

PULSE - 2011 Edition 1
VA North Texas Health Care System Magazine



DIRECTORS MESSAGE



Our Promise

While growing up, I recall being asked to define my commitment with a promise. To the person who put me up to the challenge, having my promise meant more than an 'okay' or a half-hearted 'yes.' My promise sealed it. My promise guaranteed I would put every resource I had into making it work. My promise meant they had my 100% into making the outcome a success.

And rightfully so, the veterans we serve want us to fulfill the promise first stated by President Abraham Lincoln during his second inaugural address in 1865, "to care for him who shall have borne the battle." Today, as we build on our promise to care for veterans, there are three we should keep in the forefront of everything we do:

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

Network 17 director Lawrence Biro reminds executive leadership of these three promises each time we interact. You are also a part of these promises. Your individual efforts to create an environment that is superior, to provide timely access to care and to do whatever it takes to satisfy veterans is how we fulfill each of these promises daily.

So think about what a promise means to you. When you walk through the halls and interact with patients, consider the basis of our name, "Veterans Affairs." A fully engaged team must put veterans and their concerns at the center. We do so by demonstrating respect, providing an optimal healing environment and communicating with patients and families in ways that are affirming and useful. When we serve as good stewards of the funds we receive and look for continuous ways to improve quality and efficiency, our promises are fulfilled.

As VA employees, we are part of a world-class system and known for providing the "best care anywhere." Know that we appreciate your contributions to fulfill our promise to veterans. The time and expertise you have invested in VA North Texas is the reason we can continue to make strides on our path to excellence.

Glance through our first edition of PULSE. You'll find many examples of the promises we keep every day, and hear from veterans who have experienced the same. Enjoy.

Sincerely,
Mark S. Dosek, FACHE
Acting Director

YOUR HEALTH MATTERS



More people die from cigarette smoking than any other preventable death in the United States. Heart disease is the number one cause of deaths in the U.S. claiming over 600,000 lives per year. One of the most dangerous diseases is high blood pressure (hypertension). Nearly one-third of people who have high blood pressure don't know they have it. We hear these compelling statistics and seem to become conditioned at their true intent; to motivate us to stop doing whatever it is we're doing that will likely land us among the ones who "fit the statistic."

With a plethora of acute and chronic diseases steadily on the rise, one group at VA North Texas has made it their mission to educate and empower staff and patients to make wise, life-changing decisions to improve their overall health, Employee Wellness.

"It's unrealistic for people to think they can get healthy by following trendy diets and not committing to a real plan," said Mark Moore, recreation coordinator at Dallas VA Employee Wellness, who prefers a "tell it like it is" approach to health and wellness. "I don't sugar-coat my words when addressing those wishing to start a regimen to increase their overall health," Moore said. "Being straight-forward and direct is always best."

There's good news for people who smoke, have high blood pressure or heart disease risk factors. With a healthy diet and the right exercise, these can be managed, sometimes without medication, if not eliminated altogether.

YOUR HEALTH MATTERS

These tips and solutions below are great for managing hypertension as well as other diseases, but the most important thing to remember is to always seek medical advice and follow up with your doctor. Health care providers can continue to monitor progress and screen for damage to other parts of the body. Regular visits to the doctor, a healthy diet and a solid exercise plan can yield great results for anyone seeking to live better.

TIP: Stop smoking to dramatically decrease chances of developing heart disease. This will also improve high blood pressure.

SOLUTION: Employee Wellness Lifestyle Tip: Don't smoke. If you smoke, quit.

TIP: Engage in a light exercise to help lower blood pressure. Working up a sweat or hiking for miles is not necessary to do so.

SOLUTION: Employee Wellness offers office exercises tips on the intranet like "desk yoga move of the week."

TIP: Get stress under control. Stress can lead to high blood pressure and coronary artery disease if left unmanaged.

SOLUTION: Employee Wellness offers classes weekly that are low impact and not time-consuming to help redirect energy or eliminate stressors.

TIP: Make responsible food choices and manage your diet to help lower high blood pressure.

SOLUTION: Employee Wellness offers "The Balance of Good Health" in the thought for the week section with healthy diet tips and links.

TIP: Consider complementary and alternative treatments of relaxation techniques which can be effective for treating high blood pressure either coupled with or in lieu of medications.

