Greetings Colleagues:

March was Professional Social Work Month and VA social workers celebrated our many contributions to VA healthcare services and programs.

This year’s theme for Professional Social Work Month was “Social Workers Change Lives.” We celebrated the expertise and dedication of professional social workers in helping rebuild lives.

Today, we have almost 9000 master level social workers working in VA healthcare facilities, Vet Centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) providing care, treatment, support and services. Our role as social workers in serving Veterans, families, and our communities is vital to their wellness. We help them make changes in their lives that will maintain and restore health. We promote healthy living and are advocates for health care needs, programs and services that give hope and health to our Veterans.

Social workers are taking the lead with the growth of new and expanded programs and VA leaders are looking to Social Work and social workers to meet the challenges in finding positive solutions to every day issues. Social Work is fully engaged as leaders in psychosocial care and support vital to the psychosocial care and support of Veterans while expanding outreach to Veterans in rural communities will challenge social workers to enhance community collaborations and partnerships to ensure Veterans have equitable access to VA health care and benefits.

I want to encourage all of you to continue your professional development. Think about areas for growth, take advantage of new opportunities for learning and developing new skills. Take that ‘stretch’ assignment, work on a medical center committee, a national committee or take a student as a field instructor. Leadership comes from within – seek opportunities – don’t wait for them to come to you.

As VA continues to transform into a 21st century organization, social workers are on the front lines working in expansion of community collaborations in eliminating homelessness, improving the quality and access for mental health services and expanding outreach, access in rural communities including leveraging technology and the new caregiver initiatives.

We continue to see significant growth and opportunity for our profession in VA health care. Social workers contribute to the overwhelming success in providing world class healthcare to our Veterans.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of Synergy and learning about the different ways VA social workers celebrated Social Work Month. Thank you for all you do – what an honor and privilege we have in serving Veterans, their families and caregivers.

With warm regards,

Debbie

MISSION: To eliminate psychosocial complications as significant barriers to healthcare interventions for Veterans, caregivers and families. This is accomplished by developing and maintaining integrated, quality programs in patient care, research, education and prevention.

VISION: In return for the investment of Veterans’ “trust and institutional support, “ VA Social Work will provide the foremost leadership in the psychosocial care of Veterans, caregivers and their families.
Caregiver Support Program

Launches New Caregiver Services in 2011

Keith A. Welsh, LCSW, National Director, Caregiver Support Program and Margaret Campbell-Kotler, MPH, RN, Program Manager, Caregiver Training and Education

On May 5, 2010 in the presence of family caregivers and advocates, President Obama signed P.L. 111-163 - The Caregivers and Veterans Health Services Act of 2010. This Act established two caregiver support programs: The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers and The Program of General Caregiver Support Services. Since that date, the Caregiver Support Program has grown considerably in size and scope.

The first portion of the new program to launch in 2011 was the Caregiver Support Line located on the Canandaigua, New York VA Medical Center (VAMC) campus, which opened on February 1. This line fields over 100 calls each day from family caregivers and community agencies serving Veterans. The Support Line serves as a resource/referral center for caregivers, providing a “warm” referral to the Caregiver Support Coordinator at the Veteran’s VAMC to follow up on the caregiver’s questions and concerns.

Full-time Caregiver Support Coordinators (CSC’s) have been placed at every VAMC with lead CSC’s identified at the VISN level. The CSC is the focal point for the delivery of Caregiver Support Services at the local level. Caregiver Support Coordinators have many responsibilities including: facilitating the application, training and certification processes for the Program of Comprehensive Caregiver Support, serving as the VAMC subject matter expert on caregiving, and collaborating with the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), Mental Health and Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) Teams in providing education and training for staff, Veterans, families and caregivers. CSCs will develop and facilitate caregiver support groups, maintain caregiver print and electronic resource materials developed by the VA, local, state and national caregiver organizations, and will collaborate with community organizations to bring attention to and help to address the needs of Veteran caregivers.

By early summer, 2011, the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers will be launched. This program is specifically for the caregiver of a Veteran or a member of the Armed Forces (undergoing medical discharge from the Armed Forces) who has a serious injury including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma, or other mental disorder incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, on or after September 11, 2001. The Veteran must be in need of personal care services because of an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living or in need of supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury. As described earlier, the VAMC Caregiver Support Coordinator will play a major role in the application, training, and certification of caregivers to participate in this program.

