Issue 220
February 2011

SALEM VAMC

Just the Facts

NATIONAL CAREGIVER SUPPORT LINE

On February 1, 2011, the National Caregiver Support Line number went into effect. This Support Line serves as a resource and referral center for caregivers, Veterans and others seeking caregiver information; provides referrals to local VA Medical Center Caregiver Support Coordinators and VA/community resources; as well as provides emotional support.

Caregivers assist those who are chronically ill, disabled, or are getting older and are no longer able to care for themselves. Caregiving includes helping with personal needs or household chores, as well as managing a person's finances, arranging for outside services, or visiting regularly to see how the individual is doing. Caregivers are generally unpaid family members or friends (though they may be paid professionals) who provide care to their loved one. You do not need to live with a person to be considered a caregiver and many people who serve as a caregiver do not recognize themselves as such – you may simply think you're "helping out."

According to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki, "Caregivers are loved ones, family and friends, who are essential to the healing of sick and injured Veterans, providing critical attentiveness in the home to complement the life saving work of the medical points of care in VA's hospital system. Transportation between home and VA alone is demanding enough, but their contributions go well beyond that, magnifying the importance of our partnership. Their sacrifice is enormous, every day, year after year, for Veterans, who safeguarded this Nation. Caregivers are our indispensable partners in Veteran's healthcare, and they deserve our support."

The number and hours of operation are as follows: 1-855-260-3274 Monday through Friday 8:00 am-11:00 pm Eastern time and Saturday 10:30 am- 6:00 pm Eastern time. The support line will be staffed with licensed independent clinical social workers and health technicians. Calls from Veterans and their Caregivers will be screened through this new resource and referrals sent directly to the appropriate Caregiver Support Coordinator at corresponding VAMC's.

Caregivers may also obtain information on various VAMC programming and caregiver helpful hints by logging onto: www.caregiver.va.gov.

Carol S. Bogedain, FACHE
Interim Director

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

The Team recently shared information about VA health care services at: Roanoke Gun Show, Bastian Union Church, New River Valley Community Services Board, Salem Rodeo, Post-Mobilization Yellow Ribbon Event at Hotel Roanoke, AmVets State Conference in Roanoke, VFW Post 7568 in Galax, United Auto Workers Hall in Dublin (*Kathryn Null assists Mark Peterson in photo at right*), Rocky Mount Community Services Board, Wytheville Holiday Dinner, Staunton Senior Center, Salem Gun Show, Flat Ridge Community Center in Troutdale, Carrington Place in Wytheville, Rockbridge Community Services Board, and the Virginia Employment Commission in Galax. The Team also hosted an Open House in partnership with the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program here on our campus on January 19th (*group photo at right*).

Upcoming Rural Health Public Events

(Also posted at www.salem.va.gov)

- ☆ February 9 – VFW Post 7568 with Princeton Vet Center on 115 Rose Land Road; Galax, VA from 9:30a-2:00p.
- ☆ February 11 – VFW Post 1033 on 710 Dolly Ann Drive; Covington, VA from 10:00a-2:00p.
- ☆ February 15 – Bastian Union Church on Bears Trail Road; Bastian, VA from 2:00-6:00p.
- ☆ February 17 – American Legion Post 7 on 338 N. Washington Ave.; Pulaski, VA from 2:00-6:00p.
- ☆ February 18 – New River Valley Community Services Board on 1042 E. Main St.; Pulaski, VA from 10:00a – 2:00p.
- ☆ February 22 – Carrington Place with Princeton Vet Center on 990 Holdston Rd; Wytheville, VA from 10:00a – 2:00p.
- ☆ February 23 – Rockbridge Community Service Board on 241 Green House Road; Lexington, VA from 10:00a – 2:00p.
- ☆ February 24 – Waynesboro Senior Center Health Fair on 325 Pine Ave; Waynesboro, VA from 10:00a – 1:00p.
- ☆ March 12-13 and March 19-20 – Highland Maple Sugar Festival on 94 W. Main St.; Monterey, VA from 8:30a – 5:00p.
- ☆ March 23 – Military Support Fair at James Madison University Conference and Student Center from 4:00-7:00p.
- ☆ April 30 – Military Extravaganza on 3401 U.S. Highway 29; Danville, VA from 10:00a – 5:00p.

If you would like to invite the Rural Health Team to an event, please contact Marian McConnell at (540) 855-3460 or email at marian.mcconnell@va.gov.

