health care.
- Be tobacco free.
- Eat wisely.
- Be physically active.
- Strive for a healthy weight.
- Limit alcohol.
- Get recommended screening tests and immunizations.
- Manage stress.
- Be safe.



"The HPDP program is designed to support a paradigm shift from disease centered care to patient centered care," said Harry Scher, HPDP program manager for VA North Texas. "This new approach empowers Veterans to partner with their health care team in a shared decision making process."

All of the programs, technologies and services VA North Texas offers are part of ongoing efforts to maintain an environment focused on patient centered care. VA North Texas serves more than 111,000 annually. We plan to touch every single one.

Unwritten Practices of Patient Centered Care

There are some components of patient centered care that are nowhere to be found in writing. They are concepts, thoughts and actions. They don't have operator's manuals or a set of guidelines and procedures. They're good old common sense practices that are sometimes overlooked but should not be forgotten.

For example, you can walk through Dallas VA Medical Center and find several areas "don't look like a typical hospital" at all. That's what employees hear from Veterans

who come and go. From the wood flooring and walls, and the earth-toned accents, to the plush comfort of homelike bedding and décor, patients are getting a different feel – sometimes with each visit. Freddy Fuller, a Veteran and patient at Dallas VA, said he notices how staff puts patients first. "Keep up the good work," he said. "You are all doing a wonderful job."

In some inpatient units, noise levels are controlled through the use of Sound Ear Noise monitors. The devices alert staff

when noise levels have exceeded the limit. In other areas where monitors are not being used, posters are in place as reminders to keep noise to a minimum. It's called SHHH, which stands for silent hospitals help healing.

Another example of patient centered care is the hospitality at the information desks. Guests are welcomed by a friendly employee and often provided with an escort in lieu of verbal directions. With Veterans and their families always coming and going, employees, volunteers and even patients sometimes pitch in to help out.

Keep in mind, this is not an exhaustive list of the numerous ways VA North Texas is making health care more patient centered. Patient centered care is inclusive of the overall experience a patient has at every VA medical facility or clinic in our system.

Pet therapy provides joy to patients.



Meet Mr. Dancy



VA Core Values

INTEGRITY

Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

COMMITMENT

Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

ADVOCACY

Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

RESPECT

Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

EXCELLENCE

Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes and rigorous in correcting them.

Network Director's Three Promises to Veterans:

1. Provide care second to none.
2. Maintain and expand services.
3. Every Veteran will be personally satisfied based on outcome.



VA North Texas Health Care System is pleased to welcome the newest addition to our leadership team. **Peter Dancy, FACHE**, was appointed associate director on March 25. Dancy is responsible for managing the areas of logistics, engineering, human resources, pharmacy, prosthetics, health information management and fiscal. He formerly served as associate director of Edward Hines Jr. VA hospital in Chicago.

PULSE editor sat down with Mr. Dancy to get to know him better.

He noted a couple of reasons why he accepted this position.

VA North Texas Health Care System has a great reputation for providing high quality health care to Veterans and I wanted to join this committed team of professionals. My experience at Edward Hines Jr. VA was tremendous. However, the opportunity here gave me the chance to move closer to family.

An Army Veteran who retired as a lieutenant colonel after 22 years, Mr. Dancy was asked why he enjoys serving Veterans.

As a fellow Veteran, I fully understand the sacrifice and commitment those who wore the uniform have demonstrated. It is an honor and privilege for me to give back to a military profession that has allowed me to have a fulfilling career serving our country. Serving fellow Veterans gives me an opportunity to continue in that service.

There were many other attractions for Mr. Dancy. What he looks forward to most here at VA North Texas is...

- Working with committed professionals
- Expanding services to our Veteran population
- Building upon the great reputation that VA North Texas has regarding quality care
- Creating a more patient-centric environment that Veterans willingly choose
- Helping to train the next generation of administrative and clinical health care leaders and professionals

"It is important to do everything I can to get the needed resources and provide guidance for one of the largest expanding VA facilities in the nation," said Dancy.

One of the things Dancy is eager to get started is giving back to the community where he works and lives. He believes it is his duty as a good citizen to volunteer, especially in a mentoring capacity with youth.

No stranger to Texas, Dancy comes to Dallas after living in other Lone Star cities like San Antonio and Houston.

North Texas offers a 'howdy' welcome to Mr. Dancy!

Serving a President

he was an Air Force staff sergeant serving as a presidential steward on Air Force One, the designated aircraft transporting any U.S. President. Bowdich recalls arriving at Love Field Airport in Dallas on Friday, November 22, 1963, at 11:40 a.m. after a very short flight from Carswell Air Force Base, now known as Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, in Fort Worth.

