



Just the Facts

EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION PICNIC

The Executive Leadership Team and Worklife Improvement Team (WIT) sponsored the annual Employee Appreciation Picnic on June 18. The event was bittersweet as it was a farewell to Director John Patrick. Employees wished him well in his position as Director of the Portland, Oregon VAMC. The Employees Association presented Mr. Patrick with a plaque of appreciation. We wish him the best! Thanks to ALL employees for providing EXCELLENT care to Veterans!



(Bottom Left Photo, Left to Right: Pearl Washington, Sandra Patrick, Shannon Starkey, Melissa Spears, Director John Patrick, and Anita Phifer with plaque from Employees Association. Photos by Marian McConnell

CAROL BOGEDAIN
Interim Director

RURAL HEALTH TEAM

Salem VAMC has a **Rural Health Team** to serve Veterans in our catchment areas.

Kirsten Funk is the Rural Health Integrator (team leader). Thirteen staff members support this initiative: a Public Affairs Officer; Health Education Manager; Program Support Assistant; Medical Support Assistant; Outreach, Clinical, and CBOC Nurses; Social Worker; Pharmacists; and a van driver.

The team is under Salem VAMC's Primary Care Service Line, and works closely with Home Based Primary Care, Tele-medicine, Women's Health, Mental Health, OEF/OIF Coordinator, and other services.



Salem's Rural Health Team: (Left to Right) Marian McConnell, James Bonds, Kathryn Null, Kimberly Jarrett, April Lopez, Brenda Hart, Vicky Mullins, Kari Wygal, Jennifer Noell, and Kirsten Funk.
Not pictured: Andrew Forest, Paula Kirtley, Joseph Smigiel

Upcoming Rural Health Team activities:

-  June 28 Roanoke Rescue Mission—Roanoke, VA
-  June 29 Amherst County Annual Senior Picnic—Amherst, VA
-  July 14 Health, Safety & Education Fair—Lansdowne Park—Salem, VA
-  July 18 AmVets Benefit Motorcycle Ride—Roanoke, VA
-  July 24 Wytheville Farmers Market—Wytheville, VA
-  July 31 Wytheville Farmers Market—Wytheville, VA
-  August 9 WW Golf Tournament—Lexington, VA

If you have an event or organization you'd like to invite the Rural Health Team to visit, contact Marian McConnell at (540) 855-3460 or marian.mcconnell@va.gov.

AIR COMPASSION FOR VETERANS

Air Compassion for Veterans (ACV) provides wounded warriors and their adversely affected family members with free air transportation to medical, counseling, and rehabilitative services. Flights are on commercial airlines, private aircraft, and ambulance, and can be provided within hours if needed. ACV was created in 2006 by Mercy Medical Airlift with a seed grant. ACV has supplied over 14,400 free flights in the past 40 months. For more information see www.aircompassionforVeterans.org.



CHANGE TO MEDICATION COPAYS FOR SOME VETERANS

WASHINGTON - As previously announced on January 7, 2010, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) froze prescription copayment increases for six months. Veterans who generally have higher income and no service-connected disabilities - referred to as Priority Groups 7 and 8 Veterans - will now pay an additional \$1 for each 30-day supply of outpatient medications. Taking effect July 1, the increase to \$9 from \$8 is the first change in VA's medication copay since Jan. 1, 2006.



"Because of the harsh economic reality facing many Veterans, we delayed the change," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We're now ensuring the Veterans most in need of VA care are those least affected. Yet, even with this increase, VA medication copays are lower than much of the private sector."

This change does not impact Veterans in Priority Groups 2 through 6 who will continue to pay \$8 for each 30-day supply of medications for their non-service connected conditions unless otherwise exempted. These Veterans will also continue to have their out-of-pocket expenses for VA outpatient medications capped at \$960 per calendar year. Veterans who have an injury or illness connected with their military service resulting in a disability rated 50 percent or greater -- who are known as Priority Group 1 Veterans -- are exempt from the copay.

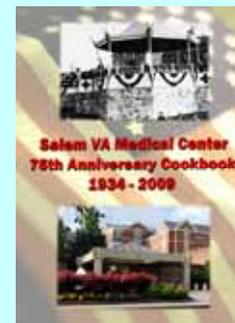
VA generally sets its outpatient medication copay rate based upon a regulation that ties the rate to the Medical Consumer Price Index for prescription drugs.

