



# Special Edition

# SYNERGY

February 2007

## THE NATIONAL VA SOCIAL WORK NEWSLETTER

### SOCIAL WORK LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The VHA Social Work Leadership Council and the VHA Social Work Public Relations Committee have completed their social work leadership project. This "Special Edition" of SYNERGY concludes the series of the Leadership Success Story Project. Thanks to everyone that participated and made this so successful.

#### Social Work Leadership

Jill Manske, ACSW,  
LISW Director, Social Work  
Service VA Central Office



Of the 4,713 social workers employed by VHA as of October 2006, 11% are in supervisory positions. Of those supervisory social workers, 32% are eligible to retire in FY 07 and 35% will be eligible in FY 08. We will be facing a leadership crisis in Social Work, along with most of the rest of VHA, when that tsunami of retirements begins to hit.

But leadership isn't just about serving in a supervisory position. We have 732 non-supervisory social workers at the GS-12 level and above who are either in a leadership role as a program coordinator or have leadership responsibilities. And many GS-11 social workers are field instructors for social work graduate students, some supervise social work associates and many serve as coaches and mentors for new social workers. Social workers on inpatient units typically run discharge planning meetings and family conferences. They also chair task forces and committees and sometimes work on special projects for the medical center. All of these functions require use of leadership skills.

Leadership development is a critical component of the careers for all social workers. But we are not starting from scratch. Social work graduate school training includes learning about effective communication, systems theory, facilitating groups, negotiation, and assessing people and situations. During field placements and post-graduation, social workers practice active listening, "starting where the client is at", and developing plans based on assessment. These are all leadership skills, which is why so many social workers move up the career ladder into VHA senior leadership positions, such as medical center directors and associate directors.

Our series of articles on leadership success stories was meant to inspire you to consider the many leadership opportunities that VHA has to offer. Training programs abound, including VISN and facility LEAD programs, to help you gain basic understanding of leadership. We are also offering leadership and career development within Social Work. Kristin Day, Deputy Director of Social Work in VA Central Office, moderates a monthly Social Work Career Development call open to all social workers. The December call focused on how to prepare for performance-based interviews (PBI). Future calls will feature guest presenters, including some from the VHA National Center for Organizational Development. Our goal is to help all social workers, from entry level to chiefs, develop skills they will need to progress in their careers.

While it is sad to see so many long-time social workers prepare for retirement, it is equally exciting to watch staff social workers grow and mature into tomorrow's leaders. I'll end with my favorite quote from Eleanor Roosevelt, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." So, dream big and do all that you can to prepare yourself for what the future holds!

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## Deborah Amdur

### Special Assistant to the Director Washington, DC VAMC

*Submitted by: Pamela Wright, LCSW,  
Canandaigua VAMC (NY) Chair Elect,  
National SW Public Relations Committee*



Deborah Amdur, Special Assistant to the Director at Washington DC VA Medical Center, said she has always taken advantage of opportunities around her. With an impressive list of accomplishments and awards, Amdur is right in the middle of an exciting environment where she can influence positive change. She played an integral role in coordinating the Armed Forces Adult Home in Washington to take in 400 evacuees from New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. She set up a VA clinic within the adult home for processing evacuees and provided supervision to social workers at the home to meet their special needs. This all came naturally to Amdur as she was trained as a social worker and learned the role of teacher, advocate, counselor and caregiver early in her career.

Amdur has a notable curriculum vitae, with years of clinical work and upper level management experience. She received her BA in Chinese Studies with a minor in Liberal Arts from Cornell University in 1976 and continued on to receive her Master's degree in Clinical Social Work with a minor in Health Care from Washington University in 1977. She has worked as a clinical social worker, a program director (externally and within the VA), Chief of Social Work and Community Based Services in Ann Arbor, and as Chief of Social Work in Washington DC VA Medical Center. In November of 2005 Amdur was appointed to be the Special Assistant to the Director at the Washington DC VA Medical Center and feels her work with the Katrina evacuees helped show her strengths in a difficult situation, bringing her to the attention of the Director.

Early on in her social work career Amdur said, "I found it interesting and challenging to pursue things on a programmatic level." She took on major projects and at the beginning of her career wrote a grant that was subsequently funded. This broadened her horizons and brought the realization of how she could impact a program at a broader level.

Strong mentors were also part of Amdur's rise to upper level management/leadership. Her first mentor was Rod Fitch, Chief of Social Work at Ann Arbor. His open door policy and thoughtful approach to his staff helped to shape Amdur's management style. This was a tumultuous time in VA history, when some medical centers were reorganizing to Care/Service Lines. Fitch was trying to keep social work as a service; in the end, they were successful, but not without a struggle. When Fitch retired, Amdur was asked to serve on a leadership council that managed social work while the medical

**Advice to social workers:**  
"Get the attention of leadership through your work and willingness to try new things."

center underwent significant re-organization. Amdur left Ann Arbor to take a position as Program Director of HBPC at Durham. When Amdur returned to Ann Arbor as Chief of Social Work, with lessons learned under her old mentor, she got management's approval to re-establish social work as an independent service under the Chief of Staff.

"Sandy Garfunkel, DC VA Medical Center Director, has been a wonderful mentor," Amdur said, "David West, Associate Director, has also provided a great deal of guidance. "At times though, I have had to learn lessons trial by fire and with no formal leadership training." Amdur told a funny story of attending a Commanders Executive Board meeting with top leaders in military health care for the Director. At the first meeting she felt a little awkward and inadvertently took the seat of a general not realizing military protocol. When her error was exposed she gladly moved and chalked this up to a lesson learned. The general was very gracious and now she feels quite comfortable when she has to sub for the Director at this high level meeting.

Amdur said, "Our proximity to the Nation's Capitol adds additional challenges to the job, but is very interesting and ever changing." She interacts more with Central Office and receives visits from Secretary Nicholson to the Medical Center. Amdur believes the people skills that social workers possess have helped her greatly in her career. "In my position you have to interact with a variety of people with varying backgrounds and professions and knowing how to assess people and their situation is very important." She said she is not surprised that so many social workers end up in leadership positions.

Amdur said she finds finances and data management more challenging to deal with than interacting with high profile visitors and the political situation. Amdur provided some advice when working in an area that is unfamiliar: "Ask a lot of questions, find the right people to provide guidance and instruction, and let them help shape your knowledge base." She added that serving on a committee or project in your area of weakness can also be helpful.

Her advice to social workers looking into career advancement or a leadership position: "Get involved in things, move to a new horizon, find a mentor and look for all the opportunities, even outside of social work. Get the attention of leadership through your work and willingness to try new things." Amdur looks at every new project as an interesting and challenging opportunity. This appears to have worked for her and she provides great advice to those getting ready to take the next step in their career.

## Rose Blesener

### Director of Resource Management St. Cloud VAMC

*Submitted by: Jana O'Leary, LMSW  
Central Texas VHCS Temple ICFW,  
National SW Public Relations Committee*



"Bloom where you are planted" is a quote which encourages doing your best wherever you are, and,

reaffirms the many possibilities already within your orbit. This is one of the quotes Rose Blesener uses to inspire herself and others. Rose is the Director of Resource Management at the St. Cloud VAMC and she is a Social Worker by training. She holds an undergraduate degree in English from the College of St. Benedict in Minnesota and a Masters degree of Social Work from the University of South Carolina. She has also completed internships and coursework for a MPA degree and additional graduate coursework related to her position.

