

The BEACON

FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF THE SAN FRANCISCO VA MEDICAL CENTER • MARCH 2010

SFVAMC Staffer Answers the Call of Duty in Haiti

After the devastating earthquake in Haiti, Greg Rohrbach, a staff nurse in the ICD/Pacemaker Clinic, felt the “call of duty.” Unable to find an organization that was ready to send medical personnel immediately, he went online and purchased an airline ticket to Santo Domingo, a six hour drive from Port-au-Prince. With a small backpack of food, health bars, protein supplements, a water purifier, clothes, and a sleeping bag, he took off for Haiti.

On his long flight to Santo Domingo, Greg happened to sit next to a man who was part of a missionary group. He invited Greg to join their team of 12 volunteers consisting of EMT’s, nurses and doctors. The next day the group took a bus to the border of Haiti to a medical clinic in Jimani that was supported by International Medical Alliance of Tennessee. The medical clinic, that normally sees 20 patients a day, was now overflowing with over 200 patients a day.

“My experience in Haiti was invaluable and I know that I got just as much out of it as the patients that I cared for.”

For the next 5 nights Greg worked 12-14 hour shifts in the Pediatric Recovery Unit. He cared for children ranging in age from 2 months to 15 years old. Injuries were quite severe and pain control and comforting them were among Greg’s biggest challenges.

The missionaries left after one week and Greg switched to a day-shift in the tent section. There he did dressing changes, and administered pain medication and antibiotics. He also helped coordinate patients returning to the operating room for wound debridement and external fixator device realignment.

After the ambulance used to transport patients to the operating room for procedures broke down, Greg helped coordinate and transport patients using a pickup truck. They placed the patients in cots and rescue litters and laid them down in the bed of the truck to transport them to the OR.

“This experience really put things in perspective for me. Many of us, including myself, were always complaining about something; it’s too hot, we’re hungry, we didn’t get enough sleep, etc. The Haitians appeared to be taking it all in stride, rarely complaining and even managed to make us smile and laugh,” said Greg. “The Haitians are very grateful for the Americans’ enormous support in Haiti.”

“They are amazingly strong people and have endured more hardship than any of us can ever imagine,” he said. “My experience in Haiti was invaluable and I know that I got as much out of it as the patients that I cared for.”

—Submitted by Manon K. Marovich



From the Director

Dear Employees:

As you all know, last week was our triennial Joint Commission survey. Seven surveyors spent the entire week reviewing our programs for the following accreditations: Hospital, Long Term Care, Behavioral Health and Home Care. The results of the survey revealed findings in 6 Direct Impact Standards including: 5 in the Hospital program and 1 in the Long Term Care program. We also had 27 Indirect Impact Standards covering all four areas.

This is an excellent result for any hospital, magnified even more when our size and complexity are considered, and we should all be very pleased. Throughout the week the surveyors were extremely complimentary of the professionalism of our staff and all were impressed with the compassion and dedication staff exhibited. Among their many comments, they praised the work being done in our Community Living Center as best practices, and were very impressed with research being done in our Mental Health program. They were most impressed with the openness of staff, and their willingness to not only respond to questions, but to help educate, as well. Your commitment to this Medical Center, and, more importantly, to the Veterans we serve, was evident to our Joint Commission guests, and for that I am honored to be a member of this great team!

I know that many of you went above and beyond last week and I am so appreciative of your hard work and efforts. But I also know that it is the hard work, commitment and dedication of all of our staff, day in and day out, that allowed us to perform so well during this unannounced survey. While we have work to do to correct the deficiencies this survey revealed, we have so much of which to be proud.

Thank you for your good work and for your commitment to America's Veterans!

Sincerely,



Lawrence H. Carroll
Medical Center Director

State-of-the-Art PET/CT Scanner Comes to SFVA

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was recently held to celebrate the new state-of-the-art GE Discovery PET/CT 690 scanner. This is a new, state-of-the-art molecular imaging advanced technology that provides a hybrid mapping of disease, which leads to earlier and more sensitive diagnoses and evaluation of response to treatment. This is the first of its kind on the west coast. The scanner will run under the direction of Dr. Mari Aparici, Chief of Nuclear Medicine and Dr. Judy Yee, Chief, Radiology Service. PET/CT studies are offered Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and can be ordered through the Physician's Radiology Ordering Menu.



