



BEACON



FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF THE SAN FRANCISCO VA MEDICAL CENTER

APRIL 2012

First Veterans Justice Court Opens in San Francisco

For the first time ever, a Veterans Justice Court (VJC) has opened at 575 Polk Street in San Francisco. This court is for Veterans charged with non-violent alcohol or drug-related felonies who may be experiencing life difficulties such as mental health issues or homelessness. The new VJC is a collaboration between the San Francisco Superior Court, the Department of Public Health, community-based service agencies, and our Medical Center.

The intention of the VJC is to connect Veterans who have mental health, substance abuse and medical issues, to treatment in a timely manner, while avoiding lengthy incarcerations and further involvement with the justice system. Instead of spending time in jail, Veterans are diverted and sentences are either delayed or replaced with treatment for a period (usually 12-18 months) during which medical and mental health care is provided by the San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC) or the SF VA Downtown Clinic. If this diversion is successful, the Veteran is less likely to repeat the behaviors and offenses that resulted in court system involvement.

The VJC currently focuses on Veterans living in specific geographic areas in San Francisco: the Tenderloin, SOMA, Civic Center and Union Square, who have misdemeanors or non-violent felonies. The process includes clinical meetings where updates are provided by treatment staff, and a court process that allows each involved Veteran to get feedback on their progress from the judge.

“Most of the Veterans involved in this court are currently homeless or at risk for homelessness, and this program will offer them an opportunity to be considered for permanent housing through the VA’s HUD/VASH program,” said Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist **Elizabeth Brett, LCSW**, who serves as a liaison between the court and the VA.

The court incorporates both rewards and sanctions to keep Veterans motivated in treatment, which may range from residential treatment and structured outpatient treatment, to drop-in groups. Upon successful completion of the VJC, charges may be reduced or dismissed.



Future plans involve a Veteran peer mentoring program that will pair court participants with a peer mentor who will support the Veteran throughout his involvement in the court. “We are also developing relationships with local law schools to provide services for a legal clinic at our Downtown Clinic to address civil related legal issues for Veterans,” said Brett.

“Often times our Veterans are caught in a cycle—they have civil legal issues which result in their becoming homeless, which leads to criminal justice involvement. Hopefully this legal service, along with the new VJC, will help prevent that cycle.”

Santa Rosa VA Clinic Home to First Veterans Legal Clinic

California’s first free Veterans Legal Clinic has opened at our **Santa Rosa VA Clinic**. Held every Wednesday from 1-4 p.m., the clinic provides a variety of legal services to enrolled Veterans by an experienced Northern California criminal defense attorney. Legal services offered will help Veterans address issues such as driver’s license suspensions/revocations, outstanding warrants, and criminal records (expungement, sealing, pardons and certifications of rehabilitation).

This new clinic is a result of the efforts of Veterans Justice Outreach Social Worker **Kevin Wright, LCSW, BCD**, and **Social Work Service** leadership.

Hippotherapy Lifts CLC Veterans' Spirits

Hippotherapy is a form of physical, occupational and speech therapy in which a therapist uses the characteristic movements of a horse to provide carefully graded motor and sensory input. It is often used to treat people with physical or mental challenges. Unlike therapeutic horseback riding (where specific riding skills are taught), the movement of the horse is a means to a treatment goal when utilizing hippotherapy as a treatment strategy.

SFVAMC is lucky to be within driving distance of the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy, the only California facility that is a member of the American Hippotherapy Association. It is located at a state-of-the-art, and tranquil, 12-acre facility in Woodside. CLC Veterans visit this facility once a month and participate in adaptive riding, therapeutic driving (steering a horse-drawn carriage), and grooming. This program provides physical and emotional strength building therapies for Veterans using the movement, strength and compassion of horses.

This nature-oriented physical activity promotes positive social interactions for Veterans with traumatic brain injury, PTSD and physical limitations. It also helps to awaken pleasant memories, especially for our Veterans raised in rural communities.



As part of the Hippotherapy program, CLC residents take part in therapeutic driving, which is steering a horse-drawn carriage.

