



Proud of our Veterans,
Proud of America!

THE epicenter

Newsletter of the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) • July 2003

National Therapeutic Recreation Week: July 13th - 19th

Recreation Therapy Services will mark this occasion with a variety of educational opportunities for veterans and VA employees to experience the benefits of Recreation Therapy interventions and some of the diverse programs Recreation Therapy Service provides.

The purpose of National Therapeutic Recreation Week is to increase awareness of Therapeutic Recreation Programs and Services, and to expand leisure and recreation opportunities for individuals with disabilities in hospitals and the local community.

Here at VAPAHCS, there are 28 Recreation Therapy Service staff who, as an integral part of the treatment teams, provide daily therapeutic programs in long-term care, sub-acute and inpatient/outpatient psychiatry. Specialized therapy services are provided on the inpatient and outpatient specialty programs such as Homeless Veteran Rehabilitation Program, National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Spinal Cord Injury Center, Traumatic Brain Injury, Women's Trauma Recovery Program, Western Blind

Rehabilitation Center and Alzheimer's Dementia program. Additional programs include aquatic and land-based fitness/wellness clinics. All efforts are made to increase the veteran's independence, functional abilities, improve quality of life and maintenance of physical health.

Recreation Therapists utilize a variety of holistic modalities and many are certified or specialize in areas of Creative Arts and Alternative Healing such as: music therapy, art therapy, drama therapy, aquatic therapy/exercise, intergenerational activities, animal assisted therapy, horticulture therapy, aromatherapy, jin shin jyutsu, self-help acupressure and yoga.



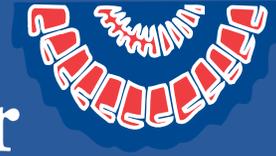
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A Word From Our Director



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

Combined Federal Campaign

It is my pleasure to introduce Lori Russo, Chairperson, and Lea Namba, Vice-Chairperson, for this year's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). I want to personally thank each of them for taking on this important project that benefits so many.

The CFC is the annual fund-raising drive conducted in the workplace each fall by federal employees including armed forces personnel and postal service employees. Employees of any federal agency are the donors and volunteers who make up CFC. In 1961, the CFC was established by Executive Order and is currently regulated through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Each year federal employees and military personnel raise millions of dollars through CFC that benefit thousands of non-profit charities. The official solicitation period will run for a six-week period during the months of September through December. Your contributions make possible a variety of health, human services, social, and environmental programs. Your gift can mean meals for hungry children, counseling for families in need, work on cures for diseases, comfort for the dying and better life and renewed hope for those across our community, throughout the country, and around the world.

Many federal employees have been the recipients of the services offered by the hundreds of charities in the Combined Federal Cam-

paign. During times of need, the value of these services can't be measured in dollars and cents. You never know when you or a family member may require assistance from a CFC agency. Supporting the CFC is one way to ensure that help is there when you need it.

To learn more about the 2003 CFC and events, log on to <http://www.cfc硅谷.org>, or to <http://www.opm.gov/cfc>. If you would like to be a member of the CFC Planning Committee, please contact us Ms. Russo at extension 66726 or Ms. Namba at extension 65008.

Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
Director



*Lori Russo, Chairperson (left), and Lea Namba, Vice-Chairperson,
for this year's Combined Federal Campaign*

A Message from Robert H. Roswell, M.D. VA Under Secretary For Health

I am writing to update you on one of the most important programs VA has undertaken this decade. Called CARES - it is a process designed to enable the veterans health care system to more effectively use its resources to deliver more care, to more veterans, in places where veterans need it most.

Make no mistake how important it is. VHA has more than 4,700 buildings and over 18,000 acres of land. But the very heart of VA is not in its infrastructure, it's in the veterans we serve. Some of the buildings and land VA owns are not well suited to veterans' health care needs. Many are underused or vacant, some are aging and in dire need of repair, others simply aren't where veterans need them.

