



"PROUDLY SERVING AMERICA'S VETERANS"

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Issue 4

January 2012

The BIG Show

The Platters Coming to Jackson to honor Veterans



l to r: Joseph Cross, Johnny Butler, Joseph Coleman and Sonia Revels

It was early January of 2011 when the annual call went out to Voluntary Service Chiefs across VA to put in their applications to host a Valentines for Veterans Concert. The concert is one of 16 concerts being held across the country as part of National Salute to Veteran Patients Week, an annual recognition throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs to honor the men and women who served this country in uniform. The National Salute celebration honors Veterans and promotes volunteerism at VA medical centers throughout the country. Timed to coincide with Valentine's Day, the National Salute observance connects the holiday's sentiments of caring by expressing appreciation to Veterans. The Valentines for Veterans Concert also serves as a Welcome Home Celebration for returning Veterans from the global war on terrorism.

"I put in an application in 2010," said Deborah Thomas, Chief, Voluntary Service at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center, "and we weren't selected. I decided to go for it again in 2011. We were notified in February that we would be one of the host sites. It was exciting."

Soon after the excitement wore off, the reality of the enormity of the task hit. A committee needed to be formed. Buy-in from the staff. Support from the front office. Letters to the community. Letters to the Veterans Service Organizations. And the details. Whew! The details. There were many, and suddenly, even though the concert was more than a year away, time was running short.

"We had to set goals and garner support from the community," said Thomas. "One of our first sponsors was the Jackson Convention Center. They donated the exhibit hall where the concert will take place. They told me they wanted to support us and our Veterans."

Now that the concert had a home, it was time to start focusing on the details. And for that, it would take a quality team.

"Ooooh! Even before we formed the committee, I needed my staff to be on-board. We needed to be all pulling in the same direction," said Thomas. "And thank goodness for Embra Jackson and Tony Bailey. Without them, this event would not have happened. They have just the right can-do attitude."

As the days marched inexorably toward concert night, critical pieces fell into place. Financial arrived and folks wanted to volunteer just to be a part of the event. A little over a month before the concert date, the tickets came in.

"Now we needed to get the word out," said Thomas. "At first, we wondered exactly how we should do that. We decided to use our website and Facebook pages, posters throughout the hospital and traditional media. Then word-of-mouth took over. It all came together and the tickets went."

Went, they did. To the tune, if you don't mind the pun, of distributing 2200 tickets and establishing a waiting list in case more seats became available.

"We got some good media," said Thomas, "which was one of our goals. We feel this concert is a great opportunity to showcase our Veterans, our medical center, employees and to promote volunteerism with VA."

Tonight, all the planning, all the preparation will come to fruition. The Platters are in town.

"Oh, it's on now!" laughed Thomas. "We're out there!"



January 21—Jackson VA employees helped welcome home 300 returning Mississippi Veterans at the Yellow Ribbon event held at the Jackson Convention Center.



January 24—Fond Farewell to VCS Canteen Chief Fabian Santos (right) pictured with Interim Medical Center Director Joe Battle. Santos took a similar position in Phoenix.



February 3—Interim Medical Center Director Joe Battle appeared on the J.T Show to promote the Job Fair.



February 8—National High School Honor students from Murrah High School came by and handed out Valentines Day cards to our Veterans.



(Interview below continued from page 7)
Cardell Bell

SG: Yes, that must have been something. After you got out, what then?

CB: I came back to Mississippi and opened up my own auto body shop in 1974. I named it Hollywood Customs. I still have the shop today. I changed the name to Cardell's Body Shop.

SG: What kind of work do you do there?

CB: Well, my passion is restoration. I love taking an old car and re-storing it. It's a remarkable thing to see a car, that may be a little beat-up in the beginning and then see it when I'm done.

SG: Now re-storing a car is different from a traditional auto body re-furbish or having "some work done?"

CB: Oh, yes, it's very different. It may take 3-4 years to re-store a car just the way I want it. Sometimes a car may sit for months before I touch it and me and the guys just sit around the shop and

just talk about a part or what should go where. You don't rush when you're re-storing a car. I don't even go near it if I'm tired. I want to be completely focused.

SG: So in 40 years, how many cars have you re-stored?

CB: Hmm. I'd say about 10.

SG: So for you, this is more like being an artist. It may take years before it's complete.

CB: Exactly. It's all in the details.

SG: Is there a favorite car that comes to mind?

