



Proud of our Veterans,
Proud of America!

THE epicenter

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

VA Nurse Elected

New Vice President of San Mateo County Commission on Disabilities



Noreen Sommer, RN, MSN, a Community Health Nurse working at the Spinal Cord Injury Center, was appointed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to the San Mateo County Commission on Disabilities in 2001 and was elected to serve as Vice President of the Commission in July 2002.

The Commission on Disabilities, an advisor to the Board of Supervisors, is a

coalition of individuals with disabilities, service providers, and other interested people representing the larger disabled community working together to create opportunities and coordinate resources that promote full participation and integration of people with disabilities in the community. It was established

on September 10, 1991 to represent the estimated 15% of residents living in San Mateo County with developmental, physical, mental, sensory and other disabilities, as well as the community at large.

Mrs. Sommer reports that her service on the Commission “Is an honor and a wonderful opportunity to learn a great deal about community resources for people with disabilities while making a contribution to my community”. It is also an opportunity to share with the community the great work done here at VAPAHCS for veterans with physical, mental, sensory and other disabilities.

Mrs. Sommer has found that one of the bonuses has been meeting veterans who have been involved with some of VAPAHCS programs who are now contributing to the community by serving on committees that address issues of access for services in San Mateo and the State of California.

The Commission has developed a web site www.smco-cod.org, which contains information that may be of interest to patients, families and health care providers.

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A Word From Our Director



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

The VA lost a great friend recently. On August 15, 2002, former Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown died after a long battle with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease). For those of you who may not have known or met him, he was a man

deeply committed to veterans' issues. He also let everyone know that he was the "Secretary *for* Veterans Affairs" not "*of* Veterans Affairs."

Mr. Brown was reappointed by President Clinton on December 20, 1996, to a second four-year term as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a position he had held from January 22, 1993. Under Mr. Brown's leadership, VA expanded benefits for veterans who were former prisoners of war or exposed to Agent Orange, radiation or mustard gas. He also expanded treatment services to those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Mr. Brown directed VA to undertake an aggressive research initiative to determine the causes of the illnesses of Persian Gulf War veterans. He successfully worked for the enactment of laws authorizing VA to pay compensation for these veterans' undiagnosed illnesses and to provide them with priority healthcare for illnesses they may have incurred as a result of Gulf service.

Mr. Brown convened the first national summit on homeless veterans. Under his leadership, VA began awarding grants to groups that aid the homeless and added homeless programs at medical centers. He expanded services to women veterans, including counseling for sexual trauma suffered in the military, new health centers with specialized treatment capabilities, and more full-time coordinators for women's care at VA medical centers. He oversaw a major reorganization of the VA healthcare system that decentralized its management and made it more patient-focused. Mr. Brown continued to press for changes to make the VA medical system competitive in a changing healthcare environment. His priorities were to maintain the VA system as an independent provider, to broaden veterans' access to the system and to offer a continuum of comprehensive care.

Mr. Brown believed VA should be a provider of top quality service to the nation's veterans. To reduce a backlog of veterans' benefit claims, Mr. Brown formed a task force, whose recommended changes have led to improved technology, redesigned work processes and more staff training. He also ordered training for all VA employees as part of his campaign of "Putting Veterans First."

Mr. Brown deeply cared about veterans. His every action as Secretary demonstrated his passion for improving veterans' lives and honoring their service to their country. The VA lost a staunch advocate and a great man, but his legacy will endure.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Elizabeth J. Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
Director



CAPITAL ASSET REALIGNMENT FOR ENHANCED SERVICES

CARES Commercials To have on the tip of your tongue

- C** Communicate and collaborate - Comments from stakeholders are welcome and encouraged throughout the CARES Process.
- A** Analyze - The CARES process will be data driven. During the CARES process, we will analyze where veterans are going to be living and what their health care needs will be.
- R** Realign - CARES will help realign our facilities and services to continue to bring VA's health care system into the 21st century and to meet the demand for VA health care services effectively and efficiently during the next 20 years.
- E** Enhance quality, access, services - CARES is intended to enhance the quality, access and efficiency of services provided to our veterans.
- S** Shift care where most needed - CARES will enable us to plan for providing high-quality care to more veterans in more accessible locations.

New Secretary to the Director Named!



Naoma Zanetti has been selected as the Secretary to the Director for the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. Naoma comes to us from Hewlett Packard, Mayfield Site, Mountain View, CA where she served as the Executive Assistant to the World Wide Marketing - Customer Service Manager.

