



THE DESERT SUN

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Phoenix VA Health Care System

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Recreation Therapy Opens Fitness Treatment Center at the NW Clinic

By Lyn Hambel, CRT

Fitness is popular amongst our Veterans who use the fitness facility in the Recreation Therapy unit in Mental Health and Behavioral Science Services. Now the popular clinic is expanding to Veterans at the Northwest VA Health Care Clinic. The goal of the expansion is to provide better access to care and to help promote overall health, wellness and disease prevention.

The fitness program includes general upper body and lower body circuit training with light weights, resistance bands, core and balance training on a stability ball, and 20-30 minutes of cardio-respiratory training. Through the fitness program, Veterans achieve their goals as well as educate Veterans on the safe and proper way to exercise so they can continue to exercise at home or in the community.

Each recreation therapist implementing the treatment is a Certified Personal Fitness Trainer through the National Academy of Sports Medicine or the American College of Sports Medicine. They are trained to provide the most current, state of the art, evidence-based fitness protocols with adaptations as needed for each Veteran to have successful participation.

According to the National Institute of Health, "There are literally zillions of exercise benefits to be gained through a regular fitness and nutrition plan." Research demonstrates that individuals who exercise on a regular basis have increased energy, mental focus, range



of motion, strength and stamina, improved circulation, better digestion, glycogen storage, endurance, improved sleep patterns and body composition, as well as a decreased risk of heart attack, osteoporosis, hypertension, colon cancer, and non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus.

For individuals wishing to strive for a healthier weight increasing activity level through a regular fitness program while decreasing their caloric intake can make a life changing difference. To help in this regard, MH Recreation Therapy and the MOVE program have partnered to establish a collaborative effort in helping Veterans lose and/or manage their weight through MOVE.

Veterans wishing to participate in the NW Clinic MH Recreation Therapy Fitness Program need to request a

consultation for treatment from their provider with medical clearance for participation. Once received, Veterans will be contacted by a recreation therapist and enrolled in a 12-week group exercise (Sittercise) class, which is an important progression as well as a required pre-requisite for entry into the fitness center.

Upon the completion of the group exercise class, the Veteran will be transferred into one of the fitness group time slots, designed an individualized fitness treatment program, and then be required to participate twice a week for 12 weeks. At the end of 12 weeks, the therapist and Veteran will evaluate progress and determine if more treatment is necessary.

For more information, contact MH and BSS Recreation Therapy at (602) 277-5551, ext. 17250. ■

Sharon Helman Appointed Director for Phoenix VA Health Care System

Sharon M. Helman has been selected as the new director of the Phoenix VA Health Care System in Arizona and will have her first day on the job Feb. 27.

As director of the Phoenix VA Health Care System, Mrs. Helman will oversee all aspects of this level 1b tertiary care hospital. The Phoenix VA Health Care System has been rated nationally as a top performing hospital by the Joint Commission. Our high quality health care to more than 85,000 Veterans includes primary care, specialty care, inpatient care and extended support services. We also have six community health care clinics in Globe-Miami, Mesa, Show Low, Surprise, and North Central Phoenix. The Phoenix VA Health Care System was established in 1951 and recently celebrated its 60th anniversary.

Mrs. Helman comes to Phoenix after serving as the Director of the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital. As the Hines Director, Mrs. Helman managed one of the largest and most complex hospitals in the VA system. Hines, which is located 12 miles west of downtown Chicago on a 147-acre campus, offers primary, extended and specialty care to our nation's heroes. Specialized clinical programs at Hines include Blind Rehabilitation, Spinal Cord Injury,

Neurosurgery, Radiation Therapy and Cardiovascular Surgery.

At Hines VA Hospital, Mrs. Helman managed their 483 inpatient beds as well as six community based outpatient clinics in Elgin, Kankakee, Oak Lawn, Aurora, LaSalle, and Joliet. More than 635,000 patient visits occurred at Hines in fiscal year 2011; with the facility providing care to more than 56,000 veterans, primarily from Cook, DuPage and Will counties.

Mrs. Helman career with the Department of Veterans Affairs spans more than 20 years including increasing roles of leadership responsibility at eight VA facilities. She previously held the role of Director at the Spokane VA Medical Center from June 2008 to January 2010. Prior to that, she was Director at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center from January 2007 – June 2008, Acting Director at the VA Roseburg Health Care System in Roseburg, Oregon from October 2006 – April 2007, and Associate Director at Roseburg from March 2005 – October 2006.

Mrs. Helman earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communications and then a Masters in Business Administration from National University in San Diego, California. During her VA career she has received a number of commendations and awards, including a Certificate of Special Congressional



Recognition, Secretary's Hero Award, and Commendations from the Under Secretary for Health and Deputy Under Secretary for Health of Operations and Management along with special honors from the Native American Veterans Groups.

She holds professional affiliations with the American College of Healthcare Executives, Senior Executive Association, the Association for Women in Communications, Washington Rural Health Association, Rotary, and Executive Women International.

The Phoenix VA Health Care System will host Director Town Hall Meetings on Tuesday Feb. 28 so all staff can meet Mrs. Helman in person. The Town Halls will be held at 8 a.m.; noon, and 3 p.m. in the multi-purpose room in the lower level of the Ambulatory Care Clinic.

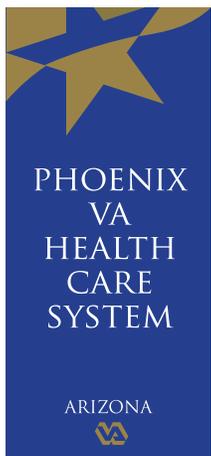
We hope you will join us in giving our new director, Mrs. Sharon Helman, a warm sunny welcome to Phoenix! ■

The Desert Sun is a bi-monthly printed publication for VA staff, volunteers, our Congressional members, Veterans Service Organizations and the Phoenix community.

The Desert Sun is supported by:

- Dr. Jamie Robbins Interim Medical Center Director
- Lance Robinson FACHE Interim Associate Director
- Dr. Sylvia Vela Interim Chief of Staff
- Nancy Claflin RN, Ph.D. Associate Director for Patient Care Services
- John Scherpf FACHE..... Assistant Director
- Paula L. Pedene APR..... Public Affairs Officer & Managing Editor
- Illustrated Graphics..... Graphic Design and the Desert Sun Editorial Board

If you would like to submit an article that falls within medical center and appropriated funding guidelines, please contact PVAHCS PAO Paula L. Pedene APR at (602) 222-2667 or via e-mail at paula.pedene@va.gov. We are not allowed to accept any advertising, political or editorial content.



