

Local Columbus high school students help distribute 2,000 balloons donated for Veterans through Kroger's "Heart to Heart" program.

Volume XV - II, March 31, 2015

Leaders in Volunteer Management

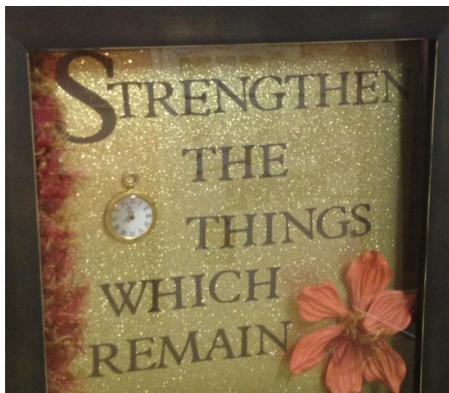
* Header photo by Thomas Ullom, Chalmers P. Wylie Ambulatory Care Center, Columbus, OH

FROM THE DIRECTOR

More than 2 years ago now, I was invited to the home of a good friend for a "Visioning Party." As part of my work in leadership development, I had done many courses in goal-setting, strategic planning, determining priorities; but never anything like this as part of a social gathering. I certainly was intrigued by the thought and definitely enthused with the opportunity to be with some of the most fiercely talented, smart, compassionate, and beautiful women I know.

We started this journey with the initial task of thinking about our personal and professional goals, and from there, to create a Vision Board from an infinite array of papers, pens, magazines, cutting tools, scrapbooking materials....enough to have entertained any arts and crafts enthusiast for hours. My girlfriends immediately went to work combing through all of the supplies, cutting out pictures, turning their plain poster boards into these amazingly colorful and brilliant creations portraying their well-defined dreams and goals. As one finished, she would relay the story of her Vision Board, while the others continued to work and randomly take turns sharing their finished products. I listened encouragingly like any good friend would do; all the while my board remained blank. What should have been a nice easy day with my friends was quickly turning into a mentally and emotionally draining experience.

It was at that moment I realized that I was living in an acute state of uncertainty, discontent, and simply seemed to lack a clear vision for my life. During these times, I feel like I am fairly good at hiding this fact, as I am generally quite optimistic, confident, and rarely shy about sharing my own gifts and talents. But for a few minutes, I was crippled in fear. Even in this very intimate setting with the people who know me best, I think I was still doing an adequate job of masking the panic that was running through me. For the next 10 minutes I was continuing to smile and nod, and contribute to the rich conversations that were taking place around each board. The entire time I was taking slow, deep breaths in an effort to calm myself and come up with the ideas for my still empty canvas. Then, as the calm settled in, a gentle thought came to mind and these five words made up the entirety of my Vision Board: STRENGTHEN THE THINGS WHICH REMAIN.



Even in this richly creative and supportive environment, I had not been able to find my vision, but I did determine what

my next step would and should be. I realized that during a time of change, new direction, confusion—that it is urgently important to re-establish a firm foundation and return to the basics. Some things never change.

So it is with VA... ongoing challenges, new legislation, changing leadership, proposed restructuring. It all makes for quite a bit of anxiety, fear, and uncertainty. When you're not sure where you're going, "strengthen the things which remain." For VAVS, what remains is an insatiable desire to serve Veterans, a keen ability to match the skills and talents of others with the needs of our facilities, and a commitment to the individuals and organizations who steadily stand on their traditions of service. This is the foundation of VAVS and it *is* what will endure through periods of change or challenge. Stay calm. We're standing on very solid ground!

-- SABRINA C. CLARK

“Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It's not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it's a day you've had everything to do and you've done it.”

~ Margaret Thatcher



2015 NATIONAL SALUTE
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT



As chairman of VA's 2015 National Salute to Veterans, actor Dominic Chianese of "The Sopranos" recently filmed a public service announcement encouraging viewers to volunteer at VA medical facilities to help Veterans or make an online donation to support Veterans programs.

Check out the video, featuring volunteers from the Manhattan campus of the VA New York Harbor Health Care System (pictured below with Dominic Chianese, Tyrone Green - VAVS VACO, Sabrina Clark - Director, Voluntary Service Office, and Yvette Cintron - Chief, Voluntary Service VA NY Harbor HCS), on the [Department of Veterans Affairs YouTube channel](#).



MAKING A VETERAN'S DISNEY
DREAM COME TRUE

Submitted by Christina Strofield, DM, Chief, Voluntary Service, Miami VAHCS, Miami, FL

Mr. Conoly, a Navy Veteran, had made plans to take his family to Disney World and then became too ill to proceed by himself. Recreation Therapy and the National Ladies Auxiliary of Jewish War Veterans Post 223 offered to assist Mr. Conoly with achieving his wish. The National Ladies Auxiliary

of Jewish War Veterans Post 223 offered financial assistance through their *Grant A Wish Program* and plans were being made by Recreation Therapy to help Mr. Conoly, his wife, and son visit Disney World.