Motorcades were waiting for President Kennedy, his wife Jacqueline and the rest of the presidential entourage so the president could deliver a speech and share a steak luncheon with government, business, religious and civic leaders and their spouses. Little did Bowdich know at the time, but this was an engagement President Kennedy would not make.

As a steward of Air Force One, Bowdich always stayed with the plane. He and other stewards were busy cleaning and re-stocking supplies for the Austin leg of the two day Texas trip. Bowdich was happy to go to

Dallas so he could see his parents and had snuck away to take them to lunch. He became aware that something was wrong when public address announcements were made at Love Field Airport for all White House personnel to return to the airplane.

At 1:33 p.m., official word of President Kennedy's death came from a nurse's classroom at Parkland Hospital. A few minutes after 2 p.m., President Kennedy's body was removed from the hospital and driven to Air Force One.

Do you remember where you were or what you were doing in 1963 at the moment of President Kennedy's assassination in Dallas?

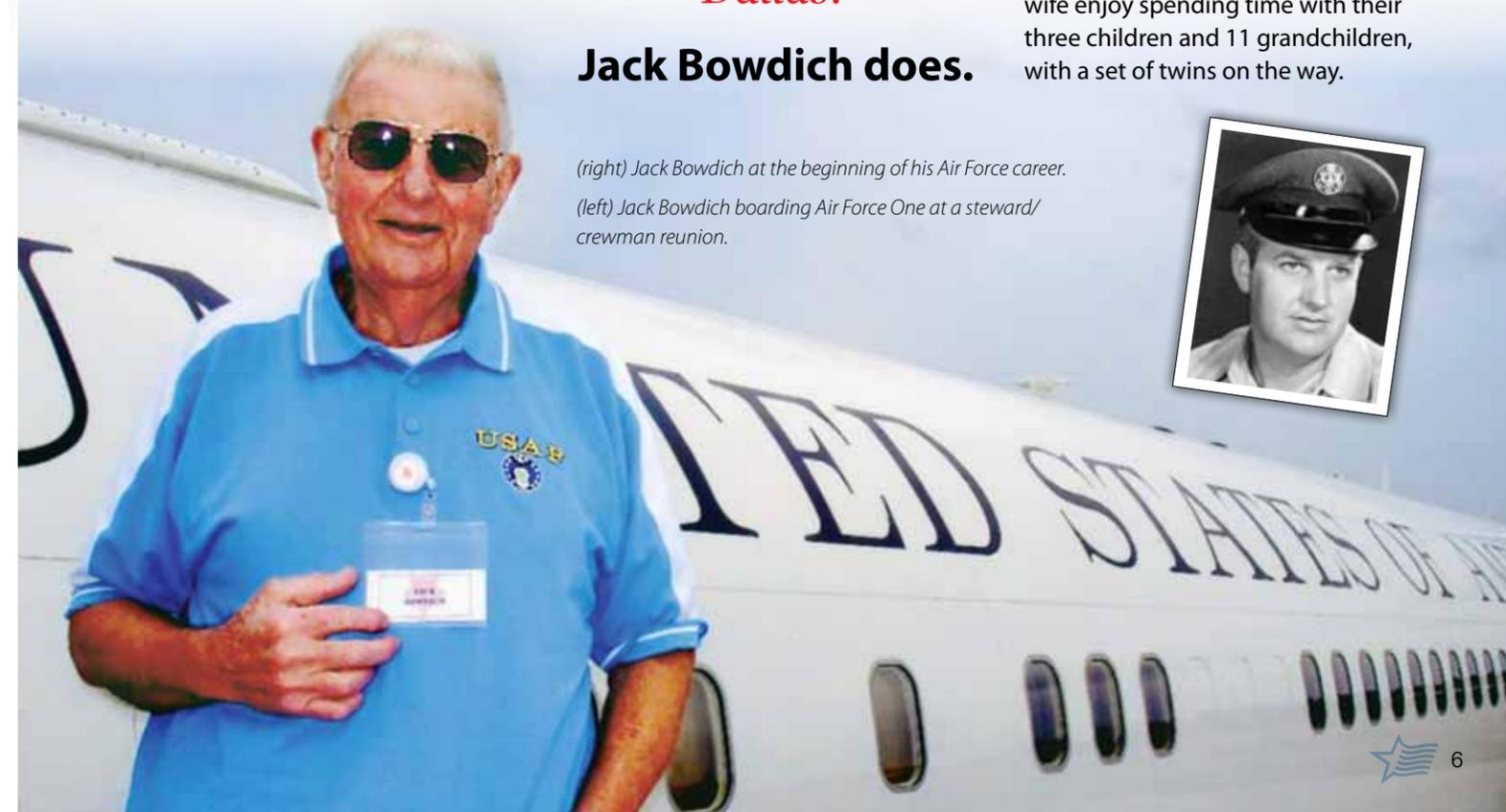
Jack Bowdich does.