New Privacy Officer

SFVAMC's new Privacy and Freedom of Information Act Officer is **Brynn Cole**. She transferred from White River Junction VAMC to SFVAMC in 2010 and was previously SFVAMC's Assistant Emergency Management Coordinator. In that capacity she helped rebuild that program.

She brings to this position a wealth of VHA knowledge, as well as effective communication skills, the right attitude and enthusiasm to excel in the position. As SFVAMC's Privacy Officer she is responsible for:



- Ensuring local facility compliance with applicable laws, regulations and directives.
- Working closely with SFVAMC's Chief Information Officer and Information Security Officer to promote employee awareness of VA's responsibility to protect Veteran and employee personally identifiable information.
- Responding to privacy complaints and violations.

Remember, privacy is everybody's responsibility! If you have privacy concerns or questions, Brynn can be reached at Brynn.Cole@va.gov or ext. 2135.

Compliance & Ethics Week

National Compliance & Ethics Week is April 29 - May 3, and the theme is "Excellence Through Integrity." This is a good opportunity to reinforce the significance of ethics in the work we do for Veterans. SFVAMC staff and Integrated Ethics Program Officers will celebrate this important week by conducting activities that raise awareness of ethics and VA core values. For more information, please contact Brynn Cole at Brynn.Cole@va.gov or ext. 2135.

Major Milestone for RRT

When a patient at our Medical Center suddenly isn't doing so well, who do you call? The Rapid Response Team (RRT)! And, that team has reached a major milestone as it has now responded to 1,000 calls!

"We started the RRT in 2006," said ICU Medical Director **Leslie Zimmerman, MD**. "The idea is that before a patient becomes seriously ill, what we recognized is there was a period of time when they were beginning to deteriorate, and if we had a mechanism to rescue those patients in that early period, we could avoid the crisis of full resuscitation. So we developed a team that could swoop in and do an early assessment, evaluation, and start treatment of patients who had these early signals that things are not going well."

The RRT consists of an ICU physician, ICU nurse, and an ICU respiratory therapist. The program began in the main hospital and has since been expanded to include the Community Living Center, the Primary Care Clinics, and Radiology.

"Anyone can call us," said Zimmerman. "A physician, nurse, respiratory therapist, dentist, and even families and patients can call (ext. 4444) and say, 'Something is not quite right. Here's the situation, and here's where the patient is. Please come help with an evaluation.'" RRT members respond within five minutes, surrounding the patient with a "safety net" of expertise.

The greatest benefit of having the RRT is that it "saves lives," said **Wendy Quek, RN**. "There are less code blues called, and if we intercept early, it's a better outcome for the patient." Congrats to the Rapid Response Team on a job well done!



Rapid Response Team members, from left, **Evangeline Rico, RN**; **Wendy Quek, RN**; **Jayson Morgan, MD** (back); **Minda Laquian, RRT**; **Leslie Zimmerman, MD**; and **Arwin Neypes, RN**.

New Vascular Surgery Program

The Vascular Surgery team has initiated a program focused on thoracoabdominal aortic aneurysms (TAAA). They have started a pilot in the Western Region to standardize TAAA evaluation access and management.

This program was inspired by a total endovascular TAAA repair pioneered by **Drs. Tim Chuter** and **Linda Reilly** from UCSF and SFVAMC. This treatment has lower morbidity and mortality, and faster recovery than can be achieved with an open repair. This program gives the Vascular Surgery team the ability to receive patient referral/consults from any other VAMC facility in the nation.

The team has been working diligently to create the systems that allow any other VA to send e-consults and digital images and is working to facilitate Telehealth visits in collaboration with their primary care and local vascular surgery provider. Their vision is that the path they are blazing will allow them to treat Veterans anywhere for other rare illnesses.

Help Share Clean Air

In the spirit of VA's mission of focusing on wellness and patient-centered care, and in support of national VA directives, Smoking Policy MCM 00-16 has been revised and changes where people can now smoke.

