



The

# BEACON

FOR THE EMPLOYEES of the SAN FRANCISCO VA MEDICAL CENTER • WINTER 2007

## A Message from the Director

“The Beacon” has been revitalized! This quarterly publication will serve to keep you not only informed on what’s happening at our medical center, but will also help you to keep in touch with all of the good things happening with our employees.



One of the good things you will read about in this issue is the results from the “VHA All Employee Survey” that we completed in July. More than 76% of all employees completed this survey, which far exceeded not only our facility goal for this year, but it also surpassed last year’s response rate of 46%. I have said all along that part of the reason for our success was bribery – certainly the chance to win a 32” flat-screen TV didn’t hurt, just ask Georgine Wong, from Laboratory Medicine! But in all sincerity, I believe that the staff of the San Francisco VA Medical Center care about our workplace and workforce, and the fact that so many of you were willing to take the time to complete this survey is proof of that. While I am very proud of the overwhelming response to this year’s survey, more importantly, we should all be proud of the outstanding results.

The staff of the San Francisco VA Medical Center are some of the most dedicated and hardworking employees throughout the entire VA system. Our accomplishments and successes are proof of that. I want to thank you for taking the time to express your thoughts and opinions and thank you for your hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,

*Sheila M. Cullen  
Medical Center Director*

## Speaker Pelosi Visits SFVAMC

In observation of Veterans Day, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi spent the morning at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. During her visit, she received a research overview from Lynn Pulliam, MS, PhD, Michael Weiner, MD, and Paul Volberding, MD, and then toured the Nursing Home Care Unit.



*Following her tour of the NHCU, Speaker Pelosi held a news conference where she praised the care veterans receive from the San Francisco VA Medical Center.*

In the research overview, she learned about some of the current research being conducted in the areas of neuroimaging, post-traumatic stress disorder, and AIDS. “We presented recent results concerning our studies of veterans of the first Gulf War. These include effects of stress and exposure,” said Weiner.

Pelosi expressed her support of research and science. “Strong investments in science help us in every way,” said Speaker Pelosi during the briefing. “Science for the defense of our country, to grow the economy, for a healthier America and to preserve the planet. We have a moral responsibility to support scientific research.”



*NHCU Resident John Alexander, a 95 year old WWII veteran, served as Speaker Pelosi’s tour guide.*

Following the research briefing, Speaker Pelosi toured and met with patients at the Nursing Home Care Unit.

# All Employee Survey: Outstanding Results!

Several months ago we participated in the “2007 VHA All Employee Survey” and the results for our Medical Center were outstanding. More than 1400 of our employees responded to the survey, which is more than 76% of all of our employees. Nationwide, over 71% of all VHA employees responded to the survey – the most in the Department’s history. This survey measured your perceptions in the areas of:

**Job Satisfaction Index (JSI)**, which measured individual satisfaction with key job features.

**Organizational Assessment (OAI)** questions, which measured employee satisfaction in your immediate work group.

**Culture** questions, which measured employee perceptions of the general atmosphere of the facility overall.

So what did you think? In the JSI category, type of work, direct supervision and overall satisfaction had the highest scores, whereas promotion opportunities and pay satisfaction had the lowest scores.

For OAI, resources, work/family balance and diversity acceptance were the highest rated domains, and psychological safety and retention rated lowest.

And in the category of culture, SFVAMC rated the highest in the bureaucratic culture factor.

Overall, the SFVAMC improved in nearly all categories. In addition, our scores were near or at the highest throughout the VISN. The results for our Medical Center were overwhelmingly positive and we thank you for your efforts to complete this survey.

## Toastmasters Wants You!

Are you uncomfortable, nervous, or have difficulty speaking in public? Have you turned down opportunities for advancement because you couldn’t communicate effectively? Let the Lands End Toastmasters Club give you the skills and confidence you need to effectively express yourself in any situation. Toastmasters is the most efficient and enjoyable way to gain great communication skills. Toastmasters Lands End Club meets every 2nd and 4th Wednesday from 5-6:30 PM in either the Teak Room (2nd Wednesday) or the Auditorium (4th Wednesday). Contact **Elaine Lanier** at Ext. 2488 or **Gui Scheid** at Ext. 2497 for more details.