Dr. Mari Aparici and Dr. Judy Yee cut the ribbon with SFVAMC leadership including Associate Director Ed Safdie, Chief of Staff Dr. Diana Nicoll, and Director Lawrence Carroll.

Have You Seen Our Facebook?

Our Medical Center was one of the first VA Medical Centers given permission to have a presence on the social media outlet Facebook and we're now on Twitter, too. These sites are being used to promote news, programs, special events and new initiatives. It will also be another source of communication for patients and staff in the event of a crisis or emergency. VA Central Office recently removed the blocks to these sites, so be sure to become a fan today by going to Facebook (www.facebook.com/sfvamc) or Twitter (www.twitter.com/vasanfrancisco).



Good News for FERS

The National Defense Authorization Act made important changes to the FERS retirement systems. Prior to October 28, 2009, employees who retired on an immediate annuity (Optional Retirement, Disability Retirement, Early Voluntary, etc.) and had a balance of unused sick leave, their unused sick leave could not be credited in computing the amount of the retiree (or survivor) annuity. In general, sick leave was not creditable for retirement computation purposes under FERS.

From October 28, 2009 to December 31, 2013, employees will be credited for 50% of the sick leave they accumulated.

From January 2014 and thereafter, employees will be credited for 100% of the sick leave they accumulated. Please note: Unused sick leave is not used in determining the high 3 average salary and does not count in establishing length of service to determine retirement eligibility.

For questions, please contact Brett Laidler, HR Specialist at x4967.

Need Child Care?

The Cheryl Andersen-Sorensen Child Care Center located on campus has space available in the preschool program for a four-year-old child. The "Trailblazer" group has eight children with one primary teacher. Their philosophy is that play is the foundation for learning. In the four-year-old group they incorporate trips to the library and nature walks in Golden Gate park. They also have a music and movement teacher who meets with them weekly. Their program encourages children to explore independently, ask questions and work cooperatively with each other.

This is a year round program which is open Monday - Friday from 7:30 am -6:00 pm. If you are interested please call Kate at (415) 751-8511 or e-mail her at casccsf@att.net.

On the Road For Vets

Recently, a new Volunteer Transportation Network van was donated by the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to SFVAMC. This van was donated to transport Veterans primarily in the Fort Bragg Area to the Medical Center. In 2001 a volunteer van started operating out of Fort Bragg, and since that time Fort Bragg volunteers have been driving Veterans to their medical appointments twice a week. The volunteer drivers are very dedicated, spending 12-14 hours a day on the road. According to the drivers, their reward is "serving those who have served." Several thousand veterans have benefitted from this wonderful service. Thank you to the volunteers and a thanks to the DAV for providing the vans.

Do you know someone who might be interested in serving as a volunteer driver? To be a driver you must:

- Must have a clear driving record with no points in the last 5 years.
- Must pass a background check.
- Must have a Class C Driver's license.
- Must pass a physical exam.
- Must attend a volunteer orientation.
- Must complete 2 PPD skin tests and one annually thereafter.
- Must view a driver safety video and take a test.

If you know someone who is interested please contact our Voluntary Service Department at (415) 750-2144 or e-mail Jim McDermott at James.McDermott@va.gov.

—Submitted by Carl Stenberg, Mendocino County VSO



Pictured left to right: Chris Mahaffey, Carl Stenberg, Robert Cauckwell, Jim McDermott

Highlights Around the Medical Center



The new Santa Rosa VA Clinic held an Open House on Friday, November 6, 2009. More than 200 people attended the event that featured a performance by the Yountville Singers, speeches by VA officials and others, as well as, refreshments and entertainment. Clinic Director Audrey Stephens (pictured above) served as master of ceremonies. The new Santa Rosa VA Clinic offers expanded services to Veterans. Congratulations to all of the Clinic staff for hosting an excellent ceremony and reception!

