

In The News

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SPRING 2011



***End of an Era:
Final WWI
Veteran Passes***

Director's Letter



Spring is finally upon us. During this season, the sun begins to shine, the weather becomes warmer and the flowers and trees start to bloom. It's also the time of year that friends and families begin to plan outside activities such as camping, fishing, or my personal favorite – golf.

At the Portland VA Medical Center (VAMC), Spring marks the time of year that employees have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their work/life experience to leadership through the all-employee survey (AES) a valuable tool that helps to drive change throughout the medical center leading to improving quality care to our Veterans. During last year's AES, we received a tremendous response from employees willing to share information leading to improvement projects and initiatives at Portland VAMC.

For example, in response to comments from employees wanting an increase in activities that encourage wellness and satisfaction, we formed a separate Staff Satisfaction Committee. Led by Assistant Director, Veterans and Staff Services Mark Morgan, the committee includes employees from all areas and levels of the medical center. Its aim is to improve the work and life experience for all employees and is currently focused on working with the Human Resources Service to reinvigorate our Awards Program.

We also held an Employee Appreciation Day (EAD) Picnic in September late last summer. Over 900 employees and their families enjoyed a wonderful day filled with live music, sporting competitions in softball and volleyball and plenty of good food. Many of the employees who attended the picnic gave enthusiastic feedback about the music, the activities, and the ability

“...to improve the work and life experience for all employees...”

to spend time with their families and colleagues outside of work. Based on the positive feedback from those that attended we are planning an even better picnic this year, scheduled for September 10, 2011.

The Staff Satisfaction Committee and Employee Appreciation Day Picnic are just two examples of how your ideas from the AES have directly led to changes at the medical center. Please don't miss this opportunity to participate in the 2011 AES beginning on April 25. Your feedback is important, valued, and DOES lead to meaningful change.

And, finally, thank you for your dedication and attention to our mission, to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional care that improves their health and well-being. By continuously striving to assure that Portland VA Medical Center is an employer of choice and a great place to work, I feel certain that we are better positioning ourselves to meet this honorable commitment.



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In The News is an organizational
newsletter for employees
and volunteers at the
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Corporal Frank W. Buckles, the last “doughboy” of WWI, was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery on March 16. Buckles lied about his age to join the Army at age 16 in order to serve in the War “...to end all Wars.” The last of more than 4.7 million doughboys who served in the Great War, Buckles also served as a civilian in World War II. During that war, he was captured in the Philippines and spent 39 months as a prisoner of war.

***In The News Spring 2011 Photo Credits:
Outward Bound, Portland Winterhawks,
Michael Moody, Anne Marie Murphy, Kelli Roesch
and Kimberly Wilkie.***

Thank you!



Nurses react as Kathy Chapman (far left) Deputy Director for Patient Care Service makes the announcement of PVAMC's Re-designation as a MAGNET facility.



Portland VA Medical Center:

It's A Fact!

Magnet Re-designation

Exemplary Performance, National Recognition

On December 15, 2010, Portland VA Medical Center (VAMC) announced its re-designation as a Magnet Facility. More than fifty nursing staff were on-hand to hear the good news when Kathy Chapman, Deputy Director of Patient Care services received the call from Karen Drenkard, Ph.D, RN, and Director of the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC).

"I am very pleased to

announce that we have met the rigor of review by the ANCC and have again received Magnet status," announced Chapman.

Within the nursing community, no achievement is greater than designation as a Magnet Facility. The Magnet Recognition Program® is the gold standard for nursing excellence. The program developed by the ANCC recognizes health care organizations that provide the very best in nursing care and professionalism in nursing practice.

Portland VAMC was recognized as special exemplars in its use of data, depth of

interdisciplinary relations, excellence in clinical care, scope of nursing research and contributions to new knowledge and innovation.

Portland VAMC is one of only four Magnet Facilities in Oregon, and one of only five VA Medical Centers nationwide. Nationally, among 6,000 private and government hospitals, only 378 are Magnet Facilities. "The designation is a testimony to our skilled, innovative, and caring staff who continually strive to improve care they provide to our nation's heroes. I am grateful for our nursing staff and proud of their accomplishments," said Chapman.



