



# SYNERGY

March 2007

## THE NATIONAL VA SOCIAL WORK NEWSLETTER

# MARCH IS SOCIAL WORK MONTH

*"Hope + Health: Help Starts Here"*

## Social Work Month

**BY:** Jill E. Manske, ACSW, LISW Director, Social Work Service VA Central Office



**Social Work Month** is always a time for celebrating and recognizing what social workers do. We typically have luncheons, receptions and parties. At some medical centers, awards are presented to social workers with significant accomplishments and to "Friends of Social Work". We often have display boards with information about the education and training of social workers and the functions we perform in VA health care in order to educate other staff, volunteers and patients. But during March, I like to reflect on where VHA Social Work has been and where we are heading.

As of January 2007, there were 4,787 master's prepared social workers in VHA. Of those, 66% are women and 26% are members of minority groups. Of the total number of VHA social workers, only 151 are in supervisory positions. However, there are 1,254 social workers at the GS-12 grade or higher (26%).

Another interesting set of numbers has to do with projected retirements. This year, 19% of VHA social workers are eligible for full or early retirement. The numbers just continue to creep upwards: 20% in FY 08, 21% in FY 09, and 22% in FY10. And never let it be said that social workers burn out young. The average age of our Social Work staff is 51, and 54% of us are over age 50. We have 52 social workers who are at least 70 and 2 who are over 80.

So, what does all of this mean and why should you care? We have a fairly diverse but aging staff that is predominantly female. Due to the number of leadership positions in Social Work (including program coordinators, senior social workers, supervisors, assistant chiefs, chiefs and executives), there are many opportunities for social workers to climb the career ladder. So despite downsizing and elimination of middle management positions over the last 10 years, more than one quarter of all VHA social workers are at grades above the GS-11 full performance level.

Yet the leadership opportunities are also challenges. Many of you are aware that in the last 5 years, we have seen a trend with medical centers recentralizing and creating Social Work Services with chiefs. But when many of these medical centers announced vacant chief positions, they had few applicants. In part, that's because we have not had a Social Work chief training program since SWALT (Social Work Administrative Leadership Training) was discontinued in 1996 and we therefore have no pipeline of chief trainees ready to be promoted. But other factors also come into play, most notably that fewer potential chiefs are mobile and willing to relocate.

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We are facing a Social Work leadership crisis. To assure we have talented, experienced social workers ready to move into leadership positions, we have begun offering monthly Social Work career development conference calls. We will also soon roll out a formal mentoring program for supervisors and program coordinators interested in becoming chiefs and assistant chiefs. Last year, we implemented our Social Work Preceptor Program to provide mentoring for newly-appointed chiefs and executives. There are also opportunities for staff social workers to serve on national committees and task forces to gain some national experience and exposure.

As we celebrate Social Work Month this March, think about your career plans and where you would like to be in 3 years or 5 years. With your supervisors, complete individual development plans, outlining your career goals and the steps you can take to achieve them. Many medical centers have leadership training programs, as do all Networks. Also remember to read the last issue of Synergy, which was a special edition devoted to telling the stories of VHA leaders with Social Work degrees. Hopefully you will be inspired. In the next few years, we will have many, many retirements and many opportunities for you to move up. It's an exciting time!

### Social Work Month

The Social Work Month Toolkit is a resource for VA social workers to use when developing plans and programs to celebrate Social Work Month. The toolkit provides examples of past Social Work Month activities, helpful websites and a variety of ideas from simple fun celebrations to elaborate planning ideas.

The NASW provides a social work theme each year that is announced sometime in December. Posters and other merchandise can be purchased through their web site. NASW offers a link to social work month, which provides the current year's theme and a toolkit on ideas for the month. Check out the link at <http://www.naswdc.org>

This is a great time to educate staff about the Association of VA Social Workers (and the merchandise makes nice staff appreciation gifts). Membership applications and available merchandise can be located at <http://www.vasocialworkers.org>.

**The VA National Social Work Public Relations Committee wishes you a happy Social Work Month!**

## Atlanta VAMC Social Worker is cited as part of a research project on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Submitted by: Mary Lou Pittman, LISW-CP, Atlanta VAMC

In 2003, the Atlanta VAMC Trauma Recovery Team formerly known as the PCT team embarked on a research project. The PCT looked at the effects of group based exposure treatment (GBET) for patients suffering with severe military-related Posttraumatic Stress. A by product of that research led another team of clinicians to document the rate of co-morbidity of physician-diagnosed chronic pain conditions in veterans who were seeking treatment for PTSD. The second aim was to examine pain ratings before, during and after PTSD treatment. Using data that was a part of the GBET clinical practice, those with more pain before treatment reported reductions in pain over the course of PTSD treatment and the four months following treatment. Once completed, the team moved toward publication and after several attempts the research was accepted and will be in press for 2007 in the Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development.

What makes this research extra special is that the research team was a multidisciplinary one and it included one of our own, a licensed clinical social worker by the name of Virginia Worley.

**Virginia Worley** agreed to be interviewed for the Synergy and this is what she shared:

Virginia, affectionately known as "Ginger" shared that she is humbled and honored to serve the veterans at the Atlanta VAMC and to have taken part in this vital research project. She shared "*how wonderful it is to view the positive effects of treatment which is to see America's hero's experiencing a better quality of life (not to mention hugs from the spouses at the semi annual picnics).*" In addition she continues to be part of a now larger multidisciplinary team who continue to combine treatment with continuous review of literature and further research in order to offer cutting edge treatment of PTSD to veterans of all ages. Ginger added that often time's social workers are at the forefront of innovative research and are the least to be recognized. She hopes that she has led the way for other social workers at the Atlanta VAMC and throughout to take part in research.