In 1999, the General Accounting Office testified that VA was expending up to \$1 million a day on underused or vacant space - that is \$1 million a day that could be better spent providing health care services to veterans. They are not the only group looking to CARES for solutions. The Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, veterans service organizations, and other stakeholders are all looking to CARES to provide a framework for the future of VA health care that is fair, based on consistent data, and identifies not only areas of expansion, but also of opportunities to better use existing resources.

As a part of a multi-step process that started a year ago, 20 Networks recently submitted what are called draft Market Plans to me for thorough review. These draft market plans were the Networks' and facilities' recommendations for local changes and improvements, based on data that projected veteran population in the next two decades. It is now my responsibility to take these plans and incorporate them into the Draft National CARES Plan.

The current review process was built into the CARES planning cycle as a deliberate step to assure a national perspective and produce a consistent, systematic response, a sharing of best practices and good solutions, and equity and balance in the final report. Your Network plans are now undergoing this review by the CARES program office, national veterans service organizations, DoD representatives, teams made up of headquarters and field employees, and a special Clinical Work Group.

All of these groups are reporting to me on their progress. Over the course of these reviews, we often went back to the Networks to request more in-depth information. In some cases, we asked that additional options be considered. This was done to ensure not only that Network Market Plans meet all required CARES criteria, but also that, in aggregate, they describe the best overall national program to serve veterans for the future of the VA health care system.

This step was originally scheduled to take six weeks. Over the course of the review, we learned that it would take longer to produce a comprehensive national review of the proposed VISN CARES plans.

Secretary Principi agrees. In a recent memo to me, he wrote, "it is clear to me that the current CARES timetable does not allot sufficient time for the national-level review and adjustments you must make to the VISN plans before they are passed on the CARES Commission for their review. I recognize that I insisted on a very tight schedule for every point in the process. But after evaluating our progress, I believe it is more important that your recommendations to me to be informed by your assessment of opportunities...rather than rigid adherence to the schedule."

Though CARES has encountered this delay, it continues to move forward with full vigor. Last month, I asked Network Directors for more information that I needed to make the best decisions possible to accomplish the overriding goal of CARES - providing the best future health care possible for veterans across the nation.

As we continue with this first review of CARES from a national perspective, you may hear rumors and speculation. That is a natural reaction to potential change. However, I encourage you to engage in the process rather than to broaden the speculation. Keep informed through local and national channels, ask questions, speak to your colleagues, visit the CARES web site at www.va.gov/CARES, and know that this National review has one clear charge, to create a brighter future for VA health care by making better use of resources to provide more effective health care for our nation's veterans.

This CARES review is still an interim step. After I submit the draft National CARES plan to the Secretary, it will be thoroughly vetted through the CARES Commission and then presented to the Secretary for final decision.

Change is never easy, but is often necessary to produce healthy improvements. In places where change is recommended, I commit to you that we will do everything possible to make future transitions as painless as possible for you, our employees, and that no veteran who depends on us will go without health care.

It is my duty to produce a national plan that describes the brightest future for VA health care. We owe that to our veterans.

Sincerely yours,

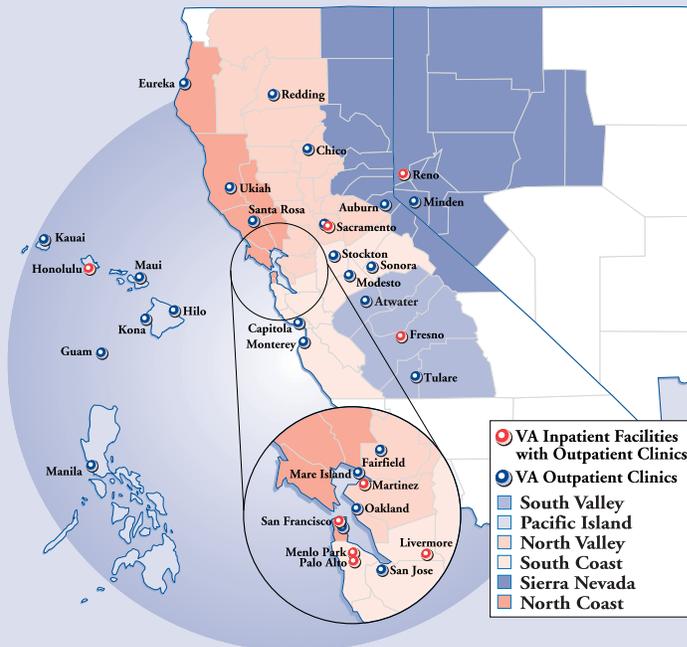
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.

