Employee of the Year Kari Tabino Among Awards Ceremony Highlights

More than a hundred MGVAMC staff, including members of our Executive Leadership team, gathered to recognize and honor each other, share some good-natured laughter, and enjoy a variety of finger foods and desserts from the Veterans Canteen Service during an hour-long, outdoor awards ceremony Sept. 26th. The new format of having the event under a tent, and after normal work hours for most, received several supportive and constructive comments—as staff expressed their appreciation and ideas for future events.

Enthusiasm and fun captures the spirit of those supporting our 2018 Employee of the Year - Kari Tabino, RN (Veteran), who is our Veteran Education Coordinator and routinely shares her passion and personality for inspiring Veterans and co-workers on the benefits of VA health care!

She graciously, said, “thank you” following the award presentation by AD-PCS Nurse Executive Darci Raschke and Associate Director Rick Richards (pictured at right). Kari Tabino, began her VA career as a work study in 2003—before coming on board full-time in 2006.

Employees of the Month were also called forward and recognized—as were Federal Time-in-Service award recipients. The enthusiastic crowd cheered for everyone honored. Among them, Gary Helms (Veteran) who received his 45-year Federal Service pin! Gary has worked at Spokane’s VA ever since he completed his four year active duty service in the US Army in 1977 (that’s him below right, as fellow co-workers applaud him and his tireless commitment to serving Veterans and VA in Spokane.

More event pics and photos of attending monthly winners can be found on page-4 of this edition of the the VA Voice! Please follow this link for Kari’s Award Nomination and this link for monthly winners!

FLU Shots Available at VA thru October

MGVAMC has begun providing Veterans, VA staff, and volunteers with this year’s new influenza vaccine!

Flu shots are free and are given to all Veterans presenting at any of the vaccination stations (MRI hallway 8am-noon M-F) or in the Primary Care lobby (M-Wed. 1-3pm) through October 15th. Flu shots will be given daily between 8am-3pm between Oct. 15-31st—all in the Primary Care lobby. Veterans can also ask their Primary Care team for a flu-shot during their regular appointment. VA employees and volunteers can obtain a flu shot at UCC side entrance.
Mann-Grandstaff VAMC’s Chaplaincy service, led by William Wise-Gendusa and Jonathan Block are reaching out in new ways to Veterans and staff.

Beginning October 16th, the Chaplains will welcome Veterans, VA staff and volunteers for what Wise-Gendusa describes as, a discussion group [that] will explore a variety of spiritual themes such as gratefulness, mindfulness/prayer, justice, and failure/success.

Below are highlights of the article at this link outlining more about the new weekly group meetings, their purpose and goals:

“Board certified chaplains are the spiritual care specialists, and the subject matter experts that bring a wealth of depth, breadth and expertise in assisting people in making meaning, addressing their spiritual distress, and walking with them on their physical, mental, and emotional path …”

“This month, MGVAMC’s Chaplaincy is trialing a new group that will meet on Wednesdays at 4:30 p.m. in the chapel called “My Spirituality”. This group will kickoff on October 16 at 4:30 in the chapel. All staff and veterans are welcome! For more information, please call 434-7762.

Highlights from Spokane Area Community Partners joining Mann-Grandstaff VAMC for Emergency Preparedness Fair September 19, 2019
VA Continues Suicide Prevention Outreach

Suicide is a serious national public health crisis that affects communities everywhere. At the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), preventing suicide among all Veterans is a top priority—including among those who do not currently or may never seek care within the VA system. Still, VA employees are working every day to reach Veterans where they live, work, thrive, or maybe—just trying to survive.

Just as suicide has no single cause, no one strategy can end Veteran suicide. VA is using a “bundled public health approach” that involves multiple sectors, including media and entertainment industries. Research has shown that the way media covers suicide can influence behavior—either positively, by encouraging help-seeking, or negatively, by increasing contagion or “copycat” suicide, which occurs when exposure to suicide or suicidal behaviors contributes to another suicide.

At Mann-Grandstaff VAMC, Lisa Sporre (pictured at right) is our new Suicide Prevention Coordinator. With Medical Center Director Dr. Robert Fischer in the background, Sporre shared VA’s strategy, including the #BeThere campaign, as well as the challenge for everyone to “Make the Connection” with those who are struggling with depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. VA believes talking with a Veteran about their suicidal thoughts may be challenging, but your words could be exactly what a Veteran needs to hear and could be a reminder of the many people who are willing to listen!

