

WHAT IS VFAB?

by Ron Whitcomb

Veterans Family Advisory Board (VFAB) is a mental health consumer council made up of Veterans, family members, and some staff members. The mission of VFAB is to lead in building a working alliance between Veterans and VA leadership to ensure the highest quality of service and care to the Veterans. VFAB also serves to allow Veterans' voices to be heard by VA leadership.

The suggestion boxes placed around the VA and the Vet Center are to be used to make suggestions about how the VA could be better. Suggestions are collected and read by VFAB members so that areas Veterans designate can be targeted for improvement.

Veteran's Watch is a quarterly publication written BY Veterans FOR Veterans. If you have suggestions for future articles or would like to join VFAB, please contact Jessica Zuehlke, PsyD, at 401-273-7100, ext. 2629.

Thank You

Korean War Veterans!



VETERANS WATCH

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Newsletter Written FOR Veterans BY Veterans

MEET THE STAFF! VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

Spotlight on: WILLIAM BURNEY

Meet the Staff: Veterans Helping Veterans is a new quarterly column, highlighting Providence VAMC Veteran staff members.

by Bob Goodreau

Mr. William "Bill" J. Burney, the Acting Director of the Providence VA Medical Center, sat down with the *Veteran's Watch* to discuss his military background, despite having a very hectic schedule.

After graduating from the University of New York at Stony Brook with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology, Mr. Burney enlisted in the United States Air Force during August of 1970. As with all recruits, he attended 8 weeks of Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. He received his Advanced Individual Training at Shepherd Air Force Base, Wis-

consin, as an Air Cargo Specialist.

His first permanent duty assignment took him to Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, with the Military Airlift Command. Airman Burney's day-to-day activi-



ties included quality assurance of cargo, proper weight distribution on the aircraft, loading and unloading of cargo to include

the coffins of our fallen heroes of the Viet Nam War, in transit to their final resting places. After a period of two years in this capacity, it came to the attention of his commander that Airman Burney had a degree in sociology, and he was handpicked to attend The Defense Race Relations Institute, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. Upon completion of his courses, Airman Burney returned to Dover Air Force Base. A group of 3 NCO's, an officer, and he were given the task of constructing a curriculum for a two-and-a-half day seminar on race relations, not only for military personnel but civilians as well. He continued teaching for the final 2 years of his enlistment.

As a long term VA employee, Mr. Burney began his career

Continued on page 2

PATIENT CENTERED MEDICAL HOME MODEL

The Office of Patient Care Services, Primary Care Program Office, is undertaking a new initiative to implement a patient-centered medical home (PCMH) model at all VHA Primary Care sites. This initiative supports VHA's Universal Health Care Services Plan to redesign VHA healthcare delivery through increased access, coordination, communication, and continuity of care.

The PCMH model utilizes

seven key elements (patient-driven, team-based, efficient, comprehensive, continuous, communication, and coordination) in the development of a medical home. The medical home provides accessible, coordinated, comprehensive, patient-centered care, and is managed by primary care providers with the active involvement of other clinical and non-clinical staff. The medical home allows patients to have a more active role in their health

care and is associated with increased quality improvement, patient satisfaction, and a decrease in hospital costs due to fewer hospital visits and readmissions.

The Primary Care Program Office has developed a variety of tools to assist Primary Care staff with the transformation towards becoming patient-centered medical homes. Ask your Primary Care provider for more information.

MR. BURNEY

Continued from Page 1

with the Veterans Benefit Administration in 1974 as a Veterans Representative on Campus in Delaware. He served as Chief of the field Section at the VA Medical & Regional Office Center in Wilmington, Delaware and then moved to the Veterans Health Administration as a Management Analyst Trainee in Richmond, Virginia. Bill went on to receive his Masters Degree in Management & Supervision from Central Michigan University in 1979.

Over the years, Mr. Burney has held many high level positions in the VA Medical System to include Staff Assistant to the Director, Prescott, Arizona VA Medical Center and as Planner and Staff Assistant to the Director of the Boston VA Medical Center. He was selected for the Associate Director Training Program which he completed at the Brockton/West Roxbury VA Medical Center in 1995. He was then chosen as the Chief Administrative Officer for VISN 1. After serving as the Assistant Director and acting Associate Director of the VA Boston Healthcare System, Mr. Burney came to the Providence VAMC in 2004 as the Associate Director for Operations. Since January of this year he has been the Acting Director.

