

Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center

# VVA ALL STAR NEWS

Summer 2009



## Run For The Wall 2009

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## Secretary's Award for Excellence in Nursing



*Angela Kirby, MSN, RN*



*Michael Little, RN*



*Barbara Williams, LPN*



*Alshakenya Morrow, NA*

The Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center recognized several of our nurses in May for their continued excellence in nursing. Each year TVAMC selects two registered nurses, one licensed practical nurse and one nursing assistant, who have exhibited excellence while caring for our veterans.

This year's recipients included Angela Kirby, MSN, RN; Michael Little, RN; Barbara Williams, LPN; and Alshakenya Morrow, NA.

Kirby, Associate Chief Nurse for Primary Care/Care Coordination, holds several degrees, including a Master's of Science Degree in Nursing Rural Care Management from the University of Alabama. She began her career with TVAMC in October 2004 as the Combat Veteran Coordinator and Case Manager.

Kirby helped to develop the TVAMC Transition Center for returning OEF/OIF veterans, which provides a single location for veterans' services.

Little, a graduate of the Capstone Nursing Program, began his career at the TVAMC in April 1993. He is a staff nurse in the Mental Health Intensive Case Management Program (MHICM).

Little helps to provide independent living and life management skills to veterans. He also serves as a preceptor for nursing students from Lawson State and was assigned as the preceptor for a Valor Student for three months.

Williams, a Mental Health Unit 3 Nurse, has over 10 years of experience helping our veterans here at the

TVAMC. She received a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Stillman College in 1983 and completed the LPN Program at Shelton State Community College in 1995.

Through Williams' leadership, a group of LPNs and NAs were able to redevelop unit rules of behavior. She also is involved in educating veterans regarding the proper way to use their inhaler for maximum effectiveness through the Respiratory Group. The purpose of the group was to improve behavioral interactions among veterans and between veterans and staff.

Morrow, a Nursing Assistant, on the Heroes Haven Unit, began her career at the TVAMC in March 2005. She attended Shelton State Community College and has been recognized for providing excellent customer service.

Morrow is effective in providing creativity when developing ways to reduce falls, assaults and pressure areas in a high risk population. She also helps to educate veterans and their family members about the transformation from the nursing home environment to an environment that appears more like home through the discussion of treatment plans and the transformation process.

Congratulations to all of our recipients from the TVAMC for all their hard work and dedication to our Nation's Heroes!

# N\*U\*R\*S\*E



*Sheila Park, RN, BSN; Alan J. Tyler, MS, MPA, FACHE, Director; Cheryl Vickey, RN, BSN; Reporting for Duty.*

TVAMC celebrated Nurses Week during the month of May. This year's theme (N\*U\*R\*S\*E) featured a MASH-like appearance, including specially designed t-shirts. An awards tea was held on May 4 to recognize nursing employees for their service to our veterans. On May 5 a continuing education program was held and vintage uniforms were worn.

The final day of Nurses Week featured food, fun and games for the nursing employees. Everyone dressed in their NURSE t-shirts and enjoyed the festivities. Hotdogs, chips and cookies were served as MREs. The nursing staff was also recognized by some of the veterans receiving care from the TVAMC.

Several nurses were recognized for their continued years of service. Without the dedication of our nursing staff, it would not be possible to succeed in caring for our Nation's Heroes.

Prior to the celebration, cookbooks and t-shirts were sold to help fund the program and many businesses, individuals and organizations helped by donating services and door prizes.

Nurturing  
Understanding  
Resourceful  
Selfless  
Empathic

## Tuscaloosa VA Recognizes Volunteers

*Angelia L. Stevenson, Acting Associate Director, TVAMC, presents Lewis Matthews with a plaque. Matthews has volunteered at the TVAMC for over 27 years. Also pictured are John Matthews and Birdie Matthews.*



TVAMC recognized many of its volunteers at the annual Volunteer Recognition Ceremony held at the Hotel Capstone on April 21.

