

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VANGUARD

September/October 2002



Hispanic Heritage

9-11 Remembered

Korean War Vets Honored

Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurs

FARRAGUT



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On the cover

This statue of David Farragut is located in downtown Washington, D.C. Farragut, a Spanish American, was the most famous Hispanic participant in the Civil War. He's best known for the remark, made during battle, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!"

Our new look

In this issue, we introduce a new design. Vanguard had the same "look" for nearly 10 years, and it was time for a facelift. We will publish the new Vanguard six times a year with more pages than before and in color. We hope you'll find the redesigned magazine better organized, easier to read and more visually appealing. Look for more refinements in upcoming issues.



VA Ready to Fulfill Our Role in National Emergencies

*Anthony J. Principi
Secretary of Veterans Affairs*

On the first anniversary of the attacks on America, I met with members of the National Medal of Honor Society, recipients of the nation's highest military award for heroism. I thought about their valor on the battlefield and how their actions reflect the true character of the American spirit.

I also couldn't help thinking of the firefighters, police officers and emergency medical technicians who gave their lives in the line of duty exactly one year before. Their courage and commitment were as heroic as any man or woman in uniform has ever shown, and there is a real parallel between their actions and those of our Medal of Honor recipients.

VA employees, too, showed heroic commitment and dedication on Sept. 11, 2001. On that day, VA employees in New York searched for those who needed care and pulled them from chaotic, surging crowds to safety. It didn't matter if they were veterans or not. They were hurt and they needed our help.

Later, VA regional office employees assisted veterans and their families at Pier 94 in New York and near the Pentagon. And for months thereafter, VA experts in post-traumatic stress disorder reached out to veterans and members of the public grappling with psychological trauma.

Our nation may have been caught off guard by terror, but I'm proud of the way

VA employees responded. September 11 taught us a valuable lesson about the importance of being prepared for medical emergency.

In the year since the attacks, I've made certain our Department is fully prepared to fulfill our role as a partner in the Federal Response Plan. Our mission of providing backup medical services to the Department of Defense and public health authorities in cases of national emergencies is vital to national security. As we pursue the War on Terrorism, we must be

Our mission of providing backup medical services to the Department of Defense and public health authorities in cases of national emergencies is vital to national security.

prepared to fulfill the responsibilities we are given to serve America in this crisis.

An Emergency Preparedness Working Group came up with recommendations to improve our ability to respond to national disasters or terrorist events. Gen. Mick Kicklighter, Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, set up a command and control center for the Department. He and his staff have worked closely with the Office of Homeland Security to draft a comprehensive national strategy to respond to future terrorist attacks.

Today, VA is managing and strategically deploying national pharmaceutical caches to provide emergency responders immediate access

to necessary supplies. VA employees managed emergency pharmaceutical caches for the Olympics in Salt Lake City, the Super Bowl in New Orleans, and the President's State of the Union Address. Nearby VA medical center personnel were also alerted to remain on emergency standby status during each event. Fortunately, our help wasn't needed.

We also must ensure that we are capable of providing quality care and benefits to veterans and dependents in times of national

protocols to assist emergency responders at all levels to meet the medical challenges posed by biological and chemical weapon attacks.

Today, we are much better prepared to resist aggression than we were on Sept. 11, 2001. I have made emergency preparedness a management priority. And we are working with the President and Congress to ensure our care for America's 25 million veterans while providing emergency medical support for the Department of Defense and the nation.

emergency. We are already stockpiling enough pharmaceuticals to provide care for our veterans should our supply lines be disrupted.

We are preparing our doctors and nurses to meet the new challenges heralded by Sept. 11 by using VA's video network and Web resources to train them to deal with chemical exposures and biological casualties. Several of our hospitals have redesigned their emergency treatment areas and installed biohazard decontamination showers to prepare for worst-case scenarios.

Congress is considering legislation that will create emergency preparedness centers within VA to develop training programs, plans and

Ultimately, the responsibility to support our nation during future emergencies rests with you and your fellow employees. I am confident that, should we be tested in the future, VA—and America—will be in good hands. **VA**

Are You Watching?

Don't miss your weekly helping of "VA News," news for and about VA employees delivered each week in a digestible 10-minute video shown daily at 4 a.m., noon, 4 p.m. and 10 p.m. (Eastern Time) over the VA Knowledge Network satellite link to your facility.



Honor Our Hispanic Employees and Veterans

Jacob Lozada, Ph.D.

Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration

I am delighted to introduce this special issue of *VAanguard* honoring our Hispanic employees and veterans during Hispanic Heritage Month. This year's celebration and its theme—*Hispanic Americans: Strength in Unity, Faith, and Diversity*—are particularly significant, as the results of Census 2000 indicate that Hispanics have become the largest minority group in the United States.

In Census 2000, 281.4 million residents of the United States and its territories were counted, and 35 million (or 12.5 percent) of those counted were of Hispanic ancestry. In addition, there were 3.8 million Hispanics living in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The Hispanic population increased by 57 percent from 1990 to 2000, compared to a 13 percent increase for the entire U.S. population. This translates into an increase from 22.4 million Hispanics to 35.3 million Hispanics living in the United States in the year 2000.

The relative young age of the Hispanic population in the United States is reflected in its population. A larger percentage of Hispanics than non-Hispanics are young, with proportionately more children and fewer elderly. This young Hispanic population will impact our society by becoming some of the leaders and shapers of the country over the next 20 to 30 years.

Hispanics value their

families, their friends, hard work, and country. They are highly patriotic and proud of their cultural roots and up-bringing. Hispanics share traditional values and are deeply religious. Respect toward elders and parents are cornerstones of the Hispanic culture.

When it comes to serving in the United States Armed Forces, Hispanics have always risen to the occasion. In 1898, the United States declared war on Spain. Hispanics were among those who served with the Rough Riders under Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt.

Exactly how many Hispanics fought in World War I

lines was disproportionately high for their population. As in previous wars, many Hispanics chose to serve in combat units such as the Marines and paratroopers. They distinguished themselves through courage and bravery.

It is worthy of note that 39 Hispanic Americans have been recipients of the Medal of Honor, the highest recognition for acts of individual gallantry and heroism by members of the nation's armed forces. Only seven are currently living.

As of September 2000, Hispanics made up 8.2 percent of armed forces members, representing 4 percent of the officer corps and 9

panics, are adapting to American culture faster than earlier generations. By the end of high school, the children of immigrants are generally more fluent in English than in their parents' language. The level of Spanish proficiency among second-generation immigrants indicates their children will most likely speak English only.

Hispanics will continue to contribute to our nation and its economy, culture, security, and values. I hope you'll join me in recognizing the multiple contributions that Hispanics have made to our country. Specifically, I encourage you to join me in celebrating the many contri-

I hope that you take a minute to reflect on the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, and the need to work together as one people—without regard to race or ethnicity—to ensure liberty, freedom, a strong nation, and security for all.

is unknown, but some reports indicate that almost 20,000 Puerto Ricans served during this war. An estimate of the number of Hispanics who served in the armed forces during World War II ranges from 250,000 to 500,000; figures are imprecise because data were not maintained on Hispanics as a group.

The presence of Hispanics in the U.S. military ranks has increased since World War II. During the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the number of Hispanics on the front

percent of the enlisted force. The percentage of Hispanics on active duty has almost doubled in the past 10 years. Given the continued growth in the Hispanic population and the youth of the population, it is evident that over the next 10 years, the representation of Hispanics in the armed forces will likely double again.

The history of the United States is one of different waves of immigrants coming to its shores seeking new opportunities. Today's immigrants, including His-

panics of our nation's Hispanic veterans. I also hope that you take a minute to reflect on the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, and the need to work together as one people—without regard to race or ethnicity—to ensure liberty, freedom, a strong nation, and security for all. **VA**

Editor's Note: In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, a significant portion of the content in this issue is devoted to features on Hispanic employees and veterans. To add additional interest, we're presenting some of the articles in both English and Spanish.



Honra a nuestros empleados y veteranos latinos

Jacob Lozada, Ph.D.

Secretario Adjunto para Recursos Humanos y Administración

Estoy encantado de hacer la introducción para la edición especial de *Vanguard* en honor a nuestros empleados y veteranos hispanos en ocasión del “*Mes del Patrimonio Hispano*”. Esta celebración anual bajo el lema “*Hispano-estadounidenses: Fortaleza en la Unidad, en la Fe y en la Diversidad*”, es particularmente significativa en vistas a que el resultado del Censo 2000 indica que los hispanos se han convertido en el grupo minoritario más importante de los Estados Unidos de América.

El Censo 2000 arrojó un resultado de 281, 4 millones de residentes en los Estados Unidos y sus territorios, de los cuales 35 millones (es decir el 12,5 por ciento del total) tienen ascendencia hispana. Además se contó a 3,8 millones de hispanos que viven en el Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico.

La comunidad hispana se incrementó un 57 por ciento en el período de 1990 al 2000, comparado con el 13 por ciento de incremento que tuvo la población total de los Estados Unidos. Esto se traduce en un incremento que pasó de 22,4 millones a 35,3 millones de hispanos viviendo en los Estados Unidos en el año 2000.

La relativa juventud de los hispanos en los Estados Unidos se refleja en su población. El mayor porcentaje de juventud lo tiene la comunidad hispana y esta también tiene en

proporción, más niños y menos ancianos. Esta joven comunidad hispana hará impacto en la sociedad americana cuando algunos de sus miembros se conviertan en líderes y formadores de nuestra nación en los futuros 20 o 30 años.

Los hispanos valoran la familia, los amigos, el trabajo duro y la nación. Son muy patrióticos y orgullosos de sus orígenes y su educación. Comparten valores tradicionales y son profundamente religiosos. El respeto a los mayores y a los padres son pilares fundamentales de la cultura hispana.

Cuando las Fuerzas Armadas de los Estados Unidos han requerido del servicio de los hispanos, estos siempre han estado a la altura de las consecuencias. Cuando en 1898 los Estados Unidos le declararon la guerra a España, los hispanos estadounidenses también estaban dentro del batallón de los “*Rough Riders*” bajo el mando del Coronel Theodore Roosevelt.

No se sabe el número exacto de hispanos que lucharon en la Primera Guerra Mundial, pero algunos reportes indican que al menos 20.000 portorriqueños prestaron servicio en esa confrontación.

Una estimación del número de hispanos que estuvieron al servicio de las fuerzas armadas nacionales en la Segunda Guerra Mundial varía entre los 250.000 a 500.000, el

número exacto es difícil de lograr debido a que en esos tiempos no se registraba a los hispanos como miembros de un grupo en particular.

La presencia de hispanos en las fuerzas armadas de los EE.UU. se ha incrementado desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Durante las guerras de Corea y Vietnam, el número de soldados hispanos fue desproporcionadamente alto con respecto a la población total. Como en las ocasiones anteriores, muchos hispanos eligieron prestar servicio como infantes de marina o como paracaidistas, y se distinguieron por su coraje y bravura.

Vale la pena recordar que 39 estadounidenses de origen hispano han recibido la Medalla de Honor, que es el más alto reconocimiento a los actos de valentía y heroísmo que se otorga a miembros de las Fuerzas Armadas de los Estados Unidos. De ellos, solo siete viven en la actualidad.

Desde septiembre del 2000 los hispanos representan el 8,2 por ciento del total de miembros de las fuerzas armadas, representando un 4 por ciento de los oficiales y un 9 por ciento de la tropa regular. El porcentaje de hispanos en servicio activo se ha casi duplicado en los últimos 10 años.

Dado el continuo crecimiento y la juventud de la población hispana, es evidente y probable que en los próximos 10 años el número de hispanos en las

fuerzas armadas se duplique nuevamente.

La historia de los Estados Unidos está basada en las diferentes oleadas de inmigrantes que han venido a estas costas en busca de nuevas oportunidades. Los inmigrantes de hoy, incluyendo los hispanos, se adaptan más rápidamente a la cultura estadounidense que en las pasadas generaciones. A la finalización de la escuela secundaria, los hijos de inmigrantes generalmente hablan el idioma inglés más fluido que el idioma de sus padres. El nivel del español que hablan los inmigrantes de segunda generación indica que sus hijos se inclinarán por hablar inglés únicamente.

Los hispanos continuarán contribuyendo con nuestra nación, con su economía, su cultura, su seguridad y sus valores. Estoy esperando que usted se unirá a mí en el reconocimiento de las múltiples contribuciones que los hispanos han hecho a nuestro país. Especialmente, yo lo aliento a unirse a mí y celebrar las tantas contribuciones que han hecho a nuestra nación nuestros veteranos hispanos.

También espero que se tome un minuto para reflexionar sobre los trágicos eventos del pasado 11 de septiembre de 2001 y sobre la necesidad de trabajar juntos como un solo pueblo, sin importar raza o etnia, para asegurar la libertad, la fortaleza de la nación y la seguridad de todos. **VA**

Eager to Learn

53 Texas high school students got an introduction to public service and more this summer through an innovative program



Moxy Garcia and the other students participated in work and educational experiences 40 hours a week for eight weeks.

The summer of 2002 was a memorable and rewarding one for 53 Texas high school students. It was a summer that brought hope, encouragement, work force experience and a nice paycheck.

The students were part of a VA and Texas Workforce Commission-sponsored summer employment and enrichment program at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio.

"We were fortunate to have some real bright stars, very ambitious and eager to learn," said health care system director Jose Coronado. "This is a very good program that benefits us all."