Soon To Be Gone

By Capt. Stephen R. Ellison, M.D., U.S. Army

(Editor's Note: This story was submitted to us by Dr. Michael Garrett)

I am a doctor specializing in the emergency departments of the only two military Level One-Trauma Centers, both in San Antonio, Texas. Both care for civilian emergencies as well as military personnel. San Antonio has the largest military retiree population in the world living here. As a military doctor, I work long hours and the pay is less than glamorous. One tends to become jaded by the long hours, lack of sleep, food, family contact and the endless parade of human suffering passing before you. The arrival of another ambulance does not mean more pay, only more work. Most often, it is a victim from a motor vehicle crash.

Often it is a person of dubious character who has been shot or stabbed. With our large military retiree population, it is often a nursing home patient. Even with my enlisted service and minimal combat experience in Panama, I have caught myself groaning when the ambulance brought in yet another sick, elderly person from one of the local retirement centers that cater to military retirees. I had not stopped to think of what citizens of this age group represented.

I saw 'Saving Private Ryan.' I was touched deeply. Not so much by the carnage, but by the sacrifices of so many. I was touched most by the scene of the Pvt. Ryan survivor at the graveside, asking his wife if he'd been a good man. I realized that I had seen these same men and women coming through my emergency department and had not realized what magnificent sacrifices they had made. The things they did for me and everyone else who has lived on this planet since the end of that conflict are priceless.

Situation permitting, I now try to ask my patients about their experiences. They would never bring up the subject without the inquiry. I have been privileged to an amazing array of experiences, recounted in the brief minutes allowed in an emergency department encounter. These

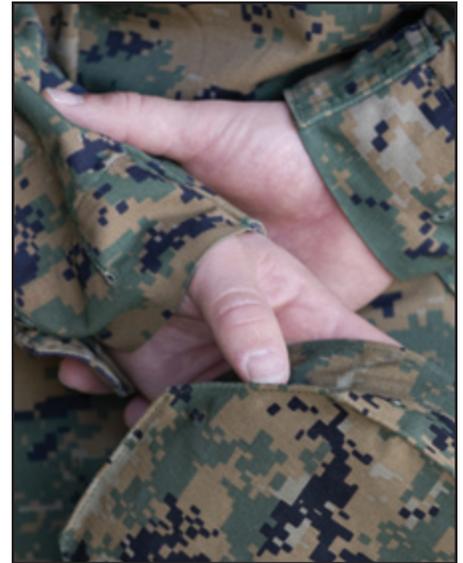
experiences have revealed the incredible individuals I have had the honor of serving in a medical capacity, many on their last admission to the hospital.

There was a frail, elderly woman who reassured my young enlisted medic, trying to start an IV line in her arm. She remained calm and poised, despite her illness and the multiple needle-sticks into her fragile veins. She was what we call a "hard stick." As the medic made another attempt, I noticed a number tattooed across her forearm. I touched it with one finger and looked into her eyes. She simply said, "Auschwitz." Many of later generations would have loudly and openly berated the young medic in his many attempts. How different was the response from this person who'd seen unspeakable suffering.

Also, there was this long retired colonel, who as a young officer had parachuted from his burning plane over a Pacific Island held by the Japanese. Now an octogenarian, he had a minor cut on his head from a fall at his home where he lived alone. His CT scan and suturing had been delayed until after midnight by the usual parade of high priority ambulance patients. Still spry for his age, he asked to use the phone to call a taxi to take him home, then realized his ambulance had brought him without his wallet. He asked if he could use the phone to make a long distance call to his daughter who lived seven miles away. With great pride we told him that he could not, as he'd done enough for his country and the least we could do was get him a taxi home, even if we had to pay for it ourselves. My only regret was that my shift wouldn't end for several hours, and I couldn't drive him myself.

I was there the night M/Sgt. Roy Benavidez came through the emergency department for the last time. He was very sick. I was not the doctor taking care of him, but I walked to his bedside and took his hand. I said nothing. He was so sick, he didn't know I was there. I'd read his Congressional Medal of Honor citation and wanted to shake his hand. He died a few days later.

The gentleman who served with



Merrill's Marauders,
the survivor of the Bataan Death
March,
The survivor of Omaha Beach,
The 101 year-old World War I veteran,
The former POW held in frozen North
Korea,
The former Special Forces medic - now
with non-operable liver cancer,
The former Vietnam corps
commander.

I remember these citizens and still
groan when yet another ambulance
comes in, but now I am much more
aware of what an honor it is to serve
these particular men and women.

I have seen a Congress who would turn
their back on these individuals who've
sacrificed so much to protect our liberty.
I see later generations that seem to be
totally engrossed in abusing these same
liberties, won with such sacrifice.

It has become my personal endeavor
to make the nurses and young enlisted
medics aware of these amazing
individuals when I encounter them
in our emergency Department Their
response to these particular citizens has
made me think that perhaps all is not lost
in the next generation.

My experiences have solidified my
belief that we are losing an incredible
generation, and this nation knows
not what it is losing. Our uncaring
government and ungrateful civilian
populace should all take note.

If it weren't for the United States
military, there'd be NO United States of
America! ■

Mandatory Training Caveats

By Joan Etzenhouser

It is a requirement of all Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) employees to complete the following mandatory trainings on an annual basis, except for Prevention of Workplace Harassment/No FEAR, which is completed every two years.

- VA Privacy and Information Security Awareness & Rules of Behavior
- VA Privacy Policy Web Training
- Green Environmental Management System (GEMS)
- Fire Safety
- Hand Hygiene
- Infection Control & Prevention
- The Many Faces of Diversity in Health Care
- Violence in the Workplace
- Hazard Communication & New Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) Program (MAXCOM)
- Elder or Vulnerable Adult (and Child) Abuse, Neglect & Exploitation

- VHA CO Compliance & Business Integrity (CBI) Awareness Training
- Prevention of Health Care Associated Infections
- Impaired Professionals
- Patient Rights, End of Life Care, Organ Donation
- Team Training, Quality, and Performance Improvement
- National Patient Safety Goals
- TB, Bloodborne Pathogens, Influenza Education
- Prevention of Workplace Harassment/No FEAR (biennially)

It is in your best interest as employees to regularly access Talent Management System (TMS) and review their To-Do List. Although TMS sends out training expiration notifications, it is important to be aware of any impending training due dates and newly assigned training requirements.

If you do not access TMS at least every 90 days, the system will lock you out. If you need your password reset, please

contact your local department TMS Administrator, not the national help desk. If your department administrator is unable to help you, please have them contact Nursing Education or Employee Education Service.

The list of facility TMS administrators and several tutorials for common TMS tasks are found on the facility intranet page under Education, on the TMS webpage.

It is important to make sure that you have a correct e-mail and supervisor name in your TMS Profile. Visit the facility TMS Web page for the tutorial on how to add or update this information.

Once new employees have been through New Employee Orientation, they are required to access TMS and complete their mandatory training. They may be assigned additional courses based on their position, title, and responsibilities, especially if they are to provide patient care. The Joint Commission requires that all mandatory training be completed prior to providing care to any patients.