TELERETINAL IMAGING

Article and Photo by Marian McConnell

Stacy Lam, LPN, (left) takes a Teleretinal Image of Mr. John Eaken's retina, to help him keep his eyes healthy. In the screen in the background is a Teleretinal Image of Mr. Eaken's retina.

Patients diagnosed with Diabetes should have their eyes checked annually, especially for diabetic retinopathy.

"Diabetic retinopathy is the most common diabetic eye disease and a leading cause of blindness in American adults. It is caused by changes in the blood vessels of the retina. In some people with diabetic retinopathy, blood vessels may swell and leak fluid. In other people, abnormal new blood vessels grow on the surface of the retina. The retina is the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. A healthy retina is necessary for good vision. If you have diabetic retinopathy, at first you may not notice changes to your vision. But over time, diabetic retinopathy can get worse and cause vision loss. Diabetic retinopathy usually affects both eyes." (*National Eye Institute)*

Teleretinal imaging is a quick, painless, accurate way to check patients for this condition, and has been available at Salem VAMC for the past year and a half. Ms. Stacy Lam, LPN, provides this service to Veterans from a special exam room in Primary Care Team Clinic I. Stacy has been at Salem for 7-1/2 years and in the first year screened over 1,000 Veterans. Ms. Dianne Smith, LPN, travels to the Danville, Lynchburg, and Hillsville Clinics to offer the service there as well. Including the CBOCs, over 1,800 Veterans received this screening in Fiscal Year 2010.

The Veteran simply places his/her chin on the rest while a picture is taken of the retina (back of the eye) – no drops are required. Just "sit still and open your eyes" for a quick flash which captures the image of the retina and sends it to the computer for review by an Opthalmologist or Optometrist. Signs of macular degeneration and glaucoma may also be spotted thanks to this high-tech equipment. The final results are mailed with any follow-up recommendations to the Veteran in about a week.

If you are a diabetic, you can help prevent or slow the development of diabetic retinopathy by taking your prescribed medication, sticking to your diet, exercising regularly, controlling high blood pressure and avoiding alcohol and smoking.

HEAR YE! YEAR YE!

Have you ever found a hearing device during your visit or stay here? Did you know that all VA-issued hearing devices are registered through a national database by their unique serial number? If you find a hearing device, please contact the Audiology Clinic at ext. 4249. We will be glad to locate the owner and return it to them.

PHONE NUMBERS TO PRIMARY CARE CLINICS:

Primary Care Clinic 1—(540) 855-5057
Primary Care Clinic 2—(540) 855-5058
Primary Care Clinic 3—(540) 855-5059

VETERANS' USAGE OF TOBACCO EXPLORED IN RESEARCH BY DR. SHANNON COHEN

Dr. Shannon Cohen, Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager and nurse practitioner, had her research on Veteran tobacco usage published in Military Medicine in November 2010. "Veteran Tobacco Use, Low-Density Lipoprotein, and Glycated Hemoglobin Levels" stems from further exploration of Dr. Cohen's doctoral dissertation dataset. A retrospective review of the de-identified electronic medical records of 1,452 Veterans with a history of smoking who received outpatient care between the years 2003-2007 at the Salem VAMC confirmed previous findings that there is a link between diabetes and smoking. Current smokers in this study had consistently higher HbA1c, a laboratory test used in diabetes management, than former smokers during the five year study.

Dr. Cohen reports that four million people die each year from health issues related to tobacco use and it is predicted that smoking will cause more than 10 million deaths annually by 2030. She reports that "reasons for tobacco use among active military and Veterans include the need to relax, relieve stress or boredom, replace the effects of caffeine to alleviate fatigue, curb appetite and lose weight, fit in with friends and the unit, and family-influence. Veterans report tobacco use and marketing as part of traditional military culture."

Dr. Cohen challenges health care providers to monitor patients for cardiovascular and diabetes risk factors, and educate patients regarding recommended lifestyle changes. She notes that cessation of smoking reduces the risk of developing diabetes as well as reducing mortality from cardiovascular and lung disease. Cohen states "it is imperative that health care providers focus their efforts on prevention of chronic disease including encouraging tobacco cessation, following a heart healthy diet, and participating in regular exercise."

To read the article's text (tables and figures excluded) visit CBS health news at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3912/is_201011/ai_n56443602/.

