



Clearlake VA Clinic: Organization of the Year

The Clearlake VA Clinic was recently honored with the Lake County Chamber of Commerce's "Organization of the Year – Nonprofit" award, as part of the 16th annual Stars of Lake County Community Awards Program. A beautiful Stars Trophy with a certificate of recognition was presented by Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA) during the celebration held at the Soper Reese Theatre in Lakeport on November 16.

Nominated by one of their own Veteran patients, the Clearlake VA Clinic was recognized for the tireless work they perform on behalf of others and for their involvement in the community, according to Lake County Chamber of Commerce CEO Melissa Fulton.

The clinic, open since November 2010, serves over 1,800 Veterans in Lake County annually. Staff members are involved in community outreach events such as: Veterans Day celebrations, Open Houses, VetConnect, and they also participate in Lake County emergency response. Clearlake VA Clinic recently received a \$5,000 transportation grant from PG&E through Red Cross' Service to Armed Forces initiative to assist qualifying Veterans in traveling to the clinic for their medical appointments.

"Our goal is to reach all Lake County Veterans to let them know we are here to serve them," said Clearlake VA Clinic Medical Director Kirk Andrus, MD, who attended the award ceremony along with Clearlake's Director of Mental Health Teresa Timmons, MD, and Administrative Officer Wendy Carter. "I'm very proud of my staff and their achievement—we have an outstanding crew and it's a pleasure to work with them."



Back row, from left: Medical Staff Assistant (MSA) Emelie Revheim; Admin. Assistant Delia de los Santos; Clinical Director Kirk Andrus, MD; Nurse Manager Carol Brown, RN; Sharon Bour, LVN; Sally Gibson, MSA; Lab Tech. Angel Gardea; and Security Guard Dave Bischell. Middle row, from left: Sue Weldy, LVN; Barbara Harrold, LMFT; Daisy Greene, LVN; Medical Director of Mental Health Teresa Timmons, MD; Fred Berdan, RN; Volunteer Linda, and Bishop Cohen. Front row, from left: Quetta Bricka; Admin. Officer Wendy Carter; and Jennifer Gegenheimer, RN. Not pictured: Tina Huggins, RN; Tia Delong, MSA; Heather Olds, LCSW; Anne Tait, MD; Security Guard Dave Drew; Volunteers Gernot Geldon, Wendy Groshong, and Carolyn Alexander.

"I'm pleased that the community and our Veterans recognized us for this award," said Carter. "This validates us, that we're on the right track and that we care about our patients."

"It is a great honor to receive this award," said Nurse Manager Carol Brown, RN. "This is a true testament of our service to our Veteran patients. We work hard to provide excellent quality care, and this award is a reflection of our dedication and service to all Veterans of Lake County."

From the Desk of the Director

It's been two months since I've had the honor of becoming your Medical Center Director. As many of you have heard, I began my career as an Occupational Therapist, have worked in Medical Centers in the private sector, and have served as the Associate Director at the Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System. Most recently, I was the Deputy Director of the Office of Cultural Transformation and Patient Centered Care. This career path has allowed me to see health care from all different perspectives and has given me a true appreciation for the important work being done at the patient bedside. I have said that San Francisco has always been my favorite city, and that was a motivating factor for my interest in coming to this Medical Center. But, more importantly, I was well aware of the outstanding and innovative clinical care, education and research being conducted here each and every day. Having an opportunity to work with such dedicated, committed and creative staff – in my favorite city – was an opportunity I didn't want to pass up!

In the short time I've been here, I've had a chance to learn about and be part of some really great things. A few of those include:

- The Golden Gate Awards Ceremony, where we celebrated the mental health recovery and accomplishments of 14 PRRC Veterans who are actively returning to the Bay Area community.
- Our Veterans Outreach Program at the City College of San Francisco — a wonderful example of truly providing personalized, proactive, patient-centered care.
- The anniversary celebration at our Clearlake VA Clinic and how the Veterans in that community have completely embraced the staff and clinic, really making it their own, complete with their own Veterans' art exhibit!
- The CLC's Memorial Service where staff and family members remembered our CLC residents whom we have lost.
- Our Veterans Day ceremony where I was moved to tears by the honesty and vulnerability exhibited by Sergeant Danny Acree, as he spoke of his experiences and challenges.