The Comprehensive Caregiver Support Program allows the Veteran to identify, through the application process, a primary family caregiver and two additional family caregivers. Primary and family caregivers must complete training to be approved as caregivers and this training will include both a core caregiver training and a home-based training on the specific care needs of the Veteran. The core caregiver training will be provided through a contract with Easter Seals Inc. and will be accessed by the caregiver through a referral from the CSC. The training may be completed in a classroom with an instructor, online, or with a DVD and workbook mailed to the caregiver. Primary and family caregivers interested in taking the classroom training will have travel and per diem expenses paid by the VA. Respite care, as needed, may also be provided by the VAMC for caregivers attending classroom training. Training completion enables the family caregiver to receive certain benefits, including mental health counseling and counseling related to the care of the Veteran.

Additional benefits provided to the primary caregiver include a monthly personal caregiver stipend and health benefits. The amount of the monthly stipend is calculated based on the Veteran’s level of dependence, based on an assessment completed by the PACT, HBPC or other VA health care provider. The stipend is based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics hourly rate for a home health aide by geographic region. If the primary family caregiver does not have access to employer based health insurance, CHAMVA will be provided. Supportive home visits will be completed quarterly to support the caregiver and Veteran and assess their ongoing needs. Primary caregivers may also request at least thirty days of respite care as needed and this may include 24/7 in-home respite when medically indicated.

Family caregivers of Veterans from past eras will be eligible to participate in the Program of General Caregiver Support. This program is available to caregivers of Veterans who need personal care services because of an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living or need supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological or other impairment or injury. Support services under this program will include in-person and web-based education sessions, use of Tele-health, and the provision of techniques, strategies and skills for caring for a disabled Veteran. Counseling and medically and age appropriate respite care including 24 hour per day in-home respite care are to be provided.

REACH VA is one of a several evidence based caregiver resources which the Caregiver Support Program plans to make available to all VAMCs. REACH VA is an award winning support program for caregivers of Veterans with Alzheimer’s Disease or other dementias. Work is now under way to tailor REACH VA to the needs of caregivers of Veterans who sustained spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury. The Caregiver Support Program is dedicated to assuring that its staff and clinicians throughout the VA have access to state of the art knowledge and information on the implementation of the Program of Comprehensive Caregiver Support as well as the most current methods and trends in providing caregiver support. On April 12, 13 and 14, 2011 a three session satellite broadcast was delivered throughout the VA. These broadcasts will be repeated frequently during April and May and will be available any time through the Learning Management System (LMS). Additionally two Caregiver Regional Conferences are planned for summer, 2011, to include one in July in Washington DC and the second in August in California. Ongoing staff training is integral to the success of the Caregiver Support Program.

The Caregiver Support Program is poised to provide programmatic and clinical leadership on the delivery of high quality caregiver support services and program implementation. Please feel free to contact Deborah Amdur, Chief Consultant, Care Management and Social Work, or Keith Welsh, National Director, Caregiver Support Program, for additional information.
**Tampa VAMC Social Work Month**

Submitted by: Milagros “Margie” Grinion, LCSW

The Social Work Social Committee at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa, FL celebrated Social Work Month by hosting its annual Social Work Luncheon on Monday 3/28/11. The theme of this year’s luncheon was Relaxation. Aside from tasty treats, staff enjoyed relaxing music, coloring activities, along with games and prizes. Special guests included Dr. Cutolo – Chief of Staff and Mr. Cappello, MPH – Acting Director, who expressed their appreciation for the great work social workers provide at the Tampa VA! Fun and relaxation was had by all!

**Connecticut VAMC Social Work Month**

Submitted by: Darlene Casella, MSW, LCSW

This year, VA Connecticut hosted an educational event for staff and Veterans in our Rotunda where materials were provided on Social Work services at the VA. Social Work staff distributed pamphlets on VA Social Work and answered questions, and provided names of community resources which assist veterans.

In addition the Social Work Department developed a “Social Work Timeout” in which social workers provided services to one another. This included a 20 minute Reiki session, ice cream social, travel group, tour of historic cemetery, and recipe swap. This activity was developed as a way to nurture ourselves and socialize within the department. It was well received and well attended and will be an annual event at VA Connecticut.