Remember: it is recommended that you do not contact the VA TMS Help Desk for password resets. Please contact your department TMS administrator. ■

Our Patients Tell Us...

Last week I was admitted to your hospital after suffering sudden numbness and loss of strength in my right hand. I would like to take a moment and recognize a couple members of your staff because their performance, attitude and caring was well above noteworthy. In the past year, I have unfortunately had an opportunity to observe nurses while visiting a dear friend who passed away due to cancer. Her stays were in several Valley hospitals, and I saw many nurses as she was attended to. While not an expert in nursing, I do consider myself to be a reasonable judge of character, performance and ability.

Liza Bobo, RN and Michael Esteves, RN provided the daytime care during my stay. I was told Michael is a recent transfer and was working with Liza

while he comes up to speed on the ward, which is why I was provided two skilled members of your staff. Michael and Liza impressed me in several ways. They are empathetic, engaging, thorough, skilled and, above all else, professional. I liked and appreciated the way they led their team. They led through example, and it didn't matter if the job was messy or disgusting, they led with a smile, which was contagious to both the patient and the others around them. During my stay, my needs were minimal; however the gentleman in the bed next to me wasn't so lucky. His needs were greater and he was attended to by Mike and Liza with cheer and a friendly word. In my case, they impressed me as being an advocate for me in my care, in keeping me in the loop on my progress, and just plain being

two people I would be honored to have as friends.

I am writing this letter not only to share my observations, but more importantly to encourage you to do all in your power to retain these individuals either through performance increases or by providing opportunities of greater responsibility to continue their career growth. It is my sincere hope you will review this letter the next time they are up for review and recognize their achievements.

Mike and Liza embody the goodness the VA should always strive to provide the Veteran community. Please take a moment and make their day by thanking them personally for me.

Best Regards
Rick Aldom ■

Million Veteran Program Seeking Veterans for Research Study

The Million Veteran Program at Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix is still accepting enrollments from Veterans who want to participate in this groundbreaking research project.

The Million Veteran Program (MVP): A Partnership with Veterans, is a national, voluntary research program conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research & Development. MVP aims to enroll as many as one million Veterans during the next five to seven years. Participants will be asked to complete a one-time study visit (about 20 minutes in length) to provide a blood sample for genetic analysis. Participation also includes filling out health surveys, allowing ongoing access to medical records and agreeing to future contact. This research program will establish

one of the largest databases of genes and health history. The results of MVP may lead to new ways of preventing and treating common illness.

Those wanting to enroll in the program can visit the Clinical Research Center, which is located on the northeast corner of the campus between Building 27 and Building 21. MVP appointments are taken each day from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

By participating in MVP, Veterans will help contribute to the knowledge base that may result in developing personalized treatments for military-related illnesses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as more common illnesses like diabetes and heart disease. Results from MVP will help improve health care for Veterans and all Americans. MVP has extensive safeguards in place to keep Veterans



personal information secure and confidential.

Participation will not affect access to health care or benefits. Visit the website of the Million Veteran Program at www.research.va.gov/mvp to learn more. For more information or to participate, call toll-free 866-441-6075. ■

PR PROVIDERS

Public Affairs Officer Paula L. Pedene APR often has to garner media assistance from staff for interviews and other information on a short turnaround basis for media queries. When staff assists our VA with media and other PR requests, Pedene recognizes them as PR Providers. This helps us provide our four-hour turnaround for media queries, and helps to support other special needs for public relations assistance. PR Providers earn recognition in this column, and they receive a special token of appreciation for their PR efforts.

A special thank you to Mr. Johnny Wallick of Wallick Jewelers who resized a ring of a former POW and World War II Veteran living in the Community Living Center.

- ◆ Laura Winter for her efforts with the Yellow Ribbons at our VA in welcoming home our Veterans.
- ◆ Michael Owens and Dr. Leslie Telfer with Channels 5 and 12 on PTSD
- ◆ Yusuf Batuta for your extra efforts in preparing events on your day off.
- ◆ Veronica Bishop for your assistance in providing photographs for the Desert Sun.
- ◆ Catherine Moore for assisting in providing World War II Veterans for a special event.
- ◆ Mark Gorman for his assistance with the Channel 3 story on assistance the Veterans Court is providing to our Veterans.
- ◆ Dr. Leslie Telfer and Chris Antoniou for their support with a Channel 3 story on PTSD.



Paula L. Pedene APR with a Silver Anvil Award presented by the Public Relations Society of America

We thank you all for being PR Providers!

Value Convenience Service (VCS): 65 Years of Service to Veterans

Established in 1946, VCS was created to provide articles of merchandise and services at reasonable prices to Veterans enrolled in VA health care system, caregivers, and visitors. Since its conception, VCS' mission continues, incorporating a strategic Veteran-centric approach, emphasizing the importance of service to Veterans and supporting VA's overall mission.

VCS employees provide retail, food, and vending services across the country. Its operating vision is simple: become an integral part of the VA and deliver merchandise and services of exceptional quality and value in an environment consistent with high levels of satisfaction and comfort. These guiding principles are the "strategic drivers" of the programs and services offered today.

VCS PatriotStore offers a large variety of items found at any major retailer such as LED/LCD TVs, iPods, men's & ladies fragrances, military apparel, giftware, snacks and much more. They also carry brand names such as Sharp, LG, Cuisinart, Nautica and Reebok just to name a few.

VCS has worked diligently to refresh product assortment and review the top 100 sellers making sure items carried are updated and replenished in the retail stores. Customers can rely on in-stock basic merchandise at the right time, right place and right price. In addition to our assortment within the retail stores, VCS also has a convenient Business to Business program in which they work with any Veteran organization to procure merchandise needed for any special occasion or event.

VCS PatriotStore&Café has expanded offerings to communicate the importance of value, health and wellness with the "Smart Choices" program. Within retail, PatriotStore focuses on trends, as well as, basics that are competitively priced. The



PatriotCafé provides nutritional meal choices for our Veteran, Caregivers, Visitors and Staff of the VA Medical Centers. In the PatriotExpress Vending program, customers can look for the "Smart Choices" stickers used to identify healthful snack/food items.

Nutritional information for standard café items can be found on counter menu signs, as well as in the Smart Choices Nutrition Guide. Contributing to a healthy organization, VCS actively supports Healthier US Veterans, MOVE and WIN initiatives.

In addition to the Nutrition Guide, VCS PatriotCafé offers catering. The Catering Guide offers a wide assortment of signature items that are unique to Veterans Canteen Service. VCS can cater any size meal, whether it's a four-course meal or simply coffee and pastries.

VCS is also a proud to "give back" to the VA community by supporting the VA's Rehabilitation Games, Fisher House, Poly-Trauma Centers for OEF/OIF Veterans, disaster relief efforts and VA's Homeless Veterans Program.