I've also heard from many of you who haven't been shy in expressing your concerns and issues. Parking, space and staffing challenges are a few of the repeated themes I've heard. In the next few months I will be focusing on establishing our leadership team to include the recruitment for a new Associate Director and a new Associate Director for Patient/ Nursing Services. We will focus continued efforts on Strategic Planning. Not only will we be looking at what new programs and initiatives we can develop, but also ensuring that staff at ALL levels are involved in this process.

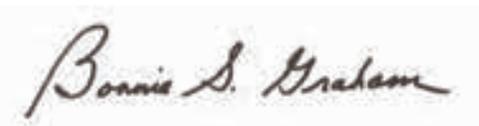
We will also be focusing on our facility planning and space allocation to ensure we are using our space efficiently and effectively. This will not be an easy task, but it is sorely needed. We'll also be looking at processes and teamwork to support our clinical care, and I look forward to sharing more about that in the very near future.

Our 2013 All Employee results show that our staff are experiencing burnout and exhaustion, and want more engagement and transparency with supervisors and senior leaders. Together we will look at ways to engage employees at all levels to ensure that staff feel empowered, supported and involved.

Lastly, I intend to continue to walk the halls and see and hear about the excellent work you are doing to ensure our Veterans are receiving the best possible care we can provide. I know you are all working hard at all levels and in all areas to provide proactive, personalized, patient-centered care, and I'm looking forward to seeing it in action!

I'm excited about our future and am looking forward to the good work we will do together.

Sincerely,



Bonnie S. Graham, MBA
Medical Center Director

CLC Award for Veteran Centered Care Champion



The Community Living Center (CLC) has recently established the CLC Veteran Centered Care Champion award. This award recognizes a staff member who generates enthusiasm, sustains momentum and embodies the values of patient-centeredness, and who helps the hospital culture evolve toward treating all of our Veterans as unique individuals.

The first recipient, as selected by both staff and Veterans, was Staff Nurse **Maria Lee, RN,**

CNS, NP (pictured on the left with **Lynn Martin, RN, MS, PMH-CNS,** Acting Chief, CLC Nursing Service). Ms. Lee works individually with any CLC Veteran who is in need of ongoing strengthening/exercise/practice either after they complete or before they begin physical therapy. She is known for her patience, and her soothing, encouraging approach when working with the most behaviorally challenging Veterans.

Ms. Lee motivates Veterans to participate in difficult, often tiring exercises and makes her sessions pleasant by individualizing the approach to each Veteran's specific needs and preferences. She treats all Veterans with unconditional respect and dignity. Ms. Lee is simply remarkable in her ability to help each Veteran feel important, unique, and understood.

It's Flu Season

The flu season is in full force! We are seeing an increase in patients and staff who are sick with influenza. The symptoms of influenza are fever, chills, cough, runny nose, general aches and pains, and headache. You may have all of these symptoms or just a few.

If you do not feel well, please do not come to work while you are sick and experiencing any of these symptoms! Flu vaccine is still available and is an important way to prevent you, your family and patients from getting the flu. Flu vaccine is available in Employee Health, (Bldg 203, Room GB-12) Monday through Friday from 10 – 11 a.m. and 2 – 3 p.m.

STAR-VA: Intervention for Our Most Vulnerable Veterans

Veterans with PTSD and/or brain injury are twice as likely as other Veterans to develop dementia. Today, Vietnam Veterans are entering the VA system for long term care of dementia at an alarming rate. To address this need, a new national VA program called STAR-VA has been developed. The program provides an interdisciplinary behavioral approach to managing challenging dementia-related behaviors without medication.