Smoking is now allowed only in one of three new smoking shelters. The new shelters are located between across from Building 12 (near the Emergency Department), and outside the entrance of Building 7. There is a third smoking shelter, for use only by patients and staff in the Community Living Center, located on the southwest side on Building 208, accessible via the ground floor.

The smoking shelters provide employees and Veterans with an environmentally-enhanced area to smoke. These shelters include heating, air conditioning, air and smoke filtering.

The policy applies to all patients, employees, visitors, volunteers and contractors, and will be enforced by campus Police. Thanks for your adherence to the change in smoking locations and helping to share clean air!

Highlights Around the Medical Center

Michael Drexler, PhD, received the Exceptional Educator Award at the 2012 National Academy of Neuropsychology Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. This award is bestowed by the Women in Leadership Committee of the National Academy of Neuropsychology, in recognition of guidance and support during professional training and with gratitude for extraordinary supervision. Congratulations!



Carmen Peralta, MD, (pictured right) is one of 10 national winners of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Young Leader Awards. The award recognizes leaders ages 40 or under for their exceptional contributions to improving the health of the nation. The awards also signal the winners' strong potential for future leadership, and highlight the important contributions that people can make early in their career to improve health and health care for all Americans. Congratulations!



Kimberly Hiroto, PhD, psychologist at the Santa Rosa VA Clinic, has been appointed as the early career psychologist for the American Psychological Association Committee on Aging, a six-person committee dedicated to furthering the science and practice with older adults. It's a three year term and will involve several projects focused on issues including policy, education, and science. It comes on the heels of her being part of the APA Working Group to revise the Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults.



SFVAMC won the top "gold" 2012 Cornerstone Recognition Award for VISN 21. This annual award is bestowed by the VA Center for National Patient Safety. Kudos to Patient Safety Manager **Diane Laney** and Quality Manager **Laura Stewart**, and to all who participated in the RCA process over the last year!



Millie Hughes-Fulford's work on International Space Station (ISS) was nominated and selected as the top Life Science discovery on International Space Station by NASA. She will present her work in the Plenary Session at the July 16 Congress of the American Astronautical Society in Denver.

A new patient-friendly online tool called PREPARE (www.prepareforyourcare.org) has been developed by researchers from SFVAMC, UCSF, and NCIRE to help people make complex medical decisions. The PREPARE website incorporates content identified in new research to address key patient- and surrogate-identified aspects of preparing for advance care planning and decision making. The site provides concrete examples through videos and other mechanisms on how to identify what is most important in life, how to communicate that with family and friends and doctors, and how to make informed medical decisions. SFVAMC researchers on this new tool included **Rebecca Sudore, MD, Sara J. Knight, PhD, and Ryan D. McMahan, BS**.



Michael W. Weiner, MD, Director, Center for Imaging of Neurodegenerative Diseases (pictured below), is one of three physicians to be awarded the 2013 Potamkin Prize for Research. The \$100,000 prize is an internationally recognized tribute for advancing dementia research. The Potamkin Prize honors researchers for their work in advancing the understanding of Alzheimer's disease, Pick's disease and other related disorders.

Weiner is receiving the prize for standardizing imaging and biomarker tests to find better ways to detect and diagnose Alzheimer's disease. He helped form the Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI), which was the first to perform amyloid positron-emission tomographic (PET) imaging brain scans at multiple sites across the United States. Today, amyloid PET imaging is widely available for diagnosis and use in clinical trials. "None of this would be possible without SFVAMC's strong leadership and support," said Weiner. "ADNI, a \$40 million project, is the only scientific project that shares data with the world as we receive it; we do not embargo it. Sharing this information has increased collaboration and research in the area."



Community Living Center nurse **Amy Tong, RN** recently passed her Gerontological Nursing Exam. Well done!

Congratulations to **William Marks, MD**, who has been appointed Chief of Health Professions Education in the national VA Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA), the office responsible for overseeing VA's health professions training enterprise and managing VA's extensive array of academic partnerships. In this executive leadership role, Dr. Marks is responsible for VA's health professions education portfolio, which encompasses clinical education for more than 117,000 health professions trainees in more than 40 disciplines across the country each year.