Mr. William, "Bill", Burney resides in Brockton, MA, with his wife Beth. He can be reached during normal business hours in trailer #37, Office of the Director, 401-457-3041.

We thank you for your service to our country and your ongoing efforts to improve health care services for all Veterans.

VETERANS & FAMILY ADVISORY BOARD UPDATE

by Ron Whitcomb

We had the honor of the presence of the Commander of the RI National Guard, Major General Bray, at our last Veterans & Family Advisory Board (VFAB) meeting. He brought with him Major Rhonda Gomez, who will be a monthly attendee and ally at our meetings. We appreciate that General Bray is on board with our Advisory Board and look forward to our partnership. We are also pleased to

have Major Gomez on board.

We are putting together a "wish list" of what Veterans would like at the VA Medical Center. One of the VFAB members may contact you to ask you what would be on your VA "wish list." We generated many suggests at our last meeting. These suggestions include a day care (as the new Veterans often have to bring their young children to the VA or cancel their appointments due to not having

a sitter), a quiet place to relax in between VA appointments, and a Wellness Center to exercise, do yoga, or meditate.

This "wish list" can include anything, and we are encouraging Veterans to "think outside of the box." Your input is needed, but participation is voluntary. Feel free to put your suggestions in the VFAB -marked Suggestion Boxes or email me at:

Tawodi11@aol.com.

SUICIDE HOTLINE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

The VA Secretary announces a new hotline for Homeless Veterans: the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans:

**1-877-4AID VET
(424-3838)**

The National Resource Directory is a comprehensive resource locator that is a partnership project between the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs. Please visit their website at: nationalresourcedirectory.gov.

by Ron Whitcomb

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mr. Rogers of the children's show fame was a Navy Seal and used his cardigan sweaters to cover his arms which sported many tattoos.
- Jimi Hendrix served in the U.S. Army.
- James Doohan ("Scotty" on Star Trek) landed in Normandy with the U.S. Army on D-Day.
- James Stewart entered the Army Air Force as a private and worked his way up to the rank of Colonel. He served as a bomber pilot during WWII.
- Clark Gable gave up his mega movie star status to

enlist, although he was beyond draft age.

- Charles Bronson was a tail gunner flying missions over Guam.
- Charles Durning was a US Army Ranger who received the Silver Star and Purple Heart.
- George C Scott (star of the movie Patton) was a decorated U.S. Marine.
- Lee Marvin was a U.S. Marine and was awarded the Purple Heart.
- Alan Alda from the "M*A*S*H television series actually served in Korea during that war.

OVERVIEW OF RHODE ISLAND VETS

Totaling nearly 80,000, 80% of RI Veterans have served our country during a wartime period. This qualifies them for a full-range of benefits provided by the RI Division of Veterans Affairs. These benefits include a comprehensive range of social, medical and rehabilitative services, as well as burial services. Some benefits are also available to Veterans' spouses and dependents. Benefits are provided

through one of the Division's three units: the Veterans Affairs Office, the Rhode Island Veterans Home and the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery.

Based on data from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the largest segment of war service Veterans distributed by service period are those who served in Vietnam (26,127), followed by the Persian Gulf, (12,618), World War II (12,540), and Korea

(11,128). A total of 17,203 served during peacetime. While the overall ranking by distribution hasn't changed significantly over the past several years, the number of soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf has, for the first time, surpassed the number of RI Veterans having served in Korea.

(RI Department of Human Services Division of Veterans Affairs: Annual Report FY09).

A SUMMER OF FREE ART FOR MILITARY

The National Endowment for the Arts has partnered with Blue Star Families, a nonprofit network of military families, to offer free admission to more than 600 museums nationwide for active-duty service members and their families from Memorial

Day to Labor Day. The complete list of museums is available on the Endowment's Web site: www.arts.gov.

