**Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center**

**the VA VOICE**

**June 24 - July 12, 2019**

**MGVAMC and Cerner Corporation Reach Milestones towards EHRM**

At left, Dr. Terese Kincaid, Chief—Urgent Care Clinic joins MGVAMC leadership during a “Commitment Ceremony” and poster signing that kicked off an exciting week of Cerner’s return to Spokane for Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM).

The ceremony confirms the unifying alliance between the Cerner Corporation, VA-OEHRM, and MGVAMC staff—to keep the EHRM software development and deployment process on track, and on time towards to achieve a March 2020 “Go Live”. MGVAMC is the first Veterans Affairs Health Care System to deploy the new electronic health record.

The ceremony was one of several events taking place across Spokane during the week-long Cerner Workshop #5 which required off-site meetings at nearby Gonzaga University. A “capability showcase” was held in at the Medical Center to share online views of the new Cerner product and to answer questions. More than 150 attended. See more on page 7.

**Veteran Bill Misner Shines at Golden Age Games in Alaska**

Vietnam War era Veteran Bill Misner, a Marine, returned from the 33rd Annual Golden Age Games in Anchorage, AK in mid-June having medaled in every event he entered. His performances also placed him atop the current leader boards in the World and U.S. Masters Rankings for Indoor performances in four of the five events he competed in!

At 79 years old and a Native American Veteran of Oklahoma’s Choctaw Nation, Misner asked for and received permission to wear a singlet (racing shirt/outfit) with the Spokane Tribe of Indians’ Salish emblem on the front of his jersey, honoring his local ties with the Tribe as Misner is a member of MGVAMC’s American Indian Veterans Advisory Council (AIVAC). Misner has a PhD in nutrition and has dedicated his life to helping others through proper nutrition and exercise that can curb diabetes and heart disease to name a few.

“Bill totally encompasses whole health in his everyday life and I think that played a huge roll in his performance,” explained VA Recreation Therapist Chelsey Pangborn.

Competing in the Golden Age Games, Misner earned three Gold medals in running events, despite having to complete all three events in less than 45-minutes! He no sooner finished the 1500 meters and before getting his gold medal for that, had to run to compete in the 100m dash, followed by then running the 400m. Misner also earned a Silver medal for the Javelin toss and a Bronze medal for the 25m freestyle swim. “I had so much fun, and Chelsey (Pangborn - Recreation Therapist) was just terrific for her outstanding support. I am grateful to Mann-Grandstaff VAMC and the entire Physical Therapy team for how the VA is empowering my life and clearly, so many more!”

Follow this link to the full story, and this link for more important info from VA!
Staff Embrace Employee Town Hall Mtgs at MGVAMC

Along with his leadership team, Dr. Robert J. Fischer, Medical Center Director hosted three Employee Town Hall meetings June 11th to attract as many staff as possible—to share updates, but also address any employee concerns. “We continue to hire staff in order to maintain high-quality health services,” explained Dr. Fischer, describing the manpower needs required to sustain success of the medical center's primary mission as well as support Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) deployment at MGVAMC. He and the Tetrads openly heard—and addressed staffing realities and challenges, and space needs during each of the gatherings (7am, Noon, 4:30p.m.).

“What we do is important. And at VA, I believe we are and should continue to be doing it better than our community hospitals. Competition is good, but we are VA and we know how to serve Veteran-centric care.”

Dr. Fischer explained that MGVAMC will be carrying out approved and planned projects in FY19 and FY20 with a combined estimated cost of $124-Million dollars. This includes new construction and renovation. In addition, he openly discussed his desire to obtain roughly 18,000sf of lease space in the Spokane community to create more access for Veteran patients, support EHRM, and additional space to expand Graduate Medical Education training for students in a primary care setting.

“We have 40% more employees than we did five years ago. It is now time to pause to consider what ‘steady state’ will look like as we analyze current and future Veteran demand for services and work with VISN 20 on next year’s budget. It’s hard not to be excited about our future. We just have to be smart and strategic since we have many stakeholders including Veterans, the public and Congress. Combined, all three employee Town Hall meetings drew approximately 175 MGVAMC staff members. Dr. Fischer also told the audiences that he’s willing to commit to monthly employee Town Hall meetings at Noon going forward.
MISSION ACT: Strengthening VA’s Workforce...

The majority of Veterans who are eligible to receive their health care through one of our many community care programs continue to “Choose VA” at one of our VA medical centers or clinics. One of the primary reasons cited is the high-quality care they receive at VA from some of the best medical professionals our nation has to offer.

However, VA is not immune to the national shortage of health care professionals, especially physicians and nurses in specialties that include psychiatry, primary care and emergency medicine. Fortunately, one of the MISSION Act’s provisions is to strengthen VA’s ability to recruit and retain quality health care professionals. This enables VA to focus on recruitment to ensure our Veterans receive the care they have earned.