## Social Work Field Education in the Digital Age

Submitted by: Anthony Winckowski, DSW and Judith Caldwell, LCSW West LA VA Healthcare Center Los Angeles, California

In December of 2006, **Tony Winckowski**, DSW and **Judith Caldwell**, LICSW of the West LA VA Health Care Center in Los Angeles had the opportunity to present at the Fifth International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health in Hong Kong. The workshop explored the critical use of the co-evolution of students through their generative relationships at the edge of chaos. It is at this edge of chaos where we believe creative complex learning occurs.

The workshops highlight the importance of the students evolving relationships, their tasks and the new sources of learning that cannot be predicted in advance.

"Our presentation was well received with amazement. It was hard for people to understand the fact that we can devote our energies for this type of 'advanced educational activities' when most are still trying to get their education program off the ground. Many gave me their business cards in order to receive more information about complexity theory." – Tony Winckowski

### The Problem: Science Fatigue

Social work field education has a substantial legacy problem. A critical lack of synergy continues to exist between student field education and the didactic coursework at the University. Further, in spite of continuous attempts to infuse a variety of learning concepts, social work field education primarily relies on the time-honored apprenticeship model to train the new generation of social workers. The traditional training programs in academia and the field strive for order, control, and predictability. The basic concepts include:

- Everything is knowable and measurable
- Causes can be known and are measurable and
- Theory is truth and experience is folklore

These standards exist because Western scientific society has for the past 150 years embraced a paradigm based on two essential concepts. These concepts are "certainty" and "determinism".

Certainty is concerned with knowledge, that is, if one had enough knowledge of the present state of the universe, one could predict all future states.

Determinism focuses on cause and effect, that is, the idea that all effects have causes that, once understood, lead to precise prediction and control of the future events. All social work sanctioned actions are based on these two assumptions.

One of the major consequences of social work's focus on the scientific paradigm of certainty and determinism is that the social work graduate education process remains jumbled and disconnected. Social work educators both in academia and the field have been unable or unwilling to effectively identify the field educational models that may lead to effective social work practice in our digital age.

Furthermore, the current generation of students is deeply immersed in an increasingly complex world. Social workers unanimously agree that life is becoming more complex and the potential management of social, organization, economics, and spiritual life issues calls for a re-examination of the complex exchanges of activity, knowledge and values between people. We are also beginning to recognize a radical change in the schema of our student population. Today's digital generation of students approach learning as a plug and play experience. The current generation of students is unaccustomed and unwilling to learn sequentially, to read the manual and instead is inclined to plug-in and learn through participation and experimentation. Present day social work education has been unable to link the current student needs with a curriculum that is emergent, creative, and open.

### Solution: A Paradigm Shift - WHAT IS COMPLEXITY THEORY?

Complexity theory provides us with a new way of conceptualizing knowledge and education systems. Complexity science considers aspects of systems that are overlooked by traditional scientific approaches. Complexity theory has been described as systems thinking applied to the behavior of natural systems and suggests that there are multiple ways of learning.

At its core, this intellectual revolution is transforming our understanding of life, its structures, and dynamics while providing new principals for making sense of what is most fundamental in our lives, that is, our relationships with other people and our environment. It may help explain how people learn.

Complexity theory concerns the behavior of complex systems and explains how parts of the

system give rise to collective learning behaviors. Complexity principals provide a powerful explanation of how systems (students) interact with their environment. Complexity theory pinpoints the source of social order in the nonlinear and dynamic behavior of the system. It attempts to explain the big consequences of little things.

Complexity theory also attempts to understand complex, interrelated education systems by looking at the whole of the system, not just the component parts.

Complex systems contain many discrete and simple elements that may be similar to each other and which interact with other elements of the system, for example a group of students. As a result of the interaction of the elements (students) there arises a synergistic pattern of order or behavior that is not seen in nor can be understood from the individual elements alone.

Complexity theory seeks to explain how an education system's functions rely upon multiple feedback loops in order to reframe both the learning environment and the student schema.

Finally complexity theory focuses attention on the interaction as a process of producing knowledge. Importantly it sees participants, in this case, students, as active agents, co-creating and co-constructing their knowledge. Complex thinking therefore changes the educational emphasis from objects to relationships between entities, from control to enabling infrastructures and suggests ways that students can develop lifelong learning paradigms that allow for continuous change.

In summary, educators, both in the field and the university remain concerned with exposing their students to what they will be facing when they enter the ever-changing professional social work world. The present day social work field experience generally tends to constrain exploration and innovation, such that students who perform well in the apprenticeship program are likely to be those who are particularly good at following the supervisor's instructions, rules and performing actions that reflects or reinforces the supervisor's views. This narrow linear view of social work field education is clearly not the best landscape for the student, field agency, university and clients.

A potential answer may lie in complexity theory. Complexity theory considers aspects of systems that are overlooked by traditional scientific

approaches.

