



Proud of our Veterans,  
Proud of America!

# THE epicenter

Newsletter of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) • August 2002

## A la Cart System Enhances Food Delivery

*“The A la Cart Advanced Tray Delivery System allows us to serve meals on time and at the proper temperatures to our veterans through a process that reduces rush periods. A calmer pace, and use of smaller and lighter carts and trays, promotes safety for our employees and eases transport, handling, and serving of meals.”*

– **Cherri M. Leake, MS, RD, CFCS**  
Chief, Nutrition and Food Service

Imagine preparing, serving and washing the dishes for 2,380 meals! That is what Nutrition and Food Service does everyday for veterans at the Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Livermore Divisions.

In order to serve meals on time, at the right temperature and of consistent quality, Nutrition and Food Service recently installed the state-of-the-art A la Cart Advanced Tray Delivery System at the Menlo Park Division. Preparations are underway to install this new tray delivery system at the Livermore Division later this year and introduction of the A la Cart system at the Palo Alto Division is under discussion.

The new A la Cart Advanced Tray Delivery System allows meal trays to be pre-assembled using chilled foods. The trays are then transported to pantries in the outlying buildings and docked in preparation for service. Thirty-eight minutes before serving, the trays are automatically set to heat so that when meal time arrives, the trays are ready to be served with piping hot entrees and crispy, cold salads. Since implementation of the new tray delivery system, there has been an increase in patient satisfaction scores with regard to timeliness of meal service and food temperature.

Nutrition and Food Service staff spent a great deal of time planning for the start-up of the new system. Cooks, food service workers, and truck drivers all worked hard to make sure the new system was successfully implemented. A new tray line for the assembly of patient trays was installed in the main kitchen of Bldg. 329 at the Menlo Park Division. Pantries, where trays are given the finishing touches of toast and hot beverages, replaced the former kitchens in Bldg’s. 331 and 324. Attractive new china and trays were also purchased.

VAPAHCS is also planning an extensive renovation of the main kitchen, Bldg. 329 at Menlo Park. The original building, constructed in 1968, requires seismic strengthening and general upgrade of facilities. The design team is planning a beautiful new entry and dining room for veterans in addition to improving the utilities and work-flow within the building. Work on the building is expected to begin the end of this year and be completed by November 2003.



*Left, Velma Davis works at the chiller; above, Bessie Elliott and other staff prepare meals.*

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# A Word From Our Director



**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman, Director  
VA Palo Alto Health Care System**

## **VAPAHCS CARES Market Area Committee**

The CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) process is continuing. VISN 21 has proposed six distinct market areas to the VHA National CARES Planning Office (NCPO) for approval. For VAPAHCS, our market area mirrors our patient service area. All VAPAHCS inpatient and outpatient facilities

are included in our market area. We have submitted the proposed membership of our VAPAHCS CARES Market Area Committee. I will chair this committee. The proposed membership includes clinical and administrative leadership, both of our unions and some Veteran Service Officers. After the entire membership is approved, we will announce it throughout the health care system. We will also schedule twice monthly public information sessions to inform all interested persons as to the status of CARES activities. Bill Ball, our Communications Officer, is already registering all external inquires regarding CARES and reporting these inquiries to VA Central Office monthly.

What is the charge to our CARES Market Area Committee? The Committee will receive from the NCPO, through VISN 21, a "gap" analysis as to where our current services (beds or outpatient services) are not aligned with the actuarial enrolled population projections. The NCPO will also examine whether we have excess building space throughout the health care system. The NCPO will also identify where we are deficient in providing services. The CARES Market Area Committee will address each gap with a planning initiative. These initiatives will be very in-depth and will analyze all of the impacts of adopting the initiative.

We anticipate receipt of the NCPO "gap analysis" in August. From the time of receipt, we will have approximately three months to complete our work.

We will be providing a far more in-depth discussion of CARES activities as this process continues. In the interim, if you want more information on the status of our CARES activities, please call Bill Ball at 650-493-5000, extension 64888.