With VA's work force aging, officials believe it's never too early to begin introducing youths to the VA work force in hopes of attracting the best and the brightest employees down the road.

The program, the first of its kind in VA, has gotten the attention of Secretary Anthony J. Principi, who said VA wants to introduce high school students to role models and mentors who will inspire them to remain in school. "We want to help motivate our youth to pursue their education into post-secondary schools and we hope VA will be their employer of choice," the Secretary said.

The program has already had a positive impact on Catalina Quintanar, 16, who wants to return to work at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital in San Antonio one day. "I gained so much experience working at the VA hospital that my self-confidence really escalated," said Quintanar, who worked in the facility's Learning Center. "I saw myself using work skills that I didn't even know I had."

Michael Ramirez, 16, who worked in the public affairs office, echoed the same sentiments. "I learned so much and felt that I made some valuable contributions. It was one of those experiences where I would look forward to the next day so I could go back to work."

For 16-year-old Stephen Martinez, his summer job in the medical center's X-ray unit has him now wanting to pursue a career in the medical field. "This has been an eye-opener for me. I feel that I expanded my communications skills and felt comfortable talking with both the doctors and patients," he said. "I appreciated the staff's willingness to help. They made me feel needed and appreciated."

Martinez, whose grandfather and uncle are veterans, said he took time to let the patients know how much he cared about them and how grateful he is to them for their service.

Some of the students' parents, like Martinez's mother Doreen, said they strongly endorse the program and hope it continues. "It's very important that they get work experience and learn to be responsible. That's always good," she said.

The pilot program involved 53 students, most of them Hispanic, whose low family incomes may limit their chances of attending college or even completing high school. Ranging in age from 16 to 18, they were selected by the Texas Workforce Commission to participate in work and educational experiences 40 hours a week for eight weeks.

Continued on page 8

Ansiosos de aprender

53 estudiantes de escuelas secundarias en Texas recibieron introducción al servicio público aparte de otra información gracias a un programa inovador

El verano del 2002 ha sido memorable y gratificante para 53 estudiantes de escuela secundaria de Texas. Ha sido un verano que trajo esperanza, estímulo, experiencia de trabajo y una buena paga.

Los estudiantes fueron parte de la Administración de Veteranos y de la Comisión de Personal de Texas que patrocinaron el programa de verano para empleo y enriquecimiento en el Sistema de Servicios de Salud para los Veteranos del Sur de Texas en San Antonio.

“Hemos sido afortunados de contar con verdaderas estrellas, tan ambiciosos y con tantas ganas de aprender”, dijo el director del Sistema de Servicios de Salud José Coronado. “Este es un programa muy bueno que nos beneficia a todos”.

Como el personal de la Administración de Veteranos va envejeciendo, los oficiales consideran que nunca es muy temprano para comenzar a incorporar jóvenes dentro del personal de la institución y tienen la esperanza de poder atraer a los mejores talentos que haya disponibles.

El programa, primero en su clase en la Administración de Veteranos, ha captado la atención del Secretario Anthony J. Príncipi quien dijo que la Administración quiere captar estudiantes secundarios para jugar con ellos el papel de modelo y mentor y así inspirarlos a continuar estudiando. “Queremos motivar a nuestros jóvenes a

continuar estudiando después de terminar su escuela secundaria y esperamos que la Administración de Veteranos sea el empleador que ellos elijan”, dijo el secretario.

El programa ya ha tenido su impacto positivo en Catalina Quintanar de 16 años, que algún día quiere reintegrarse al trabajo en el hospital de veteranos Audie L. Murphy en San Antonio. “Gané tanta experiencia trabajando en el hospital de veteranos que la confianza en mi misma ha aumentado considerablemente”, dijo Quintanar, que trabajó en las instalaciones del centro de aprendizaje. “Me he encontrado a mi misma haciendo uso de habilidades que no sabía que tenía”, agregó.

Michael Ramírez, también de 16 años y que trabajó para la oficina de

asuntos públicos, hace eco de los mismos sentimientos. “Aprendí muchísimo y siento que he hecho contribuciones muy valiosas. Fue una de esas experiencias en las que uno espera con ansia el día siguiente para volver al trabajo”.

A el joven de 16 años Stephen Martínez, este trabajo de verano en la unidad de rayos X del centro médico lo ha motivado a querer seguir una carrera en el campo de la medicina. “Esta experiencia me ha abierto los ojos. Desarrollé mis capacidades de comunicación y me sentí cómodo hablando con médicos y pacientes”, dijo y agregó, “He apreciado la voluntad de ayudar que tenía el personal. Me hicieron sentir necesitado y valorado”.

Martínez, que es hijo y nieto de veteranos, dijo que se tomó el

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Michael Ramírez trabajó en la oficina de asuntos públicos.

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While the majority of the program participants worked at the main facility in San Antonio, others worked at the medical center's six outpatient clinics in Corpus Christi, Kerrville, Laredo, McAllen, San Antonio and Victoria. The Texas Workforce Commission paid the students' salaries for the first four weeks and VA paid the last four weeks. During the eight-week period the students, who earned \$7.68 an hour, were taught how to manage their money, as well as the importance of grooming and punctuality. Many also were introduced to the city's public transportation system, since a number of them had to take the bus to work.

"We provided these students with a good working

environment," said Dr. Chris Bacon, the health care system's assistant chief of staff for education. "We instilled in them a good work ethic. We would meet with them every Friday to discuss their jobs and to provide some basic performance skills. We also would let them know that we were pleased that they were part of our work force."

The young employees were noticed by many of the patients, who said they appreciated the students' work and VA's efforts to provide jobs for them. "This is our future generation, and these students got an opportunity to perform a job. This is a wise investment by the VA," said patient Dan Krischke, a Vietnam veteran. "These youths can learn a lot from talking to us veterans. We have a lot of wisdom to give out. Many times the spo-

Youth Program Praised as 'Showcase for Government'

The summer work program for high school kids at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System was praised as a "showcase for government" during an interagency task force meeting in Washington, D.C., in July.

The task force, established in October 2000 by Executive Order 13171 and chaired by the director of the Office of Personnel Management, met to discuss the steps agencies have taken to improve the representation of Hispanics in the federal government. As part of the executive order, all agencies must submit to the President an annual report detailing their progress in hiring Hispanics.

VA's representative on the task force, Dr. Jacob Lozada, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, attended the meeting. As he described the San Antonio youth program, in which 53 high school students spent the summer working with mentors at VA facilities, he said he received a great deal of positive feedback. "They called it a showcase for government," he said. Later that day, when he returned to his office, he received several e-mail messages from task force members interested in replicating the program in their agencies.

In the weeks that followed, a partnership between VA, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services at the Department of Health and Human Services, and Baltimore City Public Schools led to the establishment of the Student Career Academy.

The academy opened its doors recently to disadvantaged and minority high school students in Baltimore Public Schools who are referred by their high school guidance counselors. Once enrolled, they get one-on-one mentoring, job shadowing opportunities, and become eligible for paid summer jobs. The first class of about 50 students entered the academy in September. During the course of the regular school year, they'll gain the knowledge and skills necessary

to succeed in the workplace, and get a feel for the types of jobs available in the federal government.

With San Antonio's youth employment program being used as a model by other agencies, Lozada would like to see it replicated in VA as well. He said it would work in any city with a large concentration of minorities. All the program needs to succeed, he added, is the support of facility directors.

That's exactly what happened in San Antonio. Jose R. Coronado, director of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System, is a former high school teacher and principal, and a strong believer in mentoring. When he heard about Lozada's idea, he volunteered to prototype the program. He issued a call for employees to participate as mentors and was swamped with volunteers. In the end, he had more mentors than students. It took just two weeks for them to set up the program.

"This is a great way to energize staff," said Coronado. "These young people are in need of positive role models, and the staff really enjoyed filling that role." He said when the eight-week program ended, about half of the kids asked if they could stay. They ended up joining the health care system's youth volunteer program and still meet regularly with their summer mentors. "Now everyone is asking if we're going to do it again next year," said Coronado.

Encouraged by the success in San Antonio, and in replicating the program in Baltimore, Lozada is optimistic about the future. "I personally believe [the youth employment program] has tremendous potential to address issues of underrepresentation in the federal government and in attracting young people to public service and to what we do in VA. It can be very, very powerful for these kids to see someone who looks like them in a position of leadership in the federal government."

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tiempo para hacerle saber a los pacientes lo importante que son para él y lo agradecido que está por el servicio que los veteranos han prestado a la patria.

Algunos padres de los estudiantes como la madre de Martínez, Doreen, dijeron que respaldan enérgicamente el programa y esperan que continúe. “Es muy importante que los jóvenes ganen experiencia laboral y que aprendan a ser responsables. Eso siempre es bueno”, dijo.

El programa piloto involucró a 53 estudiantes, la mayoría de ellos hispanos, los cuales por pertenecer a familias de bajos recursos ven limitadas sus chances de poder asistir a la universidad y a veces hasta de poder terminar la escuela secundaria. Con un promedio de edad entre los 16 y 18 años, ellos fueron seleccionados por la Comisión de Personal de Texas para participar en experiencias de trabajo y educativas por período de ocho semanas a razón de 40 horas semanales.

Mientras que la mayoría de los participantes trabajó en las instalaciones principales de San Antonio, otros trabajaron en los centros médicos de las clínicas de pacientes externos en Corpus Christi, Kerville, Laredo, McAllen, San Antonio y Victoria. La Comisión de Personal de Texas pagó el salario de los estudiantes por las primeras cuatro semanas y las 4 semanas restantes fueron pagadas por la Administración de Veteranos. Durante las ocho semanas, los estudiantes ganaron \$ 7.68 a la hora y se les enseñó como manejar el dinero y también la importancia de ser prolijos y puntuales en el trabajo. A muchos de ellos también se les enseñó a manejarse en el transporte público de la ciudad dado que algunos tuvieron que tomar el bus para llegar a su puesto de trabajo.

“Hemos provisto a estos estudiantes de un buen ambiente de trabajo”, dijo el Dr. Chris Bacon que es el jefe adjunto del personal de educación del Sistema de Servicios de Salud. “Hemos inculcado en ellos la ética del trabajo. Nos reuníamos con ellos todos los viernes para dialogar sobre sus tareas y para proveerlos de técnicas básicas de trabajo. También les hacíamos saber que estábamos muy agradecidos de que formaran parte de nuestro personal”.

Los estudiantes también fueron notificados por muchos pacientes quienes manifestaron que apreciaban su trabajo y los esfuerzos que la Administración de Veteranos hacía para darle una posibilidad laboral a ellos. “Esta es nuestra futura generación y estos estudiantes tienen la oportunidad de realizar un trabajo. Esta es una sabia inversión que hace la Administración de Veteranos”, dijo el paciente Dan Krischke, un veterano de Vietnam. “Estos jóvenes pueden aprender mucho hablando con nosotros. Los veteranos tenemos

mucha sabiduría para dar. Muchas veces la palabra hablada es mejor que la palabra escrita y estos estudiantes nos escucharon”.

Maggie Parsons de la Oficina de Recursos Humanos del sistema de servicios de salud expresó que los estudiantes cumplieron con el lema de la institución que dice “Los veteranos primero”. Como conclusión, bien valen las palabras de Catalina Quintanar, la estudiante sobre quien nos hemos explayado anteriormente, “El dinero que gané fue importante, pero la experiencia que logré ha sido mucho más valiosa que eso.” **VA**

Por Ozzie Garza

Oficina Regional OPA de Dallas

ken word is better than the written word. And these students listened to us.”

Margie Parsons, of the health care system’s Human Resources Office, said the students certainly lived up to VA’s motto of “Putting Veterans First.” Perhaps young Catalina Quintanar best summed up the program. “While the money I earned was important,” she said, “I found the experience I gained far more valuable.” **VA**

By Ozzie Garza

Dallas OPA Regional Office

A Strong Voice for Hispanic Veterans

The American G.I. Forum, founded in 1948 to fight discrimination against Hispanic World War II veterans, is the nation’s oldest and largest Hispanic veterans service organization. Headquartered in Denver, the group has more than 140,000 members.



Garcia

The organization’s founder, Dr. Hector P. Garcia, was born in Mexico and fled to Texas at age 4 with his family to escape the Mexican Revolution. A 1940 graduate of the University of Texas Medical School, he joined the Army during World War II, and served in North Africa and Italy as an infantryman and combat engineer until officials found out he was a doctor. He earned the Bronze Star in Italy.

After the war, Garcia opened a medical practice in Corpus Christi, Texas. While working as a VA contract physician, he discovered that Hispanic veterans were

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Puerto Rico's 65th Infantry Regiment Fighting for Honor, Country

They spent World War I pulling guard duty at the Panama Canal. World War II brought a similar assignment, guarding the rear lines in Europe and North Africa. By the time the Korean War broke out in June 1950, Puerto Rico's 65th Infantry Regimental Combat Group was hungry for action.

When the Chinese army entered the war and swarmed south in October 1950, threatening the Eighth U.S. Army at Hungnam and surrounding the 1st Marine Division, it was the 65th who were called to the front. They punched through enemy lines and cleared a 13-mile escape route, allowing the besieged Marines to slip out of the Chinese trap. In their first major operation, the 65th had gone from rear guard obscurity to the front lines of America's fighting forces.

As the war progressed, the 65th continued to make a name for themselves in a series of decisive victories. One mission saw them marching to the South Korean capital of Seoul to capture two hills held by the much larger Chinese 149th Division.

