



November 2009

VISN 19 Network Director Update

Glen W. Grippen

Enjoy Thanksgiving and Thank a Veteran



A message from Glen Grippen, Network Director, VISN 19: "During this time of year, I find myself compelled to thank those that have served our nation and wish to let you know that our entire VA staff offer you our personal gratitude for your sacrifice and service".



National News: (Click on titles to read full press release)

[VA and Kaiser Permanente Invite Veterans to Participate in Health Record Pilot Program](#) - The Department of Veterans Affairs and Kaiser Permanente today announced an exciting program designed to improve care and

services to our Nation's heroes. VA and Kaiser Permanente are launching a pilot program to exchange electronic health record (EHR) information using the Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN) created by the Department of Health and Human Services. (11/25/09)

[Patrick W. Dunne, VA Under Secretary for Benefits, to Step Down](#) - Patrick W. Dunne, the Under Secretary for Benefits for the Department of Veterans Affairs, today announced his resignation for early next year. Dunne,

who attained the rank of rear admiral while in the U.S. Navy, has been with VA since 2006. (11/20/09)

[Office of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Senior Executive Announcement](#) -

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs announces the following: The President of the United States has announced his intent to nominate Robert Petzel, M.D. to be the Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs. [Secretary Shinseki Announces Study of Vietnam-Era Women Veterans](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching a comprehensive study of women Veterans who served in the military during the Vietnam War to explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health. (11/19/09)

[VA and DoD Announce Disability Evaluation System Pilot Expansion](#) - To expedite the delivery of benefits to many injured servicemembers who receive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department announced the expansion of a program with the Department of Defense (DoD) to streamline the application process for people retiring or exiting the military due to disabilities. (11/17/09)

[Secretary Enhancing Partnerships with Medical Schools](#) - To ensure Veterans receive 21st century care, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has vowed to strengthen the partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the schools that train the nation's health care professionals. (11/16/09)

[VA.Gov Launches First Step of Web Site Redesign](#) - On Veterans Day, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) rolled out the first phase of a large-scale Web renovation to better serve America's Veterans. This first and most visible step of the renovation consists of changing the Web site's look, making it easier for Veterans and their families to navigate and to find the information they are looking for. (11/13/09)

[VA Suffers Losses and Offers Help at Ft. Hood](#) - In the midst of providing mental health services and other support to the Ft. Hood community following the recent shooting, the Department of Veterans Affairs learned about its own losses from the violence. Two VA employees, both serving on active duty with their Army Reserve units, were among the slain. A third VA health care worker on reserve duty was seriously wounded. (11/10/09)

[Craigslist Founder Joins VA Innovation Search Panel](#) - Craig Newmark, the founder of "craigslist" and a well-known technology visionary, has agreed to serve on the blue-ribbon panel of the Department of Veterans Affairs that will review and evaluate ideas to improve disability claims processing times and provide greater transparency to Veterans. (11/4/09)

[Shinseki Announces Veterans' Stories Posted on VA's Web Page](#) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs will join with the Library of Congress to host a "Veterans History Countdown" on the VA Web site - www.va.gov - featuring the oral histories of Veterans from every state and U.S. territory. (11/4/09)

[Secretary Shinseki Details Plan to End Homelessness for Veterans](#) - Today, at the "VA National Summit Ending Homelessness among Veterans," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki unveiled the department's comprehensive plan to end homelessness among Veterans by marshalling the resources of government, business and the private sector. (11/3/09)

VISN 19:



Glen Grippen

Updates on our four rural health projects:

Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinics (PCTOCs)

Telehealth Equipment: Delivery of Provider site equipment is en route to the facilities and the delivery of patient site equipment will start the first week of November.

For the CBOCs where there is one provider on site, a Primary Care Cart Configuration has been ordered to enable maximum flexibility, optimize equipment use, and support the CBOC via telehealth if the one provider cannot be present for some reason.

PCTOC Project Staffing Update: All facilities continue to make progress on hiring on new staff.

PCTOC Telehealth Training: for new staff has been developed. Telemedicine basics training, and specific Primary Care and Specialty care training on basics and specific peripherals are top priority. Ongoing training will be provided using Train the Trainer concepts. The first Train the trainer activities was completed October 14-15, 2009.