Bowdich recalls the challenges of trying to get President Kennedy's casket on board Air Force One. Four seats and one partition had to be removed so the president could make his final journey in the cabin of the plane.

Once back at Air Force One, and only after Mrs. Kennedy and President Kennedy's body had also returned to the plane, Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as the 36th President of the United States of America.

Bowdich keeps in touch with his fellow Air Force One stewards and crewmen and has fond memories of President Kennedy, a man he respected and admired. Like the time when the president received a huge wooden rocking chair as a gift from the Irish government. Bowdich recalls he was one of the lucky ones to try it out before it found a home in the White House.

These days Bowdich enjoys NASCAR at Texas Motor Speedway. He and his wife enjoy spending time with their three children and 11 grandchildren, with a set of twins on the way.



(right) Jack Bowdich at the beginning of his Air Force career.

(left) Jack Bowdich boarding Air Force One as a steward/crewman reunion.



Cardiologists Emmanouil Brilakis, M.D. (left) and Subhash Banerjee, M.D. perform cutting edge procedures on VA North Texas Veteran patients.

Cardiology Keeping Hearts Beating — One Pump at a Time

The human heart — It's one of the most important organs in the body. No larger than its owner's fist, it has a very big job to do. The heart's primary function is to deliver blood to other parts of the body, which allows for the supply of nutrients and oxygen and also the removal of waste. In order for the heart to effectively pump blood to other parts of the body, it must be in good working condition. If the heart cannot pump the right amount of blood, the body will suffer. If the heart cannot pump blood at all, the body will quickly begin to shut down.

The heart can be affected in a number of ways causing it not to function properly. Fortunately, there are cardiologists — the doctors who keep hearts in tip top shape.

There's good news not only for heart patients at VA North Texas, but for all. We have a team of award-winning cardiologists performing groundbreaking research right here in the heart of Texas. They continue to study and work to improve outcomes for heart patients. Our cardiologists performed the first multicenter trial of drug-eluting stents for bypass grafts in the world.

Every patient who receives bypass surgery usually gets one of two kinds of stents — drug-eluting or bare metal. Preliminary research of drug-eluting stents showed early and long



term reduction of stent renarrowing when compared to bare metal stents. Through this particular study, the cardiology research team found that the drug-eluting stent was better than the bare metal stents. Now, patients who receive drug-eluting stents instead of bare metal can expect better outcomes after the procedure.

The SOS (stenting of saphenous) vein graft trial was made possible through the Network 17 Startup Award and the Texas Health Harris Methodist Foundation. The SOS study formed the basis for the ongoing DIVA (drug-eluting stents in saphenous vein graft angioplasty) trial that is sponsored by VA's Cooperative Studies program.

Cardiologists are also studying ways to lower cholesterol in patients without using drugs. The Plaque Regression and Progenitor Cell Mobilization with Intensive Lipid Elimination Regimen (PREMIER) trial is using LDL apheresis, a device that filters out bad cholesterol from the blood, to reduce the risk of another heart attack in patients. Most patients who already had a heart attack are likely to have another one. One of the best ways to prevent that is to lower their cholesterol levels.

Many patients who take drug therapy are either not able to tolerate the available lipid lowering medications or the medications cannot adequately decrease the cholesterol levels. This is the first such trial ever performed and is funded by the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Researchers are also developing ways to respond to patients with complex coronary anatomy who also have chronic total occlusions, which are 100 percent artery blockages. Several advanced techniques are being used in our institution, including the retrograde approach and dissection/re-entry techniques that result in high success and low complication rates.

Another cutting edge research focus for the cardiology team is to find more treatment options to help Veterans with

peripheral artery disease (PAD) and diabetes. PAD causes blockages in the legs which result in disability or amputations. The goal is to reduce disabilities and save limbs.