They reached the hills on Jan. 31, 1951, and began their assault. After two days of intense fighting, "the Borinqueneers," as they were nicknamed, fixed bayonets and charged straight at the enemy, causing the Chinese to flee.

After another mission, aptly named Operation Killer, in which the 65th fought to the banks of the Han River, they were sent to the rear for R&R, the military acronym

for a period of rest and relaxation. As they settled in, the unit came under heavy attack from North Korean troops.

It was a costly mistake. When the gunfire silenced, the 65th had wiped out more than 600 enemy troops and captured nearly 400. In the process, they lost one man and suffered six wounded.

The 65th Infantry's actions from

suffered a series of staggering losses at Outposts Kelly and Big Nori. Just two weeks later, they were sent to take a hilltop that would come to be called Jackson Heights. Casualties mounted quickly during repeated probes of the hill.

When they finally reached the summit, it offered little or no cover and the men found themselves vulnerable to enemy artillery fire. With hundreds of their dead countrymen strewn across the barren hill, soldiers questioned the purpose of their mission.

Some refused to fight. Others turned and ran. In the end, 92 men were court-martialed for disobeying orders, including one soldier who refused an order to shoot deserters. More than half of the men were later granted clemency after glowing testimony before Congress from a former battalion commander. Few things make sense in war, and the incidents surrounding the 65th Infantry's "bug out," as it has come to be known, are no exception.

Francisco D. Maldonado, area emergency manager at the Miami VA Medical Center, knows the story of the 65th well. His father spent 30 years in the Army, serving

with the 65th in World War II and the Korean War, during what he called the unit's "golden years."

He said the people of Puerto Rico are extremely proud of the history of the 65th Infantry. But he pointed out that whenever the topic is brought up in conversation, the discussion inevitably turns to the

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Francisco Maldonado's father, right, at Mass while serving with the 65th Infantry during the Korean War.

1950 to 1951 exemplified their unit motto, "honor and fidelity," better than at any other point during the war. Yet, for some veterans, memories of battlefield heroics are clouded by a dark chapter in the unit's history.

By 1952, many of the experienced troops had rotated home. The green replacements, mostly draftees,

Regimiento de Infantería N° 65 de Puerto Rico

Luchando por el honor y el país

Ellos fueron los encargados de hacer guardia en el Canal de Panamá durante la Primera Guerra Mundial. En la Segunda Guerra Mundial, tuvieron una tarea similar cuidando la retaguardia de las tropas en Europa y en el norte de África. Cuando llegó el momento de la Guerra de Corea en 1950, el Regimiento de Infantería N° 65 de Puerto Rico estaba ansioso por entrar en acción.

Cuando el ejército chino entró en guerra en octubre de 1950 y se agrupó en el sur, amenazó el Octavo Batallón del Ejército de los EE.UU. en Hungnam y rodeó la Primer División de *Marines*. Esta fue la oportunidad del Regimiento N° 65 para pasar al frente de batalla.

Los hispanos perforaron una línea a través del ejército enemigo y despejaron una vía de escape de 13 millas que permitió salir de la trampa a los *Marines* sitiados. En la primer operación a gran escala que tuvo que realizar, el Regimiento N° 65 pasó de la oscuridad de la retaguardia a la primer línea de combate de las fuerzas estadounidenses.

A través del desarrollo de la guerra, el Regimiento N° 65 continuó haciendo conocer su nombre a través de victorias decisivas. Una de las misiones los encontró marchando hacia la capital de Corea del Sur, Seúl, para capturar dos colinas que estaban en posesión del Regimiento N° 149 del ejército chino que era mucho más numeroso que ellos.

Llegaron a las colinas el 31 de enero de 1951 y comenzaron el

asalto a las mismas. Después de dos días de intenso combate, los “Borinqueneers”, como se los apodaba, calaron bayonetas y cargaron directo contra el enemigo, haciéndolo huir.

Después de la misión que apropiadamente se dio en llamar *Operation Killer*, en la que el Regimiento N° 65 luchó en la rivera del río Han, los soldados fueron

capturado también a 400 prisioneros. En total la unidad solo perdió un hombre y 6 fueron heridos.

Entre 1950 y 1951, las acciones bélicas del Regimiento N° 65 son un claro ejemplo de su lema “Honor y Fidelidad”, nada más importante que eso en el campo de batalla. No obstante para algunos veteranos del regimiento, las memorias de un pasado heroico en el campo de batalla se ensombrecen por un capítulo oscuro en la historia de la unidad.

En 1952 muchos de los soldados experimentados estaban de licencia en sus casas. Sus reemplazantes poco experimentados, en su mayoría reclutas del servicio militar, sufrieron una serie de importantes pérdidas en los puestos de avanzada de Kelly y Big Nori. Justo dos semanas después fueron enviados a capturar una colina que más tarde se llamó *Jackson Heights*. Las víctimas se sumaron rápidamente durante los intentos de subir a la colina.

Cuando finalmente llegaron a la cima, el lugar ofreció muy poco reparo para las tropas, haciéndolas vulnerables al fuego enemigo. Al ver a cientos de camaradas desparramados sobre la estéril colina, los soldados cuestionaron el sentido de la misión.

Algunos se rehusaron a pelear, otros se volvieron y huyeron. Al finalizar, 92 soldados fueron sometidos a corte marcial por desobedecer órdenes incluyendo un soldado que se rehusó a disparar en contra de soldados que desertaban.

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El 65avo. Monumento de Infantería en San Juan.

enviados a retaguardia para gozar de un período de “R&R”, lo que significa en el ejército descanso y relajación. No bien se asentaron, la unidad sufrió un ataque de las tropas norcoreanas. Fue un gran error de parte del enemigo. Cuando se callaron los disparos, el Regimiento N° 65 había aniquilado a más de 600 soldados enemigos y había

Did You Know?

Hispanics in America

■ Hispanics have played a key role in the history of America for hundreds of years. The Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León is credited with discovering Florida. He led an expedition to the area in 1513, landing near the site of what is now St. Augustine.

■ Hispanic Heritage Month is observed every year from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. That period covers a wide range of Independence Days for Latin American countries.

■ Congress initiated a nationwide celebration of Hispanic heritage, National Hispanic Heritage Week, in 1968; 20 years later, Congress extended the observance from a week to a month.

■ The theme of this year's Hispanic Heritage Month is *Hispanic Americans: Strength in Unity, Faith and Diversity*.

■ More than 30 million Americans, about 1 in 8 people in the United States, claim Hispanic origin.

■ Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the U.S., and are expected to make up 24 percent of the population by 2050.

■ The U.S. Hispanic population increased 57 percent between 1990 and 2000.

■ About 6 percent of the federal workforce is Hispanic, the same percentage found in VA's workforce.

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Más tarde, y como resultado de un brillante testimonio de un ex comandante de batallón ante el Congreso, se le otorgó clemencia a más de la mitad de los soldados sentenciados. Pocas cosas tienen sentido en la guerra y los incidentes que llevaron a la unidad a insubordinarse y no respetar a sus mandos no son una excepción. (El incidente es identificado con la expresión en idioma inglés "bug out" del Regimiento N° 65.)

Francisco D. Maldonado, gerente del área de emergencia en el Centro Médico de Veteranos de Miami, conoce muy bien la historia del Regimiento N° 65. Su padre pasó 30 años en el ejército sirviendo en la unidad durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial y durante la Guerra de Corea, lo que él llamó los "años dorados" del regimiento.

Él dice que la gente de Puerto Rico se siente extremadamente orgullosa de la historia del Regimiento N° 65, de todas maneras destaca que cada vez que se habla del tema la discusión termina girando sobre las cortes marciales. Explica que algunos veteranos del Regimiento N° 65 sienten que sus

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courts martial. He explained that some veterans of the 65th feel as though their heroics were tarnished by the events at Jackson Heights. Others sympathize with those who refused to fight, calling it a suicide mission.

In the fog of war, some soldiers disobeyed orders. But many fought with valor. During the Korean War, "the Borinqueneers" were awarded 1,014 Purple Hearts, 562 Bronze Stars, 163 Silver Stars and seven Distinguished Service Crosses. The

actos heroicos han sido empañados por los eventos de *Jackson Heights*. Otros simpatizan con aquellos que se rehusaron a luchar por considerar que esa fue una misión suicida.

En la oscuridad de la batalla algunos soldados desobedecen órdenes, pero muchos pelean con valor. Durante la Guerra de Corea, los "Borinqueneers" fueron condecorados con 1.014 Corazones Púrpura, 562 Medallas de Bronce, 163 Estrellas de Plata y siete Cruces por Distinción en el Servicio. El legado de esta unidad permanece como una fuente de profundo orgullo para los portorriqueños.

Cuando el secretario Principi visitó el Centro Médico de Veteranos de San Juan al comienzo de este año, el director Dr. Rafael Ramírez Gonzáles y su personal le presentaron una historia sobre la actuación del Regimiento N° 65 en la Guerra de Corea que se llama "Gloriosos Unfortunates" (en español "Gloriosos Desafortunados"). La historia fue escrita por el hijo de Maldonado, que también se llama Francisco, para su proyecto de investigación en la Universidad de Yale. VA

Por Matt Bristol

unit's legacy remains a source of deep pride for Puerto Ricans.

When Secretary Principi visited the San Juan VA Medical Center early this year, director Raphael Ramirez-Gonzales, M.D., and staff presented him a history of the 65th Infantry Regiment's service in Korea called *Glorious Unfortunates*. The paper was written by Maldonado's son, also named Francisco, for his senior research project at Yale University. VA

By Matt Bristol

Who Are VA's Hispanic Leaders?

VA Central Office: Antonio Aponte, director of VBA's Office of Communications and Case Management; Alfonso R. Batres, Ph.D., chief officer of VHA's Readjustment Counseling Service; Jim W. Delgado, director of VHA's Voluntary Service Office; Donny Flores, chief of Property Management for VBA's Loan Guaranty Service; Jacob (Jake) Lozada, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration; Armando E. Rodriguez, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity;



Delgado



Lozada

Armando E. Rodriguez, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity;

VHA field facilities: Jose Coronado, director, South Texas Veterans Health Care System; Gabriel Pérez, director, Saginaw, Mich., VA Medical Center; Rafael E. Ramirez, M.D., director, San Juan, Puerto Rico, VA Medical Center; Jeanette Diaz, associate director, San Juan, Puerto Rico, VA Medical Center; Ada Medina Neale, associate director, Long Beach, Calif., VA Medical Center; Faust Alvarez, M.D., chief of staff, Ft. Harrison, Mont., VA Medical Center; Vincent Alvarez, M.D., chief of staff, Nashville, Tenn., VAMC; Sandra C. Gracia-Lopez, M.D., chief of staff, San Juan, Puerto Rico, VA Medical Center;



Neale



Rodriguez

Sandra C. Gracia-Lopez, M.D., chief of staff, San Juan, Puerto Rico, VA Medical Center;

VBA field facilities: Sonia Moreno, acting director, San Juan, Puerto Rico, VA Regional Office;



Moreno

NCA field facilities: Steve Muro, director, Memorial Service Network V (Oakland, Calif.); Jorge Baltar, director, Puerto Rico National Cemetery; Gill Gallo, director, Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery; Gloria Mote, director, Port Hudson National Cemetery; Jorge Lopez, director, Houston National Cemetery; Joe Ramos, director, Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery; Donald Rincon, director, Sante Fe National Cemetery; Arleen Vincenty, director, Natchez National Cemetery; Gerald Vitela, director, Fort Logan National Cemetery.



Batres

Hispanic Veterans

■ During the American Revolution, the Continental Army benefited from the valor of Bernardo de Gálvez, who led his frequently outnumbered troops to numerous victories against the British.

■ In the War of 1812, Spanish Americans from Louisiana joined Gen. Andrew Jackson's defenders in defeating a British invasion force.

■ David Farragut was the most famous Hispanic participant in the Civil War. He's best known for the remark, made to his crew during battle, "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" Farragut was the first person to earn the rank of admiral in the U.S. Navy.

■ Cuban-born Loreta Janeta Velázquez didn't let her gender stop her from fighting for her side during the Civil War. She disguised herself as a man named Harry Buford, even wearing a fake mustache, and joined the Confederate forces. Her secret was discovered only after she was injured in battle.

■ Marine Pfc. Guy Louis Gabaldon, a Mexican American, captured more enemy soldiers than anyone else in the history of U.S. military conflicts. He captured 1,000 Japanese soldiers in the South Pacific during World War II.

■ Luis Esteves organized the first Puerto Rico National Guard and rose through the ranks of the U.S. Army to become a distinguished Brigadier General.

■ Thirty-nine Hispanics have earned our nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor.

Preserving Latino History

Vet Centers join a grassroots effort to collect missing pieces of American history

A grassroots effort is underway to preserve the history of Hispanic Americans, and VA is a national partner. Take a look through history books on World War II, the Depression, and post-war America, and you'll be hard-pressed to find any mention of Latinos, noted Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Ph.D., assistant professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin.

Consider the story of Guy Louis Gabaldon, a Mexican American who grew up in East Los Angeles. Nicknamed the Pied Piper of Saipan, he is credited with capturing more than 1,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians as a U.S. Marine during World War II. His actions were depicted in the 1960 film "Hell to Eternity." But according to a *Los Angeles Times* article, instead of depicting Gabaldon as a Latino, the film portrayed him as an Italian American played by Jeffery Hunter. It didn't marginalize his heroics, just his heritage.