Just who is the Face behind **VA Portland** Facebook?

Did you know that Portland VA Medical Center (VAMC) is using Facebook to message Veterans and employees? You can follow us at www.facebook.com/vaportland and click on the “Like” button to get automatic updates and important information from Portland VAMC. As of press time, we have over 1,008 “Like(s).”

The Portland VAMC face behind the Facebook is Communications Specialist

Kelli Roesch (rhymes with “Deli Fresh”) for Public Affairs and the MyHealthVet Program Roesch sorts through current and pertinent information, posts messages, and responds to comments on our page.

“Out of 81 medical centers currently using Facebook, ours is ranked at eight,” Roesch said. “We have achieved such popularity by making our page informative, entertaining and interactive. Over the past few months, we have posted several items of interest including Weather Alerts, Health Information, and Special Events, such as National Salute to Veterans

Week and the Fifth Annual OEF/OIF/OND Welcome Home Event. Given the positive feedback we receive, we anticipate becoming #1 in the near future. We proudly hold the distinction of being the first VA Medical Center to post tsunami warning information,” Roesch said.

“Facebook is just one of the ways that we can communicate,” Roesch said. “I know a lot of our employees and many of our Veterans use Facebook everyday and we want them to “Like” us so we can communicate and interact with them.”

Integrated Ethics

Improving Ethics Quality in Health Care

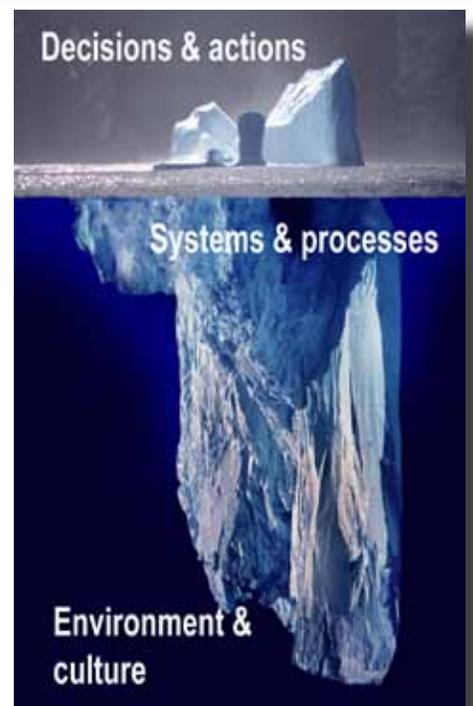
Morgan Bresko, MSW, along with her Preventive Ethics (PE) group members, is taking the initiative to improve hand-washing compliance throughout the Portland VA Medical Center (VAMC). With the help of Infection Control (IC), this initiative will target the areas and staff members demonstrating excellence in hand washing practices.

To ensure that our Veterans are safe at all times, PE will highlight areas and staff members who incorporate hand-washing on an ongoing basis. We all know that

hand washing is a vital practice that protects both the provider and our Veterans from harm. Our hope is to support a culture change at our medical center, promoting safety and health.

Data will be collected through Quality & Performance (Q&P) and IC to identify which areas and staff members are ‘tops’ in hand-washing compliance at Portland VAMC.

Last year, Critical Care proved to have the highest compliance rate for hand-washing practices. Congratulations!!



5th Annual Welcome Home



partners.
“We are continuing our tradition of having a fun event to bring our returning Veterans and their family members together,” Victoria Koehler, Returning Combat Veterans Program Coordinator said. “We have had some great events in the past, but this was the biggest and best yet.”

More than 1,750 Veterans and their family members attended the Portland VA Medical Center’s (VAMC) 5th Annual Welcome Home Event on Sunday, March 20. The event, held at the Portland Rose Garden, was the last game of the regular season for the Portland Winterhawks versus the Spokane Chiefs.

Veterans and their families had a great time watching a great hockey game and had the opportunity to learn about their



benefits available through the Department of Veterans Affairs, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs and several community

This event doubled the attendance of any previous events Portland VAMC held. Prior events included baseball games at the Portland Beavers and the Bend Elks, as well as a day of family fun at Portland’s Oaks Park.

