



# Voice Of The Northwoods



*Focused on Excellence—Putting Veterans First*

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
OSCAR G. JOHNSON VA MEDICAL CENTER  
April-May-June 2013

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## Health Tip Of The Day!



**Pool Safety.** Summer is just around the corner and is a special time for fun in the water. Yet drowning is a leading cause of unintentional death. Each year over 1,000 children under 14 years old drown. Another 16,000 are rushed to the hospital after a near drowning. Most drowning occur in home or residential pools. To keep your summer fun and tragedy-free, follow these pool safety tips at [www.poolsafely.gov](http://www.poolsafely.gov).



## ONE ON ONE WITH THE CHIEF OF STAFF

### *New COS reported aboard in September*

The Voice of the Northwoods recently caught up with Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center's new Chief of Staff, Dr. Grace Stringfellow, M.D.

Dr. Stringfellow reported for duty last September after serving 15 years at the Amarillo VA Health Care System in Amarillo, Texas. She served as a clinician in the Occupational Health and Spine Clinics, then as Chief of the Occupational Health and Rehabilitation Medicine Service, and eventually as Chief of Staff of the Amarillo VA.

**Voice:** Tell us a little about yourself, for example where you grew up, went to school, etc.

**COS:** I grew up in the Midwest in Washington, Illinois, outside of Peoria. I attended college in Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas; I followed my best friend there. From there I went to University of Texas at Houston for medical school and then to University of Kentucky for my Residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

**Voice:** What do you like to do outside of work?

**COS:** I like to read and hike.

**Voice:** What was the last good book you read and why did you like it?

**COS:** One of the series I really like is Phillipa Gregory's historical fiction series. One of his books I really enjoyed is *The Constant Princess*, which depicted



Catheron of Aragon's marriage into the Tudor family and her impact on the evolution of England as a world power.

**Voice:** What is one thing you would like people to know about you that may not be so obvious?

**COS:** I loved to scuba dive, when I had more time and have traveled all over the world to dive including the Cozumel in the Mexican Caribbean, Belize, Caymen Is-

lands, Cairnes in Australia, Thailand at the Similian Islands off Phuket, Maldives, and the Red Sea in Egypt.

**Voice:** What drew you to the Rehab Medicine and Occupational Health as a profession?

**COS:** I enjoyed working with the musculoskeletal system in med school, managing injuries and adding quality and

**(Continued on page 3)**

***"I loved to scuba dive, when I had more time, and have traveled all over the world to dive."***

# Service Spotlight: Nutrition and Food Service (NFS)



## **OGVAMC's Registered Dietitians**

(above from left to right): Nancy Whitens, Bridget Galas, Nicole Kleist, Mitzi Metzler-Baker, and Andrea Millan

Registered Dietitians are located throughout the facility and work in a variety of health care settings:

Bridget Galas, MS, RD (Tele-MOVE! Dietitian), Nicole Kleist, MS, RD (Chief, NESS),

Mitzi Metzler-Baker, MS, RD, CDR (CLC & Acute Care Dietitian), Nancy Whitens, RD (PACT Dietitian), Andrea Millan, RD, CDE (HBPC, MOVE!, and Diabetes Dietitian) ♦

The Nutrition and Food Service (NFS) specializes in providing nutrition-based care, nutritional education, and counseling to Veterans through the use of Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT). The VA's registered dietitians are always available to lend a helping hand and provide guidance to Veteran's with their nutrition related health concerns. The optimal goal of NFS is to provide guidance, wellness, and disease prevention through the promotion of healthy and quality food choices throughout the VA healthcare system. NFS also coordinates and runs the VA MOVE! program. March was National Nutrition Month, which had the theme of "Eat Right, Your Way, Every Day". This is a campaign that focuses on the making the proper food choices as well as the importance of healthy physical activity. NFS is located in the facility basement, B-180.

## Nutrition Tip Of The Day!



**Got your dairy today?** The Dairy Group includes milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soymilk. They provide calcium, vitamin D, potassium, protein, and other nutrients needed for good health throughout life. Choices should be low-fat or fat-free—to cut calories and saturated fat. How much is needed? Older children, teens, and adults need 3 cups\* a day, while children 4 to 8 years old need 2½ cups, and children 2 to 3 years old need 2 cups.

For 10 tips to help you eat and drink more fat-free or low-fat dairy foods, please go to:

[www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet5GotYourDairyToday.pdf](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet5GotYourDairyToday.pdf)

\* What counts as a cup in the Dairy Group? 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese.

## Annual VA2K Walk & Health Fair To Benefit Homeless Vets

The Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center will be hosting a 2K walk and health fair on Wednesday, May 15, 2013, to promote healthy living and benefit homeless Veterans. The event is open to the public of all ages.