**Orlando VAMC Social Work Month**

Submitted by: Megan Barton, MSW

The Orlando VAMC celebrated Social Work Month by hosting a Donations Drive for Voluntary Services, arranging a panel called “Ask a Social Worker” during our monthly meeting to learn more about our own programs within Social Work, and honoring exceptional non-Social Work colleagues as “Friends of Social Work” with chocolate bars and an announcement in the Orlando VAMC publication. Two events that were particularly well received were our “Guess Who” game and “Social Work Resource Fair.” The Social Work Resource Fair was held to educate Veterans and staff about VA Social Work programs. Attendees participated in a raffle drawing and a cake decorated with the NASW Social Work Month theme was provided. Finally, social work information with interesting facts about fellow social workers and historical information about the profession were emailed weekly. March was a busy month, but we were proud to celebrate and educate others about our profession.
Bedford VAMC Social Work Month

Submitted by Shara Katsos, LICSW, CPRP Chief Social Work Service

Social Work Month came in like a lion at the Edith Nourse Rogers VA Medical Center with the unveiling of a Social Work Service (SWS) version of “the wall” on March 1st. This wall consisted of pictures and job descriptions of what the 60+ social work team does at the Bedford VAMC on a daily basis and was put together by several members of the Social Work Service team. Colorfully done, the display even allowed passerby’s to write comments on the wall as they gazed at staff pictures. The very next day, social work staff held the 1st of two bake sales and education fairs. One satisfied Veteran gave the food “2 yum’s up!” The money raised was donated to the social work education committee to further staff development. Last but not least, at the March social work staff meeting, social workers were greeted by supervisors and Chief Shara Katsos, wearing chef hats and cooking flap jacks and bacon to thank staff for their hard work. During the meeting, the annual Friends of Social Work awards were handed out to employees from other departments who made a significant contribution to Veterans or helped social workers get the job done. Also in attendance was Dr. Greg Binus, Chief of Staff, who expressed his gratitude to the social work department for the hard work social workers do to improve the quality of life for Veterans.

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System Social Work Month

Submitted by Tyrinda S. Caver, LGSW

Social Work Service of Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System (CAVHCS) presented several opportunities for celebrating National Social Work Month. The month began with a Social Work Kick-Off Breakfast, which included a tribute to current and retired Social Workers at CAVHCS. The program included a proclamation from the Mayor of Tuskegee, AL, inspirational poems and quotes, social work trivia and more. The staff were treated to a motivational message from Mr. Maury West, Director of Social Work Service with the Alabama Department of Public Health. The breakfast then concluded with door prizes, food, souvenirs and fun.

In the true Social Work spirit of giving back, a Social Work Open House was held on the Montgomery and Tuskegee Campuses. The open house provided an opportunity to display and provide information on various Social Work programs and services. The Social Work Staff later participated in a Campus wide Volunteer Day. Social Work staff and interns provided volunteer services at the CAVHCS New Horizon Community Living Center and the Inpatient Acute Medical Unit.

In an effort to foster partnerships and provide education, Social Work Service also hosted a workshop on "Services to Women Veterans." The workshop provided an opportunity for professional education, while also enhancing community partnerships. The workshop hosted guest speakers to include: VISN 7 Lead Women Veteran’s Program Manager, Ofelia Mutia; Jessica Hardy, Director, Alabama Public Health Office of Women’s Health Services; and CAVHCS staff. This educational opportunity was also extended to all Veterans, Department of Defense personnel, and community agencies.

The month of celebration was concluded with a cruise on the Alabama River aboard the Harriett II. Special thanks to our Service Chief, Ms. Iva K. Davis and Assistant Chief, Mrs. Deborah Huffman, for celebrating and recognizing the importance of Social Workers and How We Change Futures.
Celebrating Social Work Month at the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center

Submitted by: Kristal Wichman, MSW, CAPSW, Primary Care Social Worker, Appleton, Wisconsin

After months of planning, the event was finally here! This year's Social Work Month theme at the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin was, "Social Workers Change Futures." The event was held on March 30th and all the social workers were invited to attend the celebration. This year's event opened with remarks from David Van Thiel, Milwaukee Social Work Executive, thanking the 100+ social workers for their dedication to serving and supporting Veterans and their families.

Our celebration started off with a "Speed Greet" (similar to speed dating), an ice breaker designed to provide an opportunity for social work colleagues to get to know one another better. The ice breaker was a fun and energetic way to engage the group and meet new staff. There were many laughs and the crowd was a bit rowdy at times!