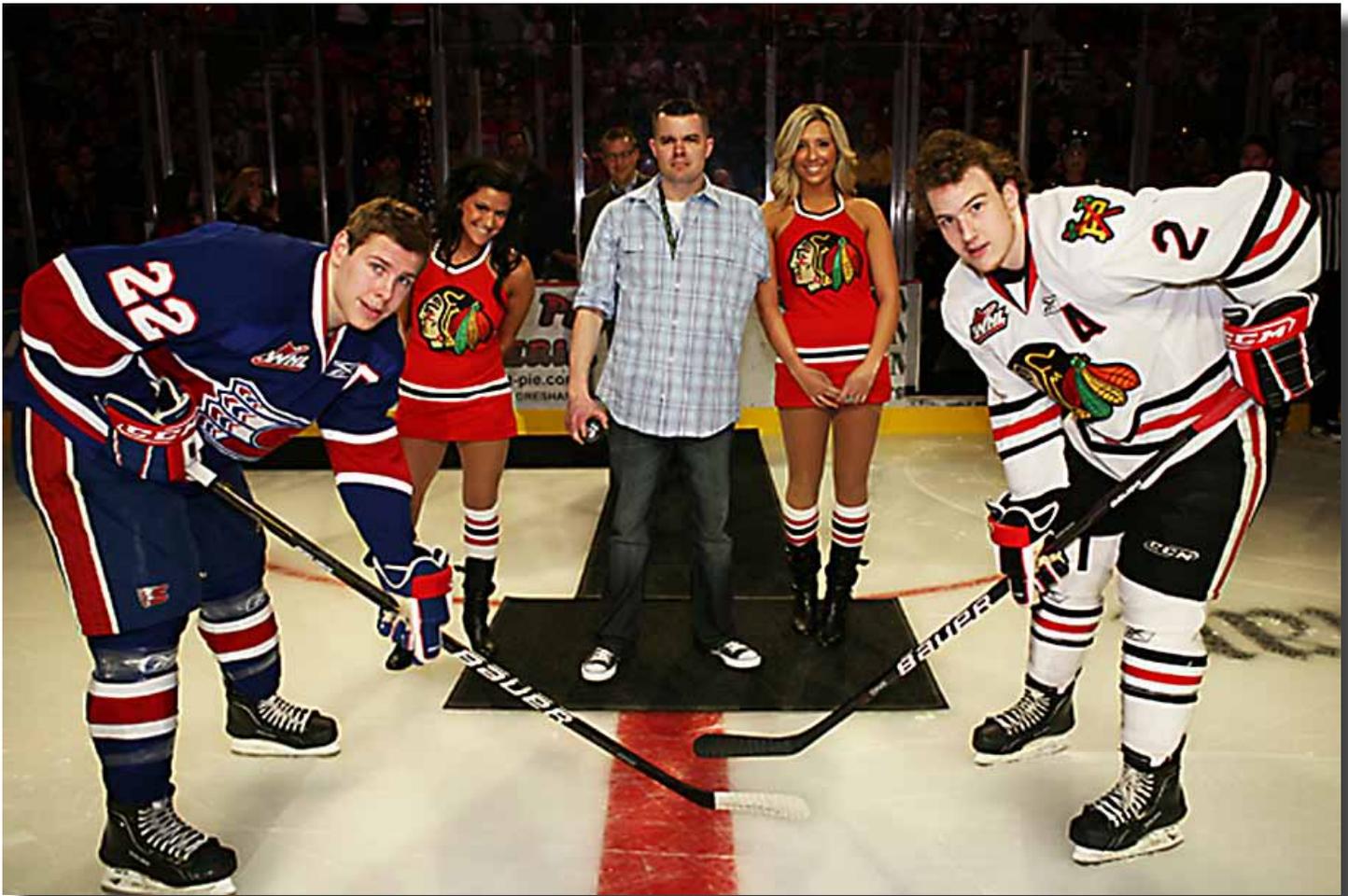
“We want to show our appreciation to those that have served and for the families that supported them,” Koehler said. “We want to thank you for your service, and look forward to serving you.”