Some special exhibitions may not be included in the free admission. Participating museums include RISD Museum of Art in Providence,

Boston Children's Museum and Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford CT, among others.



CALLING ALL WRITERS!

Please submit articles or story ideas to *Veterans Watch!*

Ron Whitcomb:

(Tawodi11@aol.com)

Jessica Zuehlke:

(Jessica.Zuehlke@va.gov)

SMOKING CESSATION CLINIC

by Kathleen Meunier

The Smoking Cessation Clinic has been in operation since 1982. The program meets for six weeks and then has two follow-up meetings. Any Veteran is eligible. A consult by a provider is necessary and easy to get. Chief of Psychology, Al Sirota, PhD, runs the group. Dr. Sirota says, "Veterans who would like to quit smoking should try this program. The techniques being used have been researched for many years

and have been found to be most effective. Quitting smoking is not easy but this program makes it possible. Trying to quit smoking in a group is often the most effective...Many people make 4 or 5 attempts before being able to quit." The Program has a 30% success rate.

I went through the program 10 years ago. I did the Patch, the Pill and took the class. I successfully quit. I used all the money I saved from not smoking to take myself and a friend out to

lunch for a year. I have to say that it was the class that got me through and helped me to be a success. The class is based on Cognitive Behavior Therapy. Challenging the thoughts that kept me as a smoker was key.

A recent survey found that 90% of Veterans would like to quit smoking. Are you one of them? The next group will start the second Monday in September. The group is put on 3-4 times a year. Ask your Primary Care doctor (or other provider) for a consult.

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO!

Does the VA have your current phone number and mailing address?

Remember to UPDATE your contact information with Central Check-In when you have an appointment.

OPERATION VET 2 VET UPDATE

by Ron Whitcomb

Ron and Don have started a new group for OEF/OIF Veterans. The Wellness group will be held in Trailer 33 every Wednesday from 4:30 P.M.– 6:00 P.M. We also will have our new posters up throughout the Medical Center; please check them out. Our other three groups continue as scheduled.

We are pleased to report that there are seven more peer facilitators! We were delighted to attend their graduation a few weeks ago. Two of the graduates are from one of our groups, and we are pleased they have completed the training and will be adding to the strength of the peer-to-peer program.

DISCOUNTS FOR VETERANS & MILITARY

by Kathleen Meunier

GYM MEMBERSHIPS

Work Out World! (WOW!) in Warwick is waiving the yearly membership fee of \$99 for disabled Veterans. The monthly charge is \$10. WOW! in Warwick is on the bus line and is next to Job Lot on West Shore Road.

The YMCA on Hope St. in Providence is accepting applications from disabled Veterans who receive Social Security. They will give memberships for \$23 a month (instead of the \$46 fee). Veterans who can show severe financial hardship may be able to get a membership for \$10 a month.

IMAX THEATER

The IMAX theatre at the

Providence Place Mall is offering a sizeable discount on matinees for active duty military. The normal price is \$13.75 but with an active duty card the fee drops to \$5. The movie theatre next door also charges \$5 to eligible Veterans.

HUNTING/FISHING LICENSES

Veterans who are 100% Service Connected or receive Social Security are eligible for a free hunting and fishing license. For the hunting license, it is required that a class be taken. The fishing license is for fresh water fishing. The Dept of Environmental Management supplies them. They can be found at 235 Promenade St., Room 360, Providence, RI.

In order to get your free license, you must bring a recent awards letter. You can obtain one from the Social Security office or VA Regional Office. If you need assistance, please contact Kathleen Meunier at 273-7100 ext. 2695.

FREE BEACH PASSES

Veterans who have a 100% service-connected disability are eligible for a free beach pass, good at any RI state beach and for golfing at Goddard Park (East Greenwich). The Veteran gets the pass and can go in any vehicle. To get a pass, bring your award letter to the Division of Parks and Recreation, located in Johnston. You can obtain a copy of your award letter at the VA Regional office.

WHY WORK?

by Kathleen Meunier

There are a multitude of reasons to work. The most obvious is that you make money. Money can be a motivator. It gives you the opportunity to have more and different options in your life. You can make goals about what you'd like to purchase. Money can also validate you. It can lend itself to raising your self-esteem and can help you feel valued. You also take on another role that most people are already a part of: the rank and file of being a tax payer.