When Mr. Conoly then became too ill to travel, "Disney World" was created on the 3rd floor of the Community Living Center. Mr. Conoly, as well as his wife, son, sister and brother-in-law, and nieces and nephews participated in a Disney World adventure in the comfort of the CLC 3 Family Room. Recreation Therapy staff decorated the room, developed Disney themed activities, and assisted Mr. Conoly and his family throughout the day.

Decorations, Disney memorabilia, Mickey and Minnie ears, Disney and Orlando tee shirts, live music, activities, and photo booth were all part of the Magic Kingdom experience.

Mr. Conoly remarked, "This is wonderful. Thank you and the Ladies Auxiliary for everything you have done; the decorations are wonderful."

A gift bag containing Disney souvenirs was created for Mr. Conoly to present to his son. The Veteran and his family dined on Disney style foods, selected by Mr. Conoly as his favorites, including corn dogs, sausage dogs with pancakes, fresh cut fruit, root beer floats and Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Mr. Conoly requested that his thanks be passed along to the members of the National Jewish War Veterans Auxiliary Post 223 who supported this event for the Veteran and his family, "Thank you all for making this happen."



Mr. Conoly and his family enjoying their Disney World adventure.

18TH ANNUAL WINTER SPORTS
CLINIC ALIGNS PATIENT CARE,
ADAPTIVE SPORTS, AND VSOs

Submitted by Richard Leeman, Assistant Chief, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Boston HCS

141 Volunteers provided more than 4000 hours of support to 59 Veterans, 5 children of Veterans and 2 care givers during the 18th Annual VA New England Winter Sports Clinic at Mount Sunapee New Hampshire.



Cold temperatures could not stop the warmth of caring that could be felt everywhere. During the week of rehabilitation through sport, Veterans participated in adaptive downhill skiing, snowboarding, air rifling, wheelchair basketball, kayaking and a friendly game of Texas Hold'em. Veterans were also treated to a recognition dinner at Colby Sawyer College. As a special gift, noted musician James Montgomery made a guest appearance and rocked the house for our Veterans.

VAVS Boston would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all VA Staff that supported the event, our volunteers, and some of our community partners for helping to make this clinic a resounding success: New England Handicapped Sports Association, Mt. Sunapee Resort, New England Paralyzed Veterans of America, National Amputee Foundation, and Veterans Canteen Service.

Quote from a participant:
"The New England Winter Sports Clinic shines at building community. This is exactly what our Veterans need more of!"



2015 National Salute to Veteran Patients

POPLAR BLUFF, MISSOURI

Submitted by Donna Reynolds, Voluntary Services Officer, John J. Pershing VAMC, Poplar Bluff, MO

It was a busy National Salute week in Poplar Bluff with multiple activities scheduled every day to celebrate Veterans. From the opening ceremony of the Wall of Valor to performances by Dirt Road City Limits and The Hendricksons the packed schedule was capped off by a visit from The Kentucky Headhunters prior to their Valentines for Veterans concert at the end of the week.



In addition, the medical center held a community outreach "214 Day" event in conjunction with a Veteran Art Show. Six county recorders were on site to record Veterans' DD-214s. Poplar Bluff staff helped enroll new Veterans in the system, obtain medals and/or copies of DD-214s, and also provided information about services such as telehealth, women's health, and mental health, among others.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, VERMONT

Submitted by Karen Campbell, Chief, Voluntary Service, White River Junction VAMC, White River Junction, VT

VA Voluntary Service, White River Junction (WRJ), VT collaborated with King Arthur Flour Company to host a 'Bake for Good' event for Veteran Outpatients and participants enrolled in the Residential Rehabilitation Center program.

Veterans were given the opportunity to attend a bread and scone-making class at the company headquarters in Norwich, Vermont. Participants received a complimentary bread baking kit and took their scones home to enjoy.



All bread loafs made were donated to the WRJ, VT VA's weekly Veteran's Free Farmer's Market the next day for their fellow Veterans to enjoy. This Bake for Good event has resulted in a community partnership between the medical center and King Arthur Flour and helped members of the community understand the importance of our mission to serve Veterans.

TEMPLE, TEXAS

Submitted by Monica Smith, Voluntary Service



Specialist, Central Texas Veterans HCS, Temple, TX Central Texas Veterans Health Care System (CTVHCS) Volunteer, Garland "Dub" Wagner, has been part of the tradition of National Salute to Veteran Patients for over 20 years. Starting in March of the prior year, Dub begins working on his beautiful poem that he will read out loud to the current Miss Texas. Dub ensures that his poem is perfect, framed just right, and nothing is out of place.