The latest information, updates and photos from the event are on Portland VAMC’s Facebook page at

www.facebook.com/vaportland

**For more information, contact the Returning Combat Veterans Program Office
503-220-8262, ext. 53062**





John King (center), Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran, prepares for ceremonial puck drop at the Portland Winterhawks versus Spokane Chiefs hockey game March 20, during Portland VA Medical Center's Fifth Annual Welcome Home Returning Combat Veterans Program Event.

***View All
Event Photos***

***[www.facebook.com/
VAPortland](http://www.facebook.com/VAPortland)***

"Like" us,

Stay connected!



The Old Portland Canteen remade, behold the new...

“Patriot Café”

by Jack Hamacek, Chief Canteen Service

The new Patriot Café has had a slow transformation from a dated, poorly lit facility to an updated, bright, and quieter environment. Along with the transformation came improved sustainability opportunities. The new flooring is a vinyl composite that can be maintained with a clear water wash. There is no need for chemical cleaners and the new flooring earns extra points for being a no wax product. The flooring is also a much friendlier surface to navigate for our wheelchair customers.

The new ceiling tiles (below right) are 73% recycled materials and the design has made a noticeable reduction in noise pollution. The lighting (below left) is also a big improvement: all new, cool burning, energy efficient lighting just to brighten your day.

Not as obvious is the new equipment that has been installed: deep fryers, hot serving line and two new deli/salad cases that are far more energy efficient

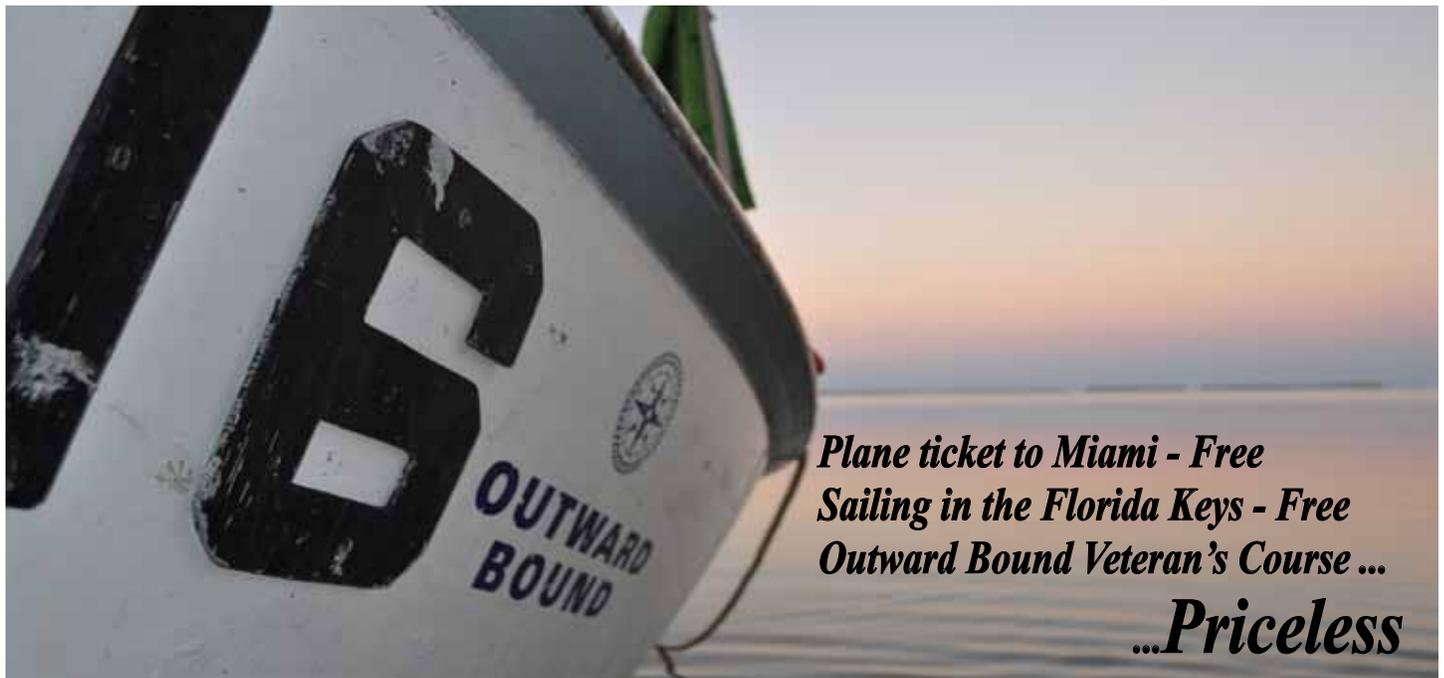
than the units they replaced. The Patriot Café has also gone to a more earth friendly product in their to-go containers and the new plastic bags are made from 25% recycled material. In 2010, the Patriot Café recycled 600 gallons of trans fat free cooking oil. Composting is coming! The Patriot Café