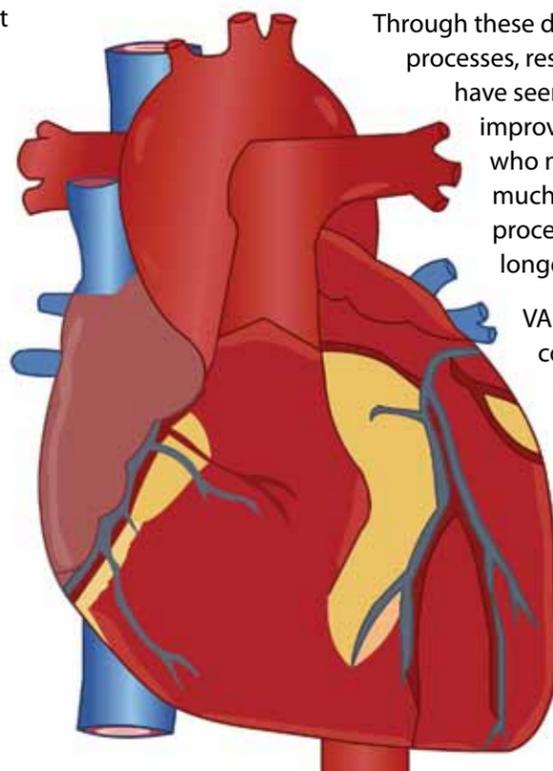
Our cardiologists are the first in the world to study the use of local cooling or "cryo" therapy delivered through a balloon in patients with diabetes and PAD. More than 50 percent of Veterans have some form of PAD. Forty-four percent of those have diabetes. By comparing two treatment strategies, cardiologists are able to implement the best one.

One option is to use a regular balloon to treat the blood vessel and the other is to use a balloon called the cryoplasty balloon. Cryo, which means cold, is used to lower the temperature in the artery. By cooling the artery, it prevents reformation of blockage.

VA North Texas was responsible for this first ever diabetes PAD trial. This trial was the first one in the world to study treatment of PAD exclusively in diabetics.

Through these dynamic processes, researchers have seen outstanding improvements in patients who may otherwise receive much more invasive procedures and require longer recovery.

VA North Texas continues to find innovative ways to treat Veterans in a caring environment. With all the research and work being done, Veterans can expect the best.



An Alternative Way to Wellness

Acupuncture is a form of Chinese medicine that has been practiced for centuries. It's based on the theory that energy, called chi, flows through and around our bodies along pathways called meridians. Acupuncturists believe that illness occurs when something blocks or unbalances your chi. Acupuncture is a way to unblock or influence chi and help it flow back into balance. The goals of acupuncture are noble; decrease pain medications, decrease pain and improve quality of life.

VA North Texas offers acupuncture through the pain clinic to treat chronic pain. Good candidates, chosen from patients under treatment for pain management, fall into one of the following categories: have an interest in alternative medicine and are not good candidates for traditional pain management or have not had success with traditional pain management.

Air Force Veteran Chuck Flanigan experienced severe back and neck pain for years due to an incurable condition. Although he tried injections and medication, there was no lasting relief from his constant headaches and neck pain. When his rheumatologist referred him for acupuncture, he agreed because of his own curiosity and results he saw in friends. When describing his first session, Flanigan said, "When I got up from the table my headache was gone. This was the first time I didn't have a headache in years." Flanigan is just one example of the success of this alternative therapy.

Teekam Ochani, M.D., anesthesiologist and acupuncture practitioner is excited about the service. He said, "Veterans want alternative methods and we are happy to offer it."

More to come...

Enas Kandil, M.D., section chief of pain management, envisions a team of acupuncturists at VA North Texas dedicated to fulfilling the need to treat more Veterans for more than just pain management. Acupuncture can be used to treat smoking cessation, obesity and PTSD. Those involved are eager to expand in the future.



The Eyes Tell it All: Teleretinal Services Now Available

diabetic retinopathy is one of the leading causes of preventable blindness in the United States. The longer someone has diabetes, the more likely he or she will get diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes within the Veterans Health Administration poses a significant challenge because the estimated prevalence among its enrolled patients is as high as 20 percent, substantially higher than the general population.¹

Nationally, VA is leading the way in the effort to combat vision loss from diabetic retinopathy through the use of sophisticated technology that increases Veterans' access to screening.



Patient receiving teleretinal screening.

The technology that VA is using to screen at risk Veterans is called Store-and-Forward TeleRetinal Imaging. These highly sophisticated digital retinal cameras take detailed pictures of the back of the eye (the retina). These pictures are then sent to an eye specialist to determine if diabetic retinopathy has developed. If diabetic retinopathy is detected,

follow up with an eye specialist is arranged. VA clinics and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) that historically have not provided this screening on site are the locations receiving the technology.