SOLUTION: Employee Wellness offers a variety of classes that include Tai Chi and Yoga, both designed to help with relaxation.

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

I make my VA better by...



“Treating my patients like a part of my family.”
**Brandy Seigman, Tyler VA Primary Care Clinic
Medical Administration Service**



“Putting our veterans first and being an advocate of courtesy, respect, and commitment. Our vets’ safety and well-being is one of my main concerns so I developed a way of evacuating our ICU patients from a sports bed in case of an emergency. Wasting money is another concern; therefore, I started an awareness campaign called “Waste Not Want Not” of supplies. Because throwing away good supplies is the same as wasting money.”
**Charles King, Dallas VA Medical Center
Surgical Intensive Care Unit**



“Empowering patients and providers to seek excellence in health care through thoughtful guidance, clear communication and insightful leadership.”
**Itala Manosha Wickremasinghe, M.D.
Dallas VA Medical Center, Spinal Cord Injury**



“Ensuring that our veterans receive optimal pharmaceutical care\ by checking for optimal doses, monitoring lab work and other critical data, and counseling the patient to better manage their care. With coordination of care with other health care professionals, VA promotes safety and effective treatment for our veterans, and I am proud to be a part of it.”
**Ciby Ellampally, PharmD,
Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center
Pharmacy Service**



“Devoting all of my efforts as part of the VA team towards making veterans, their family members, and all visitors feel there is somebody who cares. And, by working in EMS, I can help prevent and eliminate cross contamination by promoting a clean and healthy environment. This, in essence, allows me to be a positive part of the solution and to deliver outstanding customer service.”

**A.D. Edwards Jr., Dallas VA Medical Center
Environmental Management Service**



“Focusing on veterans’ and their families needs and providing resources and referrals for services that will improve their circumstances.”

**Laura Lippin, MSW, Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center
Social Work Service**

BEYOND OUR WALLS

VA HEALTH CARE IS NOT LIMITED TO THE CONFINES OF OUR CAMPUSES.



Photo of Staff from Medical Administration, Social Work and Nursing join with the Vet Center to participate in a health expo at Dallas Cowboys Stadium.

As veterans age, it is increasingly difficult for them to travel to a VA facility, while the newest generation of veterans is on the go with young children. Health care has to be tailored to fit their needs, and we are reaching beyond our walls to make this happen. From Home-Based Primary Care, Social Work, Nursing and Mental Health home visits to telehealth monitoring capabilities, opportunities to provide care and other outreach services help VA North Texas reach more veterans than ever.

Outreach has become an effective way to increase enrollment while making sure veterans in the community are aware of the health care services they have earned. It might surprise you to know that some people who were discharged honorably from the military do not know they are a veteran. Since December 2010, our team has

educated and connected with more than 3,500 veterans and their family members. Medical Administration Service, Social Work, Vet Centers and other departments are throughout North Texas at events and meetings to present VA services and benefits information. Consumer Affairs at VA North Texas is involved with Veteran Service Organizations and County Service Officers and keeps these groups informed of any changes and updates that will affect veterans on a national or state level as well as local news. Meanwhile a team of nurses go out as part of a Health Care Outreach team to provide blood pressure, flu shots and more to veterans at churches, sporting events and health fairs.

REACHING SPECIAL GROUPS

In support of VA's goal to eliminate homelessness among veterans in five years, VA North Texas' homeless program performs outreach services in the community to identify homeless veterans and provide assistance with housing and employment. We realize we cannot end homelessness alone, and value and depend on our community partners who pitch in.

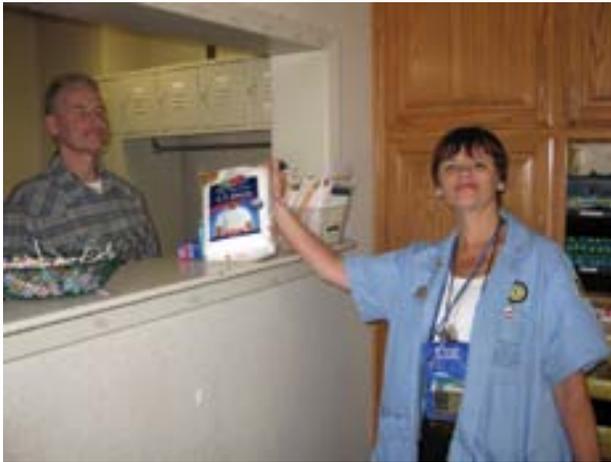
VA staff also connect with returning service members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan to make sure they know VA is here when they are ready to seek health care, education or other benefits. With the help of social media, our newest patients and veterans of all ages can stay in touch with VA North Texas through resources like Facebook and an interactive web site at www.northtexas.va.gov.