"Our goal is to provide an event for our staff, Veterans and the local community that helps homeless Veterans through donated items while promoting healthy life style changes and behaviors," said Darlene Johnson, coordinator for the Medical Center's Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program.

People participating in the 2K walk at the medical center may do so at their convenience during the following times: 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Registration for the 2K walk will be held at the main entrance of the medical center.



The health fair will be held 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and include healthy living booths provided by the various departments as well as the Mobile Vet Center and a U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary boating safety display.

For those wishing to donate new items to benefit homeless Veterans, a suggested list can be found at [www.ironmountain.va.gov/documents/VA2KDonationList.pdf](http://www.ironmountain.va.gov/documents/VA2KDonationList.pdf). ♦

## One on One with the New Chief of Staff *(continued from page 1)*

functionality to life for patients who had sustained life changing injuries such as a stroke or severe spinal cord injury. So I pursued that field in my residency.

**Voice:** Why did you choose to work for the VA and when did you start?

**COS:** I started on August 17, 1997 after one of my dear friends' husband called me nearly every day to come work in the Occupational Health section of the Amarillo VA. He did some very effective recruiting. I was interested in the mission to serve the veterans and to also impact the health and safety of Veteran care and Employee wellness, safety and health.

**Voice:** So it sounds like you did work outside of the VA, early on at least.

**COS:** Yes. I was selected to be the Medical Director for the new Rehabilitation unit at St. Anthony's hospital in Amarillo, so I was able to develop a new rehab unit and grow a rehab practice, both inpatient and outpatient when I first arrived in Amarillo in 1991 and did that extensively until 1997 when I went to the VA. I did keep a piece of my private practice in the evening.

**Voice:** Tell us about your career path in the VA.

**COS:** I joined the Amarillo VA as a front line provider and ran the Occupational Health Service as well as several rehab clinics. I was then offered the opportunity to provide clinical leadership for the Rehabilitation service and to work on developing a new service that combined physical therapy, occupational therapy and all the services and programs that went along with that for inpatient, outpatient and CLC Veterans. So I built a service call Occupational Health and Rehab and became the service chief in 2001. I held this service chief position while serving as Acting Chief of Staff from 2007 to 2009 and even after being appointed Chief of Staff in 2009 until my transition to Iron Mountain last fall.

**Voice:** What was your most rewarding position or assignment in the VA and why?

**COS:** I really enjoyed working with my Spine patients and maximizing their resources both for clinical care as well as adaptive equipment for their home and daily use. I also enjoyed the impact the role of COS has on

ensuring high quality, accessible care and the impact of program development and resource allocation to enhance Veteran Care.

**Voice:** What was appealing about OGJVAMC that brought you here?

**COS:** Having an opportunity to work with our Director, Mr. Rice. He is an excellent director and leader in both VISN 11 and VISN 12. The facility was also a leader in the areas where I wanted to grow, including telehealth and rural health. I felt this area was prime for further understanding the cultural competency of providing rural care and optimizing health care literacy.

**Voice:** Now that you have been here for a few months, what do you see as challenges that OGJVAMC faces?

**COS:** Provider retention and recruitment are always challenges everywhere, but especially in a rural setting. Also, balancing the resources we have in a small rural facility. We do a good job of

that, but in a small facility we have to wear more hats and get the job done despite the fact we have fewer employees. These are the challenges specific to our rural region, which we are working to improve.

**Voice:** Conversely, what are your priorities as COS?

**COS:** My priority is to provide our Veterans with the highest quality, accessible healthcare with an outstanding service experience. To do that we need a solid retention/recruitment program for our providers and that we have a solid approaches for alternative mechanism for getting the right care at the right time in the right place. That may be by recruiting a part time specialist, or it may be by expanding telehealth for that specialty care, or it may be a combination of both to balance the access to care. ♦

***"[OGJVAMC] was also a leader in the areas where I wanted to grow, including telehealth and rural health."***



# OGJVAMC Volunteers Recognized at Luncheon

## April 21-27 National Volunteer Week

There are over **400 caring and giving people** that volunteer their time to help OGJVAMC fulfill its mission, which is to “Honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well-being.” In 2012, these volunteers provided over **35,869 hours of service, or equivalent to 17 full time employees.** OGJVAMC volunteers were honored by VA leadership at a special luncheon Friday, April 26, at Pine Grove Country Club. For a complete article on the wonderful things OGJVAMC volunteers have done, click this link: [http://www.ironmountain.va.gov/features/OGJVAMC\\_Honors\\_Its\\_Volunteers.asp](http://www.ironmountain.va.gov/features/OGJVAMC_Honors_Its_Volunteers.asp).



For a complete listing of 2013 Volunteer Awardees click this link: [www.ironmountain.va.gov/documents/VolunteerAwardList.pdf](http://www.ironmountain.va.gov/documents/VolunteerAwardList.pdf). For more photos check out the photo album at [www.facebook.com/vaironmountain](http://www.facebook.com/vaironmountain).