In October 2011, VA North Texas started providing diabetic retinopathy screening at the Denton CBOC. This enables Veterans with diabetes to get their annual or bi-annual retinal screens completed close to home and not have to travel to another facility.

"Early recognition and timely management of diabetic retinopathy are absolutely essential to preserve vision. Often there may be no visual disturbance or other warning signs in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy, but if the condition is left untreated, blindness can result. Fortunately, there are effective therapies available which have been shown to slow and sometimes halt the progression of the disorder. Successful outcomes begin with screening and early detection," said Brian Sullivan, M.D., acting chief of ophthalmology at VA North Texas.

Teleretinal imaging is also available at Dallas VA Medical Center, Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic and Tyler Primary Care Clinic. Soon it will be available at the Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center in Bonham. Veterans with diabetes should contact their primary care provider to arrange for a screening at one of those centers.

1. Cavallerano A, Conlin P. Teleretinal Imaging to Screen for Diabetic Retinopathy in the Veterans Health Administration. J Diabetes Sci Technol 2008; 2(1): 33-39.



The energy was still high when Aaron's employees, Lucky Dog mascot and sports celebrities posed after a three hour extreme makeover event for Veterans.

Aaron's Donation: Extreme Volunteering at its Best

Aaron's proved the second time around is much sweeter. With Veterans on their mind, they came back to Dallas VA and donated even more furniture than before.

The rental giant showed its heart is just as big, donating loads of furniture and other decorative items to beautify patient and family waiting areas. New beds, wardrobes, night stands, sofas, TVs, refrigerators, clocks, greenery and more changed the atmosphere for the better in areas like the homeless domiciliary, hospitality rooms and GI, ICU and dialysis waiting areas.

Equally as impressive are the 150 Aaron's employees who donated their personal time to assemble and arrange furniture in just three hours.

Why Dallas VA? Mitch Paul, senior vice president at Aaron's said, "Why not? Veterans help us enjoy the freedoms we have today. This is just a small way for us to thank them for their bravery and sacrifices," he said.

In the spirit of southern hospitality, employees lined the driveway with cheers, smiles and high-fives to thank the employees who arrived on buses escorted by Dallas Police Department and the American Legion Riders.

And while the Aaron's extreme makeover event has come and gone, the smiles seen in the beautiful new environments will leave a lasting impression upon Veterans and their families who now enjoy Aaron's act of kindness.

Tasty Food Choices

"The food," is one of the answers a patient might give when asked, "What is the worst thing about being in a hospital?" If you've tasted it, then you know why.

it usually doesn't taste like anything you would cook for yourself at home. Sometimes items on the tray just don't seem to fit well together for individualized tastes. Also, depending on how you feel, you may not want the one and only selection on the menu. If given a choice, you would have chosen the chicken Caesar salad or lasagna, instead of pot roast.

VA North Texas recognizes that all patients are not alike. There's no one size fits all when it comes to anything, including the food patients eat. Long gone are the days of "take it or leave it." Through ongoing efforts to focus on patient centered care, some patients can now choose what they're having – for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Select menu is what it's called. Patients are given a menu for the entire day, outlining everything that is available for all three meals. An example of a lunch menu will include a selection from:

- 1 of 4 main courses
- 1 of 3 types of bread
- 1 of 3 types of dessert
- 1 of 2 types of soup
- A salad with a choice between 5 types of dressing
- An assortment of condiments and beverages

Patients circle their options and turn in their menu to the food service worker who delivers the meals and picks up the used trays at the end of the meal. Patients can expect to receive exactly what they ordered at their next meal delivery.



One patient's selection of chicken parmesan over pasta, garlic breadstick, vegetable medley, house salad and strawberries with whipped topping for dessert.

If there's ever a mix-up, employees like Jeffery Hall promise to "get it right." He said, "When patients place an order and don't receive what they requested, it's our job to see to it that they are satisfied."

Nutrition and Food Service is not only changing the menu options for patients, but also the manner in which food is delivered. Employees are encouraged as much as possible to interact with patients. "We want Veterans to be satisfied with the overall meal experience," said Cheryl Davis, assistant chief of nutrition and food. "Something as simple as 'How is your day?' goes a long way."

Employees Jeffery Hall (left) and Jeaniqua Hunter enjoy delivering nutritious meals from the select menu to Veterans.



Patients can also expect the best when it comes to the presentation of their food. Designer placemats, plates and silverware all add to the enhancement of the total meal experience.