Veterans who have difficulty paying copayments for outpatient medications should discuss the matter with their local VA enrollment coordinator. Veterans may also contact VA at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) or visit VA's health eligibility Web site at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

75th ANNIVERSARY COOKBOOKS STILL AVAILABLE

Submitted by Barbara Fasnacht

75th Anniversary Cookbooks were created and sponsored by the Employees Association. Of the 1,020 cookbooks printed, over 970 have been sold with a profit of \$2,784 for the Employees Association. Through the Salem VA Credit Union about \$70 has been donated to the Children's Miracle Network. There are still a few cookbooks left to purchase for \$15 each from the Credit Union, Canteen, or Barbara Fasnacht in Human Resources at (540) 982-2463, ext. 2823.



EMPLOYEES—NOTE CHANGE FROM “EMPLOYEE EXPRESS” TO “MYPAY”

Submitted by Charlene Trovata

Effective June 24, please use the new “myPay” website instead of “Employee Express.” The new myPay website is an innovative, automated system that electronically manages certain discretionary pay data items, and allows you to view, print, and save Leave & Earnings Statements and W-2's.

Starting June 15, 2010, myPay will begin notifying VA employees (only employees who do not currently have a customized myPay account) of their new myPay temporary passwords. PLEASE DO NOT contact myPay prior to receiving your temporary password as they cannot set employees up until the official temporary passwords have been sent.

After receiving your temporary password from myPay, please attempt to access the system according to the video and instructions on the myPay website. If, after you have attempted to access the system, you still require assistance, please contact the Cleveland Centralized Customer Support Unit toll free at 1-888-DFAS411 (1-888-332-7411), or commercial (216) 522-5096. Press # 5 for myPay. The hours of operation are 7:00 A.M - 6:30 P.M. Eastern time.

VA MAKES FILING CLAIMS EASIER AND FASTER FOR VETERANS

WASHINGTON (June 15, 2010) - As part of Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki's effort to break the back of the backlog, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is reducing the paperwork and expediting the process for Veterans seeking compensation for disabilities related to their military service.

"These reductions in paperwork, along with other improvements to simplify and speed the claims process, symbolize changes underway to make VA more responsive to Veterans and their families," said Secretary Shinseki.

VA has shortened application forms to reduce paperwork for Veterans. The new forms, which are being made available on VA's Web site at www.va.gov/vaforms, include:

- * A shortened **VA Form 21-526** for Veterans applying for the first-time to VA for disability compensation or pension benefits. This form has been cut in half - from 23 to 10 pages. It is immediately available to Veterans via Web download, and will be available through VA's online claim-filing process later this summer at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>.

- * **VA Form 21-526b** for Veterans seeking increased benefits for conditions already determined by VA to be service-connected. This new form more clearly describes the information needed to support claims for increased benefits.

In order to make the claims process faster, VA has also introduced two new forms for Veterans participating in the Department's new fully developed claim (FDC) program, which is one of the fastest means to receive a claims decision.

Gathering the information and evidence needed to support a Veteran's disability claim often takes the largest portion of the processing time.

If VA receives all of the available evidence when the claim is submitted, the remaining steps in the claims-decision process can be expedited without compromising quality.

To participate in the FDC program, Veterans should complete and submit an FDC Certification and VA Form 21-526EZ, "Fully Developed Claim (Compensation)," for a compensation claim, or a VA Form 21-527EZ, "Fully Developed Claim (Pension)," for a pension claim.

The forms were designed specifically for the FDC program. These six-page application forms include notification to applicants of all information and evidence necessary to "fully develop" and substantiate their claims. With this notification, Veterans and their representatives can "fully develop" their claims before submission to VA for processing.

Along with the application and certification, Veterans must also submit all relevant and pertinent evidence to "fully develop" their claims. A claim submitted as "fully developed" may still require some additional evidence to be obtained by VA, to include certain federal records and a VA medical examination.

VA provides compensation, pension, education, loan guaranty, vocational rehabilitation, employment, and insurance benefits to Veterans and their families through 57 VA regional offices.

Disability compensation is a tax-free benefit paid to a Veteran for disabilities that are a result of -- or made worse by -- injuries or diseases that happened while on active duty, active duty for training or inactive duty training. Pension is a benefit paid to wartime Veterans with limited income, and who are permanently and totally disabled or age 65 or older.

For additional information, go to www.va.gov or call VA's toll free benefits number at 1-800-827-1000.