To join our smoking cessation programs for patients and employees, please contact Bridgette Vest at 540-982-2463 extension 1790.

FORENSIC NURSE EXAMINER (FNE) COURSE POST-SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER (SANE) AND PEDIATRIC SANE COURSES—FREE

When: February 10, 2011 from 7:30 am—5:00 pm
Where: Roanoke EMS Upstairs Meeting Room—374 Day Ave., Roanoke, VA

Target Audience: RNs interested in the specialty of forensic nursing, law enforcement officers, attorneys, physicians, rape crisis counselors, EMS providers, and other health care professionals with an interest in forensic-related issues.
Purpose: To instruct RNs and other interested individuals in the care of the forensic patient in regard to recognition, history-taking, assessment, documentation, and preparation for courtroom testimony. Space is limited to 40 participants.

To register contact Melissa Harper, MSN, APRN, SANE-A-P, at mrhaper@carilionclinic.org.

STALKING AWARENESS

Submitted by Charlene Scott, RN

Salem VAMC takes a proactive approach in educating staff on issues regarding Domestic Violence. In October 2010 the Federal Women's Program Committee invited Detective Stacy Sheppard (*in photo*) of the Salem Police Department to educate the staff on stalking. Her presentation was very informative and of interest to all attendees.

Stalking has been defined in a variety of ways. Most commonly, and conservatively, stalking is defined as "the willful, malicious, and repeated following and harassing" of an individual in a course of conduct "that would cause a reasonable person fear."

Additionally, stalking involves persistent harassment over time and often more than one type of activity. Examples of stalking behaviors include but are not limited to: unwanted phone calls, postal mail, emails, text messaging, and instant messaging, contact through social networking sites, and sending or leaving gifts or other items.

Physical acts of stalking include following, tracking with GPS devices, trespassing, spying, peeping, appearing at one's home, business, leaving written messages or objects, vandalizing property, surveillance and harming a pet.

Thirty percent of female victims and 20% percent of male victims have sought psychological counseling as a result of their victimization. Twenty-six percent of victims said their stalking victimization caused them to lose time from work. Of these, 7% were unable to return to work.

Additionally, "women who were stalked by their partner experienced psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and injury at significantly higher rates compared with women who were not stalked by their partners."

Source: Violence Against Women Online Resources

SALEM VAMC HOSTS HOMELESS SUMMIT

On February 1st, the Salem VAMC Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Team sponsored a Homeless Summit. There were 42 attendees from over twenty-five Federal, State and Non-Profit Agencies represented from throughout our 25-county catchment area. The purpose of the summit was to develop and enhance partnerships between the VAMC and the Community in order to end homelessness among our Veteran population. Several sound strategies were discussed and the HCHV Team will be following up on them with their community partners.

For more information about the Homeless Veterans program, go to www.va.gov/homeless/ where you can find information about Prevention Services, Housing Support Services, Treatment, Employment/Job Training, Benefits/Other Services, and Resources.

Salem's Homeless Veterans Coordinator is Shelley Wimmer, LCSW, at Ext. 1517.

SALEM WELCOMES PATRICK ZIMMERMAN – EEO PROGRAM MANAGER

Mr. Patrick Zimmerman became Salem VAMC's new EEO Program Manager on December 19, 2010. He is located in Building 16, Room 13, at Ext. 2727 or patrick.zimmerman2@va.gov; his mailing symbol is (OOE).

Patrick is Retired Navy (21 years), and last worked at the Joint Expeditionary Base in Little Creek, Virginia as EEO Specialist and Maintenance Coordinator. He received his Masters in Education and Bachelors in Health Sciences with a Minor in Human Services Counseling from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA; an Associates in Arts and Sciences from John Tyler Community College in Chester, VA; and certification in Homeland Security from St. Leo University. He enjoys going to school and is currently looking for a school to earn his PhD.

His goal in his new role as EEO Program Manager at Salem is to get established and get to know the people here. He is approachable "any time" for questions, comments and concerns. His vision is to "create an EEO program that is the best in the VISN. I set my goals high." This comes from his military background; for example in 2006 he was Naval Recruiting Command "Officer Recruiter of the Year" for the entire Nation. He also has a goal of "zero complaints." "I believe all complaints can be resolved at the lowest level; there is no issue that can't be resolved if everyone keeps cool heads and addresses issues early. Good supervisors know their people, step in early, ask questions, and listen." As EEO Program Manager, he will work hand in hand with the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program. ADR is the first step to take if issues need to be resolved. Mandatory training is available online in Learning Management System (LMS) about the ADR and EEO programs. Patrick will also be happy to come to staff meetings and small groups to discuss EEO issues; "the smaller the group the better, to allow for more interaction and open discussion."