CB: (smiling) Oh yes, a 1950 Chevy Deluxe. This guy called me and asked me to look at it. It was in a barn and the roof of the car was a little caved in. I was most worried about that. Almost didn't do it, but I did. It took about 3 1/2 years. That car turned out just beautiful. We still talk about it.

SG: Last question. The Platters are here. What's in your CD player?

CB: Right now. I'm listening to Genesis 14-20, a tape of the Bible.

**Congratulations!
To
One
Of
Jackson's
Own**



Former Jackson VA employee selected as next VISN 16 Director

The Office of Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (DUSHOM) would like to welcome Rica Lewis-Payton to the role of Network Director, Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) 16, the South Central VA Health Care Network, effective January 22, 2012.

Ms. Lewis-Payton was officially appointed as the Medical Center Director (MCD) of the Birmingham Veterans Affairs Medical Center (BVAMC) in August 2008. As the former MCD, Mrs. Lewis-Payton had overall responsibilities for planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling medical, administrative, and supporting operations of a complexity level 1B facility. BVAMC is a 138-bed tertiary care teaching hospital, which provides comprehensive health care through primary care and tertiary care in areas of medicine, surgery, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation, neurology, oncology, dentistry, geriatrics, and palliative care to over 58,000 veterans in 24 Northeast Alabama counties. The facility serves as the tertiary care referral center for Alabama Veterans and host the South Eastern Blind Rehabilitation Center. There are nine (9) community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) that are VA staffed. There is an annual budget exceeding \$325 million and there are approximately 2000 employees.

Ms. Lewis-Payton previously served as the Deputy Network Director of VISN 16 from September 2004-August 2008, and was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the second largest health care network in the VA. She provided operational oversight for ten (10) VA Medical Centers and 40 CBOCs. She was responsible for strategic leadership and management direction for all finance, logistics, capital assets and workforce development operations. Mrs. Lewis-Payton served in this capacity during Hurricane Katrina and was credited with providing outstanding leadership during a national emergency.

Following the retirement of the Network Director in July 2007, she served as Acting Network Director until November 2007. During her tenure as Acting Network Director she routinely met with VA and VHA leadership, Congressional members and staff, Department of Health and Human Services leaders, Louisiana government officials and healthcare leaders, as well as testified before VA oversight committees regarding the rebuilding of the healthcare system in New Orleans, LA.

Ms. Lewis-Payton previously held positions as the Special Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs/Dean of the Medical School at the University of Mississippi, and as the State Medicaid Commissioner of Mississippi.



Student Volunteer Courtney Nalker spent **Valentines Day** greeting our Veterans. Courtney has been a volunteer since 2009 and has over 400 hours.

Thanks for making our medical center a home!



CFC Chair, Amber Arrington (left) and Staff Assistant to the Associate Director, LaToya Hood (far right) accept the "Highest Dollar Amount Raised" for the 2011 CFC Campaign in the Jackson Metropolitan area from CFC Regional Director, Tanya Poe. Thanks to all the service key workers and CFC contributors!

“Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory...”

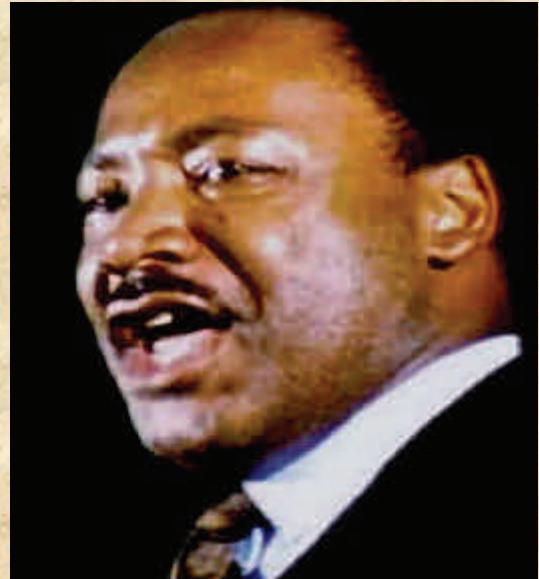
...of the coming of the Lord.”

That was the last sentence of the last speech he ever gave. Delivered on April 3, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would be assassinated the next day. He left behind a wife, Coretta Scott King, and four children, Yolanda, Martin Luther III, Dexter and Bernice. What did not die with him on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee was his dream of equality, peace and justice. It's hard to believe Dr. King has been gone now (44 years) for longer than he lived (39 years.) It's a testament to the truth and power of his words that hundreds of thousands still gather on January 15 (his birthday) to remember a man of great vision and to re-kindle the spirit of the righteous pursuit of justice.