The absence of Latinos in American history was something Rivas-Rodriguez stumbled upon while doing research for a magazine story. "I was working on a story about Mexican Americans in World War II and I realized there wasn't much written about their role," she said during a recent

telephone interview from her office in Austin. As she interviewed the aging veterans, she realized Latinos were in jeopardy of losing an important part of their history. When these veterans died, so would their

Oral History Project to collect and preserve missing pieces of American history. She has since put together an archive of nearly 300 videotaped oral histories of Latino men and women who came of age during the war. The video interviews were transcribed into narratives and archived online at www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives.

VA's Readjustment Counseling Service was her first national partner. Dr. Alfonso Batres, who oversees VA's 206 vet centers, said he was eager to get involved in the project. "Our World War II veterans are dying at an alarming rate. Many of them have not told their stories, and they may be lost forever," he said. "We have found this to not only be a good way to record historical events and accounts, but also therapeutic for the veterans who participate."

The San Antonio Vet Center was the first to participate. Team leader Hiliario "Lalo" Martinez called the experience very rewarding. "There was a lot of positive energy given out," he said. Vet centers in El Paso, Texas, Houston, Los Angeles, and McAllen, Texas, followed suit, and others are lining up. Earlier this year, Martinez and

Rivas-Rodriguez flew to Puerto Rico to meet with team leaders from vet centers in Arecibo, San Juan and

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Colorful murals like this one outside the vet center are a signature feature of East Los Angeles.

stories. She wasn't about to let that happen.

In 1999, she started the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II

VA's Humanitarian Ambassadors to Honduras

Dr. Michael Priebe and colleagues are bringing their knowledge and skills to a country that desperately needs them



Dr. Priebe's first patient, Eugenio, with his family.

Dr. Michael Priebe tells all his friends that Honduras is the ideal place to spend his vacation. But he doesn't hit the beaches of the Bay Islands or visit the Mayan ruins of Copan. He and members of his rehabilitation team go to share their knowledge and skills with the people of this beautiful, but poor, Central American country.

The chief of the VA North Texas Health Care System's Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Service enjoys his visits to Honduras so much that he has been there five times in the past three years. He has been accompanied on these trips by many of his fellow rehabilitation professionals from both VA and private hospitals in the Dallas area. All return with a renewed spirit and a better appreciation for life and for their patients.

It all began in 1999 when Priebe heard someone from his church talk about an opportunity to go to Honduras for a weeklong work

mission through an organization called Honduras Outreach, Inc. (HOI). "It sounded interesting and I needed a break," Priebe recalled, "so I volunteered to go, thinking I would be digging latrines. Every North American mission group that works though HOI needs a physician or a nurse on the team.

"They found out I was a doctor, so they said I could be the team doctor. I told them that I'm not in general medicine—my training is in rehabilitation. That didn't seem to matter. I was still the doctor on the team."

Thus began a journey that has touched and changed numerous lives, all for the better.

With only a small percentage of Hondurans having access to medical care and almost nothing resembling rehabilitation outside of the major cities, Priebe, a specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation, was a welcome visitor in the country.

His first visit to Honduras in May 1999 was an eye-opener. After helping the team build one latrine, he met his first patient. Eugenio is a man in his early 20s who was paralyzed from the chest down as a result of a gunshot wound six months prior to Priebe's visit.

Eugenio had received no rehabilitation. After his injury he was medically stabilized and given a colostomy and a catheter. He was sent home to his village to live with his wife and 1-year-old son in his parents' two-room home with a packed dirt floor and stucco walls.

The only equipment he received was an air mattress that he filled with water. He spent his days lying in bed, getting up into a plastic

lawn chair to sit on the porch when it got too hot inside. He had no wheelchair, no cushion, and no hope.

When Priebe visited with his patient he saw a young man who was clearly depressed and looked totally helpless. "The first thing I did was to teach him some basic skills, so common to us that we assume everyone knows them," Priebe said.

On the first day, he taught Eugenio how to roll over and sit up in bed, and showed his wife how to stretch his legs. The second day, Priebe discussed skin and wound care, colostomy management and bladder care with Eugenio and the village nurse who had been caring for him. And on the third day, Eugenio received his first wheelchair.

In advance of his trip, Priebe had made arrangements to take donated medical supplies and equipment with him. "I brought with me a bunch of equipment, not knowing what I was going to see," he recalled about that first trip.

Among the medical equipment was a wheelchair donated by Dr. Lance Goetz, one of Priebe's VA colleagues who also has paraplegia. Priebe taught Eugenio how to transfer in and out of the chair and how to get around without tipping over.

When Eugenio first got in the wheelchair, he nearly flipped over. But after a few minor adjustments and some practice he was able to maneuver himself around. He has since become quite proficient in the use of the wheelchair. "In the United States, the level of rehab he needed could take three weeks or

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being denied the medical, educational and housing benefits promised to millions of returning World War II veterans through the G.I. Bill of Rights. He rallied hundreds of Mexican-American veterans to organize the American G.I. Forum and demand equal treatment.

It was Garcia's involvement in resolving a troubling incident in 1949 that catapulted him and the forum into the national spotlight. A funeral director in the town of Three Rivers, Texas, refused to allow the family of a Hispanic soldier killed in combat during the war to use the funeral home's chapel. He feared it would offend the local white community.

Army Pvt. Felix Longoria had been killed in 1945 while on patrol in the Philippines to flush out retreating Japanese. It had taken nearly four years to identify Longoria's remains and return them to his family, and the only funeral home in town was denying his family a place to hold the funeral.

Longoria's widow turned to Garcia for help. He and the forum organized a widespread protest that drew national attention to the family's plight. Lyndon B. Johnson, then a Texas senator, intervened and arranged burial with full military honors for Longoria in Arlington National Cemetery.

In later years, the American G.I. Forum expanded its veterans' rights mission. With the motto, "Education is Our Freedom, and Freedom Should be Everybody's Business," the group is now recognized as a local, state and national voice for all Americans of Hispanic descent. **VA**

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Ponce to plan future interview sessions there.

Twelve World War II veterans recorded their wartime experiences

last spring at the East Los Angeles Vet Center. As the cameras rolled, the aging veterans talked about the horrors of war. They spoke about family and pride in military service. They also talked about racism and the barriers they faced as Mexican Americans.

Manuel Martinez knows the story well. He's lived in East Los Angeles all his life, not counting the year he spent in Vietnam with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, and has been a counselor at the East L.A. Vet Center for the past 10 years. He said he wanted to get involved with the project because "it seemed like a good opportunity to correct history." After speaking with Rivas-Rodriguez, he met with members of a local chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, an organization for combat-wounded veterans, who agreed to participate in the project.

The veterans arrived at the vet center early one Saturday morning, where they were greeted by journalists, television producers and reporters poised to record history. The interviewers, all members of the California Chicano News Media Association, had volunteered for the assignment.

The East Los Angeles Vet Center was a fitting place to preserve the history of Hispanic veterans, according to Jack Steingart, Ph.D., a Korean War veteran and team leader. He said Hispanics make up more than 80 percent of the vet center's surrounding community.

When asked about working with vet centers, Rivas-Rodriguez said it's been a fantastic relationship. "Vet centers gave us a chance for immediate credibility," she said, explaining that veterans are more eager to participate if they know vet centers are supporting the project.

Historical accounts collected through this project will be housed at two University of Texas libraries—the Nettie Lee Benson Latin

American Collection and the Center for American History. For more information on this project, visit www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives. **VA**

By Matt Bristol

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more. We did what we could in three days," Priebe said.

On his second trip to Honduras five months later, Priebe saw a much different Eugenio. "We gave Eugenio his legs back through the wheelchair," Priebe said. "In a way, we gave him his life back. He went from a disabled, helpless and depressed man just waiting to die, to having the potential for a full life."

Since his initial trip, Priebe has taken four different rehab teams that have included fellow VA employees and colleagues from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas and Parkland Memorial Hospital. All the rehabilitation professionals who go have to take annual leave and pay their own way for the opportunity to participate in a program that desperately needs their skills and training.

"The brief interventions that we are able to offer seem to be so small, but they make a world of difference to these people," Priebe said. "We learn as much as they do. Everybody comes back a changed person. The therapists tell me that it really has empowered them to have a greater appreciation for their patients and the work that they do. I know what they mean."

Perhaps that's the reason Priebe and his team anxiously await their next "vacation" to Honduras. More information about Honduras Outreach, Inc., is available on the Internet at www.HOI.org. **VA**

By Ozzie Garza
Dallas OPA Regional Office

Ozzie Garza

Thousands of Texas Rangers fans flocked to the Ballpark in Arlington this summer to root for the home team. As they made their way to their seats, they grabbed popcorn, peanuts and a game program. And when heavy-hitting shortstop Alex Rodriguez and first baseman Rafael Palmeiro weren't driving home runs into the upper decks, fans flipped through the program for news of their favorite players.

Inside, they found the usual player profiles and updates on the club's Lone Star Series II against the Houston Astros. But they also read about the sacrifices veterans made in answering our nation's call to service.

They read about America's heroes on the ball field who put their careers on hold and took up arms to defend liberty during World

Wars I, II, Korea and the Vietnam War. They were reminded that some came home from battle to play again, while others gave their lives in our nation's defense.

Ozzie Garza wrote the story for the Rangers' game program. "I was just doing my job," he explained. As regional director of public affairs based in Dallas, he makes it his mission to spread the word about VA benefits and the role veterans have played in shaping our country.

He said the story allowed him to combine his passion for baseball with his role as a VA communicator. A condensed version of the story, which appeared in the May 2002 *VAanguard*, received more feedback from readers than any other story in recent memory.

Writing about baseball

stars who served is one thing, but Garza, an Army veteran, also writes a weekly column on veterans' issues for *El Sol de Texas*, the state's largest Spanish-language newspaper, and translates VA press releases and fact sheets into Spanish to keep Hispanic veterans in the loop. In the process, he is shaping his three-person public affairs office into a liaison with the Hispanic community.

"From print, radio and television to personal contacts, Ozzie is there," noted Diana Struski, who now serves as a public affairs specialist for VISN 21, based in San Francisco, but got to know Garza well in the 11 years she spent at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio. "He's



the bridge, the link, for reaching out to the Hispanic community," she said, adding that his efforts to target Hispanic media markets are the first she has seen in the 15 years she's been with VA.

Garza's shop is one of seven regional offices of public affairs nationwide and is responsible for providing guidance to public affairs officers at VA medical centers, regional offices and national cemeteries throughout a seven-state region. **VA**

Discover the Freedom to Learn with VALO

It's back-to-school time. For students, that means shopping for notebooks and pencils, binders and backpacks.

But school supplies aren't just for kids anymore. Many adults are also returning to the classroom—or wish they could. Even if they can find just the right class to give them the knowledge they need and want, working adults agree that it's hard to juggle commutes and regular class meetings with a hectic family schedule.

Real-life time and family commitments often stop adult learners from getting the ongoing education and training they need. But for

VA employees, help has arrived.

The Employee Education System has partnered with the VA Learning University and other staff offices to bring a Web-based campus to the desktop and home computer for VA staff.

The program is called VA Learning Online, or VALO. This learning program can be accessed through the VA Learning University Intranet site, or from the Internet on a home or public access computer. The program is being offered free of charge to all VA employees.

Project manager Gary

Trende said VALO offers 1,100 different courses for VA employees to choose from, and more are being added. Course offerings include a wide range of topics, from personal development to information technology and management skills. You can use VALO to obtain mandatory training, complete GED requirements, or take college-level courses for credit.

VA Learning Online was launched in early July and already has thousands of employee subscribers. "With VALO, employees get essential course training from one central place," said Trende.

e-learning

"In addition to the convenience, employees take courses at their own pace, so they're more comfortable."

In addition to the quality and convenience of VALO, the program also reduces the need to travel for training. "VA strives to be a learning organization," said Trende. "Making learning more accessible is a win-win for VA and its employees."

For more information about VA Learning Online, you can access VALO at www.vcampus.com/valo. You can also log onto vawww.valu.lrn.va.gov, then click on the button for VA Learning Online. **VA**

Remembrance ...

A moment of silence swept across America on the morning of Sept. 11, 2002, in a tribute to the more than 3,000 people killed in the terrorist attacks a year earlier. America vowed never to forget the attacks, and on their one-year anniversary, communities across the country pulled together to uphold that pledge.

VA facilities in the two cities that were most directly affected by the events of that day kept the promise by hosting emotional observances.

At the Manhattan Division of the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System, located just 20 blocks from Ground Zero, about 250 employees gathered to remember the day the towers fell. They observed a moment of silence, lit candles, and read scripture as a tribute to the fallen.

Martina Parauda, associate director of the health care system, echoed the sentiments of many when she said, "We will not forget the events of that terrible morning, nor will we forget how Americans responded ... with heroism and selflessness; with compassion and courage; and with prayer and hope."

During the observance, employees laid wreaths at a newly dedicated plaque mounted at the emergency room entrance. It was there that desperate family members placed photographs of their missing loved ones in the hours after the attacks.

At the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center, employees came together to remember a day of loss. They heard from a man who lost a loved one at the World Trade Center and a VA psychiatrist who used

her training to comfort survivors at the Pentagon. Deputy Secretary Leo S. Mackay Jr., Ph.D., spoke of the day's significance and offered a reminder of an uncertain future. "We need to remember, and grieve," he said. "But we must also recall that we have a job to do, citizens to serve, a homeland to protect, and a war to win."

