



THE S^{UNNY} G

Publication for Employees, Veterans and volunteers of the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center

"PROUDLY SERVING AMERICA'S VETERANS"

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November 2011

Jackson VA Honors Tuskegee Airmen



Acorn State Cadet Keturah Richardson (center) with Tuskegee Airmen LTC (ret.) James Harvey III (left) and Calvin Moret. Both men were trained to fly at the now famous Tuskegee Army Airfield in Tuskegee, Alabama. Ms. Richardson led a team of cadets who presented the airmen a plaque on behalf of the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center at the Veterans Day ceremony on November 10. She also is a future aviator having been assigned to the Aviation branch of the United States Army. She will fly helicopters.

Prior to arriving for combat duty in Korea, LTC (ret.) Harvey had earned another distinction—he and his crew had won the first-ever Top Gun competition held in Las Vegas, NV in 1949. An honor his team didn't officially receive until many years later.

"We weren't recognized as the winners until 1995," he said. "I guess they just didn't want some pilots from the 332nd winning the thing."

For Tuskegee airman Calvin Moret, the experience was similar. Pride in being selected, but discrimination based on race just didn't make any sense.

"The Tuskegee airmen had a tremendous reputation and saved many lives in combat," reminded Moret. "They were some of the best pilots the army had and were highly sought after. Imagine how many additional lives they might have saved if given the chance earlier."

Moret left the service in 1946 and returned home to Louisiana to work for his father in the printing business. Discrimination followed him home. Ultimately, he received the training he needed to run the new printing presses—a business he operated until 2008 when Hurricane Katrina wiped it out.

"It spread the family out a little bit," remembered Moret, "but it was alright. We got through it."

Despite their difficult experiences, both men, very spry octogenarians, are thankful for the affection they have received in the last few years.

"I'm just one of many who have served," said LTC (ret.) James Harvey III, "but I am very proud to be a Tuskegee airman."



(LTC ret. James Harvey III and Calvin Moret)

The *Tuskegee Airmen* is the popular name of a group of African-American pilots who flew and fought with distinction during World War II. Officially, they were comprised of the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group. But there's more to the story than that because prior to the war African-Americans were barred from flying for the U.S. military. The reasons for exclusion are well-known in American history.

"They didn't think we were smart enough nor brave enough," said LTC (ret.) James Harvey III, a 1944 graduate of Aviation Cadet Training at Tuskegee Army Airfield. "They were mistaken."

Although he did not fly combat missions during WWII, LTC Harvey fought in Korea in 1950-1951. He earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and ten Air Medals.

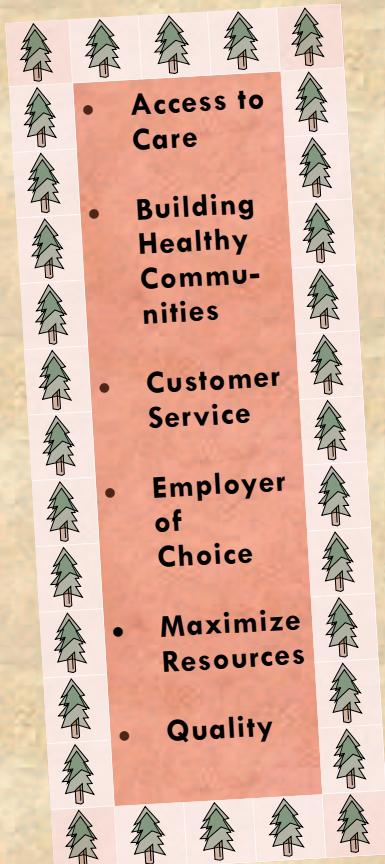
"I remember by December 1950, the Air Corps announced that a pilot's combat limit was 100 missions," said LTC (ret.) Harvey. "I already had 126. They didn't let me fly anymore and I went home in January 1951."

Veterans Day Photo Gallery



Congressional Gold Medal presented to the Tuskegee Airmen by President Bush in 2007.

From the Director's Office...



Dear Employees, Veterans and volunteers,

As we head into that time of year when there are many demands upon us, I would like to wish each and every one of you a safe, happy and healthy holiday season.



These are exciting times at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center, and as 2011 comes to a close, we can be proud of our accomplishments. We are very fortunate to be entrusted with a sacred and honorable mission to take care of our Nation's Veterans with caring and compassion. That's what makes our VA a home and not an institution.

