



The BEACON

FOR THE EMPLOYEES of the SAN FRANCISCO VA MEDICAL CENTER • DECEMBER 2008

Speaker Pelosi Honors Veterans SFVAMC Hosts Road 2 Recovery



Photo by Eduardo Caballero

The San Francisco VA Medical Center hosted a Veterans Day Ceremony on Monday, November 10. Keynote speaker was the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker

of the House, who spoke to a standing room only crowd of over 150 patients and staff.

The Veterans Day ceremony marked the third time in the past 18 months that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has come to San Francisco's VA Medical Center; she says it is part of her pledge to put veterans first.

She thanked the veterans for their sacrifice and vowed to bring legislation in Washington to provide more help to veterans. "There's a saying among the troops that you leave no man behind," Pelosi said. "We aim to make that, leave no veteran behind, either."

Other speakers at the San Francisco VA Medical Center's ceremony included: ABC 7 Anchor Cheryl Jennings and Sloane Guy, MD, a SFVAMC Cardiothoracic Surgeon and an active duty Lieutenant Colonel in the Army. Dr. Guy is part of a unique sharing agreement with the Department of Defense that allows him to serve his active duty assignment at the Medical Center. He will be deployed to Iraq in February where he will serve as Chief of Surgery of the 47th combat support hospital for 6 months. This will be his 3rd deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Following the ceremony Speaker Pelosi visited with patients and staff on 2B.

America's wounded warriors along with celebrities, athletes, and elected officials participated in a 7 day, 420-mile "2008 Road 2 Recovery California Challenge" that kicked off at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. This is the second year in a row that the SFVAMC hosted this event.

Actor Mike Vogel, chair of VA's National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, joined nearly 70 injured veterans and others in the event this is called a "life changing experience." The ride was aimed at helping wounded warriors overcome obstacles they face by participating in cycling. The event helped to raise funds to support Spinning® and outdoor cycling programs at military and VA locations around the U.S.

The riders left San Francisco VAMC after a kick-off ceremony on September 28, 2008, and finished at the West Los Angeles VA, where they were treated to a USO Concert featuring Gary Sinise, and the Lt. Dan Band. The American Legion Riders provided a motorcycle escort during the event and several Posts sponsored rest stops and dinners along the way.

Wounded warriors from San Diego Naval Hospital, Brooke Army Intrepid Center, Walter Reed MC and various VA's throughout the country participated.



Photo by Wendy Mazzoni

Police Beat

The SFVAMC Police offer the following tips that can help prevent office theft.

- ▶ Start an Office Watch Program. You can alert others to the presence of unauthorized or suspicious persons.
- ▶ Challenge wandering or “lost” veterans roaming the halls and escort them to the right office or clinic, or at the least, give them directions and point them in the right direction.
- ▶ Watch out for “head poppers,” those who open the wrong doors and pretend to be looking for an office or person. Also watch out for persons checking doors. Call VA Police x2222 and give them a description and direction of travel.
- ▶ Lock your office when you leave, even for a short period of time. It only takes an experienced thief seconds to go through an office and steal credit cards and cash.
- ▶ If you work late, let VA Police know. If you hear someone checking your door, call VA Police. When you do leave, check your door(s) and make sure they are secured and locked.

Always remember, late at night only the Emergency Department is open. If you are in a non-patient care area, i.e. offices, research, etc. and you see anyone that appears to be suspicious, call VA Police at x2003 (non-emergency) or x2222 (emergency).

Emerging Leaders '08

The Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP) is a VISN 21 program developed in 2004 as part of succession planning. Offered annually to qualified applicants (GS-7 through 11 and Wage Grade and Title 38 equivalent), it consists of nine consecutive training sessions featuring both speakers from within our facility and contracted courses. As part of the program participants develop an individual development plan and select a mentor to keep them focused on their goals.