The STAR-VA protocol was written by 10 VA geropsychology & behavioral management experts, including CLC Gero-Psychologist **Elizabeth Sutherland, PsyD,** and PRRC Psychologist **Michael Drexler, PhD.**

A 2011 pilot of the STAR-VA occurred at 21 VA Community Living Centers (CLCs), and the results demonstrated significant reductions in the frequency and severity of challenging dementia-related behaviors, and significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression in CLC Veterans with dementia, without the use of psychotropic medication. Although preliminary, this was considered a new evidence-based model for treatment of dementia.

Thanks to Dr. Sutherland's application, the SFVAMC CLC has been chosen from among many applicants for the second pilot phase. Dr. Sutherland and advanced practice psychiatric nurse Lynn Martin, RN, have received national STAR-VA training, and will be the SFVAMC on-site trainers.

Training for all CLC staff will include the following concepts:

The Human Brain is Complex
Dementia is a Disease
Dementia-Related Behaviors have Meaning and Purpose
People with Dementia get Anxious and Depressed
Communicate Without Words
Listen
Comfort
Redirect (Don't Confront)

We are honored to be among those few VA sites chosen to participate in this important project.

Highlights Around the Medical Center



SFVAMC's **Environmental Management Service (EMS)** received the *"Infection Control Award of Excellence"* for achieving the highest hand hygiene compliance for the entire facility during the August hand hygiene period prevalence. Being ranked at 85 percent compliance was a remarkable achievement as EMS not only scored 26 percent higher than the facility average, but they also moved from one of the poorer-performing hand washing professions in February, to the highest. Congratulations EMS on a job well done!

Shelia Branner, Decedent Affairs Officer, has been recognized on the Bereaved Family Survey Honor Roll for FY 13 (Quarter 2). This distinction is reserved for staff, named by Veterans' family members, as having provided exemplary care for a Veteran who died in a VA facility.

Kristine Yaffe, MD, Chief, Geriatric Psychiatry, was the recipient of the Thirteenth Annual Faculty Research Lectureship – Clinical Science for her ground-breaking patient-oriented research



on the epidemiology of dementia. The lecture, titled "Optimizing Cognitive Aging," took place on October 28 in Cole Hall, Parnassus Campus, followed by a reception. Since 2001, this award has been bestowed on an individual member of the UCSF faculty with outstanding achievements in clinical research. Nominations are made by UCSF faculty, who consider the clinical research contributions of their colleagues and submit nominations for this prestigious award to the Academic Senate Committee on Research.

The National Center for Prevention (NCP) selected SFVAMC's MOVE! Program and the Move, Strength and Wellness (MS&W) Veteran's group as one of its "FY13 HPDP Bright Spots." Only 20 VA sites were chosen to present their QI projects at the NCP national VA webinar. The webinar was presented by the interdisciplinary team of: **Chris Geronimo, CTRS; Gary Yee, RD; Christian Dillon, RT, CPT, GFI; Mara Fleischer, PhD; Kelly Busjaeger, PhD; Sandra Smeeding, PhD, and Stephen Rao, PhD.** The pilot MS&W group has demonstrated excellent results in improving weight loss, improving physical fitness and in healthy behavior change.

Allison Broennimann, MD, SCAN-ECHO mental health provider, was presented two Congressional recognition certificates from Congressman Mike Thompson and Congressman Jared Huffman, from her Hep C Treatment Support Group patients for her work in the SCAN-ECHO program.

Assistant Police Chief **Byron Alvarez** and Project Engineer **Allan Federman** competed in the U.S. Open Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Championships in Santa Cruz. Byron won a bronze medal in the Senior Blue Belt Division. Allan fought a tough opponent in the Masters White Belt Division.



Physician Assistant **Joe Estrada's** youngest daughter, Whitney is now a member of the UC Davis Women's Gymnastics Team and is majoring in nutritional science. His eldest daughter, Jowilyn graduated with honors from UCLA with a BS in Electrical Engineering, was hired by Boeing, and is engaged to be married in July 2014.

Psychologist **Sarah Palyo, PhD**, Physical Therapist **Kate Schopmeyer**, and Pharmacist **Tracy Lin**, all received specialty certification as Certified Pain Educators by the American Society of Pain Educators.