MISSION Act specifically enables VA to do this through the following provisions:

- Expands scholarships available for physicians and dentists under the VA’s Health Professional Scholarship Program: Through expansion of this program and the Veterans Healing Veterans Program, VA will offer scholarships to 18 Veterans to attend medical school in return for them to serve in a VA hospital or clinic for four years.
- Increases the maximum amount of VA’s education debt reduction program: VA will increase the maximum of debt reduction reimbursement for up to 50 qualifying graduated medical or dental students or residents from $120,000 to $200,000 over five years, not to exceed $40,000 per year.
- The MISSION Act also authorizes this program to be used as a recruitment and retention tool for Vet Center employees who serve in mental health positions.
- Establishes peer specialists on VA Patient Aligned Care Teams at VA medical centers: The goal is to promote integration of services for mental health, substance use disorder and behavioral health in a primary health setting. Fifteen VAMCs were completed by May 31 and we expect to complete at least 30 additional medical centers by May 31, 2020.

In summary, several recent surveys reinforce that VA health care quality and access is equal to or better than the private sector. Veterans who currently receive their health care by a VA provider continue to Choose VA, even when they have other choices. This is only because VA continues to recruit and retain the best of the best. These MISSION Act provisions will give VA even more strength to provide the best care for our Veterans whom we serve. For more information about the recruitment benefits currently available, please follow/click this link: https://www.vacareers.va.gov/Benefits/EducationSupport/.

Richard Stone, MD
Executive In Charge, VHA

PRESIDENT - SECVA
VA Conference Call
MISSION Act Update

Tuesday, June 25, 2019
11:45 a.m. EST
www.att-rsvp.com / Conf. ID: 469230
EHRM posters are now positioned throughout the facility to further educate staff, Veterans, and volunteers about the benefits EHRM will bring to VA.

The process began here in Aug. 2018 to advance the decades old Veterans Information System and Technology Architecture (VistA) into the 21st century with interoperability between VA, the Department of Defense, and eventually, the private healthcare sector.

In addition to the poster signing, capability showcase, and off-site workshops, the week included Cerner Corporation's move into their new leased space across the street from MGVAMC— that will help this design/implementation and integration continues to operate seamlessly. At right, is an illustration which depicts the remaining engagement, training, and timing needs of EHRM.

EHRM Commitment Ceremony ~ June 17, 2019
Mann-Grandstaff VAMC ~ Spokane, WA
**Mann-Grandstaff VAMC Displays Pride for All Veterans in VA Care**

Before she presented rainbow colored “PRIDE” wristbands to MGVAMC leadership, Alaina Taylor, LGBT Coordinator and a USAF Veteran wiped away her own tears as she expressed her appreciation for the support she’s receiving in meeting VA’s mandate to be an inclusive, caring organization for all Veterans.

“May this symbol represent to our LGBTQ Veterans that this is a welcoming medical facility where they can feel safe and get the care they have earned and deserve,” said Taylor. The PRIDE flag will remain in our front entrance throughout the month of June. “It is known all over the world as a symbol of LGBTQ rights, acceptance and peace. I am so proud to be here today, to be a part of this movement, and to say thank you to our Executive Leadership for being courageous enough, like our Veteran heroes, to declare and recognize this [PRIDE Flag] as a symbol of compassion and peace.”

Taylor recently received the VA Secretary’s Inclusion and Diversity national award for her efforts, which she says are based on a simple goal: “to educate employees to create a welcoming environment for the Veterans we serve.”

The brief front lobby celebration and PRIDE flag posting also allowed Taylor to share the meaning behind the rainbow colors depicted on the flag that was created and designed by Vietnam War Veteran Gilbert Baker in 1978.

**PRIDE Flag Colors represent:**

- RED = Life
- GREEN = Nature
- ORANGE = Healing
- BLUE = Harmony
- YELLOW = Sunlight
- PURPLE = Spirit

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**MGVAMC Peer Support Specialist Hoff in running for National VA Award**

U.S. Army Combat Veteran Matt Hoff helps returning or recently discharged Veterans by welcoming and guiding them into and through the VA Health Care system at Mann-Grandstaff VAMC. He is MGVAMC’s 2019 Peer Specialist of the Year and was recently recognized in front of the entire Behavioral Health Service team by Acting Chief of Staff, Dr. Hugh Conway, and VA Psychologist Dr. Darrell Volwiler (pictured at right).

“Matt was selected due to his sustained and significant contributions to VA’s Peer Support profession,” smiled Dr. Conway as he shared the attributes of Matt’s commitment. “Matt has a unique ability to establish and maintain good relationships with the Veterans he serves as well as other staff in our facility and the community.”