VCS sponsors the six VA National Rehabilitation Games each year. Fisher House residents receive discount certificates that can be redeemed in the PatriotStore for any basic necessities during their stay. And most recently, VCS has partnered with VA's Homeless Veterans Program to assist homeless Veterans with housing, treatment, employment opportunities and basic necessities.

"Preserving Resources for those who have Preserved our Freedom" is VCS' sustainability motto. By using recyclable bags and coffee cups, selling reusable shopping totes and refillable mugs, VCS has reduced its Carbon Footprint.

Another popular program involves the new VA/VCS All Services Exchange Catalog. Working through the military resell Exchange Systems, this program provides on-line shopping options, including thousands of items offered at great values for VA employees and registered Veterans.

Customer service and nurturing relationships are the keys to VCS' success. The cornerstone of its success can be characterized by knowledgeable, passionate, friendly, courteous, fun and happy associates, who truly care about their mission and the loyal customers they serve.

VCS' evolution has been dramatic over the last 65 years. Although its mission remains the same, its programs, initiatives, and contributions reflect the integral role it plays within the VA community more than ever before. Veterans, patients and VA caregivers should expect nothing less.

Please visit our Web site at <http://www.vacanteen.va.gov>

Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/VAcanteenservice

For more information on VCS Business to Business, please email:

MaryLou.Pryor@va.gov ■



Construction Update

By Demarques Potter

The Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) community has been through a lot of changes with our construction projects and there are still more impacts on the horizon. Several construction projects have been and will be completed and activated for use by our Veterans. In addition, several projects will begin that will greatly improve Veteran care and increase the space at the PVAHCS. These investments have been and continue to be needed to meet increasing patient demands, accommodate new equipment and support numerous initiatives and directives from the Department of Veteran Affairs. We should all be proud of these activities as this is the realization of hard work and sacrifice by the entire PVAHCS community.

Projects scheduled for completion include:

- **Specialty Care Addition:** The Ambulatory Care Clinic (ACC) basement area will be converted to Compensation and Pension (C&P) clinics, and office space for mental health and nuclear medicine. Construction has been complete and plans are in the works for activating

by the end of February.

- **Solar project:** We are currently installing solar panels that will use Phoenix's abundant sunlight to produce clean, renewable electricity. This project will decrease the facility energy cost by an estimated \$200,000 annually and is expected to be completed in February. A side benefit: about 95 percent of our parking spaces will be covered, and that means no more burning steering wheels in the summer
- **Temporary Operating Room (OR) Suites:** The temporary OR suites south of the Emergency Department were completed in January. This was done to make way for needed repairs and maintenance of the OR Suites on the third floor.
- **Elevators 6, 7, & 8:** Construction on the new elevators by the CLC is complete and now available for public use.

Projects scheduled to begin include:

- **Plumbing Phase 7 and OR repairs:** This project is currently on-going, taking place in D-tower and the OR Suites of the main hospital.

- **New Mental Health Building:** This new three-story, 41,000 sq. ft. facility is to be located adjacent to the main hospital. It will house the residential treatment program and other mental health functions. Construction is expected to begin in February.
- **Rehabilitation Building:** This new two-story, 28,000 square feet facility is to be located adjacent to D-wing of the main hospital, on the South side of the ACC connecting corridor. It will house rehabilitation services, and the project is currently on-going.

These construction impacts mean a lot of changes and revisions for us as we strive to do our jobs and for our patients when they come to their appointments. All of us in Engineering Services appreciate your understanding and continued support throughout these constant changes. We are proud to have and will continue to serve our nation's Veterans and their families with an enhanced environment of care. ■



Temporary Operating Room Suite Is Impressive

By Paula L. Pedene, APR

When you walk through the doors from the Emergency Department into the temporary Operating Room (OR) suite it's interesting to note the change. First there's signage telling you what you are walking into. Then you come to the hallway, and moving down this path you arrive in the receiving area of the six trailers that have been joined together to create our new OR suites. The front area has the OR reception, preop, scrub room, recovery, supplies and storage areas. Beyond that are the double doors leading to the surgical suites where our patients currently have procedures performed.

"This temporary OR facility is state of the art, ensuring the best possible care for our Veterans during the necessary infrastructure renovations to our permanent operating rooms," said Interim Chief of Surgery Dr. Gene Dossett.

The current renovation Dr. Dossett is

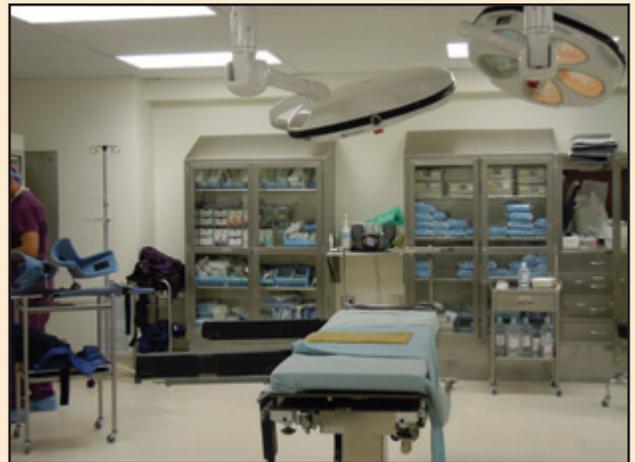
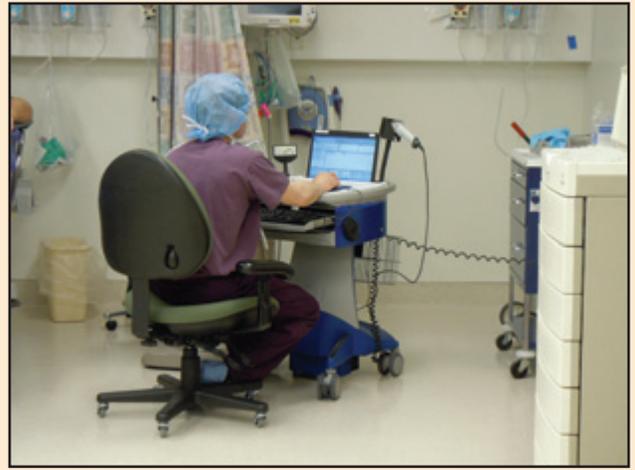
speaking about is a plumbing upgrade over the entire OR structure on the third floor of the main hospital. When the hospital was built in 1951, plumbing pipes ran back and forth overhead in the ceilings, which meant that if there was a plumbing issue or leak, it could contaminate the areas where the operations were occurring. With today's technology, the plumbing in ORs is still pushed overhead in the ceilings and to the sides of the room, much like a picture frame, thus averting potential exposure to leaks and other issues.

However, to do this extensive amount of work meant two options. One, keep the ORs open Monday through Thursday and then close them Friday through Sunday for construction; or two, move out of the area to make way for the construction and set up temporary trailers to create the needed space. Phoenix VA opted for the latter.