What's VISN 21?

The VA Sierra Pacific Network is one of 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks in the Veterans Health Administration. It serves 1.13 million veterans residing in northern and central California, northern Nevada, Hawaii, the Philippines, and several Pacific Islands including Guam and American Samoa. The seven VA medical centers/health systems listed below manage a total of thirty-five care sites: VA Central California Health Care System (Fresno); VA Medical and Regional Office, Honolulu; VA Regional Office/Outpatient Clinic, Manila; VA Northern California Health Care System; VA Palo Alto Health Care System; VA San Francisco Medical Center; and VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System (Reno). More than 260,000 veterans residing in the Network have enrolled in the system. In FY01, the Network provided care to more than 167,000 veterans with an operating budget of \$902 million. The Network operates 653 hospital beds, 802 nursing home beds, 100 domiciliary beds and 89 Psychiatric Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program beds. Nearly 1.9 million outpatient visits are provided each year.

VISN 21 Facts

- 1.13 million veterans reside in northern and central California, northern Nevada, Hawaii, the Philippines, and several Pacific Islands including Guam and American Samoa.
- More than 298,000 veterans were enrolled during FY02.
- FY03 Budget is \$1.1 billion.
- 11 VHA Clinical Programs of Excellence –
6 at VA Palo Alto Health Care System; 5 at San Francisco VAMC.



VISN 21 Staff

Robert L. Wiebe, M.D.
Network Director

John Sisty
Acting Operations Officer

Shelly Fine
Chief Financial Officer

Judy Daley, RN
Quality Management Officer

Jeff Shyshka
Chief Information Officer

Doss Miller
Chief Logistics Officer

Richard Crowe
Contract Manager

Vernon Chong, M.D.
Special Asst. to the Network Director

Laura Halterman
OSH Program Manager

Jan Carmichael, Pharm. D.
Pharmacy Benefits Manager

Janelle Cummings
Prosthetics Representative

Jane Dutton Morris
Compliance Specialist

Diana Struski
Public Affairs Specialist

Peggy Ashcraft
Data Analyst

Judy Ingebritson
Staff Assistant

Linda Pierce
Staff Assistant

Lori Cry
Program Analyst

Shelly Jenkins
Budget Analyst

Ti Melson
Program Assistant

Martie Donovan
Program Assistant

EMPLOYEE NEWS

New Employees

Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.
Donald R. Fink

Human Resources Mgmt. Svc.
Liberty O. Mateo

Nursing Svc.
Martin N. Chavez
Josephine S. Gapasin
Ken Kehoe
Denise L. King
Melissa Lapierre
Alice S. Narvaez
Carolina Perez
Diem Pham
Richelle B. Reyes
Marilyn Rose

Nursing Svc. (cont'd)
Liberty Santos
Cherina Tinio
Ellen Williams

Nutrition & Food Svc.
Doyle Burton
Insuk Durham

Pharmacy Svc.
Patricia Strong

Physical Medicine & Rehab.
Janice K. Chow

Radiology Svc.
Ben J. Romanowski

Research Svc.
Aaron L. Dalton
S. Dzieszietnik
Pom Su

Social Work Svc.
Katherine Scholten
Phyllis Tempo

Ward Administration Svc.
Peter W. Svertshkov

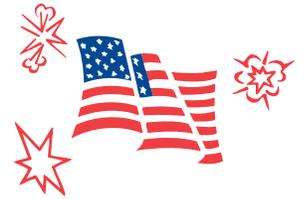
Retirees

Ankin Chandrasekaran (8)
Surgical Svc.