After completion of the Speed Greet activity, the Social Workers enjoyed lunch and delicious cupcakes and cake for dessert. As a token of appreciation, each social worker received a VA Social Worker lanyard and jelly beans. In keeping up with tradition, the event ended with a basket raffle. The baskets were created by fellow social workers and add an element of anticipation to the event each year. The first basket that was raffled off was a Brewer's Theme and it was presented to a lucky social worker by two of the Klement's Racing Sausages!! If you are not familiar with the Klement's Racing Sausages, they are sausage mascots who race in the bottom of the 6th inning at every Milwaukee Brewers home game. The surprise was a home run with the Social Work team!

In conclusion, the theme of the event was really more than a theme; it is "code" the social work team at the Milwaukee VA lives by! The Milwaukee VA Social Workers do change futures and will continue to support and engage Veterans daily in making positive changes in their lives.

VA North Texas Health Care System Social Work Month

Submitted by: Jimmie Henderson, LCSW

VA North Texas Health Care System celebrated Social Work Month embracing the values and emphasizing importance of our profession. The Social Work Month Committee developed events that encouraged participation of all VANTHCS Social Workers and the community.

We kicked off the month’s celebrations with a Bake Sale and Raffle Fund Raiser to raise money for our annual Social Worker Appreciation Luncheon. For the first time, enough money was raised to host a luncheon in Dallas, Ft. Worth and Bonham so staff did not have to travel to other sites.

The Social Work Community Resource Fair included booths representing internal VA programs/services as well as agencies from the community. Veterans were able to obtain information about VA and community programs/services. Social Workers coordinated an Advance Directive Drive in collaboration with Chaplain Services to assist Veterans in completing Advance Directives while at the medical center. We coordinated with IT to have lap tops available so that advance directives could be completed on-site. Veterans were grateful for the convenient service.

The Social Work Professional Development Committee organized an Education Conference that provided VA, community and student Social Workers an opportunity to obtain CEUs.

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VA social workers presented a majority of the topics. The workshop allowed VA social workers and community social workers an opportunity to network. The conference facility was full to capacity.

Additionally, Social Workers initiated a VAEA sponsored Food Drive to help eliminate hunger. There were three drives held simultaneously for the entire month of March in Dallas, Fort Worth and Bonham. Over 3000 pounds of non-perishable foods were collected for donation to local food banks/pantries.

VANTHCS Social Work Month of 2011 was a resounding success and perpetuated this year's theme Social Workers Change Futures.
Social Work Month Celebration at Dayton VA Medical Center, Ohio

Submitted by Joseph Augustine, LISW-S, Supervisory Social Worker, Dayton VA Medical Center, Ohio

The Dayton VA Medical Center Social Workers celebrated Social Work Month through various activities. This month has been packed full of fun and exciting events to showcase social workers and our distinguished profession.

Resource Fair:

The Social Work Month was kicked off with the Social Work Resource Fair on March 1, 2011. Social workers across the Dayton VA participated to highlight the services that are provided by social workers. Two tables were set up in the lobby of Building 330 in which one table was used as a resource table for the whole day and the other table was used to highlight 2 programs, more in-depth, at a time. The programs that participated included: Suicide Prevention, HBPC/ADHC/Caregiver Support, Family services, PTSD, Mobile Clinic, Substance Abuse, Homeless Program, Mental Health Clinic, Recovery Services, Freedom Center, and General DOM. The Resource Fair had a steady flow of Veterans and employees who provided positive feedback about the event.

Care Package Sent:

Social Workers across the Dayton VA mailed a care package to fellow social worker, Dave Roby. Dave is the team leader at The Vet Center and is currently deployed to Afghanistan with the US Army. Two full boxes of toiletries, movies, candy, snacks and Social Work Newsletters were mailed to Dave the beginning of March. This project was designed in order for Dave to enjoy Social Work month while serving our country. Rita Yanwic, social worker with Prime Care coordinated this project. Rita states "I found it enjoyable to be able to help a fellow social worker enjoy a little comfort of home while defending our country". "I would also like to thank all the social workers who helped in this project financially and by donating items to make it successful."

Food Drive:

In true Social Work fashion during the month of March, our social workers participated in a food drive with proceeds going to the Good Neighbor House of Dayton. The Good Neighbor House provides a helping hand to those in need and their goal is to lift people up, provide hope during difficult circumstances and to help people get on their feet. This agency is a bridge to self-sufficiency.

