Working Together

Issue 23
Special Edition

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.—*Henry Ford*

2006 All Employee Survey Results

VAPHS
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

A Message from the Director

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

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On the Cover:
The high standards for care and services VAPHS provides our veterans could never be attained without the dedication, compassion and teamwork of individual employees from all throughout the healthcare system working together to share their individual talents.
WARREN PARK PHOTOS

Dear Fellow Employees, Volunteers, Veterans and Friends of the VAPHS,

As our employees will recall, and as visitors to our facilities may remember seeing signs and posters about, an employee satisfaction survey was conducted in the spring. All employees were asked and encouraged to take the survey—either via the Internet, on the telephone, or by filling out a paper copy. I would like to take a moment to sincerely thank each and every employee who took the time out of their busy schedule to let us know how they feel about their job and work environment. A phenomenal 84% of VA Pittsburgh employees took the survey, a 35.5% increase from the last time this survey was administered in 2004!

This survey is of vital importance to the direction and strategic planning of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. It has been proven that a highly satisfied workforce does great work. We strongly believe that employee satisfaction leads to higher clinical results and better care for our veterans. Employees appreciate a better workplace and that makes for better outcomes for the patients. We want our employees to be satisfied. We want highly talented and dedicated individuals to choose VAPHS as their employer and remain VAPHS employees for the majority of their career.

WARREN PARK PHOTO

Mr. Moreland makes rounds on 4-West with Jerome Ferrar, RN, and Amy Ellis, RN.

Following the 2004 survey, the leadership of VAPHS made a concentrated effort to fix problems that were uncovered. A task force was formed to analyze the results and determine what actions could be taken to improve employee satisfaction at VAPHS. A thoughtful plan of action was formed and many ideas were solicited from front-line staff. On the following pages you will see examples of many of these actions and you will also see how much our scores improved. It was not an accident that VAPHS received the highest scores in the VISN, higher scores than the VHA average, and higher scores than the 2004 VAPHS survey. It was the result of a planned strategy to make VAPHS an employer of choice.

The results of this year's all employee survey indicate that this is a great place to work! These results came from teamwork—from employees taking responsibility for their actions, and from supervisors and leadership taking responsibility and working for their employees.

The next challenge is to keep improving employee satisfaction for the good of the organization and the well-being of our patients. These results show that VAPHS is a well-performing organization, but we will continue to make it better. We will strive to reach the next level and become the benchmark employer for the entire VA. We will aim to attract quality employees to come work here and stay here. We will again analyze the results of the survey and figure out what areas need to be improved.

In this special edition of *Working Together*, you will see just a few examples of the targeted actions the Executive Leadership Team took after the 2004 survey to try to improve results of this year's survey.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Moreland
Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

Response Averages Comparison

The purpose of the survey was to collect information on employees' perceptions of the work place and their satisfaction with the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. They were asked to answer all questions thinking about their experiences over the past six months.

The surveys were completely anonymous. The survey was divided into three primary sections: Job Satisfaction (13 questions); Organizational Assessment Inventory (31 questions); and Culture (14 questions).

Employees were asked to rate and respond based on the following scale:

(1) Not at all satisfied
(2) Not very satisfied
(3) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
(4) Somewhat satisfied
(5) Very satisfied

Average results were compared with average results from the 2004 VAPHS survey as well as the VHA average results from this year's survey. As you can see from the data below, VAPHS has improved over the past two years in the majority of the categories and is above the national average in most of the categories as well. Between now and the next All Employee Survey, we will strive to improve even further, especially in the categories that were not higher than the 2004 or VHA results.

I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.

—Mia Hamm

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

—Helen Keller

Job Satisfaction

	VAPHS 2004	VAPHS 2006	VHA* 2006	% Change Within VAPHS	% VAPHS Different From VHA
Work Type	3.92	4.11	4.09	4.91%	0.40%
Work Amount	3.58	3.78	3.68	5.79%	2.69%
Pay Satisfaction	3.22	3.38	3.15	4.93%	7.17%
Coworker	3.88	4.01	4.01	3.26%	0%
Supervision	3.53	3.71	3.7	4.92%	0.19%
Senior Management	2.98	3.26	3.19	9.63%	2.20%
Promotion Opportunity	2.63	2.79	2.74	6.14%	2.02%
Work Condition	3.34	3.56	3.48	6.58%	2.28%
Customer Satisfaction	3.83	3.98	3.93	3.99%	1.50%
Praise	3.04	3.21	3.18	5.49%	1.02%
Work Quality	4.42	4.4	4.43	-0.48%	-0.64%
Satisfaction	3.68	3.83	3.77	4.11%	1.59%
Satisfaction-2yrs	3.02	3.09	3.05	2.31%	1.44%