The NCIRE/SFVAMC/DoD Neuroscience Center of Excellence has been approved for \$6.25 million in continuing funds for FY 2010. This is the largest annual appropriation received by this program since it was founded in 2003.

Ann Hayes BSN, RN, CGRN, was invited to present her nursing research study at the international GASTRO 2009 United European Gastroenterology Federation and World Gastroenterology Organization (UEGW/WCOG) Conference in London.

Congratulations to Gloria Luu, MSN CPAN, for being selected as the Post Anesthesia Nurses Association of California (PANAC) District 3 Director.

Congratulations to Dr. Ross H. Talarico, Chief of Podiatric Surgery, for recently being appointed "Assistant Clinical Professor" at the California School of Podiatric Medicine.

Carl Grunfeld, MD, received the 2010 Robert H. Williams – Rachmiel Levine Award of the Western Metabolism Club. This award is given in recognition of outstanding scientific achievement and mentorship in the field of metabolism.

Eduardo A. Ramirez, MPA, graduated from the Federal Executive Board, Executive Development Program. This program develops future leaders and helps them to develop management/leadership skills and philosophies.

NFFE/IAMAW Local # 1 has been selected to send a member to Washington, D.C., to take part in the annual Legislative Week activities. They will accompany President Patricia La Sala for this yearly conference. Local # 1 and four other NFFE members from other agencies were chosen to take part from over 100,000 Union Federal Employees. They were chosen for their attention to the Agency's mission while protecting membership.

Trish Cavanagh, Speech Pathologist, is now a Board Recognized Specialist in Swallowing Disorders. She is one of only 122 in the nation that hold this certification. Trish was also recently invited to join VA's Audiology and Speech Pathology Field Advisory Council. She is one of four VA Speech Pathologists chosen to serve on this Council.

Dr. Judy Ford has been selected to receive a VA Research Career Scientist Award to support post-doctoral scholars in translational neuroscience research relevant to psychosis. This is a very prestigious award that is given to a small number of highly productive VA-based non-clinician scientists.

Congratulations to Jane D. Rudolph, R.N., 1A and ACIC Nurse Manager who received her MBA from St. Mary's College of California in December of 2009.

Marek Brzezinski, M.D., Ph.D., was the senior author of “Teaching Faculty to Identify and Manage Difficult Residents” presented at the Annual Meeting of the New York State Society of Anesthesiologists’ PGA/63 Meeting. His presentation, which was a bi-coastal collaboration between Harvard and UCSF, received the “Special Scientific Award.”

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Congratulations to Michelle Tapia for being recognized with the Lasallian Vincentian Alumni Award presented by Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory. Each year the SHCP community recognizes 2 alumni for their community efforts and service.

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Recently, the VA Inpatient Evaluation Center (a national center that reviews outcomes at VA sites) reviewed best practices at the SFVAMC ICU. SFVAMC rates in the highest percentile (best category) for patient outcome at 30 days and hospital discharge. Some of the best practices noted included:

- High quality, stable ICU staff
- Strong senior leadership and support
- Collaborative environment with lots of communication
- Proactive quality improvement projects
- A focus on innovation (including early adoption of a Simulator Center and a Rapid Response Team)
- An ICU team structure that fostered close oversight of patients.

The ICU team recognizes that outstanding ICU care relies on numerous other hospital services to be successful. This includes: EMS that makes them sparkle; SPD that keeps them well-stocked; Engineering that makes sure everything is working; Nutrition that ensures that the food order is correct; as well as other services such as lab, radiology, OT, and PT that help our sickest patients get better. Congratulations to you all!

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Cindy Barton, NP, and Mary H. Hulme, MSW, will be hosting a two-part Memory Disorders Clinic Caregiver Conference for caregivers from all over Northern California. Speakers will be addressing issues such as: behavioral management strategies, medication

management, long-term care planning and community resources. Part 1 will be held April 27 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Part 2 will be May 25 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.. Both sessions will be in the HR Training Room.

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Congratulations to HDU staff (pictured below) for ensuring that Veterans are satisfied with quality of care they receive. According to the staff, behind all their success is “tender loving care.” The Veterans they serve are grateful that the HDU team has made them feel important, not just during their dialysis treatment, but also on special occasions such as Halloween, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and even their own birthdays. The HDU staff would like to thank Voluntary Service for providing them with the funds that are needed to celebrate these special occasions with Veterans.