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Complex thinking changes the educational emphasis from objects to relationships between entities, from control to enabling infrastructures and suggests ways that students can develop lifelong learning paradigms that allow for continuous change. The key challenge will be to rethink many aspects of how we create learning experiences so that social work graduates will be prepared for a different kind of society, one that is constantly shifting, interdependent and increasingly complex.



Tony Winckowski and Judy Caldwell at a Hong Kong restaurant, Felix at the Pinnacle Hotel

*We're on the Web! Visit us at:*

## **COLLAGE**

[http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/E\\_SocialWork/](http://vaww.collage.research.med.va.gov/collage/E_SocialWork/)

Intranet: [vaww.va.gov/socialwork](http://vaww.va.gov/socialwork)

Internet: [www.va.gov/socialwork](http://www.va.gov/socialwork)

## NEW TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS

These two programs were developed to meet the transportation needs of our nation's newest veterans and their families. These innovative programs have been designed to compliment transportation resources that were already offered to veterans and their families.

### Medical Transport Program to Promote Health and Healing For Iraqi and Afghan Veterans and Their Families

Submitted By: Erica Taylor, LICSW, VAPSHCS

A new charitable program will transport troops, veterans and families affected by military deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

At a recent news conference, **Edward R. Boyer**, CEO and president of Mercy Medical Airlift, announced Air Compassion for Veterans (ACV) and explained its benefits. ACV was created to arrange and provide free air transportation for veterans and families, including air ambulance and commercial airline flights related to medical and support needs. It is supported by the Iraq Afghanistan Deployment Impact Fund of the California Community Foundation in Los Angeles.



The program works cooperatively with related programs of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs. ACV also cooperates with the Heroes Miles Program of the Fisher House Foundation.

Virginia Beach Mayor Meyera Oberndorf attended the news conference and commended the program for "providing the gift of healing" to veterans by "giving them wings." She noted that to date the amount veterans have saved is over \$67,000 for the missions flown. "This is a brand new chapter in the book of good deeds that we have been able to accomplish through folks who are in love with flight," she said.

Boyer said ACV has flown 20 missions since the first flight on November 20, 2006. Besides flights related

troops, veterans, their families, and loved ones affected by the military deployment." Boyer said he is seeking other philanthropic funding sources to expand the program to include veterans of other wars.

The compelling first flight of Air Compassion for Veterans illustrates the program's impact in life and death situations. A 2½ year old boy was beaten and abused while his father, a sergeant in the US Marine Corps, was serving in Iraq. The child's mother had met a man on the internet and developed a relationship with him, then went to Texas, taking the boy and his younger sister with them. When the boy had difficulty breathing and would not stop crying, the couple took him to the hospital where they were then arrested for injury to a child. The paternal grandparents flew to Lubbock, Texas from their home in Melbourne, Florida to obtain temporary custody and make travel arrangements for the young boy. The grandfather had learned about the ACV program through a friend and was able to schedule a medical flight on a Lear jet to Florida.

Boyer said ACV is "committed to the ongoing healing process" and wants word of the free service to reach far and wide into the military community.

VHA Social Workers may access the services by contacting Air Compassion for Veterans at: 1-888-662-6974. Their website can also be viewed at: <http://AirCompassionforVeterans.org>

Due to the funding for this program, they are only able to assist with OIF/OEF veterans at this time.

### Veteran's Airlift Command: Meeting the Aviation Needs of our Nations Newest Veterans

Submitted by: Erica Taylor, LICSW; VAPSHCS and Cathy Blanchard, LICSW; VAPSHCS

Veteran's Airlift Command provides air transportation for medical and other compassionate purposes to wounded warriors, veterans, and their families



through a national network of volunteer aircraft owners and pilots. The organization was founded by **Walter Fricke**, who knows first hand how important it is to have family nearby to provide support when recovering from a serious injury. Veteran's Airlift Command was established in July of 2006 and flew its first mission in November of 2006. Since that time, they have flown over 50 additional missions and respond to daily requests from Walter Reed Medical Center. The organization now has over 230 aircraft and 300 volunteer pilots available to transport veterans. The volunteer pilots and those who volunteer their aircraft donate their time and the cost of operating the aircraft, such as fuel and the cost of using an airport. This is estimated to cost the volunteers at least \$1000 a trip. Mr. Fricke states the response to donate time and aircraft has been overwhelming, "this is family to them." While OIF/OEF veterans and their families are given priority service, the organization will attempt to meet the travel needs of veterans from other conflicts as resources become available.

Veteran's Airlift Command recently provided a flight for a veteran's wife and children to fly from Arizona to Washington to see her husband, who was hospitalized at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System. **Cathy Blanchard**, the social worker who arranged the service through Veteran's Airlift Command, stated using the service was "incredibly easy." She said it took little time to arrange and that a volunteer pilot had responded to the request while she was on the phone making the initial request for service. She also mentioned that the family was very pleased with the service and enjoyed the flight.



To Arrange a Flight through Veteran's Airlift Command contact:

USA Cares 1-866-784-8917 (due to the types of aircraft used, this resource is best for flights less than 500 miles, but attempts will be made to accommodate longer flights)

Information about Veteran's Airlift Command can be located at their website:

[www.veteransairlift.org](http://www.veteransairlift.org) or by calling (952) 582-2911

### Attention Social Work Interns, Intern Coordinators and Supervisors

Tell us about your projects, your research, your innovative groups and other best practice endeavors while in placement at the VA.