One experience which helped lead her to her current position actually started after undergraduate school when she was employed with a small publishing company where her job entailed writing and editing. During graduate school, she completed her internship at the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center in Columbia, SC. After graduation, she accepted a position at the St. Cloud VAMC where her federal career has been based. She worked as a social worker in various areas such as psychiatry, chemical dependency, extended care and medicine over the course of 17 years. In 1999, she transitioned from clinical to administrative work when the position of Public Affairs Officer/Customer Service opened. She states that the combination of her Social Work skills and her publishing background was a plus in her selection for the position. This experience later led her to the position of Administrative Assistant to the Medical Center Director. In 2003, Ms. Blesener became a Service Line Director for Resource Management, an Administrative Service that includes fiscal, human resources and logistics.

Advice to social workers:  
**"Go for it!"**

There were several factors that influenced Rose to transition from Social Work to Administration. First of all, she felt that the problems addressed by management/administration were "big picture" problems. She states that she "was attracted to the issues, the questions, the processes that required a systems approach on a larger scale than individual social work." Ms. Blesener felt that her social work background provided ideal skills for those problems. Secondly, her experience as a mentee also paved the way for her direction. Ms. Blesener has had several mentors, some formal and some informal. She said "mentoring, to me, has been very important in my career development." She was recently certified as an ECF (Executive Career Field) graduate and she states she benefited immensely from the formal mentoring program. The mentoring program is a part of the ECF program and lasts for 18 months. Rose noted that a "mentor provides advice based on their education, experience, perspective and their assessment of your strengths, weaknesses, and goals." St. Cloud VAMC has a formal mentoring program in place in which Ms. Blesener serves as a mentor to others.

There were several reasons that led Rose into Administration, but what led her into Social Work? Having volunteered for an inner-city program that provided summer school classes to children led her to start pursuing a career in the "helping" field as she was dazzled by the clear challenge and invitation to be of service. After

volunteering, she was hired by the Charleston County Department of Social Services in adult and protective services. A great benefit of this position was the opportunity to pursue a Master's degree which led to her MSW internship at the VAMC in Columbia, SC.

Rose met her husband, Billy Daly, a VA Social Worker (now retired), after she started working for the St. Cloud VA 26 years ago. She and Bill have four children, Trevor, on active duty in the Marine Corps; Brenna and Bridget, both in college; and Kevin, a senior in high school.

Rose Blesener' advice to Social Workers who want to go into Administration: "Go for it!" She suggests that Social Workers talk to someone already in the position you think you may want to pursue, try a shadowing experience or a "stretch" assignment and consider training to augment your skills. Having worked in the VA for many years Rose Blesener says the Bottom Line is that "I've been blessed in many ways, and I recommend social work as a field that can also prepare you for many other paths. The VA is a great place to work with a wonderful mission, and social work values are very congruent with that mission."

## Joseph Dalpiaz

### Medical Center Director Sioux Falls, SD

Submitted by: Lisa McGuire, LCSW,  
Tomah VAMC National SW Public  
Relations Committee



Mr. Dalpiaz began his career with the VA in Lebanon, PA as a staff social worker on the inpatient mental health and substance abuse unit. He worked there for approximately two years when an opportunity opened for an Administrative Officer in Extended Care. He felt the position would afford him the opportunity to enhance his interest in administration while still involving the utilization of his social work skills. As Administrative Officer in Extended Care, he was responsible for staff recruitment, establishing a Geriatric Evaluation Unit, writing proposals for new initiatives, and overseeing the contract nursing home program. The Medical Center Director at the Lebanon VA was a social worker and he encouraged Mr. Dalpiaz to pursue leadership positions.

While at the Lebanon VA he was able to continue in administrative positions with his appointment as Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Staff, where he gained considerable knowledge of the medical profession. He later served as Administrative Assistant to the Medical Center Director. It was here that he increased his knowledge of financial management. During this same period of time he had an opportunity to attend the Leadership VA Program.

He transferred to Clarksburg, WV for his first Associate Director position before moving to the VA Black Hills in Ft. Meade and Hot Springs, SD where he served as the Chief Operating Officer and later became the Director at that facility. He then transferred to Sioux Falls, SD where he is currently the Director.

Mr. Dalpiaz feels that his social work training and background assist him in bringing in the "human factor" when making difficult decisions and determining a strategy for corrective actions. He states that his social work skills have also been helpful when dealing with diverse people and opinions, managing conflict, and organizing efforts to resolve problems.

Advice for social workers:  
"Be visible and show that you have much to offer."

When discussing the challenges he has faced in leadership positions, he feels he has not always asked enough questions, since it is difficult to make solid decisions without the needed information. He also states that time management is always a challenge.

Mr. Dalpiaz believes social workers should recapture the realm of discharge planning and patient and family advocacy. As a profession, he thinks we need to educate other professionals about our values and what we as social workers add to the delivery of health care.

For social workers looking to expand their horizons in administration he offers this advice, "Experiment with different things that may interest you. Volunteer for assignments that take you out of your 'comfort zone'. Get into the Executive Career Field (ECF) Program or Leadership VA, ask for opportunities to be exposed to a broader spectrum of VA experience, and learn the business side of healthcare including: workload, finances, funding sources, medical care cost recovery."

**Claudia Dewane,**  
**LCSW, D. Ed., BCD**  
Deputy Field Director, Women  
Veteran Health Program, VISN's  
1-5, 21-22  
Central Office, Washington DC



*Submitted by: Jennifer R. DiSanti, LCSW, Erie VAMC  
National SW Public Relations Committee & Erica Taylor, LCSW,  
Seattle VAMC Asst. Editor Synergy and SW Public Relations*

Although she does not see her position as "outside" of social work, Claudia Dewane states that she uses her social work training daily as the Deputy Field Director, Women Veteran Health Program, VISN's 1-5 and 21-22. In this position, Dr. Dewane acts as a consultant to the Women Veteran Program Managers at each facility and VISN office. She also acts as an advisor to the Director of the Women's Program at VACO. As a VACO employee, Dr. Dewane spends time in the field completing site visits and attending VISN meetings. She provides oversight, some compliance monitoring, and a great deal of program and policy development. Dr. Dewane states the position "definitely fit my career goals of wanting to impact the system for the benefit of marginalized populations."

In addition to being the Deputy Field Director of the Women Veteran Health Program for several VISN's, Dr. Dewane is active in the academic community. She obtained a certificate in family studies from Smith College School of Social Work in 1977, a Bachelors degree in Sociology and English from Rutgers University in 1973, a Master of Social Work degree from Columbia University in 1975, and a doctorate in Adult Education from Penn State University in 1993. Dr. Dewane currently serves on the Faculty of Temple University in Harrisburg and teaches graduate level courses. Dr. Dewane has also published several peer reviewed articles, collaborated on a book, wrote a manuscript, and was a scriptwriter for a video. Topics for her published works include women veterans, PTSD, military sexual trauma, and clinical supervision.