staff is working with the Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) Committee to incorporate composting in 2011. The Patriot Café may not be completely green yet, but they continue working to make a more sustainable environment for their customers.



Thank you to the VA design team of John Carrier, Melisse Kuhn and Diane Encarnacao for their vision and support to our Veterans. (Photo Center: The associates proudly presenting our new “From the Garden” concept in the Portland Patriot Café are, left to right, Mr. Ha Khanh, Phuong Nguyen, Bach Nguyen and Lorna Camba.)





*Plane ticket to Miami - Free
Sailing in the Florida Keys - Free
Outward Bound Veteran's Course ...
...Priceless*



Two members of the Portland VA Medical Center staff recently joined Outward Bound Veterans Sailing Course in the Florida Keys for the adventure and self-discovery opportunity of a lifetime. Can you imagine: six days of lounging on the decks of a luxury sailboat? Well, no one on the trip could either because they were actually on a rustic 30-foot sailing boat, with very little privacy and even less luxury. Did we mention the absence of plumbing or bathroom facilities? That didn't stop Shaun Benson, Chief of Voluntary Services and Kelli Roesch, Communications Specialist with My HealtheVet from taking on the sailing challenge. "It was an incredible opportunity that

encouraged us to test our limits while learning a new skill," said Benson, and then he laughed out loud. "I really didn't know that six days of sailing translated into four days of rowing... a tough, but very much worthwhile, experience."

Lacking in amenities, Outward Bound courses are designed to be physically challenging while providing the re-energizing gift of learning a new skill in the most beautiful locations in America. The Veterans courses are provided free-of-charge to OEF/OIF/OND Veterans.

During the sailing course, the all-Veteran team learned everything about the boat and navigation, in addition to reading charts and working together to achieve goals. The adventure and self-discovery unfolded while swimming in a pristine coral reef state park, adjusting to sleeping on oars each night, a scorpion sting, marveling at a team of dolphins following the boat, and seeing loggerhead sea turtles in their natural habitat. All of this intertwined with team challenges of trust and cooperation and the goal of getting there and back, together.





Volunteers

The Portland VA Medical Center (VAMC) celebrated National Volunteer Week during the week of April 10. More than 240 medical center volunteers met at the Monarch hotel in Clackamas, Ore. to attend this year's recognition event and luncheon, "We're So Lucky to Have You!"

"Our volunteers' contributions and efforts do not go unnoticed," said Volunteer Specialist Barbara Decoito. "A Veteran cannot visit the medical center and not be touched by the contributions volunteers provide." The volunteers at the Portland VAMC

donated 138,898 hours of time or the equivalent of 67 full-time employees in fiscal year 2010.

The Department of Veterans Affairs established Voluntary Service 65 years ago and it is one of the largest centralized volunteer programs in the Federal government. Veteran Service Organizations and individuals from the community donated \$215,820 in cash donations and \$1,035,891 in item donations to Portland VAMC last year.