PCTOC Space, Locations/Leases Update:

- Montana
 - Plentywood - Hospital interested, solicitation prepared
 - Hamilton - Hospital interested. Tentative date for meeting scheduled
- Cheyenne
 - Rawlins, WY - Reviewing bid offer
- ECHCS
 - Salida, CO - Ribbon Cutting/Grand Opening ceremony scheduled for Dec. 15, 2009.
- Grand Junction
 - Moab, UT- possible site found. Finalizing build out specifications for the Moab site.
 - Glenwood Springs, CO - Still looking, staff is visiting 7 potential sites in Glenwood first week of November.
- SLC
 - Idaho Falls and Price - Reviewing bids
- Sheridan
 - Evanston and Worland - Reviewing bids.

General Telehealth - Specialty Consultations:

This project is finalizing a Specialty Scheduling System / consult management systems to manage both inter and intra facility consults and all the related activities for a telehealth visit: service agreements, clinic set-up/scheduling, consult templates, progress note templates, communication and follow-up.

Extended Education and Wellness - Oversight Committee has been established. Patient education staff hired and on station at ECHCS. They are finalizing a Tele-Patient Ed Scheduling System / consult management systems to manage both inter and intra facility consults and all the related activities for a telehealth visit: service agreements, clinic set-up/scheduling, consult templates, progress note templates, communication and follow-up.



HIGHLIGHT - (Virtual) vICU Project

The virtual ICU (vICU) went live October 13, 2009. A critical care CCRN nurse in Denver carries a designated vICU cell phone and is available 24/7 for immediate rapid response collaboration and consultation to the rural facilities throughout VISN 19. The vICU RN contacts each facility by phone every 12 hours to discuss current clinical

issues, patient status, and care needs.

Videoconferencing between sites will begin once each facility has received their Tandberg unit. It is estimated that the Tandbergs will be delivered by the end of December 2009.

Since October 13, 2009, the vICU has received 4 rapid response calls and has assisted in the care of several other critically ill patients via the daily vICU phone calls to the rural sites. There have been no adverse events associated with the vICU. There were three critical care transfers from the rural sites to Denver between October 13, 2009 and November 13, 2009.

Examples of specific interventions include: vICU call to confer with an Infectious Disease attending about his patient with a diabetic foot ulcer; vICU call to speak with Oncology specialist about his patient; vICU call to consult on patient with worsening pancreatitis; vICU daily calls on a patient with worsening pulmonary function test (PFT) results.

There have been no adverse events associated with the vICU since its inception on October 13, 2009 through November 13, 2009. As a quality measure, an anonymous vICU survey is currently in development. The survey will be available to all VHA staff throughout VISN 19 as a means of providing anonymous feedback on the vICU program.

Cheyenne Mobile Tele-Primary Care –Enrollment continues to grow. The team has faced some equipment challenges, related repairs and site location challenges. The mobile staff is working hard to resolve the problems/challenges and keep the following schedule as planned.

- Sterling, CO, Tuesday clinics.
- Torrington, WY, Thursday clinics.
- Laramie, WY, starting Nov. 6, for Friday clinics.
- Wheatland, WY will start on Dec. 2 for Wednesday Clinics.

ECHCS



Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility:

The Denver VAMC is providing a weekly update on the status of the Denver Replacement Hospital. These updates are distributed via e-mail every Monday and can also be found on

<http://www.denver.va.gov/projecteagle/index.asp>.

WHERE ANGELS MEET HEROS

The VA ECHCS Medical Foster Care program recently received wonderful reviews following a feature story on the front page of the Denver Post! The VA Medical Foster Care program was designed to provide alternatives to nursing-home care.

With thousands more veterans coming home in need of medical care from deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, health care planners feel an ever-more urgent need to seek the most humanistic long-term care settings possible.

Medical Foster Home providers have formal education in nursing care or long practice caring for relatives. The homes are screened for safety, and the caregiver must live there. The VA expects the home to provide the same levels of care as a nursing home and to be able to care for terminally ill veterans through death.