Advice for social workers:  
"Identify what you are good at and what you *enjoy* and capitalize on it."

Dr. Dewane's career at the VA began in 1975 when she worked as a clinical social worker at the Lebanon VA Medical Center. In 1979, she was promoted to a supervisory social worker. In this position, she supervised the social work department of a newly established outpatient clinic. She was then promoted to the Director of the Veteran's Readjustment Counseling Center in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In this position, she provided clinical and administrative supervision to staff, provided oversight of service delivery in a 24 county area of central Pennsylvania, and initiated one of the first therapy groups for women who served in Vietnam. Dr. Dewane states "working for the Vet Center program was one of the most rewarding career experiences for me. Knowing that we helped identify PTSD and brought recognition and assistance to those heroes forgotten for too long was very rewarding. The self help philosophy of the Vet Center and ability to creatively provide help to vets and families was very energizing." In 1993 Dr. Dewane was promoted to the Deputy Field Director of the Women Veterans Health Program. In addition to the required duties of this position, she has developed the "Top Ten Leadership/Management Strategies for Women Veteran Program Managers." These are gender specific strategies for managing an effective women's program. However, the strategies Dr. Dewane outlines could be used as a guide for effective management skills by anyone. Her utilization of social work skills in her daily management duties is apparent when reading the strategies. For example, one of the strategies is "manage sideways." This strategy encourages working across departmental lines to "resolve conflict and build collaborative relationships." This strategy has helped many veterans obtain needed services and has proven to be an effective management strategy. Dr. Dewane states "my favorite role or social work skill is 'resource brokering' . . . If a Women Veterans Program Manager (WPVM) from once facility needs advice or suggestions, I like to be able to tell her that another WPVM has information that could help." Her strategies can be viewed at: <http://vaww1.va.gov/wvhp/> Dr. Dewane will be presenting her strategies in a workshop at the Excellence in Government Conference in April.

Dr. Dewane offers advice to other social workers to identify what you are good at and what you enjoy and capitalize on it. She believes that social work in the VA has come a long way. Social workers are recognized for their versatility, education, and capabilities. Dr. Dewane is an exemplary example of what social workers are capable of.

## Henrietta Fishman

Service Line Manager, VISN  
3 New York City, Northern  
New Jersey



*Submitted by: Jonathan Pollack,  
LCSW, MPA, Albany VAMC, National  
SW Public Relations Committee*

Henrietta Fishman is the current Service Line Manager of the Homeless Programs Care Line in VISN 3, which is the only VHA network with its own care line for homeless programs.

Fishman graduated from Columbia University with an MSW degree in the late 1960's, began her VA career shortly thereafter, and eventually completed the Social Work Administrative Leadership Training Program (SWALT). When asked what influenced her decision to pursue a career path outside of social work, Fishman answered "I don't consider my career choice to be outside of social work. I am a social worker and the work that I do is, to me, reflective of core social work values. That transcends titles!"

Fishman feels strongly that as either a social worker or as a manager we do similar things, such as using analytical and networking skills to work with people to

**Advice to  
social workers:  
"Move away from the  
status quo and think  
outside the box."**

reach agreed upon goals. Fishman further explains that social workers are expert at fitting programs to the needs of clients and feels that the "ability to listen" is a key skill which social workers possess.

Fishman described some of her greatest challenges as confronting myths about the homeless client population with the reality of who they are and what their needs really are; as well as making the best use of social workers as change agents who can move away from the status quo. For example, Fishman related a story from the time when she was Director of the Homeless Domiciliary in St. Albans, NY. Stray animals such as cats, dogs, and even a parrot would appear on campus and be adopted by domiciliary residents. This was anathema to proponents of the medical model and required constant intervention to support the program. As a result, Fishman was able to establish a "pet therapy" program which lasted for a number of years. She states that the residents had even named one agitated dog "Killer," but when they re-named the dog "Gypsy" she immediately began to calm down probably reacting more positively to her name!

Fishman's advice for other social workers who are interested in making a career change is "Know Thyself." More specifically, she feels that a position, for which an individual applies, should play to a person's strengths and interests rather than a person applying simply because the position is for an upgrade. Fishman also stresses that social workers should begin to develop a network of people with whom they can "bounce ideas around." Fishman advises meeting with people they admire and learning their roles, and then asking what preparation they consider to be essential. She then encourages social workers to think very carefully about whether their own strengths, interests, and talents lie within those areas.

Her wisdom and humor are what make Henrietta Fishman so special. Because of this she remains an inspiration to other social workers who are willing to move away from the status quo and to "think outside of the box."

## John Glacken, MSW

Associate Director  
VA Outpatient Clinic,  
Columbus



*Submitted by: Jana O'Leary, LMSW  
Central Texas VHCS Temple ICFW,  
National SW Public Relations Committee*

John Glacken is currently the Associate Director for the Chalmers P. Wylie VA Outpatient Clinic in Columbus, Ohio. He received undergraduate degrees in both social welfare and sociology from Penn State University and obtained his Masters degree in Social Work from Marywood University in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He has been a mentor for the VA and has served as a preceptor for MSW students. But where did his career begin?

Mr. Glacken decided to pursue a career in Social Work in his early teens, encouraged by an uncle who was a social worker. He would listen to his uncle's stories about being a social worker and helping others and was inspired to become a social worker himself. Mr. Glacken began his Social Work career in 1979 as a general medicine/orthopedics social worker for a private hospital in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. In 1980 Mr. Glacken accepted his first VA job as a psychiatric social worker at the Lebanon VA Medical Center. In 1981 he relocated to Columbus, Ohio, where he worked in both residential and outpatient care settings at the Chalmers P. Wylie VA Outpatient Clinic.

His first experience in an administrative role was in 1986, when he was selected as the Clinical/Administrative Coordinator for the Mental Health Clinic at Columbus. This dual role included both clinical and administrative duties. His administrative duties included coordinating the walk-in clinic and administration for mental health. His clinical responsibilities included seeing his scheduled patients as well as walk-ins. He remained in this dual role until November of 1990.

To broaden his skills, Mr. Glacken transferred to the Providence VA Medical Center as inpatient/outpatient Coordinator for Psychiatry Services, which was primarily an administrative position. However, he continued to serve as a clinician in the Bipolar Disorders Clinic and conducted a support group for families during Desert Storm.

**Advice to  
social workers:  
"Developing your skills sets  
you apart. Leadership will  
notice your contributions...."**

In 1993, Mr. Glacken returned to his Social Work roots, becoming the Assistant Chief of Social Work at the Highland Drive campus of the Pittsburgh VA Medical Center. During 1996 and 1997 Pittsburgh integrated their University Drive campus with the Highland campus to become the current Pittsburgh VA Medical Center. Along with this integration, there was a transition from services to care lines. With the integration of the campuses and transition to care lines, Mr. Glacken was chosen as Vice President of Community Based Care at Pittsburgh, where he provided supervision for Community Based Care Line Programs.