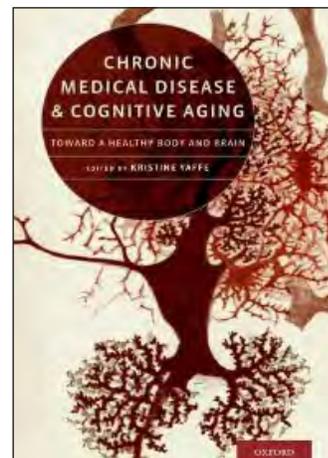
Congratulations to the winners of the Santa Rosa VA Clinic's 2012 Halloween Hat Contest: **Victoria Wright**, "Most Creative" (pictured right); **Susan Petitt**, "Most Festive"; **Ronica Smith**, "Most Creepy"; and **Rose Jacob**, "Most Original."



The SFVAMC's LGBT Employee Resource Group will be walking in the SF Gay Pride Parade on June 30. The Parade is an excellent opportunity to show support and gratitude to LGBT servicemen and women, and to show pride in the SFVAMC. Participation is open to VA employees, Veterans, and any interested family members. Contact **Leh Hickman** at jerry.hickman@va.gov for more information.

Congratulations to **Michelle Tapia, LCSW**, Community Living Center. She's the 2012 recipient of the Secretary's Hands and Heart Award, which recognizes VA employees whose dedication to Veterans is marked by the highest standards in patient care. It is awarded to an employee who exhibits characteristics that best exemplify the finest in patient care and who provides exceptional, sustained, compassionate, and direct patient care that clearly goes above and beyond the call of duty.

Chief of Geriatric Psychiatry **Kristine Yaffe, MD**, recently edited the book, *Chronic Medical Disease and Cognitive Aging*. The book discusses current research on the association between a variety of chronic medical diseases and cognition and—where appropriate—promising interventions or accepted treatment strategies. While a cure for many diseases continues to be elusive, insights garnered from the interplay between diseases of the body and mind may help point the way to novel therapeutic strategies to improve cognitive function late in life.



Science of Caring, a publication of the UCSF School of Nursing, featured an article, "Training Nurse Practitioners and Physicians for the Next Generation of Primary Care" (Jan. 2013 by Andrew Schwartz). At the VA, the team concept of providing care is known as Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT). SFVAMC's EdPACT training program gives second-year NP students their own longitudinal panel of patients, trains NPs alongside second-year medical residents and gives staff NPs dedicated precepting time – all three concepts virtually unheard of outside the VA. The article quotes PACT program co-directors **Rebecca Shunk, MD**, and **Susan Janson, NP**. The article may be viewed at: <http://scienceofcaring.ucsf.edu/future-nursing/training-nurse-practitioners-and-physicians-next-generation-primary-care>.

Joseph Estrada's, Neurosurgery Physician Assistant, daughter Whitney (pictured right with proud parents Joseph and Wilma) competed in the Northern California Women's Gymnastics Level 9 competition, and won her first-ever state championship in uneven bars. Way to go Whitney!



SFVAMC Hosts Student Veterans Day at CCSF

The San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC), City College of San Francisco (CCSF) and NCIRE joined forces to host the first Student Veteran Day. The event served as a multi-agency collaboration aimed at enhancing the connection between student Veterans at CCSF, the SFVAMC, community support resources, and internal CCSF programming.

The event, which was attended by 128 student Veterans, provided 12 sessions of educational programming, informational tables and individual consultations. Student Veterans were afforded priority access to eligibility and enrollment services at SFVAMC, academic support services at CCSF, individual benefits counseling, mental health services and more.

The event also marked an important collaboration between VA clinical service and VA research because the event included the presentation of research protocols to attendees.

Special thanks to **Keith Armstrong, LCSW, Bridget Leach, LCSW, and Gerard Choucroun**, who spearheaded the planning and implementation of this successful event.