The award now places Matt into consideration for the VA-wide Peer Specialist of the Year award. There he will be evaluated, much like he was for the local MGVAMC award—using nationally provided criteria.

Dr. Conway and Dr. Volwiler praised Matt during the staff meeting, where it was also revealed that Matt “displays knowledge of VA resources including VHA and VBA, and guides Veterans seamlessly through challenging systems with persistence, while endorsing and promoting self-determination, empowerment and self advocacy—on the part of the Veteran.”

From leadership, and his peers, Matt “has been and continues to be a truly outstanding role model of recovery for Veterans and our facility. He is a vocal representative of the recovery model in a variety of settings and has been a speaker on this model several times in the community, including Veteran Town Hall meetings with the Director, and is a “Whole Health” coach and soon, will be leading our new “Taking Charge of My Life” group for Veterans.”

**Kevin Bratcher... the Fish Catcher!**

Fishing stories come and go, but once in a while, you see/hear something that just makes you want to know more.

At right is Kevin Bratcher, a Mental Health Professional who works in our Behavioral Health unit at Mann-Grandstaff VAMC. He admits the Northern Pike he recently caught in Lake Coeur d’Alene broke the scale he had in his tackle box after catching that 46” monster on 12lb test fishing line.

“I was fishing for bass with crank bait when this one struck. I knew it was big right away. At 46”, it’s pretty close or ties the Idaho catch & release state record I think,” he said. “Either way, it will always be a spectacular memory for my Son and I.”

That’s right, you read right... he let the fish go after the picture!

Fishing and enjoying life in the great outdoors are among the great attributes about living 300-miles inland from Seattle. The weather is better. Traffic isn’t as bad, and there are so many lakes and rivers to fish, raft, or float; mountains for hiking, camping, hunting, biking, trail riding; and snow and water skiing to keep anyone active year-round.

With continued growth projected for Spokane’s VA, Bratcher is also helping promote Mann-Grandstaff VAMC as a great place to work while serving Veterans – and enjoying living life and raising a family in the Pacific Northwest! Nice catch Kevin!
MGVAMC’s LEAD Graduates Create “Game Changing” Programs to Increase Veterans and Employee Satisfaction at VA

Personal growth and professional development opportunities are alive and well at Mann-Grandstaff VAMC, where last week, 11 employees, in three separate workgroups, graduated from our Education Services’ Leadership Effectiveness Accountability Development (LEAD) program. The event also allowed the graduates to share the outcomes from their respective projects and how they are benefitting Veterans, staff, and operations at Spokane’s VA.

“It’s great to see the turnout, support, and participation in this personal development opportunity that LEAD offers our VA employees,” smiled Darci Rashke, AD-PCS/Nurse Executive—as she addressed the large crowd assembled to learn the positive impacts from the projects and honor their co-workers. “Our Senior Executive Leadership team understands that improvements really begin at the front-line level—and we thank you.”

Kim Connolley, Chief, Education and MGVAMC’s Designated Learning Officer says LEAD class graduates spent months (in addition to their regular duties) meeting regularly to identify areas of concern, design their project, and test their solutions to make them sustainable locally and if possible, to other facilities through VA’s annual Shark Tank competition. The three projects featured at the graduation ceremony include: 1) Improving Veteran Understanding of Community Care Consults/Referrals; 2) Telephone Accessibility for Veterans/Call handling; and 3) Medical Respite Care for Homeless Veterans.

“I am so pleased to see our staff commit to the process,” explained Connolley. “LEAD is about career development, succession planning that prepares our employees for growth and additional responsibilities. LEAD also allows staff to put their creative ideas, talents, and professional know-how to work as a team.” And, she says, “LEAD is an example of how VA is working to recruit from within and retain future leaders and health care professionals - to compliment the efforts being done nationwide to fill job vacancies within VA.” Ms. Connolley also emphasized how LEAD participants, some of which have been a VA employee for many years, can benefit by selecting their own mentor—to better enable them to understand the evolving VA system—and most importantly, serve and honor Veterans enrolled in VA!

2019 LEAD Graduates
- Stacy Dancker
- Stephanie Johnson
- Rebecca Johnson
- Brian Kelley
- Amber Medina
- Paula Newell
- Mandy Pereyda
- Nicholas Sangil
- Katherine Schoel
- Melanie Simpson
- Amy Waterman

Also pictured: Kimberly Hitt, Kim Connolley, Denise Tolliver, Ms. Darci Rashke, AD-PCS/Nurse Executive, and Dr. Scott Nye, Chief of Staff here at Mann-Grandstaff VAMC.