Rosemary Rydin (18)
Nursing Svc.

William Stewart III (34)
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.

(Years of service are indicated in parentheses.)



Employee Service Awards

10 Years

Paul Barnett
Research Svc.

Tamei Chan
Nutrition & Food Svc.

Jane Custodio
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

Keith Humphreys
Research Svc.

Marcus Nevarez
Radiology Svc.

15 Years

Rosendo Amador
Vet Center

Susan Bass
Social Work Svc.

Penny Brennan
Research Svc.

Maria Bucmaniuk
Vet Center

Vernell Gardner
Nursing Svc.

Catanya Jones
Nursing Svc.

Ellis Joseph
Nursing Svc.

Freda Lutz
Nursing Svc.

Terri Monisteri
Psychiatry Svc.

Huong Nguyen
Nursing Svc.

Alicia Shimabuku
Nursing Svc.

George Sims
Surgical Svc.

Patricia Skowron
Nursing Svc.

Dorothy Smith
Nutrition & Food Svc.

Jocelyn Thomas
Nursing Svc.

20 Years

Max Calderon
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.

Loutricia Coulter
Business Office

Cary Davis
Nursing Svc.

William Faustman
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

Gayle Fernandez
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
Director's Office

Valerie Greely
Business Office

Noelle Hall
Director's Office

Richard Rodriguez
Engineering Svc.

Vanita Westbrook
Environmental Mgmt. Svc.

Thelma Ellis
Medical Svc.

25 Years

Karen Bratcher
Nursing Svc.

Orville Crumpton
Police Svc.

Juan Hernandez
Nursing Svc.

30 Years

Peggy McKinney
Medical Svc.

35 Years

Elizabeth Calhoon
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

Carol Diamanti
Spinal Cord Injury Svc.

Charles Pullen
Nursing Svc.

Kay Troiani
Nutrition & Food Svc.

(continued from page 1)

National Therapeutic Recreation Week



RT intern Charles DaSilva adapting musical instrument with Tom Holstein in Musical Jam session.

How does Recreation Therapy participate on a NATIONAL level?

Recreation Therapy also provides the opportunity for patients to participate in national events such as the Golden Age Games, Winter Sports Clinic, National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Bowler's Veterans Link, Tournaments and National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

What additional programs or facilities are on campus for staff and veterans?

Veterans or VA employees can utilize the following services:

- Golf Course
- Bowling Alley
- Tennis Courts
- Therapeutic Pool
- Billiards Room
- Fitness/Wellness Services
- Softball League
- Weight Room
- Open Gym

What about Special Events and Holidays?

Recreation Therapy Service professionals are responsible for planning, coordinating, and facilitating events on individual units, community based treatment and hospital-wide special events, celebrations, and on-going weekly social events.

Did you know?

Recreation Therapy treatment utilizes a patient's existing skills and interests as well as facilitates the establishment of new skills for daily living and community functioning!

Benefits and Outcomes of RT

- Improved physical conditioning
- Improved cognitive functioning
- Reduced reliance on healthcare systems
- Reduced complications related to secondary illness
- Decreased manifestation of stress and depression
- Enhanced communication, decision making and social abilities
- Improved familial coping
- Heightened self-esteem and self-confidence
- Transitional skills for successful community re-entry

How do you personally benefit from RT?

A few of our veterans had this to say...

"I get peace of mind and a sense of well being. Interacting with others during outings keeps you alive. Pool therapy helps stimulate my body and mind. Recreation Therapy helps me look forward to another day . . . in other words, it gives me hope."