"These young guys may look forward to the rest of their lives being taken care of, and a nursing home is not what they or their families are looking for," Foster Medical Home program coordinator Judy Chandler said.

Three more Colorado homes are being screened, and Chandler hopes to place up to 40 more veterans in the area within two years. Home placement costs the veteran \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month, lower than full nursing care at an institution. Much of the cost comes out of the veteran's existing benefits.

The article told the story of Judy Ryan, one of the care providers, and the service she provides to the veteran who lives with her as part of the program.



The veteran staying with Judy Ryan has diabetes and a neurological disorder that slows his body and his thoughts. When he left the nursing home, he was wheelchair bound and eating nothing but candy, cookies and cola all day.

Now, he walks behind a walker all around the house, and outdoors when the sun shines on Ryan's high-prairie patio. He trades jibes with Ryan's feisty father, and they like to sit in the driveway together in the afternoons watching planes land at Denver International Airport or waving to commuters arriving home from work.

He is one example of what will surely become many examples of successful placements for the veteran participants.



VA Montana Health Care System:



VA Montana Healthcare System is starting and finishing several construction projects at Fort Harrison. A new parking lot just started, Canteen Remodel is nearly finished, the laboratory project phase one is slated to be complete the first part of January 2010 and the physical therapy expansion with a new elevator is scheduled to be complete in April.

Glasgow CBOC is moving from the contracted site at Francis Mahon Deaconess Hospital to a VA staffed site at 630 2nd Avenue South, Suite A. The clinic will be operational on December 1, 2009, with a new phone number of 406-228-4101.

VA Montana continues to work towards getting the Primary Care Telehealth Outreach Clinics (PCTOC) up and running in Hamilton and Plentywood Montana. On Tuesday, November 17, 2009, two VA staff members were greeted warmly by the Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital CEO, John Bartos in Hamilton, a City Commissioner and members from the local Volunteer Valley Veteran Service Center. All parties are excited to have a VA presence in Hamilton and express their desire to be a service in any way possible.

VA Montana will be conducting an ophthalmology clinic in Missoula by the end of November. This means veterans in Western Montana do not have to travel to Fort Harrison for ophthalmology examinations. A contract is also being negotiated to perform surgeries such as cataract removals at a local surgical facility in Missoula. This is one more step to assist rural veterans avoiding great travel distances.

Sheridan VAMC:



Veterans were honored at the annual Sheridan VAMC Veterans Day service. This year Col. Kathy Wright was the main speaker. Col. Wright, a 35 year member of the Wyoming National Guard, spoke about the story behind the uniforms. Speaking to a standing room only crowd she said, "My son had to draw a picture one year for Veterans Day. He drew a man driving a car with the caption, 'a Veteran drives a Chevy'. I am not sure what he was thinking but he is right, Veterans are everyday people who have done extraordinary things."



VASLCHCS:



The Colonel joined Director Hirschman and female inpatients at the VA for a special luncheon to honor Women Veterans and celebrate the second birthday of the Women's clinic. Thanks to the Wyoming National Guard Museum, the Auditorium was decorated with female military uniforms from several conflicts. (photo: Female military uniforms from the Wyoming National Guard Museum. The second; Col. Kathy Wright being interviewed by KOTA-TV out of Rapid City, SD)

VA Phone Bank in SLC Rings off the Hook!!

One thing is for sure...TV does work. VASLCHCS's informational telethon on Veterans Day on the local CBC affiliate was a huge success. VA representatives from all areas received all day programming in order to educate veterans, the military, their families and the community about the services, programs and benefits available to them. During the 12 hour broadcast employees and veterans answered over 400 phone calls concerning medical care, disability claims, GI Bill, job training and a whole host of other benefits topics. The public heard personally from many veterans willing to put themselves out with there with their stories in order to draw others in for much needed help and services.



Grand Junction VAMC:



Many elected officials also made an appearance including Senator Orrin Hatch, and Congressman Jim Matheson; in fact, they even answered phones for a time. This was all part of the VASLCHCS's continued effort to reach out to veterans young and old and urge them to take advantage of the benefits they have earned; benefits many veterans may not be aware of. They also wanted to expose the changing face of our VA and the compassion that VA employees have for our nation's heroes because we know we can't do it alone. Our mission takes an entire community who is educated on the resources and committed to the same goal.