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Jody Garber, MD, has been selected as one of three faculty members to be inducted into the Council of Master Clinicians. The award recognizes UCSF physicians who are considered superior and distinguished from their peers by: an unusual depth of knowledge in their field, a willingness to acquire and share new knowledge, outstanding interpersonal and communications skills, a commitment to professionalism, experience with and ability to use the full resources available to provide care that is of optimal value, and by a proven ability to provide compassionate, appropriate, and effective care to all patients.

Mail Call for the Troops; SFVAMC Gives Big

For those who have not experienced a deployment to a foreign country, mail call is the highlight of the day. During the holidays, the 300 members of Task Group Trident in Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan received over 200 boxes of cookies, candy, beef jerky, clothing and others items due to the generosity of the SFVAMC employees and students.

Eddie Ramirez, Mental Health AO, coordinated the effort and had some special helpers from Urology and the Minor Procedures Unit who helped with the collection and boxing of the items. One of the service men wrote an e-mail thank you note to a SFVAMC staffer. It read in part, “Even more than the contents of the package I loved the feelings you guys evoked within me since I have grown a little more cynical over the years. It was a wonderful and inspirational feeling to be reminded that kind and generous people still exist out there and that Americans think about us out here. Thank you so much.”



Pictured with some of the care packages are (left to right): Arlene Geonanga, Gladys Villanueva, Lou Torres, Eddie Ramirez, Rita Yee, and Jean Murphy.

Helpful Hints from the SFVAMC Police

As we all know, parking at the San Francisco VA Medical Center is extremely limited. On any given day, to meet the needs of patients, staff and visitors we are about 300 parking spaces short. Because of this, we all should be extra vigilant on how and where we park our vehicles. Staff are encouraged to:

- Park legally at all times.
- Ensure your vehicle is only utilizing one parking space and parked properly within the lines.
- If your vehicle is so large that it blocks traffic, don't park there; use one of the oversized spaces on the outskirts of the parking lot.
- Be sure to display the appropriate tags and stickers authorizing you to park on VA property.
- No overnight parking unless approved by the Associate Medical Center Director.
- Report illegally or improperly parked vehicles to SFVAMC Police at x 2003.

For more information, refer to Medical Center Memorandum 00-09, Appendix 5.

Vehicle Safety

When parking your vehicle, please observe the following safety tips:

- Do not leave any personal or valuable items inside the vehicle.
- Lock all valuables inside the trunk before arriving at your destination.
- Doors should be locked and windows up.
- Use anti-theft devices like “The Club” or alarm systems.
- Removable stereo systems should never be left in a vehicle.
- GPS mapping devices – dash or windshield mounted – should never be left in a vehicle.
- Report break-ins and thefts to your local police department. If at the VA, contact VA Police x 2003

Always contact the VA Police if you see someone tampering with a vehicle or looking suspicious.

CLC Knows How to Party

Dancing With the Stars—look out! Our CLC is developing a reputation as the hot spot for a good party. They recently sponsored a Fall Fling and Holiday Party, and both were a big success! For the Fall Fling, volunteer Michael Carriere served up a rocking selection of swing, pop, jazz, and rock-n-roll from the 40's through the 80's. Recreation Therapists Marcia Lizza, Margy Falin and Cindy Chan transformed the dining room with crepe fall leaves, balloons and streamers. Other staff volunteers, including Rina Shah, Freda Motak and Beatrice Choi, served refreshments. One CLC resident gushed, "It was a lot of fun for everybody, It cheered up a lot of people and everyone had a smile."

In December they sponsored their ever-popular holiday party luncheon. The lunch was staffed with the support of more than 50 volunteers, including active duty and retired military staff and music and entertainment was provided by volunteer musician. More than 100 residents and their family members took part in this special activity that included generous donations of Bay Area businesses including: Liverpool Lils, Woodlands Meats, The Cake Box, Upper Crust, Diestel Turkey Ranch, and the San Francisco Fairmont Hotel. During the "CLC National Quality Forum, Weaving Threads of Quality," one of the presenters mentioned SFVAMC's CLC's dances in the opening talk, as a "joyful gathering for both residents and staff." Way to go!