By 1999, Mr. Glacken had decided he was interested in hospital administration as a career path and applied to be the Associate Director of the Chalmers Outpatient Clinic, where he has been for the last 7 ½ years. Mr. Glacken has enjoyed moving into an executive leadership position, where he is able to work with a wide range of issues such as budgets, construction, strategic planning and human resources. He feels his position and background as a social worker have impacted his leadership and that focusing on patients and helping make services better is a benefit of his current role.

Mr. Glacken's successful transition from clinical social work to administration occurred partly because of his mentors, including John Barilich, Chief of Social Work at Pittsburgh. He stated that Mr. Barilich assisted him in improving his knowledge of supervision, program development and budgeting, as well as overall leadership skills. Through his experience at Pittsburgh VA Medical Center and his mentorship with John Barilich, Mr. Glacken felt he was ready for a higher level of responsibility and felt well prepared to apply for and accept his current position at the Chalmers VA Outpatient Clinic. Other important mentors included Joe Williams, Associate Director for Patient Care Services in Pittsburgh, and Lillian T. Thome, M.D., Director of the Chalmers VA Outpatient Clinic. Mr. Glacken believes his clinical skills, administrative training and positive mentoring experiences helped him when the Associate Director opportunity arose. "I was ready for the challenge", he states.

Mr. Glacken offers some advice to social workers who would like to transition to administrative positions. "For me, success in leadership meant – looking for gaps in services, presenting ideas, solving problems and working hard to improve services. Developing your skills sets you apart. Leadership will notice your contributions and you

will be in a strong position to be considered when a higher level position becomes available."

Mr. Glacken is a perfect example of how diligence, hard work and determination can help you reach your goals.

## **Kathryn Maginnis, MSW, MBA, FACHE**

Central Office - Director of  
Network Support – East



*Submitted by: Shirley Salom-Bail,  
LCSW, Palo Alto VAMC; National VA  
Social Work Public Relations Committee Member*

When I received the assignment to interview Kathryn Maginnis, MSW, MBA, CHE, I "googled" her and quickly saw that she isn't a "typical" social worker. A few links revealed her as the Director, VHA CARES Program for VISN 12 from 2001-2003. Currently, Ms. Maginnis works in Central Office as the Director of Network Support – East. She is the liaison for 44 medical centers in Networks 1-6 & 10.

Our telephone conversations, however, revealed Ms. Maginnis as a definite social worker – her compassion and strong beliefs in advocacy for veterans/families; an appreciation for the interdisciplinary team; an amazingly determined work ethic; personal values of family and education; an understanding for the need of diversity; flexibility in problem solving; her thinking about systems and the necessity to broaden options and networking opportunities; and most importantly, a sense of humor.

Ms. Maginnis' career as a public servant began as a social worker (GS-9) in Maryland with the U.S. Army Alcohol and Drug Consultation Center. Soon after, she moved to California where she was a GS-11 Social Worker at VA Long Beach. What happened next was not so typical – she decided to go back to graduate school to earn an MBA, while continuing to work full-time as a VA social worker. The dual degree added another perspective to this social worker's vision of how she could make a difference; it only enhanced her abilities as a leader. Ms. Maginnis saw a similarity between MSW and MBA – both are generic degrees that teach valuable skills in working with people and systems.

Naively, at first, I didn't see the connection. Aren't those 2 degrees opposites? Social workers like working with people, not numbers or data. They want to help people, not manage a business or stock portfolios. Traditionally, most social workers have shied away from numbers/data, but that has put us a distinct disadvantage. In today's healthcare arena, data speaks volumes about the types of services that can be offered to consumers/patients. Social Workers are skilled in working with various cultures and learning ways to communicate within that particular culture. The business world can be viewed as a type of "culture". An MBA degree gives a social worker a way to "speak their language", while making an impact on multi-systems levels.

Upon completing her MBA, Ms. Maginnis queried an HR specialist at the VA about other positions she could possibly pursue with this additional degree. She found that social workers were stereotyped as performing only social worker duties as classified by OPM. Although that interaction presented a different challenge, it was not a barrier. Ms. Maginnis' career path as a social worker has been anything but a stereotype; rather, noteworthy and extraordinary.

Ms. Maginnis' willingness to move to different parts of the country over the course of her career opened doors to multiple opportunities. She worked as Executive Director/Program Manager of eating disorders and substance abuse programs for a private company in Southern California, before returning to VA Long Beach in administrative positions. She gained administrative experience at VA San Diego as an Associate Director Trainee, and in the Western Region, VHA, San Francisco as a Senior Health System Specialist and Director for Operations. Since 1994, Ms. Maginnis has held higher-level positions at VA Tucson and VA Long Beach HCS as Associate Medical Director and Acting Medical Center Director after Director retirements at these two facilities. Most recently, she served as Interim Medical Center Director at Central Alabama Veterans HCS.

Her impressive career path has presented numerous challenges, despite her flexibility, personal commitment and amazing talents. She believes she would have benefited from a formal mentorship program and encourages social workers to take advantage of such opportunities. For those interested in making a career change, Ms. Maginnis advises looking at broad experiences within the VA. "You can make a difference in many places whether providing direct patient care, in leadership positions in administration, at the medical center, in the Network, or in Central Office. Social Workers have excellent training and skills for these positions. There are numerous successful role models all round who will help". She also found that people are more than willing to provide guidance and support – if you ask.

I started the interview wondering if Ms. Maginnis' journey was something with which I could relate. I found her very personable, determined and delightful. She emphasized that looking for opportunities, working hard, appreciating the differences that people bring to the table makes most things attainable. As a social worker, I can certainly relate to that!

**Advice to  
social workers:**  
"You can make a difference in  
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## **Barbara McLelland**

Deputy Network Director VISN 11  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

*Submitted by: Pamela Wright, LCSW, Canandaigua VAMC;  
Chair Elect, National SW Public Relations Committee*

Since Barbara McLelland never thought she would leave social work, but kept an open mind to opportunities that came her way. Today she is the Deputy Network Director for VISN 11 in Ann Arbor, with responsibilities which include providing strategic leadership and direction for the Network's management of finance, logistics and capital assets services.

McLelland began her schooling at the University of Wisconsin in 1971, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Social Work and a minor in Economics. She began working at a county social service agency, went on to work at a state geriatric mental health facility, and then finally at a community nursing home as a social work program manager. After gaining experience as a social worker providing direct care and program management, McLelland felt it was time to pursue further education. When asked what influenced her to pursue a career path outside of social work, McLelland said, "I was interested in incorporating business principles into social work program management, so I decided to pursue a master's degree in business. I felt this credential would provide a wide range of professional opportunities over the long-term."

**Advice to  
social workers:**  
"Spend time in personal  
reflection as to what type  
of work motivates you ...  
what makes you want to  
get up in the morning  
and go to work."

While pursuing her master's degree at the University of Wisconsin in 1980 she became connected with people who were VA consultants and employees at Madison. These associations provided her with a connection to the VA and allowed her hard work at school to be recognized and noticed by VA management, leading to her first VA job as a Health System Specialist Trainee at the VA Medical Center, Madison, Wisconsin.

