



Just the Facts

MY HEALTHeVET—24/7 ONLINE ACCESS

My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov is VA's award-winning e-health website, which offers Veterans, active duty soldiers and their dependents, and caregivers anywhere, anytime, Internet access to VA health care information and services. VA employees and volunteers are also encouraged to sign up.

Launched nationwide in 2003, My HealthVet is a free, online Personal Health Record that empowers Veterans to become more informed partners in their health care. Veterans may log on to My HealthVet and begin to better manage their health care and make informed decisions in collaboration with their health care providers.



Some of the current features are:

- ☆ VA Benefits & Services
- ☆ Personal Health Journals
- ☆ Vitals Tracking & Graphing
- ☆ Military Health History
- ☆ Activity/Food Journals
- ☆ Health Living Centers
- ☆ VA News & Feature Stories
- ☆ Disease & Condition Centers
- ☆ Trusted Health Information

Veterans who receive care at a VA facility should ask about In Person Authentication (IPA) to obtain an upgraded account which offers additional access to key portions of their VA electronic medical record. Once this one-time process is complete, the Authenticated Veteran can:

- ☆ Refill VA Prescriptions
- ☆ Get VA Wellness Reminders

Future enhancements for Authenticated Veterans:

- ☆ Get VA Appointment Reminders and View VA Appointments
- ☆ View Lab Results
- ☆ Communicate electronically with participating providers through Secure Messaging

To register and/or be authenticated, please visit the My HealthVet Connection office near the entrance of the Main Lobby of Building 143 during normal business hours. There you will find computers and friendly staff to help you get started. Sign up today!



Tammy Kendrick, Chief, Health Information Management Section (HIMS), is Salem's Point of Contact for My HealthVet.

John E. Patrick
Director

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

As a Veteran and the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), I thank those of you who demonstrated exceptional dedication and service during the recent storms in which unprecedented amounts of snow buffeted the Mid-Atlantic States, Northeast and parts of the Midwest. Many Federal facilities in those regions were closed, but you braved icy roads and blizzard conditions to show this Nation's finest citizens how much you care.



VA has a solemn responsibility to care for those who have borne the battle. Under incredibly challenging circumstances, you met that responsibility in an inspirational way. I applaud each of you for the determination you showed in fulfilling our sacred mission and honoring the service of our Veterans.

Many stories have poured into my office of employees working extra hours and taking on extra duties to ensure our medical centers remained open and provided the top-quality care that is VA's hallmark and every Veteran's due. Your selfless service is an example to your fellow VA employees across the country and a testament to the entire Nation of the importance we place on providing the best in care.

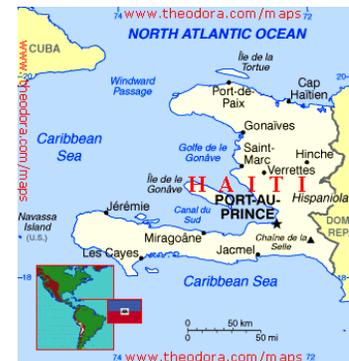
Each of you is a credit to VA. The personal sacrifices you made for Veterans makes me proud to serve beside you.

Sincerely, **ERIC K. SHINSEKI**

MELTING POT CORNER— REPUBLIC OF HAITI

Submitted by Evelyn Sayers

The history of the Republic of Haiti started in the early 17th century when Spain ceded the western third of the island of Hispaniola to the French, which later became Haiti. Located in Central America and the Caribbean with a total land area of 27,750 sq km (slightly smaller than Maryland), it shares the island with Dominican Republic which has the eastern two-thirds. Haiti became one of the wealthiest countries in the region but in the late 18th century, nearly a half million slaves revolted against the French government and after a prolonged struggle, it became the first black republic to declare independence in 1804.



Haiti has a total population of 9,035,536 (July 2009 est.) with 95% black and 5% mulatto and white. French and Creole are the official languages. Christianity is the dominant religion though roughly half of the population practices Voodoo.

The Haitian government has three branches just as the United States does: Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary. Even with a similar system of government, Haiti has been plagued by political violence for most of its history. The country finally inaugurated a democratically elected president and parliament in May 2006 after decades of political unrest.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere with 80% of the population living under the poverty line and 54% in abject poverty. The economy has been affected by natural disasters, four tropical storms in 2008 and the January 2010 earthquake that severely damaged transportation infrastructure and agricultural sector, killing thousands of people and displacing hundreds of thousands others.