Throughout September, VA and its staff and facilities nationwide expanded outreach to promote suicide prevention efforts—in part, to keep the issue at the forefront and “top-of-mind” for Veterans, and/or their families who want assistance in managing their life stressors and staying ahead of the negative thoughts or decisions that can compound suicidal ideation. U.S. Military Veterans do not have to be enrolled in VA health care to learn more or seek mental health care—for the first year after separating from active duty status (including Guard or Reservists back from deployment). Veterans with concerns about their mental health and outlook can also ask a VA Urgent Care Center (UCC) staff member to speak privately with a VA mental health professional while seeing the UCC or their Primary Care Provider. For Veterans, family and stakeholders, the following links provide additional support to learn more about VA’s suicide prevention efforts: S.A.V.E. Training video. VA’s #BeThere campaign. Coaching Into Care to find care or services for a Veteran. And, VA’s Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention offers additional resources and tools for clinicians and patients. And, the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7 by calling 1-800-273-8255!

Quality, Safety, and Value Nurse Leads National Convention for American Case Management Association

Pictured at left is MGVAMC’s Steve Case – WA Chapter ACMA (American Case Management Association) President. Case, an RN, is also the Utilization Management Coordinator within our Quality, Safety, and Value (QSV) service.

The picture was taken while Case was presiding over the business meeting of the national Chapter recently. The (ACMA) chapter celebrated 5 years during its recent annual conference in Seattle. This years topic “Transitions of Care”, was shared with over 120 people attending from five different states to learn more about Transitions of Care.

“As president of the chapter I was responsible for the overall content and arranging the conference, held at the Grand Hyatt in downtown Seattle. We had a total of 5 speakers at the event. I was able to share information regarding the VA and the importance of Integrated Case Management Across the Continuum.

The RN’s and Social Workers who attended received 5 hours of Continuing Education Credits.”
Employee Awards included recognition for several of the staff honored as Employee of the Month award winners… including those pictured with Associate Director Rick Richards L-R at right: Jason Johnson, Lynn McHugh and John Johnson all appearing with Jan Pennock, RN, Chief, Care in the Community (CITC), who accepted on behalf of other CITC winners including: Patricia Creswell, Berrett Orr-Chavez, and Sandra Flint.

Employee of the Month winners also include Patricia VanCurler (GREC / PT); Randy Naporlee, HCAS; Denise Raymond, LPN, Primary Care; Kylee Plummer, QSV; Kaylie Ecker, Patient Advocate. Also recognized were new Supervisors at MGVAMC as were dozens who received their Federal Time-In-Service award recipients. Click here for some of the award pics!

**Marguerite Wayland, ARNP is Nursing Excellence**

A Primary Care staff meeting quickly turned into a surprise DAISY Award for Nursing Excellence for Margurite Wayland, ARNP, pictured at center below with Dr. Robert J. Fischer, Medical Center Director and her team members.

Dr. Richard Sams read aloud the compassion and qualities supporting the Winning nomination of Margurite - which can be read here. Congratulations!!
**VA: Suicide Is a National Public Health Priority**

VA and the Dept. of Defense have combined resources and commitment to support President Trump’s national Suicide Prevention campaign and task force known as PREVENTS (President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide).

In an article by The Washington Times, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie is quoted as saying “There’s been a stigma throughout the history of our country what I still think you see manifestations of today,” he said. “In the military, there’s always been a reluctance to address those issues... but with many issues, certainly complicated ones, just starting to talk about it is a step forward. People would run from this label, mental illness. Families would panic, communities would panic. It’s amazing to me that we’re not any farther along,” he said.

The article highlighted this summer’s VA-DoD conference in Nashville, TN where federal and corporate executives gathered with a goal of “developing and implementing the first governmentwide national strategy to confront the root causes of Veteran Suicide.

Secretary Willkie also shared VA’s top clinical priority (Suicide Prevention) with members attending the American Legion’s 101st National Convention, including a $206-million line item budget allocation towards Suicide Prevention next year. As for the new Task Force, Secretary Wilkie and DoD executives want to make suicide prevention a national public health priority and to flood radio, TV, and social media with content that inspires a call to action by everyone! Please, follow this link to read more about Secretary Willkie’s announcement at the convention or this link to learn more about the new “PREVENTS” Task Force. This link will take you to the Sept. 20, 2019 release of VA’s new 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Report.

