

# ALL STAR NEWS

Fall 2011

Proudly Serving  
America's Heroes



Department of  
Veterans Affairs



**Ready to Roll**  
Bringing care to Veterans with  
Mobile Health Clinic

# VA ALL STAR NEWS

Newsletter  
Fall 2011 Edition

**Director**

Alan J. Tyler, MS, MPA, FACHE

**Associate Director, Acting**

Paula Stokes, CTRS, CPM, M.Ed., J.D

**Associate Director for Patient Care Services**

Patricia Mathis, RN, MSN

**Chief of Staff**

Martin S. Schnier, DO, FACOFP

**Editor/Design**

Damon A. Stevenson,  
Public Affairs Officer

**Photography**

April Jones, Medical Media

Stephen Tyler, Medical Media

Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center  
3701 Loop Rd. East  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35404  
205-554-2000  
[www.tuscaloosa.va.gov](http://www.tuscaloosa.va.gov)

## *Inside VA All Star News*

<b>Mobile Health Clinic</b> Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center to deploy mobile unit to four cities in rural Alabama	3
<b>Run For the Wall!</b> Annual event continues to honor all Veterans	4
<b>Memorial Day</b> Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center honors America's fallen and also pays special tribute to Tornado victims	5
<b>Women's Equality Day</b> Celebrating Women's Equality with a special guest speaker	6
<b>Student Volunteer Recognition Program</b> Announcing the Student Volunteer of the Year	7
<b>Combined Federal Campaign Kickoff</b> Local government agencies and charitable organizations celebrate new campaign	8
<b>Welcome Home Event</b> Combat Veterans are welcomed home with "Picnic in the Park"	9
<b>From the VA Mailbag</b> See what Veterans are saying about TVAMC	11

*"All Star News" is a publication produced by the Public Affairs Office for the employees of the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center. We thank the medical center staff for their never-ending commitment to the care of our Nation's Heroes."*

## Mobile Health Clinic - Ready to Roll

The Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center was approved for funding through the Office of Rural Health to develop a Rural Mobile Health Clinic to bring primary care services to Veterans living in rural areas in central and western Alabama. The mobile clinic is designed to help reduce the travel time while increasing Veteran access to much of the same services available at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center. The clinic will visit four predetermined locations on a rotating schedule. Since the mobile clinic will function as a primary care team, Veterans will be assigned to the mobile care team and attend appointments through the mobile clinic. All Veterans living in rural areas are eligible

for the services and can apply for care in the same manner as applying for care at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center after the program is operational. The medical center will have individuals available to assist with VA enrollment and other outreach activities. These services would be available for all Veterans, but especially those who have never utilized VA health care. A vendor was selected to design and build the clinic which was delivered to the medical center on June 23. Hiring and training of staff continues and after utility system installation is completed, the clinic will become operational, with a target date of November. Open houses were held in the four cities selected to be served

by the clinic, based on Veteran population -- Fayette, Hamilton, Demopolis and Livingston. The interest and turnout by Veterans at the open houses was tremendously positive. The clinic will utilize state-of-the-art telemedicine, with the nursing staff on board the unit and the doctor back at the medical center, communicating with the patients and on-board staff through videoconferencing and other telehealth equipment. Dr. Michael Shortall will serve as the physician for the mobile clinic, and Shiela Park and Sheila Hinton will serve as the nurses for the unit. Additionally, Lisa Koontz has been selected as the Telehealth Operations Nurse Manager for the Mobile Clinic.



*The clinic will serve four cities, based on Veteran population -- Fayette, Hamilton, Demopolis and Livingston.*

# Run For the Wall

They Ride for Those who Can't

Each year many veterans and staff members gather along the drive of the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center to welcome riders from Run



for the Wall. Many of these riders have traveled from as far as California to eventually visit the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C. As the riders rode into Tuscaloosa, they were escorted by the Tuscaloosa Police Department. This year's ride included approximately 350 motorcycle riders.

These riders make a stop at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center each year to visit with patients. Since many of the riders are Veterans, the medical center provides medical care if needed. The Medical Center also provides lunch for the riders as they visit the facility.

RFTW began as a one-time trip of Vietnam Veterans who rode from San Diego, Calif. to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington,



tions and the community came together for a great cause. They assemble in California and travel to Washington, D. C., every year and have done so for

Run For The Wall recognizes the sacrifices and contributions made by all veterans who have served our nation. Veterans of recent conflicts and those currently on active duty are especially welcome to join them as they ride for those who cannot. The Mission Statement for Run For the Wall is to promote healing among ALL veterans and their families and friends, to call for an accounting of all Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action (POW/MIA), to honor the memory of those Killed in Action (KIA) from all wars, and to support our military personnel all over the world.



