

Working Together

Issue 27
Winter 2008



Winter Director's Message	2
Current Construction Projects Update	3
VHA All Employee Survey Results	4

A Message from the **Director**



University Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15240
1-866 4 VA PITT
(1-866-482-7488)

Check out our Web site at:
www.va.gov/pittsburgh

Terry Gerigk Wolf, FACHE
Director

Rajiv Jain, MD
Chief of Staff

Bonnie Graham, MBA
Associate Director

Ira Richmond, RN, CNAA
Associate Director for
Patient Care Services

William Mills
Acting Associate Director
for Site Management

The VA Pittsburgh Working Together

(1999-2008)

is published for the employees,
volunteers, patients and friends of
the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare
System. To submit articles, editorials,
letters or story ideas for possible
inclusion, please contact David
Cowgill at
412-365-4052 or via e-mail:
david.cowgill@va.gov

Editor

David E. Cowgill
Public & Community
Relations Coordinator

Design & Layout

Rodney E. Boyce
Creative Director
Square Peg Design

Photography

Warren Park
Glenn Hangard

On the Cover:

The \$200 million major construction project
progresses. Top: University Drive Parking Garage
Bottom: Heinz Division Residential Living
Villas (left) and Administration Building (right).

WARREN PARK AND GLENN HANGARD PHOTOS

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

As we continue to progress into the new year and look back on the past year, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on the many accomplishments we have achieved and the challenges we've overcome. Our MRSA prevention program has been rolled out in all VA medical centers nationwide and many private sector facilities are emulating our successful practices. We opened a new emergency department and implemented several new behavioral health care services. We also unveiled a new eye clinic and a spacious pharmacy waiting area. After challenging times for employees and veterans with limited parking, I am proud to say that our brand new, 1,500-space parking garage at University Drive is now open.



Terry Gerigk Wolf, FACHE,
Director, VA Pittsburgh
Healthcare System

I would like to thank all employees who participated in this year's VHA All Employee Survey. VAPHS's response rate of over 94% was among the highest in the nation. Based on the results, we have developed our next steps in building an even stronger workplace across VA Pittsburgh. Supervisors held staff meetings to review results and to develop actions to improve individual work areas. I look forward to seeing more of the important changes made as a result. Turn to page four to find out more about the survey and the results.

One of the most important components of a positive work environment is safety. Thanks to our premier Police Service, all of the patients, employees, and visitors to VAPHS can feel comfortable in a safe environment. The back cover explains just how extraordinary our Police Service has become.



Terry Gerigk Wolf continues her successful work in actively partnering with the VAPHS Police to revitalize the service, including enhancing training.

This issue of "Working Together" also spotlights a few of the many outstanding accomplishments achieved by our dedicated staff.

Director, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Vital Signs

Helping Improve Mental Health Services

A small but dedicated group of veterans consisting of mental health consumers, family members of consumers, and mental health staff have been meeting once a month as a Mental Health Consumer Council. The mission and focus of the council is to provide a forum for veterans to communicate their ideas and concerns regarding the delivery of mental health services. The council has been working to provide a voice for the mental health consumer by identifying barriers to access to mental health services



Dennis Hughes, Veteran and Chairman of the Council; Ron Rabold, Vice President for Community Based Care; and Tom Shade, family and Council member

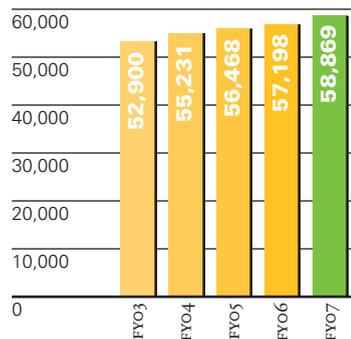
at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Additionally the council has accepted the challenge of strengthening partnerships between consumers, mental health staff, and mental health stakeholders in the community. One way of

accomplishing this has been to interview veterans in the outpatient clinic at the Highland Drive Division regarding their experience at VAPHS.

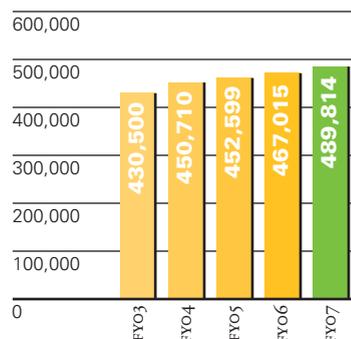
More veteran participation is needed to realize all of the goals of the council.