Congratulations to ELDP 2008's sixteen participants: Salvador Acosta, Engineering; Monica Allison, OAT; Vernon Clevenger, Downtown Clinic; Teresa Corpuz, Surgical; Kendra Hill, Audiology; Catherine Hong, Geriatrics; Faith Luss, Nursing; Sheila O'Connor, Business Office; Andreana Ososki, Chief of Staff; Pete Popin, Anesthesiology; Noreen Ramos, Nursing; Benjamin Reynolds, Mental Health; Antonieta Santos-Kremling, Geriatrics; Palma Sciuto, VIST; Elaine Tran, Office of the Director, and Kelly Wommack, Engineering.

SFVAMC Police Enhance Martial Arts Skills

As part of their ongoing efforts to enhance their skills, SFVAMC Police Officers have recently embraced the martial arts. The participation in this training is due in part to the commitment and dedication to the sport of Mixed Martial Arts by SFVAMC Police Captain Raymond Alvarez. Captain Alvarez has been training in martial arts for 30 years in various disciplines. He holds dual black belts in Kung-Fu and San Shou, and has competed in “Born To Fight”(San-Shou) and the “San Francisco Open (Kung-Fu)” competitions.

Police officers encounter people with various degrees of fighting and martial arts abilities, and in order to keep themselves and their contacts safe, they must maintain relevant levels and training and practice. Captain Alvarez and the other officers have come in contact with veterans who are ground-fighting trained and this presents greater challenges than normal when taking someone into custody. This is why this training is so relevant and important.

“We don't currently have a program in place at our national level for ground-fighting, so Chief Baczek and I have taken it upon ourselves to implement training for our officers to put them on a level playing field with the people they may come into contact with. It also brings a strong camaraderie to my team,” said Captain Alvarez.

The ultimate goal is safety of all the parties involved in Police work. Developing and implementing programs with the intention of improving the health and safety of Police Officer's and citizens alike is commendable.



Pictured left to right (standing): Leonardo "Glo-Glo" Seixas, Anthony Majors, Dennis Neely, Robert Baczek, Robert Guardianic, Carlos "Sapao" Ban, Raymond Alvarez. Left to right (kneeling): Rick Hoganas, Leo Gamit, Lou Lucas, John Talamayan, Lucas Coulter, Patrick Agustin.

All Employee Bar-b-que

The San Francisco VA Medical Center recently held the annual All Employee Appreciation Bar-b-que. More nearly 2,000 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, serves, runners and helpers. This event was supported by the VA Canteen Dividend Account, which is funded in part as a result of your patronage of the Canteen. Thank you!



Photos by Eugenio Cabanero

Highlights Around the Medical Center

Janelle Harris is proud to announce that she recently completed her fourth marathon. She participated in the Nike Women's marathon with more than 20,000 other runners. Way to go Janelle!



The annual Fleet Week was held in San Francisco in early October, and, as usual SFVAMC patients and staff had a front row seat to the show. Engineering staff hung a gigantic American flag on

Bldg. 2 to salute the pilots. **Bob Baczek**, SFVAMC Chief of Police, took this picture of the Blue Angels as they flew over the Medical Center.



During Hurricane Ike **Ben Caliboso**, LVN, completed a deployment as part of the SFVAMC's Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) team. He was the only Medical Center employee deployed. He spent 14 days at the Federal Medical Shelter at Port San Antonio, where he provided basic bedside nursing care. Ben said that this was an experience he will not soon forget. He is proud to have served the people of Texas and to represent the San Francisco VAMC as part of the cooperative that pulled together from all over the country to assist our veterans and fellow human beings in this unfortunate natural disaster.



A research group headed by **Michael Weiner, MD**, Director of the Center for the Imaging of Neurodegenerative Diseases, has been granted a \$6.04 million Biomedical Technology Research Resource (BTRR) Award from the National Institutes of Health. The award will be used to support development of new techniques and technologies to improve the sensitivity and resolution of several magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) techniques in order to better diagnose and track neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease.