## **Goal Sharing Update**

I am pleased to report our goal sharing process continues to flourish. We have approximately 100 distinct plans with almost 600 participants. The breakdown on those plans is the following:

Outreach to special populations	8 plans
Budget/Revenue Enhancement	11 plans
Employer of Choice	21 plans
Improving Veterans Satisfaction	36 Plans
Improving Operational Efficiency	58 plans

I am extremely impressed with your progress reports submitted in June. My thanks to Enrique Vitug, Staff Assistant to the Chief of Staff, for coordinating this effort and to those participating in goal sharing. You are making a terrific impact on our health care system.

## **Management By Walking Around (MBWA)**

MBWA is certainly not a new concept. However, Dr. Erin Bushell and Kim Park, from the VHA Patient Safety Center of Inquiry, have asked Dr. Sheikh, Chief of Staff, John Sisty, Associate Director, and me to participate in a new approach to MBWA. For the next several weeks, Dr. Sheikh, Mr. Sisty and I will be piloting a new process for performing work place visits. The purpose of these visits is to understand the obstacles you face in providing high quality care to our veterans. The visits are not an inspection. They are an attempt to bridge the gap between top management's understanding of your daily challenges in providing safe care in a blame-free environment. We are committed to improving patient safety through better communication between employees and leadership.

This pilot will then be presented to the VISN 21 Executive Leadership and may then be exported across the VISN. My hope is this program will eventually be exported across many levels of management at VAPAHCS.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth J. Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Elizabeth Joyce Freeman,  
Director**

# Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES)

## What does CARES mean?

It is an acronym that stands for “Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services.” CARES is a reorganization study to ensure veterans receive the right care, at the right time, at the right place. It is designed to objectively evaluate the best ways to provide quality health care and services, to more veterans, in more locations, now and into the future.

## Isn't this really about closing facilities?

The CARES' goal is to improve health care delivery. It will develop strategies for meeting current and future veteran needs for accessible, quality health care and aligning capital assets to meet those needs. In fact, CARES may recommend that VA open new sites. CARES planning initiatives, accepted by the under secretary for health, that involve a significant mission change for a facility will require approval by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. If approved, the Secretary will submit reports describing the option to appropriate congressional committees and national stakeholder groups. There will be a formal 60-day comment period before the CARES commission makes recommendations to the Secretary.

## How will Phase II of CARES work?

CARES will assess veterans' health care needs by Network (VA has organized its hospitals, clinics and other assets into 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks). Each Network will be divided into specific market areas, primarily based on enrolled veteran populations.

**1) Market Analysis of Veterans' Health Care Needs:** The CARES headquarters office will collect extensive facility data, such as number of square feet, the condition of the available space and services provided to determine the capacity to deliver services in each market. Network strategic plans and detailed actuarial enrollment projections will identify the expected demand for health care services in each market.

**2) Initiative Development:** From this planning base, the CARES office will analyze each health care market and will apply the standards and criteria (see attached) and other analyses to the data. The CARES office, in conjunction with Network personnel, will identify planning initiatives that cover duplications and overlaps in clinical services and infrastructure, inadequate health care access and excessive vacant space. The CARES planning initiatives will be designed to address all of the major program elements of VA care: acute, outpatient, long term, mental health, spinal cord injury and other special programs.

**3) Network Completion of Planning Initiatives:** Each Network will review the planning initiatives and recommend actions to resolve the issues identified in each planning initiative to meet the current and future requirements for optimum type and location of capital assets to meet veterans health care needs. During this process, stakeholder input will be solicited and carefully considered.

**4) National CARES Plan:** Input from Networks will be incorporated into a draft National CARES Plan approved and published by the Under Secretary for Health.