The Mental Health Consumer Council meets at Highland Drive on the second Wednesday of each month at Building 1, in Conference Room C, 2nd floor. Lisa Fitzsimmons can be contacted for further information at 412-365-5087 or Lisa.Fitzsimmons@va.gov.

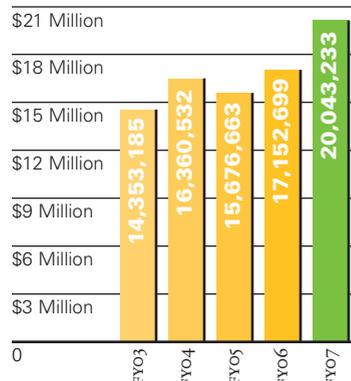
UNIQUE PATIENTS



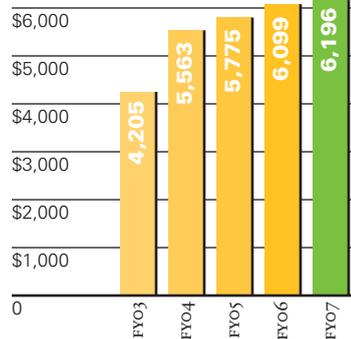
OUTPATIENT VISITS



MEDICAL CARE COST RECOVERY



OBLIGATIONS/ UNIQUE PATIENT



Current Construction Projects Update

1,500-space parking garage (UD)

Completed: **Dec. 2007**

100%

residential living villas (Hz)

Scheduled Completion Date: **Oct. 2008**

61% completed

administration bldg. (Hz)

Scheduled Completion Date: **Oct. 2008**

61% completed

* as of beginning of January 2008



Architectural renderings of the behavioral health addition at University Drive and the ambulatory care building at Heinz. Both are completely designed.

VHA All Employee Survey

Results from VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Employees

The purpose of the survey was to collect information on employees' perceptions of the work place and their satisfaction with VA. Employees 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 (31 questions); and Culture (14 questions). An overwhelming 94% of VAPHS employees responded!

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



Andre Segers, Medical Records Technician who has worked for VAPHS for almost five years, with Terry Gerigk Wolf, VAPHS Director.

job satisfaction

“Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It's not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it's when you've had everything to do, and you've done it.”

—Margaret Thatcher (former British Prime Minister)

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.

Sample Question: Type of Work – Compared to what you think it should be, how satisfied are you with the type of work that you currently do? (Not At All Satisfied, Not Very Satisfied, Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, or Very Satisfied?)

A sampling of employees' individual satisfaction with key job features	2007 Average VHA Response	2007 Average VISN 4 Response	2007 Average VAPHS Response	Change from 2004 VAPHS Response
Type of Work	4.09	4.06	4.08	0.16
Amount of Work	3.67	3.66	3.77	0.19
Pay Satisfaction	3.14	3.18	3.36	0.13
Coworker	4.02	3.98	3.98	0.11
Direct Supervision	3.73	3.69	3.76	0.22
Senior Management	3.25	3.08	3.30	0.32
Promotion Opportunity	2.82	2.72	2.85	0.22
Work Condition	3.51	3.48	3.55	0.21
Customer Satisfaction	3.93	3.93	3.94	0.11
Praise	3.25	3.19	3.28	0.23
Quality of Work	4.41	4.40	4.40	-0.03
Overall Satisfaction (Now)	3.77	3.73	3.80	0.12
Satisfaction vs. 2 yrs. ago	3.08	3.07	3.11	0.08

© LINDA HANGARD PHOTO



organizational assessment

“I know the price of success: dedication, hard work, and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen.”

—Frank Lloyd Wright (American Architect and Writer)

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.

Sample Question: Products, services and work processes are designed to meet customer needs and expectations. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree, or Do Not Know?)