Naoma began her career in 1970 with Wemco, Division of Envirotech in Sacramento, CA as a blue print operator in the Engineering Department. During her 23 year career with Wemco, she work in several different positions; blue print operator, inventory clerk II, cost accounting clerk II, accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, financial accounting, invoicing, executive assistant and Production Control Coordinator II. In 1993 Naoma left Wemco to relocate with her husband to San Jose where she spent 2 years with Combs and Greenley Court Reporters as their San Jose Office Manager and then in San Francisco scheduling the attorney based calendar coordinating deposition sites nation wide. Then in 1996 she was fortunate enough to land a job with Hewlett Packard as an Executive Assistant ending that dreaded commute between San Jose and San Francisco.

Naoma was with Hewlett Packard from 1996 thru July 26, 2002, when again another opportunity opened up - On July 29th, 2002, the VA Palo Alto Health Care System select her as Secretary to the Director. Naoma is excited to work for VA and looks forward to many exciting and rewarding years at VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

Naoma lives in Gilroy, Garlic Capital of the World, with her husband of 35 years (and counting) and their two, very spoiled, Bassett hounds Scotch and Brandi. Her hobbies include camping, walking, reading, arts and crafts, woodworking, gardening and cooking.

Ann Thraikill Receives Secretary's Hands and Heart Award



Ann Thraikill, Women's Veterans Coordinator & Program Manager and Nurse Practitioner was selected the 2001 Secretary's Hands and Heart Award recipient. This award honors an employee at each Veterans Health Administration facility who has demonstrated particular dedication and compassion in the delivery of patient care.

Ann has been the woman veterans coordinator at this facility since 1988, and full time Coordinator and program manager since 1992. During this period she has developed the program and increased the services provided to women veterans at all of our sites, in addition to recruiting women veterans of all ages to the program. She has been a huge resource to other providers in addition to being always available to the women who have questions or are in need of care of women's health services. She is chair of the women's Health and Advisory Committee since 1989, which is a multidiscipline committee of staff members who work to help make the care that we offer to women's the very best available anywhere. She continues to be involved locally with the National Organization of VA, as well as nationally with The American Nurses Association and Advanced practice Nurses, but is her everyday work with the women veterans that won her this award and recognition from the VA Secretary. Women look to her as being very knowledgeable in women's health issues as well as the person to go to for help in accessing the system. Ann continues to raise awareness of the needs and rights of the women veterans that she cares for, while at the same time offers them a listening ear and a caring heart.

EMPLOYEE NEWS

New Employees

Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.
Anthony W. Tipton

Chaplain Svc.
David Bar

Director's Office
Naoma M. Zanetti

Environmental Mgmt. Svc.
Donald L. Brazier
Steven K. Butt
John T. Guerrero
Edward E. Jones
Andrew Saucedo

Medical Svc.
David Buckeridge
Maria Dans
Annette Geisler
William Lyons
Jayant Nath
Susan Price
Monique Vance
Rios Ernesto Zataran

Nursing Svc.
Angel Aligada
Mina Askari
Ruth V. Barriatos
Susan Carbonell
Luzviminda Castro
Ana R. Cervantes
Susan Cordiero
Gwendolyn Goods
Corazon Gosom
Kay S. Jobe
Neal Mehta
Richard Rumohr
Vanassa Sanders
Rhodora Tadeo
Lilibeth Zerna

Nutrition & Food Svc.
Henry B. Boulton
Elena Holbea
Helen Young

Pathology & Laboratory Svc.
Betty J. Branson

Pharmacy Svc.
Lori Koopman
Eunice Tam
Olga Vrabel

Physical Medicine & Rehab.
Diana J. Saw

Police Svc.
Orville Crumpton
Samantha Ross

Research Svc.
Terence R. Dela Cruz
Michael P. Frese
Gina F. Grace
Susan M. Grossman
Robyn N. Lewis
Lisa L. Liu
Jared D. Minkel
Sandra J. Shefelbine

Retirees

Engineering Svc.
Donald Seagraves (33)

Nursing Svc.
Jeanne Kempainen (16)
Harold Pounds (21)
Shirlee Smith (16)
W. Jane Sturm (6)

Psychology Svc.
Pat Moreno (25)

Years in service are indicated in parentheses.

Employee Service Awards

10 Years

Gregory Brooks
Nursing Svc.
Christine Dixon
Nursing Svc.
Joann Dourousseau
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.
Michael Embry
Dental Svc.
Jon Fuller
Medical Svc.
Mason Hall
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.
Alvin Ignacio
Nursing Svc.
Rukhsana Khan
Psychiatry Svc.
Suzanne Kum
Physical Medicine & Rehab. Svc.
Misao Kusuda
Psychiatry Svc.
Gina Oda
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.
Douglas Rait
Psychology Svc.
Rodolfo Reyes
Nursing Svc.
Rita Salamanca
Medical Svc.
Imelda Sanidad
Nursing Svc.