Cyndi Bakir, RN, participated in the East Coast Climate Ride (320 miles in 5 days), bicycling from NYC to Washington DC through

four states to raise awareness and support sustainability, active transportation, and environmental causes. She raised \$2,830 to benefit the SF Bicycle Coalition.



Congratulations to **Keith Armstrong, LCSW,** Director, Couples and Family Program, on his selection as the 2013 VA Social Worker of the Year. This award celebrates the accomplishments of a gifted social worker who exhibits exemplary service in the performance of his/her job, builds links between individuals and groups in the organization, thinks

and acts innovatively, exceeds the needs of internal and external customers, and demonstrates outstanding competency in his job. Keith created and implemented the first VA mental health clinic on a community college campus (City College of San Francisco Veterans Outreach Program). He has also developed new models of service delivery for providing treatment for families and couples. Also, his publications, "Courage After Fire" and "Courage After Fire for Parents" are highly valued in supporting returning service members, Veterans and their families.

J. Ben Davoren, MD, ACOS for Clinical Informatics, is now one of the first 400 physicians to become board certified in this brand new specialty of the same name. Clinical Informatics is the scientific discipline that seeks to enhance human health by implementing novel information technology, computer science and knowledge management methodologies to prevent disease, deliver more efficient and safer patient care, increase the effectiveness of translational research, and improve biomedical knowledge access.

Congratulations to **Jeff Manipon, OI&T,** who has achieved VHA Mentor Certification at the resident level. Jeff completed VHA Core Mentor Training and actively participated in 25 hours of mentoring, coaching or precepting.

Approximately 50 **SFVAMC employees, Veterans, and volunteers** marched in the 2013 SF Veterans Day parade. Marchers carried a SFVAMC banner, all military branch flags, the POW/MIA flag and state flags.



The **Veterans Outreach Program at City College of San Francisco (CCSF)** was recognized with the American Psychiatric Association's 2013 Silver Achievement Award for its innovative program that provides accessible mental health services for Veterans enrolled in college. Transition from military life to college life can be difficult, and this program helps Veterans to succeed by providing them with comprehensive specialty mental health care on campus rather than at a VA facility across town. The services are provided by the San Francisco VA Medical Center. The Veterans Outreach Program also gives Veterans access to a supportive network of peers on campus.

San Francisco VA Medical Center neurologist and research scientist **Karunesh Ganguly, MD, PhD,** has been named as a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers, the highest honor bestowed by the United States Government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers.



Dr. Ganguly is recognized for his groundbreaking research on the role of neural learning in a brain-machine interface (BMI). His research uses principles and tools from the field of neural engineering to develop BMIs for Veterans and others with permanent disabilities after spinal-cord or brain injury. BMIs aim to seamlessly integrate electronics with the nervous system to enable skilled control of artificial prosthetics.

2013 AES Results

The All Employee Survey (AES) is administered to all VA employees, and this year's survey was held in September. SFVAMC had a response rate of only 38 percent. One issue that undoubtedly contributed to our low turn-out is the fact that employees feel as though they have not been provided with the results. In addition, employees feel that the Medical Center has not made changes in practices and ways of doing business based on the survey results.

So, what were the results? For the Medical Center as a whole, areas where we showed lower scores from 2012 were: direct supervision; senior management; promotion opportunity; customer satisfaction; praise and overall satisfaction. Areas where we scored higher than the control group included burnout, turnover plans, and exhaustion.

Staff also had the opportunity to make comments on areas for improvement and areas of strength. Common themes for areas in need of improvement included: staff involvement in decision making; lack of support from supervisors; and regular staff meetings. Themes for our strengths included: Staff work well together; strong clinicians and clinical teams; and an overall belief that we provide good patient care.

Supervisors have been provided copies of the overall results, as well as results for specific work areas. They have been encouraged to share this information and to engage staff in developing plans for improvement. In addition, results are available on the HR SharePoint.

Outreach Committee Seeks Volunteers

Are you passionate about VA's mission? Does the idea of meeting new people at community events appeal to you? Would you like to help Veterans obtain information about VA health care services and benefits?