Throughout the past few months, I have had the opportunity to witness several acts of healthcare excellence and am always touched by the dedication of our employees, compassion of our volunteers, and dignity of our Veterans and families. We do meaningful work here.

I wish you a joyous and peaceful holiday season!

Sincerely,

Michael R. Winn
Interim Center Director

Ladies and Gentlemen: Please Welcome the Platters

As part of National Salute to Veterans Week, the world renowned Platters are coming to Jackson, Mississippi. They have sold over 100 million records. Tickets are free, Volunteers are needed. Contact Voluntary Service at 1312 or email deborah.thomas5@va.gov.

**Valentines for Veterans
Welcome Home Concert**

When: February 17, 2012 at 7:30 pm
Where: Jackson Convention Center
Who: Open to the entire community
Why: National Salute to Veterans Week

**Jackson VA by the numbers!!****332 Mil***Annual Budget***430,230***Outpatient Visits***13 Mil***FY 11 Construction***60,000***CFC Goal***44,804***Veteran Uniques***29,195***Volunteer hours***3,423***Veterans transported***2,668***Women Veterans***2,400***Employees***350***Volunteers***Pardon Our Dust!****Replace Fire Alarm Systems**

Replacing the existing fire alarm and card access systems throughout the Medical Center. *Estimated Completion: 11/2011.*

Refinish Exterior Pre-Cast Panels

Refinishing and coating the pre-cast panels on the building's exterior surfaces. *Estimated Completion: 11/2011.*

Replace Site Lighting

Replacing existing parking lot and exterior building lighting with new, energy efficient fixtures. *Estimated Completion: 12/2011.*

Install Fire Sprinklers in Research Building 5

Installing fire sprinklers in building 5 (Research & Education Bldg). *Estimated Completion: 2/2012.*

**Holiday Open House****Friday, December 16****Atrium****6-8 am (midnight shift-Montgomery Hall)****2-4 pm (All Others)**

We Got Game...



Find more pics at www.facebook.com/jacksonvamc



Homeless Veterans Summit



Women Veterans Day Program, November 2



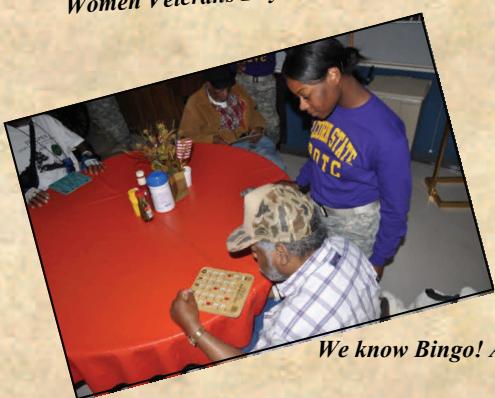
Homeless Veterans Summit, November 1



Caregiver Education Fair, November 14



172nd Military Family Day on November 5.



We know Bingo! Alcorn State ROTC visits Veterans on November 18.

Jackson VA Chiropractor Named 2011 Mississippi Chiropractor of the Year

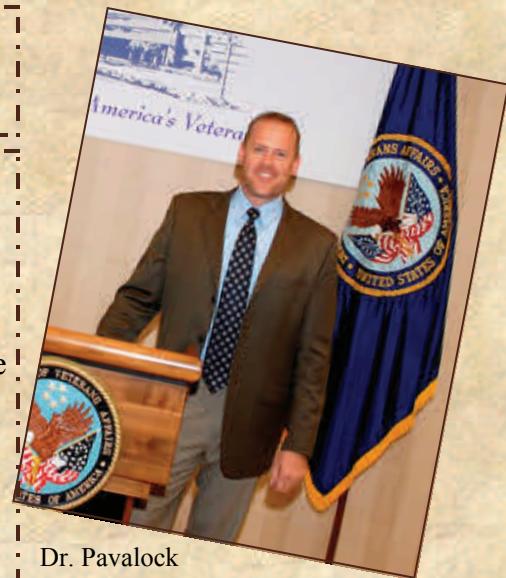
Dr. Michael Pavalock, DC, MPA, (*right*) Staff Chiropractor at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center, received the 2011 Chiropractor of the Year Award from the Mississippi Chiropractic Association for his contributions to the Chiropractic profession, his career achievements and his leadership within the Federal Chiropractic arena. The Chiropractor of the Year award recognizes a Chiropractor who exemplifies the highest standards of professional leadership, service and quality health care. Pavalock is one of a few select Chiropractors pioneering the integration of Chiropractic care into the Department of Veterans Affairs. In this role, he has established the capabilities and value of Chiropractic care through clinical excellence and organizational integration. His work to control outsourced neurosurgical expenditures is yielding significant savings to the Medical Center while improving the care of Veterans.