Throughout his brief life, Dr. King set the standard for his role in the advancement of civil rights through the use of non-violence. By always keeping the Civil Rights movement focused on the prize: Legislative and judicial victory, Dr. King, and many others, demanded the nation honor what it had written down on paper in the Declaration of Independence, that “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...”



Rev. Dr. Samuel Boyd delivered the keynote address at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center's Annual Martin Luther King celebration in January.



This struggle for justice would eventually cost him his life, but not before leaving an indelible legacy on the country he loved. Some of Dr. King's achievements in his brief 39 years:

Awards

- 1964-Nobel Peace Prize
- 1977-Presidential Medal of Freedom (posthumous)
- 2004-Congressional Gold Medal (posthumous)

Famous Speeches/Writings

- 1963-Letters from a Birmingham Jail
- 1963- “I have a Dream”
- 1968- “I've been to the Mountaintop”

Major Civil Rights Campaigns

- 1955-Montgomery Bus Boycott
- 1957-Co-founder, Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- 1963-March on Washington
- 1965-Selma to Montgomery march

...like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's Will. And he's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we as a people, will get to the Promised Land. And I'm so happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything! I'm not fearing any man!

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY OF THE COMING OF THE LORD.

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
April 3, 1968

Wounded Warrior Living Life to the Fullest

“After 19 surgeries this is as good as it’s going to get.”

Serving his country was simply in his blood. Like his father, a decorated Marine in Vietnam, Brad Beard felt a calling. He first enlisted in the U.S. Marines (1996-2000) and then re-enlisted in the U.S. Army(2004).

“My dad definitely influenced me to go into the military,” said Beard.

And now it’s more than a military bond the father/son duo share; they both have military combat awards . Brad Beard received a Purple Heart in Iraq while his father earned a Bronze Star in Vietnam.

“My Dad still doesn’t talk about it. I was just doing my job and got injured. His award was for valor in action.”

But when you’re in the military, inside a combat zone, just doing your job comes with a multitude of risks. In March 2007, Beard and his comrades found just how risky.

“We were conducting a joint operation with the Iraqi National Police,” recalled Beard. “We went in and grabbed seven bad guys. Then, just as we started to leave, there was an explosion.”

Beard landed in the lap of his close friend, the team medic, Sgt. Adam Novak, who immediately applied a tourniquet.

“Those saved my arms and my life,” remembers Beard.

Transported to the Casualty Collection Point in Baghdad, Beard had lost his index finger and thumb to the knuckle on his left hand. But the real damage was to his right side. The blast blew off his right index finger, ruptured his ear-drum and blew a hole in his retina. There also was severe soft tissue damage, muscle, nerve and tendon damage and burns on the right side of his face and shoulder. Beard underwent two emergency surgeries in Iraq before he was transferred to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany where he underwent another. Four days later, he arrived at Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio where he would undergo 16 more procedures.

“Ya know, as tough as it was for me, what I remember most is the soldiers who had been badly burned. I’ll never forget one guy whose face was really un-recognizable, but his little daughter knew who he was and they would walk up and down the hallways hand-in-hand. That was tough to see.”

Today, five years later, Brad Beard is living life to the fullest. He married fellow wounded warrior, Jennifer McGaheran ,and moved back to his hometown in Vicksburg. He works part-time as a mechanic and is still working through his injuries. So much so, that in two weeks, he will attend the Winter Games, high in the Wasatch Mountains near Salt Lake City, Utah, to participate in a variety of snow activities. Looking back, he has no regrets.

“I love the Army. The camaraderie, the organization...And I love my friends. I pray for them every day.”



Veteran Brad Beard and wife, Jennifer, outside their home in Vicksburg, MS.



Beard's 19th surgery allowed for his right hand to open enough so he could hold a soda can.

Job Fair a HUGE Success



Interim Medical Center Director Joe Battle addresses a large crowd of employers and Veterans just prior to the opening of the Job Fair.

In a partnership with the Regional VBA office, the Mississippi National Guard, the Department of Labor, the Win Job Center and the Governor's Job Fair Network, the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center hosted a Job and Education Fair for Veterans and Veterans spouses on **February 3**. The event exceeded expectations. Over **600** Veterans attended, **537** resumes were accepted and **134** on-site interviews were conducted. Employers anticipate hiring 321 Veterans in the next year as a result of the Job Fair. The event did not come without challenges. Parking comes to mind. However, employees were gracious in giving up some parking spaces and using our shuttle service for the day. Special thanks for coordinating the day's events go out to Embra Jackson, Leonette Williams, Tony Bailey, Dos Hetrick, Ruth Thorton, Tamara Stewart, Don Wainwright and James Therese. The event was covered by all four local TV stations, the Clarion-Ledger, Jackson Advocate and Mississippi Public Radio. See more photos on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/JacksonVAMC.