"We have 720 sq. ft. of space for each of the five OR suite, seven bays

for PACU and a three bays holding area constructed with the six adjoining trailers in this project," said Lisa Warner, Nurse Manager. "The space is great, but it means we have a little more to do on the logistical side of things, with patient movements, supplies and reorientation. At this point we have no limits to our cases and we're operating at full steam ahead," she said.

It took quite a bit of planning for the temporary set-up to come to life. There were clinical and administrative meetings to discuss the needs and ensure all protocols and guidelines could be met. Engineering Service partnered with several allied services to ensure a smooth transition. Dr. Vivienne Halpern provided the clinical guidance for the project, while Interim Medical Center Director Dr. Jamie Robbins worked with Susan Bowers, Veterans Integrated Service Network 18 Director, to provide the leadership to make the project come to life.



“By working together this way we are meeting the needs of our Veterans and the needs of our staff with no decrease in operations and no shift changes. The only thing we have to do at this point is adapt to a new routine and be flexible with any kinks that arise,” said Warner.

The maneuvers for this setup read like a military medical mobilization:

- 34 Surgeons
- 17 RNs
- 6 Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists
- 5 Recovery Room RNs
- 4 Anesthesiologists
- 3 Scrub Techs
- 2 Nursing Assistants
- 2 Medical Support Admins
- EKG Techs
- 6 trailers
- OR Tables

- OR Lights
- OR supplies
- Sterilization supplies
- Scrubs
- Biomedical services
- Contracting for lead services and negotiations
- Engineering Services for overall concept, design, layout and follow through led by Gary Zettl
- Environmental Management services
- Information Resource Management services
- Laboratory and Pathology staff support and services
- Radiology staff support, equipment and pathways
- Supply Processing and Distribution services
- Voluntary support for patient trans-

fers from the OR intake on the third floor to the temporary OR

You get the drift.

“We couldn’t have done this without the tremendous support we’ve received,” said Warner. “It has taken a massive, collaborative effort to put us into this new environment and make it work,” she added. “Overall this has a positive impact on patient care and I just want to give special thanks to everyone for working through this situation to support our efforts in the long run.”

The speed with which the project was constructed impressed everyone and the space is large enough to handle all of our patient maneuvers. The temporary OR will be in place on the south side of the main hospital behind the Emergency Room from January through May 2012. ■

HIGHLIGHTS

Around the Medical Center

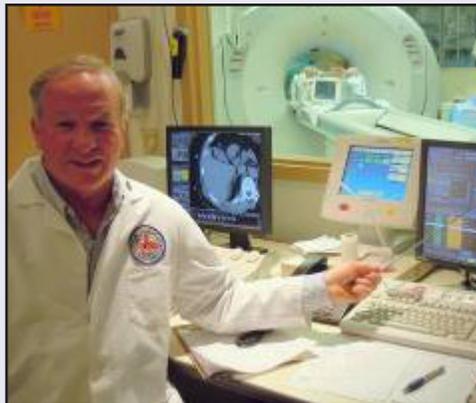
Paula L. Pedene, APR, Public Affairs Officer

- Our Chief of Medicine **Dr.**

James Felicetta won the election to become the next governor for the American College of Physicians (ACP) in Arizona. ACP is the national organization representing all internal medicine physicians and trainees, including both generalists and subspecialists. ACP publishes the *Annals of Internal Medicine* and also the MKSAP, a rigorous self-assessment program which is widely used by physicians and trainees to keep their medical knowledge up to date. Dr. Felicetta's term as governor is four years. There are only two other state ACP governors nationwide who work within the VA system.



- Each year medical professionals in Phoenix nominate doctors from specified medical specialties to be submitted for the distinction as a "Super Doctor" in *AZ Magazine*,



published by the *Arizona Republic*. This year **Dr. Marc Manger** earned top honors in the Radiology division. Doctors are asked to submit their nominees based on one question "If you needed medical care in one of the following specialties, which doctor would you choose?" Dr. Manger completed his undergraduate work at Yale, attended medical school at Tufts, and completed his Radiology residency at UCLA. Fellowship trained in both CT/Ultrasound and in MRI, Dr. Manger also became Board-certified in Cardiovascular CT Angiography. Dr. Manger has special interests in Cross Sectional Imaging and in Quality and Process Improvement Challenges in Diagnostic Imaging. He is an invited guest speaker at the American College of Radiology's February 2012 national conference on "Maximizing Value in Radiology through Quality and Safety Improvements."

- Our Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service has many accomplishments to celebrate already this year. First, the Laboratory Services Transfusion Service staff achieved accreditation from Advancing Transfusion and Cellular Therapies Worldwide group. Second, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine staff earned triennial accreditation from The College of American Pathologists. Third, they have been selected as a study site for laboratory software. The Laboratory System Reengineering Project (LSRP) provides an industry-leading Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) for the VA Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service (PLMS). The selected solution is Cerner Millennium PathNet, a Commercial Off-The-Shelf LIMS, which will modernize the VistA Laboratory application created more than 30 years ago. The Cerner Millennium PathNet is interfaced with VistA to maintain systems integration with the more than 40 applications currently receiving and/or providing information from VistA. The system was successfully implemented at the Alpha site, Huntington, VA., and implementation activities are just beginning at the Beta sites, Phoenix, AZ, and East Orange, NJ. Additional information is at LSRP's homepage: <http://vista.med.va.gov/clinicalspecialties/Lab%20Reengineering/index.html>

- **Dr. Karen Kattar** co-authored a chapter about Cognitive Processing Therapy in the treatment of military personnel in a text book, which will be used to educate staff and trainees on PTSD. The book is "Treating PTSD in Military Personnel: A clinical handbook." Dr. Kattar is a certified national trainer for one of the signature therapies—Cognitive Processing Therapy which is used in treating PTSD.