Early on in McLelland's VA career, she was exposed to the complex workings of VA management and relocated to gain knowledge and experience in a range of VA systems. McLelland said, "Deciding to accept a position with the VA was challenging because it required a statement of mobility and that required a family commitment to moving...all worked out well, but it was a risk for me personally." Her career started in Madison, Wisconsin, continued in Salisbury, North Carolina as the Quality Management Officer and then as the Executive Assistant to the Director. Next in her career path was Durham, North Carolina as a Health System Specialist, Office of the Regional Director. McLelland's leadership continued onto Ann Arbor as the Executive Assistant to the Regional Director, Central Region and then as Acting Director of Operations, Central Region Transition Office.

She was selected as the Chief Operating Officer for the newly established VISN Office in 1995 and in 2004 was appointed the Deputy Network Director.

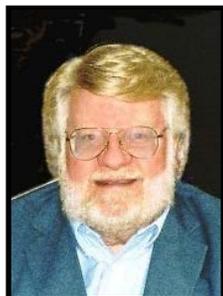
McLelland said, "My social work background provided me with a strong foundation in good oral and written communication", which she feels is imperative in a management position. She also said as an independent practitioner in social work she learned to work alone and to be thoughtful of how her actions affect both other individuals and the system. Over the course of her VA career, McLelland said the two things that have worked most successfully for her have been moving out of her comfort zone and her enjoyment of working under pressure, both of which are needed in top-level VA management careers.

McLelland's advice to social workers that would like to try a different career path is "Get experiences in other professional areas, attend conferences outside social work topics and talk to others who have made significant career changes." McLelland concludes by saying "Spend time in personal reflection as to what type of work motivates you ... what makes you want to get up in the morning and go to work" – this will help you in making a life changing decision.

## Roy Mitchell

Management Analyst, VHA  
Decision Support Office  
Bedford, MA

*Submitted by: Jonathan Pollack,  
LCSW, MPA, Albany VAMC; National  
SW Public Relations Committee*



When asked what influenced his decision to pursue a career path outside of social work, Roy Mitchell responded, "Opportunities have seemed to pursue me. I was encouraged to apply for different positions and my first thought was, 'Thanks, but no thanks.' However, if you do good work people notice and I was willing to take a chance on trying new things."

Mitchell received his B.A. from Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL, in 1969 and his M.S.W. from Boston University in 1971. He began his career as a social worker by founding the Drug Dependency Treatment Program at the Boston, VAMC and in 1985 became the Director of the Substance Abuse Treatment Program at the Sheridan, Wyoming VAMC. Mitchell then transferred to the Hot Springs, South Dakota VAMC to become Social Work Chief and was subsequently promoted to Staff Assistant to the Medical Center Director. Mitchell states, "By then, I was able to see firsthand the impact that VAMC level financial decisions had on clinical services. After seeing VAMC level data-based management in action, I became increasingly interested in national-level health care management and funding."

This interest led Mitchell to accept a position in 1990 at what is now the Allocation Resource Center in Braintree, MA. Then in 1996 he accepted his current position as

Management Analyst in the Decision Support Office (DSO) at Bedford, Massachusetts, which is a field office of the VHA Chief Financial Office in VACO.

Mitchell states, "I have continued my interest in data-based management by helping to deploy and manage the Decision Support System (DSS) to provide integrated clinical and financial data to VAMC and VISN service and care-line

managers, with the overall objective being to improve the quality and efficiency of the health care VHA provides to America's veterans and their families."

Mitchell says that his clinical perspective is very different from others in the world of finance and, therefore, he has been able to represent and advocate for the clinical needs of veterans and their families. One very valuable piece of advice that Mitchell gives is, "Don't change your behavior to become overly ambitious. Your concern for people, felt and demonstrated, will get you much further than blind ambition."

He further states, "Be careful not to step on people on your way up, lest they later step on you on their way up over you. Treat your peers with respect - you may be working for one of them some day." Mitchell also feels that having a sense of humor is extremely important. He related a story from his time at the Hot Springs VAMC: Staff had "bed races" with self-propelled beds while the patients enthusiastically cheered them on, improving the morale of both patients and staff.

Mitchell also emphasizes treating employees fairly and including them in management decisions whenever possible. He advocates for "making mutually agreed upon plans and holding each other accountable." Mitchell states, "When you make a deal, keep your end of it. Trust usually develops slowly, over time. Mistrust often only takes a single, quick, long-remembered incident."

Mitchell concludes by noting that if most of this advice sounds like basic social work principles, it's because it is. His advice for making a successful career change is basically the same as for being a good social worker. He stresses remembering our social work roots, which include genuine concern and respect for people and developing effective working relationships.

We, as social workers and employees of the VA, are extremely fortunate to have had the privilege of receiving some of the wisdom and knowledge so generously shared with us by Mr. Mitchell and look forward to his continued contributions.

### Advice to

#### social workers:

"Be careful not to step on people on your way up, lest they later step on you on their way up over you.  
Treat your peers with respect - you may be working for one of them some day."

## Patricia Nealon, MSW

### Associate Director VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

*Submitted by: Jennifer R. DiSanti, LCSW, Erie VAMC National SW Public Relations Committee & Erica Taylor, LCSW, Seattle VAMC Asst. Editor Synergy and SW Public Relations*



Patricia Nealon, the Associate Director of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, believes social work is "a wonderful foundation for almost any job in the healthcare industry. The training and experience serve us daily as we interact with the community, employees and veterans; as we assess situations in order to make sensible decisions, and as we supervise and develop new employees within the system." Ms. Nealon has utilized her social work skills to rise to the position of Associate Director of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. In this position, she is responsible for the planning and implementation of strategic goals for information technology, personnel management, space and projects, and the overall budget. She also provides direct supervision to service line managers for Information Management, Facilities, Business Office, Human Resource, Police, and Information Security. She also participates in VISN level activities including being a member of ELC, AD Council, Advanced Clinic Access Planning Group, Chair of Missed Opportunities for Advanced Clinic Access, Chair of Nursing Hours Per Patient Day, and the Chair of the VISN Equipment subcommittee of Finance Council.

Ms. Nealon first became interested in leadership roles within the VA when she observed the impact people serving in leadership positions have on the organization as a whole. Ms. Nealon's first opportunity to serve in a leadership position occurred when she was asked to serve as the acting administrative assistant to the chief of staff. While in this position, she was able to use her clinical skills to influence the global goals of the organization. Ms. Nealon was promoted to a Supervisory Social Worker at the Highland Drive VAMC in 1976, just 5 years after obtaining her MSW from Tulane University. She was then promoted to the Assistant Chief of the Social Work service at Highline Drive VAMC in 1992, a position she served in for 1 year. She was then promoted to the Chief of Organizational services of the Highland Drive VAMC in 1993 and served in that position for 3 years. She continued to seek out new opportunities and accepted the position of Integration Coordinator for the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System in October of 1996. In 1999, Ms. Nealon became the site manager of the Highland Drive Division of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and the Vice President of Community Based

**Advice to  
social workers:**  
"Take advantage of  
opportunities, say 'yes' to  
new challenges, and most  
importantly, to embrace  
change."