Select Menu is just one of the many ways VA North Texas is focusing on the softer side of medicine, which includes everything a patient experiences from the time they arrive until they time they leave. Food has been proven to aid in healing. Sounds like Virginia Woolf had it right when she said "One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well." That's food, for thought.





Pictured (L to R) Danny Cooley (Air Force-Ret.), Gary Atkinson (Air Force-Ret.), Frank Isbell (Army), Raymond Franssen (Marine Corps) and Earl Sturdivant (Army, Marine Corps).

Bonham Residents Never Stop Giving Back

A group of residents at the Bonham Community Living Center (CLC) are not slowing down in their senior years. As members of the Vietnam Veterans Support, Education and Growth group, these men made it their personal mission last summer to collect food and comfort items to ship to Texas military units deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. They worked collaboratively with the U.S. Air Force 136th Airlift Wing, sending over 300 care packages and considered their efforts as “pay back” to the current generation of military women and men involved in combat operations.

The group's latest passion is based on the theoretical concepts of Narrative Therapy and Life Review Therapy. Documenting their life stories complete with memorabilia, the residents presented their project for permanent display in the CLC where they narrated their stories to an audience of invited friends, family members and VA staff.

These Veterans have already seen many positive results from this project, including:

- Opening a dialogue to pass their story along to friends and family
- Normalizing and validating their experiences
- Strengthening their interpersonal relationships and expanding their community networks within the CLC
- Promoting cohesion, camaraderie and reducing isolation
- Providing purpose and meaning
- Identifying inner strengths and resources

The Support, Education and Growth group are not quite sure where their passions and projects will direct them next, but social worker Jerry Cooke said, “As the group's facilitator, I will work collaboratively with the members as they consider future goals based on their expertise and strengths. And knowing these Veterans, it will be another project that uses their military experiences to give back to others or one that helps others better understand and communicate with those who served their country.”



This has been my second family for the past 29 years. Being a small facility, the employees here truly are like a family because we care for each other and help each other when needs or situations arise. I'm very proud to be part of this family.

Alana K. Clark, Human Resources, Bonham



The staff understands my needs. Most are able to relate because of their military background.

Gloria Darby, Air Force Veteran



I enjoy my job, my staff and making all attempts to meet the needs of our customers.

Paulette Dickens
Health Information Management, Dallas



The heroes are here, the director, doctors, nurses, technicians and all staff. I have been hospitalized here numerous times since 1995. And three times, you guys saved and extended my life. Contrary to what Dallas Morning News said several years ago about the treatment, it has always been GOOD, but everything is BETTER now.

Wayne Miller, Air Force Veteran

I have the privilege to share in the emotional lives of our Veterans. I appreciate the opportunity to give back a little to those who have given so much by helping them work through some of their troubles and, hopefully, improve their quality of life.

Dr. Kenneth L. Farr, Pharmacy, Fort Worth

I love my Veteran patients. As a Veteran myself, I love taking care of them and giving them the best care I can. I also love communicating with them when they need help.

Bernardo Delacaza, Nursing, Dallas

The doctors are very caring. The health care I am receiving is good and everyone is very informative and helpful. I especially like the people at the Dallas front desk. The service there is exceptional.

Bernadette Henson, Army Veteran

They (staff) always treat me nice. I always get the treatment I need.

Jack Freeman, Navy Veteran

An Angel in Disguise

As a young 13-year-old, Barbara Robinson got her first experience with Veterans as a volunteer at Dallas VA hospital. Happy to give back in her own community, she bounced around the hospital delivering specimens to the lab and transporting patients.

Barbara went off to college, studied biology and chemistry and chose a career in medical technology. She thought her calling was set after working 25 years in the private sector.

Then one day, the course for Barbara's path changed when she decided to go to nursing school. Thinking she would practice nursing in the private sector, something drew her back to VA in 1998.

Often it takes only one special moment in time to alter your life. “I thought I would only stay for one year and then go

back to the community hospital,” explained Barbara. For Barbara, that moment came during her first six months when she met a terminally ill Veteran whose family couldn't care for him at home. This Veteran made a permanent impression and was now like her own family. “I never thought about the sacrifices Veterans make,” she said. “I fell in love with Veterans and learned not to take my freedom for granted.” Barbara's eyes opened and then it was truly an honor to serve.

Fast forward to 2009, Fisher House was built and ready for families whose loved ones were being treated at the hospital. A simple chore of cooking a meal could prove to be an unwelcome task for Fisher House guests, especially after a long day of tending to their hospitalized Veteran. Barbara thought, “Wouldn't it be nice to just come in and sit down and not have to cook?”