CINCO DE MAYO

Submitted by Rita Cone, Photo by Ann Benois

Cinco de Mayo — May 5th — was celebrated this year by the Employees Association, EEO/Diversity Committee, and AFGE. The event kicked off with Ms. Zuheil Banuelos performing several dances in the auditorium. Ms. Banuelos is a native of Mexico and now resides in the area. She teaches Spanish at Salem High School. She says dancing is her passion and has been dancing since her junior high school days. Her performance showed her love and talent for dance! We hope to have her again for Hispanic Heritage month.

Latino music was played while employees ate food (including nachos). On the auditorium porch Robert Miller served up funnel cakes. There was a piñata breaking at noon in the auditorium courtyard. The daughter of one of our Veterans was the winner who broke the piñata. Candy was then carried throughout the lobby of 143 and given to patients.

Artifacts from Mexico decorated the tables in the auditorium as well as art by Carlos Hensley and Larry Freeman.

AFGE had a display table to enroll new union members and raffled off a large gift basket. Congrats to Sonya Haley in Centralized Payroll as the winner of the basket.

Thanks to all who attended and helped make Cinco de Mayo a fun event!



JULY 4 - JULY 9, 2010 - DENVER, COLORADO

The largest annual wheelchair sports competition in the world, this event offers 17 different sports to Veterans who use wheelchairs due to spinal cord injuries, amputations and neurological diseases. The Games promote rehabilitation through rigorous competition in such events as basketball, rugby, softball, handcycling and others. A special "Kids Day" program allows children with disabilities to meet the athletes and be introduced to wheelchair sports. While past Games have produced national and world-class champions, the Games also provide opportunities for newly disabled Veterans to gain sports skills and be exposed to other wheelchair athletes. See more at www.va.gov.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

Submitted by Wayne Johnson

During July and August, significant progress will be made on several construction projects. This timeframe will see initiation of foundation work (and likely some steel erection) for the MRI Addition to Building 2A as well as essential completion of the new Mental Health Building near Building 9.

Progress will also continue on the following:

- Elevator renovation: Complete Buildings 4, 12 (1st elevator) and 74. Preparatory work will resume in Building 7 and work should begin for Building 12 (2nd elevator). Work for Buildings 9, 75, and 77 will follow.
- Building 143 Fire Alarm System Replacement - progress will continue.
- Steam repairs in the West Loop affecting Buildings 74, 75, and 76 - will continue and will require some corridor use restrictions.
- Construction of Building 75 Education Center - should initiate.
- Vehicle refueling station modernization and relocation – should continue.
- Construction of a Contractor staging area near parking lot T - should resume.
- Replacement of roofs for East Loop Corridors and Buildings 143 and 2A – should initiate.
- HVAC systems replacement in Buildings 11 and 12 (in design) - should initiate.
- Installation of lighting in Parking Lots H and I.

Several other Projects are in the process of procurement, and could begin during this timeframe:

- Installation of shuttle bus shelters – awaiting issuance of contract.
- Renovation of Building 76, 1st floor (after July).
- Renovation of Building 9, 2nd Floor (after July).

We are working toward resolution of contract problem issues with several Projects. While no construction is currently taking place, progress is being made in resolution of issues and eventual resumption of construction work for the following:

- Correction of floor deficiencies: Auditorium, Building 143 corridors, and Building 4 corridors.
- Renovation of the Canteen dining areas.
- Completion of HVAC humidification corrections.
- Completion of retro-commissioning of Building 143.

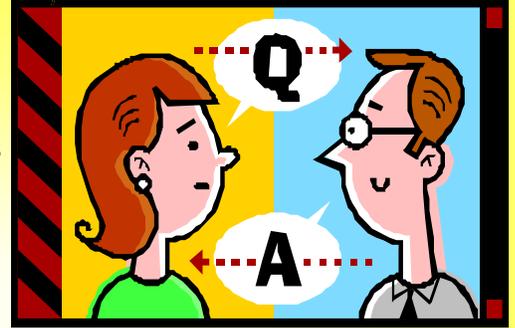
In addition to the work noted above, there are a number of smaller Projects in progress. FMS will continue to coordinate construction activities with directly-affected personnel and services. Your patience is appreciated. Please report any unsafe conditions or situations immediately to Safety (Ext. 2292) or FMS (Ext. 2700).

Aerial Photo by Pat Richards, Veteran, Air Shots Aerial Photography, of the "Living Flag" planted in honor of Salem's 75th Anniversary through the CWT Greenhouse, Faith Christian Academy, and Volunteers and Employees.



