



VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network

Keeping Veterans at the HEART of it all

May 2010

News briefs

San Antonio VAMC Canteen Opens

Please join us for the Ribbon Cutting of our new Veterans Canteen Service facility Thursday, May 20, at 9 a.m. at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital, San Antonio. The San Antonio VAMC Canteen won national "Canteen of the Year" honors for 2009.

Help Available By Phone, Online

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org or 1-800-273-8255 (TALK).

Veterans or their family members can remain anonymous once they enter the one-on-one chat Web site. There, they are joined by a counselor who is trained to provide information and respond to the requests and concerns of the caller.

Radio PSAs Available Online

Radio public service announcements inviting Veterans to enroll for VHA health care are now available from VISN 17. To preview the PSAs in Spanish or English, visit www.heartoftexas.va.gov/opa/. To get a high-quality MP3 file, e-mail Diana Struski or Aaron Reed

Network News is a publication of VISN 17, the **VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network**. Contact:

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Network news

One-Stop Disability Rating Coming with DES Pilot

On May 25, the commander of Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the long-awaited joint Veterans Affairs/Department of Defense Disability Evaluation System (DES) Pilot Program.

Central Texas Veterans HCS (CTVHCS) and the Veterans Benefits Administration Waco Regional Office are partners in the pilot program with the Army hospital at Fort Hood, TX, home of III Corps, which has a population of about 50,000 soldiers.

The DES pilot goals are to reduce the overall time it takes a service member to process through the DES program starting at time of referral to the Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) to receipt of VA benefits, and to increase the transparency of DES and VA claims processes for the wounded, ill, and injured service member.

The intent is for the VA components to become "plug-and-play" services within the DoD disability process at Fort Hood using the VA Compensation and Pension (C&P) physical as the single, comprehensive physical examination to meet the re-

quirements of both DoD and the

VA, conducted according to VA protocols. Established by former President George W. Bush in 2007, Walter Reed Army Medical Center launched the first DES pilot in 2007.

Other DoD sites

have started pilot programs with success, leading to the designation of additional sites, including Fort Hood.

The Waco Regional Office will provide six military service coordinators at the clinic. CTVHCS will add two health care providers and a program support assistant at the Fort Hood Clinic with specialty services provided by CTVHCS. The pilot is projected to serve more than 1,400 patients per year.



MMS/Dallas VAMC photo

Aaron's Pitches-in for Veterans' Comfort

On March 31, the Dallas VAMC received a donation of furniture and labor from Aaron's, Inc. Leather furniture, TV and gaming systems, and other furnishings were contributed to make patient and family waiting areas more home-like and comfortable.

More than 250 Aaron's staff participated in the event, part of the Aaron's Community Outreach Program (ACORP) initiative.

Texas Veterans Land Board to Break Ground on Eighth State Veterans Home May 19

Texas Veterans Land Board Chairman Jerry Patterson will host a groundbreaking ceremony at 1:30 p.m. May 19 for the newest Texas State Veterans Home. The as-yet-unnamed facility in Tyler is the first of its kind in Texas, offering family-style living in a small, cottage-like setting. It will be the eighth Texas State Veterans Home built in Texas since Patterson authored the legislation creating the long-term care program in 1997.

The Smith County home will comprise 10 cottages and one common building. The design for each cottage focuses on drawing residents into social connection by mixing the best communal aspects of a home while still maintaining privacy and independence.

An open kitchen, dining room and large table are at the heart of each of the 10-bedroom cottages.

Family-style meals will be served at the table and residents can enjoy each other's company afterward in a large living room with a fireplace. The newest Texas State Veterans Home will



Artist Rendering
Texas Veterans Land Board

be built on 20 acres donated by the University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler along the west side of Highway 155, just south of County Road 334.

Construction begins this month, and is expected to be completed in the fall of 2011.

The home will be built with a grant of about \$12 million from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, with the remaining 35 percent paid for by the Texas Veterans Land Board.

Touchstone Communities, which has its headquarters in San Antonio, will manage the Tyler Texas State Veterans Home.

South Texas Clinical Psychologist Receives Top Psychosocial Rehab Award from APA

A South Texas Veterans Health Care System (STVHCS) psychologist was recently recognized with the Outstanding Contribution to Psychosocial Rehabilitation Award from the American Psychological Association (APA).

Michele Mick, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist assigned to the Prime Psychiatry Clinic, a busy primary care program serving Veterans



with serious mental illness. In the nomination letter co-authored by STVHCS Psychology Service Chief Lisa Kearney, Ph.D., and VISN 17 Chief Mental Health Officer Steve Holliday, Ph.D., Mick is cited for what is becoming known as "Veteran-centered care."

"In any meetings Michele attends, we can always count on her to bring the face of the Veteran to the forefront. If a

policy change is proposed, she quickly and diplomatically asks how this will impact the Veteran's experience within our treatment programs," the nomination reads, in part.

Mick formally accepts her award at the 2010 APA Annual Convention, Aug. 12-15, in San Diego, Calif.

Meet the Chief of Staff at Central Texas Veterans HCS

William F. Harper, M.D., FACP, was named Chief of Staff for the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System March 28.

Harper is responsible for all medical programs, policies and medical operations of the multi-million-dollar VA health care system.

An Air Force Veteran, Harper completed his Internal Medicine Residency at Lackland Air Force Base, serving at Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. He also has operated private practices in Pine Bluff, Ark., and in Liberty, Texas, and served in several capacities at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.



May 2010 Priority 8 Outreach Events

12: 9:15-11:15 a.m., Veterans Advisory Council Meeting, Waco Regional Office, One Veterans Plaza, 701 Clay Ave., Waco, TX 76799. Sharon White, 254-743-2002.

14: 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Lamson Institute: Military and Veterans Appreciation Night, San Antonio Campus 5819, NW Loop 410, Suite 160, San Antonio, TX 78238. Genevieve Joson, 210-617-5300 x15735

14-16: 8 a.m.-1 p.m., 63rd Regional Support Command, Dallas, TX. Mariva Wakem, 501-771-7808

15: 9 a.m.-12 p.m., 2nd Annual Veterans Benefits and Job Fair, Salvation Army Building, 1225 S. Jack Expressway (IH-35), Waco, TX 76706. Sharon White, 254-743-2002.

19: 4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m., Congressman Ciro Rodriguez' Veterans Community Night (Northside), 6363 De Zavala Rd., Suite 105, San Antonio, TX 78249. Ron Acon, 210-617-5300 x14298.

20: 4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m., Congressman Ciro Rodriguez' Veterans Community Night (Southside), 1313 SE Military Dr., Suite 101, San Antonio, TX 78214. Ron Acon, 210-617-5300 x14298.