CHILL COOK-OFF WAS A SMOKIN' HOT MESS! "in a good way"

Job Well Done goes out to the Employer of Choice Committee for organizing this event!!! See more photos on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/JacksonVAMC



Best Chili

First place

Second place

Third place

Radioactive Chili

White Bean Chili

Bell Ringing Chili

Radiology

PC Silver

MAS

Table 18

Table 1

Table 10

Best Decoration

First Place

Second Place

Third Place

Bell Ringing Chili

QM's Hot Stuff

Radioactive Chili

MAS

QM

Radiology

Table 10

Table 8

Table 18

EMPLOYEE of the Year—Cardell Bell



If you've ever had to produce a pamphlet, booklet or any printed material then you know where the "Print" shop is. And then, most certainly, you've made the acquaintance of **Cardell Bell**. And then, one more time, you know that Mr. Bell is one of the most accommodating employees at the G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center. It's very possible the word "NO" is not even in his vocabulary. In January 2012, this U.S. Army Veteran was selected as our **2011 Employee of the Year**.

SG: So, first, congratulations! You're a Veteran. Where were you stationed in the Army?

CB: Well, thank you, I'm humbled by the honor. As for the Army, I was stationed in Okinawa. It was beautiful, spent weekends on the beaches, listening to bands. It was great.

SG: Sounds beautiful. During the World War II, Okinawa saw some bloody fighting. Did you visit the battlefield sites?

CB: Oh yes, I was stationed on a cliff near the small village of Yo-su-daki. It's also known as suicide cliff. During the war, Japanese civilians jumped off the cliff rather than surrender. It's a couple of hundred feet fall down onto the coral rocks below. It was an amazing view, but some very tragic things happened there.

To read the rest of the interview, go to page 2, see Cardell Bell.

VA Voices: The Platters are coming to town. What's in your CD player right now?



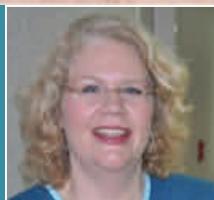
Yolanda Brown
PC Silver

"Chemistry"
R&B Jazz



Eula Middleton
VCS Canteen Services

"Shirley Ceasar"
Gospel



Traci Goodwin
Nutrition and Food
Service

"Miranda Lambert"
Country



Adolph Jones
Patient Care Services

"Mandrell"
Old School Jazz



Phil Poulin
Engineering

"Old AC/DC"
Hard Rock

Proudly Serving America's Veterans

{the expert's corner}

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." - Henry Ford

The Employer of Choice Committee consists of 16 members who represent many different service areas within the VA. It is dedicated to a Mission of VHA which is to develop and retain our most valuable assets....our employees.



Nancy Bailey, EOC Co-Chair

- Employees who provide the "best quality care anywhere"
- Employees who feel honored to serve the Veterans and their families
- Employees that foster civility, efficiency and community outreach
- Employees energized to provide great customer service
- Employees that feel respected and appreciated
-

EOC oversees some existing programs such as SAW, EVAL, LDI and Mentor Certification programs. It also supports other events such as Heritage Day, Toys for Tots, Federal Women's Program, Employee Wellness, Black History, Halloween Parade of Costumes and the Annual Christmas Open House.

Currently, EOC is working on several projects including supporting Employee Wellness in completing an inside walking track, stairwell climbing track and planning for the Annual VA 2K Walk for the Homeless Veterans to be held on 5/16/12. Other projects include completion of the Wall of Heroes and increasing Service Level Participation in the Employee of the Month program.

Last Friday, EOC and the Canteen service sponsored a "Big Chili Cook-off" in the Atrium. The event was a kick off to "Salute the Veteran" week. This event involved over 50 employees in the cook-off and provided a great opportunity for staff and Veterans to enjoy a fellowship time together. A second cook off event is being planned for later in the year.

This spring a new program supported by EOC entitled "Be the Change You Want To Be" is coming. This is an employee development program designed to provide a learning experience offering a broad range of topics to enhance job skills and assist with participants professional growth.

EOC always welcomes feedback. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Co-chairs Nancy Bailey at extension 5202 Nancy.Bailey3@va.gov or Richard Cox at extension 1529 or Richard.Cox4@va.gov.

THE S^{UNNY} G

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