As one of the fastest growing groups of veterans, women may not know what VA has to offer. That's why extending our reach and spreading the word is particularly important to locate women veterans who may not know VA provides a wide range of services for their health and wellness.

When it comes to outreach, our goal is to answer the question "what can VA do for me?" Whether it's sharing information about health, education, housing and other VA benefits, VA North Texas works closely with Vet Centers, Veterans Benefits Administration and other partners to encourage veterans to take full advantage of all VA has to offer.

For more information on VA's outreach: go to www.oefoif.va.gov.

TOUCHING LIVES



Like clockwork--every Thursday--Jeri Waterloo and the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) ladies arrive at the Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center ready to work and show their support for veterans and their families.

All that is needed to serve is a willing heart and somehow spare time will open up. For Waterloo, spare time has mounted to over 14 years of volunteer service. Waterloo unselfishly shares her

time, talent and love for veterans with over 2,700 hours of service.

She is a member of ALA Post 62, president of Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary in Denison, and for the past two years, has served as the VA Voluntary Service ALA associate representative for VA North Texas Health Care System and Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center. Waterloo also serves on the VA Voluntary Service Executive Board.

As a regularly scheduled volunteer, Waterloo commits her time by assisting with office duties and distributing comfort items to residents. She actively participates in special events like the Regional Veterans Day program and the fall carnival. During the Christmas holidays, Waterloo enjoys packing Christmas bags for veterans. When she is not helping out with duties in the Voluntary Service office, Waterloo can be found in Recreation Therapy service hosting monthly bingos and assisting with social activities that include cookouts, birthdays and holiday parties.

Waterloo even has her canine companion at work. She and her dog Lucy began participating in the Pet Therapy Program to offer friendly visits to the residents in the Community Living Center.

There is no denying her commitment to veterans. Waterloo is there wherever needed and is always looking for more ways to serve them. And she is loved by all she serves.

Waterloo was named Volunteer of the Year at Bonham during a National Volunteer Week recognition ceremony.

VETERAN CENTERED CARE

Each One, Reach One: Paying Forward an Age-Old Concept



Imagine a VA where in every city, at every hospital, veterans receive the best care ever, from the time they are admitted until the time they check out. Think of several hospitals and outpatient clinics in one network where still, each veteran is cared for and treated with respect and dignity. Now think about one veteran and their ailment or illness that sends them to that health care facility...the one where you work.

Though VA North Texas Health Care System serves hundreds of thousands of veterans, regarding each as one in the midst of many can make a world of difference. As one employee reaches out to one veteran, the unimaginable concept of an entire VA of top quality patient care is the only way to make it happen. VA North Texas is making it happen by turning the vision into reality with Veteran-Centered Care. We proudly boast Veteran-Centered Care as one of our leading efforts to transform the care we provide and as a top-notch program to personally touch each veteran.

Veteran-Centered Care is not inconceivable. It's not time-consuming. It's neither unclear nor complicated. It is, however, a simple action that requires no extra work. Frankly, it is those good deeds and manners we learned long ago. It is what every worker in every VA North Texas facility should be doing daily – putting veterans first.

Veteran-Centered Care is a collaboration of goals and principles that stem from a global vision known as Planetree. Inspired by the roots of modern Western medicine, Planetree is the tree that Hippocrates sat under as he taught early medical students in ancient Greece. The infamous "Hippocratic Oath" is an age-old, but not neglected concept that is still present today in hospitals as patient-centered care via the Planetree model.



VA North Texas is proud to stand with the Veterans Health Administration as we recognize that in order for patients to heal and live effectively, Veteran-Centered Care should be forgotten as a 'concept' and regarded as a 'standard.' As VA moves forward to apply this standard in every hospital, "the best care anywhere" will easily come to life. It is possible.

Stories of veterans who've had not-so-good experiences at VA hospitals have been heard by some. On the other hand, there are countless more stories of those with great VA experiences. Whether greeted with a smile, touched by a caring hand, thanked with kind words or guided into an elevator by a worker who was courteous, that veteran was made to feel important.