**5) CARES Commission:** Once the draft National CARES plan is completed, an independent commission selected by the Secretary of VA will evaluate the market plans. As part of the commission's evaluation, hearings may be held with, and comments accepted from, local stakeholders. Only after careful evaluation of these comments will the commission then forward its recommendations to the Secretary.

**6) Secretary Announces Final CARES Plan:** It is anticipated that the entire process will culminate with the Secretary's announcement in late 2003.

## What role do the Network and stakeholders play in this?

A formal CARES planning process will be conducted on each Network, based on market areas. Each network will assemble a CARES task force that will evaluate data and develop market-based planning initiatives. A key function for the Network will be to maintain effective communication with all stakeholders. The Network will ensure that VA's stakeholders are kept fully informed throughout the process and that all stakeholder comments and concerns are communicated back to the CARES task force and the CARES Commission.

## What kind of criteria will be evaluated in the CARES study?

Numerous factors will be evaluated, including demographics; health care quality as measured by need and access; technology and directions of health care; work force and community assets; facility capacity and functions, and ability to support other VA missions like research, homeland security and DoD/VA sharing initiatives. Based upon these criteria the Network will select the best ways to provide health care as part of the planning initiative. Each planning initiative must demonstrate VA's commitment to its bottom line: Does it improve health care for veterans?

## How will veterans benefit from CARES?

VA intends to keep pace with technology and advances in the medical field not just to provide adequate care, but also to provide the finest care in the world. Measurable, consistent evaluation will enable VA to make the best decisions possible for veterans' health care today and in the future, in the most cost-effective manner. The needs of special disability groups will be addressed and remain a priority. Once CARES is completed, veteran satisfaction is expected to increase as a result of better access, more efficient programs and superior support services.

# HOT AUGUST NIGHTS

About 7:30 on the evening of Saturday, August 1, 1986, the Reno-Sparks convention Center was bursting at the seams. Hundreds of revelers were still outside, partying, cheering and pushing to be let in to a first-time event of a magnitude yet to be realized. Inside, ten thousand applauding “teenagers of the 50’s & 60’s” were massed together in anticipation of seeing and hearing the Righteous Brothers, Wolfman Jack, and Jan & Dean...live!

It was an event whose time had come. The pent up demand was there, waiting for someone with foresight and vision to unleash the nostalgia of the 50’s & 60’s...a time of innocence, prosperity, cars and the birth of Rock and Roll. We “Baby Boomers” were ready to return to the good times, the “happy days,” our youth. The weather

was right - HOT; the place was right - RENO; the time was right – AUGUST. HOT AUGUST NIGHTS was born!

The founders came up with the idea of a concert and related events celebrating the origins of Rock & Roll. That first year of Hot August Nights was more of a nostalgia event than a car event. But, did the organizers learn! The car parade on Friday night was the highlight of the event for the participants and the crowds who thronged Virginia Street. The car owners were thrilled to show off their cars. They’d never had so many people “ooing and aahing” over their “works of art”. It was a proud moment for nostalgia car buffs, they were beaming...and they wanted more!



*Dora Clark and her husband, Wayne, in their 1968 Plymouth Roadrunner.*

# EMPLOYEE NEWS

## New Employees

Business Office  
**Richard T. Kusiolek**  
**Stephanie X. Nguyen**  
**William C. Weinerth**

Dental Service  
**Lieu T. Cao**  
**Sang Y. Kim**  
**Damon P. Saini**  
**Ritu Sood**  
**Tina H.J. Yoo**  
**Linda F.S. Yu**

Engineering Svc.  
**Chung Le**

Medical Svc.  
**Alice Roszyk**

Nursing Svc.  
**Julie Dutton**  
**Sharon Hightower**  
**Neal Mehta**  
**Sonia Mlakar**  
**Van Ngo**  
**Remedios Quizon**  
**Sheila Rezvan**