The Social Work Research and Evidence Based Practice Committee and the Social Work Education Committee are again collaborating in surveying and compiling Social Work intern projects, best practices, and research. We have been collecting the intern projects for the past three years and have seen the evidence of the exciting and innovative work of VA Social Work Interns.

School projects related to the VA, research, innovative groups or programs, and interns' upcoming projects for Social Work month are welcome. This survey of intern projects is included in the VHA Social Work Strategic Plan and demonstrates excellence in VA Social Work education. Past intern projects included in this survey have been acknowledged at an annual Council on Social Work Education meeting and the National Association of Social Workers.

We think there are more projects that interns are conducting than we have collected during past surveys. We encourage all Social Work interns to submit their intentions to engage in projects, best practices, and research to: [Mel.Tapper@med.va.gov](mailto:Mel.Tapper@med.va.gov)

A one page summary of the project will be due by April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007. It should be submitted on a Microsoft Word document and include:

- \* Name of the intern
- \* Intern's School of Social Work
- \* Intern's Social Work Supervisor
- \* VA site
- \* Intention to Publish
- \* The project is required for graduation – yes or no
- \* Does the School of Social Work have a research affiliation with the VA site – yes or no

Once again, the national summary will acknowledge interns' VA supervisors. Any intern or supervisor who has a question about the need to submit an application to the IRB should contact Mel Tapper or William I. McKinney of the Research and Evidence Based Practice Committee.

Thank you for your support this annual survey.

# National Social Work Committees:

## WORKING FOR YOU

VHA Social Work has 6 National Committees and the SW Leadership Council. The committees serve as extensions of the Office of Social Work Service in VA Central Office. The Social Work National Committees and the Social Work Leadership Council provide guidance on Social Work practice issues to the Director, Social Work Service and help shape policy and provide direction for Social Work. This year, the annual Social Work Committee meetings were held in San Antonio Texas.



### Future, Present and Past Social Work Leadership Council Chairs

L-R: **Future** Judith Talbert, Boston VA Chair Elect; **Present** Miguel Ortega, Houston Chair; **Past** Judy Arnold Eastern Kansas, Outgoing Chair



### *Social Work Leadership Council*

From left to right: Jill Manske, VACO; Doug Mitchell, Phoenix ; Judy Arnold, Eastern Kansas; Carol Sheets, VACO; Jerry Satterwhite, Birmingham ; Sandy Dunn, Bay Pines ; Heather Mahoney-Gleason, North Florida/South Georgia ; Bob Kelter, Madison; Judith Talbert, Boston; Carolyn Hughes, Fresno; Sue Stevens, Fayetteville, NC ; Mel Tapper, Boston; Miguel Ortega, Houston; John O'Brien, VA Maryland, Carroll McShane, Chillicothe; Kristin Day, VACO; Jean Bromley, Milwaukee; Betsy Randall, Boston. Not Pictured: Paul Burton, Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System; Salisbury; (not pictured) Jennifer Summers, Northampton ; Alice Aronow: San Francisco



Amy, Please accept our apology for not getting you in the full frame of the photo.

### *Professional Standards Committee*

**Mission Statement:** To guide, provide direction, maintain, and enhance the professional integrity of Social Work and the VA health care system. This is accomplished by developing, promoting, and educating the field on standards of practice and maintaining liaison with professional organizations, accredited bodies, and national leadership in support of the delivery of quality care to veteran patients and their families.

Front Row: John O'Brien, VA Maryland; Jennifer Jaqua, Madison ; Miguel Ortega, Houston; James Hammond, Togus; Jean Bromley, Milwaukee; Amy Morrow, Kansas. Second Row: Galen Britain, Black Hills; Florence Long, West LA ; Bruce Tucker, Bath.



### *Public Relations Committee*

**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Public Relations Committee is to promote and market social work practice, activities, and leadership as a core and essential component of integrated and holistic healthcare delivery.

From Left to Right: Pam Wright, Canandaigua & Rochester OPC; Jana O'Leary, Central Texas VHCS Temple ICF; Heather Mahoney-Gleason, North Florida/South Georgia HC System; Jonathan Pollack, Albany VAMC; Erin Butler, San Francisco VAMC; Lisa McGuire, Tomah VAMC; Jen DiSanti, Erie; Not Pictured: Jennifer Summers, Northampton VAMC; Terry Clark, Lexington VAMC; Victoria Hill, Birmingham VAMC; Erica Taylor, PSHCS.



### *Research and Evidenced Based Practice Committee*

**Mission Statement:** To facilitate research, program evaluation, and practice accountability that will enhance the quality of social work services provided to veterans. This will be accomplished by: (1) promoting Social Work as an integral participant within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) research community; (2) assisting VA Social Work sites in realizing their potential along the continuum of research and practice evaluation; (3) advising and consulting with the Social Work Director in Headquarters on issues pertaining to social work research; and (4) collaborating with other VACO Social Work Communities relevant to research program evaluation and practice.

From left to right: John Shalanski, Wilkes-Barre; Larry Whorley, Lexington; Carolyn Franzese, Salisbury; I.W. McKinney, Augusta; Mary Lou Guihan, Hines; Debra Volkmer, Salisbury; Jeff Doyle, Albuquerque; Mel Tapper, Boston. Not Pictured: Milton Ayala, San Antonio



### *Education Committee*

**Mission Statement:** the mission of the Education Committee is to provide leadership and expertise to social work leaders and committees when programs, projects, or initiatives contain an educational component.