One other aspect of working is that working can give you structure. There are 24 hours in a day, and work can be an important part in structuring your day versus having an endless amount of time. For me what happens is I get balance. It seems the more I do, the more I do. I balance work with physical activity, intellectual growth, socializing, and spirituality. Work is a cog in the wheel, a very important one.

Work is also a place to meet people. For me it's like a little family, and I make people connections. We all need people. I bring baked goods to work. It gives my baking a sense of purpose. Work offers you a place to go, a reason to get up, and a place to get together. It helps you know you are on a journey.

I find that I have better all around health and satisfaction because I am working. Another good thing about work is that there are supports in place for when you eventually determine that you are ready to give up your social security. I've done this and feel great about it. I make three times as much as I did when I was on social security. I also feel good that I am a contributing member to my family.

For me the money goes for travel, dining out, and fun. I am really enjoying my life despite having a serious mental illness. And you know what? Even if I didn't get paid I would still work.

Just the notion that I work overshadows the fact that I have a disability and that I am unemployable. It's not "Why Work?" but rather "Why Not Work?" I am feeling more like a complete person. The job you have might not be the one you will always have, but it can give you experience.

I am grateful to have a job and especially one that I like. I work 32-35 hours a week and am loving it. I highly encourage people to work, whether it is volunteer or paid.

MEET THE STAFF! VETERANS HELPING VETERANS

Spotlight on: DAVID DOSREIS

by Bob Goodreau

David DosReis is the Patient Advocate at the Providence VAMC. When we have problems with the VA system, we often contact David to assist us in a resolution. But who is David?

When the attacks of 9-11 occurred, David was in his second week of basic training. Having enlisted in the Army National Guard from Massachusetts, he went on to Fort Sam Houston, Texas for his Advanced Individual Training (AIT) as a Health Care Specialist (Medic). David states his reason for selecting the medical field was because, "I wanted to help others". Upon completion of his AIT, he returned to his National Guard unit in MA.

David enrolled at Bridgewater State College to pursue a degree in Communications. He worked full-time, at-

tended school full-time, and attended monthly weekend training sessions for his National Guard unit. In October 2004, David had to put his education on hold



because he was deployed to Iraq. He served 18 months as a Combat Medic with the 42nd Division Artillery. David was awarded the Combat Medics Badge (CMB), given only after treating troops under actual combat conditions. When he returned "Stateside," he restarted his college ambitions at Bridgewater State, on a full-time basis. He is due to graduate in December 2010 with a Bachelors'

Degree in Communications.

David was hired by the Providence VA Medical Center just over two years ago. Continuing his tradition of, "Helping others," as Patient Advocate David was able to successfully resolve 425 patient complaints to the benefit of both staff and clients during fiscal year 2009. David says his training in Communications dictates that a

situation isn't resolved until both sides are satisfied with the outcome.

David currently resides in Pawtucket with his wife, Stephanie, and their two sons, Gabriel & Judah.

The Patient Advocate's office is located on the first floor of the Medical Center in room 1072. You can also reach David by telephone during normal business hours at 401-457-3093.

Thank you for your service to our country.

DO YOU HAVE NIGHTMARES AND DISTURBED SLEEP FROM PAST TRAUMA?

Are you bothered by nightmares and/or disturbed sleep related to severe past combat trauma? We are seeking male and female volunteers, aged 18 and over, who have PTSD and frequent (at least 2 times per week) nightmares to participate in a research study evaluating a medication for frequent nightmares and sleep

disturbances related to past combat trauma. Women volunteers must not be pregnant or nursing. Participants will receive either active medication or placebo (an inactive substance).

The study lasts 26 weeks and participants will be asked to come to the VA for 14 visits (visits will range between ½ and 3 ½ hours long). All study

visits will occur at the Providence VA Medical Center in Providence, RI. Participants will receive monetary compensation for their time.

For more information, call Andrea Grenga at (401) 273-7100 ext. 3860. (*This recruitment bulletin (Study CSP#563) has IRB approval.*)