Nutrition & Food Svc.  
**Cynthia M. James**  
**Pablo T. Padua**

Psychiatry Svc.  
**Meghan Q. Kennedy**  
**David Michael Mathis**

Research Svc.  
**Susan M. Franye**  
**Vilija R. Gulbinas**

Surgical Svc.  
**John Bennett**  
**Lee T. Du**

Ward Administration Svc.  
**Tina Zamora**

## Retirees

Business Office  
**Adelfa Raymundo (12)**

Engineering Svc.  
**Warren Hampton (36)**  
**Duel Jones (38)**  
**Dennis Nickel (35)**  
**Mark Porep (24)**

Environmental Mgmt. Svc.  
**Wilbur Nichols (20)**

## Retirees (cont'd)

Medical Svc.  
**Ralph Rabkin (20)**

Medical Information Svc.  
**Val Putnam (13)**

Nursing Svc.  
**Jane Means (28)**

Psychology Svc.  
**Dolores Thompson (21)**

Surgical Svc.  
**John Runnels (11)**  
**Ruth Uhrhammer (27)**

*(Years of service are indicated in parentheses.)*

## Employee Service Awards

### 10 Years

**Renato Alambat**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Marilou Anderson**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Cecilia Daguio**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Elizabeth Estrellanes**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Douglas Ha**  
 Pharmacy Svc.

**Christina Hays**  
 Physical Medicine & Rehab. Svc.

**Donna Ingmire**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Victoria Lewit**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Chuan Oey**  
 Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

**Kelly Robertson**  
 Pharmacy Svc.

**Robert Smith**  
 Research Svc.

**Cynthia Wilkinson**  
 Nursing Svc.

### 15 Years

**Kimberly Anderson**  
 Nutrition & Food Svc.

**Melvin Goodwin**  
 Information Resource Mgmt. Svc.

**Nancy Granzella**  
 Pharmacy Svc.

**James Hallenbeck**  
 Medical Svc.

**Myrna Horton**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Ralph Kania**  
 Engineering Svc.

**Karen Larsen**  
 Psychiatry Svc.

**Perry Leanna**  
 Engineering Svc.

**Jesus Ortega**  
 Human Resources Mgmt. Svc.

**Ollie Robinson**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Sharon Williams**  
 Social Work Svc.

### 20 Years

**John Atwood**  
 Medical Svc.

**Michael Berwick**  
 Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt. Svc.

**Kim Bowlby**  
 Nursing Svc.

**Mary Duval**  
 Nursing Svc.

**William Hicok**  
 Engineering Svc.

**Joy Taylor**  
 Psychiatry Svc.

**Doris Tyrrell**  
 Research Svc.

**Purita Villegas**  
 Nursing Svc.

### 25 Years

**James Anderson**  
 Research Svc.

**Ronald Leisure**  
 Police Svc.

### 30 Years

**Carolyn Barnes**  
 Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

**Barbara Egbert**  
 Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

**Phillip Farber**  
 Engineering Svc.

**Paul Marino**  
 Engineering Svc.

**Arundhati Perakash**  
 Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

### 45 Years

**Robert Kato**  
 Fiscal Svc.

# CALENDAR OF TRAINING & EVENTS

EES=VA Employee Education System • HR=Human Resources • ORM=Office of Resolution Management • TQI=Total Quality Improvement • TBA=To be announced

DAY	DATE	SERVICE	TIME	PLACE	INFORMATION
Tuesday	8/6/02	HRMS	1-2:30pm	Palo Alto Building 6, Room C-269	Humor Your Stress with Jackie Bevins
Wednesday	8/14/02	Psychiatry	12-1pm	Menlo Park, Bldg. 324, Conf. Room E117	Anticonvulsants for the Treatment of Mania, with Scott Pollock, MD
Wednesday	8/21/02	Psychiatry	12-1pm	Menlo Park, Bldg. 324, Conf. Room E117	Unique Problems and Issues Facing Men Who Are Caregivers, with Dolores Gallagher-Thompson, PhD. and Joel Kaye, PhD.”
Wednesday	8/14/02	Psychiatry	12-1pm	Menlo Park, Bldg. 324, Conf. Room E117	Palliative Care Presentation Speaker TBA
Tuesday & Wednesday	8/27/02 8/28/02	HRMS	8:00-4:10pm	Palo Alto, Building 101, Auditorium	New Employee Orientation
Thursday	8/29/02	HRMS	8:30-12:30pm	Palo Alto, Building 6, Room C-269	MBTI-Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator with Jackie Bevins
Tuesday & Wednesday	9/24/02 9/25/02	HRMS	8:00-4:10pm	Palo Alto, Building 101, Auditorium	New Employee Orientation