NCIRE Board of Directors member **Keith Yamamoto, PhD**, is one of a ten scientists highlighted in the October, 2008 issue of Nature Medicine magazine for his role in biomedical science policy-making in the United States.

Dr. Sandya Venugopal, BSc., MBBS, MRCS (Ed) Post Doctoral Research Fellow, was awarded a \$500 Synthes Travel Award to present her poster at the 2008 National Neurotrauma meeting in Orlando. Congrats!



Alice Keenan is very proud to be a first time great-grandmother of identical twin boys Remy Sean and Sheridan Alexander.



Michael Sanchez received an Associate of Arts degree from Skyline College in San Bruno,



Susan Caro, RN, is the proud to announce the birth of her granddaughter Mikayla.



The SFVAMC recently held its first School at Work (SAW) class. SAW enables students to gain skills needed to move ahead at work and to help develop new possibilities for a career in health care. **Kimiko Devore**, **Marsha Harbor** and **Victoria Sison-Kocmanek** all successfully completed SAW, which lasted nine months.



The Hispanic Committee celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration with an event that was musical, fun, festive and highly energizing.

The celebration featured Aztec dancers, a local salsa band "Umbria," and culminated with a piñata party for the kids at the Child Care Center. Special thanks to the committee members and supporters: **Rosemary Hoffman-Herrera**, **Wilson Medina**, **Arnie Germes**, **Nancy Brana**, **Alicia Roca**, **Hector Villafranca**, **Lynn Hart**, **Ron Carter** and **Edgardo Caballero**.



For the second year, **David Sanchez** auditioned for American Idol. While he didn't make it passed the first round, he hasn't let this experience deter is singing career. He has performed a solo performance at Octavia Lounge and is starting to market himself more in the city with the hopes of getting more performing opportunities.



Did you know that **Melanie Hupe** is a medal winning Dragon Warrior? She competes as a member of The Dragon Warriors. The team makes its home in San Francisco Bay Area and competes in local, national and international dragon boat racing. Most recently at the San Francisco International

Dragon Boat Festival Melanie won two silver medals! The SF International Dragon Boat Festival is the largest in the United States. Over 100 teams competed on a 500-meter course on San Francisco Bay. The event was held on October 4-5 at Treasure Island and was attended by more than 50,000 fans of this fast-growing sport.



The **San Bruno Community Based Outpatient Clinic** recently celebrated its 3rd Anniversary with a special party. More than 130 people attended the celebration. Special guest speaker Congresswoman Jackie Speier expressed her gratitude to the San Bruno Clinic and presented a Proclamation to Clinic Director **Ron Strauss** to recognize the Clinics work in caring for veterans.



Karen Rehder completed her first Xterra, a mountain bike triathlon. She took first place in her age group and was the 17th woman overall. In addition, Karen is a LUNA ambassador. LUNA ambassadors help to raise money for the Breast Cancer Fund, by encouraging women to get outside and enjoying the trails. Karen also volunteers for the NorCal Mountain Bike High School League as a coach. She is proud to be coaching her 14-year-old daughter, who will race for Terra Linda High School, in San Rafael.



A report examining Michigan's state employee compensation system, written by Lansing State Journal Reporter Derek Wallbank, son of **Catherine Wallbank**, was named tops in the nation by the Association of Capitol Reporters and Editors. The Excellence in Statehouse Reporting award, known in the group as a "Cappie," was for his "State Employees: Under Siege?" report, which ran earlier this year.

The Smithsonian Philatelic Museum recently celebrated their 15th anniversary. To celebrate, the museum is showing an exhibit called, Alphetilately! According to the museum's website, Alphetilately is a universally appealing exhibition and a lively educational experience for visitors of every age. **Gigi Trabant**, a nurse in our CLC, was honored to have two pieces of her collection in the display -- a first day cover envelope and a second envelope that portrayed the "G" stamp. She was invited to attend the event with her granddaughter and daughter and said it was a superb event! Gigi said it was her mother's deepest wish that some of her collection be exhibited in a stamp museum someday and now that wish has come true!



