

Cover Photo: Staff and Veterans participating in VA Illiana 1st Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walk. Photo by Jaime Kanger, Illiana

A quarterly publication for VA employees of VISN 11.

New Healthcare Endeavor for Network Director

The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 11 says goodbye to Michael Finegan, Network Director. Finegan resigned from the Department of Veterans Affairs VISN 11 directorship on December 7, 2012.

Finegan has had an illustrious 23-year history with the VA, receiving multiple awards and commendations, such the Presidential Rank Award, the VHA Distinguished National Business Operations Commendation, as well as being the recently-named recipient of the John D. Chase Award for Executive Excellence (2011). He served as a board member of several health care groups and a member of a number of professional healthcare organizations.

Finegan began his VA career in Fiscal Service at the VA medical center in Albany, NY, where he progressed into the roles of Chief Financial & Operations Officer and Deputy Network Director. From there, he served as the Director at the VA Butler Healthcare, Butler, Pa., and then Interim Director at the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center, Wilkes-Barre, Pa. He then went on to serve as interim, then Network Director of VISN 2 in Albany, NY, and Buffalo and Batavia, NY, respectively. As Network Director for VISN 11 in 2008, he made significant contributions in leading VISN 11 in lean principles and healthcare management strategies, providing leadership to Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio VA healthcare executives and staff.

Finegan accepted a position in the private sector working for a large healthcare corporation in Southeast Michigan.

Cover Photo

The VA Illiana Health Care System, VA Employee Association and the VA Federal Women's Program sponsored their 1st Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walk in Danville, Ill. Over 100 participants took part in the walk with over \$1,300 in donations received.

Editorial Board

Network Director – Robert P. McDivitt
Managing Editor – Anthony Colon
Editors – Jeanne LoVette/Angela Taylor

Design by – Angela Taylor

Contributors – Derek Atkinson, George Berg, Charlotte Dixon, Patrick Fisher, Todd Greenman, Sheryl Grubb, Fran Levin, Damian McGee, Alysse Mengason, Carrie Seward, Doug Shouse, Kelly Unrein, and Shirley Villaire.

Life as Network Director...Michael Finegan

A photo layout on page 3 includes pictures from over the years with Network Director Michael Finegan; such as a ribbon cutting ceremony, presenting awards, visting a GI clinic, and meeting with people.

VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Veteran Justice Outreach: Serving Justice Involved Veterans

In August 2012, VAAHS organized a Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO) Initiative Summit in partnership with the Thomas M. Cooley Law School and The Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals. The Summit was well received with more than 125 guests in attendance, including representation from every Veterans Treatment Court in the State of Michigan, State Legislators, VISN Leadership, VJO Coordinators from throughout the State of Michigan, and Veteran Peer Mentors involved in the legal system.

The Summit provided an opportunity to network, strengthen partnerships, provide education about the VJO Initiative, updates on legislation supporting Veterans Treatment Courts in the State of Michigan, and announce the start of a Veteran's Treatment Court in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Paul Rieckhoff visits VAAHS

On September 30, 2012, Ann Arbor had the privilege of hosting Paul Rieckhoff, Army Veteran and CEO of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), on a tour of the medical center. IAVA is an online community of the next great-generation of Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Rieckhoff shared his experiences from his times on Wall Street, Iraq, and as the Chief Executive of IAVA. Rieckhoff was also able to meet with some VAAHS OEF/OIF Veterans. Rieckhoff regularly testifies on Capitol Hill on Veteran issues and is a frequent contributor to media outlets such as The New York Times, CNN, and NBC.

PECASE Award Recipient Dr. Amy Kilbourne

Dr. Amy Kilbourne, Associate Director for the Serious Mental Illness Treatment Resource and Evaluation Center (SMITREC), part of the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System's Center for Clinical Management Research (CCMR), was named a recipient of the 2012 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE).

Dr. Kilbourne's research focuses on improving medical and psychiatric outcomes for people with mood disorders through integrated care models.

To that end, she has proposed and implemented novel psychosocial interventions for bipolar disorder that combine best practices in care management and behavioral medicine. Her research also focuses on measuring and improving quality of care, and dissemination and implementation of behavioral health treatment models.

Dr. Kilbourne is one of 96 recipients of this year's PECASE awards. This marks the second consecutive year that a researcher from the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System has received this prestigious award.