## SATELITE BROADCASTS



Log onto our intranet site, [VAPAWEB](#), to find a schedule of upcoming satellite broadcasts.



# TONER CARTRIDGE RECYCLING AT THE VAPAHCS

Recycling one toner cartridge conserves the one to two pints of oil needed to manufacture a new cartridge. In only seven months the remanufactured toner cartridge industry conserves more oil than the Exxon Valdez spilled into Alaska's Prince William Sound in 1989!

#### Xerox Toner Cartridges:

- Call Dave Moura at x62242 for recycling used Xerox toner cartridges and for any other Xerox questions.

#### Toner Cartridges from Corporate Express:

- Most of the toner cartridges we purchase from Corporate Express are made from recycled materials
- Keep your used toner cartridges in their original box.
- Give them to the Corporate Express driver when he makes his next delivery.
- Or call Lito Millan at x64436 to arrange for pick up.

For questions, information or suggestions, please call John Kaay at x22674.

# You Make a Difference!

*Submitted by our veterans and their families. We welcome more contributions from LVD, Stockton, Modesto, San Jose, and Monterey.*

**Vickie Chang, R.N.** (PAD), Nursing Service, has been exceptional in taking the extra minutes to explain in layman's terms my treatment. She has provided top-notch skill and care in providing for my needs during my visit. She had a calming effect on us, answering every question, and providing knowledge and education to ease the senses and make a better decision. Thank you Vickie. You have made a valuable contribution in helping me recover.

I have been a client of VA San Jose Clinic for many years and I had the pleasure of meeting some wonderful healthcare providers in the Mental Health area. After group meetings, we come in contact with a truly wonderful individual in the travel department. **Ms. Gasling Sweeney** (San Jose Clinic), Business Office, is always there with a smile, yet is very professional in providing us service. Her willingness to prepare our travel vouchers and provide us with current veteran information makes us all feel like we are important and that someone in the VA HCS truly cares. There is no doubt that when you deal with Ms. Sweeney, she will provide for need in a cheerful and professional manner.

It's early to rise with **Barbara Cusseaux's** (PAD), Nursing Service, smiling eyes. Her up and at 'em early morning zest and humor makes it a pleasure to start the day. As important as a balanced breakfast, she hustles, without hassles, us out the door with good positive energy. No matter what happens in the day's events, it always has a great beginning.

**Arlene Armstrong** (PAD), Nursing Service, is such an excellent, reliable, efficient ward clerk. She went "above and beyond" in helping with the move of the Nursing station on Ward 2B1. She provided great assistance with coordinating the activities related to the move. Her positive, cheerful attitude made a significant impact on the staff and patients.

The Santa Cruz County Vet Center staff and I would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank You" to **Patricia McKeon, Ph.D.** (Monterey Clinic), Psychology Service, for her outstanding consultation services. We have not had a single critical incident at our Vet Center. This is quite an accomplishment, partly due to the expertise that Dr. McKeon imparts to our staff. It has been a pleasure working with Dr. McKeon and we have gained much from her expertise and knowledge. We look forward to another year of successful treatment planning, consultation, and referral with her guidance. A "Thank You" to Fiscal Service Staff for their outstanding support to our operation. Without fail, our staff can call Fiscal Service and receive prompt, and expedient service. **Brian Kelly** (PAD), Fiscal Service, has always been helpful. His attitude is always positive with a "Can Do" attitude. He returns calls promptly and always seems to have answers. He truly exemplifies positive customer service.