Patrick is excited about being at Salem, and working with the EEO/Diversity Committee. The Committee is hoping to bring fresh ideas and activities for employees to promote equal opportunity, diversity, and respect amongst coworkers.

Patrick is originally from Brooklyn, NY and grew up on Coney Island. He joined the Navy and was eventually stationed in the Virginia Beach area where he met his wife, Joanna (from Lynchburg), also in the Navy. They have two daughters; Jocia (16) and Amari (9). Because Joanna is still in the Navy, Patrick will be a "Geo-Bachelor" traveling back and forth to spend time with his family. Outside his career, Patrick enjoys sports – college football, college basketball, baseball, etc.

His life philosophy is, "Don't be afraid to try new things! This opens your mind to other cultures and ideas, and helps you get along with others."

OEF/OIF/OND:

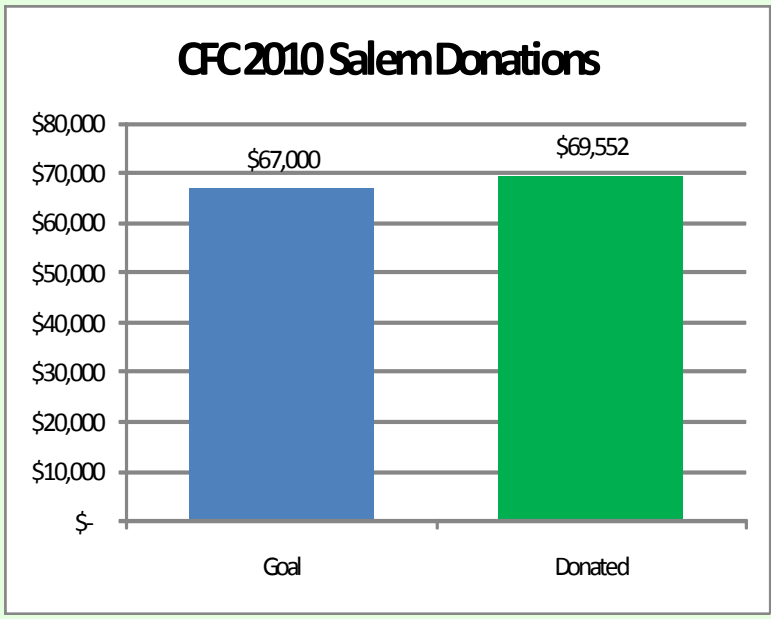
The OEF/OIF Program is now officially the OEF/OIF/OND Program:

Operation Enduring Freedom/
Operation Iraqi Freedom/
Operation New Dawn (*which began September 1, 2010*)

For more information see www.oefoif.va.gov/. Note: There is no directive to destroy current OEF/OIF literature, brochures, etc., and these materials may continue to be used until the stock is depleted; but, all communications, correspondence, and printed materials should reflect the change to the new name OEF/OIF/OND.

THANK YOU FOR LIVING, LOVING, AND GIVING TO CFC!

Submitted by Kristy Suhr and Michelle Lentz



November 15, 2010 marked the official kick-off for the 2010 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The theme for this year was "Live, Love, Give." The campaign is the world's largest and most successful workplace philanthropic fundraiser in the world.

The mission of the CFC is to support and to promote philanthropy among communities in an effort to improve the quality of life for others through donations to local and international charities in need. Salem VAMC soared to new heights this year. The campaign goal was $67,000. With the generosity and support pledged by our Salem VAMC employees, over $69,552 was raised that will now benefit agencies in our community and beyond.

A special thank you to AFGE, Salem VAMC Federal Credit Union, VA Canteen Services, and the CWT Greenhouse staff for their donations of prizes. Drawings were held weekly with numerous prizes ranging from gift certificates to local eateries, beautiful poinsettias, to a digital picture frame.