- Veteran **Arthur Imwalle**, recently met with staff at the Northwest VA Health Care Clinic to



World War II Veteran Arthur Imwalle proudly holds the certificate he received for his participation in the Battle of the Bulge during World War II.

share his stories and display his certificates from his service at the Battle of the Bulge during World War II. In late 1944, in the wake of the Allied forces' successful D-Day invasion of Normandy, France, it seemed as if the Second World War was all but over. But on December 16, with the onset of winter, the German army launched a counteroffensive that was intended to cut through the Allied forces in a manner that would turn the tide of the war in Hitler's favor. The battle that ensued is known historically as The Battle of the Bulge. The German drive, led by Gerd von Rundstedt's panzer army, was initially successful but was halted by Allied resistance and reinforcements led by General George Patton. The Germans withdrew in January 1945, but both sides suffered heavy losses. It was called the "Battle of the Bulge" because their invasion lines formed a bulge. You can read more: about this battle at <http://www.answers.com/topic/battle-of-the-bulge#ixzz110QUeL00>

- Congratulations to **Allison Reusch** for being selected as one of three members to work with the national VA LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Employee Resource Group.
- Patient Services Assistant **Victoria M. Miller** from the Jade/Opal Clinic passed along thanks from our Veterans to Ms. Nicoloff's 4th grade class for their recent letter writing campaign. "Thank you for the letters and drawings that you sent to our hospital for Veterans Day 2011. In November 2011 we put them up on our walls and windows at the Jade/Opal (Mental Health) clinic... and they are still there now in January 2012! So many Veterans, employees and family members have enjoyed reading them. Many Veterans' smile when they see the drawings. Some Veterans ask for a copy so that they can put it in their pocket to keep. What you did was very special and is very much appreciated. (I don't know when to take them down because they are so enjoyed.) Thank you all.
- Our Native American Program was honored to have two-time World Champion Hoop Dance **Brian Hammill** perform for those at the event. Hammill uses dance as a key to keeping his Native American culture alive. Traditionally their dances were used for many purposes, such as ceremonial, story telling and entertainment. You can learn more about Hammill and his dance at <http://www.nativespirit.com/> In addition, the program had First Place Creative Arts Winner **Wes Ricks** play the flute at the event. Ricks loves to play his music for our patients, and you can hear his soothing sounds in the ACC most weekdays, when he volunteers to play on the second floor seating area. Highlights of his work can be found at <http://www.wesricks.com/> At the event, there were 18 tables filled with Native American wares, traditions, jewelry, music, books etc. There was a raffle and several wonderful pieces of Native jewelry were won. Food was provided by the Veterans Canteen Service with samplings of fried bread, beans, soup, etc. Additionally, Arnold Collins, Chairman of the Western Intertribal Gourd Society, from Gallup, N.M. spoke about the Gourd Society, and our own VA employee, **JoAnn Ahlemeyer**, Native American Program Coordinator, spoke about the benefits the Gourd Society has to offer. **Cari James** shared her experience and reflected on what it

means to be a Native American as a VA employee. **Trina Carter** and **Jennifer Russoniello** coordinated the event.

- Our thanks to **Dr. Joel Cooper**, staff physician, who captured this beautiful sunrise over the Northwest VA Health Care Clinic in Surprise.
- Social Worker **David Stephensen**, who works with our Health Care for Homeless Veterans, performs with the Mormon Choral Organization. They recently released a CD, *Messiah in America*, a new oratorio by Brett Stewart. The choral/symphony release is a new major classical release which debuted at #1 on the Tradition Classical chart in Billboard Magazine, the standard publication for the music industry. The group is a non-profit, all-volunteer group of musicians whose love for music has propelled the group into national prominence. The CD is available on Amazon.com. You can also hear David perform when he sings with the "VA Sounds At Work." ■



Webelos from Pack 63 recently paid a visit to one of the Show Low VA Health Care Clinic.



The Eastern Mountain Young Marines presented this banner with their hand prints and thank-yous to Veterans at the Show Low VA Health Care Clinic recently.

Make Your Own Chinese Take-Out

Instead of Chinese take-out, create your own healthful version of a Chinese restaurant favorite. As a refreshing change from sweet, goopy sauce and breaded chicken, this colorful sweet-and-sour stir-fry cuts out the excess fat, sugar and sodium.

The mix of vegetables in this recipe provides a broader spectrum of nutrients and phytochemicals than a single vegetable dish can offer. Phytochemicals – a plant's natural defense system – create the different colors of vegetables and fruits and may play a role in fighting disease, according to the latest expert report on diet and cancer published by the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Using frozen chopped vegetables saves time without losing phytochemical or nutrient protection. The flash-freezing methods used these days preserves their vitamins and other protective compounds.

Serve this meal atop brown rice for even more nutritional value. A source of fiber and B-vitamins, brown rice is chewy and nutty tasting. Instant varieties are now available.

Adjust the amount of vinegar and apricot preserves to create a sweet and

sour balance for the tender chicken that suits your own taste. For a spicier dish, add red pepper flakes.

Sweet and Sour Chicken with Brown Rice

2 cups cooked brown rice
1 Tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce
1/3 cup rice vinegar
2 Tbsp. cornstarch
1/4 cup apricot preserves
2 Tbsp. sesame oil, divided
1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size pieces
4 tsp. minced ginger
4 cloves minced garlic
1 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
6 cups chopped frozen vegetables (carrots, broccoli, peas, corn)
1 can of sliced water chestnuts, drained
Pinch crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Prepare rice according to package directions. Set aside. Whisk soy sauce, vinegar, cornstarch and apricot preserves in a small mixing bowl and set aside as well.

Heat 1 Tbsp. oil in large skillet over medium to high heat. Add chicken to skillet and cook undisturbed for 2 minutes. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally until starting to brown, about 2 additional minutes. Transfer chicken to a plate.

Add remaining 1 Tbsp. oil, ginger and garlic to the skillet and cook over medium-high heat, about 30 seconds. Add chicken broth and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add frozen vegetables, reduce heat, cover and simmer under the vegetables are thawed, about 5 minutes. Do not overcook vegetables.

Return cooked chicken to the pan. Add water chestnuts. Whisk the reserved sauce and add to the skillet. Add a pinch of red pepper flakes, if desired. Simmer, stirring occasionally until the sauce thickens and chicken is heated through. Transfer chicken to a serving platter. Season with salt and pepper. Serve.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving: 490 calories, 9 g total fat (1.5 g saturated fat), 66 g carbohydrates, 33 g protein, 6 g dietary fiber, 470 mg sodium.

Risk Factors for Posttraumatic Stress Symptomatology in Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Similar to Those Observed in Vietnam Veterans