Battle Creek VA Medical Center, Battle Creek, Michigan

Shaping My Future, Class of 2012

Congratulations to the following employees who recently graduated from the LEAD "Shaping My Future" Class of 2012! Back row – David Irvine, Co-chair, LEAD Program; Jane Heaven Hoyle; Mary Beth Skupien, Ph.D., Medical Center Director; Jennifer Gipson; and Todd Greenman, Co-chair, LEAD Program. Front row – Shelley Wilkinson, Mary Hornilla, and Margaret Marshall. Mentors who served this year were Yvonne Stark, Chris Michalek, Polly Simkins, Fred Reynolds, and Gail O'Dwyer.

Meet New Director at Battle Creek VA Medical Center

Mary Beth Skupien, Ph.D., has been named Director at the Battle Creek VA Medical Center. Prior to this appointment she served as the Director, Office of Rural Health for Veterans Health Administration. She developed and implemented policies and programs to improve the access and delivery of high quality health care services of rural and highly rural Veterans. Dr. Skupien served as the VHA subject matter expert in all areas related to rural health care. Previously, Dr. Skupien held positions of progressive responsibility and leadership for 28 years at all levels in the Indian Health Service. This included development, oversight and implementation of significant health care programs such as public health programs, clinical and preventive programs, policy development and strategic planning.

Battle Creek Welcomes New Service Chiefs

Five new Service Chiefs have been named at the medical center. They include Luke Wasick, Chief, Fire Service; Todd Greenman, Chief, Community and Volunteer Service; Brandi Odom, Chief, Pharmacy Service; Kurt Schulte, Chief, Fiscal Service; and John Caras, Facility Chief Information Officer.

VA Illiana Health Care System, Danville, Illinois

Making a Difference, Veteran Centered Care Award Recipient

Congratulations to Nancy Vaglica who was awarded the VISN 11 Network Director's Veteran Centered Care Award. An article in the March 2012 issue of *Planetalk* describes how Vaglica began the amazing transformation in Illiana's library by merging the Veteran's and medical libraries. The renovation included new carpeting, wheelchair accessible shelving, new furniture and paint. Vaglica is now accessible to greet Veterans and staff when they arrive, whether they are looking for assistance or just wanting to browse. In essence, she created a therapeutic milieu where Veterans can complete resumes and apply for jobs, watch television and play Wii games. Coffee and snacks are provided free of charge. A children's section with books and toys is available for Veteran's families to enjoy. Recent additions to the library include two massage chairs, new patio furniture with umbrellas, and an assortment of plants and trees. Vaglica has also been recognized nationally for her efforts. She made a presentation at the 2012 National Planetree Conference for transforming the VA Illiana Health Care System's Veterans' Library and Learning Resource Center into a Planetree environment.

VAIHCS Implements Huddle Boards

VA Illiana Health Care System (VAIHCS) is working along with all the other facilities in VISN 11 in a collaborative effort to integrate Continuous Daily Improvement (CDI) as part of the daily work of all employees.

VAIHCS had two pilot sites in this collaborative: Dental Service and the Copper Star PACT Teamlet at the Decatur CBOC. Now there are approximately nine Services that have implemented this CDI huddle boards and Area Improvement boards. The boards are utilized to collect and track improvement ideas from staff as well as piloting other key Lean improvement initiatives and to display key metrics that units are actively engaged in improving. VAIHCS goal is to have huddle boards implemented in all units/Services in 2013.

Recognitions

- VAIHCS was one among six VA's to participate in the Cardiology Specialty Care Collaborative. The VAIHCS Team presented at the National Specialty Care Collaborative in Salt Lake City.
- VAIHCS won the 2012 Under Secretary for Health's Award for Innovation in VA Community Living Centers with their Green House initiative.
- Chuck Benninger, Utilization Management Coordinator, was named the 2012 Healthcare Executive of the Year by the American Academy of Medical Administrators.

John D. Dingell VA Medical Center, Detroit, Michigan

Detroit VA Medical Center Receives UAW/GM Van Donation

Residents of the Detroit VA Medical Center's Community Living Center (CLC) have a brand new vehicle thanks to a generous donation.

UAW-GM, General Motors and Chevrolet donated full-size Chevrolet Express vans to five VA medical centers for transporting Veterans to medical appointments and other activities. The first of the vans was delivered in early December to the Detroit VA Medical Center. The vans, built at GM's Wentzville, Mo. Assembly Plant and UAW Local 2250 near St. Louis, are specially adapted to accommodate Veterans using wheelchairs or who have other mobility issues.