– Troy Maxey

". . . I like the outings because it gets me away from the facilities, I learn something new, and they are enjoyable." . . . "I get to go places that I would not have been able to, if I did not have the assistance from Recreation Therapy . . . it makes me feel important, and I forget I have a condition or disability."

– Rick Todd



Recreation Therapist Sausha Polentz, CTRS with RT intern Charles DaSilva doing air mat and massage therapy with NHCU patient Tom Sullivan.

Fun in the Sun in San Jose!



The 3rd annual VA Palo Alto Health Care System Golf Tournament took place Friday, May 30th at the San Jose Municipal Golf Course. Sixty players made up of employees, volunteers and friends took part in a 4-person scramble format to determine this year's winner. There were many tales of *if this putt would have fallen* or *if that tree wasn't there*, but all in all it was a great day for everyone.

This year's first place team made up of Bill Hollingsworth, Brad Arnold, Scott Arnold and Al Williams shot an amazing 10 under par. The teams of Tito Amasol, Rino Entac, Tom Kane, Rickie Rivers and Tom Mazurczak, Virginia Jackson, Mike Tuttle and Ramon Mendoza tied for second place with a respectable score of six under par. The Long Drive and closest to the pin (3 feet 6 inches) was won by Jerry Cole. A special award went to Richard Peardon, James Spinks and John and Deborah Sisty for having the most fun and hitting the ball the most!

The success of the tournament could not have been made possible without the support of Agbayani Construction Company, Rossitar Relocation Service Xerox Office Supplies, PHS Professional Hospital Supplies, Hillrom Specialty Beds, Homeless Veterans Emergency Housing, OMNI Cell. Special acknowledgement goes to the Frank Schliefer of the VA Palo Alto Employees Association along with James Grissett for organizing the tournament.

Blood Drive at Palo Alto Division

VA Palo Alto Health Care System will be hosting a Blood Drive with the Stanford Blood Center on Friday, July 11, 2003, from 09:00am to 1:00pm in the Auditorium of Building 101 at the Palo Alto Division. To schedule an appointment please call Julie Harper at (650) 617-2665 / x22212 or e-mail Julie.harper@med.va.gov please have a 1st and 2nd choice available. Appointments are scheduled in 15 minutes increments. If you have any medical questions please call (650) 725-9968.

Since each blood donation is split up into its many different collection parts (red cells, white cells, plasma, platelets, and cryo-precipitate), each person who donates can help save 3 to 4 different lives! It takes approximately 45 minutes to an hour for the complete donation process. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments have first priority. Refreshments (cookies, ice cream, juice, and pretzels) will be available for all donors. All participants will get a free total, cholesterol level screening.

Stanford Blood Center provides blood and blood products for many Peninsula and South Bay Hospitals, including VAPAHCS and its own Stanford Hospital and Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital.

Requirements for Donating

- Must be between 17 - 74 years of age
- Must weigh at least 110 pounds
- Must be feeling well and healthy
- Allergies and allergy medication are OK
- Must be well hydrated- Drink plenty of fluids
- Must have eaten within 4 hours prior to donating
- Must bring a photo ID at the time of registration

Voluntary Service Awards!



You Make a Difference!

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

Gerry Esguerra, Nursing Assistant-Nursing Service, 4C- PAD, is a good example of a Nursing Assistant that this hospital should be proud of. Since my stay here on 4C, he made my stay comfortable. He uplifted my spirit and boosted my morale. I noticed his patience dealing with me and the other patients. He is friendly to everybody, patients and co-workers.

I want to thank all of the staff on **90-IB, VA Livermore & 324B4-Nursing Home-1D, VA Menlo Park**, who cared for my husband, a WWII veteran, while he was in your care during the last couple of weeks of his life. I'll miss him very much, but I realize he's not suffering anymore. His last day I was able to be there with him. He knew my voice and he knew I was there with him. Thank you again for taking care of "My Honey."