Another key element of Veteran-Centered Care is to honor veteran's expectations of safe, high quality and accessible care. Glass and other veterans can continue to count on VA to keep VCC in action.

Now that Veteran-Centered Care has surfaced, patients, their families and caregivers enjoy receiving and giving care in a groundbreaking environment. Just like Glass, many veterans contend VA North Texas has evolved with the standard of Veteran-Centered Care.

One veteran at a time, VA North Texas is working hard to change the myth that VA is a last resort for medical care. Our aim is to practice what we preach. We are the right choice for veterans because we care. We are committed to always providing the best in quality, safety and service. And to top it off, we serve the best group of patients in the world – the men and women who defended the freedoms that we enjoy today.

ONE VETERAN'S STORY



Michael Glass, an Army veteran, is considered a “double dipper” having served in both Desert Shield/Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom over the course of his 13-year career. After Glass’ discharge, he always knew something was not quite right. With persistent anxiety attacks and getting upset for what seemed to be minor things, his family and friends constantly urged him to seek treatment.

It wasn’t until Glass followed the advice of a fellow veteran when he finally sought help. One day while working in Galveston after Hurricane Ike, another worker noticed an incident in which Glass exploded with anger. “Out of nowhere,” Glass said, “he gave me a hug with tears in his eyes.” The fellow worker was a Vietnam veteran. He told Glass to come to Dallas VA hospital that helped change his life. Glass admits having approached the idea of seeking VA treatment with hesitancy after hearing some of those not-so-good stories.

Since 2009, Glass has benefitted from several programs VA North Texas has to offer including a domiciliary substance abuse program in Bonham and the homeless domiciliary program in Dallas. As far as Veteran-Centered Care is concerned, Glass says, “All of the different doctors, social workers, occupational therapists and recreational therapists... so many have made such an impact in my life. They put me first and consider my needs. I don’t ever want to leave.”

The type of care Glass receives at Dallas VA represents only a glimpse of 12 key attributes indicative of Veteran-Centered Care. To solicit and respect the veteran’s values, preferences and needs is one attribute Glass says is always present throughout his care. Caregivers are attentive to his needs, review goals and include him in the decision-making of his personalized plan. What’s more, his providers encourage involvement of family and friends. Although Glass’ journey has mostly been alone, he now looks forward to living as a civilian with the help of one of his adult daughters.

FROM ONE VET TO ANOTHER

Third generation military veteran Chris Hardin works at Dallas VA. Although Hardin has traded his uniform for a suit and tie, from time to time he interacts with veteran patients and continues to recognize the importance of putting them first in every aspect.

“There is a special gift in caring for veterans,” Hardin explains as he recalls why he and others do the jobs they do. “What we do is science, technology and programs. Why we do this is dignity and respect for all those veterans who served America, and who trust us with their care.”

Glass and Hardin are among many other veteran patients and employees raving about and practicing Veteran-Centered Care. Many thanks and smiles of affirmation are heard and seen in the corridors and waiting areas daily throughout VA North Texas. Evidence of Veteran-Centered Care in action is apparent as customer satisfaction numbers steadily increase. Patients continue to give praise and accolades to the staff at their facility of choice, Dallas, Bonham, Fort Worth, Tyler or any of the community based outpatient clinics. These are the places where we continue to put veterans first and where their best interest is always at the forefront of their medical care.



KEY ATTRIBUTES OF VETERAN-CENTERED CARE

1. Honor veteran's expectation of safe, high quality and accessible care.
2. Enhance the quality of human interactions and therapeutic alliances.
3. Solicit and respect the veteran's values, preferences and needs.
4. Systematize the coordination, continuity and integration of care.
5. Empower veterans through information and education.
6. Incorporate the nutritional, cultural and nurturing aspects of food.
7. Provide for physical comfort and management of pain.
8. Ensure emotional and spiritual support.
9. Encourage involvement of family and friends.
10. Provide an architectural layout and design conducive to health and healing.
11. Introduce creative arts into the healing environment.
12. Support and sustain an engaged workforce as key to providing VCC.

Is Veteran-Centered Care possible throughout VA North Texas?

It is possible. One veteran at a time.

For more information on Veteran-Centered Care,
contact VA North Texas coordinator

Erik Sanders at Erik.Sanders@va.gov.