The Good Neighbor House is currently in need of everything from snack items to cleaning supplies including crackers, popcorn, jell-o, cake mixes, toilery items, laundry detergent, dish soap, etc. Social Workers pitched in to a "Fishbowl" aka 1D-134 in the Social Work Department. The food drive was coordinated by the OEF/OIF Freedom Center Social Work Case Managers, Patrick Cook and Audrey Pace. Just for fun, the Social Workers were separated into two teams: Team Irene Grant and Team Whitney Young with each team with its own bin for the donations that were collected through the month of March.

Luncheon on March 17, 2011:

The Social Work Luncheon on March 17th was a great function that was graced with the presence of many dignitaries including, Mr. Gary Leitzell, Mayor of the City of Dayton, Mr. Bill Montague, our new Acting Director, and many other staff members from the Directors Office: Dr. William Germann (Acting Chief of Staff), Ms. Anna Jones Monnett (Associate Director for Patient Care Services), Mr. Mark Murdock (Assistant Director), Mr. Byron Wade, and Dr. Simran Sebhi, Chief of General Psychiatry, MHS.

Mayor Leitzell took the time out of his busy schedule to say "thank you" and read the Mayor proclamation honoring the Month of March as Social Work Month during the SW Luncheon.

We got a proclamation from the Directors Office and we even received a proclamation from the Governors' Office! It was an unexpected pleasure for our new Acting Medical Director, Mr. William Montague, to attend and speak at our Social Work Month Luncheon. We were one of the first clinical services he has been able to speak with. He felt it was important enough for our luncheon to be on his calendar and used this opportunity to discuss his philosophy as it relates to Veteran care and what we can expect for him. He discussed his four principles that should guide us each day: 1. See more Veterans (Workload), 2. Meet performance measures and monitors (Quality), 3. Be Kind (Patient Satisfaction) and 4. Send a bill (Reimbursement/VERA).

Our social work therapist in the OEF/OIF Freedom Center, Mr. Tim Moss, LISW-S, BCD, who is also the 2nd Vice President of National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Ohio Chapter, provided staff with NASW gifts and gadgets. Also, in attendance was Ms. Cindy Webb, Executive Director of NASW, Ohio Chapter. A variety of awards and recognition were provided during the luncheon:

Honorary Social Work Degrees were awarded to Ms. Kimberlee Wilson of the Travel Office (Dayton VAMC) for her outstanding support to the Social Work Service and Ms. Ramona Borgerding for her outstanding service and commitment in the mental health arena.

Continued on next page
Social Work Month Celebration—Dayton, continued from previous page

The Whitney Young Award for Leadership from NASW went to Mr. Dave Drew, MSW, LISW-S, Chief of SWS. Mr. Frank Webb, MSW, LISW-S (Supervisory Social Worker/Nursing Home Expeditor, SWS) was nominated for The NASW Lifetime Achievement Award. This was announced by Ms. Cindy Webb, Executive Director of NASW OH. For fun, we even presented a ‘1st to pay for Social Work Luncheon’ award! Mr. Ritchie Teague, MSW (addiction therapist ) received this award.

During the luncheon we also remembered social workers Gabe Zimmerman of Arizona and Tasha Burch-York of Ohio who lost their lives in the line of duty. A display was prepared by a 13 year old! Brent, our social worker - Kim Osborn’s son, did a fantastic job preparing this. The luncheon concluded with Mr. Dave Drew, LISW-S the Social Work Chief recognizing social workers who have graduated from the VISN 10 Leadership Development Institute (LDI) and those who have won employee of the month awards. The budding social work leaders who have gone through the VISN 10 LDI Program in the past years include Katina Stone-Jones (2007-2008), Joseph Augustine (2008-2009), and Kathy George (2009-2010). In the 2010-2011 LDI Program, there were three social workers (out of four total participants) who just graduated: Timothy Moss, Debbie Oberg, and Julie Thomas. For the 2011-2012 LDI Program, Hilleary Marshall was selected to be a participant.

It was very fitting to note the fact that social workers won the ‘Employee of the Month’ Awards for 3 months in a row! In the month of January 2011, Tania Cronin, LISW-S (HBPC social worker), won the award, while in February 2011, the award went to Tracy Miller, LISW (medical social worker ) and in March 2011, Joseph Augustine, LISW-S (supervisory social worker, SWS) got this award. It was also noted that another social worker, Frances Ingram, LISW-S, got the same award in November 2010. Thus, in four out of the last 5 months, the jobs performed by our social workers were recognized at the Medical Center level!