She found her niche again. This time it was serving as a monthly hostess working with restaurants and caterers to provide meals to Fisher House families.

Whether it's down home barbeque, southern cuisine, Italian, Chinese or Mexican, the meals are a tasty gift. The funds come solely from Barbara. She willingly donates out-of-pocket and graciously serves as a social butterfly to mingle with guests each month.

Part of this networking and personal touch allows Barbara the chance to offer tips to families to help them coordinate patient care. In her quiet, peaceful demeanor, she takes time to ease worries and calm their fears.

Even on her own clinical unit, Barbara is behind the scenes creating smiles. An angel in disguise, she quietly makes a difference by doing whatever she can to provide comfort to patients and their families.

Hugs are often given as thanks, but Barbara knows the greatest reward is in serving.

“My blessings are coming back in many ways.”



Barbara Robinson, RN, MT (ASCP), assistant nurse manager (Nursing Service), has a passion to serve.



Military service was very familiar to Chaplain Tonia "Toni" Hatchett. Her father retired after 22 years of service in the United States Air Force. Toni was born overseas and remembers her family traveling abroad to various military bases. She still meets people she either knew as a child or served with in her own military career over the years. Toni said, "You realize how small the world is."

She followed in her father's footsteps by joining the Air Force through Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) and received her commission in 1988. Toni's military career fields include supply and fuels, transportation, logistics, combat readiness and services. In 2008, she retired as lieutenant colonel, squadron commander and was ready for something new.

She began her chaplain residency at Dallas VA in 1999 while transitioning from active duty to reserves. Upon seminary graduation, clinical chaplain training and ecclesiastical endorsement, Toni was hired as a permanent staff chaplain in 2004.

"As a VA Chaplain, I have come to understand my calling to be a pastor is not limited to parish ministry. I am called to be a pastor to the sick, diseased and dying within the medical center," Toni said. "I never dreamed my calling would take me in this direction."

After serving six years as an associate pastor and youth pastor in the church setting, Toni understands her calling to be specific and unique to minister to people who come from different places and walks of life. "Some of these have been damaged or wounded by the traditional church," Toni said.

Her ministry includes healing and binding up the broken-hearted

(left) Toni Hatchett (Chaplain Service) ministers to a Community Living Center resident.



Lt. Col. Hatchett (3rd from left) in 2007 with members of her squadron deployment team in Sembach Air Base, Germany.

through patient visitations, crisis ministry, family ministry, religious consolation, spiritual guidance, grief/bereavement counseling, sacramental ministries, and also through worship or ministry to VA staff. Toni believes Veterans are some of the best examples of communities of faith, given their unique experiences.

Although the work as a chaplain can be emotionally and spiritually draining, the journey with Veterans provides a safe place of vulnerability for both chaplain and patient.

Veterans, families and staff come with their own spiritual understandings, very often requesting to be heard or valued.

"My greatest reward is to represent sacred space, anywhere, anytime," Toni said.

Congratulations to the following employees for more than 25 years of federal service: Fiscal year 2012 — 1st and 2nd quarters.

25 YEARS

Ronnie Humphrey
Environmental Management Service (EMS)
Rosalie Bowens-Savage
Fiscal
Tammie Y. Curry
Fiscal
Pamela M. Gouldsby
Fiscal
Darrell Mims
Health Information Mgmt
Horace C. Campbell
Human Resources
Darleen F. Haden
Human Resources
Louvada W. Jones
Human Resources
Dana S. Kerr
Human Resources
William E. Chinn
Medical Administration Service (MAS)
Marcus J. Clay
MAS
Diana L. Gampper
MAS
Sylvia M. Lowe
MAS
Patricia A. Maxwell
MAS
Patricia N. Munson
MAS
Candance L. Ritch
MAS
Katrina A. Robinson
MAS
Richard Dasheiff
Medical
Linell G. Garnsey
Medical
Kimberly C. Smith
Medical
Edward W. Tilson
Medical
Mamie L. Gunter
Mental Health
Valetta D. Morrow
Mental Health
Dann L. Sexton
Mental Health
Carolyn J. Washington
Mental Health