Congratulations to **Chuck Filanosky** and his wife Vicka who welcomed their second child, Sasha Maria, into the world!



The Vietnam Veteran's Association's Chapter 951 from Lake County presented appreciation plaques to **Dan Nash, MD** and **Kevin Mack, PhD** for their service to the members of their chapter. They also presented a certificate of appreciation to the Ukiah Community Based Outpatient Clinic in recognition of the quality service provided by the Ukiah Clinic.



A new friendly competition has developed between **NCIRE** and **SFVAMC** employees in the form of regular paintball competitions.



A group of nearly 20 employees from both organizations have been playing for bragging rights. So far SFVAMC employees have won both competitions!

Spiritual Care Volunteers Wanted

The San Francisco VA Medical Center's Spiritual Care Volunteer Program provides an opportunity for hospital staff to spiritually enhance the life of residents at the Community Life Center (CLC). Volunteers are expected to spend a minimum of one hour per week visiting veterans.

What is expected as a Spiritual Care Volunteer? Being there! Veterans appreciate conversation, reading, listening and other activities. One of the volunteers Roger Tauber says, "I feel something is missing out of my life and this program allows me to give back to fellow vets." The primary focus of the program is simply "caring" for those who served our nation. Now that these soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen are part of our special CLC family, you can make a change and a difference! For more information about how to become a Spiritual Care Volunteer, please contact Chaplain Bolden at ext. 3556.

AIDS/Lifecycle 8: Join the Team

The AIDS/Lifecycle 8 will be held May 31 - June 6, 2009. This monumental event gathers more than 2,500 bicyclists and over 530 volunteers for a 545-mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. This event is the official cycling event of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center. This event raises money to help beneficiaries continue to provide the critical services and education needed to meet the needs of the community.



This event is guaranteed to transform your spirit and commitment to humanity and it exemplifies the true essence of Esprit de corps. Also, the AIDS/LifeCycle community of cyclists and roadies is unlike any other. Each year it's an amazing group of people from all over the world, of all ages and from all walks of life, united by their common goal to do something heroic in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

If you think you're up for the most fun challenge of your life, visit the website www.aidslifecycle.org, for all of the information you'll need. Planners are in the early stages of creating a SFVAMC team for next year's event. If interested contact Jose Baez at ext. 4571.

Compliance Bullets...

Effective compliance programs must have policies and procedures which address risk areas. Risk areas are clinical or business activities that may be unethical, illegal, a conflict of interest, or in violation of national and local policies and procedures. Examples include:



- Self referrals, which includes VA clinicians inappropriately referring patients to their private practice.
- Accepting kickbacks, which are similar to bribes, and include offering or accepting gifts, money or favors in exchange for an action which can be accomplished in your official duty.
- Billing for services not provided.

National and local policies and procedures can be accessed via the following links:

- VHA's directive management system link: vaww1.va.gov/vhapublications/
- SFVAMC's policy memoranda link: vaww.sf.med.va.gov/info/reference/MCM/mcm_index.htm

During the past few months, the following local policy memoranda related to the compliance program were reissued:

- Appendix B to MCM 00C-01, subject: *CBI Training and Education*
- Appendix G to MCM 00C-01, subject: *CBI Investigation and Response Policy*
- MCM 04-22, subject: *Prevention of Billing for Services or Items Not Provided*
- MCM 04-23, subject: *Prevention of Improper Unbundling*
- MCM 04-24, subject: *Confirming and Processing Overpayments*
- MCM 04-27, subject: *Refund Policy*



Can you name another element of an effective compliance program?

If yes, contact SFVAMC's Compliance Officer Yvonne Brooks at yvonne.brooks@va.gov or x4398. The first ten readers who contact Yvonne Brooks will receive a prize.