MAIL BAG



What Veterans Are Saying

Dear Sir:

I am an 80 year-old U.S. Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War. I have no complaints but a commendation. The care I have received from Dr. Elizabeth John at Fort Worth over the past seven years has been of immense benefit to me. I can truly say I am a content old man now and can sleep at night, due in large part to Dr. John's treatment.

I am also grateful for the health care and interest I have received from Dr. Cecilia Karl and Dr. Louis Shirley. They are both excellent representatives of the VA in their treatment and dealings with us deaf, blind, forgetful and cranky old vets.

– Rayburn Blair

Letters sent via “Speak to the Director:”

I will take this opportunity to commend the staff at Bonham. In particular, Beverly Herndon for her assistance in scheduling my appointment. Also Christy Madsen and Dr. Kristi Latham were professional, considerate and thoughtful. Thank you for the excellent care I receive at Bonham.

– Frank Hayward

My husband and I came in to the Tyler Clinic. He was very sick, and at age 36, was convinced he was fine. One of the clerks made a way for him to be seen although he hadn't been there before. By the time they saw my husband, his blood sugar was very high. He was a diabetic and didn't know it. I am convinced that the Tyler Clinic was used by God to save my husband's life. Thought you might want to know the difference the Tyler Clinic made in our life. Thank you!

– Jessica Switzler, Wife of an Iraqi Veteran

CUTTING EDGE - ANOTHER PIONEER PROGRAM



Fatigue. Weakness. Shortness of breath. Palpitations. These symptoms may sound familiar to anyone who has ever had a vigorous workout, ran a few miles or swam a few laps. When those symptoms become problematic and persistent without normal activity, one could be experiencing what is known as atrial fibrillation (AF).

A new procedure is providing relief for those with AF. VA North Texas is the first VA nationwide to perform the new “Convergent Procedure,” performed in collaboration with a cardiac surgeon and an electrophysiologist (EP). The EP department and Cardiothoracic Surgery at Dallas VA are readily performing the procedure with good results for veterans significantly troubled by AF, and who have been treated with standard measures that have failed.

AF, an abnormal cardiac rhythm also known as an arrhythmia, currently affects more than two million people in the United States. That amounts to one percent of the general population and over 10 percent of individuals 80 years of age and over. The prevalence of AF is rising so rapidly that it is projected to more than double over the next 50 years in industrialized countries.

For the Convergent Procedure, the surgeon gains access to the beating heart by making a very small incision in the upper abdomen. Next, a port is passed behind the heart and lines of radiofrequency ablation are laid by the surgeon under direct vision. Then, a drain is left near the heart and the EP physician places the usual wires into the heart via the groin. Finally, the physician makes small burns in the gaps that are inaccessible to the cardiac surgeon. The combined procedure takes approximately seven hours. The patient remains in the hospital for two to three days following the procedure.

In most patients, the varying degrees of symptoms in AF patients are so problematic, a reduced quality of life is the result. Heart failure and stroke precipitated by AF are both cause for concern among doctors. Thanks to this cutting edge program, doctors are helping patients live better and get back to enjoying their everyday activities.

For more information, contact Dr. Owen Obel or Dr. Michael Jessen at Dallas VA Medical Center.

CUTTING EDGE

Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic Update

The long-anticipated Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic at I-20 and Campus Drive is booming in its new location. Since opening November 2010, more than 2,300 new patients have enrolled for care.

At 239,000 square feet, it is the largest leased outpatient clinic in the Department of Veterans Affairs. The larger facility offers plenty of parking, a western cultural environment and car-to-door service.



New features include:

- MRI, CT and Mammography
- Canteen services with retail shopping and dining facility
- Comprehensive women's clinic with primary and gender specific care
- Secure email communication with health care providers through MyHealtheVet
- Compensation and Pension program

Coming soon: GI endoscopy suite

Fort Worth also uses the new and improved space to offer complementary services for veterans such as wellness classes, chronic disease management workshops, education fairs, legal clinics and onsite veteran employment services.

The number of staff working at Fort Worth has increased by 30 percent over the last year for a total of 250 employees. More than 26,000 veterans receive care at the clinic.

To learn more about the Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic, visit www.northtexas.va.gov and click on "Visitor Information."