Care. During this time, she also had the opportunity to serve as the Acting Associate Director of the Clarksburg VAMC. In 2002, she became the Associate Director of site operations until she began serving as the Acting Associate Director of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Ms. Nealon was hired as the permanent Associate Director of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System in November of 2004 and has continued in that role. Ms. Nealon reflected "social workers grow up learning about supervision and listening skills, so it's a natural fit for social work to use those skills in leadership roles."

Ms. Nealon stated her greatest career challenge was serving as Chief of Organizational Improvement and learning about JCAHO standards. She noted, "once you adapt, it gets easier." When asked about advice for social workers interested in future leadership positions, Ms. Nealon offers "try as many acting roles as you can, but keep your eye on what you are currently doing. You have to do your current job well, and not just focus on the next big step." She encourages others to "take advantage of opportunities, say 'yes' to new challenges, and most importantly, to embrace change."

## Marianne Semrad

### Associate Medical Center Director North Chicago VAMC

*Submitted by: Erin Butler, LCSW, San Francisco VAMC, National SW Public Relationship Committee*

Marianne Semrad, Associate Medical Center Director, North Chicago VA Medical Center (NCVAMC) described the moment she saw Maslow's hierarchy in action and realized that without meeting basic human needs she could not be an effective change agent. She was doing a social work home assessment on a single mother with three children, one of whom was developmentally disabled, and realized that talking to the mother about a behavior chart was not enough. There were many more basic issues "before her eyes" that had to be dealt with first, e.g., availability of food, cleanliness and pest control, organization of the household. She feels her background in behavior change and her commitment to improving systems, coupled with her belief from a young age that anyone can do what they want to do if they put their mind to it, has shaped her career.

After 15 years in community settings, she came into the VA originally in Planning and Program Development, moved into the Associate Director training program, and now has been with the VA for over 20 years. She is currently the Associate Medical Center Director at the North Chicago VAMC after moving from her position as the Associate Director at the Hines VAMC. With lots of informal on-the-job training and several mentors, she lives by the motto of one of her mentors Russ Struble, that "there's no job too big, no job too small for the leader".

Ms. Semrad believes that there is an ongoing need for capable and qualified leaders in the VA due to current vacancies and projected turnover from retirement. For staff who are interested in advancing, she has excellent

concrete advice. First, she offers that you should find somebody in the management hierarchy and apply to him/her for assistance with leadership: "raise your hand and say that you do want to move up in the organization". Second, she advises spending time learning to write good KSAO's for applications. She encourages staff to serve on community organization boards or committees to demonstrate their leadership skills. Third, she feels it is important to be well prepared for performance-based interviewing (PBI), "review the competencies of the position for which you are applying, make a list of one or two specific examples of how you have demonstrated that competency, and ask a mentor to interview you so you can practice doing a performance-based interview. Finally, and most importantly, she believes that "if someone asks you to do something, say yes". She had many opportunities arise from a detail to another section or VAMC. With this experience, you can "step into unfamiliar water (in the future) and have the skills, abilities, and contacts to do it successfully."

**Advice to  
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up in the organization".

Her recent focus in leadership is based on the book "Good to Great" that has been a guiding philosophy for her management style and life. She has been part of using these concepts to "create a language, and a visual for what we are trying to do." One concept is to make sure they "have the right people on the bus." She reports NCVAMC has redesigned the new employee orientation so that the new recruits meet the leadership team of the Medical Center in the first hour. The Medical Center Director or Associate Director can then educate new employees about "this is who we are, this is what we are looking for, and if you stay at our VA, these are the expectations." She certainly lives this example with her inspiration, her love of her job and her appreciation for the commitment of VA employees.

## **Olivia Stallings**

Assistant Medical Center  
Director St. Louis, Missouri

Submitted by: Jonathan Pollack, LCSW,  
MPA, Albany VAMC; National SW  
Public Relations Committee



Olivia Stallings was a service chief who was interested in new challenges, especially in dealing with budgetary issues, such as allocation and distribution of resources. She took a chance, applied for, and was accepted into the Associate Director Training Program. She is now the Assistant Medical Center Director at the St. Louis, Missouri VAMC.

Stallings actually began her VA career at the Chicago VA thirty-six years ago after having earned her B.A. in sociology from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, and her M.S.W. from Atlanta University. She

states her training and experiences as a social worker, a supervisory social worker, and a social work chief "prepared me to deal with diverse groups of people and diverse problems." Stallings reflected that some of her greatest challenges in moving into progressively more responsible and demanding leadership positions entailed moving from a "specialist" to a "generalist" outlook, learning to look at the "whole picture" as opposed to looking at one specific department.

Stallings has some sound advice for other social workers who may be interested in leadership positions. She recommends "knowing what you want and being open to retraining." Stallings states, "One must be open to learning new things as well as unlearning things that they have learned in the past." Although transferring into an administrative position may lead to promotions and an increase in status, Stallings cautions against making the career transition solely for that purpose. Rather, Stallings advocates applying for positions that you are interested in, that provide opportunities for professional growth, and from which you will experience personal enjoyment.

**Advice to  
social workers:**  
"One must be open to  
learning new things as  
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learned in the past."

Stallings further elaborates that any amount of success will be based on training, circumstances, and preparedness. She encourages others "to be flexible and to be willing to do more than the basic requirements of the job."

Ms. Stallings is an erudite, articulate, and well-prepared leader who serves as an outstanding role model for other social workers who are interested in non-traditional social work leadership roles. We would all be well advised to seek out her wisdom, knowledge, and generosity of spirit.

## **VA Social Work Leadership Project in Review**

*The Ingredients for Leadership*

Submitted by: Pamela Wright, LCSW  
Social Work Executive, Canandaigua VAMC; Chair Elect  
National SW Public Relations Committee

Note from the Editor: Pam has taken the lead on the task of organizing, reorganizing and keeping this project on target. This has not been easy when you consider there has been a total of 22 leaders who participated in the project. The Leadership Project grew beyond expectations, allowing us to see how social workers have moved beyond the traditional roles. Thanks for all your work on organizing this project Pam.

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to interview social workers who have advanced to upper management leadership positions. Each of their stories were different but all contained very similar themes. I found there are certain ingredients that, when combined, make a high probability that a successful leader will be

born. After great reflection and much thought, I make that statement with confidence.

Use of common sense proved to be of great importance in each of them rising to leadership roles. Many pursued advanced education, took advantage of the VA educational online and hands-on classes, applied for leadership training, participated on as many committees or projects as possible, found a mentor to teach them the inner workings of the VA, and were able to balance personal and work life. They had a sense of humor and employed it to their advantage which helped them to relate well to others. They utilized networking and teamwork to promote having their name well known and well respected.

The common themes that emerged with each interview were not surprising, but made me realize that beyond hard work, it is crucial to form good personal relations (social work qualities) and to learn at every opportunity. It was also apparent that each of these leaders possessed an internal drive that was never lost, even when confronting great obstacles that would deter a less driven person. The internal determination displayed by these individuals impressed me more than anything else.