Holiday Mail for Troops

The American Red Cross is sponsoring a national "*Holiday Mail for Heroes*" campaign to receive and distribute holiday cards to servicemembers and veterans both in the United States and abroad.

Holiday Mail for Heroes, which began Tuesday, Veterans Day, is a follow-up to the 2007 effort that resulted in the collection and distribution of more than 600,000 cards to hospitalized servicemembers. This year's program will expand its reach to not only wounded servicemembers but also veterans and their families. The goal is to collect and distribute one million pieces of holiday mail.

"As we enter this holiday season—a time to celebrate with family and friends—it's important to remember the thousands of men and women who serve our nation in harm's way and those who are recovering in military and veterans hospitals," said Army Col. Norvell V. Coots, commander, Walter Reed Health Care System. "The Holiday Mail for Heroes program is a wonderful outreach effort and a great way to acknowledge the sacrifices of our men and women in uniform." Holiday cards should be mailed to:

Holiday Mail for Heroes
P.O. Box 5456
Capitol Heights, MD. 20791-5456

Cards should not be mailed or delivered to Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

For more information, visit www.wramc.amedd.army.mil or www.redcross.org/holidaymail for Holiday Mail for Heroes program guidelines.

Please note: Walter Reed is **NOT** accepting mail addressed to "A Recovering American Soldier."

The U.S. Postal Service has made it easier to get packages to the troops. In fact, if you're sending a package to a service member overseas, the Postal Service has even made it cheaper. Using the Priority Mail Large Flat-Rate Box (12" x 12" x 5.5"), you can ship a package to any U.S. address for \$12.95 (even if they're not service members). If you're sending the package to an APO or FPO address, you'll pay \$10.95 - a \$2 military discount from the Postal Service. The large flat-rate boxes are free. You can get these boxes from your post office, online through www.usps.com/supplies, or by calling (800) 610-8734.

Honor Our Troops

As we enter the holiday season, please take a moment to honor the men and women who have served, or are serving, our country in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Below is a list of SFVAMC staff or family members of our staff who are serving in support of the war.

Eric K. Reynolds, *son-in-law of Carole Word*

Kevin Sykora, *son of Maria Sykora*

Alyssa Aguilar, *granddaughter of Virgil Salazar*

Harry Hilton, *nephew of Joanne Peters*

Jeffery C. Nagle, *brother of Jennifer Nagle*

Marc Gardner Adams, *nephew of Candace McGhee*

Sentel Williams, *nephew of Dana Kizer*

David C. Caburnay, *husband of Maria Hufana*

Antonio Carrion, *son-in-law of Rick and Gail Fernandez*

John Wersler, *nephew of Julie Doyle*

David Crumrine, *nephew of Debra Crumrine*

Lance Landry, *nephew of Juanita Carter*

Charles A. Bolden, *brother of Williard Bolden*

Joannehope V. Mohler Alberts, *daughter of Amy G. Mohler*

Danny Doss, *brother-in-law of Irma Acevedo*

William Green, *nephew of Sandra Moody-Ayers*

Eric L. Shaver, *son of Mary E. Baker*

Eric Leszkiewicz, *Police Officer, SFVAMC*

Debra Byrd, *Nurse, SFVAMC*

Sloane Guy, *Cardiothoracic Surgeon, SFVAMC*

Lia Locasto, *Program Assistant, SFVAMC*

Christopher M. Jocson, *Electrician, SFVAMC*

Thank you for your service to our country!

Law Allows Vets to Salute

It took a change in federal law, but military veterans and current service members in civilian clothes now can salute during the playing of the national anthem.

Last year, Congress gave vets and those out of uniform the right to salute when the American flag was raised, lowered or passed but did nothing about the prohibition on saluting during the national anthem. So, in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, Congress corrected that oversight.