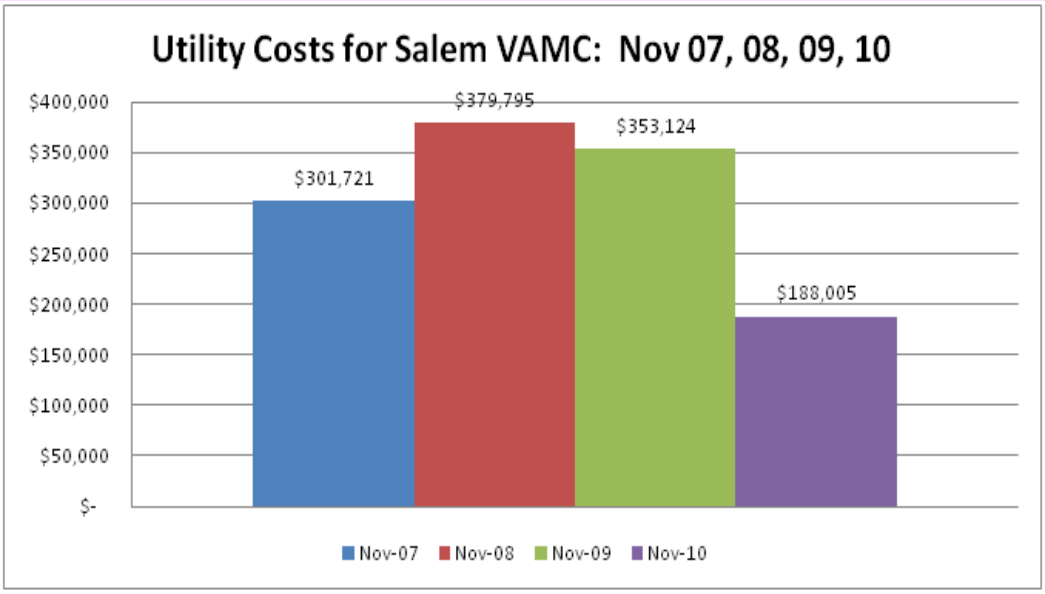
We would also like to thank all of the Key Workers, Jennifer Gwin, Elaine Wilkinson, and the Paint & Carpentry Shop personnel who supported behind the scenes efforts for this year's event.

All employees are encouraged to continue their support of CFC in the Fall of 2011. Despite tough economic times, we can be proud that Salem VAMC staff gave so generously to those in need.

UTILITY COST SAVINGS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

Submitted by Bob Rossbacher

All Federal agencies are mandated by Congress and the President to reduce energy consumption by 3% per year. Through various energy saving measures, Salem VAMC has reduced its energy consumption by 5% each of the last two years. This has also contributed to the lowering of our utility bills beginning this fiscal year 2011. This reduction in utility costs in November 2010 from previous Novembers was a reduction of natural gas and electricity usage, combined with a sizable reduction in natural gas prices.



Thanks to all VA employees for turning off lights in unoccupied areas, using stairs instead of elevators, and for minimizing the use of portable electric heaters.

ON-SITE ADVANCE CLASSES

Submitted by Rod Hiduskey

Advance is a VA-wide initiative to invest in employee development, workforce engagement and talent management for the delivery of high-quality healthcare, benefits and other services to Veterans and their families. In support of this national initiative to bring educational opportunities that will contribute to the professional and personal development of Salem employees, the Office of Employee Education is sponsoring the following Advance classes for 2011. These on-site classes will be facilitated by contracted VA vendor companies and will be held in 77-130d (Education Classroom). Registration for any Advance class must be done through LMS. To register for the on-site classes: enter the class name in the Search Catalog box; locate the class; add to your learning plan; and then click on Offering Details. Participating in the on-site classes does not require you to use annual leave, but you must have approval from your supervisor to attend.

The classes are listed on our Salem VAMC Intranet Home page in the Events Calendar: Effective Communications, Building Resilience, Great Work—Great Career, Managing Self Through Change, Managing Your Team Through Change, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Working at the Speed of Trust, and Project Management: An Approach That Works. Advance offers many classes to VA employees in many delivery modes. You are encouraged to research and participate in Advance classes. Accessing the entire Advance catalog can be done through LMS. All classes have size limits, so register early.

SALEM VAMC BEGINS PACT TRAINING

Submitted by Rod Hiduskey

In 2010, Salem VAMC was one of five VA medical centers selected by the VA to provide Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) training. Salem PACT faculty will facilitate training sessions throughout VISN 6, 7 and 8. The first of many training sessions was held in December 2010, in Roanoke, and was attended by VA healthcare professionals from Beckley, Hampton, Richmond, and Salem.

Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) is a new VA national model of patient care for the 21st century that is based on integrated healthcare teams following these principles: Patient Driven – Patient and Family Inclusion; Efficient – Based on Data Driven Decisions; Comprehensive – Whole Person Oriented Care; Continuous – Continuity of Care with the PACT Relationship; Communication – Honest, Respectful, Reliable and Culturally Sensitive; and Coordination – Working with others to Ensure Quality of Care

This new patient centered model involves using care teams (Teamlets), normally consisting of physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, mental health providers, nutritionists, administrative staff and ancillary providers. Together, working closely as a team, they will bring a comprehensive and holistic approach, including the participation of the patients and families, to provide a continuous and seamless approach to meeting the healthcare needs of our patients by determining practical opportunities to improve processes, tasks, structures and communication to promote patient aligned care, and promoting effective team culture and civility within teams. (*Photo—PACT attendees participate in a team-building exercise*.)

Throughout 2011, Salem PACT faculty will be traveling throughout the southeast United States, including Baltimore/Washington, DC, to train VA medical center staff about this new VA national healthcare initiative. Salem faculty include: Mehdi Kazemi, MD (ACOS, Education), Thomas Eldridge, MD (Chief, Primary Care Service Line), Terry Golden, MD (Primary Care Physician), Shikha Vasudeva, MD (Teaching Hospitalist), Sachinder Vasudeva, MD (Physician), Margaret Craft, RN, MSN (Associate Chief Primary Care), Thomas Martin, MD (Chief, Medicine Service Line). Amar Sawh, MD (Chief, Hospitalists Section), Jose Gieck, PhD (Psychologist), David Buyck, PhD (Acting VISN 6 Director of Mental Health Services), Sarah Hartley, PhD (Health Behavior Coordinator), Shannon Cohen, PhD/NP (Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Coordinator), Jane Harrison, RN/ MSN (Nursing Education), Marsha Garrison, RN/MSN (Lead Nursing Education); Stephanie Baynton, RN/MSN (Clinical Nurse Specialist); and Barbara Zicafoose, RN/MSN (ANP – Women's Health Program Manager).

FACILITY ENHANCEMENTS/CONSTRUCTION NEWS

Submitted by Wayne Johnson

Several significant interior construction projects remain in progress and unaffected by winter weather. These include partial renovation of the Emergency Department (nearing completion), construction of a new Education Center in Building 75, and renovation of Building 9, 2nd Floor for Mental Health Service Line. Construction of the new MRI Addition to Building 2A, now under roof, has also continued largely unaffected by weather.

In addition to Projects noted above, February and March design and construction progress will include:

- Building 143 Fire Alarm System Replacement: New Fire Alarm System will be completed, tested, and placed in service during this timeframe.
- Steam repairs: Corridor restoration in Buildings 74 and 75 will be completed.
- Replacement of roofs - East Corridors and Buildings 74 and 143/2A: Corridor work, preparation for Building 74 roof, and Building 143 work will progress as weather allows.
- HVAC systems replacement in Buildings 11 and 12 (in design): Currently in negotiation for initiation of work. Construction expected to begin in late February or early March timeframe.
- Installation of lighting in Parking Lots H and I: Expected to resume in March.
- Installation of shuttle bus shelters: Shelters to be installed in February.
- IT Infrastructure Security and IT HVAC: Nearing completion in February.
- SPD Renovation for Scope Processing: Design will be completed and work initiated.
- Replacement of exterior lighting with energy efficient LEDs: Work should resume.
- Building 8 Addition for Mental Health Service Line: Design work will continue.
- High efficiency heating systems for Buildings 17, 18, 19, and 25: Contract will be advertised.
- HVAC humidification corrections in Building 143: Contract modification in progress – work should resume and be completed in February.
- Retro-commissioning of Building 143 HVAC system: HVAC system corrections will continue.
- Front accessible entrance for Women's Health Clinic: Design will progress.
- Building 76 renovations for Research: Contract will be advertised.
- Masonry corrections above the roofline of Buildings 7, 8, and 9: Contract should be awarded.

Projects which are recently completed or are essentially complete include:

- Underground fuel storage tank leak detection installation

Several additional projects are also in conceptual, design, or construction stages.