In the ever changing environment of the VA, many tend to let set backs stop them or divert them from pursuing their goals. Better use could be made of a set back by allowing it to boost motivation to reach the goal which these leaders did successfully. This internal drive is not created by hard work, mentoring, or taking additional educational classes, but comes from a place within the person. This drive keeps the spark burning and allows one to trudge onward when things are at their lowest point. It is a desire to make a difference and understand that all is not lost after one defeat.

This internal drive allows a person to promote themselves into a position in upper management/leadership. It helps situate them into a place where they can make positive change and advance their vision of how to implement the best care for our veterans.

In addition to the internal drive needed, another common thread emerged that proved to be an integral ingredient in the move toward a leadership position. That ingredient is willingness to learn more about your personal weaknesses. Many people avoid their areas of weakness only to find out later, that if they worked on learning more about these areas, it would have helped them progress. Some leaders mentioned weaknesses in budgetary knowledge, data management, and services outside their expert knowledge base. Once you are able to identify your area of weakness; that is the area to focus on. For many of us, these areas are generally not the ones that social workers tend to excel in naturally. Our abilities usually involve being able to relate to people, work well on teams, communicate well orally and in writing, solve complex problems, analyze difficult situations and advocating for others. We have developed these skills through our training and practice.

The stories in this Special Edition of Synergy are here to inspire you to take the next step in your career

development. These stories can help you connect with others development and provide you with the spark to pursue your unique path to leadership. Leadership does not always mean rising to the level of a Director but it can mean finding your leadership potential and setting a goal of achievement that is right for you. You now have the tools to use if you are interested in making a change towards career advancement or leadership. Now all you have to do is use them!

## You'll Have to Work for Opportunities

Submitted by: Heather Mahoney-Gleason, Associate Chief, Social Work Service North Florida/ South Georgia VHS

In 1996, a national task group was charged with evaluating the Director Career Track program. After thorough investigation, the group recommended to replace the Director Career Track with the High Performance Development Model (HPDM) in order to develop not just future Directors/leaders but the entire VA workforce. This was an effort to re-direct our focus toward the other half of the VA's mission which is to "become an employer of choice". In the past, the VA's focus has been to meet the other half of the mission, "To become the provider of choice", neglecting the development of its best asset, the employees. The focus of the model, therefore, is to develop employees' potential, to make employees more marketable and employable focusing on lifelong employability, not lifelong employment.

The questions the task group had to ask were:

- **WHAT** to develop and
- **HOW** to develop the employees' potential?

To answer these questions, the group visited and analyzed various high performing organizations. The group found that these high performing organizations had something in common: their employees were developed and competent in the following areas:

- *personal mastery*
- *technical skills*
- *interpersonal effectiveness*
- *customer service*
- *flexibility/adaptability*
- *creative thinking*
- *systems thinking*
- *organizational stewardship.*

These areas make up the VA High Performance Development Model eight core competencies. Six elements support the core competencies:

- *performance based interviewing*
- *performance management*
- *continuous assessment*
- *competency development*
- *continuous learning opportunities*
- *coaching/mentoring.*

We use **performance based interviewing** to bring on the right employees. We **coach and mentor** them using **competency development** as a framework to help employees gain the skills and resources they need to accomplish their goals and the goal of the organization by providing **continuous learning** opportunities. We **continuously assess** using performance appraisal, IDP, PDP and other assessment tools. Lastly, **performance management** measures and evaluates that what we are doing is working.

VA offers many leadership development programs at all levels in the organization using HPDM core competencies as a framework for professional development. Many of these programs come with the opportunity to have a coach or mentor while you are completing the coursework. The good news is they are FREE. Medical centers may have to commit to some financial support if travel is involved. Many professionals in the private sector pay thousands of dollars to take similar courses. This is another benefit to many employees. However, it is up to the employee to take advantage of what is available.

You can find out about these programs through your medical center Education Coordinator or by searching on-line through many of the VA websites. Here are some programs available to VA employees. Some have web links dedicated to the specific program.

#### VISN LEAD programs -

<http://lrnestweb8.dva.va.gov/succession/templates/master.aspx?pid=1656>

#### VHA Mentor and Coach Certification -

<http://lrnestweb8.dva.va.gov/succession/templates/Master.aspx?pid=2527>

#### Supervisor Training -

<http://lrnestweb8.dva.va.gov/succession/templates/Master.aspx?pid=2528>

#### Service Chief Orientation -

<http://vaww.ees.lrn.va.gov/Site/Templates/SearchResultDetails.aspx?pid=526&query=service%20chief&catalogId=22862>

#### Leadership VA (LVA) -

<http://10.190.0.50/Sites/valu/learning/1108/>

#### Executive Career Field (ECF) Candidate Development Program -

<http://lrnestweb8.dva.va.gov/succession/templates/Master.aspx?pid=1581>

EES has leadership courses you can take for FREE-

<http://vaww.ees.lrn.va.gov/Site/Templates/Home.aspx?pid=79>

You should check with your supervisor to find out which programs may best suit your learning needs. Don't forget to get your supervisor's approval prior to applying to any of these programs. You have to work hard to meet your goals. Be open to constructive feedback and use feedback as an opportunity to grow. Be committed to be the most well-qualified and well-trained employee providing the best possible service to our nations veterans.

Good luck on your leadership journey. We hope to meet you at the top.

## Leadership Awards

**Judy Haushalter**, VIST Coordinator Sioux Falls VAMC, South Dakota. The South Dakota Society for Social Work Leadership in Healthcare presented the award at the SD Association of Healthcare Organizations Fall Convention Annual Joint Award Luncheon. During the awards luncheon, Judy received the Social Work Leadership Award for *Leadership Efforts in Healthcare*.



**Jill Manske**, Director, Social Work VACO was recognized for her outstanding leadership by her alma mater, Loyola University of Chicago. The presentation was part of the Founder's Dinner. Following a film outlining her amazing career of service Jill was presented with a beautiful medal of honor.

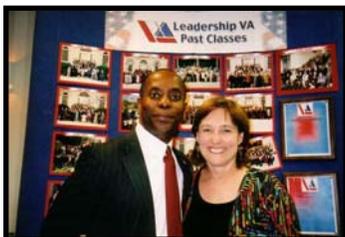


**Tim Shea**, Medical Center Director Audie Murphy VAMC, San Antonio, TX, first appeared in our May SYNERGY Leadership Project Success Story. It was recently announced that he has been selected to receive the 2006 *Presidential Rank Awards for Meritorious Senior Professional*. Each year, the President honors an elite group of career members of the Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Level (SL) and Scientific and Professional (ST) corps who are selected for their outstanding leadership, accomplishments and service over an extended period of time in some of the nation's most critical positions in the federal government.

## Leadership Recognitions



**Michael Moreland**, Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (and former SW chief) has been selected as the VISN 4 Director. You can read more about Mr. Moreland's career in the October 2006 Synergy where he was one of the first leaders interviewed for the Leadership Success Story Project. Mr. Moreland first appeared in our May SYNERGY Leadership Project Success Story Project.