Employees from VA facilities all over the country also gathered to remember the day America was attacked. At the New Mexico VA Health Care System, they came together in the chapel to read the names of all who perished.

Ronald Cok, chief of Chaplain Service at the Albuquerque VA hos-

pital, came up with the idea of reading the names, hometowns and place of death for each of the victims. More than 60 employees volunteered for the reading. It took them eight hours to complete the list. "It was very emotional," said Michael Kleiman, public affairs officer.

One of the readers was Richard J. Massen, M.D., a surgeon at the medical center and native New Yorker who went home after the attacks in search of Ground Zero. His journey took him to his old Brooklyn Heights neighborhood, where he attended medical school, and down to Saint Vincent's Hospital, where hundreds gathered after the attack in search of missing loved ones.

He concluded that Ground Zero wasn't a piece of land, but rather a moment in time. Massen shared his observations with employees before reading the names of 62 victims.

"We're all seeking to reconnect with Ground Zero but can't find it, because it uniquely existed only



PENTAGON PHOTO

A highlight of the Pentagon's 9-11 one-year anniversary ceremony, attended by President Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (above) was the unfurling of the giant American flag recovery workers had unfurled shortly after the terrorist attack.



Attendees of the 9-11 one-year anniversary observance at the Manhattan Division of the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System look at a newly dedicated plaque mounted outside the emergency room entrance. It marks the spot where desperate family members placed photographs of their loved ones in the hours and days after the attacks.



VA provided a Pentagon-shaped granite headstone to mark a gravesite at Arlington National Cemetery containing the remains of victims of the 9-11 attack.

Marking the Resting Spot

A 16-ton granite headstone was unveiled on Sept. 12 at Arlington National Cemetery in memory of victims of last year's terrorist attack on the Pentagon. The National Cemetery Administration's Memorial Programs Service procured the marker from Granite Industries of Vermont, the same company that built the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

The light-gray headstone is in the shape of the Pentagon and marks the final resting spot for a single casket containing 150 pounds of identified and unidentifiable remains. It was placed in a section of the cemetery overlooking the Pentagon, an area where 57 victims of the attack are buried. Families of the victims can visit the group marker and make rubbings of the 184 names etched on its burnished-aluminum panels.

When asked about VA's role in procuring the marker, Dave K. Schettler, director of NCA's Memorial Programs Service, said the assignment had special meaning for many of his staff, but that it wasn't unusual for VA to provide a group marker. "We provide about 12 group markers a year" for Arlington National Cemetery, he said, explaining that most are for remains from the Vietnam War recovered in Southeast Asia.

Before the marker was unveiled, families who lost loved ones in the attack attended a funeral service in the cemetery's amphitheater. It was the first such funeral since 1984, when remains from Vietnam were interred in the Tomb of the Unknowns.

The families wore black and shielded their eyes behind dark sunglasses. Some clutched photos of loved ones lost and wept as if releasing a year of pent-up grief.

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, who was in the Pentagon at the time of the attack, expressed the nation's sympathy, saying, "Our country shares your sorrow and mourns your loss." The service and group burial held special meaning for the families of five victims whose remains were never positively identified. **VA**



An Honor Guard bears the casket containing remains of 9-11 victims during a funeral service held in the cemetery's amphitheater.

once," he said. "I think we feel compelled to return to that time for a simple reason. During those dark and terrifying minutes, we were all there, in New York, together. Everyone was stuck up in the Trade Center. Everyone was in a terrifying flight over Pennsylvania. Everyone was crushed in the impact on the Pentagon.

"Yet during those moments, we somehow also knew that, for a rare instance, real heroes were walking the Earth, marching up and down the stairwells of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and in flight over Pennsylvania. I think we need to be in the presence of those heroes again.

"During those moments, real angels were on the Earth, showing compassion and mercy to the injured and the frightened. We need to be in their comforting presence again." **VA**



WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

President Bush greets Arlene Howard, VA volunteer and mother of a victim of the World Trade Center attacks.

Arlene Howard

They Died Doing What They Loved

There is a red, white and blue wreath hanging in the window of Arlene Howard's Long Island home. It was given to her by a local Cub Scout troop, one of many tokens the Northport, N.Y., VA Medical Center volunteer and World War II veteran received following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that took the life of her son, Port Authority police officer George Howard. He was one of more than 300 firefighters and police officers who gave their lives that morning doing what they loved, helping those in need.

The remains of George Howard were found on Sept. 19 when a rescue worker spotted a shiny black pistol jutting from a mound of twisted steel and charred concrete at Ground Zero. He reached down to pick it up and found it snugly strapped in Howard's holster.

Arlene Howard gave her son's police badge to President George W. Bush when he visited New York City in the days after the attack. Her gesture signaled the start of a special relationship. President Bush spoke movingly of their encounter during his address to a joint session of Congress on Sept. 20. He held her son's badge for all to see and called it "a reminder of lives that ended, and a task that does not end."

Nine months later, when President Bush was in Port Elizabeth, N.J., on June 24, 2002, to honor Port Authority heroes and outline new security measures, he spotted Arlene Howard in the crowd, thanked her for coming, and spoke about what she means to him. "Arlene is my friend," he said. "She represents so many moms and dads and loved ones who mourn for the loss of a child or a husband or a wife. I appreciate your strength, Arlene. I love seeing you every time."

The President may love to see her, but the occasion is always a somber affair. It's been a year of loss for Arlene Howard. "Tragic," is

how she described it. She said keeping busy has helped, but in the end, it's just not enough. "Every time you think of September 11, you relive all the things that happened that day ... it's very sad."

It started slow—a card here, a letter there. But as America mourned the loss of thousands of lives, Arlene Howard received an outpouring of support. One day, she received a silver angel in the mail from a woman in Missouri. Young ladies with a junior American Legion Auxiliary in Iowa sent her an American flag quilt. Schoolchildren from across the country sent teddy bears, cards and other mementos. "People have been so beautiful," she said. "People from all over have poured out their hearts and kept us in their prayers."

On the one-year anniversary of the attack, she and her family attended a Mass in New York City held for the families of the 75 Port Authority employees killed in the attack. "God must have needed some good men up in heaven," she said, "because he took them on September 11." **VA**

Bill Nelson

Not OK, but moving on

"I don't know how to respond when people ask if I'm OK," admitted Bill Nelson, Ph.D., a longtime VA employee whose wife Ginger was killed in the World Trade Center attacks. "I mean, no, I'm not OK. How could anyone be OK? But I'm trying to move on with my life."

He paused, excused himself for "still being so emotional," collected his thoughts, and continued. "Sometimes, it seems like it's been an incredibly long year, and other times I wake up and it seems like it happened just last week. It hasn't been very easy to find closure, because it's constantly in your face," he said, referring to the Sept. 11 media blitz.

He spoke about the challenges he's faced over the past year, his memories of Ginger, and the things he's done to preserve her legacy. Ginger was senior vice president for an investment firm headquartered on the 93rd floor of the North Tower, one floor from

the impact site. Everyone in her office was killed.

While thousands of New Yorkers gathered at Ground Zero to remember the fallen, Nelson was on the other side of the country. He spent Sept. 5-12 in Washington state conducting ethics training and meeting with colleagues from the National Center for Ethics in Health Care. "I chose to be out of the city on the 11th," he said, explaining that he had been to Ground Zero many times for personal reflection. Last Memorial Day, a New York City Fire Department chaplain escorted him to the "pit" at Ground Zero where steel beams in the shape of a cross stood as a tribute to the dead.

He woke up early on the one-year anniversary of the attacks and met with two close friends in his hotel room to watch the live broadcast from New York. Later, he and ethics center staff attended the Mozart Requiem held in Seattle. He said friends and colleagues helped him through the past year and they continue to show their support today. When he returned to his office at the Manhattan campus of the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System, he found dozens of e-mail messages on his computer from VA employees he's met over the years and friends expressing their concern and sympathy. He said he was "amazed" at how much people seemed to care. "Throughout all this time, my colleagues have been with me, and that's what really helped me get through this."

Ginger may be gone, but her legacy remains. Nelson, along with family members, friends and colleagues, are preserving her memory through the Ginger Risco Memorial Scholarship fund at Ginger's alma mater, Columbia University. The first scholarship was presented on Sept. 26. Near their apartment on the Upper West Side, officials planted a maple tree in Riverside Park in Ginger's honor. Each year, its broad leaves will put on a fall show of color, changing from green, yellow and orange before erupting in fiery red, the color of her hair. The park sits across the street from their apartment and he can see the young sapling each time he leaves or enters his building.

Bill Nelson may not be OK, but he's moving on with life the best he can. **VA**

Abe Scott

Visiting Pentagon a Painful Experience

The remains of Janice Scott were found under rubble and debris in the E Ring at the Pentagon, the spot where American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the building on Sept. 11. They were identified using DNA tests from blood samples taken from her mother, sisters and two young daughters.

The autopsy report provides the details of her death, but her husband, VA employee Abraham Scott, doesn't want to read it. He has, however, been to the Pentagon a couple of times since Janice was killed. He first visited in April, when the Department of Defense unveiled its America's Heroes Memorial dedicated to the 184 victims of the Pentagon attack. He also visited the impact site once it was renovated to see where Janice's remains were found.

Each trip takes an emotional toll. "It's extremely hard for me to come back in the Pentagon," said Scott, a retired Army finance officer who joined the National Cemetery Administration two years ago.

He tries not to dwell on the day his wife was murdered, but it's hard not to think about her loving, upbeat spirit and how it was taken away so abruptly. Keeping busy has helped, he said.

He attends Monday night meetings of a grief support group for families of those killed in the attack, and he is on a steering committee for a 9-11 memorial at the Pentagon. The final design will be selected in November 2002 and the memorial will be dedicated by September 2003. A statement on the Pentagon memorial Web site from families who lost loved ones in the attack emphasizes that the memorial "should instill the ideas that patriotism is a moral duty, that freedom comes at a price, and that the victims of this attack have paid the ultimate price."

Scott visited the Pentagon again on Sept. 11, 2002, but this time, he brought his daughters, Angel and Crystal, as well as Janice's mother, brother and five sisters. They joined the more than 12,000 people who gathered at the Pentagon to observe the one-year anniversary of the attack.

Scott and his family visited the America's Heroes Memorial, where Janice's name is etched on a large black panel, and they gathered outside the impact site to observe a moment of silence at 9:37 a.m., the moment the hijacked airliner slammed into the building. The observance stirred powerful emotions. "It really took a toll on me," said Scott. "Janice was such a loving mother and wife, I couldn't have asked for a better soul mate." **VA**



Abe Scott visits the America's Heroes Memorial at the Pentagon.

Reflection ...

Sept. 11 touched all Americans. As the nation marked the one-year anniversary of the attacks, VAnguard invited VA employees to share how the events of that day affected them personally. Nearly 220 of you did. Here are some of your stories.

I was at home with my daughter, who had recently had a kidney and pancreas transplant. I was particularly joyful regarding the miracles of modern medicine and the benevolence of an unknown person who even in grief thought of giving life to another. In a matter of minutes, my feelings of joy and wonder were replaced with feelings of disbelief and then enormous sorrow. I somehow could not reconcile the fact that even with all the amazing things mankind has accomplished to give and save lives, some can so easily take life away simply because of a different belief system.

Sharon Pusateri
North Chicago, Ill., VAMC

Who could ever imagine this date as being one of the most devastating days for all Americans? I could not believe what I was hearing on the radio. As a mother who lost my 16-year-old daughter, Genevieve, 15 years ago to a drunk driver, I know what every mother of those Americans felt at that very moment. I was getting ready for work when I heard the news bulletin and I was scared to leave the house, but then I remembered all those men and women who fought for my freedom and were not afraid to go to war. How could I not go to work?

Sophie J. Gutierrez
Albuquerque, N.M., VAMC

I don't think anyone was able to do an ounce of work that day, that week, maybe even that month. We went through the motions, doing what had to be done, but our minds and hearts were, and still are, in so many different places. We are inspired by the heroic efforts of so many, those who left us that day and those who are still with us. We are amazed at the resilience of the human spirit, not only of Americans, but also of many nations who came to our side to stand for what's right. We strive to be better people for our children, our families, our extended families, our co-workers, our fellow Americans,

and our world family. We pray for the children who lost one, possibly both, parents. We think of those husbands and wives who may still mourn and now must bear their burdens alone. We count our blessings much more often than we ever have in the past. We give thanks daily, regardless of how difficult they may be, for our own children, our siblings, our parents, extended family and friends. We give thanks for our health and for everything else that we value.

Karen Scully
Dayton, Ohio, VAMC

My 4-year-old granddaughter died of encephalitis that very day. It was viral and nothing could have been done about it. When I came home from the hospital and turned on the TV, I could not believe my eyes. I started crying all over again. Not only was I grieving for my loss, but the whole world was grieving. I realize now that life is too short. We must all be all that we can be and be grateful for the life that we live. I will never take anything or anyone for granted. I will respect others, as I would have them respect me.

Deborah J. Price
Louisville, Ky., VARO

As a physician, I was taught to place my feelings aside and approach my patients in an objective, scientific manner. I have witnessed individual tragedy and suffering time and again and steadfastly maintained my professionalism. On Sept. 11, 2001, I witnessed human tragedy on a scale that wrenched my heart to a degree that was very painful. Prior to those horrific events, I wasn't sure that could be possible. The events of Sept. 11 placed me more in touch with my empathetic nature. It also reinforced my love for the defenders of our nation. Hate war but love the warrior.