Jeanne Schillaci
Psychology Svc.

Kathleen Schutte
Research Svc.

Edward Simpson
Environmental Mgmt. Svc.

Justina Valdez
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

15 Years

Maribeth Antonio
Nursing Svc.
Betty Bell
Spinal Cord Injury Svc.
Zarda Bernal
Nursing Svc.
Robert Deloach
Nursing Svc.
Alejandra Foronda
Nursing Svc.
Mary Gaines
Business Office
Ludivina Isaac
Nursing Svc.
Roosevelt Keyes
Nursing Svc.
Cherri Leake
Nutrition & Food Svc.
Charles Luttrell
Nursing Svc.
Marcia Miller
Radiology Svc.

Joanne McDay
Chief of Staff

Denise Renfro
Nursing Svc.

Laurel Schott
Nursing Svc.

Lina Serrano
Environmental Mgmt. Svc.

Jan Shriner
Surgical Svc.

Christine Timko
Research Svc.

20 Years

Edward Beggs
Nursing Svc.
Gary Hartz
Psychology Svc.
Elena Krivy
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.
Donna Lasu
Audiology & Speech Pathology
Virginia Lee
Pharmacy Svc.
Barbara Odum
Environmental Mgmt. Svc.
Lillie Pugh
Nutrition & Food Svc.
Fannie Thomas
Nursing Svc.
Antonette Zeiss
Psychology Svc.

25 Years

Nina Bellatorre
Surgical Svc.
Joy Burgar
Human Resources Svc.
John Ford
Research Svc.
Larry Lowery
Engineering Svc.
Harriett Norte
Research Svc.
Precilla Oandasan
Nursing Svc.
Charles Williams
Pathology & Laboratory Svc.

30 Years

Walter Bober
Social Work Svc.
Gregory Goodrich
Psychology Svc.

35 Years

M.D. Ichiyamanomikiyo
Nursing Svc.
Felix Arcayan
Acquisition & Materiel Mgmt.

40 Years

Lois Brockhoff
Psychology Svc.

Study Tips: How Parents Can Help Their Children

Parents have an important role in their children's education. If families don't provide the necessary support and resources that their children need to increase their chances of succeeding in school, their children are placed at increased risk for school failure (Macoby, 1992). Parents should participate in their children's schools, encourage their children at home, and instill in them a love of learning. The following study tips may help parents to develop good habits in their children, and ease the stress that can accompany school projects and exams.

Time Management

The first and most important tip is for parents to develop a schedule for themselves and their children. Include in the schedule sleep time, play time, extracurricular activity time, meal time, study time, etc. Don't be afraid to change the schedule if necessary. Write down important events (tests, project due dates, family trips) on a calendar, and schedule time for these events. Parents should schedule time to check their children's homework each night.

Study Environment

Parents should provide a good study place for their children, free from distraction, and with the tools needed for study. All books, paper,

pencils, etc. should be in place to avoid wasting time looking for these items. Children should always use this same place for their studying.

When to Study

Children should study when they are rested and free from distraction. Late night "cramming" is not recommended.

Break Times

Break times are a necessary part of studying. Experts suggest that college students should study in 45-minute periods, with 15-minute breaks. Younger children may require shorter study periods.

Know the Teacher

Parents should meet with their children's teachers, and know the teachers' expectations. Parents can relate these expectations to their children as they review the homework.

Hopefully, these tips will aid parents and their children as another school year gets underway.



It took many years for Bob to get over being stuck in his daughter's school desk at "Back-To-School Night."

Increase Child Safety

Parents can take many steps to address the many threats to child safety in schools, at home, and in the community. Examples of such steps include:

- Talk with children early and regularly about gangs, drugs, weapons, school and community safety, and related concerns.
- When you talk with children, BE HONEST! Violence and related trauma issues are serious, but more damage can be done by minimizing or exaggerating points than by simply providing children with facts and telling the truth.
- Do NOT assume that your child knows even the "basic" facts about safety and other risks. Kids absorb a lot of information and, unfortunately, much of it is inaccurate or from questionable sources. Let your child get all of the information - the correct information - from you as the parent. And give it to them in a non-threatening and non-embarrassing time, place, and manner. Perhaps then your child will be more willing to come to you with other questions and problems later on!
- Eliminate access to weapons by youth.
- Be aware of and do not permit gang identifiers.
- Provide order, structure, and consistent discipline in the home.
- Seek professional assistance when needed and in a timely manner. Do NOT wait until a problem gets out of control and then look for professional help!