Pavalock also is the director of the Chiropractic Academic Affiliation program. This highly competitive 4-6 month competency training program has been designed to welcome select students into the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery Medical Center and to provide advanced clinical multidisciplinary training. The program's expansion now involves Medical Doctors in the University of Mississippi Medical Center Pain Management Fellowship Program. Fellows, as a component of their rotation through VA, spend two days in the Chiropractic clinic for training on non-invasive pain management methods.

Pavalock presented the Chiropractic program integration to the South Central VA Health Care Network's Executive Leadership Council composed of 10 VA medical centers' executive staffs from MS, LA, TX, OK, and AR. As clinical adjunct faculty at Palmer College of Chiropractic, Pavalock also traveled in 2011 with a delegation of faculty and students into the Amazon of Brazil providing care to the medically underserved. "It has been a great pleasure to be part of the integration of Chiropractic into VA and to demonstrate the expanded capabilities and value of the profession here in Mississippi," said Pavalock.

Veterans Justice Outreach Program Launched

In a partnership with Circuit Court Judge Bob Helfrich of Forrest and Perry county, there now is a Veterans court. VA Justice Outreach Specialist Shea Langs attended the first court held on November 21. Veterans courts are designed to be proactive and help Veterans navigate the court system, but most importantly, "get Veterans the help they need to avoid un-necessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration." For more information, please contact Mr. Langs at ext 3274.



Dr. Pavalock

VA Psychologist Receives Grant

Dr. Jeanne Gabriele, staff psychologist at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center has been awarded a Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Centers (MIRECC) pilot grant in the amount of \$48,937 to study the perceptions returning Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have towards the use of peer support in conjunction with other therapies. "Cognitive Processing Therapy is a structured "talk therapy" shown to effectively treat PTSD," said Dr. Gabriele. "Historically, PTSD was perceived as being untreatable. With new treatments this is no longer the case. Fifty to 80 percent of individuals with PTSD who complete Cognitive Processing Therapy show clinically significant improvements and once PTSD symptoms diminish they typically do not remerge."



Dr. Gabriele

"I Must Take Care of My Father..."

Sam Walker Wilson is a caregiver. His father, Veteran Sam Wilson, was diagnosed with colon cancer approximately one year ago around the same time Sam Walker was laid off from his job as a construction/heavy equipment operator. It was a pivotal point in his life.

"I never saw myself as nurturing or a sitter," said son Sam Walker, "but I had a very strong sense of family—my mother would always say family is your greatest wealth and asset."

Soon after the elder Wilson was diagnosed with colon cancer, he underwent a colon resection with colostomy and then was admitted into a nursing home.

"My father is a widower with eight children. Other family members decided to place him in the local nursing home where he remained for approximately 2 months," said son Sam Walker. "This decision weighed heavily on me. I prayed and re-evaluated where my life was, and whether I could provide the care my father would require in his home. Sometimes, my wife and children don't understand, but family is the "core," and I *must* take care of my father."

Being new to the role of caregiving, Sam Walker quickly realized he had a steep learning curve. He needed to be sensitive and supportive; confident and knowledgeable. The type of care his father needed required a high level of competency in colostomy care to ensure there is no stool leakage to protect the sensitive skin around the colostomy. Most importantly, he wanted to have a "sense of normalcy for his father."

**NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL
CAREGIVERS MONTH**



Sam Walker Wilson, Veteran Sam Walker and Nurse Practitioner Sarah Abernathy

"I allow my father to make the decisions and participate with his care as much as he can," said Sam Walker. "My father has always liked to wear his 'blue jeans' so once or twice a week I put his blue jeans on—this allows him to have control of something in his life, and it gives him a sense of power."



“Never, over my 34 years as a nurse, have I experienced such a diligent caregiver, not only capable, but highly sensitive to the needs of his father.”

—Sarah Abernathy
Nurse Practitioner
G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
VA Medical Center

That's what he/she said...