Battle Creek VA Medical Center also received a van. Each van is customized with special equipment to meet the specific needs of each facility.

"Those who serve our country deserve the best, and these brand-new, full-size vans built by our team in Wentzville will help the VA medical centers safely and comfortably transport Vets to wherever they need to go," said Cathy Clegg, GM vice president of North American Labor Relations. "On behalf of our patriotic workforce with nearly 5,000 military Veteran employees, and 45,000 retirees who are Veterans, we're glad to make a difference in Veterans' lives."

"In Detroit, this van will fill quite a gap in terms of transportation needs for our Veterans who are residents of our Community Living Center," said Dr. Pamela Reeves, Medical Center Director. "When it comes to the unique needs of our Vets, buses and vans can sometimes be one size fits all when they are made, so many times we end up taking a few different vehicles on our outings and field trips," she said. "The fact that this van will actually be fitted with the specific equipment that meets the needs of our Veterans, and to the specifications of our recreational therapists, is truly unique."

Detroit Highlights

- For the first time, the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center was part of a great effort, along with Volunteers of America and Southwest Solutions, as they welcomed women...and women only to a city-wide Women Veterans Stand Down, held on November 7, 2012, at Piquette Square in Detroit. The turnout was wonderful, as more than 150 ladies came out, and were thrilled to receive everything from makeovers to employment assistance, professional clothing advice and registration information from Detroit's Women's Health Clinic.
- A medical center tradition, the 27th annual VA Voluntary Service Country Store delighted one and all again this year, with great food, sales and fun! The annual event was held on October 26, 2012, nearly raising \$5,000.
- In September 2012, the Chaplain Service received great news. The COMISS Commission for Accreditation of Pastoral Services fully accredited the facility's pastoral services for "its mission, vision and values" among other things. Interestingly, the Chaplain Service at the

medical center has quite a legacy as it was the first VAMC Chaplain Service in the nation to become fully accredited. The accreditation extends through December 2017.

Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center, Indianapolis, Indiana

Doctor Leads Way to Innovative Pain Management

Dr. Ahmed Elsayh is the director of the Interventional Pain Management Clinic at the Roudebush VA Medical Center. The Cairo, Egypt-born anesthesiologist has introduced many new interventional pain relief procedures to the medical center, most of which are now accepted procedures.

“Pain affects more than just the patient,” explained Dr. Elsayh. “It can affect families, work, relationships, and quality of life.”

The doctor says some types of chronic pain might be incurable. In that case, the clinic has to teach the Veteran how to live a normal, productive life by giving them techniques which helps them live or work around the pain or minimize it as much as possible. “Sometimes we tell the patient that they will have to accept lower expectations. Surgery cannot always relieve the source of long-term pain,” said Dr. Elsayh.

Dr. Elsayh enjoys working for VA because, he says, “Veterans deserve our help and support. They are very appreciative.” He also enjoys the teaching aspect of his position. He has taught several new pain relief procedures to his coworkers since he’s been at Indianapolis. One is called the MILD procedure, which is a minimally invasive procedure for those suffering from spinal stenosis. Simply stated, spinal stenosis is the constricting or narrowing of the spinal canal. “This condition causes pain when a person tries to walk. When they do walk, they must frequently rest so that the back can recover and they can resume their walking,” explained Dr. Elsayh.

The procedure decompresses the lumbar thereby reducing pressure on the bones of the lower back. “It’s a relatively new procedure, but has had excellent results,” claimed Dr. Elsayh.

He also is an innovator in the use of an implanted pump that injects pain medication straight into the spinal cord rather than a traditional injection or pill. “That way, a patient receives much less medicine although the smaller dose is just as effective. This is especially useful for our cancer patients,” said Dr. Elsayh.

Indeed, the medical center is lucky to have such a prestigious and innovative caregiver as Dr. Elsayh on its staff, not only for his teaching abilities, but as a healthcare provider who always puts the patients concerns and needs first and foremost.

Patient Safety Hero Award Recipients

Employees from Roudebush VA Medical Center were awarded the coveted Patient Safety Hero Award on November 20, 2012, by the Indianapolis Coalition for Patient Safety (ICPS) at the Lilly Corporate Center in Indianapolis, Ind.