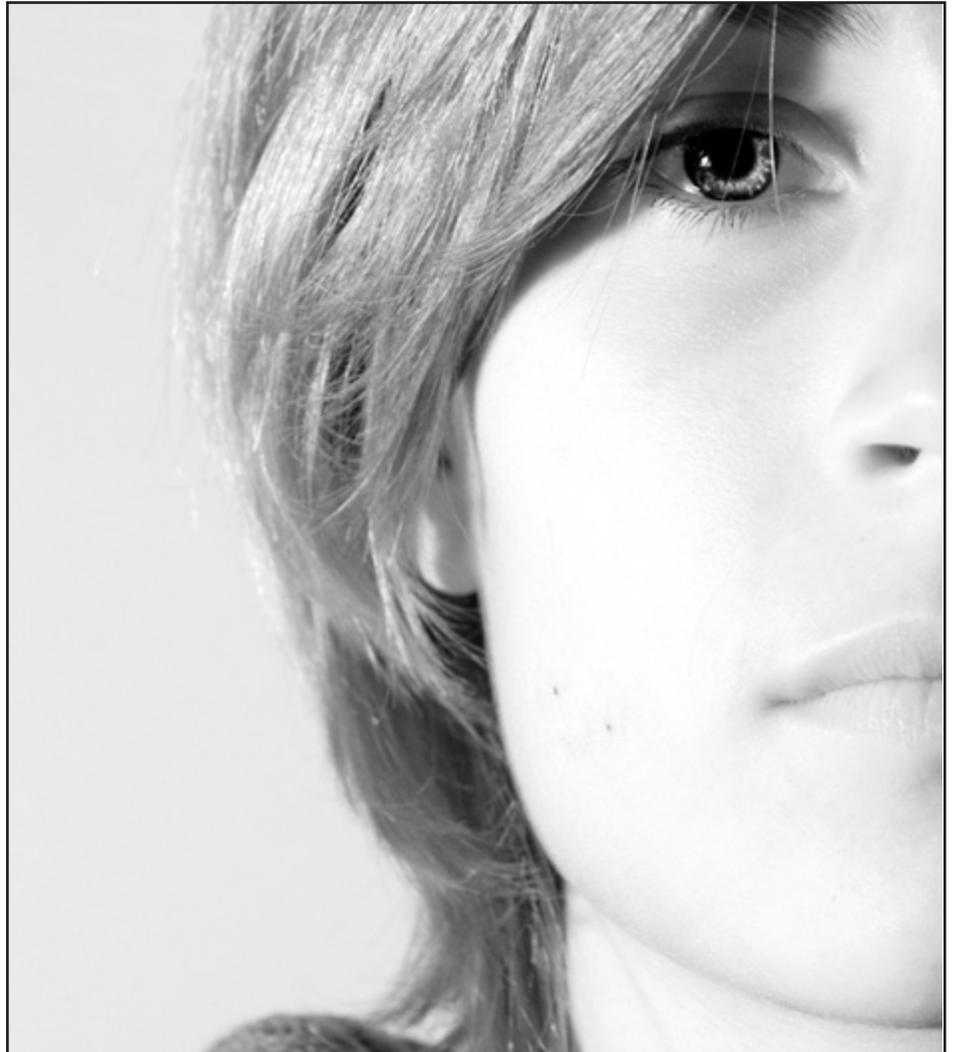
Women Veterans Face New Risk Factors

WASHINGTON – Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) researchers from Boston report in the November issue of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* that risk factors for posttraumatic stress symptomatology (PTSS, short of full-blown posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD) in Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans were found to be similar to those observed in Vietnam Veterans. This suggests that there may be generalized mechanisms and pathways, common to different Veteran populations, through which risk factors contribute to PTSS.

“This research underscores the vital importance of VA’s outreach to Veterans, and their families, in helping them cope with posttraumatic stress,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

The study subjects were a national sample of 579 (333 female and 246 male) Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans exposed to combat operations who had returned from deployment in the 12 months preceding the study. Using data from mailed surveys, the researchers assessed, as predictors of posttraumatic stress symptomatology, several risk factors which were previously documented among Vietnam Veterans. Examples include exposure to combat, predeployment stress exposure, dysfunctional family during childhood, lack of post-deployment emotional support from family and friends, and post-deployment stress exposure.

An interesting finding was that the women Veterans surveyed had new risk factors that were not seen in Vietnam-era women, such as exposure to combat and perceived threat. The authors ascribed that finding to the significantly different experiences of female Vietnam War and Afghanistan and Iraq war Veterans. Women Vietnam Veterans were primarily nurses or clerical staff.



In contrast, women Veterans’ roles in Afghanistan and Iraq have substantially expanded, with much higher levels of exposure to combat. Thus, women Veterans in these more recent conflicts may have more in common with their male contemporaries, in relation to PTSS risk, than with their female counterparts from the Vietnam era. However, in terms of postdeployment readjustment, family relationships during deployment appeared to play a more prominent role in female compared to male Veterans.

“Our findings highlight the impact and role of family disruptions in increasing the risk for posttraumatic stress symptomatology, particularly for

female servicemembers,” said Dr. Dawne Vogt, the paper’s lead author, from the VA Boston Healthcare System. “It is particularly noteworthy that women who experienced relationship problems during deployment, also reported less postdeployment social support.”

Veterans who believe they are experiencing symptoms of PTSS or PTSD may call the crisis hotline number at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and then push 1 on their telephone keypad to reach a trained VA mental health professional who can assist the Veteran 24 hours a day, seven days a week. ■

Creating Safer Modes of Traveling for our Veterans

By: Advanced Low Vision Clinic Staff

Have you noticed while pushing the pedestrian button to cross the lighted intersection at S. Herrera Way / 3rd Street and Indian School Road, the way it now vibrates and produces different sounds indicating when it is safe to cross the street? The city of Phoenix and PVAHCS Advanced Low Vision Clinic has joined forces to implement an Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) system to make it safer for our low-vision / blind Veterans to cross the street safely. APS was designed to provide additional audible and/or vibrotactile information, allowing access for pedestrians who are low vision or blind. This is important because the designs of intersections often change, at a time when car manufacturers are producing more silent cars. These new more silent cars have affected useful street crossing techniques that traditionally have had blind travelers relying on loud traffic sound cues.

Most APS are installed by the request of a low-vision, or blind local traveler in need of additional sound or tactile clues to perform safe street crossings. Local low vision or blind travelers who find they would benefit from additional sound or tactile information to cross safely should contact the city civil engineers. Once contact has been made to the city, an environmental safety assessment is conducted to see what strategies and/or information would increase safety for the low-vision/ blind traveler during the street crossing.

APS come in many different models, depending on the intersection design and the needs of the requesting traveler.

The APS installed at S. Herrera Way / 3rd Street and Indian School Road includes a vibrotactile arrow on the pushbutton. All the sounds come from the pedestrian pushbutton housing unit, rather than the pedhead (overhead sound). When the pedestrian is preparing to cross the street, he presses



Signals like these at crosswalks produce an audible signal that allows visually impaired people to know when they can safely cross a street.

the pushbutton locator that produces two different sounds to indicate whether it is safe to cross.

When it is not safe to cross, the tactile arrow unit generates a slow and steady “beep.” When a traveler pushes the tactile arrow while it is NOT safe to cross, the tactile arrow unit will say “WAIT.” When it is indeed safe to cross the street, the traveler will hear the “woodpecker”

sound throughout the duration of a safe crossing.

For those of you who haven't taken the opportunity to check out the new APS at the lighted intersection of S. Herrera Way / 3rd Street and Indian School Road yet, come see how this new Accessible Pedestrian Signal can assist a low-vision or blind traveler cross the street safely. ■

Lima Foxtrot Offers Recreation, Respite for Wounded Veterans

By: Charles Melton TCF

Located in Birmingham, Ala., the Lakeshore Foundation's Lima Foxtrot program is more than a thousand miles from the Phoenix VA Health Care System, but its reach to severely-injured Veterans easily spans the distance.