The SFVAMC has had a presence at CCSF since 2011 when we opened the Veterans Outreach Program. This program has been nationally recognized for providing comprehensive services to student Veterans. Services include enrollment, social work case management, medication management, smoking cessation, mental health counseling, and referral for additional services not available on campus.



Students had access to many resources during Student Veterans Day at CCSF.

MLB and SF Giants Visit Hospitalized Veterans



Staff on Unit 2B pose with Giants Legend Gaylord Perry. He pitched from 1962-1983 for eight different teams in his career, including the Giants from 1962-1971.

Employees and patients had an opportunity to be part of the World Series activities with a very special visit to the Medical Center by Major League Baseball and SF Giants executives and former ballplayers. Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig, President and CEO of the SF Giants Larry Baer, Giants Legend Will Clark, Hall of Famer and Giants Legend Gaylord Perry, and former MLB All-Star/Hall of Fame Broadcaster Jerry Coleman visited with patients prior to Game Two of the 2012 World Series. This was part of Major League Baseball's support for the military through their Welcome Back Veterans initiative by dedicating Game Two of the World Series to Veterans and military families.

The visitors met with patients on Unit 2B, handed out autographed baseballs and goodie bags, and posed for pictures. Even staff got in on the action as Giants Legend Gaylord Perry entertained the group and tossed them baseballs. Veteran students from the City College of San Francisco were also on hand to welcome the guests to the unit. While the special guests only had a very limited time to spend at the Medical Center, patients and staff had a great time and enjoyed the visit.

That night at AT&T Park, there was a special pre-game ceremony honoring World War II-era baseball Veterans, including Hall of Famer Bobby Doerr, Broadcaster Bob Wolff, and Manager Tommy Lasorda. The visit to our Medical Center must have brought the Giants good luck because they went on to win the World Series with a 4-0 sweep of the Tigers!

Construction Updates

Newly Renovated Emergency Department Space:

After a year of renovations, construction on the non-acute care area and waiting room of the Emergency Department (ED) has been completed. This project was necessary, in part, because the construction of the new 12 bed acute care ED left the existing space looking dated and poorly utilized.

Since the Emergency Department is staffed 24 hours a day, the 6,000 square foot renovation was accomplished in four phases. Essential to this was the collaborative efforts of Biomedical Engineering, Operations & Maintenance Engineering, Space Planning, IRMS, EMS and Project Engineering. Their efforts allowed the ED to continue to care for Veterans throughout the construction.

The newly renovated area provides a brighter and more welcoming waiting area. **Christopher Brazell**, project engineer, worked closely with ED management to create a space with a higher level of privacy, security and accessibility for patients and staff. In addition, the new ED, which was completed in 2010, has a better capacity to function around the clock with increased emergency power, and more effective and energy efficient systems with occupancy sensors for lighting and digital climate controls.



The newly renovated ED waiting room.

Monumental Electrical Project Almost Finished:

Since its design in 2005 and construction start in 2011, SFVAMC has been methodically undertaking a \$25 million electrical construction project that has modernized and replaced over 80 percent of our electrical distribution system.

“The entire project involved replacing the infrastructure of our power system at the facility,” said Electrical Project Engineer **Travis Dilts**, project lead and contractor liaison.

Highlights of this project include:

- Installing 40,000 linear feet of new underground electrical utilities.
- Upgrading from 5,000 volt to 15,000 volt electrical distribution system for more available capacity.
- Upgrading and replacing 13 major electrical substations and 451 electrical distribution panels.

“We’ve also expanded our electrical capacity to support new Radiology and OR equipment, new air handlers, new chillers and other ventilation equipment,” said Dilts. “By ‘expanding’ I mean modifying, retrofitting or renovating areas to make them better for patient use.”

“When the project is completed, the Medical Center will have enough capacity for any future buildings, future upgrades, and more than enough power to do whatever we need to do,” he said.