## HR Goes Online

The SFVAMC Human Resources Management Service is now online! The newly designed site has a wealth of information about benefits, retirement, classification, fingerprints/investigations, payroll, staffing, training, employee and labor relations. Employees can obtain HR forms, access Employee Express and Thrift Saving Plan, find benefit information, and take employee surveys directly from the website. Visit the HRMS Intranet Website today at [http://vaww.sf.med.va.gov/HRMS/hrms\\_index.htm](http://vaww.sf.med.va.gov/HRMS/hrms_index.htm).

## Thefts On A Rise: Safeguard Personal Items

We are experiencing a large number of thefts of wallets taken from unoccupied offices. When you leave your office, please secure your purses, backpacks, etc., in a locked drawer, and lock your office. It only takes a few seconds for someone to enter your office and locate your valuables. If you receive a call from someone identifying themselves as a bank or credit card representative who is making inquiries into “suspicious activity on your charge card (or ATM card),” DO NOT give any information to them, especially information such as pin number, date of birth, social security number, etc. Legitimate representatives of these companies will never ask for this kind of information over the phone. Make note of the incoming phone number on your telephone display and notify VA Police.



Please make every effort to safeguard your personal belongings and immediately report any thefts or suspicious individuals to VA Police at extension 2003 or 4400.

# Collaboration Leads to State-of-the-Art Procedure

by Jannette Jansson

SFVAMC's cardiology department and department of cardiovascular surgeons, led by Dr. Kendrick Shunk, recently collaborated to perform a very rare and unique procedure. Dr. James Geiger, a retired Cardiothoracic surgeon and former Chief of Cardiovascular Services at both Letterman and Walter Reed Army Hospitals, came to SFVAMC with severe congestive heart failure due to a leak around his new aortic valve. After many evaluations and discussions about a second open heart surgery it was determined that the risks were unacceptably high. With limited treatment options, Dr. Shunk's team agreed to attempt to close the leak remotely by way of a small catheter. Since the procedure has only been performed a few times anywhere in the world and had never been done at SFVAMC, success was not guaranteed.

An "ACU-NAV" ultrasound catheter was threaded into the right side of the heart to help visualize the leak up-close. Dr. Shunk was able to fix the leak through a small hole in the skin via small diameter catheters inserted through the patient's femoral artery and threaded up into the heart guided by real time x-ray images and intra-cardiac echo images. This approach to repairing a leak around a prosthetic aortic valve has been reported only one or two other

times in the literature. The cath lab team was able to seal the leak and Dr. Geiger immediately noticed an improvement. After being essentially bed-bound for a year prior to this procedure, Dr. Geiger is now able to walk 800 feet without difficulty and continues to improve. His immediate goals are to get his drivers license back, and to complete the 5 manuscripts that are waiting for him on his desk.



The team, pictured left to right: Laura McGill, RN; Dr. Kendrick Shunk; Shirley Sayavong, CVT; Monica Smith, CNA; Jackie Williams-St Paul, RN, MSN; Karen Rehder, NP; and Viet Do, CVT. (Not pictured: Michael Jackson, RN)

# Operation American Spirit Rolls Into Town

The San Francisco VA Medical Center recently hosted actor Jack Scalia and injured veteran bike riders who were taking part in Operation American Spirit. This was a 1,500-mile bike ride to raise awareness and funding for injured troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. The 16-day journey began in Portland and ended in San Diego. The riders made stops at VA medical centers along the way, including both the San Francisco and Palo Alto VA Medical Centers. While at SFVAMC Jack Scalia and injured veteran J.R. Martinez met with patients and staff on 2B. They thanked the patients for their service to our country. SFVAMC leadership and staff were on hand during the early Sunday morning visit to welcome the riders and thank them for their efforts on behalf of OEF/OIF veterans.