Best Practices at VAPAHCS!!

Despite major advances in the field, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease remains the number one killer of American men and women. Type 2 diabetes, along with hypertension, obesity and cholesterol abnormalities (lipid abnormalities) are the major risk factors for this. In the population of people with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), there appears to be an even higher incidence of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, often occurring much earlier than in the population at large.

To address this problem the SCI Diabetes/Heart Clinic was started as an attempt to improve the cardiovascular survival of people with SCI. The Clinic incorporates cutting edge information on treatment of cardiovascular risk factors and attempts to prevent the complications of type 2 diabetes. It incorporates comprehensive training, with respect to diet and exercise, in addition to the best pharmacological therapy currently available, with patients as active partners in their health care management. Dr. Inder Perakash, Director of the Spinal Cord Injury program states, "We started a special dedicated Diabetic clinic for SCI patient because the incidence of type 2

is higher in SCI patients. It is now well appreciated that type 2 diabetes is due to insulin resistance and patients with paralyzed muscles are more prone to develop insulin resistance. Of course there are also other factors, which contribute to insulin resistance such as obesity, excessive consumption of high caloric food and also the genetic predisposition with a family history of diabetes in parents. Exercise, weight reduction, and certain drugs can help control or even delay occurrence of diabetes and prevent severe cardiovascular complications such as heart attack blindness and renal failure."

The SCI Diabetes/Heart Clinic is scheduled for Wednesdays in the SCI Outpatient Clinic in Building 7. To schedule an appointment, please call Margaret Haze, CRRN, CDE at (650) 493-5000 x67198. A Board Certified Endocrinologist and a dedicated Certified Diabetes Educator see patients. Treatment is individualized and appropriate referrals are made to Podiatry, Ophthalmology, and Cardiology Clinics as indicated. The goal of the Clinic is to prevent complications while maintaining the best possible quality of life.

Livermore Division Hosts 2nd Annual Family Day BBQ

The weather was sunny and hot with just the hint of a breeze flowing through the valley. It was a perfect day for a picnic. At least that's what over 350 family members of the current residents at the Nursing Home Care Unit and Sub-acute Unit thought. The outdoor celebration was to run from 11 to 2 p.m., but many families started arriving by 10 a.m. and some stayed well past 3 p.m. The second annual event hosted by members of the interdisciplinary care teams and the nursing staff from NH1, NH2, and Ward 5, as well as members of Voluntary Service and its dedicated volunteers, treated the guests to a real outdoor BBQ lunch consisting of BBQ chicken, Polish sausage, hamburgers, salad, baked beans, coleslaw, tossed salad and homemade potato salad personally made by volunteer Virginia Mello. Staff provided sno-cones and cotton candy to enhance the carnival atmosphere. One of the families donated 23 seedless watermelons to share with everyone and another family brought in 5 sheet cakes so all could celebrate the birthday of their inpatient Veteran.

Livermore Boy Scout Troops came early to wash down and decorate the outdoor tables, many of which had been brought over from Menlo Park by the VAPAHCS Move

Team. The Livermore Elks Club also donated tables for use. The Daughters of the American Revolution provided all of the paper products and served the food buffet. The local AMVETS chapter donated \$2500 for food and kids entertainment and Groth Brothers, Livermore Chevrolet Dealership, sent over their large grills for use in cooking. The Stockton Elks and Russ Fox of the American Legion donated 27 cases of soda and bottled water.



Staff members escorted most of the patients outside for the event, and volunteers made up special trays for those bed bound veterans who could not go outside. Environmental Management Service was on hand and did a great job with the supplying and emptying of extra garbage cans and general clean up afterwards. There certainly was something for everyone with the entertainment provided by a three piece band, a clown, rumored to be the mother of Recreation Therapy Assistant Renee Chastain, an inflatable water slide and kids jumping house and door prizes galore. Yes, many went home tired that day, but all

went home happy for the chance to have a day in the country with their loved ones.

Environmental Care Week

Service to VAPAHCS

Environmental Management Service within the Palo Alto VA has total responsibility for sanitation, linen & laundry, pest control, recycling, waste management and the Patient Assistance Program.

Our primary goal is to provide the best quality service to our veterans, staff and visitors ensuring that their needs are met.

History of Environmental Management Service

Environmental Management Service, formerly Building Management, was created in 1954 by VA to consolidate sanitation functions that were performed by employees in other disciplines (e.g., Nursing, Registrar, Engineering and Supply) allowing those employees to focus on their primary responsibilities and to create more consistent, efficient and effective programs.