For lunch, we feasted on Mr. Hymans Fine Dining. Kudos to the Social Work Month Planning Committee members for their extra efforts in making the Social Work Month at Dayton VA Medical Center a huge success.

Long Beach VA Health Care System - Social Work

Submitted by: Ann Costa, LCSW, Gloria Picking, LCSW and John Petek, LCSW,BCD

At the Long Beach VA Healthcare Center the Social Work Professional Development Committee proudly kicked off Social Work Month with an article in our Medical Center Newsletter and a group photograph. The article provided a glimpse into social workers’ traditions and values that make our profession so valuable to the VA and our Veterans. The article also discussed social work contributions to the various programs that are found throughout the VA Healthcare System, as well as some of our local Social Workers’ accomplishments.

Later in the month, a second article was submitted to the newsletter, covering the Evidence Based Mental Health practices that our Mental Health Social Workers provide in support of the Uniform Services MH Package.

On March 23, the Social Work Department put on our annual Social Work Fair which is open to the staff and Veterans at this medical center. Social work staff use creative, poster boards to provide information regarding the programs that we lead and support. Educational materials were available, as well as a variety of handouts. The ability to complete advanced directives was available at this fair. Several community partners accepted our invitation to join us, such as the Vet Center, Caregivers Association, and the Multipurpose Center to name a few. A presentation played in the background with a social worker’s picture and a statement regarding their role in supporting the mission of the V.A.

On March 30, with the assistance of the Social Work Professional Development Committee, Social Work Administrative staff gave a Social Work Appreciation Luncheon for the social workers. Dr. Jose Coll was our guest speaker. Dr. Coll is currently the Clinical Associate Professor and Director of the San Diego Academic Center at the University of Southern California. He is actively engaged in research on treatment modalities for suicide prevention among active duty soldiers and their families. He recently co-authored “A Civilian Counselor’s Primer for Counseling Veterans.” Dr. Coll served as a Reconnaissance Marine at Camp Pendleton, California, where he was honorably discharged. He provided an inspirational talk on the power of social work for our Soldiers, Veterans and their families, as well as the training that is geared towards working with Veterans in the School of Social Work at USC. A good time was had by all!!!!
VA Western New York Healthcare System (VA WNYHS) Celebrates Social Work Month 2011!

Submitted by: Donna Leigh, LCSW, CASAC, Social Work Executive

“Enhancing Trauma Informed Care” and “Community Connections” were themes of this year's VA Western New York Healthcare System National Social Work Month celebration. Colorful Social Work month posters publicized our exciting month-long Social Work Month events. The awareness campaign included candy bars wrapped to promote Social Work Month and shared with all VA WNYHS social workers.

Each weekday in March, VA WNYHS Social Work hosted a table in the lobby decorated with posters, balloons and social work program information. The table was manned by social workers from many program areas, including: Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Care Management, Adult Day Health Care, Hospice/Palliative Care, Community Living Centers, Health Care for Homeless Veterans, Department of Housing Urban Development VA SH, Intensive Case Management, Partial Hospitalization, Substance Abuse Services, Veterans Justice Outreach, Mental Health Clinic, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Acute Psychiatry, Acute Medical, Vet Center, PTSD Residential, PTSD Outpatient, Caregiver Support, Primary Care, Home Based Primary Care, Spinal Cord Injury, Specialty Care Clinics, Tele-health, and Women's Wellness. Veterans, families, caregivers and staff were able to consult with VA WNYHS Social Workers regarding the wide variety of VA social work services.

On March 25, 2011, an educational event was held for staff which included poster presentations by Social Work interns from State University of New York at Buffalo on "War Era and Gender Considerations in Trauma Informed Care." Titles included: Considerations of Trauma Informed Practice for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, Influence and Effects of Trauma on WWII and Korean Conflict/War Veterans, Trauma Informed Services for Female Veterans, The Effects of Persian Gulf War on U.S Veterans and The Vietnam Experience. Social Work Executive, Donna Leigh and seven current VAWNYHS Social Work Interns took time to honor and thank every VA WNYHS Social Work Preceptor for their contributions to VA's mission of education. Preceptors were gifted with decorative plants, appreciation awards and expressions of thanks from all VA WNYHS Social Workers.