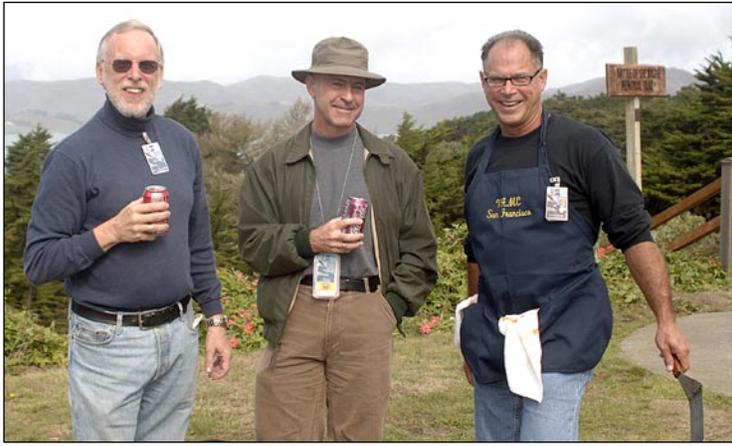


Actor Jack Scalia (fifth from the left) and injured veteran JR Martinez (far right) made a sunrise visit to SFVAMC before continuing their journey down the coast. The 16-day journey ended in San Diego.

# Annual All Employee Appreciation BBQ

The San Francisco VA Medical Center recently held the annual All Employee Appreciation Bar-b-que. More than 1200 employees attended the lunchtime event which featured delicious hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers and the ever-popular salmon burger. Thank you to Canteen Service for catering the event, and thank you to the many staff who volunteered to serve as cooks, servers, runners and helpers.





[PHOTOS: Ed Caballero]

# Highlights Around the Medical Center

Congratulations to **Cathey Sudduth Wallbank, RN, MSN**, on the accomplishment of her son Derek Wallbank, a reporter with the Lansing State Journal (LSJ), who received the Excellence in State House Reporting Award for online news commentary. He was honored for his series of columns analyzing and predicting the November 2006 elections on the LSJ's politics blog, The Capitol Journal. Wallbank is a 2006 graduate of Michigan State University and has been with the Lansing State Journal since August 2006.

**Michael W. Weiner, M.D.**, was recently awarded the prestigious William S. Middleton Award, VA's highest scientific honor in recognition of outstanding achievement in biomedical or behavioral research. Dr. Weiner was honored for his contributions to the advancement and application of brain imaging techniques, such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging and Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy, to neurodegenerative disorders, particularly Alzheimer's Disease. His work has also had high impact in the areas of PTSD and Gulf War Illnesses, both of which are significant to the VA.

**Janelle Harris, NP**, Eureka CBOC, is proud to announce that she finished the San Diego Rock and Roll Marathon in June 2007. Way to go Janelle!



Congratulations to **Judy Yee, MD**, on receiving the Visiting Professorship Award from the Society of Gastrointestinal Radiologists (SGR) for achievements in Radiologic research and education.

Congratulations to **Marek Brzezinski, MD, PhD**, Anesthesia, **David Daikh, MD, PhD**, Medicine, and **Michael Harper, MD**, Medicine, for being inducted into the UCSF Haile T. Debas Academy of Medical Educators. The academy promotes excellence in teaching, fosters curricular innovation, advances scholarship in medical education, and advocates for teachers and teaching at UCSF.

Welcome to Kayla Caliboso, daughter of **Ben Caliboso, Nursing Service**, who was born on August 13, 2007 at Kaiser Hospital in Vallejo CA. She weighed 8 pounds, 1 ounce.

**David Wofsy, MD**, Staff Physician at the San Francisco VA Medical Center recently was honored with the Lee C. Howley Prize for Arthritis Research from the Arthritis Foundation, one of the most prestigious arthritis-specific research awards in the United States. The Lee C. Howley Prize for Research in Arthritis recognizes those researchers whose contributions, during the previous five years, have represented a significant advancement in the understanding, treatment or prevention of arthritis and rheumatic diseases.