UNION STEWARD: DEBORAH CARROLL

My name is Deborah Carroll and I joined the Salem VAMC in 2006 after 20 years of working in the private sector. I started in Fee Basis, and I currently work as an Accounts Receivable Technician. I look forward to a long career with Salem and am very grateful for the opportunity to work here. It is a privilege for me to serve our Veterans and a joy to be a part of the medical center team.

I became a Union Steward last year. In the late 1970's I served as Treasurer for the ILGWU (International Ladies Garment Workers Union). I feel very fortunate to be able to have the opportunity to be involved with AFGE local 1739 and take pleasure in serving as a Steward.

I feel passionate about the Union's ability to work with management to protect employees from being underpaid and overworked and strongly support union membership as a way to better serve our Veterans and the bargaining unit employees in the facility.



ELEVATOR UPS AND DOWNS

Submitted by Scott Branscome, PE

In the next few months there will be temporary changes to how you access certain parts of the medical center by elevator. A project is underway to improve the condition of the elevators at the medical center. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience you may experience, and appreciate your patience as we improve the medical center elevator systems. The following elevators will be out of service as follows:

Building 4 elevator April 22 to June 15.

Building 74 elevator April 22 to June 21.

Building 12 elevator #1 April 22 to June 15. The other elevator will be working while work is being performed.

Building 77 elevator June 7 to August 25.

Building 9 elevator June 7 to August 11.

Building 12 elevator #2 June 15 to July 28. The other elevator will be working while work is being performed

Building 75 elevator July 29 to September 29.

Alternatives for entering/exiting the floors are using stairwells or the secondary elevator in those buildings which have more than one elevator cab.

If you have concerns or questions, contact **Scott Branscome at Ext. 4187, (540) 589-7549, or FMS office at (540) 982-2463, Ext. 2700.**



EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION: TRIP TO THE TRUMP TAJ MAHAL IN ATLANTIC CITY

Submitted by Cindy Killian

The Salem VAMC Employees Association is taking a bus trip to the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, New Jersey and we want to invite you to come along. We will depart at Midnight on Friday, May 14 and return at 6:00am on Sunday, May 16. The cost is \$79/person for members; \$89/person for non-members. Contact Mary Terry (Ext. 2647), Cindy Killian (Ext. 2025), Molly Wilson-Kelly (Ext. 1337), or Shannon Starkey (Ext. 4153) for more information. **The deadline to sign up is April 30th!**

Stroll to the nearby showboat and resort casinos, ride the Ferris Wheel at Steel Pier, and more!



CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

Submitted by Wayne Johnson

Spring is in the air, along with the sights and sounds of construction equipment! During April and May, there will be a marked increase in both interior and exterior construction activity. Projects to be aware of include:



- ☆ West Loop chilled water line replacement – should be completed during this timeframe. East Loop is nearing completion.
- ☆ Elevator renovation work in Buildings 4, 12, and 74 should be in full swing. Other Buildings affected by this Project include 7, 9, 75, and 77.
- ☆ Replacement of the Fire Alarm System in Building 143.
- ☆ Addition to Building 2A for a second MRI.
- ☆ Continuation of construction of a new Mental Health Building near Building 9.
- ☆ Construction of a contractor staging area near parking lot T.
- ☆ Steam system repairs in the West Loop affecting exterior areas of the West Loop and corridors of Buildings 74, 75, and 76.
- ☆ Initiation of construction for Building 75 Education Center.
- ☆ Project for relocation of the vehicle fueling station and associated spill containment.

Several other projects are in the process of procurement and should begin within the next few months including:

- ☆ Renovation of Building 76, 1st floor, for relocation of Medical Research.
- ☆ Replacement of HVAC systems in Buildings 11 and 12.
- ☆ Correction of floor deficiencies in the auditorium, in Building 143 basement corridors, and in Building 4 basement corridors.
- ☆ Renovation of the Canteen dining areas.

Projects recently completed include:

- ☆ Construction for Relocation of Cardiac Rehabilitation into 1C-129.