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**Oct.—Nov. Events**

- Veterans Town Hall Meeting 10/10
  Wenatchee Vets Hall Noon-1:30pm
- Columbus Day Holiday 10/14
- Vitalant Blood Drive Here! 10/15
  Outside MRI Entrance 8-11:45am
- Veterans Flu Shot Clinic 10/15
  moves to Primary Care Lobby (M-F)
- MGVAMC Employee Town Halls 10/16
  Skype/Tele= 12-1pm or in CLC 2-3pm
- “Great Shake Out” Drill 10/17
  “Earthquake Preparedness” 10:17am
- 2nd Harvest Mobile Food Bank 10/30
  Outside MRI Entrance 12:30-2pm
- IPV “Popcorn & Movie” event 10/30
  CLC 2-3pm (Open to All)
- “Monster Mash” costume contest 10/31
  Judging 9:45 a.m. in CLC Dining room
- Veterans Last Roll Call (CLC) 11/3
  Service of Remembrance - 2:30pm
- Nursing Skills Fair at MGVAMC 11/5-6
  Click here for times/locations
- Veterans Day Event (10-11am) 11/11
  Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena
  https://www.facebook.com/VASpokane
  https://twitter.com/spokaneva
  Click Here to share suggestions or ideas for improving services or operations at MGVAMC.

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**VA Employees Can Help Charities / Non-Profits and communities through Combined Federal Campaign**

The CFC campaign gives VA employees easy access to local, regional, or national organizations relying on the generosity of donors supporting charitable (tax-deductible) organizations.

Here at MGVAMC, the plan is to schedule a kick-off event, along with the annual tradition of themed “gift baskets” from participating service lines or units wanting to express their creativity to create/display the baskets (for open bidding) in the Veterans Canteen starting in November. Bidding for employee parking spots will also be available once again. In the meantime, check out this video involving this year’s campaign. CFC organizers have simplified the donation process through this online portal open to all employees. Stay tuned for much more to come about the 2019-‘20 CFC! Please click here for VHA Executive in Charge Richard Stone’s support!
EHRM: Electronic Health Record Modernization Update

Introducing VITAL: a program designed to support and enhance VA’s culture of innovation by employing analytics and data-driven solutions that solve real-world problems in VA health care. Front-line staff and end users are trained to engage with EHRM’s new technologies and processes through four one-week sessions, individual learning plans, and group capstone projects.

VITAL is a joint effort of the Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization (OEHRM) and Cerner with staff from both organizations teaching courses on one of the Cerner campuses in Kansas City, Missouri.

Two of the four VITAL sessions are before and two are after go-live. As an IOC, MGVAMC received twice the number of openings for VITAL as other facilities will receive. MGVAMC sent 34 staff to the first session held this summer. The second sessions for MGVAMC will be held in the fall.

The first session included topics such as defining value, interoperability goals, human factors and usability, and analytics available in the new EHR. Capstone projects under development by teams from MGVAMC include:

- Assisting the MGVAMC’s new Case Management department in identifying Veterans who would benefit from their service;
- Staffing needs before, during, and after go-live.
- Community results integration into registries.
- Referral 2-day scheduling attempt in the EHR.

In the meantime, Cerner’s new training center for MGVAMC staff is taking shape.

Located directly across from the medical center on Wellesley Ave. and next to the Veterans Thrift Store, Cerner’s new design-build interior features 10 large training rooms for MGVAMC staff, in addition to office space, conference, and break rooms!

Dr. Robert J. Fischer, Medical Center Director presents VA Nurse Donna Vreeland with a coin from VA DEPSEC James Byrne for her commitment to EHRM Modernization in Spokane!

Nicotine Replacement Therapy Available

With VA’s Smoke Free policy now in effect, MGVAMC’s Health and Wellness team is promoting Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) for Veteran patients, staff, and volunteers.

NRT includes nicotine patches, gum, and lozenges—and when used consistently or even in combination, can reduce cravings for tobacco. Available for free through Employee Health Services at ext. 6329, NRT is also easy to obtain through a Veteran’s Primary Care Provider or through MGVAMC’s Tobacco Cessation Services (434-7571) with a clinical pharmacist assisting with prescriptions (following a brief telephone consult).

VA offers a Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-Quit–Now / 800-784-8669), through MyHealtheVet, or through several other smartphone apps that can help! Call 434-7571 or email: Mary.Hoenecke@va.gov.