Randy LeStourgeon, Voluntary Service Coordinator at TVAMC, served as the Master of Ceremonies. After the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Lewis Matthews, and the singing of the National Anthem, led by Herb Champion, Angelia L. Stevenson, Acting Associate Director at TVAMC, gave a warm welcome to all that attended.

Yellow roses, donated by Pat's Florist, were presented during a memorium for volunteers that have passed in the last year.

After a wonderful dinner served by the Hotel Capstone, the presentation of awards was underway. A total of 67 volunteer awards were given at the ceremony.

Lewis Matthews, of Stillman College, was recognized for his continued voluntary service of 27 years and over 16,000 hours.

Others receiving awards for over 3,000 hours included: Hershell Lockhart, Calvin Hawkins, Minnie

Thomas, Doris Barton, Calvin Brown, Greg LeStourgeon, Grover House and Chris Haynes.

Several businesses donated their services to help make the ceremony a success. Door prizes, including Peace Lillies, hats, gift cards, CDs, cookbooks and garden ornaments, were donated by Tuscaloosa VA Credit Union, Brown's Greenhouse, Pat's Florist as well as other volunteers. Entertainment was provided by The George Winter Orchestra.

The Volunteer Recognition Ceremony has been a part of the TVAMC for over 50 years and continues to recognize the importance of volunteers to our mission and to the ongoing care of our veterans.



*Chris Haynes Accepts a 12,500-Hour Honor Award from Angelia L. Stevenson, Acting Associate Director; Linda Champion, Customer Service Coordinator; and Barbara Porter, Occupation Therapist.*

## Run for the Wall Visits TVAMC



*Motorcyclists from across the country traveled from California to Washington, D. C. to honor our veterans.*

TVAMC welcomed Run for the Wall (RFTW) to Tuscaloosa as they traveled across the country, honoring our many veterans and military.

RFTW seeks to raise awareness of not only the injuries that our veterans have faced physically and mentally, but also to remember POW and MIA soldiers and to honor returning military from conflicts abroad.

RFTW began as a one-time trip of Vietnam Veterans who rode from San Diego, Calif. to the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D. C. RFTW quickly became an annual event in which many veterans, organizations 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 the past 20 years. This year marked the ninth visit to the TVAMC by RFTW.

Along the route, many other riders join in helping the number of participants to grow each year. This year around 300 riders visited the TVAMC.

As the motorcycles filed in, our veterans, staff and community welcomed them with open arms. Holt High School JROTC provided a saber archway for the riders as they drew their swords to welcome the motorcyclists to the TVAMC campus.

RFTW Board of Directors presented the TVAMC with a plaque for our continued support of their mission. The riders were also provided lunch by the TVAMC and were also welcomed to visit with our patients.

Each year, around April, our veterans and staff begin asking when the Run for the Wall motorcyclists are coming. The event marks a time in which everyone stops to remember and recognize those who have sacrificed for our freedom.

The support from the staff and community for RFTW was overwhelming and the spirit of patriotism was in the air. Most of the by-standers were waving small flags that were distributed by the TVAMC Stakeholder Relations Service and volunteers.





TVAMC



## The Blue Angels Visit TVAMC



When the Blue Angels came to Tuscaloosa for an air show, staff from their group came to visit our veterans. Veterans and staff alike were fascinated by the stories told by these colorful visitors.

The residents enjoyed hearing the stories about the legendary air shows that the Blue angels have performed across the nation.

## Randy LeSturgeon Receives National VAVS Award

Randy LeSturgeon, Voluntary Service Coordinator at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, was selected to receive the American Spirit Award from the Voluntary Service Committee in the VA Central Office, Washington, D.C.

The Committee selects only four recipients from across the nation for four separate categories: Student Recruitment, Recruitment From Military Groups, Corporate Recruitment and Senior Recruitment.

The award focused on LeSturgeon's hard work involving the recruitment of students for our volunteer program. With his dedication to the program and the TVAMC, he has successfully recruited students from abroad to volunteer each summer.

LeSturgeon was presented with the American Spirit Award at the 63rd VAVS National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting on May 20.