Projects continue to be added to the construction list on a regular basis. In the interest of brevity, only the larger projects are listed above. As always, FMS will strive to notify affected areas as construction becomes imminent.

Your patience is appreciated as we work to improve Salem VAMC facilities to provide the best care possible for our Veterans. Anyone on site at the Salem VAMC will likely encounter some aspect of on-going construction, so please heed all warning signage and access restrictions. Please immediately report any unsafe conditions or situations to Safety (Ext. 2292) or FMS (Ext. 2700).

PHONE BOOKS

Submitted by Joan Aders

FACT: On average, 660,000 tons of phone books end up in landfills every year. By recycling just 500 books, we could save between 17 and 31 trees, 7,000 gallons of water, 463 gallons of oil, 587 pounds of air pollution, 3.06 cubic yards of landfill space and 4,077 kilowatt hours of energy! Salem VAMC is collecting all outdated phone books in the warehouse and will have them picked up for recycling as they have done in the past. Way to go, Warehouse staff!



National VA Research Week

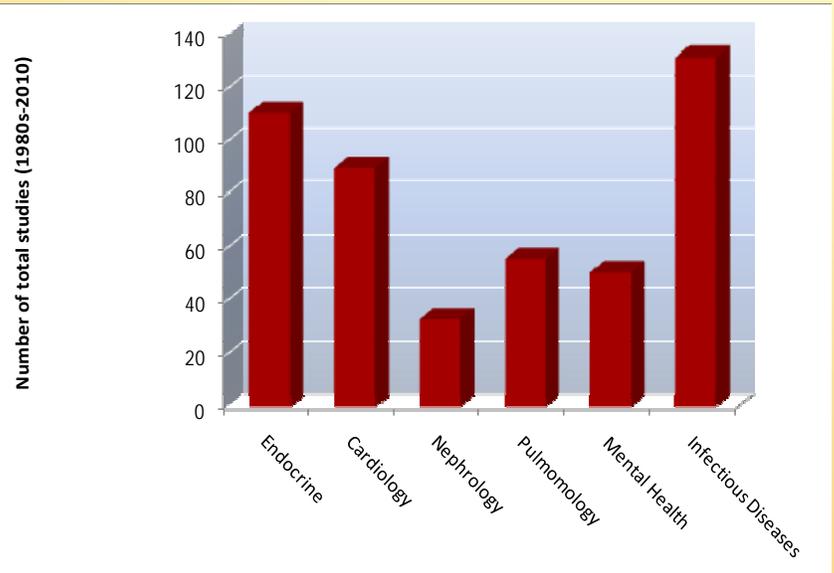
Submitted by Lynne Moffitt

In addition to April 26-30 being 2010 National VA Research Week, VA is celebrating the 85th year anniversary of the program (1925-2010) with the theme “VA Research: 85 Years of Discovery, Innovation, and Advancements for Veterans.”

This year Salem VAMC is preparing for a special celebration. On April 29th and April 30th there will be a research poster display in the Auditorium, Bldg 5, 1st floor. All Veterans, employees, and visitors are invited to see the posters that were – in many cases – presented at national conferences during the past year. On Thursday, research coordinators will be in the Lobby of Bldg 143 to answer questions regarding the research study process and participation.

On Friday April 30th, a special Medical Grand Rounds will be dedicated to resident research. Also a “Lunch and Learn” session will feature guest speaker, Dr. Carl Elliott from the University of Minnesota speaking on “Marketing Drugs with Clinical Trials.” We are very excited as Dr. Elliott is a nationally known speaker at conferences such as PRIM&R (Public Responsibility in Medicine & Research), author of many articles in leading medical journals and several books.

As we commemorate the 85th year anniversary we note that since 1980 our local program has included over 80 investigators and almost 600 research studies. Our investigators from Internal Medicine, Mental Health, and Pharmacy have produced numerous abstracts, posters, and articles from this considerable amount of hard work. We are very proud to have reached this level of success. We anticipate a bright future.