Organizational Assessment

	VAPHS 2004	VAPHS 2006	VHA* 2006	% Change Within VAPHS	% VAPHS Different From VHA
Cooperation	3.42	3.58	3.54	4.46%	1.11%
Conflict Resolution	3.19	3.37	3.32	5.41%	1.25%
Diversity Acceptance	3.6	3.75	3.7	4.13%	1.32%
Coworker Support	3.58	3.66	3.62	2.21%	0.94%
Supervisory Support	3.6	3.68	3.66	2.32%	0.62%
Customer Service	3.55	3.72	3.69	4.77%	0.72%
Innovation	3.26	3.43	3.4	5.38%	0.82%
Resources	3.7	3.88	3.81	5.02%	2.01%
Safety Climate	3.59	3.73	3.72	3.82%	0.31%
Leadership	3.33	3.49	3.47	4.78%	0.61%
Rewards	3.25	3.43	3.4	5.54%	0.88%
Employee Development	3.27	3.47	3.45	6.24%	0.76%
Work/Family Balance	3.56	3.78	3.77	5.99%	0.33%
Planning/Evaluation	3.56	3.65	3.64	2.28%	0.26%
Job Control	2.95	3.11	3.08	5.48%	0.94%
Demands	3.47	3.43	3.51	-0.98%	-2.23%
Retention	3.37	3.44	3.4	2.25%	1.26%
Engagement	*new question in 2006	3.56	3.57	N/A	-0.12%
Psychological Safety	*new question in 2006	3.28	3.25	N/A	1.13%

Culture

	VAPHS 2004	VAPHS 2006	VHA* 2006	% Change Within VAPHS	% VAPHS Different From VHA
Group	2.77	2.95	2.97	6.54%	-0.62%
Entrepreneurial	2.68	2.85	2.82	6.49%	1.10%
Bureaucratic	3.47	3.48	3.44	0.32%	1.30%
Rational	3.15	3.25	3.24	3.04%	0.18%
Civility	3.5	3.64	3.59	3.85%	1.29%

*Medical facilities only

The results of the survey indicate that Overall Job Satisfaction of VAPHS employees has risen 4.7% since 2004.

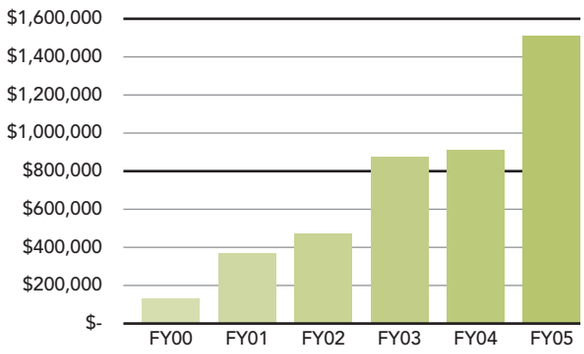
In this section, employees were asked questions about their satisfaction with their type and amount of work, pay, opportunities for promotion, working condition, praise, and a few others.

Here are just a few of the strategies taken in hopes of improving job satisfaction after the 2004 survey. The two main focuses were Rewards & Recognition and Opportunities for Promotion. Both areas showed substantially significant improvement over the past two years.

REWARDS & RECOGNITION

Employee Awards

The amount of money spent on Employee Awards increased from $89,880 in FY 1999 to $1,501,441 in FY 2005. This is an increase of 1,570.5% in six years.



Cameos of Caring

In conjunction with the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing, VAPHS has committed to the advancement and promotion of the nursing profession by casting the spotlight on the accomplishments of outstanding individuals. Wholeheartedly embraced by the health care community, Cameos of Caring has become the voice heralding the rewards of nursing practice with the hopes of assisting facilities with RN retention and with the recruitment of a new generation of candidates to the profession.

Each year VAPHS chooses a winner from each division as well as encouraging staff to nominate an extraordinary co-worker for one of two special categories. The Cameos of Caring Advanced Practice Award debuted in 2002 to honor five nurses practicing at a higher level of patient care and possessing a master's degree. In 2003 the School of Nursing partnered with the Center for Organ Recovery and Education to develop the Cameos of Caring Donate Life Award, recognizing advocacy for organ and tissue donation. Each year VAPHS has more and more nominees. This year, in addition to our three division winners, two nurses won the Advanced Practice Award and one won the Donate Life award.

WARREN PARK PHOTO

Patricia Nealon, Associate Director; Winners Alicia Waters, Kathy Downey, Lorna McKenzie, Jacqueline Ruple, Melissa Achtziger, Jeanne Walters; Ira Richmond, Associate Director for Patient Care Services; Michael Moreland, Director

Federal Executive Board Excellence in Government Awards

Each year numerous VAPHS employees are nominated for FEB awards—and many of them win! In 2006 VAPHS was very proud to have nine Gold or Silver winners, as well as 12 Bronze awardees in this regional competition. In 2005 VAPHS was proud to have 20 Gold or Silver winners, as well as eight Bronze awardees.