The March 25 event included professional social work education and a luncheon. Associate Medical Center Director, Jason C. Petti, MSHA provided opening remarks of appreciation for Social Worker's contributions to quality of care for Veterans. Marlene Roll, Commander of Post 362 and Erie County Director of Veterans Services reviewed County services for Veterans. She encouraged social workers to remain sensitive to the unique needs of women Veterans. A final presentation was provided by Tara Hughes, LCSW, Adjunct Professor and NY State Red Cross Disaster Mental Health Advisor. Tara presented on "The Confusion and Disorientation of PTSD." Tara reviewed empirical data on brain structure and function changes associated with PTSD. She provided orientation to factors affecting PTSD recovery and the application of healing interventions including: Grounding, Psychological First Aid and The Four Step Therapeutic Conversation.

VA WNYHS Social Work Supervisors and Program Coordinators gave a review of increasing progress made on local social work initiatives, including expanding Veterans Justice Outreach, programming to include collaboration with state civil law (Kendra's law), PACT implementation, expansion of Adult Day Health, HCHV programs and progression of the five year plan to end homelessness. They reviewed progress made in advancement of Social Work Trainings. The day concluded with a collective commitment to continued progress, a luncheon and social work cake cutting!
North Florida South Georgia Healthcare System Social Work Month

Submitted by: Tanya Fookes, MSW, LCSW, ACSW

What a month full of activities here at the North Florida/South Georgia VHS! Social Workers are an integral part of the vibrant VA community. They can be found serving Veterans in various capacities; going above and beyond the call of duty, and working to resolve challenges one Veteran at a time. During the month of March, a variety of events took place to honor the tireless efforts of social work professionals during National Professional Social Work Month.

The month-long series of events began with the Second Annual Social Work Retreat held at the Alachua County Women's Center on March 1, 2011. The retreat provided an opportunity for NF/SGVHS Social Workers to gather, meet one another, and enjoy a day of information and fun among colleagues. Each Social Worker received a smooth jazz compilation CD to help set the tone for the day, as well as a certificate of appreciation signed by Director Thomas Cappello and Mental Health Service Line Director Peter Durand Ph.D. The overall response to the event was a very positive one! We were also able to meet and welcome Heather Mahoney-Gleason, LCSW – the new Chief of Social Work.

Additional events held during the month included a Social Work Resource Fair held at Gainesville, Lake City, and Jacksonville locations. Social Work professionals from various areas were provided designated areas in which to showcase their respective programs. Educational literature, visual displays, and representatives from different programs were available to share information to Veterans and their families, as well as, those in other disciplines. Social Work Month proclamations were also obtained for the cities of Gainesville, Jacksonville, and Lake City – what a way to ensure the community is aware of the role of Social Workers. The Social Work Professional Practice Council contributed by hosting welcome receptions for Heather Mahoney-Gleason, which were well attended! In addition, a variety of educational events were offered, including:

"HIV/AIDS" David Syfrett
"Medicare/Medicaid Information" by Joni Presnell
"K9 Therapy" by Shanelle Snyder
"Caregiving Strategies" by Erin Foerster
"Blind and Low Vision Services" by Cathy Rodgers
"Purpose and Possibilities for Social Workers" by Lawanna Barron
"Vet Center Information" by Steve Nolan

Social Work is a profession of hope and inspiration. In short, professional Social Workers remain on the frontlines helping to change futures!

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VA/DoD Professional Social Work Training Consortium

Next training session will be held on May 25, 2011 from 1200-1:30 PM ET. Social Workers can earn 1.5 CEU's per session.
Muskogee VAMC Social Work Month

Submitted by Joan McWilliams, LCSW

March means a lot of things to people—it's the beginning of Spring, looking forward to warmer weather, and, of course, March Madness. But, to Social Workers across the nation it's all about us! March is National Social Work Month, a time to kick up our heels and celebrate the work we do. Muskogee Social Workers have gone back to the roots of Social Work Month, using the entire month to promote the contributions of Social Workers in every department of our facility and educate others about the important role that Social Workers play in the care of our Veterans. Our motto this year has been to "divide and conquer" with a number of projects and activities throughout the Medical Center and community.

We took advantage of some of the hospital's newest technology to promote our service, with the help of Nita McClellan, Public Affairs Officer, posting a special "Thank You" to all VA Social Workers on our new electronic bulletin boards, located throughout the facility.

We posted on the Medical Center's Facebook page to promote two community fundraising events for the Social Work Emergency Fund. Social Workers Leah Collins, LCSW, Dusti Johns, MSW, Suzanne Koenig, LCSW, and Juli McNeil, LCSW, took on the task of contributing articles and information for the local newspaper and the Medical Center's newsletter, Progress Notes, about Social Work's contribution in many of the Medical Center's programs. Informational bulletin boards were also posted on the Medical/Surgical floor bulletin boards, providing information about the history of Social Work, our key principles, and the variety or roles Social Workers play within the Medical Center.