From left to right: Terry Harbert, Eastern Kansas, Topeka; Darlene Contadino, Cincinnati; Rocco Bagala, PSHCS; Linda Gillespie-Gateley, VAPSHCS; Katherine Smits, Martinsburg; Dian Leibel, Danville; Jerry Satterwhite, Birmingham; Karen McNealy-Boswell; Tuskegee; Judith Talbert, Boston.



### *Staffing and Clinical Practice Committee*

**Mission Statement:** To enhance quality practice by developing and disseminating staffing models, staffing strategies and clinical tools in support of performance improvement.

Left to Right: Front Row: John Petek, Long Beach; Lorn Gingrich, Albany; Deborah Walls, Indianapolis; Cathy Dahle, Seattle; Joanna Kadis, San Diego; Nancy Campbell, VISN 10. Back Row: Emily Baldwin, Durham; Betsy Randall, Boston; Doug Cadiz, Northampton; and Chuck Clancy, Louisville.



### *Data Management Committee*

**Mission Statement:** The VHA Social Work Data Management Committee's mission is to provide the field with information and resources to support the strategic plan of VHA and VHA Social Work. Specifically, workload systems, accurate recording of patient services including CPT and ICD-9-CM Coding, and financial reporting systems to ensure accurate quality services to our veteran patient population and provide baseline data consistent with evidence based practice. Additionally, data based productivity standards promote access of care for our veteran patient population and the availability of data that supports staffing guidelines.

From left to right: Joan Chipps, Buffalo NY; David Riley, Battle Creek; Leah Goodnow, Philadelphia; Steven Pharris, Tennessee Valley; Sandy Dunn, Bay Pines; Patricia Gray, Little Rock; Missy Creel, Daytona OPC; Carroll McShane, Chillicothe. Not pictured: Larry Murray Tennessee Valley and Denise Hamilton, Consultant from Indianapolis

**Interested In Applying for Committee Membership?  
Watch for a future Synergy Newsflash with more specific details about available positions and applying to a committee!**

**22nd ANNUAL UNIFORMED SERVICES SOCIAL WORKERS  
(USSW)  
CALL FOR PAPERS  
“Building the Next Generation”  
Salt Palace Convention Center, 11-16 November, 2007  
Salt Lake City, Utah**

The Uniformed Services Social Workers (USSW) is a consortium representing military, uniformed and civilian social workers in the Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy, Public Health Service and Department of Veterans Affairs. For the past 21 years, USSW has hosted an annual conference open to all social workers of our member agencies as well as social workers in public and private settings with an interest in the provision of social work services to military, public health, and veteran populations. Check out the 2005 and 2006 Proceedings at [www.usuhs.mil/ussw](http://www.usuhs.mil/ussw). This year the conference will be held in conjunction the 113<sup>th</sup> Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) Annual Meeting. AMSUS, the Society of Federal Health Agencies was founded in 1891 and chartered by congress in 1903. It is comprised of professionals serving in the full spectrum of healthcare disciplines in the US Army, US Navy, US Air Force, US Public Health Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, US Army Reserve, US Navy Reserve, US Air Force Reserve, Army National Guard, Air National Guard, and the Coast Guard. The official announcement, including information on the USSW conference, will follow in several weeks and will contain detailed information on registration, travel, hotel and the program schedule.

The theme for the 22nd Annual USSW Conference, “Building the Next Generation,” reflects the need for social workers in our respective agencies to mentor and groom our junior members in developing the skills necessary to provide quality social work services in today’s environment.

We invite submission of proposals for presentation at plenary, workshop, and poster sessions. Areas of particular interest include social work mentoring activities and research which supports deployed service members, their waiting families, and service members requiring medical and mental

health care to support their return to duty or their transition to civilian life, including current and future treatment within the VA health care system. These social work activities, programs, and research may include:

- Prevention and Clinical Treatments
- Services for Returning OIF/OEF Service Members/Veterans
- Working with Military Families and Communities
- Leadership/Administrative Issues
- Education/Research
- And issues that relate to practice ethics

We hope to receive a sufficient number of proposals to categorize workshops into several practice tracks. The program will include a balance of theoretical issues, research, innovative programs, and skill-building presentations. Presentations which describe unique or innovative programs should include evaluative data.

*All proposals must:*

- Use the attached form in Microsoft Word
- Include a resume or Curriculum Vitae
- Include daytime phone numbers and e-mail addresses
- Be submitted electronically to [mchapin@usuhs.mil](mailto:mchapin@usuhs.mil)

The deadline for submission of proposals is close of business on **April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007**. Notification of selection or non-selection will be done by e-mail or telephone on or about May 15th, 2007.

Those selected to present will be expected to seek agency travel funding or pay privately. Funding is not available from USSW resources.

We look forward to receiving your proposals! Please direct questions to your agency’s USSW Conference Planning Committee point of contact, Kristin Day.