CUTTING EDGE

A New Model of Care: Polk Street Annex Formally Dedicated

The Polk Street Annex, located three miles from Dallas VA Medical Center, is open for business and setting the trend for a new model of care – Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT). A patient-centered initiative that focuses on partnering with veterans, PACT offers access to care using diverse methods, coordinated team care, and a designated team approach to provide life-long health and wellness.

Among better coordination and access to care, some features at the Polk Street Annex include:

- Primary care, lab, mental health, telehealth & EKG services
- Assigned team: a provider, registered nurse, licensed vocational nurse and administrative clerk
- Newly renovated 9,950 square foot space with contemporary design
- Faster check-in
- Appointment reminder calls from team
- Direct access to team
- On-site pharmacist to answer questions
- Ample parking

Look for future updates on how our PACT is spreading across VA North Texas Health Care System locations in future editions.



Pictured from left to right Dr. Clark Gregg, chief of staff; Dr. Stephen Holt, deputy chief of staff; Lawrence Biro, network director, VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network (VISN 17); Dr. Praveen Mehta, associate chief of staff, Ambulatory Care; David Hoover, veteran; Mark Duskocil, acting director; Shirley Bealer, associate director; Jennifer Purdy, assistant director for outpatient services and Kenda Smith, acting for associate director for patient care services cut ribbon to mark the official open.

WATCH US GROW



As VA's second largest health care system, we continue to break ground, tear down walls and expand in the community to further the care we offer. More demand and our commitment to grow are at the root of the capital growth we've experienced in recent years. Countless numbers of buildings, labs and nursing units have been added in the last decade alone, as renovated and Veteran-Centered Care environments are underway at all VA North Texas facilities.

With new construction already in progress and more to come, exciting times are ahead. The physical transformation of VA North Texas in this decade and beyond is needed and one staff and veterans look forward to.

February 2009: Fisher House Opens

This ultimate home away from home offers deluxe temporary accommodations for families of hospitalized veterans. The 21-suite Fisher House is a prime on-campus location for family members to support their loved ones while they are in the hospital.

August 2010: New Hospice Unit

One of the largest hospice facilities in VA, the unit is arranged in neighborhoods which promote an atmosphere of the comforts of home. Each neighborhood has a central living area, and each room is spacious with a couch that converts to a bed so family members can be at the patient's bedside night and day.

November 2010: Fort Worth Clinic Expands

Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic sees its first patient in a brand new 239,000 square foot facility. More than five times larger than its previous location, the facility stands as VA's largest outpatient clinic to date. The \$55 million construction project brought the former location to its new 24-acre site.

March 2011: Our PACT: Polk Street Annex Opens

The new annex, as part of Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) transformation, improves access and care for veterans. With five dedicated teams for each patient, veterans are right at the center of care in this comfortable, modern environment.

May 2011: Investing in Innovation

The 3T MRI addition is progressing on the south end of the Dallas campus. The addition of this high field, large magnet will provide veterans the most technologically advanced imaging services. Estimated completion date is August 2011, with first patients being seen in September.

August 2011: Patient Parking Garage

Anticipation is building for the new patient parking garage in lot 6 near the Ann Arbor entrance. This garage will provide a net gain of 500 spaces to help ease the congestion at Dallas.

December 2011: Polytrauma Center

With the new Polytrauma Center, patients with complex injuries will have an improved space to include three-four additional exam rooms and approximately 12 co-located offices.

March 2012: Relocate Geropsychiatry

This project provides 30 acute Mental Health beds in a beautiful and secure environment. Scheduled completion is linked to construction on the second and third floors which includes a Specialty Clinic with Diabetes, Dermatology and a Women's Clinic.

DOWN THE ROAD

Chronic Disease Management Clinic will create a centralized area within Primary Care whereby team members are co-located. This Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) effort will facilitate ease of patient access and support system. Coming July 2011.

Patient privacy projects are underway to renovate units and update all bedrooms with private restrooms that meet ADA access requirements. Additional space for family members to stay overnight is also planned. Construction for this project on Unit 7C at Dallas VA should be complete in June 2011.

Gero-psychiatry project relocates two Mental Health Acute Inpatient Units and provides 29 replacement beds. The interior space is currently under construction and expected to be completed by June 2012.