And, of course, we had to have a party. Following our monthly Social Work Department meeting Social Workers at all Muskogee VAMC sites enjoyed snacks, door prizes, and a game. Jerri Mathis, LCSW and VA Social Worker, presented information about stress management for Social Workers, sharing "9 Tips to Relaxation." The theme for the party was "Stressed is Desserts Spelled Backwards." Social Workers Jerri Mathis, LCSW, Mark Kent, LCSW, Sue Kent, LCSW, and Deedra Watkins, LCSW donated door prizes for the festivities and everyone enjoyed playing a "Guess the Social Worker" game designed to help us get to know each other better.

We even decorated ourselves, ordering VA Social Work polo shirts to help promote our profession throughout the year.

Congratulations Victoria Marion!

MHCL Social Worker at Cleveland VAMC was elected as President-Elect of Ohio NASW Chapter.

Social Work Leadership Announcements

Appointments

Jill Debord is the Social Work Chief at Illiana, VA
James Watts is the Social Work Chief at Lexington VAMC
Mary Pearce is the Social Work Chief at Huntington VAMC

Retirement

J. Weidman as the Social Work Chief at Erie, VAMC
**National Monthly Social Work Conference Calls**

**Sponsored by the National Social Work Program in Care Management and Social Work Service and the Social Work Leadership Council**

**Social Work Managers Call**

This conference call is designed for Social Work Chiefs and Executives.

The call is held the second Friday of each month. The dial-in number is 1-800-767-1750, access code 16389.

**May 13 1PM ET   June 10 1PM ET**

**New Social Work Leaders Coaching Call**

This call is designed for new Social Work Chiefs and Executives.

The call is held the third Friday of each month. The dial-in number is 1-800-767-1750, access code 11573.

Moderator: Joanna Kadis, Chief Social Work Service, Eastern Colorado HCS

**May 20 1PM ET   June 17 1PM ET   July 15 1PM ET**

**Social Work Quarterly Training Call**

This call is designed for focus on Social Work Practice services and programs.

The call is held the second Friday of each quarter for 1.5 CEU credits. The dial-in number is 1-800-767-1750, access code 16389.

**July 8 1PM ET   October 14 1PM ET**

**Social Work Career Development Call**

Brought to you by the Social Work Career Development Task Force

These calls are designed to provide career development to social workers interested in leadership and expanded roles within VA.

Moderator: Taylene Watson, Director of Social Work at VA Puget Sound Healthcare System.

The call is held the fourth Tuesday of each month. The dial-in number is 1-800-767-1750, access code 30485.

**May 24 230PM ET   June 27 230PM ET**

**Social Work System Redesign Round Table Call**

These Round Table presentations and discussions are designed to allow for dialogue among Social Work staff and are open to all social workers. The aim is enhanced sharing of information and discussion of experiences with System Redesign and to learn from one another. The call is held the fourth Monday of each month. The dial-in number is 1-800-767-1750, access code 35678.

**May 23 1PM ET   June 27 1PM ET**

**Data Bytes**

The Social Work Data Management Committee hosts a monthly question & answer (Q&A) session for the field on the third Wednesday of every month at 1:00 PM ET. These monthly calls feature guest speakers who discuss data management topics of particular concern to VA Social Work managers. If you have specific questions that you would like addressed during a Q&A call, please send them to the Social Work Data Management Committee prior to the call so that we can be as helpful as possible. The dial-in number for this call is 1-800-767-1750, access code 17386.

Moderator: Carroll McShane, Chief of Social Work, Chillicothe VAMC

**May 18 1PM ET**
SYNERGY Newsletter

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**SYNERGY** provides an excellent opportunity to share information with thousands of social worker peers and VA stakeholders. SYNERGY welcomes articles on leadership and innovation in practice relating to Social Work within the Veterans Health Administration.

The next edition of Synergy will focus on Homelessness. Help us make this a great edition of Synergy by submitting your stories on how your facility is working to end Veteran Homelessness. For more information or to submit an article, please contact Erica Taylor (Fjarlie) in Outlook or at (253) 583-2067. All articles submitted that reference a Veteran case must be accompanied by a signed Release of Information form.