Dr. Wofsy's career has been devoted to the development of new therapies for people with severe forms of arthritis and related autoimmune diseases. He and his mentor Dr. William Seaman were among the first investigators to test the therapeutic potential of monoclonal antibodies in a mouse model for autoimmune disease in people. Within the past decade, this general approach has led to the development and eventual approval of new therapies for many arthritic diseases in humans. "It is humbling to receive an award of this type," said Dr. Wofsy. "The reality in science is that each investigator makes a small contribution that only has value in the context of what others have done or will do. To be singled out at the same time is very gratifying and a little embarrassing, since the award truly recognizes the work of many people."

**Marie Permann, RN**, became a "Certified Health Care Recruiter" by taking the credentialing exam at the National Association for Health Care Recruitment annual conference in Denver.

The **Infection Control Service** received a public health grant to improve employee flu vaccine rates. They held a week long event in November to kick off the 2007-2008 flu vaccine season

Congratulations to **Nilita Nicoud, RN, BSN, MHA**, National ICD Coordinator, who was invited to become a National Heart Rhythm Society Member. She looks forward to participating as a member in the annual Scientific Session at Heart Rhythm Society by sharing our National ICD Surveillance Program outcomes and future research.

**The San Bruno Outpatient Clinic** recently celebrated its two year anniversary with a special Welcome Home event for returning Afghanistan and Iraq veterans. The San Bruno Clinic cares for approximately 1,200 patients with new patients joining every month. They have launched an OEF/OIF outreach campaign, which includes ongoing contacts with local colleges and military units.

**Steve Murray**, Research, has a small non-profit production company ([www.makeitsoproductions.org](http://www.makeitsoproductions.org)) that he started in 1998. He produces fund raisers for AIDS organizations in the Bay Area and has produced about 100 shows including theatre, comedy and his own variety show series entitled "Viva Variety." Recently he produced an evening of outrageous comedy at the Herbst Theatre starring two-time Grammy award nominee Judy Tenuta, the "Goddess of Comedy" and Alec Mapa, "America's Gaysian Sweetheart." He has raised over \$50,000 and continues to produce shows on a regular basis.

**Dr. Karen Parko**, staff Neurologist and head of the SFVAMC Epilepsy service, was given the "Golden Toe" award by the UCSF Neurology residency class of 2007. This award is given in recognition of outstanding clinical teaching.

Seven SFVAMC nurses recently graduated from San Francisco State University, all receiving a Master of Science in Nursing. Congratulations to: **Elizabeth Handzlik, Alicia Dacanay, Susan Hallahan, Helen Lew, Beatrice Choi, Saida Adem, and Linda Chetaitis.**

Congratulations to **Cheryl Angcay**, TCU Nurse, on her marriage to **Kent Paller**, one of our Physical Therapists.

**Ann Hayes, BSN RN CBGN**, Charge Nurse GI diagnostic center, has been named President-elect of the American Board for Certification of Gastroenterology Nurses.

**Megan Kossar**, Social Worker, has collaborated with the Department of Aging and Adult Services to update a San Francisco County Resource Guide for Homebound and Disabled Adults. The Department of Aging and Adult Services is publishing the guide and will be distributing it to every agency in San Francisco County.

**Dr. Verna Gibbs**, Chair, Surgical Service QI (SSQI) Committee, recently presented at the NSQIP conference in Orlando, presenting a workshop on "Wound Classification Made Simple," for the nurse reviewers. Dr. Gibbs is a member of the Patient Safety and Peer Review committees at the SFVAMC.

## A Forrest Gump Moment

Fifty years ago, November 17, Robert Owen, MD, had a brush with history when, as a high school honor student, he had the opportunity to meet with President Dwight D. Eisenhower during his visit to Oklahoma City and prior to his nationwide speech on science and security. It was during this speech that Eisenhower spoke publicly of a civilian space agency for the first time and the "space race" was begun, following the launch of Sputnik a month prior.

During the 20 minutes he spent with the President, Owen talked about his future goals which included pre-med courses in general arts and sciences, and then medical school. He also had the President sign his algebra book, which he was reading while waiting to meet him. The President signed the book and said it was too bad it wasn't a book on military tactics which he would know more about, Owen recalled. "This was clearly my Forrest Gump moment," he said.



*Robert Owen (second from left) and fellow students had an opportunity to meet with President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The experience was well documented in local newspapers including this picture that appeared in the Daily Oklahoman.*

# Service Awards

Congratulations to the following employees who have been honored for their years of service between July-November 2007.