D. C. RFTW quickly became an annual event in which many veterans, organiza-

the past 21 years. This year marked the 11th visit to the TVAMC by RFTW.



# Memorial Day

Memorial Day is a special day of remembrance at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, but in the wake of the deadly tornado, which became known as "April's Fury," this year's program held even greater significance. In addition to honoring those patriots who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country's freedom, this year's program also paid tribute to those in Tuscaloosa who lost their lives on April 27.

Damon Stevenson, Public Affairs Officer, served as Master of Ceremonies, and a Welcome was provided by Alan J. Tyler, Medical Center Director. An Invocation was led by Chaplain Kendall Thomas, followed by Presentation and Posting of the Colors by Holt High School JROTC. Marine Corps Reserve Corporal Eddie Harden led the Pledge of Allegiance. Valerie Stewart, Miss University of Alabama, performed the National Anthem. Colonel William A. Morris, State Defense Force, Alabama National Guard, was the keynote speaker for the ceremony. A wreath was presented in honor of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The ceremony concluded with a Ceremony for the Fallen, Retiring of the Colors and "Military Taps" by Holt High School JROTC.



## Tuscaloosa VA Celebrates Women's Equality Day

Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center honored our women Veterans and employees, as well as the history of all women with a special program sponsored by the Diversity Advisory Committee on August 24, entitled "Our History is Our Strength."



Presiding over the program was Gwen Elliott, LPN. Linda Cheatum, Health Science Specialist, provided opening remarks, which were followed by an invocation by Chaplain Shirley Craven. The Pledge of Allegiance was performed by Shanay Lewis, Engineer, and a crowd-pleasing performance of the National Anthem was performed by Stephenie Whatley-Farmer, a Veteran of TVAMC. Rhonda Tate, another female Veteran read a poem, which was followed by a Welcome by Crystal Roshell, Service Technician, OI&T Field Office.



Patricia Mathis, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, then introduced the keynote speaker, which was Andrea Lindenberg, of NBC 13 News, Birmingham, Ala. After a motivational and inspiring speech by Ms. Lindenberg, a musical selection was performed by Cle'lata Wilson. Ms. Brenda Pollock, Federal Women's Program Manager, OI&T Field Office, then made several presentations. The event concluded with closing remarks from Denise Murray, Diversity Advisory Committee Chairperson.



Patricia Mathis, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, then introduced the keynote speaker, which was Andrea Lindenberg, of NBC 13 News, Birmingham, Ala. After a motivational and inspiring speech by Ms. Lindenberg, a musical selection was performed by Cle'lata Wilson. Ms. Brenda Pollock, Federal Women's Program Manager, OI&T Field Office, then made several presentations. The event concluded with closing remarks from Denise Murray, Diversity Advisory Committee Chairperson.



## 2011 Summer Student Volunteer Recognition Ceremony....and the Winner is!

Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center held the 2011 Summer Student Volunteer Recognition Ceremony on August 20. Student volunteers were thanked for their hardwork this summer while volunteering in numerous departments throughout the facility.

Randy LeStourgeon, Voluntary Service Coordinator, presented the Tuscaloosa VAMC Summer Student Volunteer of the Year Award to Phillip Cunningham, a three year volunteer with over 1,100 volunteer hours.



Cunningham also received a \$50 cash award and will be the Medical Center's nominee for the prestigious national James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship. Cunningham will compete with nominees from VAMCs nationwide for the more than \$20,000 scholarship.

Cunningham volunteered all three years in our Police Department, earning praise and respect from all officers and the Chief, for his maturity, industriousness, and diligent way he performed his volunteer duties.

The Recognition Ceremony saw 29 student volunteers recognized for contributing more than 3,000 volunteer hours in administrative, clinical, customer service areas.

Eleven donated scholarships totaling \$4,100 (including the \$500 one received by Cunningham) were presented to deserving volunteers. Several donated door prizes were given away, refreshments were served, and a wonderful time was had by all.

## VA hosts Combined Federal Campaign Kickoff Celebration

Courtesy of the Tuscaloosa News

The Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center hosted the Heart of Alabama Combined Federal Campaign kickoff from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., September 15 in the Sports Atrium of Building 137.

Many organizations participated in the campaign, which raises money for charities on a local, national and international level. The event is geared for federal employees, who can elect to make a one-time donation or arrange for payroll deductions from their direct deposit checks.