A sampling of employee perceptions of conditions in their immediate work group	2007 Average VHA Response	2007 Average VISN 4 Response	2007 Average VAPHS Response	Change from 2004 VAPHS Response
Cooperation	3.60	3.54	3.58	0.15
Conflict Resolution	3.39	3.33	3.39	0.20
Diversity Acceptance	3.74	3.70	3.76	0.16
Coworker Support	3.66	3.62	3.66	0.09
Supervisory Support	3.65	3.60	3.68	0.08
Customer Service	3.72	3.68	3.72	0.17
Innovation	3.45	3.38	3.47	0.22
Resources	3.83	3.83	3.90	0.20
Safety Climate	3.74	3.70	3.78	0.19
Leadership	3.51	3.45	3.52	0.19
Rewards	3.47	3.43	3.50	0.25
Employee Development	3.50	3.43	3.51	0.25
Work/Family Balance	3.79	3.76	3.81	0.25
Planning/Evaluation	3.68	3.64	3.69	0.12
Job Control	3.12	3.04	3.12	0.17
Retention	3.40	3.42	3.46	0.09
Civility	3.64	3.59	3.64	0.14

culture

“Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.”

—Jawaharlal Nehru (former Indian Prime Minister)

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

Sample Question: The glue that holds my facility together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being first. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Agree, or Strongly Agree?)

A sampling of employee perceptions of the general atmosphere at their facility overall	2007 Average VHA Response	2007 Average VISN 4 Response	2007 Average VAPHS Response	Change from 2004 VAPHS Response
Bureaucratic <i>Follow standard operating procedures.</i>	3.46	3.45	3.51	0.04
Entrepreneurial <i>Let’s find a way to do it better!</i>	2.88	2.79	2.88	0.20
Group <i>Our people are our most important asset.</i>	3.02	2.92	3.00	0.23
Rational <i>We get the job done!</i>	3.28	3.20	3.26	0.11



PHOTO COURTESY OF KARI ZAVIA

Members of the All Employee Survey committee encouraged employees to take time to respond to the survey and facilitated easy access to the survey. (Percentage numbers shown were preliminary.)

Mailbox

Dear Director,

I am writing to inform you of a very positive experience which I had during the fall of 2006 while working my clinical rotation at the VA Highland Drive.

I had the great fortune of having Ms. Mary Frances Pilarski of the Homeless Veterans Program as my clinical instructor which set the tone for the duration of my time with the VA Healthcare System. Mary Frances personified all that I believe a nurse should be and more. She always put the patients first, worked as a team player among her coworkers and was a phenomenal teacher! She took the time to truly educate us, answer our questions and always listen to our concerns. She went out of her way to organize clinical experiences with Sue Byerly of the OEF/OIF, Keith Zanotti of the Adult Day Care and Pat Wilson of the CTAD, among others. You should know that there are no finer, more appropriate clinicians for each of their specific job titles than those you have working in the positions currently. Working with each of those individuals was an exceptional experience. Like Mary Frances, they welcomed the opportunity to share the experience of their clinical roles, teach us, and were always willing to take the time to answer our questions. The time I spent with each of your esteemed team members will forever remain a critical part of my nursing school experience. They were much more than I could have ever hoped for as role models.

Furthermore, I cannot express to you what it meant to me that each of the health care team members I worked with held our veterans in the highest regard. My heart was warmed and I was absolutely delighted to have had the privilege to work with our veterans and your incredible team working for them!

My positive opinion of the VA Healthcare System was shaped by those employees mentioned above. Because of the example they set I am now very seriously considering post-graduate employment at your healthcare system which was not even on my radar prior to this experience.

Many thanks for the unparalleled clinical experience.

Very sincerely,

—C.T.

Dear Mrs. Wolf,

We would like to extend our thanks to Marie Moreau for the interest and empathy she extended to Mr. L upon his arrival and throughout the care that he is receiving. She also answers our questions in a professional manner and has the ability to put families at ease with her pleasant and helpful demeanor. Marie articulates in a manner that we are able to understand and is never condescending.

This same premise could also be said of all who take care of our father and husband. One sings to the patients, some converse; one sees that he is clean and shaved, some tidy up the rooms and all are so pleasant!

Please convey our thanks for jobs so very well done.

Sincerely,

—A.L.'s Family

Dear Mrs. Wolf:

First I hope I have spelled your name correctly, sorry if I did not. Congratulations on your new position. I am the father of LM. L has been at your facility since Feb. 2007 for a liver transplant.