Every year is a special year, but for some reason, this year topped it all! 2014 Miss Texas Monique Evans, was very flattered,

and even shed a tear of joy! This is a tradition that CTVHCS will continue for many more years to come, and a perfect ending to our program week!

ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Submitted by Sonja Brown, Chief, Voluntary Service & Public Affairs Operations, New Mexico VA HCS, Albuquerque, NM

Volunteers at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque started off National Salute to Veteran Patients week with a tasty kick-off celebration of cake and cookies in the medical center lobby. Veterans also received hand-written Valentines and pins.

Special visitors included: Students from Albuquerque High School's Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps program; Commanding General of the U.S. Army's White Sands Missile Range. Brigadier General Timothy R. Coffin; Members of the U.S. Air Force's 58th Special Operations Wing; the University of New Mexico Lobo Men's Golf Team; and Congresswoman Michelle Lujan Grisham, U.S. Representative for the 1st District of New Mexico.



In addition, Chief Gorden Eden and five of his top officers with the Albuquerque Police Department visited with Veterans that same day at medical center. Their visit included stops in the Spinal Cord Injury Center, where they thanked Veterans for their military service. The officers also stopped to chat with Veterans in the main lobby and Pharmacy waiting area.



COLUMBUS, OHIO

Submitted by Traci Washington, Chief, Voluntary Service, Chalmers P. Wylie Ambulatory Care Center, Columbus, OH



Approximately 2,000 people packed the Aladdin Shrine Auditorium in Columbus for this year's Valentines for Veterans Concert. The audience had an amazing experience, dancing and singing to all of the Motown classic hits. The Miracles were extremely engaging and allowed the audience to participate in many of the songs that they sang.

Just as exciting was the fact that the National Salute Chairperson, Mr. Dominic Chianese (Uncle Junior from the Sopranos), acted as the Master of Ceremonies. He not only hosted the show, but afterwards he spent time with The Miracles and some VIP guests and had dinner along with a private jam session, in which he gladly participated.



National Salute Chairperson, Dominic Chianese, with opening act, The Bruise Brothers.

The evening was filled with joy, and appreciation for our Nation's heroes. Many commented that it was one of the best concerts that they had been to in years. All were appreciative of the recognition that they received from The Motown Miracles, Mr. Chianese, and the Leadership of the Columbus VA.

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

Submitted by Mary Golden, Voluntary Service Program Manager, Central California VA Health Care System, Fresno, CA

The Fresno chapter of the "Knights of the Shield" (KOS) Official Oakland Raider Fan Club hosted their 3rd Annual BBQ for Central California Veterans, their guests, and VA staff. Live music by One Voice and KOS guitarist Keith Perez added to the enjoyment. The KOS shared this sentiment: "A BIG Thank You to all Veterans that are serving, have served, and those who have made the Ultimate Sacrifice. We are humbled to serve YOU today."



BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN

Submitted by Brian Pegouske, Voluntary Service Specialist, Battle Creek VAMC, Battle Creek, MI

For the second year, the Battle Creek VA Medical Center hosted students from Central Michigan University (CMU) for an alternative weekend break during National Salute to Veteran Patients Week. The CMU students arrived Friday afternoon to begin their volunteer weekend. They volunteered Friday evening, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning before making the trip back to CMU. Since the CMU campus is over two hours away, they make arrangements to stay locally in Battle Creek. This has become known as Heroes Weekend.



The students give up their Valentine's Day weekend to spend time with heroes served by the Battle Creek VAMC. The registration for this event filled up quicker than any of the other alternative break trips offered at CMU throughout the year. Many of the students stated that this was the best alternative break trip that they have taken. This is a great way for college student to give back to our Veterans and help to celebrate the week. Although the students volunteered in a variety of patient areas over their three days, the highlight of the weekend was the Saturday night Valentine's Party. The party was sponsored by Military Order of the Purple Heart and other community donations. The students worked hard to decorate the auditorium and assemble special hand decorated gift bags for the event. When it came time for the party, the CMU students were engaging, helpful, and fun! It was inspiring to see the quality of the conversations taking place throughout the evening. The party was not only entertaining for the Veterans but also therapeutic for their recovery.

National Advisory Committee

The 69th Annual VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee Meeting and Conference will be held April 22-24, 2015, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The host hotel for the meeting is the Albuquerque Marriott at 2101 Louisiana Boulevard NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87110.

Visit <http://www.volunteer.va.gov/NAC.asp> for Registration details.

** Check this site for your 2nd quarter volunteer reports after April 8th.*

★ CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF ★

- Sabrina C. Clark, Director
- Mary Jo Munnelly, Lead Staff Assistant
- Tony Burtley, Voluntary Service Specialist
- Christine Feeser, Program Specialist
- Tyrone Green, Program Analyst
- Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist
- Kevin Stanford, Health Systems Specialist, Detail