"I was recently admitted to the Jackson VA for a rather serious health issue, and it was my very first experience in being in a VA hospital. In view of the recent issues cited to the VA, I would like to comment on the care I received from the VA Urgent Care Center, 4th floor, Wing C South...the professionals were attentive, intelligent, caring and highly competent. Moreover, all of my care was received in a compassionate manner that bespoke well of the people who care for patients."

—Robert O. Laird
Former Special Agent with the FBI

"This letter is to commend Beverly J. Nunn. Over time the routine has changed for getting travel pay, I have watched and listened as Ms. Nunn has been gracious, thoughtful and encouraging to those who resented standing in yet another line in order to get needed authorization to go to the travel pay station...my husband and I have frequented the Jackson VA over many years...we are thankful to be able to come to the Jackson VA for his needs...Ms. Nunn is to be commended for her sweet spirit, hard work (she is in constant motion) and her dedication to serving the Veterans and their families well."

—Dr. Billie Jean Daniel
A Veteran's spouse

"I am a retired Vietnam era/DESERT STORM Vet with 25 years of honorable service as a US Navy Hospital Corpsman...my affiliation with the VAMC began in March 2001 shortly after retirement. My physician/patient relationship with Dr. Jo Harbour began approximately three years ago during an emergency room visit. For several years prior, various clinicians attempted unsuccessfully to control my hypertensive states...I was at the end of my rope. No one seemed to care until a miracle was manifested through Dr. Harbour. She said to me, Theo, you are experiencing lethal blood pressures and we're going to get this managed. In a statement of confidence I say, the Lord has granted me approval to entrust her with stewardship over my healthcare. I thank you, Dr. Harbour, for not leaving a man in the field. Semper Fi."

Theodore H. Williams
Chief Petty Officer, US Navy (ret.)

November Employee of the Month



Bernice Tolbert

Respiratory Lab Technician
US Army Veteran
35 years of service with VA

"I have spent all but one year here at the Jackson VA Medical Center. My children ask how could I stay in one place all that time? My answer: I have always wanted to work with Veterans. What better place? If you like what you're doing you best stay put. I have enjoyed everything about my time here with VA."

VA Voices: Thanksgiving—Where'd ya go and whad'ya bring?



Linda Patton
VCS Canteen Service

"Hosted at home. About 40 people. Turkey, dressing, crab boil, collard greens, sweet potato and pecan pie..."



Maggie Anderson
GI Lab

"Hosted at home for three families. 25-30 people. Traditional Thanksgiving plus homemade ice cream."



Phyllis Bowen
Occupational Therapy

"Hosted at home. Invited others who don't have family here. Traditional."



"Shambi" Jackson
Caregiver Support

"Went to my Auntie's house. Just brought myself—I went to eat!"

Proudly Serving America's Veterans

{the expert's corner}



Ever heard of the saying you have to give to receive? At VA, we have always understood that by volunteering and partnering with our neighbors we can create a more stable community where our families and Veterans can thrive. In fact, philanthropy and the way we interact in our communities can positively affect our own physical and mental well-being.

(Deborah Thomas, Chief, Voluntary Service)

Coming in February 2012, we are excited to bring to the Jackson VA, and Mississippi as a whole, two events that should have an enormous impact on our Veterans, their families and our community:

- Veterans and Their Spouses Job and Education Fair
- Valentines for Veterans Welcome Home Concert

The Veterans and Their Spouses Job and Education Fair will take place on Friday, February 3, 2011, in the Atrium from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. The fair will be co-sponsored by the VBA, Mississippi National Guard and the Governor's office. With unemployment in Mississippi still high and many of our Veterans returning home over the next few months, the timing of this event to help Veterans find employment and put critical healthcare information into their hands is at a premium.

The Valentines for Veterans Welcome Home Concert will take place two weeks later on Friday, February 17, 2011, at the Jackson Convention Center. We are one of 17 VA's nationwide that will be hosting concerts for Veterans during National Salute to Veterans week. Multi-platinum selling recording artists, *The Platters* will perform for Veterans and the community. Stay tuned for your opportunity to get tickets.

Building Healthy Communities



Photo by Scott Watts

Got a story idea? To submit story ideas and photos for possible inclusion, contact James Theres at 601-368-4477 or james.theres@va.gov.

THE SONNY G

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