Lima Foxtrot is the brand name adopted by Lakeshore Foundation to describe what has become one of the premier, comprehensive, year round, sport, fitness, and recreation programs for severely injured Veterans.

"Putting smiles on the faces of everyone who attends the Lima Foxtrot programs is a great reward," said Susan Robinson, Lima Foxtrot Coordinator/ Athletics and Recreation. "Past participants have become more active in sports and recreation, creating a lifetime of fitness benefits."

In one sense, Lima Foxtrot simply represents the organization providing the programs, "L"akeshore "F"oundation. However, Lima Foxtrot also represents the spirit of Living Fit, which describes the outcomes associated with participation in these programs. Further, Lima Foxtrot reminds us all of what the courage of these men and women means to our daily lives, Liberty and Freedom.

All Lima Foxtrot events include all meals, lodging, and air and ground transportation, and all sports and recreation activities at no cost to our Veterans. Transportation from Phoenix to Birmingham is even covered, so any barriers to attend these activities are non-existent.

The programs serve servicemen, servicewomen and Veterans with injuries such as spinal cord injury (permanent paralysis), TBI, amputation, blind/visually impaired, burns, and permanent disfigurement. Their injuries do not have to be combat-related, but it is preferred that they served post 9/11. Many of the programs also serve families as well.

"I believe having quality time to spend together as a family unit is the greatest

benefit of the Lima Foxtrot programs," Robinson said. "We are able to provide a safe, family-friendly environment where our participants can recreate, play and reconnect with one another."

"In our current climate with multiple deployments, the time that spouses, children and other loved ones get to spend with one another is scarce. Add a life-changing disability to the mix and the entire family may have a hard time coping," she said. "The Lima Foxtrot programs show them they can be active with one another and that the family member who sustained the injury does not have to sit on the sidelines."

The program has events planned for June, July, August and September; early registration is encouraged as there is limited space for each session.

While the program has received many thank-you notes from spouses and children after attending a camp, Robinson said one in particular stands out.

"The thank you that took my breath away was the most simple," she said. "It read, 'Thank you for what the Lakeshore Foundation does. You helped save my marriage.'"

You can download the applications for any of the programs (listed below) at their website http://www.lakeshore.org/index.php?submenu=Lima_Foxtrot&src=gendocs&ref=Lima_Foxtrot&category=Main

- Operation Night Vision May 31 - June 3 (http://lakeshore.accrisoft.org/index.php?submenu=Lima_Foxtrot&src=gendocs&ref=Night_Vision&category=Main) Exclusively for servicemen and women who have suffered significant eye injuries or blindness while on active duty to the service member and a guest.
- Operation Down Home - July 5-8: http://lakeshore.accrisoft.org/index.php?submenu=Lima_Foxtrot



&src=gendocs&ref=Operation%20Down%20Home&category=Main Designed to introduce severely-injured Veterans and their families to recreational sports opportunities. Limited to children ages 7 and up and families of four. Provisions for larger families made on a case-by-case basis.

- Operation ALPHA - Aug.9-12: http://lakeshore.accrisoft.org/index.php?submenu=Lima_Foxtrot&src=gendocs&ref=X_Sports&category=Main Exclusively for Veterans who have suffered traumatic brain injury; at no cost to military personnel and one guest.
- Operation Rise and Conquer – Sept. 27-30 http://lakeshore.accrisoft.org/index.php?submenu=Lima_Foxtrot&src=gendocs&ref=Rise_Conquer&category=Main An extended outdoor adventure weekend held at Lake Martin, Ala., for severely-injured Veterans and a guest.

Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served for qualified Veterans.

If you have specific questions pertaining to qualifications, contact Lima Foxtrot Coordinator Susan Robinson at either (205) 313-7461 (office), or e-mail at susanr@lakeshore.org. ■

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

By Victor L. Nickson, PSA Turquoise Clinic

December



Symphony Ivory

Symphony Ivory, Human Resources Specialist, Employee and Labor Relations, is congratulated on being selected as the December 2011 Employee of the Month

Symphony Ivory is trusted, reliable, and honest with the ability to foresee challenges ahead of time before they become crises and once discovered, lay a foundation to resolution. She then has the consciousness of forethought to include management in

the solution where necessary.

Ivory possesses a kind, respectful and courteous manner towards Veterans, subordinates, peers and those senior to her. She speaks clearly, directly, concisely which leads to mission success. In addition, she is well-organized professionally for effective and efficient service delivery to all VA populations, and cultures.

Symphony Ivory is dedicated to all phases of her job, equally at home with regular work as well as work of increasing responsibility and complexity. She is committed to being available and ready to work on any assigned project.

Her compassion extends not only to Veterans but staff as well with regards to expediting voluntary leave, family medi-

cal leave and advanced leave requests.

This is important in alleviating wait times and some of the pain experienced by those already under the heavy burden of suffering. Her words and actions are comforting, reassuring.

Symphony Ivory performs at such a high level of excellence that she has been described as the glue that holds Human Resources together. She is a true team player, who has teambuilding lunch meetings, in addition to lending her knowledge and expertise to the New Employee Orientation resulting in the establishment of the Buddy Program. There is no doubt that Ivory is a cut above and an asset to Veterans Affairs. ■

January



Alejandro Bingochea

Alejandro Bingochea, Gold Clinic Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF/OIF) Medical Support Assistant assigned to two PACT Primary Care (OEF/OIF) teams, is congratulated on being selected as the

January 2012 Employee of the Month. Bingochea is a highly decorated Purple Heart recipient and an OEF/OIF Veteran himself giving him instant insight, credibility and understanding of and with his patients. This has resulted in a

special bonding and camaraderie others can only aspire to.

Bingochea empathizes with our Veterans, having walked a mile in their shoes, so they implicitly trust him. This trust has a multiplier effect allowing Bingochea to achieve success at much higher rates than otherwise could be expected. He listens, comforting the Veterans so that they do not feel so all alone. This quality is a rare gift that cannot be so easily duplicated or measured.

Additionally, he is universally recognized as an OEF/OIF subject matter expert allowing him to answer questions arising within the workplace. His co-workers are very appreciative of this help, which gives them the impetus to provide better service themselves. In other

words, Bingochea makes those around him better, improving the VA experience for the Veterans.

Bingochea on his own volition developed a weekly OEF/OIF training program to assist returning Veterans realize their benefits under OEF/OIF HAS has approved it for program establishment.

It is now up and running at warp-speed powered solely by Bingochea's sheer drive and will to make the program a success in improving the lives of the Veterans. His curriculum includes Education Benefits, other introductory courses, and a VA tour.

Alejandro Bingochoa is highly respected; has a compassion and a commitment to excellence; achieves at the highest best level; is an outstanding employee; is a cut above, who deserves this recognition. ■