I wanted you to know I think your VA hospital is the best in the VA system that I have ever been at and likely the best in the VA system period. I have used several VA facilities in the past as a vet, and none are operated as well as yours or has a better staff. I just came home to Calif. after a three-week visit with L at your facility.

I wanted to acknowledge some of your staff that I had personal contact with and they deserve to be acknowledged, and given credit for the job they are doing, as they were very professional, friendly and very helpful to me, as well as others in my family who were at the hospital since L has been there.

Please thank the following for me as they certainly deserve it.

Keith Yates, Marsha Mathews, Alan Katz, Debra Myers, Dietta Murray, Denise Moon, 6W nurses, Linda, Karen, and Rusty, and Jorge at admissions, who helped me when I got a viral infection while visiting, and the ladies at the front desk at 6W. These are a few I knew by name, but everyone I came in contact with were outstanding.

Again thank you all for what you are doing for L and other veterans, you all deserve a thanks from all who are at your hospital and from their families as well.

My wife, I, is currently at your VA facility and I know she feels the same way.

Sincerely,

—M.M.

Dear Director,

Once again, I am compelled to write to you about the excellent medical care that I am receiving at your facility. On the 3rd of April 2007, doctors at your facility removed my thyroid gland and subsequent tests revealed a malignancy. Since then, I have had an appointment with Ms. Mary Stosic who has referred me to Nuclear Medicine for some precautionary procedures.

Dr. DeRubertis confirmed her recommendations and the ball was set in motion. Dr. Klein, from the Nuclear Medicine department, has personally contacted me numerous times to talk to me about the procedures that I would be going through and to see if there were any questions. These three individuals, as well as the Doctor who removed my thyroid, (cannot remember his name) are to be complimented for a job done in an excellent manner.

If all veterans seeing these people are treated the way I have been – and believe me, it could not have been any better anywhere else (maybe not as good) – then you should not have many complaints from anyone, although I know that there are always some.

That is why I like to send these compliments to the people and let them know that they are appreciated for an excellent job. Dr. DeRubertis, Dr. Klein, Ms. Mary Stosic as well as both this clinic and the ENT clinic are an excellent example of the great care that I, as a veteran, have received at your facility.

Please pass on my thanks to all for taking care of me and let them know that it is very appreciated. I enjoy coming to your facility and would not, repeat, not even think about going to a civilian facility.

KEEP UP THE EXCELLENT CARE.

Thank you so very much,

—B.B.

A Very Appreciative Veteran



Dewaine Beard

Chief Information Officer

DEWAINE BEARD WAS APPOINTED TO SERVE AS THE VAPHS FACILITY CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER ON JUNE 26, 2007. He is responsible for all of the voice, video, and data information including all teleconferencing, computer, phones, two-way radios, cell phones, and pagers for the facility.



WARREN PARK PHOTO

Dewaine previously provided VistA system support for VISN 4. He has also served as the Assistant Chief of Information Resources Management at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago. He received a master's degree in English Literature from Loyola University in Chicago. He is originally from Canal Winchester, Ohio.

Mr. Beard's first primary challenges in this position included helping with the design of the new data center, the co-location of the VistA systems, and a wall-to-wall information technology inventory. One of his first major accomplishments was the reorganization of the Office of Information & Technology into new sections with new managers, which has allowed OI&T to be more efficient and more responsive to customer needs.

Dewaine's goals for the future of OI&T include more engagement and organization within the ADPAC group (ADPACs serve as the technical liaisons between service lines and OI&T), formalizing these positions more and reinforcing the importance of their work and integration. He would also like to create a closer collaboration between OI&T and Research and develop a better working relationship between OI&T and the Vet Centers.

In his spare time, Mr. Beard serves as the southern trail manager and editor of the upcoming revised Hiker's Guide to the Baker Trail. The Baker Trail—one of the 18 state-designated hiking trails—is a 132-mile hiking and backpacking trail, following forest paths and dirt roads through woods, farmlands and along rivers and creeks. [VAPHS](#)

EMPLOYEES WITH

20 years

OR more OF SERVICE!

The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period June 1, through September 1, 2007.