The Grand Junction VA Medical Center has continued to move forward with several renovation and construction projects that will enable the staff to better meet the needs of today's patients.

Contractors Chris Jensen (Tan Slacks) and David Horn put the finishing touches on a furniture installation in an office dedicated to the new intense outpatient substance abuse program. The office is located in an area formerly used to store recreational equipment.



Medical Center Marchers Pay Tribute to the Late, Great George E. Wahlen



Working our fingers to the bone in the basement of the medical center it all came together. The VASLCHCS's first float in many years. Our namesake was the inspiration; a true American hero. We lost George last June but on Veterans Day he was larger than life once again. His grandchildren by his side and his widow waving out the window of a vintage 1962 corvette. We marched proudly through the streets of West Jordan, Utah showing off our new logo and representing our medical center with pride.



Scott Dederick, (below) with the Grand Junction IT Department, sets a computer up to work with two monitors to increase efficiency. Studies have shown that

double monitors increase productivity in some specialties. The second monitors came from older CPU sets and would otherwise have been recycled.

In addition, the facility has continued to strengthen its connections with Veterans living in rural communities. Over the past month staff have made presentations to community hospitals, county governments, Veterans organizations and several community service organizations that covered several subjects to include transportation, recognizing TBI, enrollment, what defines a Veteran, how the VA is organized and how TeleHealth and TeleMental works.



Employee morale at the Grand Junction VAMC is also important. April Toups, scheduling clerk, brightened up Veterans and fellow staff members' day just before Halloween with her "authentic and traditional" Irish American outfit.

Vanessa Stapert, Cheyenne VA Medical Center social worker and liaison of VA's Grant and Per Diem program said, " In the third year of having worked on the Northern Colorado Homeless Stand-Down project, I can tell you that the event is growing. This indicates to me that more people are discovering the supportive services and programs that VA, and other organizations, can provide."

Bill Anderson, Cheyenne VAMC's HUD/VASH Program manager echoes Ms. Stapert's sentiment, he states, "I spoke with many Veterans who were surprised to discover, between the VA's Grant and Per Diem program, HUD/VASH program and group housing, how many options there are for housing. We generated more applications to VA's housing programs at this year's Northern Colorado Homeless Veterans Stand-Down than in earlier years. I feel that stabilizing the homeless Veteran's housing is one of the most important, first steps to improving their overall situation. After a homeless Veteran stabilizes, or establishes, permanency in their housing situation, many of the other challenges they face are resolved with greater success."

Cheyenne VAMC:



November 10, 2009, staff from the Cheyenne VA Medical Center participated in the 3rd Annual Northern Colorado Homeless Veterans Stand-Down in Fort Collins, Colorado. The Cheyenne VAMC, along with the Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, The Vet Center, Larimer County Veteran Services, Larimer County Human Services, and the Larimer County Workforce Center Veterans Unit as well as Weld County Labor, Veteran Services Workforce Center Veterans Unit all worked together to make this Stand-Down a success. The event, held just one day before Veteran's Day was a day to provide assistance, access to healthcare, housing and social resources for the at-risk and homeless Veterans throughout Northern Colorado.

Like VA's Homeless Veterans Stand-Down events across the nation, services provided included assistance with enrollment into the VA Healthcare system, information and assistance to eligible Veterans applying for VA's HUD/VASH and the Grant & Per Diem programs, seasonal flu shots and dental screenings. Partner organizations also provided hot meals, winter clothing, haircuts as well as more information about other local assistance programs. Transportation to the event was provided by the DAV, helping to get veterans from Greeley to Fort Collins.



(right to left) Gail Rogers, Cheyenne VAMC Enrollment Specialist helps an OEF/OIF veteran complete VHA 1010EZ enrollment form. Terri Orcutt, Cheyenne VAMC staff Psychiatrist helps complete another form before a Veteran receives a seasonal flu shot. In the background, Bill Anderson, Cheyenne VA's HUD/VASH Program Manager talks with local TV channel 5, KGWN-TV about VA's HUD/VASH program.