"If volunteering is something that you or someone you know would like to do then give us a

call," Decoito said. "There are so many ways that you can show our Veterans that you care." Volunteers escort patients throughout the medical center, assist as greeters in the pharmacy, lab and atrium, assist with appointment reminders calls, drive guest carts and even drive Veterans to and from appointments from around Oregon and Southwest Washington.

For more information, contact the Voluntary Service staff in Portland at 503-273-5042 or in Vancouver at 360-690-1842

2011 Volunteer Excellence Award



Site supervisors from around the Portland VA Medical Center nominate volunteers for the annual Volunteer Excellence Award. Lynn Carter, Vancouver Campus deputy coordinator and driver for guest shuttle services (left, with Portland VA Medical Center Director John Patrick) and Bill Seaton (right) who worked with the MyHealthVet office were recognized this year. Each nominee was recognized at this year's event and honored with a special certificate and a hearty "thank you."



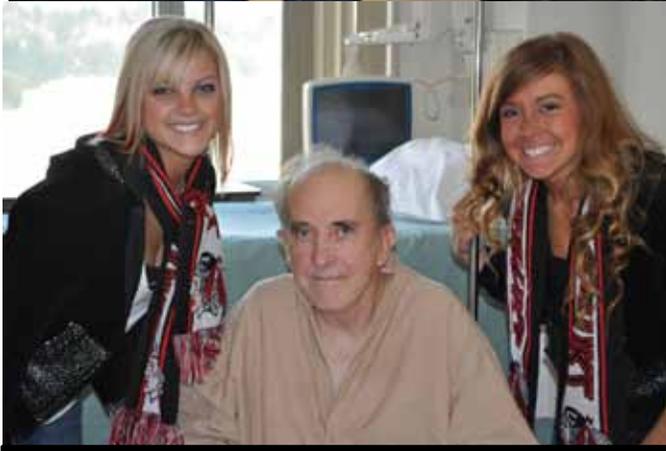


Visitors

Portland Metro-area sports teams love our Veterans!

Throughout the year, the Portland VA Medical Center hosts community members from both large and small organizations. Visitors primarily come to visit inpatient Veterans to lift their spirits and thank them for their service.

Photos Counterclockwise: Portland Trailblazers Alumni Terry Porter, Jerome Kersey and the Trailblazer Dancers signed autographs for patients during a holiday visit. Portland Winterhawk Rosebud Dancers and Vancouver Volcanoes semi-pro basketball team Volcanoes Dancers visiting Veterans at the medical center.



Gifts

The Benevolent Protective Order of Elks (B.P.O.E.) Gresham Elks Lodge #1805 recently delivered 750 bus passes for the exclusive use of the Veterans of the Portland VA Medical Center.

(Left to right) Chairman, of Gresham Elks 1805 Players Group Fred Gangwer, and Assistant Director Mark Morgan, Portland VA Medical Center.





***Beginning in July the Canteen Store
will close for 6 to 8 weeks
Look for signs to the
“Temporary Store”
inside Patriot Cafe***

IMPORTANT VA PHONE NUMBERS

Portland VA Medical Center
503-220-8262 or 1-800-949-1004

Press:

- 1** If you know the extension you need
- 2** Seasonal Flu Shot Clinics and Availability
- 3** Business Office: Patient Accounts, Enrollment, Eligibility, Patient Travel
- 4** Auto Prescription Renewal/Refill Line, Appointment Reminder
- 5** Make or change a Primary Care Appointment
- 6** Primary Care Team
- 7** Pharmacy Customer Service Representative
- 8** Specialty Clinics, including Eye Clinic

All other information, stay on the line to reach an operator.

Billing Questions

1-866-290-4618

Monday- Friday 5 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Pacific)

VA Health Resource Center staff can assist with your VA Billing Statement/Insurance questions.

Veterans Crisis Line

Confidential Help for Veterans and their families

1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press 1 for Veterans

Talk to a trained professional 24/7

visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

My HealtheVet

www.myhealth.va.gov

Renew prescriptions online, Communicate with your PCP online using secure encrypted messages, view appointments online

503-721-7854 or **800-949-1004**, ext. **57854**

VA Benefits Information & Assistance

1-800-827-1000