35 years

Kathleen McDonnell
Medical Specialty

Joseph Wagner
Human Resources

30 years

Levelle Rice
Patient Care Services

25 years

Patricia Corr
Behavioral Health

Dietta Murray
Facilities Management

James Eichner
Clinical Support

Richard Smith
Business Service

20 years

Sarah Brown
Business Service

Mary Reith
Patient Care Services

Troy Fabian
Clinical Support

Arlene Saltsman
Surgical Specialty

Harvey Holecy
Facilities Management

Holly Stapley
Community Based Care

Alfreda Hughes
Chief of Staff's Office

Melissa Sundin
Facilities Management

James Momper
Critical Care Service Line

Anita Williams
Medical Specialty

Cheryl Oneill
Clinical Support

CONGRATULATIONS!



▼ VA Pittsburgh Safe With Premier Police Service

In 2001 Terry Gerigk Wolf became the Associate Director of VAPHS, inheriting the direct supervision of the Police Department. The VAPHS Police had recently received a less than favorable inspection by the VA Office of Security and Law Enforcement.

John J. Crawford became the new Chief of Police and was charged with leading the changes necessary for the preparation of the imminent arming of police officers at VAPHS. Chief Crawford had over 25 years of service with the VAPHS Police, including serving as a police officer, detective and assistant chief. Mrs. Wolf advised him to surround himself with the best officers available to serve an active role in making the department one of the most premier VA Police Departments in the nation.

Under Crawford's direction, the VAPHS Police Department has undergone a major reconstruction and development with the new VA Police National Firearms Program and established itself as one of the most productive police departments in VA. Crawford provided clarity and purpose in the local development of the firearms program. The efficiency centered on the firearms program eventually spanned out through the rest of the department and its functions.

Crawford developed a prestigious training program for VAPHS Police headed by Captain Walter Grimm, who has over 20 years of service at VA Pittsburgh. Grimm is responsible for training new

officers and the continuous training of all VAPHS police officers in everything from CPR to firearms training. VAPHS police currently complete more in-service training than any other department in VA, far exceeding the mandatory minimum standards of training put forth by the VA Office of Security and Law Enforcement.

Crawford developed a Criminal Investigative Division to meet the rising demand for in-depth criminal investigations, working closely with the VA Office of Inspector General and numerous other federal, state and local agencies.

Thomas Dominski, Criminal Investigator, and Paul Shumaker, Detective, work diligently on felony crimes such as narcotics diversions, fraud, identity theft and computer crimes. Dominski has a total of ten years of

law enforcement and investigative experience, five at VAPHS. He has worked for municipal police departments in Pennsylvania and Los Angeles. Dominski has been called upon to complete criminal and administrative investigations in other medical centers in VISN 4. Shumaker has a total of 11 years of law enforcement and investigative experience, four at VAPHS. He has also worked for municipal police departments in Pennsylvania.

Crawford has also begun a Physical Security Program, headed by Ronald Kramer. Kramer conducts physical security surveys of VAPHS and its Community Based Outpatient Clinics. Kramer has over 20 years of physical security experience from the U.S. Army and has assisted other VISN 4 Police Departments with their physical security programs.

The VA Office of Security and Law Enforcement gave their highest rating to the VAPHS Police during their last two mandatory inspections. Preparation for these inspections are detailed and extensive. The department has far exceeded their standards of operations for a VA Police Department. Crawford feels that his officers and the support of the

Director have contributed greatly to the exceptional success of the department.

Crawford and several of his officers were among the first VA Police Departments to assist in hurricane relief efforts in New Orleans and Mississippi. Seventeen VAPHS police officers have served in the U.S. military in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and another 22 officers are also veterans. Currently, the VAPHS Police Service consists of 54 members, including police officers, sergeants, lieutenants, investigators, a captain, an assistant chief and two program support assistants, Ken Valcho and Annie Ponikvar, who provide critical support to all members of the department. Crawford plans continued positive steps to make the department the finest VA Police Department in the country. **VAPHS**



Mrs. Wolf has taken an active role in revolutionizing the VAPHS Police Service.

WARREN PARK PHOTO



VAPHS Police currently complete more in-service training than any other department in VA.

WARREN PARK PHOTO



Many daily precautions contribute to a safe environment for patients, staff, and visitors.

WARREN PARK PHOTO



Police Officers have to travel between all three divisions continually.

WARREN PARK PHOTO