## PROMOTIONS

- **Larry Bussetti** has been appointed Social Work Executive at VA New Mexico in Albuquerque. Larry had been serving as acting SW Exec.
- **Johnnie Davis** is serving as the Acting Chief of Social Work at the South Texas VA Healthcare System in San Antonio.
- **Dave Drew** will serve as Acting Chief of Social Work at Dayton, effective January 3<sup>rd</sup>, while recruitment is underway for a new chief.
- **Nancy Dupke** has been named Chief of Social Work at Ann Arbor. Nancy had been serving as Acting Chief.
- **Joy Duran** will serve as Acting Chief at the Central Texas VA Healthcare System.
- **Cody Frasure** has been detailed as the Acting Chief of Mental Health at the Huntington VAMC.
- **Jackie Morales** will be serving as the Acting Chief of Social Work at Mountain Home VAMC.
- **Veronica Gamble** will begin a one-year rotation as the Acting Social Work Executive at VA New Jersey on December 1st. Thanks to Denise Coutsouridis for serving in that capacity of the last year!
- **Isreal Jones** has been selected as the Acting Chief of Social Work at the VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, effective December 22nd. Israel has served as a supervisory social worker at Houston, Loma Linda and Gulf Coast.
- **Debra Kunkel** has been selected as the Social Work Executive at Fargo, effective December 10<sup>th</sup>. Deb had been serving as the Acting SW Executive.
- **Bill Lanning** was selected as the new Social Work Executive for VA Black Hills. Bill had been the Chief of Social Work at the Hot Springs VA Medical Center prior to the merger of Hot Springs with Fort Meade VA Medical Center.
- **Barbara Martin** previous Chief, Social Work Service at the Washington, DC VA Medical Center, is returning to serve as Chief of Social Work at the Alaska VA Healthcare System
- **Sharon Ott** is the new Chief of Social Work at the Columbia, South Carolina VA Medical Center. Sharon had been serving as acting chief at Columbia.
- **John Petek**, Chief of Social Work at VA Central Texas, has accepted a position at the Long Beach VA Medical Center.
- **Veronica Piper** has been selected as the new Chief of Social Work at the North Texas VA Health Care System in Dallas. Veronica had been serving as Acting Chief.
- **Veronica Ramnarine** was chosen as the new Chief of Social Work at the Columbia VA

Medical Center in Missouri. She was formerly a supervisory social worker at VA Eastern Kansas.

- **Amanda Redman** will be serving as Acting Chief of Social Work at Birmingham, following **Jerry Satterwhite's** retirement on December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **David Riley** has been selected as the new Chief of Social Work at the Battle Creek VA Medical Center, effective November 13<sup>th</sup>. David had been serving as Acting Director of the Substance Abuse Produce Line at the Greater Los Angeles VA Health Care System
- **Barry Roberts** has been selected as the SW Executive at the Chalmers P. Wylie VA Outpatient Clinic in Columbus, Ohio.
- **Mary Ann Romeo**, former Chief of Social Work and Social Work Executive at Hines VA Hospital, has been selected as the VISN 12 Care Coordination and Homeless Program Coordinator effective January 7th. Mary Ann will also be serving as the VISN 12 Social Work Lead.
- **Jerry Satterwhite**, newly-retired and former Chief of Social Work at the Birmingham VA Medical Center, has become the first VACO Social Work virtual volunteer. Jerry will be working on special projects, such as the VHA Social Work history/legacy project and redesign of the VHA SW Intranet and Internet web pages.
- **Tony Spillie** has been appointed Acting Social Work Executive at Hines, effective January 7<sup>th</sup>. Tony is the Social Work Clinical Manager in Geriatrics & Extended Care at Hines.
- **Judith Talbert** has been selected as the Social Work Executive at VA Boston Healthcare System. Judith had been serving as the Social Work Executive at the Columbus VA Outpatient Clinic in Ohio and was previously the Mental Health Care Line Manager at Columbus. She began her new assignment in Boston November 6th.
- **Jessi Wilson** began serving as the Social Work Executive at Popular Bluff in September.

## RECOGNITIONS

- **Lori Chase, MSW**, social worker and Prisoner of War (POW) coordinator, Manchester VAMC, was honored recently by Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of New Hampshire, for her work with former POWs. At a POW ceremony, she was presented with a plaque "In recognition and deep appreciation of your dedication and service over the last thirteen years for our Former Prisoners of War."
- **Charles Clancy**, Chief of Social Work at Louisville VAMC is now a fellow in the American College of Health Care Executives.

- **Clay King**, Chief of Social Work at San Diego, is now a Fellow in the American College of Health Care Executives.
- **Mel Tapper** MSW, Ph.D., OIF/OEF coordinator, **Dr. James Munroe**, psychologist, and **Dr. Keith Shaw**, director, Center for Returning Veterans, all from VA Boston Healthcare System, appeared on a local cable access show in the Town of Abington to promote services available at VA Boston Healthcare System for returning combat veterans.

## AWARDS

- **John "Jack" Campbell, LCSW**, addiction therapist, Manchester VAMC, was recently presented the annual "Courage to Change Award" at Serenity Place of Manchester. Serenity Place is a residential short-term treatment facility offering substance abuse treatment services. Mr. Campbell was recognized for his work in helping alcoholics and drug addicts on the road to recovery.