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

Nancy L. Fertal
Gold Award winner

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

Police Officers Team
Silver Award winners

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

Radiology Imaging Team
Bronze Award winners

WARREN PARK PHOTO

Winner, Lorna McKenzie and her nurse manager, Krista Culliver, with Director Michael Moreland

WARREN PARK PHOTO

The 2006 Cameos of Caring Awards Gala was held on Saturday, September 30 at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.

STAR Program

The STAR Program (Special Thanks And Recognition) was recently implemented at all three facilities. Anyone can easily write a little note, recognizing an employee who went above and beyond to serve our veterans.

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

A patient submits a ballot at a STAR Station.

Recognition

All employees who receive any of these awards are praised and shown in VAPHS' professional publications, including *Working Together, VAPHS Annual Report*, and *A Celebration of Excellence* to inspire and motivate their colleagues.

VA Café

A new VA Café Coffee Shop, the first of its kind in our region, was opened on the first floor of the University Drive Division as a result of the VAPHS' effort to consistently modernize and upgrade service for veterans, staff and employees. The VA Café Coffee Shop is proud to brew Starbucks coffee as well as serving pastries, salads and more. It is open Monday through Friday from 6:30AM to 3:30PM.

WARREN PARK PHOTO

Canteen

The Veterans Canteen Service at each division has been expanding, remodeling, and increasing the menu. For example, the "Fifth Avenue Deli" was instituted as

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION

Education

VAPHS employees are given infinite opportunities to expand their horizons, with several scholarship programs and in-house training. In-house training is constantly updated, enhanced, and expanded.

Just a few examples of special classes offered by VAPHS include: Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Training, How to Apply for a Federal Job, and Personal Computer Training Classes.

Scholarship programs include Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (VANEEP/EISP); National Nursing Education Incentive (NNEI); and VISN 4 Employee Education Development Program (EEDP).

VAPHS allocated over $457,000 in FY 05 alone to support education scholarships for more than 200 employees.

Testimonial

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

"I received the National Nursing Education Initiative scholarship and I am very grateful. It enabled me to go back and earn my master's degree in nursing and I could never have gone to do that without the scholarship. It helped me to grow more as a nurse in everything I've learned and to be able to apply that to my care for veterans. I'm just very grateful to the VAPHS because they've given me very many opportunities in my career here. Years ago I received the Upward Mobility scholarship, and that's how I became a nurse. I'm just very, very happy to serve veterans and be here at the VAPHS."

Mary Frances Pilarski
Nurse Manager and Coordinator of Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program

WORK ENVIRONMENT

These are just a few examples of improvements that have been made to the VAPHS work environment in the past couple of years.

Business Service Center

On October 24, 2005, a consolidated business service center was opened at the University Drive Division. This new area consolidates patient administrative services to provide one-stop shopping for veterans. It provides a centralized check-in process that is easier for patients and helps the VA maintain updated records. The area also includes most administrative functions that a patient would need, such as Release of Information, Patient Advocate, the Veterans Benefits Administration Representative, Agent Cashier, Billing Office, etc.

Seven self-serve kiosks were also added to the area to automate the patient check-in process and allow the patients to pre-register for their appointments without standing in line. After updating their information, the kiosks provide the patient with a printout of their clinic appointments for the day and the location of the appointments.

The renovation of this 17,000 square feet cost $2,510,850. Nine registration clerks, one information clerk and two escort staff were added as a result of this project.

WARREN PARK PHOTO

The results of the survey indicate that overall satisfaction in Organizational Assessment has risen 4.03% since 2004.

In this section, employees were asked to answer questions about their work group, supervisor, goals, respect, spirit of cooperation and teamwork, safety, and the VA.

Supervisory Training

The VAPHS is committed to developing and updating supervisors' knowledge and skills for an improved work environment.

To help all supervisors achieve the mandated 40 hours of supervisor training each year, the following options have been implemented: Human Resources Specific Programs; Education Sponsored Supervisor Programs; VA Learning Management; (VALO) On-Line Tutorials; TLC Satellite Programs; Director's Quarterly Supervisory Forums.

Quality Indicator Scores

VAPHS' Quality Indicator Scores have been significantly higher than VISN & National scores, and continue to improve.

In 2004 VAPHS received the following scores:

Fully Successful in Mental Health, Tobacco, and Infectious Disease categories.

Exceptional in Cardiovascular, Endocrine, and Cancer categories.

In 2005 VAPHS received the following scores:

Fully Successful in Tobacco category.