CINCO DE MAYO—MAY 5

Submitted by Rita Cone

So, why Cinco de Mayo (May 5th)? And why should Americans recognize this day? Because 4,000 Mexican soldiers were victorious over the French and traitor Mexican army of 8,000 at Puebla, Mexico, 100 miles east of Mexico City on May 5, 1862. The French, Spanish, and English troops had come to Mexico on the pretext of collecting Mexican debts from the newly elected government of President (and Indian) Benito Juarez. The English and Spanish quickly made deals and left but the French had different ideas. They brought a prince with them to rule the new Mexican empire. Napoleon's French Army had not been defeated in 50 years and were not afraid of anyone, especially since the U.S. was fighting a Civil War. When the battle between the French and Mexicans was over, many French were killed or wounded. The Mexicans had won a great victory that kept the French from supplying the confederate rebels for another year, allowing the United States to build the greatest army the world had ever seen.

Union forces were then rushed to the Texas/Mexican border and made sure the Mexicans got all the weapons and ammunition they needed to expel the French. It might be a historical stretch to credit the survival of the United States to those brave 4,000 Mexicans who faced an army twice as large in 1862. But who knows?

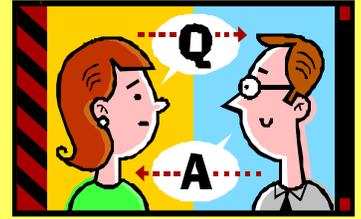
In gratitude, thousands of Mexicans crossed the border after Pearl Harbor to join the U.S. Armed Forces. Mexicans, you see, never forget who their friends are, and neither do Americans. That's why Cinco de Mayo is such a party – a party that celebrates freedom and liberty!

Mark your calendar to celebrate Cinco de Mayo on May 5th with the EEO/Diversity Committee.



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 at (122). Please include your name and Ext. if you want a personal response (all submissions are confidential).



Last Month's Ethics Question: As an employee at the VA you have become attached to a patient and family members. You have been invited to a celebration of the patient's recovery, outside the VA. Does this cross boundaries for you to attend the celebration?

Answer: Yes. See VAMC Memo 658-00-01 dated February 1, 2010, regarding boundary issues.

This Month's Ethics Question: A Veteran residing on the Community Living Center (CLC) unit hears you talking about going to the "Bath and Body Works" store and asks you to purchase an item with \$20 they give to you. This Veteran has been on the CLC unit several months and has not had any visitors. Does this cross boundaries for you?

NATIONAL ALCOHOL SCREENING DAY

Submitted by Josephine Demarce

For most adults, moderate alcohol use causes few, if any, problems. But for some, any alcohol use may lead to significant health problems. Trying to figure out the risks associated with alcohol use is not easy because alcohol affects your body differently at different times. To protect yourself, it is important to figure out where you should draw the line when consuming alcohol – where do you draw the line as you get older, if you are trying to get pregnant, if you have a family history of alcohol abuse, if you develop a medical condition, or if you take certain medications.



To help determine where you should draw the line, the Salem VAMC is offering a free, anonymous education and screening program as part of National Alcohol Screening Day, Thursday, April 8th. The free screenings will be held from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. in the lobby of Building 143.

As part of the program, participants will be provided with a variety of educational materials, complete a written self-test, and have the opportunity to talk privately with a health professional. Pamphlets, brochures and flyers will be available, as well as referrals to local treatment and support resources for those who need further evaluation.

Many people are unaware of the negative effects alcohol can have on health. The goal of National Alcohol Screening Day is to educate the public on the potential risks associated with drinking. Through education, awareness, and understanding, individuals can make informed decisions about their drinking behaviors.

National Alcohol Screening Day (NASD), held in April as part of Alcohol Awareness Month, is a program of the nonprofit organization Screening for Mental Health, Inc. in collaboration with the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Screenings will be held across the country at approximately 5,000 screening sites, including hospitals, alcohol and addiction treatment centers, primary care offices, and colleges.

For additional information about alcohol or the screening program, visit www.NationalAlcoholScreeningDay.org or contact Josie DeMarce, PhD at Ext. 2583.