Congratulations Randy LeSturgeon for all your hard work!



"Mr. LeSturgeon is a consummate professional and a leader in the Voluntary Service Program"

-- Laura B. Balun

Director, Voluntary Service Office

## From the VA Mailbag

VA Nursing Home Administrator  
April 15, 2009

My father was recently a resident at the VA Nursing Home. Though he was only there for four days, I wanted to express my extreme gratitude to the staff. We could not have been more happy with the care he received. It takes special people to care for the elderly, a quality that your staff possesses. One day each and every one of you will be repaid for the great things that you do. My father passed away on March 26. I will always be grateful to the staff at the VA Nursing Home. You will always be in my thoughts and my family and I are forever thankful for the care my father received.

God Bless,  
P.C.

April 13, 2009

Mr. Tyler,

I commend the wonderful job Hospice has done in taking care of my father. It is good to know that he is being taken care of.

I am especially thankful for Ricky Jarrett, Chi Suk Carr and Claude Norton. They are wonderful people and have been kind to my dad and to my family. They treated my father as if he was their father. Recently dad was close to death and Claude cooked for us and tended to our every need. He is so compassionate. I ask that you recognize these people for a job well done. Thank you for everything Hospice does.

Thanks again,  
D.H.

## Associate Director for Patient Care Services Retires, 39 years of Service



*Patricia T. Green is presented a retirement certificate by Alan J. Tyler.*

**O**n April 3, Patricia T. Green, MSN, RN, CNA-BC, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, retired with 39 years of government service. Green was presented a retirement certificate by Alan J. Tyler, MS, MPA, FACHE, Director, at a special Nurse Executive Council meeting held April 2.

Green exited the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center in style by a special horse-drawn carriage ride around the campus grounds. Her husband, Ronald Green (former TVAMC employee/social work) joined her for the special event. Staff and patients lined the campus grounds to wish her well as she began her retirement journey. While she will be missed, Patricia Green will never be forgotten.



*Patricia T. Green and her Husband Ronald Green Enjoyed a Carriage Ride on her Day of Retirement.*

# Memorial Day at TVAMC



*The Knights of Columbus and Alan J. Tyler, Director, Take Part in the Memorial Day Celebration*

The TVAMC 2009 Memorial Day Program offered a reminder to all of us of the many sacrifices made by our veterans and military serving our country today.

Following an invocation by Chaplain Kendall Thomas; Damon Stevenson, Chief, Stakeholder Relations Service, began the ceremony by explaining the history and origin of Memorial Day.

Alan J. Tyler, Director, welcomed those in attendance and expressed his gratitude for the sacrifices made by the families who have lost loved ones while serving our country.

Tammy Ryan, President, AFGE Local #131 led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Herb Champion, American Legion Department Chaplain, led the National Anthem.

The Knights of Columbus, Assembly #2527, honorably performed the Presentation and Posting of Colors.

Jim Burch, Commander, Chapter #2211 Military Order of the Purple Heart, and guest speaker, spoke about the Purple Heart Award as well as his military history.

Burch, who served in the United States Marine Corps, received the Purple Heart Award for wounds he received in action, during the Vietnam War.

The Knights of Columbus, Assembly #2527, presented the Memorial Wreath during the Memorial Wreath Ceremony as an honor to our fallen heroes.

Following the Retiring of the Colors by the Knights of Columbus, the program came to a close with the sounds of "Military Taps."

In closing, Stevenson reminded us of the heartfelt gratitude that we all owe to our fallen heroes and their families.

"As long as there are wars, there will be veterans and casualties. We will still decorate the graves of those whose bodies came home we will remember those who did not."

Following the ceremony, guests were invited for fellowship and refreshments being served in the Recreation Activity Room. A flag retirement ceremony led by the Girl Scout Troop #2 was also held the same day to honorably retire several flags from the community.



Alan J. Tyler, MS, MPA, FACHE, Director

TVAMC

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*"All Star News" is a publication produced by Stakeholder Relations Service 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."*