Exceptional in Long Term Care (new measure for 2005),

Cancer, Infectious Disease, Endocrine, and Cardiovascular categories.

Magnet

VAPHS Leadership and nursing staff have been working hard to achieve Magnet Recognition. The Magnet Nursing Recognition Award, administered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center in Washington, DC, is a very prestigious recognition bestowed on health care institutions that create an environment—through culture, philosophy, and practice—that attracts and retains well-qualified nurses who promote quality patient care.

To earn Magnet Recognition, we must demonstrate excellence in

- *the nursing department's management philosophy and practices*
- *adherence to standards for improving the quality of patient care*
- *nursing leadership that supports professional practice and continued competence of the nursing staff*
- *attention to the diversity of our patients and their families*

Organizations that have achieved Magnet status have reported enhanced recruitment and retention of highly qualified professional nurses—which has, in turn, facilitated consistent delivery of quality patient care. Other benefits include enhanced recognition in the community, increased utilization by health care consumers and networks, and increased stability in patient care systems across the organization.

Safety

The Leadership has made a safe employee work environment a priority and has launched several initiatives, including an accident review board and accident response team, to specifically look at the issue of reducing employee injuries. VAPHS has experienced a 45.3% decrease in lost time accidents over the past five years, which have been reduced from 181 in FY 2000 to 99 in FY 2005, as a result of the implementation of various initiatives to prevent workplace injuries.

VAPHS has also hired several additional police officers and has maintained a heightened sense of security to the expressed satisfaction of staff, volunteers, visitors and patients. Thefts have been reduced as a secondary result. Organizational overhaul of our security program allowed VAPHS to improve our program dramatically, passing all inspections that resulted in all our police officers being armed by early 2003. A Police Training Facility was also initiated, in which we train other law enforcement officials from both the VA and the private sector.

Testimonials

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

John Simpson, *SPD*

"In 1989 I was a non-employed draftsman. The VA gave me a chance to work in the laundry in Highland Drive. I worked there for 13 years and now they're shutting the laundry down and they gave me a chance to work in SPD in University Drive. We supply most of the hospital's medical supplies and I enjoy the challenge and the opportunity."

GLENN HANGARD PHOTO

Roberta Duff, *Human Resources*

"In September of 2005 I was deployed to the relief aid for Hurricane Katrina. I was stationed in Alexandria, LA, and I worked in the Human Resources Office during the day in helping to locate displaced workers and in the evenings I would volunteer at a shelter. I am grateful to the VA Pittsburgh for letting me have the opportunity to go down and assist those people. It was very encouraging to see the VA step forward and help take care of their people. I thought they were a fine example of organizational leadership and helping to take care of their employees. They made sure that they were cared for; they made sure they were placed and they provided them a home away from home."

It is not a question of how well each process works, the question is how well they all work together.

—Lloyd Dobens

The results of the survey indicate that overall satisfaction in Cultural Assessment has risen 3.82% since 2004.

In this section, employees were asked to answer questions regarding the facility's character, managers, cohesion, and emphases.

Growth

VAPHS emphasizes growth and acquiring new resources. Readiness to meet new challenges is important.

Examples:

- A fifth community based outpatient clinic was opened in Fayette County in May 2005.

WARREN PARK PHOTO

- An Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Program was initiated and new staff hired to coordinate.
- A new Smoking Cessation Program as well as MOVE (a weight management program) were implemented to help our veterans be healthier.
- VAPHS is moving toward a no-lift care environment.

Nobody knows veterans like we do.

While always striving to provide quality care to our nation's veterans that is second to none, VAPHS is a leader in modern health care delivery and cutting-edge technology.

VAPHS is planning boldly for the future and setting the standard for state-of-the-art health care facilities with a $200 million major construction project to continue to modernize and improve health care for these national heroes.

The mission of the VAPHS is to care for America's veterans—providing excellent health care, training their future providers, and advancing medical knowledge through research.

The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual.—*Vincent Lombardi*

VHA's strategic direction is based on its Eight for Excellence goals, developed in July 2005, and embraced by VAPHS leadership.

1.
Continuously improve the quality and safety of health care for veterans, particularly in those health issues associated with military service.

2.
Provide timely and appropriate access to health care by implementing best practices.

3.
Continuously improve veteran and family satisfaction with VA care by promoting patient-centered care and excellent customer service.

4.
Promote diversity, excellence, and satisfaction in the workforce and to foster a culture which encourages innovation.

5.
Promote excellence in business practices through administrative, financial, and clinical efficiencies.

6.
Focus research and development on clinical and system improvements designed to enhance the health and well-being of veterans.

7.
Promote excellence in the education of future health care professionals and to enhance VHA partnership with affiliates.

8.
Promote health within VA, local communities, and the Nation consistent with VA's mission.