To date, this is the largest non-recurring maintenance (NRM) project ever to be funded through VA Central Office, according to Engineering Service Chief of Facilities **Dirk Minnema**. “It’s a testament to our electrical project engineers, Travis Dilts and **Nick Rustia**, that we were able to get all this equipment in, well ahead of schedule,” he said.

Impressively, all the work was performed on weekdays and with minimal impact to hospital services. and is almost a year ahead of schedule, The project should be completed in June.

Service Awards

The following employees have been honored for their years of service between January - May 2012. [SOURCE: SFVAMC HR Department]

• 10 Years •

Evangeline Abelgas
Evelyn T. Badua
Tony Ball
Barbara Bensing
Daniel Bertenthal
Michelle Bosuego
Nanette Briones
James K. Carrico, Jr.
Maria Cordova
Evelyn DeGuzman
Kimiko DeVore
Gregory Elie
Leon Evans
Isabelita Fulton
James Gilbert
Lawrence Gould
Brenda Harding
Mark Hayes

Florita Macaraeg
Evana Mack
Kevin Mack
Fatima Magcaling
Jeff Manipon
Imelda Herrera
William Mulligan, Jr.
Pamela Paran
Marie Permann
Leonard Roberts
Nelson Schiller, MD
Karen Seal
Anait Sesi
Sudan Shakoor
Amanda Strickland
Arthur Tabungar
Irene Turnman

• 15 Years •

Linda Anastasi
Benjamin Apawan
Kenneth Castellano
Jean Clark
Rudy Conception
Deirdre Donovan
Daniel Ganoza
Nancy Gulino
K. L. Harris-Collett
Sherry Ledford
Deborah Mendoza
Paul Michell
Jerry Mills
Nathaniel Patrick
Ronald Patrocinio

Patrick Porter
Michael Pritchett
Daniel Roberts
Guillermo Rustia III
Myla Sanchez
Charissa Thomas
Terrie Tzeng
Mai Phuong Vu
Reginald Wilson
Walter Wu
Rita Yee
Debra Yelvington

• 20 Years •

Carolina Abaygar
Marianne Addington
Monica Allison
Erin Butler
Leroy Chan
Matthew Chappelone
Fred Contreras
Martin Cruz
Francis Durant
Richard Fontenot
Linda Green
Susan Karpenko
David Kjornes
Kimberly Land
Kevin Leech
Hon Leong
Edward Loweecey
Bonnie O'Brien
Rebeka Silva
Douglas South
Arthur Wallace

• 25 Years •

Hussam Alkhadra
Remy Balanon
Darryal Cooper
Candice Crider
Edna De Padua
Susan Hway
Brian Kelly
Alicia Lopez
Tom Lue
Mary Ellin Mannix-Cantillon
Rene Ruiz
David Saloner
Sue Schanbeck
H.J. Simmons-Myers
Linda Stubler
Evangeline Taylor
Cheryl Tuckerman

• 30 Years •

Frances Fong
Robert Hepplewhite
Mary Julian
Eileen Kennedy
Candace Kim
Kerry Mark
Nancy Pimentel
Phillip Scott
Mary Beth Tomasco
Lourdes Torres
Charles Watson
J. Williams-St Paul
Thressa Winn

• 35 Years •

Asteria Acosta
David Canlas
Doris Chan
John Dekutoski
John Desormier
Theresa Hashimoto
Roy Herren
Diana Hidalgo
Paul Simpson, Jr.
Betty Yee

• 40 Years •

Mary Eilerman
Jeff Joseph
Anna Rouge

• 45 Years •

Alice Aronow

IN MEMORIAM

Alan Winter, Member Services

The Beacon is published by the Office of Public Affairs for the employees of the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Please address suggestions, comments or story ideas to Judi Cheary, Director of Public Affairs (OOP) at judi.cheary2@va.gov or (415) 750-2250. The editor reserves the right to make changes and/or edits to any submission chosen for publication.

Writer/Editor/Designer: Judi A. Cheary

Writer/Photographer: Kellie Mendonca • Photographer: Edgardo Caballero

San Francisco VA Medical Center • 4150 Clement Street • San Francisco, CA • 94121