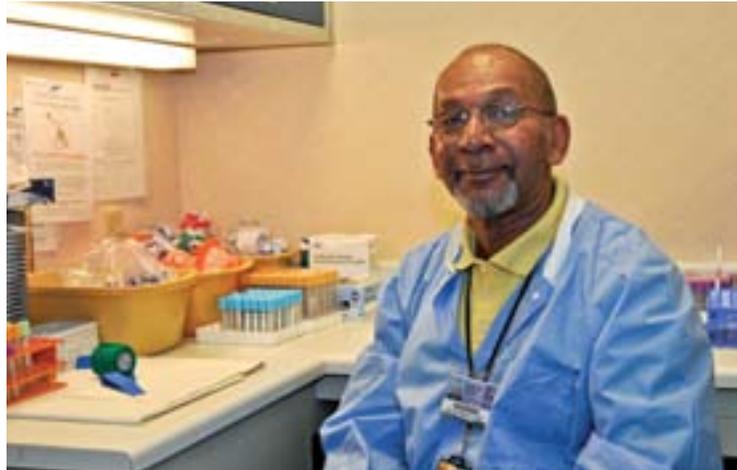
Clinical Expansion of Mental Health to renovate and expand services and consolidate and co-locate all Mental Health programs currently located throughout the Dallas campus to a centralized building. This project will provide 40 additional residential rehabilitation beds and increase the total number of domiciliary beds from 80 to 120. Up to 15 acres are needed to complete the project which will construct a multi-level parking garage of 1,000 additional parking spaces; and upgrade the Energy Center heating and cooling capacity. Construction start dates are dependent upon funding, with expected completion by September 2015 to 2018 and activation the following year.

Long Term Spinal Cord Injury (LT-SCI) Unit project includes construction of a 30-bed LT-SCI Unit, associated clinical and administrative support spaces and a utility upgrade. The 30-bed LT-SCI facility will be integrated with the existing 30-bed acute SCI center at the Dallas campus. A 1,000-car parking garage will be constructed to offset parking displaced by the construction site and building footprint, and to help mitigate the existing parking space deficiency currently at over 1,900. The project also includes a 5 Mega watt Combined Power and Heat Plant to produce renewable energy for the campus. This project has been approved for full design. The start date for construction is dependent upon funding, with expected completion between September 2015 and 2016 and activation the following year.

DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE

Wiggins' years of experience as a long-time employee, a patient and a veteran give him a unique perspective to give his finest service every day, to every Veteran.

As an outpatient phlebotomist on the front lines of patient care, Harvey Wiggins is one of the smiling faces of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine Service. Wiggins has dedicated his time and expertise as a medical technician (phlebotomist) for 30 years – in the same service.



Wiggins' job is to collect blood specimens for laboratory testing from some of the 600-850

veterans seen in draw stations every day. The Dallas VA lab is a bustling place, yet Wiggins serves his comrades with kindness and courtesy. Although this number of patients may seem intimidating or even overwhelming to some, Wiggins says the people are his favorite part of the job. He enjoys working with his co-workers and says, "They are the best and everybody gets along well."

A Brooklyn, NY native, Wiggins boasts, "If you can make it there you can make it anywhere...even the hustle and bustle of the VA." The U.S. Army veteran served 10 years and his military career included being a medic and working on Persian missiles (nuclear weapons) classified as hazardous duty.

Not only is Wiggins a VA employee, but he's also a customer. He receives his medical care at Dallas and reports he has received very good care and quality customer service. "It's much better here than outside in the private sector. The waiting time is not bad and they [VA staff] let you know what's going on," Wiggins said.

CONGRATULATIONS

To the following employees for over 25 years of Federal service:
Fiscal Year 2011 - 1st and 2nd Quarters

40 YEARS

Anselmo Abulencia, Engineering
Iner Finley, Nursing
Shirley Gabriel, Medical
Mike Griffin, Medical Administration Service (MAS)
Alfonso Telesca, MAS

35 YEARS

Ted Basley, Pathology & Laboratory Medicine (P&LM)
Dianne Bedolla, Nursing
Hal Carter, Dental
Antolino Colon, Dental
Sharon Crowder, Office of Director
Robert Dwornik, Pharmacy
William Herber, Pharmacy
Gary Hooker, Engineering
Thomas Jarrell, Acquisition & Materiel Management (A & MM)
Rutha Lee, Radiology
Karen Nelson, A & MM
Russell Paulson, Engineering
Dawn Smith, Nursing
Benjamin Taylor, Pharmacy
Milton Tucker, Jr., Central Dental Lab