“The CFC gives federal employees and organizations an opportunity to benefit charities and organizations on any level,” said Damon Stevenson, public affairs officer for the Tuscaloosa VA. “There are so many federal employees in this region, so it gives all of the organizations an opportunity to receive donations.”

Those who choose to participate can pick from more than 2,000 organizations and charities to donate to. The event lasts for about a month.

Last year’s effort raised more than \$1.1 million statewide. Stevenson said this year’s fundraising goal is the same. Stevenson said the campaign allows the VA and other federal organizations to show their support for their communities.

“A lot of people see the federal government as separate from the community,” he said. “But with these campaigns, it gives them an opportunity to support the community by donating to local organizations.”

Along with the Tuscaloosa VA, other federal organizations participating in the campaign include the Tuscaloosa Social Security Administration, the U.S. Postal Service in Tuscaloosa, the U.S. bankruptcy court and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Participating charities include Children’s Hospital of Alabama, Tuscaloosa’s One Place, United Methodist Children’s Home and United Way of West Alabama, just to name a few.



## Welcome Home - "Picnic in the Park"

Courtesy of the Tuscaloosa News

The Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center held a welcome home event September 10 for returning combat veterans.

Picnic in the Park, the medical center's annual recognition of the sacrifices made by veterans, included free food, music and information about benefits for veterans.

"We want them to understand how much we appreciate their sacrifice and their service and that we're here for them," said Damon Stevenson, public affairs officer for the Medical Center.



Nine organizations set up tents on the lawn of the medical center's campus to distribute information about resources available for veterans.



Walter Turner, 62, a veteran who served in Operation Desert Storm, distributed information about Veterans of Foreign Wars, a nonprofit organization for military veterans' benefits.

He said registering with the medical center is the first step to connecting a returning veteran with local resources.

"It opens up a whole new ball-game of benefits," he said.

For example, the transition cen-

*Continued Page 10*

ter at the VA medical center provides an integrated network for veterans to find social services, primary medical care and mental health services.

Recent combat veterans are registered to use the transition center, which eases the change to civilian life for combat veterans, Stevenson said.

“We try to make it as simple and seamless as possible,” he said.



## News Nuggets

Tuscaloosa VAMC hosted **Dr. Christa Hojlo, Director of VA Community Living Centers**, for a site visit on September 19. The visit included a tour of the medical center and also presentations by Dr. Hojlo to medical center staff about cultural transformation. Dr. Hojlo was interviewed by a reporter from CBS 42 news, which resulted in a positive news story on the evening news that included the interview and footage of the recently constructed CLC unit named Patriot's Point and the Cottages CLC Project which is currently under construction.

Tuscaloosa VAMC hosted **Dr. Tracy W. Gaudet, Director, VHA Office of Patient-Centered Care and Cultural Transformation**, for a visit on September 28-29. Dr. Gaudet is internationally known as an expert in transforming healthcare from a traditional disease-based model to a new model of patient-centered healthcare. Dr. Gaudet was recognized as one of the "Top 25 Women in Healthcare 2011" by Modern Healthcare. Dr. Gaudet toured the cultural transformation and patient-centered care programs/areas at the facility and also gave a presentation to staff on September 29.

## From the VA Mailbag

Thank you for all you did for me during a very bad time in my life. It meant a lot to me when I arrived at the Valor Center for rehab after I lost my leg and you sat me down and listened to me. You told me straight up that if I listened to you and followed your instructions you would get me healed and walking again.

At amputee clinic you made sure I got the best leg possible. You gave me the confidence to get better, quit smoking, get work done on my teeth, and the drive to perform well in rehab.

You said you wanted to see me with my leg since the beginning, so I will walk in and show you how much your motivation and caring have gotten me to the point I am at now.

Again, many thanks for being the caring folks you are.

Sincerely,

J. C.

I know you may get letters about complaints of services or staff, but I would like to commend not only the service but also a certain member of your staff. She is a clinical social worker that I have been assigned to for the past three years. Her name is Fran Burnette. Mrs. Burnette has done more for me than as far as my mental condition than anyone I've ever seen or been in counseling with for the past 10 years in four states. I cannot explain how or why but I have come to trust and believe in what she says and open up to her more than what anyone I've ever talked with about my personal and private life which has given me a lot of insight into why I react and have some of the feeling that has haunted me for 40 years. I have been able to be or show emotions with her that I never could with anyone else except my deceased wife.

I have come to trust here as I've said even calling if problems arise between appointments. I could go on and on but I just felt like Mrs. Burnette's work with me needs to be shared with staff and employers.

Sincerely,

L. P.