Ruby L. Alexander
Nursing
Velma B. Caldwell
Nursing
Jeri J. Carroll
Nursing
Jewel F. Cooper
Nursing
Ruth Ann Frazier
Nursing
Hideyo Hayworth
Nursing
Arthur P. Macy
Nursing
Elena G. McDaniel
Nursing
Rebecca J. Patterson
Nursing
Lisa A. Powell
Nursing
Shirley A. S. Ragler
Nursing
Barbara A. Waldrop
Nursing
Monica Hernandez
Nutrition and Food
Lydia L. Henderson
Office of Director
Van Johnson
Office of Director
Gary L. Davis
Pathology & Laboratory Medicine Service (P&LMS)
Belinda Herrera Chisolm
Physical Med & Rehab
Brenda M. Thompson
Mental Health
Stonell B. Greene
Readjustment Counseling
Matt J. Menger
Readjustment Counseling
Tonja L. Armstrong
Safety
Jeff W. Mason
Safety
Anthony A. Camell
Police
Francisco Cantu
Police
Alfred Godinez
Police
Stanley B. Hammett
Police
Richard R. Davidson
Surgery

Paul E. Grala
Surgery
Dianne Guerry
Surgery
Hyo Sun Frailey
Veterans Canteen Service

30 YEARS

Bryan R. Grace
Central Dental Lab
Phillip J. Eichhorn
Dermatology
Richard D. Benavides
Engineering
Dennis Mitchell Jr.
Engineering
Larry C. Waldrop
Engineering
James L. Epps
EMS
Michael W. McClinton
EMS
Gina D. Balentine
Fiscal
Breneda K. Johnson
Fiscal
Josephine M. Briggs
Health Information Management
Freddie R. Edwards
Health Information Management
Veronica Abram-Harris
MAS
Barbara A. Crittenton
MAS
Kathryn L. Dunn
MAS
Velda S. Reed
MAS
Eddie L. Richardson
MAS
Jan M. Bird
Medical
Bryon H. Adinoff
Mental Health
Trudy M. Brookins
Mental Health
Don N. Hubbard
Mental Health
Julia E. Scott
Mental Health
Gary R. Stone
Mental Health

Darryl L. Tidwell
Mental Health
Virginia Y. Demipandan
Nursing
Elton H. Dublin
Nursing
Minerva Fernandez
Nursing
Anthony Q. Fisher
Nursing
Janet M. Graham
Nursing
Thelma B. Ray
Nursing
Helen E. Rushing
Nursing
Nathaniel Swinton
Nursing
Virginia L. Warren
Nursing
Leonard Bonner
Nutrition and Food
Cheryl M. Davis
Nutrition and Food
Karen C. Vandusen
Nutrition and Food
Stephen W. Stous
Office of Director
Sandra S. Jones
P&LMS
Lois J. McMahon
P&LMS
Timothy J. Oshea
Physical Medicine & Rehab
Alan M. Villiers
Quality Management
Katherine J. Boyd
Research
Laura E. Lippin
Social Work

35 YEARS

Sandra F. Nickerson
Chief of Staff
Donald W. Juetten
Fiscal
Cliffon E. Henry
MAS
Bruce E. Sora
MAS
Andrew D. Craig II
Medical
Alvin Jimmerson
Medical

Vicky L. Robertson
Medical
Janice English
Mental Health
Phillip L. Mendenhall
Mental Health
Donnie W. Stevenson
Mental Health
Paul R. Strange
Mental Health
Mark E. Newman
Nursing
John O. Ryman
Nursing
Deloris F. Clemons
Office Of Director
Sheryl A. Poyer
P&LMS
Iris N. Serrano
P&LMS
John R. Towle
Radiology
Clifford M. Loy
Readjustment Counseling

40 YEARS

Rose C. Carr
Logistics
Francis Bialas
Engineering
Marvistean Christmas
MAS
Larry D. Curtis
Medical
Joe P. Herndon
Nursing

45 YEARS

Juan R. Gomez
Central Dental Lab



Couple Marries at Dallas VA

After receiving the news of an inoperable brain tumor, Marine Corps Veteran Josh Franks decided he couldn't wait any longer to marry his fiancée, Candi Delp. While still an inpatient, the urge to live happily ever after was more intense as love would not let him wait. Hearing the news, VA North Texas employees and volunteers all pitched in to make the wedding special for the happy couple. PULSE caught up with Josh and Candi recently and Josh is doing well.

(right) Introducing Mr. and Mrs. Josh Franks.



VA North Texas Fisher House Celebrates Three Years of Excellence

Since it opened in February 2009, Fisher House at VA North Texas has been a home away from home for more than 1,700 deserving Veteran families. That's possible thanks to the love, compassion and dedication of Fisher House staff pictured here (L to R) - *Lydia Gray-Henderson, Kimberly Montgomery and Annette Dorsey.*