Roger G. Smith, M.D.
Memphis, Tenn., VAMC

I have a young nephew who works on Wall Street. The morning of the attack he was on the phone with a friend, a bond trader for Cantor Fitzgerald, when the first terrorist-controlled plane hit the south tower of the World Trade Center. Among the last words my nephew heard that morning from his friend were these: "I'm re-

ally scared, Mikey.” I never met the young man whose voice was on the end of that phone line. And now, I never will. But there has not been a day that goes by that I don’t think of him. Or of a friend and business acquaintance of my own, Max Bielke, who died at the Pentagon doing what he had spent his whole life doing, working for veterans. Or of those who killed them.

Larry DeMeo
VA Central Office

I am a Catholic chaplain assigned to the Philadelphia VAMC since January. On Sept. 11, I was assigned to a parish in the Bronx and as a part-time chaplain at the Bronx VAMC. Realizing the trauma that the explosion was bound to cause, I went down to Ground Zero and joined a team of medical, psychological, religious and other helping professionals to assist in any way possible. We were sent to the 92nd Street YMCA, where tables and booths were set up with appropriate expertise. When the firefighters were escorted in, exhausted and smelling of fumes and asbestos, I was filled with a combination of deep sorrow, awe and tremendous respect. The event has affected my ministry because in every parish, place of worship, school, place of employment, someone knows someone who was affected irrevocably. It was as if a knife was plunged into the heart of New York City and its environs. I knew that I had to try to gently remove that knife with pastoral care. As a people our faith was rattled as were the twin towers; rattled, but they have not and will not be destroyed.

Michael Lipareli
Philadelphia VAMC

There are some places that Texans won’t go as “flatlanders,” so it took a great deal of courage to agree to ascend the tall towers of New York in the summer of 1986. Our hospital was undertaking a new bond offering to add space and services. We had journeyed to New York to achieve a bond rating through a large rating agency. Having some time to kill between meetings with the insurers and the rating agents, we took the opportunity to do some sightseeing. The view from the towers was spectacular in the morning light. This flatlander was astounded—my heart beat fast. So it hit especially close to home as I witnessed the towers’ plight on the morning of Sept. 11, knowing that I had actually stood atop those structures some 15 years before. I could feel my heart pounding just as it did when I scaled those heights. The place where I had witnessed such a spectacular view of the metropolis was now in shambles, and a cold chill settled upon me. How could this be happen-

ing in America? Weren’t we exempt from such terrorist activity? Our world is so different these days—distrust and anxiety abound. Never again will we feel free to let go and just trust that our future is secure.

John Elliott
VISN 17 (Dallas)

I was attending a medical meeting in Beijing, China, on Sept. 11. As I watched the events on CNN, I had a feeling of isolation and that I had been separated from real humanity. However, when I returned to the meeting the next day, the delegates from China and from countries all over the world expressed their sincere compassion and condolences to us as Americans. We were now part of the world family and as vulnerable to terrorism as everyone else. We were proud to stand with them against this evil.

H.B. Othersen Jr., M.D.
Charleston, S.C., VAMC

As a VA area emergency manager, I was assigned under the Federal Response Plan to Ground Zero. The scene of devastation was beyond my wildest expectations. Several of my colleagues and I had worked assignments at the WTC NYC Office of Emergency Management EOC many times, yet all that was left were mammoth debris piles. Occasionally my thoughts wander back to those days and nights of September working at Ground Zero, with smoke still rising from the debris piles, along with the thick dust and the smells that accompanied it and I think of it as all a dream. Then reality takes hold and I realize that it (WTC) and the people are no longer there. It saddens me more than words can express.

Jack F. Flynn
VA Hudson Valley Health Care System

My husband and I are both 20-plus years retired U.S. Naval Hospital Corpsmen. Two days after the 11th my two oldest sons enlisted in the Navy; one is now on a carrier off the coast of Afghanistan and the other will complete boot camp this fall. While I am scared to death of the outcome of our upcoming military actions to combat terrorism, it warms my heart to know that we instilled in our sons the pride to decide that it’s their patriotic duty to protect our freedom, no matter what the cost.

Debbie Rosenthal
North Chicago, Ill., VAMC

Called to Duty

According to VA's Office of Human Resources and Administration, more than 500 VA employees in the Reserve and National Guard have been mobilized since Sept. 11, 2001. Some have since returned to VA, while others remain on active duty. *Vanguard* salutes their efforts with a display of their names here.*

ALBANY • Albert A. Bruton • Albert Delaunay • Tony J. Griffin • Gregory J. Masiello • Eric C. Mayo • Walter Rivera • Arthur E. Robinson • R.A. Schmidbauer • Harold J. Scott • ALBUQUERQUE • Richard W. Almeter • Joe D. Ayala • William R. Brady • Lionel J. Gagner Jr. • Stephanie K. Henderson • Darcy B. Kinslow • Richard S. Larson • Elizabeth H. Lickliter • Daniel B. Miranda • John W. Owen III • Julie A. Salcido • Tina M. Sanders • Christian R. Schlicht • Peter J. Tanzilli • ALTOONA • James R. Boulware • Yvonne C. Hand • Michael A. Zerbee • AMARILLO • Timothy I. Garcia • John H. Gerald • James Henderson III • Eric T. Rice • AMERICAN LAKE • Lynda Ann Ash • Lisa A. Chisa • ANN ARBOR • Gary A. Wandmacher Jr. • Scott A. Wiseman • ARTESIA • Kimberly D. Miller • ASHEVILLE • Randall W. Clayton • John R. Hettinga • Raymond S. Meserve • Joseph G. Miller • Charles D. Rogers • Edward C. Tamasovich • Patrick L. Wood • ATLANTA • Zanetta M. Caldwell • Frank E. Holder • Richard L. Lewis • Diane M. 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Starks • Debra S. Hodnett Walker • **MONTGOMERY** • Tracy D. Forman • Michael E. Peten • **MONTROSE** • Ralph W. Costanzo • Robert D. Hansen • Anthony J. Yonnone • **MOUNTAIN HOME** • Robert W. Lamberson • **MURFREESBORO** • Rebecca J. Fraley • Jimmy Gaither Jr. • Beverly K. Groogan • Michael S. Osborn • **MUSKOGEE** • Terry R. Scantlen • Kevin L. Steele • Devon D. Sullivan • **NASHVILLE** • Isaac Atkins III • Pamela M. Collins • Christopher S. Stempson • **NEW ALBANY** • Susan E. Schiller • **NEW YORK** • Ada R. Arroyo • Nathaniel Frazier Jr. • Vallary Hamilton • Patrick L. Lambert • Orlando D. Pinnock • Ruben D. Rivera • Edwin Robles • **NEW ORLEANS** • David M. Boudreaux • Sharon L. Davis • Christy D. Eaves • LeBaron J. Fisher • Tommy F. Hamilton • Tonya L. Welch • **NORTH CHICAGO** • Julio A. Gonzalez • Samuel L. Moore • Judy S. Vega • **NORTHAMPTON** • Timothy G. Brock • Timothy E. Chilson • Andrew T. Mitchell • **NORTHPORT** • Gerard R. Balaker • Andrew S. Barnes • Richard A. Donato • Dominick R. Golio • Donald E. Norton • Lorenzo A. Vizcaino • **OAKLAND** • Dany E. Felix • **OKLAHOMA CITY** • Brian L. Davie • Homer J. Frisby • Norman N. Tucker • **OMAHA** • Sylvia L. Coleman • **ORLANDO** • Debra T. Ward • **PALO ALTO** • Marites M. Garcia • **PARKERSBURG** • Robert G. Given Jr. • Rachelle R. Hewitt • **PERRY POINT** • Keith B. Lawson • Ronald L. Luzetsky • **PHILADELPHIA** • John W. Ciano • Warren M. Cohen • Juan G. Gonzalez • **PHOENIX** • Michael E. Barnes • Larry B. Frechette • Marcel M. Jeanisse • Keril J. Rieger • Leanne D. Weldin • **PITTSBURGH** • Roseanne C. Bedillion • Edward R. Dickerson • Amber L. Fisher • William E. Laitinen • Richard L. Norman • Stephanie E. Wright • **POPLAR BLUFF** • Delbert C. Barks • **PORTLAND** • Fredrick Bender • Mary L. Childers • Carl M. Falk • David A. Gabler • Suellen Holmes • Kirk D. Rasmussen • Brian S. Roth • Suzanne L. Scott • **PROVIDENCE** • Raymond J. Aubin • Deborah D. Pacheco • Mildred Rodriguez • **RENO** • Dan W. Bolton • Wanda Martinson-Castro • Zola M. Ferguson • Michael D. Petty • **ROANOKE** • Kevin R. Thompson • **ROSEBURG** • Robert L. Flaherty • Daniel S. Murphy • Matthew A. Skidgel • **SALEM (OR)** • William H. Welborn • **SALISBURY** • Steven L. Jones • Timothy V. Mauldin • Donald R. McIntyre Jr. • Leslie P. Norman • **SALT LAKE CITY** • Walter M. Adam • David S. Archibald • Tieg B. Hamer • Andrew L. Juergens • Michael J. Nielsen • David C. Ziegenbusch • **SAN ANTONIO** • Robert P. Farrar • Eleonore Paunovich • Randy L. Perfecto • Michael R. Rice • Juan J. Sanchez Jr. • Juan R. Sandoval • Gloria J. Shean • Martha S. Wilkins • **SAN DIEGO** • Scott K. Davis • Debra A. Gautreaux • Johnny M. Lewis Jr. • Ronald D. Valentine • **SEATTLE** • Idenne M. Whetsel • **SHERIDAN** • David W. Jones • James C. Wiltse • **SHREVEPORT** • Terence W. Whatley • **SPOKANE** • Dennis A. Lee • Barbara J. Parbs • **ST. GEORGE** • Kasey Sims • **ST. LOUIS** • Shane E. Cayson • Richard G. Feldmeier • Ruth R. Henderson • Lee E. Hill • Kenneth R. Person • Devonshea D. Smith • Douglas Townes • Phyllis A. Townsend • Mark L. Williams • **ST. PAUL** • Theresa M. Hurley • **ST. PETERSBURG** • Mary L. Farquhar • Denise Foster-Williams • Janet K. Gordon • Lillie Y. Jackson • Charles L. Kimberger • Jose A. Martinez • Martha P. Silva • Nora D. Stokes • Patrick J. Zondervan • **SYRACUSE** • David W. Altieri • William J. Bivens • Mark W. Burr • Daniel G. Cook • David J. Evangelista • Thaddeus U. Hairston • Robert J. Kasulke • Paul F. Scaramuzzino • Corbett Smith • Jaushua Stewart • **TAMPA** • Robert W. Ross • Linda C. Smith • **TEMPLE** • Hiram C. Carter • Jack M. Davis • Audrey M. McMurray • Gary R. Salmon • **TOGUS** • Carolyn A. Doherty • Patrick P. Gagne • Mary E. Swain • **TOMAH** • Larry A. Bogle • **TOPEKA** • Howard C. Miller • **TUCSON** • Frederick M. Springer • **TUSKEGEE** • Lloyd Clements Jr. • Nelson McCloud • Michael G. Stinson • **WASHINGTON, D.C.** • Perryn B. Ashmore • Tracee D. Barnes • Donald M. Boseman • Gaye E. Broadway • Rosemary Bryan • Allen J. Cannon • Robert T. Frame • Mary E. Gross • Patrick Harris • Robert B. Holbrook • Arna A. Hunter • Thomas J. Kniffen • Dennis B. Lee • Michion D. Lewis • Robert M. Lucas • Marianna T. Mardeusz • Dani L. Marks • Stanley E. Mitchell • Juliette Mosteller • John A. Patterson • Veronica D. Randolph • Maggie G. Rountree • William M. Sivley • Lamont E. Stokes • Ricardo Wilkins • Thomas A. Yeager • **WEST HAVEN** • Kevin A. Muravnick • Charles D. Torres • **WEST ROXBURY** • William A. Gavazzi • Mark E. Meaney • **WHITE CITY** • John H. Mitchell • Gregg L. Ramsdell • Gary W. Thompson • **WICHITA** • Virginia L. Dronney • Barbara L. King

*list compiled by the Office of Human Resources and Administration as of Aug. 29, 2002

VACO Employees Honor Korean War Veterans



Honoree Jesse Pardue and his family take a look at the Korean War exhibit in the lobby of VA Central Office.

The Korean War was once labeled a “police action” and later called a “conflict.” Words used to describe the war had a powerful influence on public perception, ultimately leading some to call Korea “The Forgotten War.” To the men and women who fought there and the families of the 36,000 Americans killed on the battlefield, the Korean War is anything but forgotten.

In recognition of the war’s 50th anniversary, VA Central Office hosted a ceremony July 25 to honor Korean War veterans. It was a simple ceremony, but for the veterans and families who attended, it was a day to remember. The veterans, all friends or relatives of VA employees, came to Washington, D.C., to receive the Republic of Korea Korean War Service Medals. The medals were initially offered more than 50 years ago, but never issued.

Following a tour of the White House, the veterans and family members gathered in VA Central Office, where Vice President Richard Cheney joined Secretary

Principi and others in honoring their wartime service. Before introducing the Vice President, Secretary Principi spoke about the unwavering courage and determination Korean War veterans showed in combat. “They did not shrink from battle; they did not yield to fear; they did not abandon their cause,” he said.