Where's CBI?

VA is allowed to bill for services provided our Veterans based on reasonable charges. Compliance and Business Integrity (CBI) is tasked with preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in the revenue cycle including making sure Veterans are charged correctly for the services they receive. If you come across any conflicting business practices report them to:

- The VHA Help line at (866) VHA-HELP (866-842-4357)
- The SFVAMC Compliance Officer or her staff :
Yvonne Brooks, Compliance Officer x 4398
Elaine Tran, Compliance Specialist x 2135
Mary Engfer, Auditor/Analyst x 4441
Joumana Dakour, Compliance Intern x 3407

The Compliance Officer and her staff have recently moved. You can still reach them at the extensions listed above, but they are now located in Building 2, Room 275 (Compliance Officer), and Bldg. 2, Room 272 (CBI staff). Their door and communication lines are always open so stop by and visit them at their new location. In celebration of the new move, the first ten employees to stop by Yvonne's new office and reference this article will receive a special prize!

—Submitted by Joumana Dakour, TCF CBI Intern

Life Before the Lifeboat

Paul Volberding, MD, Chief of Medicine, and a widely recognized pioneer in HIV/AIDS care and treatment, has created a video documentary on the first years of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco. "Life Before the Lifeboat: San Francisco's Courageous Response to the AIDS Outbreak" is a 30-minute video featuring interviews with many of the people who helped shape San Francisco's initial response to the unprecedented epidemic.

The film was premiered at San Francisco General Hospital for World AIDS Day and is currently being shown across the country.

Service Awards

The following employees have been honored for their years of service between November 2009 - March 2010.

[SOURCE: SFVAMC Human Resources]

• 10 Years •

Dominica Akpan	Willie Green
Margaret Ansay	Joseph Alan Hagen
Bernardo Berida	Ray Ingle
Hilarey Bhatt	Mei Li-Liu
Larry Duhart	Jericho Macalino
Arnold Eusebio	Paul Otto
Janet Faccenda	Ellen Peterson
Maria French	Anthony Platt
Robert Gracom	Edwin Thompson
Edward Granchi	Frank Ung

• 15 Years •

Mark Alford	Nancy Johnson
Theresa Bell	Tracey Kinahan
Imelda Bonita	Antonio Le Roy
Josefino Cervantes	Gloria Patel
Helen Curran	Peggy Poole
Floyd Devenbeck	Charlie Sahouria
Gary Faumuina	Helen Shao
Linda Fuhrman	Dionne Williams
Laura Greicus	
Juliette James	

• 20 Years •

Mark Alexander	Sean Moseley
Michael Bierly	Melvin Olivares
Kathleen Bradford	Elizabeth Paloma
Arthur Chan	Cynthia Poblete
Elizabeth Elin	Stacey Pryor
Jeffrey Emrick	Bora Ros
Monique Etcheverry	Mary Ellen Smith
Emerita Gabriel	Victoria Tichenor
Lyda Galvez	Gina Torres
Silbina Jackson	James Waide
Naomi James	John Wong
Stanley Lewandowski	Carole Word
Danilo Mones	

• 25 Years •

Mary Billedo	Ann Ludvik
Sherry Bridygham	Arthur Lum
Ralph Brown	Altagracia Plaza
Cecile Dizon	Sheila Secretario
Diane Fingado	Nancy Tom
Martina Guerrero	Leilani Villalon
April Johnson	
James Leclair	
Alex Lozada	

• 30 Years •

Michael Anderson
Deborah Burgoon
Miligros DeJesus
Edgardo Caballero
Derrick Hill
Jack Levin
Rose Pelayo
Janice Schwertfeger
Judith Sipos
Michael Tillman
Terry Vail
Vera Washington

• 35 Years •

Anita Barad
Florence Cruz
Bunnie Davis
Nancy Herzoff
Arthur Higgins
Rick Newman
Alicia Roca

• 40 Years •

Jo Ann Blackston
Susan Sato

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