## National Therapeutic Recreation Weeks Observed

During July 15-26, 2002 Recreation Therapy Service sponsored special activities that included employee fitness and wellness gym equipment orientations, distribution of therapeutic recreation treatment information, video and highlights from the National Veterans Recreation Event the Golden Age Games, and therapeutic recreation bulletin boards with photos of patients and therapists in action.

The focus was on the importance of leisure and recreation for all people. Therapeutic Recreation uses treatment, education, and recreation services to help people with illnesses, disabilities and other conditions to develop and use their leisure in meaningful ways that enhances their health, functional abilities, independence and quality of life. Expanding people's knowledge and awareness of opportunities and ways to adapt activities to meet their specific needs is an eye opening experience. According to SCI patient Phil Reyes, "being exposed to recreation in the community and seeing how other patients handle themselves gave me the confidence to try some new things and take chances I would not otherwise have taken. I have been grateful for those opportunities to learn and gain greater independence doing things I enjoy."

National Therapeutic Recreation Week acknowledges the importance of recreation programs, leisure and treatment opportunities and services that are available for veterans and community members.

Here at VAPAHCS, Recreation Therapists provide daily therapeutic programs in long-term care, inpatient and outpatient Psychiatry, Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Services, National Center for PTSD, Spinal Cord Injury Center, Western Blind Rehabilitation, and the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Program.

Recreation Therapy Service also provides hospital wide programming for all federal holidays observed at VA along with numerous special events coordinated throughout the year. Recreation Therapy Service also facilitates patient's involvement in national recreational events such as the Golden Age Games, Winter Sports Clinic, National Veterans Wheelchair Games and Veteran's Creative Arts Festival. These events challenge veterans to improve themselves and help them achieve greater independence in the community. These National Programs, as well as the day to day interventions of the recreation therapist have a tremendous impact on patients functional abilities and quality of life. We salute their efforts on behalf of the veterans at VAPAHCS.

# August Word Search

A C C T P R N T S I S T E R F A  
M I L I M P R E S S I O N M O T Y  
H E R N P R H N T C Q U A N T Y  
P H O T P I C O L L A G E S C N  
N N N E S N S E T R C N E R E N  
E T M R E T F F E O C E N A O U  
I O L N C U O A I M E P E E S S  
S I I E C N M L O C N L O V R Y  
O U F T M A P P I C T U R E S R  
T F A C R C M P R C S I N G I N  
E N G O S S I E C F L A S H C O  
V A N H O S P Q R U P R O C S P  
I A B R I G H Q U A L I T Y C A  
P R O C E S S I N G S M Q U A L  
I T Y F I L F L I P R I N S C S

Find the following words in the letters above:

- |         |            |          |            |
|---------|------------|----------|------------|
| Accent  | Film       | Panorama | Processing |
| Cameras | Flash      | Photo    | Quality    |
| Collage | Impression | Pictures | Scanner    |
| Effects | Internet   | Print    |            |



is published monthly  
by and for employees of the  
VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

Submissions should be received by  
the 1st working day of the month to  
be included in upcoming issues.  
Due to space limitations, it is not  
possible to publish all submissions.

We welcome any comments,  
suggestions or story ideas  
you may have; please contact the  
Communications Officer (00A) at  
ext. 64888 or directly at  
650-858-3925.

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- Chuck Revell**
- Elba Soto**



Bob was too embarrassed to admit that his "workout" consisted of taking the elevator downstairs to buy a Pepsi and a bag of chips.

## Did You Know?

**Rod Norville**, a volunteer at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, has written a novel, *Moonshine Express*. Rod was in Silicon Valley top management before retiring early to study the craft of writing novels.

The story contains details from an accidental moonshiner encounter Rod had as a teenage serviceman stationed in the Southeast.