[SOURCE: SFVAMC Human Resources]

## 10 Years

Carolina Abaygar  
Liwanag Alano  
Alonzo Blunt  
Donald Carter  
Gregory Carter  
Joy Choi  
Chleo Clark-Norman  
Rudy Concepcion  
Robert Fama  
Douglas Goodin

Ricky Hoang  
Sharad Jain  
Gary Jarvis  
Jacqueline Kempis  
Estella Licaros  
Deborah Mendoza  
Paul Mitchell  
Shelley Miyasaki  
Claudette Ouimet  
Phil Robbins

Bertha Ruiz  
Milagros Saloma  
Myla Sanchez  
Monica Smith  
Manolo Stephens  
Charissa Thomas  
Patrick Vance  
Mai Phuong Vu  
Maria Wei  
Parthenia Yates

## 15 Years

Frederico Bala  
Nadia Bowden  
Leroy Chan  
Matthew Chappelone  
Ann Chu  
Ralph Cole  
Martin Cruz  
Rajvir Dahiya  
Marc Jacobs  
Joyce Hernandez

Barbara Hoffman  
Michael Kim  
David Kjornes  
Wendy Kwong  
Harry Lampiris  
Ronald Lee  
Kevin Leech  
Edward Lowecey  
Theodora Mauro  
Kathleen May

Carol McLaughlin  
George Mostella  
James Riley  
Esther Roberts  
Lynda Tawney  
Gladys Villanueva

## 20 Years

Josephine Avilla  
Jolly Brown  
R. Cajuelan-Ang  
Juanita Carter  
Kristi Chambers  
Barbara Coy  
Edna De Padua  
Romeo Delacruz  
Katharine Fairclough  
Jeffrey Fink  
Deborah Grady

William Henderson  
Maria Ignacio  
Karen Joines  
Grace Kan  
Duran King  
Sally Knox  
Johnny Laurent  
Timothy Leano  
Ronald Le Beau  
Maria I. Lee  
Gloria Martinez

Eileen Oleary  
Robert Outenreath  
Nicholas Rosenlicht  
Leilani Rozul  
Alejandro Sanchez  
Garfield Shuffer  
Evangeline Taylor  
Ray Van Raden  
Twyla Weinberg  
Robert Welch

## 25 Years

Susan Ammon  
Jean Bullard  
Elaine Der  
Andrea Henry-Davis  
Rosemary  
Hoffman-Herrera  
Joan Lonergan-Chase  
Maxine Papadakis  
Claudia Reynolds  
Barbara Standifer

## 30 Years

Steven Albrecht  
David Anderson  
Elizabeth Arentzen  
Carl Grunfeld  
Theresa Hashimoto  
Kathleen Hill  
Artie Holmes

Irving Jackson  
Jimmie Kwan  
Diana Nicoll  
Joseph Seaver  
Brenda Smith  
Jeanette Stark  
David Wofsy

## 35 Years

Raul Alejandro  
Joseph Doherty  
Mary Eilerman  
Griffiss Mcleod

Genaro Ocreto  
Sandra Perez  
Gloria Wilcher  
Sondra Yee

## 40 Years

Alice Aronow  
Charles Burkett  
Del Lewis

## 45 Years

Wilfredo Labuguen

## In Memoriam

**Fred Chan, Telephone Coordinator.** Fred had 37 years with the federal government, with 35 of them spent at the San Francisco VAMC. He was known and loved by many, who remember him as being kind, gentle and good natured. He has been described as being a consummate professional, a loving father, and friend to everyone. He will be missed by many.

**Dr. James R. Gum, Jr., Associate Director, Gastrointestinal Research Laboratory.** Dr. Gum is remembered as a distinguished scientist, researcher and teacher. He was a pioneer and international leader in the field of gastrointestinal research. Dr. Gum was not only a talented researcher and effective teacher, but he was also a very thoughtful and kind person who was respected and loved by many colleagues and students all over the world.

*The Beacon* is published quarterly 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, Public Affairs Officer (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.

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