Vice President Cheney called the ceremony a “tribute to a distinguished group of Americans.” He noted that Korean War veterans seldom receive the attention they really deserve. “On behalf of the President and the nation, I want to say ‘thank you’ from all of us,” he said.

Ismael Colon, a private in the Army during the Korean War, was speechless after the ceremony. Perhaps he was still recovering from jet lag. His family surprised him by flying him in from Puerto Rico the day before the ceremony to show him how much they honor and respect his military service. Colon said he had no idea what was in store for him in Washington, D.C., and that the ceremony was something he’ll

never forget. His daughter Rayda Nadal is a health systems specialist in the Office of the Inspector General.

A spirited cheer went up from the crowd when Bridget Downey received the Korean War Service Medal on behalf of her late husband Joseph Downey. An Irish immigrant, Downey was drafted into the Army and fought in Korea just two years after arriving in the United States. In the audience were 31 members of her family, most of whom drove from New York to attend the ceremony.

His daughter, Eileen Downey, is a 28-year VA employee and program analyst in the VHA Revenue Office. She said the family wanted to attend the ceremony as a tribute to her mother and father.

Jesse Pardue flew in from Selma, Ala., for the ceremony. He served in Korea during 1950 and 1951 as an Army rifleman and platoon leader. After the ceremony, he and his family stopped off in the VA Central Office lobby to take a look at a special Korean War exhibit. It included two of the original 9-foot high molds used to cast statues that are part of

the Korean War Memorial on the National Mall, as well as a selection of artifacts left at the memorial over the years.

Pardue stopped in front of a display board of grainy, faded images. Pointing to pictures of himself during the war, his eyes misted as he described his experiences as a 57-millimeter recoilless rifleman. With a range of 4,300 yards and the ability to take out tanks and other heavy equipment, the 57-mm was a major source of firepower. Pardue said the big gun also drew a good deal of enemy fire. He struggled at times as he tried to share his combat memories. “It’s a tale I’ve never told,” he explained. He is the nephew of William Hester, an exhibits specialist, who helped arrange the medal ceremony.

VA Central Office employees came up with the idea for the medal presentation while thinking of ways to mark the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. They invited headquarters employees with relatives or friends who served in the war to participate in the program. About 25 veterans or next of kin took part in the medal ceremony. **VA**

Young Volunteers Brainstorm Recruitment Strategies

If we want to figure out the best way to recruit young volunteers, why not ask the kids themselves, reasoned Jim Delgado, director of VA’s Voluntary Service Office. That’s exactly what he did during a focus group with some of the best and brightest youth volunteers who

came from across the country to visit VA Central Office on Aug. 6.

Some still in high school, others in college, they are all past recipients of either the James H. Parke Youth Scholarship or the Disabled American Veterans Commander’s Youth Scholar-



Youth volunteers from all over the country came to Washington to brainstorm strategies the Department can use to attract more of their peers to volunteering.

ship. They came to VACO to brainstorm strategies the Department can use to attract younger volunteers. Their ideas included establishing student volunteer committees at VA hospitals to focus local efforts, partnering with schools to conduct recruitment drives, and making sure young volunteers feel as though they are part of the VA team.

Nineteen-year-old

Wendy Koegel began volunteering at the Marion Campus of the VA Northern Indiana Health Care System when she was 13. Her mom and dad, Chris and DeeAnn Koegel, are both recreation therapy specialists there. Wendy said the best idea she heard at the meeting was to change the way young people see VA. "I think a lot of kids don't really understand what VA is," she said. "They don't

understand these are veterans who served our country, these are our heroes."

One idea the group came up with was to develop a database of student assignments so potential volunteers could go online to get a feel for the types of opportunities available at VA. In true volunteer fashion, Adam Brown, a volunteer from the Topeka, Kan., VA Medical Center, offered to make it happen. The computer engineering major runs a computer consulting business. "I'm the techie," he said.

After brainstorming ideas with Delgado and staff from the Voluntary Service Office, the students met with Deputy Secretary Leo S. Mackay Jr., Ph.D., who talked about VA's role in American society, its contributions to the past and expectations for the future. Before heading off to another meeting, he left them with some encouraging words. "I'm glad that you spent

some time with us here today," he said, "and for those of you who may be interested in spending more time with us, in a career with VA, we sure do need you."

So how did the brainstorming session turn out? Delgado said he was pleased with the results. "They have given us tremendous insight," he said.

The brainstorming group was rounded out by Gabriel Anzueto, from the South Texas Veterans Health Care System; Danny Merced, a 20-year-old who has volunteered at the Miami VAMC nearly half his life; Philip Nodhturft III, a Dartmouth College sophomore who founded the Tampa VA Junior Intern Program at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital; Frank Rios, a high school senior who has volunteered for the past seven years at the Miami VAMC; and Matthew Scott, a high school senior who volunteers at the Tampa VAMC. [VA](#)

Secretary Seeks Advice of Disabled Veteran Entrepreneurs



Disabled veteran entrepreneurs share their perspectives on how VA can do a better job of awarding contracts to businesses owned by service-disabled veterans.

"I'm embarrassed and quite honestly, disappointed, in our performance," admitted Secretary Anthony J.

Principi, referring to VA's track record in awarding contracts to disabled veteran-owned small businesses.

"Obviously, we need some advice."

The comments came during a meeting with several service-disabled veterans who own small businesses. Under Public Law 106-50, all federal agencies are required to award 3 percent of contracts to businesses owned by service-disabled veterans. Last year, VA fell far short, awarding just one-quarter of 1 percent, and this year isn't looking much better.

The low numbers prompted VA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization to team up with the Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management and form a task force

to address the issue. One of the first things they did was to invite disabled veteran business owners to VA Central Office to share their perspectives on ways the Department can do a better job.

Randy Slager, president of Bethesda, Md.-based Catapult Technology, Ltd., an IT service and consulting business, said he finds it extremely difficult to do business with VA. He said other agencies have taken steps to help small businesses. The Department of Transportation, for example, has a short-term lending program in which they front up to 85 percent of an award to a

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In Memoriam: Former Secretary Jesse Brown



Former VA Secretary Jesse Brown died Aug. 15 at his home in Warrenton, Va. The 58-year-old Vietnam veteran and former Disabled American Veterans official had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's

disease, and lower motor neuron syndrome, which attacks nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord.

Brown, who served as VA Secretary from 1993 to 1997, took pride in calling himself the Secretary "for" Veterans Affairs. He ordered sensitivity training for all VA employees as part of a campaign he called "Putting Veterans First."

Brown was himself a combat-disabled veteran. While on patrol in Da Nang during the Vietnam War, the young Marine was wounded when an enemy bullet shattered his right arm, leaving it partially paralyzed.

Under Brown's leadership, VA decentralized its health care structure, began

to offer more outpatient, primary care services, and expanded benefits for former prisoners of war and veterans suffering from Agent Orange and Gulf War-related illnesses. Brown is also credited with increasing VA services to homeless veterans with a grants program, and expanding programs for women veterans and veterans suffering from PTSD.

He vigorously and successfully fought budget cuts favored at the time by the Office of Management and Budget and Congress, winning funding increases for VA in four annual federal budgets. He often said that he won those funding battles because "we hold the moral high ground."

Brown began his long period of service with the DAV in 1967 as a national service officer trainee in Chicago. Transferring to Washington, D.C., in 1973, he rose through the ranks, eventually serving as the organization's executive director from 1989 to 1993.

After leaving VA, he formed Brown & Associates, a planning and marketing consulting firm.

Former President Bill Clinton and Secretary Principi were among the dignitaries who attended Brown's funeral service at the National Cathedral in Washington on Aug. 21. The former Secretary was buried with full honors at Arlington National Cemetery. **VA**

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small business.

"One of the big problems in running a small business," said Slager, "is having the capital up front once you win the award. This program has been critical for us. You may want to take a close look at it." Slager's company received DOT's 2001 Small Business of the Year Award.

Another disabled veteran business owner, Allen Cage, president of AOC Solutions, Inc., predicted that VA wouldn't meet its contracting goals unless management makes them mandatory. "You've got to provide some incentives," he said.

He gave an example of how his company lost a bid on a VA contract to a big business, but ended up doing the job as a subcontractor. "Small business can handle a lot of those jobs—just give

us a chance," he said. He also suggested that VA create a national database of disabled veteran-owned small businesses. Then, if a hospital, regional office, VISN or other organization needs to contract for services, they can check the database and solicit bids from companies listed there.

Do you want to solicit a contract from a disabled veteran-owned business? The best way to start, according to Scott F. Denniston, director of the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, is by calling the VA Center for Veterans Enterprise at 1-866-584-2344 or visiting their Web site at www.va.gov/vetbiz. He said doing business with veterans is a sound decision for VA. "This is who we are and what we're about." **VA**



Tom Clancy greets Michael A. Moore, executive assistant in the Office of Policy and Planning.

Writer Clancy Draws a Crowd

Best-selling author Tom Clancy was in Central Office on Aug. 15 signing copies of his latest Jack Ryan novel, *Red Rabbit*. The line of employees waiting to have their books signed by the former Maryland insurance broker stretched down the hall outside the food court. Clancy's novel is being sold in VA canteens to help promote the retail sales and services provided by the stores to veterans and employees nationwide.

The prolific writer is the second major celebrity to join VA Canteen Service's marketing efforts. In the spring, NASCAR legend Richard Petty gave VA permission to use his name and likeness in Canteen Service ads and promotions.

Flu Shots Benefit the Elderly, Study Shows

Long before the official end of summer, doctors began preparing for the return of an old nemesis by pumping up the benefits of the flu shot. They're calling for an increase in influenza vaccinations, particularly for people older than 65.

Their message is supported by a study of 100,000 people tracked over two flu seasons. In the study, which was published in August in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, lead author Dr. Eelko Hak, of the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, noted that the benefits of the flu vaccine are even greater for people who are over 65 and have an existing medical condition. An accompanying editorial written by a physician from the Mayo Clinic highlights the dangers of the flu—approximately 20,000 Americans die from influenza in an average year, just about as many who die from HIV.

A previous study conducted at the Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research Center at the Minneapolis VAMC found the nation could save \$1.3 billion a year if all full-time workers, ages 18-64, received annual flu shots.

Buffalo Study Helps Solve Lung Infection Mystery

Clever bacteria populations may be changing just enough to keep ahead of patients' immune systems, causing a mysterious intensification of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)—the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. More commonly known as chronic bronchitis and emphysema, COPD affects nearly 15 mil-

lion people nationwide.

Researchers at the Buffalo, N.Y., VA Medical Center have ended decades of controversy by proving populations of infectious bacteria are changing constantly in the lungs of COPD patients, allowing the bacteria to strike again and again—sometimes with deadly results. Their findings, appearing in the Aug. 15 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, may explain why healthy immune systems cannot prevent these recurring infections.

Intensified COPD symptoms deprive patients of oxygen through severe shortness of breath and coughing that produces thick, sticky sputum (phlegm). Researchers studied samples of sputum from 81 patients over a period of 56 months. Findings show patients were fighting populations of bacteria that repeatedly changed over time, possibly keeping one step ahead of immune defenses.

Many of the patients' immune systems seemed to be working normally, yet bacterial infections rebounded after apparently being eliminated. This prompted researchers to look more closely at the nature of the bacteria. Instead of simply measuring the size and intensity of a bacterial infection, Drs. Sanjay Sethi and Tim Murphy led a VA investigation of the bacteria's molecular identity.

They suspected acquiring a new strain of bacteria brought on the dangerous infections, causing the already sick patients to cough, choke and experience severe shortness of breath. Proving this would require a new way to identify one strain of bacteria from another. The study suc-

cessfully recovered about 4,000 separate strains of bacteria. New technology involving DNA testing enabled investigators to study the molecular signature of the bacteria, resulting in extremely accurate identification.

"People with COPD may have nothing wrong with their immune systems but they keep getting these recurrent infections—our findings may explain why this happens. It appears that when a person gets an infection and makes a good immune response, that response is only good for that particular bacteria strain," said Sethi. Investigators believe their findings may lead to novel ways to treat bacterial infection. "We can use these observations to understand the immune response to bacteria and possibly develop vaccines that keep pace with the changing strains," said Murphy. Fifty patients are actively involved in this ongoing study, and enrollment continues. VA's Medical Research Service will support the project through 2004.

VA and Harvard University Sign Technology Transfer Agreement


VA and Harvard Medical School signed an agreement July 19 defining how they will cooperate on turning shared research discoveries into commercially available health care technologies. Harvard is the 39th academic affiliate of VA to sign such an agreement, under which VA shares credit and financial interest in new inventions by researchers with VA and academic appointments, and works with its university partners to bring them to market.

The goal of these agreements is to quickly move research advances from the lab to clinical practice, while providing revenue to support VA researchers.

The Harvard agreement, signed by Secretary Principi and Harvard Medical School Dean Joseph Martin, M.D., Ph.D., also marked completion of negotiations on a licensing agreement between VA and a commercial firm for an invention by VA researchers at the West Roxbury Division of the VA Boston Healthcare System. The invention, a device for storing and preserving the heart and other organs for transplant, is the first developed, patented and licensed strictly by VA without a university partner under VA's new technology transfer program policy.