30 YEARS

Dean Crump, A & MM
Howard Daniel, Office Of Director
Mark Doscocil, Office of Director
William English, Engineering
Joseph Guss, Veterans Canteen Service
Charla Guyon, Nutrition and Food
Ellen Hal, Nursing
Rocky Hall, Nursing
Cathy Harris, Physical Med & Rehab
Marcia Hart, P& LM
David Herod, Office of Director
Leelamma James, Nursing
Kovvuru Jayalakshmi, Nursing

Elizabeth John, Mental Health
Alfreda Johnson, Office of Director
Toi Le, Ambulatory Care
Tyison Magnuson, Engineering
Thomas Mcdonald, MAS
Ivy Miller, Business Office
Lee Mitchell, MAS
Kunjamma Philipose, Nursing
Claudette Phillips, Office of Information & Technology (OI&T)
Adele Polk, Physical Med & Rehab
Adriana Quintero, Mental Health
Dean Rice, Nuclear Medicine
Derrick Sharp, Police
Sue Sibley, Nursing
Gurdeep Singh, Nursing
James Smith, III, A & MM
Darl Speikes, A & MM
Rickey Staley, Engineering
Lola Steward, Chief of Staff
Nancy Strickland, Fiscal
Cheryl Thomas-Green, Nursing
Cynthia Wilcoxson, Mental Health
James Williams, Mental Health

25 YEARS

Thomas Agee, Engineering
Kay Alexander, Dental
Mary Autry, Business Office
Annette Bailey, Medical
Byron Barr, Environmental Mgmt
Varnzell Bridges, Environmental Mgmt
Linda Brooks, Engineering
Nora Brown, Nursing
James Butler Jr., Nursing
Velma Caldwell, Nursing
Sandra Chatman, Business Office
Dennis Clark, Police
Gailen Cline, Nursing
Anita Coleman, Pharmacy
Jewel Cooper, Nursing
Richard Davidson, Surgical
Bernardo Delacaza, Nursing
Regina Easley, Medical

Lisa Eason, OI & T
Joann Fenicchia, Quality Management
Sam Finnell, Physical Med & Rehab
Virginia Foggle, Nutrition and Food
Rene Gardner, Business Office
Jimmie Harris, Surgical
Denise Henderson, MAS
Monica Hernandez, Nutrition and Food
Elizabeth Hodges, Nursing
Charlie Holcomb Jr., Audiology
Mary Holland, Nutrition and Food
Ronnie Humphrey, Environmental Mgmt
Robert Inman, Engineering
George Ivanovskis, Medical
Rhonda Jones, Prosthetics
Charlene Jones, Surgery
Helen Lacy, Medical
Judy Lindsey, P & LM
Juan Lopez, Engineering
Gregory Manning, A & MM
Bertha Martin, Quality Management
Gertrude Mccoggle, MAS
Crescent Mendez Jr., Ambulatory Care
Karen Motin-Landry, Office of Director
Johanna Murphy, Business Office
Kenneth Nash, A & MM
Nancy Nurmesviita, Medical
Rebecca Patterson, Nursing
Ester Pierce, MAS
John Pitts, Engineering
Rita Plummer, MAS
Debbie Rattan, MAS
Rhonda Ray, Mental Health
Rebecca Robertson, Radiology
Carol Runnels, Nutrition And Food
Phylease Sams, MAS
Connie Scott, Chief Of Staff
Patricia Shahim, Nursing
Tonia Shaw, Engineering
Loretta Shephard, OI & T
David Smith, Surgical
Scott Strother, Nursing
Perry Terrell, Mental Health

Terry Thompson, Environmental Mgmt
Edward Tilson, Medical
Amy Wade, Quality Management
Deborah Walker, Medical
Wayne Weaver, MAS
Cheryl Webb-Singh, Medical
Alvin Williams, MAS
Dwaine Williams, Medical
Shirley Williams, Nursing
Patricia Ann Wood, Mental Health



SALUTING EXCELLENCE IN NURSING

Winners of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Excellence in Nursing Award
(left to right): Emmylou Dolormente, LVN, won for both VA North Texas and VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network; Amber Robinson RN; Teresita Coronacion RN, and Imogene Williams, NA.