## IN THE NEWS

- **Terry Harbert**, Social Work service chief with the VA's Eastern Kansas Health Care System, was featured in the "VA Clinic Earns Congressional Salute" article in *Lawrence Journal World* on January 23, 2007. Terry was discussing the quality of care provided within VHA and the newly opened CBOC.
- There is a new article on NASW's consumer web page, Help Starts Here, written by our very own **Jennifer Henius**, social worker at Bay Pines. The article provides a lot of very useful information for consumers and veterans. Click on the first link in the attached web page to read the story.
- **Steve Klemz** of the James A. Haley VAMC was featured in the 2-18-07 edition of the *Tampa Tribune* for his work with returning OIF/OEF veterans and their families in the Haley VAMC polytrauma center.
- In the *NASW NEWS*, Volume 52, Number 2, February 2007, there is an article written by NASW Senior Editor, Lyn Stoesen, [Veterans Aided With Transition Struggle](#). Contributors to the article are **Jill Manske**, **Kristin Day**, and **Rick Selig**, OIF/OEF Trauma and Transition Resource Program Coordinator at the Topeka VA. The article speaks to the unique challenges combat veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan face in civilian life.
- **Jean Langbein** and **Steve Mason** social workers at the DC VA Medical Center is featured in the "Easing the Transition" article in the January/February edition of *Vanguard*.

## Jerry Satterwhite Retires

Submitted by: Victoria Hill,  
Birmingham VA



When I received the assignment to submit an article on behalf of Jerry Satterwhite, I jumped at the opportunity. I have been so fortunate to have worked with Jerry for the past 9 years at the Birmingham VA Medical Center. Not only is Jerry a true example of a social worker, he's been an amazing mentor to me and shown me how to effectively deal with people. His commitment to Social Work is extraordinary.

*"Jerry always makes me smile. His sense of humor is legendary among the VA chiefs and I would venture to say that there is no one who has not heard about those Red Shoes (God knows I tried to tell everyone). He has a thing about shoes, like the time that during a meeting in VACO he slipped his shoes in place of Ken Cooley's and when they got up to take a break, Ken slipped his feet into some really big shoes to fill. It was classic and vintage Jerry. Together we wrote and presented several plays about social work in VA in the 80's and 90's which were well received at Chief's meetings. Jerry's humor always works because he never does anything that might hurt someone in the process often actually directing the humor at him."*

- Terry Harbert

Jerry Satterwhite, former Chief Social Work Service, Birmingham, AL retired in December of 2006. Jerry had more than 40 years of federal service, with 33 of those years as a Social Work Chief. Jerry has had a remarkable career in the VA. Jerry Satterwhite's career began at the VA in 1967 as an outpatient social worker in Winston Salem, North Carolina. He graduated from SWALT in 1972 and was promoted to Chief of Social Work Service in Fort Harrison, Montana in 1973. In 1975, he came to Birmingham, Alabama and spent the rest of his career as Chief of Social Work Service. He has had a very notable career as a Social Work leader. Jerry has won many prestigious awards. Jerry was named as the Social Worker of the Year in 1998 and also received the Social Work Pioneer Award in 2003. Jerry has made very significant contributions to the practice of Social Work. He has helped to develop Social Work programs such as SWIMS (Social Work Information Management System) and the Allied Clinical Services Mentorship Program.

Jerry has chaired or served on nearly every national Social Work Committee including the Information Management Committee, Social Work Leadership Council and the Education Committee. He was a SWALT (Social Work Administrative Leadership Training) preceptor for 6 years and helped shape the

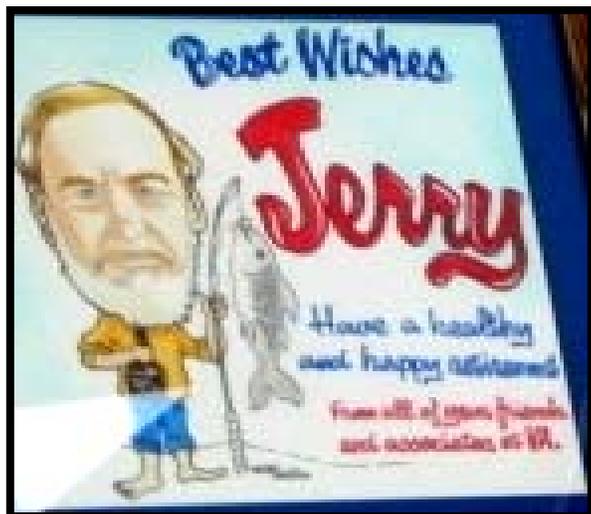
career of dozens of Social Work leaders. One of Jerry's most important contributions was the redesign of the Social Work Leadership Council, of which he wrote the bylaws which governs the Council's functioning. He also helped to create the Association of VA Social Workers. At various times during his career, he served as Acting Associate Director; Acting Director; Acting Chief of Pharmacy Service and Acting Public Affairs Officer. During his 8 years as Chief of Community Resource Service, he was administratively responsible for Social Work Service, Voluntary Service, Public Affairs, Chaplain Service and the Patient Advocates.

Jerry is a distinguished leader not only in the VA but also in the community. In the community, his achievements are impressive. His work with the National Association of Social Workers, Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care, and the Alabama Board of Social Work Examiners has helped set the values for social workers in health care settings.

Jerry has touched the lives of so many VA Social Workers and has helped countless veterans. Those of us that have had the opportunity to work with Jerry are extremely fortunate. He has provided VA Social Work with so much knowledge and wisdom that he will always be remembered.

Today, Jerry enjoys spending time with family and his 7 wonderful grandchildren. However, he can't seem to get away from social work. He is presently the Field Work Liaison between the University of Alabama School of Social Work and 16 Interns placed in 8 agencies throughout the state. He is also doing volunteer work for the Office of Social Work in VACO and is in the process of setting up a social work consultation practice.