Congratulations to Aleksandra Radovanovich, Clinical Nurse Specialist; Dr. Daniel J, Livorsi, Infectious Disease physician; and Becky Hague, Registered Nurse, BSN who were recognized for their work in reduction in central line infections. They are part of the Central Line Acquired Blood Stream Infection group that has been active since 2007.

ICPS provides a forum for Indianapolis-area hospitals to share information about “best practices” and to work together to solve patient safety issues in Indianapolis and surrounding county hospitals.

VA Northern Indiana Health Care System, Fort Wayne & Marion, Indiana

Shaping My Future, Class of 2012

Recently, VA Northern Indiana Health Care System honored its “Shaping My Future” 2012 class with an honorary graduation ceremony. There were 11 employees who completed last year’s program, representing various services from the Fort Wayne and Marion campuses, and the Muncie CBOC. The Shaping My Future program is based on the eight core competencies of the High Performance Development Model, and is focused on high potential employees at all grade levels who are interested in personal and career development.

Shaping My Future is committed to the following objectives:

- Recognize his/her ability to develop him/herself to his/her fullest potential.
- Become familiar with the variety of career options available within the VA system.
- Develop new, nurturing support systems, with a mentor and medical center employees.
- Demonstrate effective communication (verbal and written) and assertiveness skills and work habits.
- Identify and experience appropriate educational and training opportunities.
- Begin the process of developing an action plan to manage the direction and goals of his/her own career.

Shaping My Future is designed to identify individuals from diverse backgrounds who are committed to personal and professional growth, who display leadership potential and have the desire to advance within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Congratulations to the graduating Class of 2012, and a special thank you to the 2012 mentors and Program Coordinator Laura A. Johnson.

Holiday Gift Shop for Veterans

VA Northern Indiana Health Care System (VANIHCs) was proud to showcase the Annual Holiday Gift Shop hosted by the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA), November 27-28, 2012, at the VANIHCs Marion Campus Recreation Clinic.

ALA volunteers shopped, crafted and prepared throughout 2012 to furnish a variety of gifts for hospitalized Veterans to select from for their family’s Christmas. Gifts, wrapping materials,

packaging and shipping were donated by the American Legion Auxiliary and provided to Veterans in the hospital, free-of-charge.

VANIHCS was grateful to have VA Voluntary Service ALA Representative Irene Davis as the chairwoman for this event, and the approximately 40 volunteers who helped wrap, box, address, and mail out packages.

Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Saginaw, Michigan

Aleda E. Lutz VAMC Coding Staff Receive Honors

Congratulations to the Coding staff from Saginaw! A recent national coding audit was coordinated by the Office of Informatics and Analytics/Health Information Governance/HIM with the external audit company Managed Resources, Inc. They performed a retrospective coding accuracy audit, which resulted in Saginaw having the highest outpatient coding accuracy for the VA facilities audited.

Shirley Villaire, Saginaw's Chief of HIMS, was invited to speak on the August National HIMS conference call to share Saginaw's best practices in coding. Villaire was glad to outline some of their processes, but was quick to point out the real success story is the excellent MRT's (Medical Record Technicians) at Saginaw.

New Entrance for Medical Center

Construction is underway for a new 1,880 square foot entrance at the medical center. It is anticipated the construction will be completed in Summer/Fall of 2013.

As Simple as Wheels

The Saginaw VA Medical Center specializes in skilled care, healing and rehabilitation. During a recent study by the medical center, it was identified there was an unacceptable noise level incurred by patients in the Community Living Center. This was centered on the dietary, medical, and housekeeping carts and other food delivery systems. Upon further review of carts, it was found they had dilapidated wheels and had reached their useful lives. The wheels were made of hard polyurethane material.

Through a grant from the VISN 11 Network Director Innovations Grant, Saginaw has replaced the wheels with a new sound-absorbing wheel that has a longer lifespan to better serve and reduce noise for Veterans. The medical center honors Veterans' expectations of safe, high-quality, and accessible care. By reducing the "controllable noise," they can help patients relax and rest all hours of the day, therefore, enhancing their VA experience.

VA Nurse Practitioner Receives Prestigious Michigan Award

The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners has named MaryLee Pakieser as the recipient of the Nurse Practitioner (NP) State Award for Excellence, which is given annually to an NP in each state who has demonstrated excellence in NP clinical practice.