SFVAMC's Outreach Committee seeks staff to volunteer to help with outreach activities and events throughout the Medical Center's service area. If interested, talk with your supervisor about being a designated person for outreach and then contact Kathy King, Rural Health Coordinator and Chair, SFVAMC Outreach Committee at (707) 569-2431 for more information.

In Your Own Words

As a health care provider to America's Veterans, our mission is to ensure we provide proactive, personalized, patient-centered care. We all play a role in ensuring our Veterans experience nothing but the very best. So, we asked, "How does your job impact patient care?" Here's what we learned:



I screen candidates for employment and make recommendations to the recruiter. I help find the best nurses, doctors, CNAs, psychiatrists, and all of our professional positions to help our Veterans.

-- James Bullock, HR Specialist



I manage programs, development, positions, staffing, safety, and policies. In every way I'm thinking about the Veteran.

-- Mary Ann Nihart, Chief Nurse, Mental Health/Critical Care Services



I make sure the bathrooms, trash, and any biohazards are taken care of so people who work in those areas have one less thing to worry about, for the large collective good.

-- Stanford Anderson, Housekeeping Aide



I manage an office dedicated to improving and individualizing the health care experience for all of our patients.

-- Natalie Purcell, Program Director, Office of Patient Centered Care

All Employee Appreciation BBQ 2013



Service Awards: September - December 2013

[SOURCE: SFVAMC Human Resources]

• 10 Years •

Riswan Aslam	Gordon Gardner	Anthony Tan
Sharifa Bano	Bonnie Graham	Leah Thiebaut
Steven Batki	Linda Haechler	Tracey Troyer
Lilly Bourguignon	Larry Jackson	Jesus Valencia
Jennifer Boyd	Lois Jacobs	Nadine Walas
Milagros Braceros	Dinah Jalipa	
Louis Castro	Sarah Kyrie	
Marissa Chan	Mendy Miller	
Robert Chan	Sharlyn Navarro	
Stephen Chapman	Donna Nelson	
Katharine Chong	Mary-Theresa Penler	
Linda Cooper	Meriam Prado	
Carlos Corvera	Caroline Putnam	
Jennifer D Arcy	Adoracion Quicho	
Richard Fidler, II	Kenny Rucker	
Emilia Gaetos	Janak Shah	

• 15 Years •

Marilissa Almirez
Mildred Bigornia
Debora Brown
Virginia Catambay
Loretta Chuck
Ernest De Anda
Georgina Del Valle
Crispin Domingo
Joycelyn Evanado
Carlos Ibanez
Elaine Lanier-Bohan
Scott Maynard
Candace McGhee
Parvin Peddi
Guillermo Rustia III
Anh-Tuyet Saba
Michael Stick
Resurreccion Velasco
Elena Venuto

• 20 Years •

Lourdes Aguas
David Ashe
Gina Braganza
Margie Carlton
Rene Castaneda
Thomas Castillo
Eva-Marie Christman
Milagros Dela Fuente
Chris Geronimo
Susan Hallahan
Lila Jaffray
Linda Larrabee
Alfred Lee
Audrey Lee
Tita Manubag
Thomas Neylan
Michele Peters
Mark Ratcliffe
Girlie Reyes
Laura Spangler
Michael Szotak
Alexander Tong
Annette Zecca

• 25 Years •

Rodolito Andal
Sheila Branner
Kristi Chambers
Susie Choy
Deborah Kiser
Joyce Lam
Robert Ludy
Faith Luss
Manon Marovich
Lisa Narvaez
Jane Price
Belinda Reyes
Ann Wood-Gray

• 30 Years •

Carmelo Anselmo
Roberta Barajas
Ruby Bergunio
Sheila Brock
Ramon Datar
Arnulfo Germes
Judy Lew
Henry Leung
Lia Locasto
Daniel Maddix
Lynn Pulliam

Joan Bailey

• 35 Years •

Yvonne Brooks
Denise Danridge

• 40 Years •

Gabriel Moody

• 50 Years •

Willy Labuguen

IN MEMORIAM

*Ejermana B. Dela Cruz, Medical Service
Annette Sarmiento, Eye Clinic*

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