It is easy to criticize and/or think negative things about a person. However, how about the times when you get good service? Too often in today's world nothing is ever said or done. This is a time when I received good, no excellent service from **Janice Robinson, Patient Services Assistant, Business Office (PAD)**. I came into the hospital to register for the first time. I was directed to Janice and told she would take care of me. She did! Here is a woman with people such as myself constantly coming up to her for information. The phone was constantly ringing and she had her other work to do as well. In spite of this she was smiling, helpful to us all, and obviously getting her work done. We need more people like Janice in our world. Please tell her I wrote. Thanks!

I have been treated with kindness as well as concern by every person I've come in contact with: everyone from the shuttle **bus driver, custodian, receptionist, and all the wonderful technical staff, and doctors**. I have had two exams by **Dr. Johnny Chin, Sonora Clinic, Medical Service**. Your VA group of people have my vote for being better than any treatment I've ever received.

I have recently come to VA Palo Alto with a veteran friend. I want to commend you on the hospital operation and sense of immediacy and professionalism we met with from your staff. They went right to work on my friend's health problems. The telephone staff, **Mary Crandles, Amy Crickmer, R.N., and Laurie Doerfler, R.N.**, went out of their way to help us, as did **Eunice Warner and Naoma Zanetti. Michelle Ledgister**, the compliance officer, was also very compassionate and sincerely helpful to us, as was the **pharmacist** who answered our many medical questions. Our experience was such a wonderful surprise in this day of big business healthcare.

I would like to commend **Dr. Irina Melnik, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service (PAD)** for her attention, caring, and promptness in addressing my concern. I would also like to commend and thank the **nurses and the therapist on Ward 7D (PAD)**. Thanks to their professionalism, caring, and generally the over-all treatment that was given to me, I never once felt belittled. Keep up the wonderful work and thanks again.

Provider of Choice

Improving Inpatient Satisfaction

In 2000, VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) joined in a statewide project called, Patient's Evaluation of Performance in California (PEP-C I), to evaluate inpatient satisfaction. In 2002, we resurveyed patients with PEP-C II. Survey results were released to the public at the end of June. We are pleased to note that our inpatient overall quality rated better than it did on PEP-C I and national benchmarks.

We improved our scores in the following areas:

- courtesy of nurses and admission staff
- availability of nurses
- amount of information given to families
- the number of minutes it took to get help after pressing a call button
- the number of minutes it took to get pain medication

Building on our success, after our 2002 survey, we identified the following new areas to focus on:

1. Staff development related to patient expectations.
2. A commitment to answering patient questions. On admission and at least once per shift nursing staff let patients know their questions are important. An easy to use form is given to patients

so that they (or family members) can jot down those questions. Patients are encouraged to ask doctors their important questions during rounds.

3. Patients are told we intend to support them emotionally. Being hospitalized is a difficult experience and staff are letting patients know how they can help.
4. After discharge, Public Health Nurses are contacting patients at home to arrange for home health services. These phone calls allow us to reinforce discharge instructions and give patients another opportunity to ask questions they may not have thought about earlier. Additionally it sends the message that we care and are interested in how they're doing even after they leave the hospital. We plan to expand these phone calls to include all patients discharged from an acute unit.

In the current PEP-C II survey, patients' overwhelmingly recommended care at VAPAHCS. They ranked our overall rate of care as 91.3% satisfaction. We are proud of these results, and want to continue to improve patient satisfaction and provide excellence in patient care. We want to continue to be the veteran's provider of choice.

July Word Search



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

Find the following words in the letters above:

America
Beach
Brave
DOD
Fireworks

Flag
Heat
Independence
Loyal
Parents

Parks
Recreation
Splash
Veterans
Wheelchair



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

Last year was bad enough, Dad, but did we have to dress up
as cloves of garlic for the Garlic Festival again this year?
What could possibly be worse than this?!

I think I have to
go to the bathroom.



K Morrow 2003

**Don't forget! The Gilroy Garlic Festival is
July 25, 26, & 27, 2003!**