VISN 11 Network Office, Ann Arbor, Michigan

VA Reaches Out to Veterans with New Automated Appointment Reminders

The Patient Reminder Notification Redesign Project was developed by VISN 21 and Xerox Corporation and is currently installed in the following locations: VISN 8, 16, 18, 21, & 22. It was designed to convert the existing appointment letters generated by the VISTA Scheduling Package to a more user friendly reminder card that is easy to understand and provides for an improved patient experience with the VA Healthcare System with a goal to decrease the no-show rate and improve productivity of clinical staff.

VISN 11 continues to be on the technological cutting edge with the implementation of a new automated appointment reminder call system. Veterans will be called three days prior to their appointments and allows the Veteran to confirm, cancel or request rescheduling of the appointment. The final phase of the Patient Reminder Notification Project implements a multi-appointment reminder notice, which is a single postcard reminding Veterans of their multiple appointments for a single day. We also have the capability to remind Veterans of their appointments via text messages and emails as well as send out surveys to Veterans.

The Stream solution provides secure network fax capabilities and electronic faxing to automate workflow and provides security of fax information for regulatory compliance. Fax from anywhere securely, quickly and seamlessly directly from your email. The Stream solution is a standard solution for many hospitals and health care institutions including the Department of Veterans Affairs, Army Medical Centers, and public health departments.

VISN 11 Welcomes Acting Network Director

VISN 11 welcomes Robert P. McDivitt as acting Network Director. McDivitt, a Veteran who served in the U.S. Army from 1975 to 1977, and Director of the Ann Arbor VA Medical Center (2009 to present), began his VA career in 1981, serving in various leadership positions throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs prior to obtaining the directorship in Ann Arbor, Mich.

McDivitt was Medical Center Director at the Fargo VA Medical Center in North Dakota, VISN 23. From 2001-2006, he served as Deputy Director of the VA Midwest Healthcare Network based in Minneapolis, Minn. He also served for six years as the Associate Director/Chief Operating Officer for the VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System (Topeka/Leavenworth, Kan.). He is a graduate of the VA Associate Director/Healthcare Administrator training program, Leadership VA, the VA Health Care Leadership Institute and the Federal Inter-Agency Institute for Healthcare Executives. McDivitt has also received numerous awards and commendations, such as the 2011 Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service from the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on behalf of the President.

As the acting Network Director, McDivitt brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Network Director position and is a welcome asset as the VISN 11 leader.

VISN 11 Veteran Centered Care Award Recipient – Battle Creek

Congratulations to the Battle Creek VA Medical Center who received the 2012 VISN 11 Network Director Veteran Centered Care Award. The award came with \$15,000, which will be provided to the facility to further Veteran Centered Care.

Dieticians Teneil Zielaskowski and Jane Fraley presented their award winning program “Culinary Health On Wheels,” in 2012. They use the cart for hands-on demonstrations with Veterans throughout the facility, Stand Downs, the Community Living Center (CLC) and to support the MOVE! Program. The CLC even uses some of their own home grown herbs and vegetables, bringing new and healthy alternatives to Veterans.

Executive Move

Dr. Wilfredo Rodriguez, Chief of Staff at Battle Creek VA Medical Center, recently transferred to the VA Medical Center in El Paso, Texas. Photo taken at farewell reception left to right: Dr. Mary Beth Skupien, Medical Center Director; Dr. Wilfredo Rodriguez, Chief of Staff; Kay Bower, Associate Director for Patient Care Services; and Ed Dornoff, Associate Director.

VISN 11 Green Environmental Management System Recognizes VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System

During FY 2012, the Warehouse Distribution Section employees at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System made efforts to segregate wood pallets from their trash. They collected for reuse, 1,865 wood pallets. That equates to an estimated 65,275 lbs. of waste diverted from landfill. Furthermore, diverting/reusing those pallets saved the VA \$4,590 in disposal costs. It also helped Ann Arbor to meet their 50 percent landfill waste diversion goals.

Like Us on Facebook

Ann Arbor

www.facebook.com/VAAnnArbor

Battle Creek

www.facebook.com/VABattleCreek

Danville

www.facebook.com/VADanville

Detroit

www.facebook.com/VADetroit

Indianapolis

www.facebook.com/VIndianapolis

Northern Indiana

www.facebook.com/VANorthernIndiana

Saginaw

www.facebook.com/VASaginaw