FMS will continue efforts to coordinate construction activities and design efforts with directly-affected personnel and services. FMS is focused on providing the best facilities possible for our deserving Veterans, and delivering those facilities in a safe manner. If you see unsafe conditions on a construction Project or in general, please immediately report the situation to Safety (Ext. 2292) or FMS (Ext. 2700). Due to the amount of work currently on-going, please provide as much detail as possible in your report.

ENERGY CORNER

Submitted by Bob Rossbacher

Driving into the Salem VAMC using the west entrance you may think we have geysers like Yellowstone National Park and perhaps you may start to look for bison. No, we don't have bison and we don't have geysers.

What you see are steam leaks in the steam lines which supply heat to buildings 17, 18, 19, and 25. It has been determined that the circa 1935 piping is corroded and is not cost-effective to be repaired. Instead, a contractor will install new high efficiency hot water boilers fired with natural gas for each building, eliminating the need for the steam lines. The work to complete this project, awarded in February, will be finished before the next heating season. This project will save a great deal of energy and will lower the natural gas bill for our facility.

? 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. 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).

January Question: Dear Ethel: My father is a Veteran, and I am an employee at Salem VAMC, but also serve as my father's Power of Attorney (POA) and Executive of Special Needs Trust. Is it ok for me to ask care-related questions of his VA Providers to make sure his rights are observed?

Answer: As the designated POA, you have the right to ask care-related questions of your father's providers. His record should accurately reflect your designation and you can verify this through Release of Information. You should follow the appropriate VA rules and regulations in regard to obtaining information about your father and his care. Concerns and questions regarding your father must be addressed as the designated POA. In other words, your status as an employee does not give you any more privilege to information than that of a non-VA employee who is the patient's POA.

February 2011 Ethel Question: Dear Ethel: If you are off duty, for example, in church, and a Veteran asks you for money, should you give him/her any money?

IEthics thanks the following employees for taking time to submit an ethics question at the IEthics booth during the Salem VAMC Education Fair on January 20th. Winners were: Erin Skaggs ($10 Outback Steakhouse gift card), Margaret Mulcahey ($10 Outback Steakhouse gift card), Sherry Ferguson ($10 Starbucks gift card), and Chris Schroeder ($1 lb. Hershey's milk chocolate bar).

SALEM RECEIVES INTEGRATEDETHICS ENHANCEMENT AWARD!

The Salem VAMC Integrated Ethics (IEthics) Advisory Committee's Preventive Ethics (PE) Team was the proud recipient of a National Center for Ethics in Health Care (NCEHC) IEthics Enhancement award of $7,000 for Fiscal Year 2011. Salem was one of seven sites selected out of 35 proposals submitted. The award will be utilized to benefit all VISN 6 medical centers by the promotion and integration of "Ask Ethel" or similar program.

The PE Team at Salem VAMC developed a preventive ethics project to address appropriate boundaries between employees and trainees, employees and patients, and appropriate conduct in general. The PE Team then developed a vehicle for educating staff on proper boundaries that would not only be easily recognizable, but would also be an approachable venue for employees to anonymously ask such questions without concerns about reprisal.

"Ask Ethel" has been shown to address the quality gap as evidenced by an increased number of calls coming into the IEthics office asking boundary related questions. It has also generated numerous questions by employees at locally held educational fairs. Staff now recognize the "Ask Ethel" logo and report having discussions on their units about the question of the month. Ethics staff have also been invited to speak to employees on various units to provide ethics education to staff members. Therefore new educational teams are being formed to provide this education. This is an overall IEthics Team venture in that members form the IE Consultation Team, Preventive Ethics, and Council Members will be involved in educational efforts.

Salem has seen the positive effect "Ask Ethel" has generated throughout the IEthics Service incorporating all facets of our IE Program.

COMPLIMENTS CORNER

Submitted by Ann Benois

☺ "On Ward 8-1, patients were doing their laundry when the dryer stopped working. **Bill Paxton** from EMS transferred a dryer to the unit with the help of **Frank Johnson** and **Rob Abbott**. Thanks guys!"

☺ "I commend **Joe Wilder** for the assistance he gave to make sure the 4 dialysis machines that went down over the holiday weekend were promptly put back into service. He is a definite asset to the Biomed department!"

☺ "An employee accidentally dropped a quarter bottle of milk in the hallway, and the broken pieces covered the floor in the basement of Building 2. **Alvin Melvin**, Laundry Worker, happened to be in the area and helped get up the milk and glass while waiting for EMS to arrive; he had a great attitude about it and showed thoughtfulness and dedication."