*We wish him the best in his retirement.*



## VAMHCS Teams with Morgan State University for Social Work Internship Program

VA Maryland Health Care System

*Connection*; Week for January 7th to January 13th

The VAMHCS Social Work Internship Program is pleased to announce the establishment of an academic affiliation with Morgan State University. Morgan State University established a Masters in Social Work (MSW) program in the Fall of 2005. This is the first MSW program from a Historic Black College and University (HBCU) in the state. The program compliments Morgan's urban mission and focuses on preparing social workers to practice in urban communities at the individual, family, and organizational level.

The VAMHCS Social Work Training Program is excited about this academic affiliation that is accepting interns for the 2007 academic year. Social Work accepts approximately 13 MSW interns that are placed at various VAMHCS facilities and within each clinical center. Social Work interns receive a VA stipend for the time they are involved in their field work training and receive supervision from social work staff. The affiliation with Morgan State University will contribute to meeting future Social Work recruitment needs in the VAMHCS. The establishment of academic affiliation with HBCU is part of the national VHA Social Work Succession Plan.

### HEY VA! HAVE YOU HEARD? January 5, 2007

Some Pennsylvania veterans had something special to be thankful for on Thanksgiving. In early November, Concordia Lutheran Homes, a Butler County, Pa. nursing and retirement community, experienced a fire damaging the extensively damaged an apartment unit housing 137 residents. Some of the people displaced by the fire were veterans who contacted the Butler VA Medical Center for assistance. **Dan Slack**, VA homeless coordinator, and John Cyprian, Butler County director of Veteran Services, quickly met with the veterans to discuss veterans benefits and grant money for disaster situations (grant money is available through the Pennsylvania State Bureau of Military and Veterans Affairs Emergency Assistance program), and invited them to the Butler VAMC homeless storeroom where they picked out clothing, personal care items and other necessities. Approximately 33 veterans received VA help, 27 of whom qualified for monetary assistance through the disaster fund.

## Announcements & Web Sites

If you have some great web sites and you'd like to share them with our readers, please send the e-mail address and a short narrative about the website to:

[Jennifer.Summers@med.va.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Summers@med.va.gov) or  
[Erica.Taylor@med.va.gov](mailto:Erica.Taylor@med.va.gov)

- **Social Work Community of Practice.**  
<http://vaww.webboard.med.va.gov:8040/wb/default.asp?boardid=24>
- **VHA Polytrauma Telehealth Network (PTN) is now available from the OCC intranet site.**  
<http://vaww.va.gov/occ/Telerehabilitation/Polytrauma.asp>
- **GovBenefits** is a resource for government-to-citizen assistance programs available. The website lists benefits by state, category, and features a detailed resource page.  
<http://www.govbenefits.gov/govbenefits/index.jhtml>

## SYNERGY ARTICLES

**SYNERGY** welcomes best practice/articles and innovative ideas on any topic that relates to social work within the Department of Veterans Affairs. While social workers are our primary target group, contributors can be from any discipline that works with social work. *SYNERGY* is an excellent tool for communicating information and ideas with hundreds of your peers.

Need an idea for an article:

- Geriatrics & Extended Care
- Nursing Home Care
- TeleHealth
- Palliative Care
- Mental Health
- Primary Care Social Work
- Hospice
- Women Veterans
- ACA - Advanced Clinic Access
- PTSD

[Jennifer.Summers@va.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Summers@va.gov) - Editor  
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## VHA SW Monthly Conference Call

The VHA SW conference call is a chance for every social worker to listen, learn and ask questions on issues related to social work. The purpose of the calls will be to share new information, highlight best practices, discuss clinical and administrative challenges and provide support. Topics of discussion are based in part, on social workers suggestions. CEU's will be offered for quarterly conference calls.

Please e-mail [Kristin.Day@med.va.gov](mailto:Kristin.Day@med.va.gov) to identify what you would like to include in the calls. Feel free to include best practices too. Let everyone benefit from you initiatives!

### **FY07 schedule**

4/13	1:00 EST
5/11	1:00 EST
6/8	1:00 EST

As you can see this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of the month. The call in number is 1-800-767-1750 and our access code will be **16389**. This will be the access code for all future calls. Please make calls as a group as there are only a limited amount of lines.

## DATA BYTES IDENTITY CRISIS SOLVED!!

The VHA Social Work Data Management Committee hosts a monthly Question & Answer session for the field. Dial in number is 1-800-767-1750 Access Code # 17386 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month. It would be helpful to send questions to VHA SW Data Management prior to the call in so that we can be as helpful as possible. Send questions to [Carroll.McShane@med.va.gov](mailto:Carroll.McShane@med.va.gov). We look forward to hearing from you.

**IN OUR NEXT EDITION:** Our spring edition will focus on Social Work Month Activities, so send along your celebrations and photos. Not only will these be published in Synergy, they will also be added to the Social Work Month Toolkit that is maintained by the National Public Relations Committee.

**DEADLINES** article submission for future SYNERGY's:

May 7, 2007  
July 7, 2007  
October 7, 2007

[Jennifer.Summers@va.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Summers@va.gov) - Editor  
[Erica.Taylor@va.gov](mailto:Erica.Taylor@va.gov) - Assistant Editor

## Synergy Newsletter

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Please look for  
a separate  
announcement  
from the  
National Social  
Work Leadership  
Council that will  
provide more  
information  
on how to apply.**