**David Rabb**, Executive Assistant VHA Diversity Advisory Board, Minneapolis VAMC, MN & **Judy Arnold**, Associate Chief of Social Work, Leavenworth VAMC, KS and LVA Co-

Leader Social Work are pictured here at the Leadership VA and LVA Class of 2006 at VACO.

***Congratulations Everyone !!!***

## Introducing the New VHA Social Work Leadership Preceptor & Partner Program

Submitted by: **Sara A Tompkinson**, Social Worker VA Pacific Islands Health Care System, Honolulu, HI and **Heather Mahoney-Gleason**, Associate Chief, Social Work Service North Florida/ South Georgia VHS

The VHA Social Work Leadership Preceptor and Partner Program (SWLP & PP) is pivotal to VHA's successful succession planning. The participants are pioneers in building a stronger foundation for VHA social workers in leadership. Seasoned VHA Social Work Chiefs and Executives (Preceptor) are paired with newly appointed Social Work Chiefs and Executives (Partner).

The Preceptor and Partner relationship is a one year commitment. The program consists of a formalized action plan which defines the measurable goals and objectives, using principles of the High Performance Development Model (HPDM). Regular communication (via telephone, email, face to face, etc.) is encouraged to achieve desired outcomes in the partners' social work leadership development plan. Prospective Preceptors and Partners will use program tools on COLLAGE. The Preceptor and Partner relationship is collaborative and builds upon the Partner's strengths.

**Why Be a Preceptor?** The Preceptor is rewarded by fulfilling a professional responsibility to invest in the development of an emerging social work leader by sharing useful knowledge, experiences, and skills.

**Why Be a Partner?** Social work leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are tasked to have working knowledge and skills to access data management, understand the importance of fiscal stewardship, balance the challenges of ongoing change within VHA, forecast trends, and demonstrate interpersonal relationship skills across all product lines. This is a great opportunity for a new Social Work Chief or Executive to acquire the specific social work leadership skills and competencies expected by hospital Directors.

More information about this program can be obtained on COLLAGE – [http://vawww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/E\\_SocialWork/](http://vawww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/E_SocialWork/) Go to File, then File List, scroll down to the VHA Social Work Leadership Preceptor and Partner Program Guide.

You may also contact Kristin Day via Outlook or by telephone at (202) 273-5934 for additional questions, or to become a Preceptor or Partner

## Tips to Moving Your Career Forward

Submitted by: Shirley R. Salom-Bail, LCSW, Palo Alto VAMC

During the first few weeks of a new year, most people welcome and appreciate a fresh perspective. Perhaps it's the state of starting anew with clean, uncluttered appointment books which fills us with energy. Resolutions are numerous: exercise more, eat healthier, spend more quality time with family/friends, try a new hobby, quit smoking/drinking or get organized. As we reflect on the changes we want to make, one area which many of us tend to pay little attention to is our professional/career development. Beyond the obvious tips of showing up (on time, preferably), networking, improving your skills, learning new job skills, keeping track of your accomplishments, there are specific tips to help you thrive and flourish as you move up the VA career ladder.

- Serve on facility Social Work Service committees - (e.g., education)
- Serve on facility team processes – (e.g., interdisciplinary teams, RCA, AIB)
- Serve on medical center committees – (e.g., Ethics, Special Emphasis Programs, and Medical Record Review)
- Serve on VISN committees
- Serve on National Social Work committees (e.g., Public Relations, Continuing Education, Professional Standards, Data Management)
- Participate in leadership development programs and implement what you learn (e.g., Emerging Leadership Development Program, Leadership Development Institute, Executive Career Field Candidate Development Program)
- Take professional growth classes such as "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" and apply what you learn
- Always keep your supervisor informed and ask permission to take professional growth classes and apply to leadership development courses
- Keep your supervisor informed when looking for a new job or promotion. Supervisors may be able to offer you some help and review your KSAO's.
- Use your supervisor or another senior social worker as a Coach/Mentor - someone helped them get to where they are
- Become an expert in an important area for Social Work such as data management. Discuss this with your supervisor to see where your talents best fit.
- Participate in the monthly National Social Work Career Development call for more ideas.

## Directory to Social Work Leadership Success Stories

By: Erica Taylor, LCSW, Seattle VAMC, Asst. Editor SYNERGY, National VA Social Work Public Relations Committee Member

Over the past year, we have been fortunate to learn about social work leaders in non-traditional social work positions. They have generously shared their experience, insight, and wisdom. This special edition marks the end of this project, and we hope these articles have highlighted the wonderful impact social workers have made in the VHA system. The PR committee would like to thank all of the participants in this project:

### SYNERGY March 2006

- **William Feely**, Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management

### SYNERGY May 2006

- **Sr. Susan Angell**, Associate Director, Clinical Support Services, Long Beach VAMC
- **Thomas Cappello**, FACHE Director, Atlanta VAMC
- **Gary DeGasta**, Director White River Junction, Vermont Medical and Regional Office
- **Tim Shea**, Medical Center Director, Central Arkansas VA Healthcare System

### SYNERGY October 2006

- **John Barilich**, Acting Network Director, VA Healthcare System of Ohio
- **Robert Malone Jr**, Director, Tuscaloosa VAMC
- **Luigi Martone**, Deputy Manager, Mental Health Product Line, South Central VA Health Care Network
- **Michael Moreland**, Director, VA Pittsburg Healthcare System

### SYNERGY January 2007

- **Deborah Amdur**, Special Assistant to the Director, Washington DC VAMC
- **Rose Blesener**, Director of Resource Management, St. Cloud VAMC
- **Joseph Dalpiaz**, Medical Center Director, Sioux Falls, SD
- **Claudia Dewane**, LCSW, D.Ed., BCD, Deputy Field Director, Women Veteran Health Program, VISN's 1-5, 21-22 Central Office, Washington D.C
- **Henrietta Fishman**, Service Line Manager, VISN 3 New York City, Northern New Jersey
- **John Glacken**, MSW, Associate Director, VA Outpatient Clinic, Columbus
- **Kathryn Maginnis**, MSW, MBA, FACHE, Central Office - Director of Network Support - East
- **Barbara McLelland**, Deputy Network Director VISN 11 Ann Arbor, Michigan
- **Roy Mitchell**, Management Analyst, VHA Decision Support Office Bedford, MA
- **Patricia Nealon**, MSW, Associate Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
- **Marianne Semrad**, Associate Medical Center Director, North Chicago VAMC
- **Olivia Stallings**, Assistant Medical Center Director St. Louis, Missouri

The National VA Social Work Public Relations Committee and SYNERGY would also like to thank the interviewers for this project:

- **Pamela Wright**, LCSW, Canandaigua VAMC
- **Jonathan Pollack**, LCSW, MPA Albany VAMC

- **Erin Butler**, LCSW, San Francisco VAMC
- **Jennifer R. DiSanti**, LCSW, Erie VAMC
- **Jana O'Leary**, LMSW Central Texas VHCS Temple
- **Lisa McGuire**, LCSW, Tomah VAMC
- **Shirley R. Salom-Bail**, LCSW, Palo Alto VAMC

**THANKS TO EVERYONE THAT MADE THE  
SOCIAL WORK LEADERSHIP  
PROJECT A SUCCESS !!!!**

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