Presidential Lifetime Achievement:  
Donald & Fern Engel



17,500 Hours: Walter Jensen



7,500 Hours: Erwin & Joan Krukowski



5,000 Hours: Wayne Cuyler & Eugene Cavicchioni



3,750 Hours: Lloyd Gauthier



2,500 Hours: Joyce Paupore, Margie Fayas, and James Carefelle



1,750 Hours: Art Mitchell & Robert Morrell



Hours & Years Award: Mary Peters (5,984 Hrs/24 Years) & Dave Spencer (3,576 Hrs/12 Years)

# Caught of Camera



**Wear Red Day** in support of American Heart Month: (above) Menominee Clinic staff and (left) Admin staff from Nursing and Medicine Services.

11 of the 28 VA **social workers** at OGVAMC and its CBOCs. Front left: Gail Beauchamp, Cory Vedin, Amy Fowler, Sarita Gruszynski, Mary Bertucci, Lisa Warden, Julie Gendron, Alyssa Maki, Mike Matwyuk, Deb Pate, and Sean Coopersmith. March was Social Workers Month.



To promote National Nutrition Month in March, the **Nutrition & Food Service** (see Service Spotlight on page 2) unveiled their new Healthy Teaching Kitchen by offering two easy to prepare healthy recipes in a Recipe Tasting Contest. Andrea Millan and Nicole Kleist offered Broccoli Salad and Chicken Tortellini Soup (the salad won). The teaching kitchen will be used in the MOVE! program.

Selena Okler, OGVAMC's Palliative Care RN, conducting one of two **TV interviews**. OGVAMC Hosted Hospice Foundation of America's 2013 seminar on working with Veterans who are Hospice patients. To see her interview with TV 10, click here: <http://abc10up.com/hospice-education-at-iron-mountain-va/>



## Vantage Point Blogs of Interest

“As one Afghanistan Veteran put it earlier today, the Boston Marathon bombings this month brought the experience of war to our city streets. Three people were killed with over 200 hundred injured, many of which are now amputees.”

So begins one of two blogs on VA's Vantage Point blog site.

See how VA counseling services were deployed for Boston-area Vets at:

[www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/9279/counseling-services-deploy-for-boston-area-vets/](http://www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/9279/counseling-services-deploy-for-boston-area-vets/)



The other blog tells the story of Veterans and military families being among the first responders in the Boston tragedy. The blog can be found at:

[www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/9173/veterans-military-families-among-first-responders-in-boston/](http://www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/9173/veterans-military-families-among-first-responders-in-boston/)



For all Vantage Point blogs, go to:

[www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/](http://www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/)

# Kudos!

## Employees of the Month

January



**Isaac Armstrong**, Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) Coordinator. Isaac has gone out of his way to assist both home based primary care patients and community nursing home Veterans in arranging rides to meet their medical appointments. Isaac has been employed with the OGJVAMC since 2011.

February



**Kathy Wahoviak, RN**, Caregiver Support and VA Transplant Coordinator. Kathy is recognized for her unselfish service on Christmas Day, when she spent several hours coordinating services with family and community agencies for a VA transplant patient in need, ensuring patient was taken care of. Kathy has been employed at OGJVAMC since 1986.

March



**Jeanne Johnson, RN**, OGJVAMCTelehealth Coordinator. Jeanne is recognized for her positive attitude, enthusiasm and energy in running the ever expanding telehealth program at OGJVAMC. She was instrumental in recently starting up the Telehealth *Be Active* and *Move!* clinics. Jeanne has been employed with the OGJVAMC since 1999.

## Great Catch Award



Jennifer O'Keefe, RN, received the first Great Catch Patient Safety Award. The award recognizes those staff that report a close call event before impacting patient safety.

## BSN Graduates

Congratulations to three OGJVAMC nurses who successfully completed their studies and received their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) while working at OGJVAMC. They are:

Tracy DeBidart, RN, BSN  
Carrie Gunville, RN, BSN  
Jennifer O'Keefe, RN, BSN

Please notify OGJVAMC Public Affairs of any employees receiving professional certificates, awards or recognition.

## OGJVAMC OIT Ranked Top 10 in IT Customer Satisfaction



Congratulations to the **OIT Staff** for being ranked **10th** among all VA facilities and **1st** in Region 2 for the 2012 IT Customer Satisfaction Survey. OIT staff receiving awards are (front l to r): Richard Clark, Cheryl Hamby, Carey Schwartzmier, Angela Finley, Robert Van Sickle, Pat Patterson and (back l to r): Tobin Brace, Jason Buckley, Joe Burzynski, and Richard Smith. Also pictured are Mr. Rice (left front) and new OIT employee Dean Starnes (left back).