COMPLIMENTS CORNER

Submitted by Robin Haas

- ☺ “Thanks to the medical personnel who cared for me. The service given by the staff under the leadership of **Sherry Secrist**, Physician Assistant, was superb.”
- ☺ “The **Wheelchair Van** is one of the best services the VA offers.”
- ☺ “Thanks to the staff on **4J** for their great help during my stay. The staff was always kind in every way which made my stay much easier than in-patient care at other hospitals.”
- ☺ “Clinic III Staff: Thanks for the great job you all do. From the front desk to the doctors, you all have treated me like I was number one. Thanks.”
- ☺ “I took my grandfather to see the **ENT** doctor; **Dr. Grayson** and his nurse **Rita Neel** were both very kind, helpful, caring and very gentle and it was a worthwhile appointment. They are a great team up there.”
- ☺ “**Dr. Dockery**: Thank you for seeing me for my foot pain.”



NUTRITION QUIZ ANSWERS

Submitted by Bonnie Harbourt



Here are the answers to the quiz from the Dietitian's display table on March 25th. The winners of the Quiz were Phoebe Schuyler, Bonnie Goad, and Susan DuGrenier.

- False 1. People who have diabetes should avoid carbohydrates.
- False 2. Butter is better for you than margarine.
- True 3. Trans fats are bad for your heart.
- False 4. White foods are unhealthy.
- False 5. To lose weight, you should cut back on bread and potatoes.
- True 6. Including fruits and vegetables of different colors in your meals represents a diet with a lot of antioxidants and phytonutrients.
- False 7. Eggs are bad for your heart.
- False 8. Sodium is the same thing as salt.
- False 9. Sea salt is better for you than table salt.
- False 10. If a food label says “natural” it is a more healthy food.

SOCIAL WORKERS LAUDED

Submitted by Tim Woodrum

Mr. John Patrick, Director, and Ms. Pearl Washington, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, shared their appreciation of Social Work staff on March 9 at their staff meeting.

“This group works so closely with our Veterans. During the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), it was clear Social Workers have hearts of gold. Your work with homeless Veterans, our returning service members, suicide prevention program, and so many other ways attest to your role as an advocate for Veterans and their families. I commend you for your efforts and accomplishments,” stated Director Patrick. “Secretary Shinseki has mentioned several times that if someone chooses to be homeless, then we have not offered enough options. Social workers are key in finding resources to assist those who need our help.”

Ms. Washington noted that “social workers are an important part of our ability to provide for our Veterans and I share my appreciation to all of you.”

Mr. Tim Woodrum, Chief, SCI/Supportive Social Services, recognized Ms. Debra Swain-Elliott (top photo) for her leadership during the hospital-wide CFC which exceeded its goal of \$65,000 by \$3,000.

Mr. Frank Kristoff, Hospital Service Coordinator for the Volunteer Transportation Network (bottom photo), was also recognized for his assistance and support to Veterans.



OFFICE OF INFO & TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

Submitted by Joseph Plott

- ☆ For any **computer or system-related issues** please contact your ADPAC to place a work order.
- ☆ New **videoconferencing services** began in December 2009. To access the services contact **V06VTC Helpdesk** in Outlook or call Greg Aguilar at (919) 956-5541, Ext. 277 or Michelle Gilbert at (804) 675-5478.
- ☆ OI&T created new **pager and cell phone** request forms. They are located on the **Public Drive** in the **ADPAC folder**.



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.



EVENTS CALENDAR

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

Apr 8	National Alcohol Screening Day from 8a-3p in the Main Lobby of 143
Apr 9	POW Wreath-Laying Ceremony at POW Monument in front of 143 at 2p
Apr 18-24	National Volunteer Week
Apr 20	Clothesline Project from 8:30a-3:30p in the Main Lobby of 143
Apr 29	National VA Research Week Poster Display—8a-4:30p in the Auditorium
Apr 30	National VA Research Poster Display—10a-2p in the Main Lobby of 143
Apr 30	Special Research Lecture: Marketing Drugs with Clinical Trials from 12-1:30p in 77-130D; registration required
May 5	Cinco de Mayo Celebration from 10a-2p in the Auditorium
May 6-12	National Nurses Week (Events TBA)
May 9	Mother's Day
May 9-15	National Nursing Home Week National Police Week National Women's Health Week National Hospital Week
May 15	Armed Forces Day Peace Officer Memorial Day
May 17	World Hypertension Day
May 21	Hospice/Oncology Support Expo from 10a-2p in the Auditorium
May 31	Memorial Day Holiday