For more information, please follow this link to our latest edition of the “Healthy Living” newsletter.

Smoke free VHA Better starts today

Join the VHA as we go smoke free on OCTOBER 1st

VHA cares about your health and is going smoke free per Directive 1097.

*VA Directive 1097 implements a smoke free policy for patients, visitors, contractors, volunteers, and members of VA health care facilities.
The American Indian Veterans Advisory Council (AIVAC) held its 10th Annual Veterans Memorial & Honoring Ceremony Sept. 14th—and once again, challenged all Veterans to gather, remember, and honor the warriors who have served—and those currently serving in harms way.

More than 140 people attended the outdoor event in the meadow next to the Dental clinic, where passers-by could see and hear the beat of the Chief Cliff Warrior Drum Group (Montana) and other Native traditions, including a Circle Dance, prayers and roll call for Veterans from each Pacific NW Tribe who have passed on this past year. Keynote Speaker Larry Allen (US Army Ret.) a former Command Sergeant Major (top left in photo) also presided over the Grand Entry of the flags depicting Tribal Nations present and the U.S. Armed Forces. For more photos and info, follow this link to facebook!
Spokane Veterans Outreach Center Hosts Annual Resource Fair/Open House

Washington Dept. of Veterans Affairs welcomed the remains of 45 Veterans to their final resting place at the E. WA Veterans Cemetery in Medical Lake last month as active duty, reservists, Veteran organizations and guests gathered for a formal “Forgotten Heroes Internment” ceremony paying final respects to Veterans who served our nation. In addition to a full Rifle Salute, TAPS, and a Joint Service Color Guard, a bell toll and roll call recognized each fallen Veteran. WDVA also recognized Mr. Michael Ross of 9-Mile Falls who handcrafts special “Purple Heart” wood urns for those remains that often arrive in less-than-desirable conditions. Cemetery Director Rudy Lopez (USAF Ret.) also thanked the members and riders with the Patriot Guard and Combat Vet Riders for honorably escorting the remains.

Spokane Veterans Outreach Center Hosts Annual Resource Fair/Open House

The Vet Center's annual Open House and Resource Fair brought Veterans, families, non-profit agencies, and new vendors to further empower Veterans and their families last month. Food, music, new job opportunities, education services and nearly two-dozen vendors/display booths were all offered freely to inquiring Veterans.

The Vet Center offers Combat Veterans and their families with free counseling and therapy services to help them. One new Vet Center program is known as the “Significant Other Support Group (SOS) which now meets on the 2nd and 4th Mondays each month from 4:00-5:30 p.m. The group is led by VA Social Worker Audra Stillions who can be reached at (509) 444-8387.

Eligibility for the group is open to all Veterans and their significant other, following an intake assessment.
VA Employees Appreciate Annual Picnic Honoring Shared Commitment to Choose VA and Proudly Serve America’s Military Veterans

Hundreds of Mann-Grandstaff VAMC’s dedicated employees were greeted by facility leadership and service chiefs who took turns serving food, laughter, and good conversation during the annual employee appreciation picnic August 27th.

Retired VA employee Tommy Borges (USMC Vietnam War Combat Veteran) performed his relaxing, distinct Hawaiian Island sounds as staff worked their way through the serving lines, chili and dessert bake-off competitions, and health and wellness information booths to find a soft place in the grass or at a picnic table underneath the tall pines on an 85-degree day in Spokane.

Event coordinator Carrie Daniel (pictured below left) relayed her appreciation for leadership support, in part from the more than 50 gift cards donated by the Veterans Canteen service. She, like many, was also surprised and grateful for the Cerner Corporation’s support at the event. Greg Ondera (pictured at right) called upon staff to engage Cerner to create a custom mosaic (using personal cell phones and Cerner technology) of words showcasing the benefits of Cerner and VA’s joint effort to produce a new Electronic Health Record.

Ondera also surprised everyone by winning the Chili Cook-off competition with his “C3PO” chili. MGVAMC Surgeon Mark Young won the dessert bake-off with Almond Canna Potta bites that were quickly scooped up! Both received VCS gift cards for their selection as best “chefs”!

Ms. Daniel and MGVAMC leadership also want to thank our kind-hearted VA Volunteers who brought their enthusiasm and helped prepare and cook the BBQ style lunch with support from Doug Majerus and his friendly Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) staff!