Over the next 48 years Environmental Management Service assumed responsibilities that were related to its core competencies and, in reaction to increasing environmental regulation, to include linen and uniforms, patient assistance, interior design, pest control, hazardous materials, waste and recycling and environmental leadership.

Luncheon

A luncheon is planned along with several special theme events to recognize the EMS employees. The Environmental Care Week celebration was developed by the following committee members: Charlotte Robinson, Francis Maynard, Kim Monlux, Sharon Tate, Jonnie Davis, Micheal Ferguson, Tammy Elbert, Nina Nunally and Chairperson Carlina Coulter.



Livermore Staff



Menlo Park Staff



Office Staff



Palo Alto Staff

You Make a Difference!

(We welcome more contributions from LVD, Stockton, Modesto, San Jose, and Monterey.)

I was in the hospital and had surgery performed. I want to thank **Dr. Sheila Coogan** (PAD), Surgical Service, **Phyllis McGrath**, C.N.S. (PAD), Nursing Service and everyone connected with my stay. They are top of the line as far as I'm concerned. The care was awesome. My stay was comfortable and hopefully very rewarding when the re-coup time is over.

Gerry Esguerra, Nursing Assistant (PAD), Nursing Service, is a good example of a nursing assistant this hospital should be proud of. Since my stay here at the 4C Ward, he made my stay comfortable. He uplifted my spirit and boosted my morale. Gerry is always there to help me for whatever I need. I notice his patience dealing with me and the other patients. He is so friendly to everybody, patients and fellow co-workers. **Amelita Martin**, Nursing Assistant (PAD), Nursing Service, is a good worker. She's always there to help me. She comes into work early daily. She's dependable. She has a great attitude. It's just nice to have her around.

Last night, the person responsible for a certain piece of equipment had a personal emergency, so she was not able to come to work. Other trained staff were away or on leave. **Sandy Peng**, L.V.N. (PAD), Nursing Service, when presented with the situation, agreed to come to the San Jose Clinic to fix the problem so that the nine scheduled and

prepped patients did not need to be rescheduled. **Rose Waltz**, R.N. (PAD), Nursing Service, also adjusted her staffing to accommodate these patients.

It is obvious that **Deborah Daniels** (MPD), Environmental Management Service, cares about her job and the people she comes in contact with. She took the time to check on me and my welfare. When we arrived, she helped with the suitcase and immediately saw the need for a wheelchair. She responded quickly with one and also with a big smile and welcome on her face. **Chuck Rubino** (MPD), Environmental Management Service, goes beyond the call of duty and is a very dedicated person. I appreciate all his help and the fact that he takes pride in doing a good job. **Gary Mason**, (MPD), Environmental Management Service, was extremely helpful to me finding some misplaced photos. He helped me find the housekeeper who emptied the nearby trash in three different dumpsters and remained with me until the photos were found.

Lyn Juckniess (PAD), Chaplain Service, is a genuine woman committed to justice and led our groups personally in a dignifying manner. Lyn has lived the talk of what it means to care for patients, peers, and staff with dignity, and compassion.



Quick Action Saves Building

VA Palo Alto Employee a Real-Life Hero!

On the afternoon of August 19th **Mark Zemke**, a VA Palo Alto Health Care System employee, was at his home in San Jose when one of the largest fires in San Jose's history erupted in an eleven alarm inferno totally destroying a 6 acre building the size of a city block and sending flames 100 feet into the air. The blaze sent a shower of burning embers into the air that ignited at least 8 other major fires down wind. From his window Mark observed burning embers in the air and an ember land and ignite the wood shake roof of the small apartment building across from his home. He raced across the street, grabbed a garden hose and doused the rapidly spreading flames. Another neighbor called 911; but, with so many active fires in the area, it was more than 30 minutes before the fire department arrived. Without Mark's quick action, the apartment building's wooden roof would have been totally engulfed in a matter of moments and the entire building would have been lost.

September Word Search

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

Find the following words in the letters above:

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| Amendment | Efforts | Labor Day | Rights |
| Constitution | Equality | Noteworthy | Sacrifice |
| Contribution | Grandparents | Proclaimed | United |
| Democracy | Heritage | Protest | |

SCI Research Wants You!

We are currently looking for subjects who are interested in participating in two research studies involving Heart Rate Variability, and ECG abnormalities in able bodied individuals. Results will be used for comparison with individuals with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI).

Who is Eligible:

Men over 18 years of age who can walk, and without history of heart disease.

Study Duration:

2-hour appointment plus 24 hour monitoring (done while you participate in your normal daily activities).

Compensation:

\$50-\$100 dependent upon level of participation.

Interested?

Contact: (650) 493-5000
 Wilsa Charles
 extension 64259



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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