ASK ETHEL!

The Integrated Ethics Committee will pose a question each month in *Just the Facts*. Questions and Answers will address boundaries and other ethical Issues in the workplace. Answers will appear in the following month's issue of *Just the Facts*. Employees are encouraged to submit questions to **Ethics (122)**. Please include your name and extension if you want a personal response (all responses are confidential).



June Ethics Question: “Dear Ethel, If I am working on a unit where a Veteran has been recently admitted and I discover I am also working with his or her family member in a private practice setting, is that a conflict of interest? What should I do?”

Answer: It is not a conflict of interest, as long as you do not disclose to either party ANY information. This is in accordance with the HIPAA regulations and professional standards. If you have any concerns or doubts, please contact your supervisor.

July Ethics Question: “Dear Ethel — My favorite TV show is ‘Hospital ICU’ and during the episodes shown this season, Dr. McDreamy began having a torrid affair with a coworker named Meredith. I work at the VAMC and wonder if having an intimate relationship with a coworker violates the policy on boundary issues?”

WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Submitted by Charlene Scott

On Wednesday June 9, 2010, the YWCA of Roanoke Valley held its 8th Annual Women of Achievement Awards Ceremony. The event recognizes women of the Roanoke Valley who have made significant contributions to our community through their educational achievements, leadership and volunteer activities. The nominees came from diverse segments of our community, but they share a dedication and commitment to improving the quality of life for all.

Among this year’s award recipients is our very own, Dr. Stephanie Nagy-Agren, Chief of Infectious Disease Section at Salem VAMC. Dr. Nagy-Agren received the award in the category of Health/ Science.

In addition to the Award, Dr. Nagy-Agren received a letter from United States Senator Mark R. Warner, which included the following comments: “This recognition serves as a tribute to your exemplary leadership and community involvement. Your work helps to address the issue regarding health and social inequalities. Your commitment to the broader good is especially commendable and necessary during these challenging times.”

The entire Salem VAMC staff offers congratulations to Dr. Nagy-Agren on receipt of this prestigious award!!



Left to Right: Sandi Gibson, Director of Development & Community Programs; Dr. Stephanie Nagy-Agren; Melissa Woodson, Executive Director
Photo by Muncy Fine Photography

REPORTING SAFETY & QUALITY ISSUES

Submitted by Carol Carlson

Any employee of the Salem VAMC may report safety and quality of care issues directly to the Joint Commission, our accrediting agency. Concerns may be reported without retaliation or disciplinary action against the reporting employee. Reports may be reported to the Joint Commission through several means:



Mail:

Division of Accreditation Operations
The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Blvd.
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60180

Phone: 1-800-994-6610

Fax: 1-630-792-5636

Email: complaint@jointcommission.org

JUST THE FACTS

The newsletter is published around the 1st of each month.

If you have ideas for improving *Just the Facts* articles (250 words or less), photos, or suggestions, please contact Marian McConnell at (540) 982-2463, Ext. 1400; or email marian.mcconnell@va.gov at least 10 days before the first of the month.

Remember, you can read current and past issues on the Salem VAMC Intranet homepage.

Disclaimer: We reserve the right to edit/condense articles and information as appropriate. We will make every attempt to notify the author(s) first.

Now posted online at:

www.salem.va.gov



EVENTS CALENDAR

(Also see events online on the Salem homepage, and in the Weekly Bulletin)

Jul 4-9	National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Denver, CO
Jul 5	4th of July Holiday
Jul 6-12	Alzheimer's Awareness Week
Jul 11-17	National Therapeutic Recreation Week
Jul 16	Employees Association Red Sox Night at the Salem Stadium 7pm
Jul 20	Employee Education Fair from 7a-5p in Building 77 Room 130D
Jul 24	Employees Association Six Flags Amusement Park Bus Trip
August	Cataract Awareness Month Psoriasis Awareness Month National Immunization Awareness Month National Spinal Muscular Atrophy Awareness Month Medic Alert Month Neurosurgery Outreach Month
Aug 4	Coast Guard Day
Aug 8-14	Assistance Dog Week National Health Center Week
Aug 21	Employees Association Family Fun at Thunder Valley from 12-2p
Aug 23	Health Unit Coordinator Day
Aug 26	Women's Equality Day
September	National Preparedness Month National Pain Awareness Month National Atrial Fibrillation Month National Cholesterol Education Month Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month Leukemia & Lymphoma Awareness Month