☺ "Thanks to the staff of **Ward 2-3** for the respect, kindness, and wonderful care they provided for our father while he was there."

☺ "**Ruth Jamison**, LPN, Ward 2-2, is the kindest, most efficient nurse I've ever met. She always has a smile on her face and is always so pleasant when she is taking care of you."

☺ "Thanks to the staff of **Ward 2-3** for the wonderful and loving care given to our brother and the compassion shown to our family." Funds were also donated to Voluntary Service, for the Ward 2-3 Palliative Care Unit.

☺ "Thank you for the care you gave our Veteran family member on **Ward 2-3** in the Palliative Care Unit; it gave us peace of mind knowing he was comfortable."

☺ Thanks to the **Pharmacy** staff from Bridgette Vest in the Smoking Cessation Clinic, "I am very grateful for all the support from the Pharmacy yesterday with the influx of multiple prescriptions from the new employee smoking cessation program. Thanks for all your assistance and teamwork."

☺ "Thanks **Dr. Dockery**. My son (injured in Iraq) did well in a very tough mountain trail race. For me, it was ugly. Still, I was the oldest in the race but not the last. It means I'm rebounding from foot surgery (still hurts a bit) and on my way to better. You sir, were great, and I am very thankful you were my Podiatrist. Thank you again!" *The Veteran attached a copy of an article, "Seven Sisters 10-mile race in Wythe County," with a photo of him, and his son, running in the race. A total of 27 runners competed in the inaugural Seven Sisters Extreme 10-mile race.*

Veterans: Do you have a compliment or suggestion to help us exceed your expectations? Our goal is to provide excellent care. Please ask to speak to the Service Level Patient Advocate (also known as "STAR") in the area. You may receive a survey in the mail; we encourage you to complete it and return it with your feedback.

VA Publishes Final Regulation to Aid Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange in Korea: Will Provide Easier Path to Health Care and Benefits

WASHINGTON - Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea will have an easier path to access quality health care and benefits under a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) final regulation that will expand the dates when illnesses caused by herbicide exposure can be presumed to be related to Agent Orange.

"VA's primary mission is to be an advocate for Veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki "With this new regulation VA has cleared a path for more Veterans who served in the demilitarized zone in Korea to receive access to our quality health care and disability benefits for exposure to Agent Orange."

Under the final regulation published January 25, 2011 in the Federal Register, VA will presume herbicide exposure for any Veteran who served between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971, in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense (DoD) to have operated in an area in or near the Korean DMZ in which herbicides were applied.

Previously, VA recognized that Agent Orange exposure could only be conceded to Veterans who served in certain units along the Korean DMZ between April 1968 and July 1969.

In practical terms, eligible Veterans who have specific illnesses VA presumes to be associated with herbicide exposure do not have to prove an association between their illness and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits and ensures that Veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

For more information go to www.publichealth.va.gov.

REPORTING SAFETY & QUALITY ISSUES

Submitted by Quality Management

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

Be sure to check out our website

www.salem.va.gov

For events, articles, photos, this newsletter, and more!

JUST THE FACTS

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

If you have ideas for *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)

February	Senior Independence Month American Heart Month Cancer Prevention Month African-American History Month AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month Wise Health Consumer Month
Feb 1-4	EEO/Black History Dance Lessons—From 11:30a-1:30p—Auditorium
Feb 1-7	Patient Recognition Week Women's Heart Week
Feb 3	Chinese New Year Four Chaplains Memorial Day
Feb 4	Wear Red Day
Feb 6-12	Burn Awareness Week Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week
Feb 13-19	National Salute to Veteran Patients Week Cardiac Rehabilitation Week
Feb 14	Valentine's Day Health Meal Demo at 12:00 noon in the Main Lobby Valentine's Day National Donor Day
Feb 14-21	Alzheimer's & Dementia Staff Education Week
Feb 17	National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans at 1:30p—Audiorium—Special Guest: Miss Virginia
Feb 20-26	Eating Disorders Awareness Week
Feb 21	Presidents' Day Holiday
Feb 25	Black History Program, including Employee Talent Show—at 2:00p in the Auditorium
Feb 28	Stepping Out for Health—Mondays and Thursdays at 12:15p in the Main Lobby