Service Awards

Congratulations to the following employees who have been honored for their years of service between June 2008-December 2008.
[SOURCE: SFBAMC Human Resources]

•10 Years •

Marilissa Almiraz	Charlotte Hill	Pedro Rivas
Traci Babaoglu	Joyce Hughes	Kristine Stick
Mildred Bigornia	Michael Jackson	Michael Stick
Debora Brown	Mary Anne Johnson	Anh-Tuyet Saba
Elena Cabrera	Hubert Kim	Robert Stamper
Gina Campbell	Amanda La	John Teerlink
Deborah Chew	Elaine Lanier	Resurreccion Velasco
Joseph Choi	Stephen Long	Purificacion Valencia
Ernest De Anda	Candace McGhee	Arsenio Villarimo
Georgina Del Valle	Debra Muhl	Mary Whooley
Jocelyn Evanado	Parvin Peddi	Kelly Wommack
Timothy Hawkins	Mauricio Ramirez	Alicia Wright

•15 Years •

Lourdes Aguas	Milagros Dela Fuente	Thomas Neylan
Laurie Albookordi	John Devine	Anthony Oakley
David Ashe	Julio Dumlao	Michael Peters
Gina Braganza	Guy Fahnhorst	Girlye Reyes
Martha Buffum	Chris Geronimo	Mark Ratcliffe
Theresa Cameranesi	Greywolf	Susan Serrano
Alfredo Carpio	Susan Hallahan	Laura Spangler
Rene Castaneda	Linda Larrabee	John Straznickas
Thomas Castillo	Alfred Lee	Michael Szotak
Eva-Marie Christman	Audrey Lee	Alexander Tong
Loretta Chuck	Marcia Lizza	Robert Williams
John Comstock	Marylou Medina-Bolus	Phyllis Wysinger
		Annette Zecca

•20 Years •

Raymond Balingit	Robert Ludy	Belinda Reyes
Shelia Branner	Faith Luss	Jane Rudolph
Jerry Brooks	LaQuita Mabon	Chris Smallwood
Gail Browder	Michael Martin	Evelyn Smith-
Susie Choy	Manon Mays	Jarvis
Alicia Dacanay	Lisa Narvaez	Carol Tiggs
Marshall Jones, Jr	Nancy Odell	Margaret Tse
Joseph Kaminski	Ofelia Paderna	Debbie Wong
Deborah Kiser	Jane Price	Ann Wood-Gray
Joyce Lam	Linda Reilly	Quan-Yang Duh

•25 Years •

Blanca Abordo	Victoria Gray-	Vicki Simon
Arlyne Alegre	Dickerson	Albert Stepicevich
Carmelo Anselmo	Henry Leung	Linda Winkler
Ruby Bergunio	Judy Lew	
Sheila Brock	Lia Locasto	
Louis Castro	Zina Lopez	
Quintin Cortes	Daniel Maddox	
Ramon Datar	Patricia Miller, RN	
Arnulfo Germes	Lynn Pulliam	
Sheila Graf	Ezra Safdie	

•30 Years •

Irma Acevedo
Edmund Barcelo
Yvonne Brooks
Michael Gadaleta
Emerita Gaetos
Paul Heineken
Lucretia Jones
Barry Massie
Charles Reed

•35 Years •

Loreto Calara
Macdonald Calhoun
Miru Drucker
Robin East
Bradley Gee
Millie Hughes-Fulford
Robert Lee
Gabriel Moody
Patricia Rice
Rachel White

•40 Years •

Kathleen Black
Young Kim

Please join us in saying goodbye to
Gloria Martinez, MS, RN
AMCD for Patient Care Services/Nursing

Tuesday, January 6, 2009
from 3 - 5 p.m. in the Auditorium

Gloria has been appointed ACOS for Nursing at
the VA Palo Alto Health Care System effective
January 18, 2009.

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, 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.

San Francisco VA Medical Center, 4150 Clement Street, San Francisco, CA 94121
Writer/Editor/Designer: Judi A. Cheary