"This is an important step for VA because it represents the first time our technology transfer program has brought a VA invention full circle, from bench side to bedside, 'in house,'" said program manager Mindy Aisen, M.D.

VA revised its technology transfer policy in 2000 to ensure the Department receives credit and financial rewards for technologies developed by its researchers. Previously, academic affiliates were allowed to pursue full ownership of inventions generated in labs operating under joint VA-university auspices.

Under the new policy, Principi said, "VA is going to get credit for the work our researchers have done, and are doing. If that work results in financial gain, we are going to use that gain on behalf of the veterans we serve." 

Before resigning from her position as Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, **Robin L. Higgins** established an annual grant of up to \$1,000 to pay the expenses for one veteran each year to participate in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. She named the grant the Michael Rosenberg Athletic Award, in honor of her grandfather, a World War I veteran. Her grandfather served in the 27th Aero Squadron from 1917-1919. He was treated in military hospitals and VA facilities after losing his legs and an arm to disease. The grant will go to a first-time athlete receiv-

ing treatment in a VA facility who would be unable to participate in the Wheelchair Games without financial assistance. VA's under secretary for health will make the selection.

Ten vet centers were designated "Vet Centers of Excellence" by an external panel of experts. "These are the centers that have excelled in quality readjustment counseling services," said Dr. **Alfonso Batres**, chief officer of VA Readjustment Counseling Service. Team leaders at the 2002 Vet Centers of Excellence are: **Robert Erwin**, Anchorage, Alaska,

Vet Center; Cheryl Burgor, Santa Cruz, Calif., **Vet Center; Maria Crane**, St. Petersburg, Fla., **Vet Center; Betsy Tolstedt**, Evanston, Ill., **Vet Center; Gregory Burham**, Missoula, Mont., **Vet Center; James Garrett**, Albany, N.Y., **Vet Center; John Townsley**, Raleigh, N.C., **Vet Center; Hilario Martinez**, San Antonio **Vet Center; Linda L. Parkes**, Spokane, Wash., **Vet Center;** and **Johnny Bragg**, Morgantown, W. Va., **Vet Center**. There are 206 vet centers nationwide that annually serve more than 130,000 veterans and handle at least 900,000 visits from veterans and their family members.

Center, courtesy of their Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee. A group of about 21 boys between the ages of 8 and 18 spent the day at the medical center. They learned CPR and met with officers from the San Francisco police and fire departments, who spoke about the dangers of drugs and gangs and the importance of staying in school.

The Department of Labor has created an Internet portal to hundreds of Web sites containing information on benefits and services available for veterans, active-duty military, reservists, and members of the National Guard. The e-VETS Resource Advisor Web site provides the details on a variety of federal and state benefits, including job assistance, federal employment, housing and education. Visit the site at: www.dol.gov/elaws/evets.htm.

A new software program created by VA is making it easier for veterans service organizations to prepare disability claims on behalf of veterans. Using the new software, a VSO representative who holds power of attorney for a veteran can review medical information in the veteran's electronic record at VA health facilities. Previously, they had to fill out a standard form and drop it in the mail to request a copy of medical records. To ensure privacy, the software limits a user's access to the medical record of only those patients for whom he or she holds a valid power of attorney. As a second safeguard, the software provides read-only access, meaning users cannot add, delete or modify the record in any way. **VA**

Retired Major General **William A. Moorman**, formerly the Judge Advocate General of the Air Force, has joined VA to lead a review of all VA regulations to make them more user-friendly for veterans, veterans service organization representatives and VA personnel. In addition to sorting out what the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims called a "confusing tapestry" of regulations, Moorman's group will also establish and manage a more standardized, efficient and open process to develop new regulations within VA. The initial review of the regulations governing veterans' and their families' entitlement to compensation and pension benefits was completed in early September. The rewrite project for compensation and pension regulations is expected to take about two more years to complete.

July 10 was "Take Your Sons to Work Day" at the **San Francisco VA Medical**

Tuning in to the Veteran



Host **Adrian Cronauer**, right, and VA Central Office panelists **Kent Simonis**, director of Health Administrative Services, left, and **Bob Perreault**, director of the Business Office, tape the first edition of VATV at the Washington, D.C., VAMC.

"Tuned in to the Veteran" is the slogan for a pilot TV program called VATV taped in August at the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center. In the inaugural program, which was put together by the VHA Office of Special Projects, a panel of VA experts in areas such as eligibility, third-party payments, stroke and hepatitis C addressed an audience of medical center patients and family members.

As part of the program, the audience had the opportunity to ask the panel specific questions about the topics discussed. Dr. **Robert H. Roswell**, Under Secretary for Health, visited the studio to greet the veterans and participate in the program.

Dr. Rory Cooper, one of the world's foremost authorities in wheelchair design and director of the Center of Excellence for Wheelchair and Related Technology at the VA Pittsburgh



Cooper

Healthcare System, received the 22nd Olin E. Teague Award on Sept. 18 during a ceremony in the U.S. Capitol's Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C. The award is named in honor of the late Olin E. Teague, who was a strong advocate for America's veterans, and is presented each year to

a VA employee for exemplary contributions to the rehabilitation of war-injured veterans. Cooper is a U.S. Army veteran and life member of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. His work has affected thousands of his fellow veterans. He was a pioneer in wheelchair racing and became the first person to build a racing wheelchair that shared no common parts with a standard one. As a doctoral student, he studied the ergonomics of wheelchair propulsion and began to explore ways to reduce secondary disabilities resulting from repetitive strain injuries. His work elevated the quality of wheelchair design, increased understanding of secondary disabilities among wheelchair

users, and improved the availability of high-quality products and services available to disabled veterans.

Luella Onken, a U.S. Navy veteran, was recognized on her 90th birthday as the most senior volunteer at the **Sioux Falls, S.D., VA Medical Center**. Sioux Falls City Mayor Dave Munson and South Dakota Governor William Janklow proclaimed July 15 Luella Onken Day in honor of her birthday and the 25 years and 30,000 hours of service she has provided as a VA volunteer.

The NAACP recognized **Anthony T. Hawkins**, staff assistant in the **Office of Resolution**

Management in VA Central Office, for his work with minority veterans pro-

grams and for fostering and promoting equal opportunity in VA. Hawkins received the 2002 Benjamin L. Hooks Distinguished Service Award from Kweisi Mfume, NAACP president and CEO, on July 9 during the 93rd Annual NAACP National Convention in Houston. The award is named in honor of Benjamin L. Hooks, the sixth NAACP executive director, who served in the 92nd Infantry Division during World War II and saw combat in Italy.

Albany, N.Y.-based **VISN 2** received the Veterans Health Administration's highest quality award, the Kenneth W. Kizer Quality Recognition Grant Award. It

is the second time **VISN 2** has received the award since its inception in 1998. According to **Dr. Lawrence H. Flesh**, acting network director, the award is a tribute to the more than 5,000 employees in **VISN 2**, which includes VA medical centers in **Buffalo, Batavia, Albany, Bath, Canandaigua** and **Syracuse**. The award, based on the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria and open to each of VA's 21 networks, includes a \$300,000 grant earmarked to fund initiatives that improve the quality of care provided to veterans. **VISN 2**, along with another two-time Kizer Award recipient, **VISN 20**, headquartered in Portland, Ore., have previously made it to the "Consensus" stage in the Baldrige award program, the stage at which organizers decide whether to conduct a site visit.

The **Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) Foundation** will present their G.V. Sonny Montgomery Award to Faye G. Abdellah, Ed.D., R.N., the first nurse to hold the rank of Rear Admiral and the title of Deputy Surgeon General for the United States, on Oct. 24 in recognition of her service to VA nursing. Abdellah was instrumental in the joint venture between VA and the Department of Defense that resulted in the innovative Distance Learning Program, which uses videoconferencing and other technologies to prepare advanced practice nurses. The NOVA Foundation is a non-profit organization supporting improvements in care through nursing research and scholarships. **VA**

Longtime VA Research chief retires



Dr. John Feussner, flanked by Secretary Anthony Principi and Deputy Secretary Dr. Leo S. Mackay Jr., was honored at a retirement ceremony on Capitol Hill.

John R. Feussner, M.D., retired on Aug. 16 after 28 years of service to VA. Feussner, who had served as VA's Chief Research and Development Officer since 1996, has become chairman of the Department of Medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston.

During his time in Washington, D.C., Feussner led the development of the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative, a nationally recognized program that is helping translate research results into practice. Under his guidance, VA established the federal government's first independent, external accreditation program for human research, ensuring that veterans who volunteer for VA clinical research studies receive the greatest possible protection. Feussner was the first recipient of the Mark Wolcott Award "for exceptional service in providing outstanding clinical care to our nation's veterans."

Fishing at Angostura Reservoir near Hot Springs, S.D., nearly turned tragic for a veteran treated recently at the **VA Black Hills Health Care System** when he fell onto some rocks in an isolated area and fractured his right leg. He tried for nearly nine hours to flag down boats for assistance. It wasn't until evening that he was noticed and rescued by **Greg Schumacher**, social work associate in Mental Health Services at the **Hot Springs VA Medical Center**, who was fishing in his own boat. Schumacher recognized the veteran's pickup truck in the parking lot and sensed something was wrong because there was no sign of the owner. He told his family, who were fishing with him, "If he was OK, he'd be out here fishing." Schumacher brought his boat in close to shore. He spotted the veteran and realized he was in trouble. With the help of his family, he brought the man to Urgent Care at the Hot Springs VAMC, where he was treated.

Before his discharge this spring, staff frequently spotted one partially paralyzed veteran cruising the tunnels of the **Knoxville, Iowa, VA Medical Center**. After being readmitted without his electric wheelchair, though, he lay virtually immobile for weeks. That is until **Dick Reed**, a Vietnam veteran and food service worker at the facility, stopped to talk while delivering supper trays one day. The vet explained that his electric wheelchair was left at his home in Colona, Ill., 200 miles from the Knoxville facility. After speaking with his doctor, Reed told the veteran that he

would personally retrieve it on his next day off. Though other kitchen staff offered to contribute gas money or an air-conditioned truck, Reed would accept no help. On a sweltering day, he and his young daughter made the 400-mile round trip journey and brought the electric wheelchair back to the thankful vet. Co-worker **Nancy Mecham** describes his action as "Dick Reed in a nutshell—always there for the veterans and his fellow employees."

Trintis Glenn never thought he'd use the CPR training he learned at the **Beaumont, Texas, VA Outpatient Clinic**. But two days after taking the class, he used his new skills to save the life of his friend's 6-month-old daughter. "I didn't think. I just moved. In my mind, I ran through everything that needed to be done, and I followed the procedures that I had learned during the class," said Glenn, a security guard at the clinic. A piece of cereal had gotten caught in the infant's throat and she couldn't breathe. Glenn quickly cleared the baby's airway and she resumed normal breathing. "I hope everyone will take the time to learn CPR. It could mean the difference between life and death for someone you care about," said **Brenda Wyer, R.N.**, who teaches the CPR classes. Wyer volunteered to become a CPR instructor and took it upon herself to develop classes for clinic staff.

It was a simple request—a veteran with lung cancer at the **Tampa VA Hospital** wanted to pass on to his children the Purple Heart he had received during

World War II. The trouble was, he had lost the medal and was told it would take two years for him to get a new one. With his cancer, the veteran was afraid he wouldn't last that long. When student volunteer **Philip Nodhturft III** heard the story, he decided there had to be a way to help. He asked **Christine Feeser**, Voluntary Service chief, if there was anything he could do to help get the medal sooner. She suggested he speak with **Edward Sitton**, a Voluntary Service representative with the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Together, they verified the veteran was injured on Christmas Eve 1944 in a German mortar attack and obtained a replacement medal. The medal was presented on Aug. 7, National Purple Heart Day, during a formal ceremony at the Tampa VA Hospital.

A 20-year-old Augusta, Ga., man was pulled from Thurmond Lake on July 4 after being submerged underwater for nearly five minutes. Passersby saw the man go under and swam out to rescue him. **Gerry Hydrick**, a registered nurse at the **Augusta VA Medical Center**, was in the area and rushed over to administer CPR until the airlift medical unit arrived. The man recovered and was released from the hospital six days later.

On Aug. 12, **North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System** police officers **Milt Gordon**, **John Zirkelbach**, **Mark Hunton** and **William Kiefer** were driving to a firearms training session when they came upon a vehicle accident. A severe electrical storm with

heavy rain was pounding the area and visibility was extremely low. The officers immediately called for local law enforcement and medical assistance. When they discovered one of the drivers was seriously injured, they rerouted a heavy volume of traffic away from the accident scene and treated the injured driver.

While attending church services, a fellow churchgoer asked **Rebecca Duncan, R.N.**, a nurse from the **Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System**, if she could accompany him into the foyer. As they walked, he explained that he was having chest pains and had a history of cardiac bypass surgery with grafts. Duncan knew right away the situation was serious. She asked if he had his medication and helped administer the proper dosage. She summoned an ambulance and the man was transported to a local hospital for further testing and treatment. He was discharged four days later.

Police Officer **Curtis Myers** had just started his tour of duty at the **G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center** in Jackson, Miss., when he heard a "Code 99" announcement. Myers quickly responded and found a wheelchair-bound veteran in the canteen who was choking and turning blue. With the help of a patient, he lifted the struggling veteran from his chair and performed the Heimlich maneuver. The maneuver forced a piece of food from the man's airway and he began breathing again. He was taken to the emergency room, treated and released. **VA**