## Emergency Response to Flooding

On March 28, 2013, the Upper Peninsula Medical Center, which is home to the Marquette CBOC, experienced a fire. CBOC staff activated appropriate Emergency Response Plans. Thanks to the quick actions of the CBOC personnel and OGJVAMC staff activated for this response, the clinic was able to resume normal operations the very next day. Kudos to the CBOC staff, particularly Martha Koers, RN (acting lead RN that day) and Sandy Sarasin (CBOC Lead RN, who came in on her day off) in coordinating CBOC response. Thanks also to activated OGJVAMC staff who deployed to Marquette, including Steve Beauchamp (OGJVAMC Emergency Management Coordinator), Rex Sweet (Chief, VAP), Art Ontto (Chief, Engineering) and Ben Balkum (AFGE).

## Emergency Response to Flooding



On February 2nd at 5:10 a.m. a pipe broke, resulting in flooded areas in the center basement and kitchen. This emergency was handled in a very efficient manner. A well-orchestrated team effort from NESS, Engineering/Boiler Plant, Police, PAS, and leadership resulted in an utmost efficient and smooth resolution, while keeping all systems running with minimal disruption to service. Thank you to Terry VanPembrook, Martin Kerker, Rick Jones, Darren Henkel, Eric Clawson, Richard Wright, Patrick Palmquist, Mary Fran Swailes, Steve Beauchamp, Andrea Collins, Nicole Kleist, Kevin Landowski, Elizabeth Mikulich, Carol Seda, Anthony Vicenzi, Terence Mitchell, Jodi Behrens, Dawn Wahlstrom, Christopher Grosskopf, Gene Leslie, Kevin Barnard, Andrea Collins, and Bruce Watt.

## Service Pins

(**Correction** to Feb-Mar issue: Brenda Kelly received her 25 year service pin, not a 10 year pin.)



Dean Schoen  
(Escanaba VA Vet Center, 30 years)

Jim Rice (Medical Center Director, 5th from right) presented service pins to (left to right): Elaine Burke (Nursing, 30 years), Patti Menza (HRMS, 30 years), Rex Sweet (VAP, 20 years), Tonia Pierce (NESS, 25 years), Dale Huppert (Nursing, 25 years), Mr. Rice, Mary Kelly (PI, 35 years), Sherry Aichner (Nursing, 40 years), Mary Bertucci (Nursing, 10 years), and Darren Henkel (VAP, 30 years). **Not pictured:** Trevor Wittock (NESS, 15 years), Deb St. Onge (Nursing, 10 years), Cindy Ziller (BH, 15 years).



Left: Jeff Aalto (VAP, 25 years)  
Right: Patricia Staller (Nursing, 20 years)

Bill Caron (Acting Medical Center Director, left) presented service pins to (left to right): Laura Skrubellos (Nursing, 10 years), Josh Grinnell (PAS, 10 years), Wendy Welch (Finance, 10 years), Mary Beth Bezotte (Nursing, 25 years), Linda Anderson (Nursing, 25 years), and Cheryl Johnson (Finance, 30 years). **Not pictured:** Lezlie West (Nursing, 25 years), Albert Fisher (Lab, 10 years), Pat Vicenzi (PI, 30 years), and Deborah Millan (Nursing, 10 years)

## Welcome To OGVAMC!

### Canteen

Brenda Larch

### Engineering

Calvin Malueg

### Patient Admin Service

Geraldine Anderson

Sara Walters

### Nursing & Patient Care

Ann Cebollas (RHI)

Donna Erickson

Tammy Niarhos

Jennifer Savard (MEN)

Charlotte Briggs

### NESS

Whitney Lessor

David Menary

Brian Norman

Erik Ayotte

Jeffrey Bilski

### OIT

Dean Starnes

### Pharmacy

Andrew Jodocy

Megan Drewyor

### Behavioral Health

William Irving

# Employee Spotlight! (Continued)

## Farewell Wishes! (\*retired)

### Primary Care

Dr. Tim Stallman\* (14 years)

### NESS

David Anderson\* (38 years)

Holly Schroeder

Eric Blankenbach

### Engineering

Mark Bosley\* (33 years)

### Imaging Service

Brian Halverson

### Nursing & Patient Care

Michael Haleen\* (12 years)

Dianne Hicks\* (8 years)

Beth Hoffman\* (25 years)

Carolyn Rose\* (27 years)

Deborah St. Onge\* (10 years)  
(Marquette)

Ian Weber

Casi Wolf

### Logistics

Eric Danielson\* (31 years)

### Patient Admin Service

Joanne Lindholm\* (41 years)

Marie Dault\* (33 years)

### Pharmacy

Heather Boots

### Performance Improvement

Patricia Vicenzi\* (30 years)

### Pathology & Lab

Tina Freeman\* (41 years)

### Finance

Mary Lee\* (36 years)

## Upcoming Events & Observances

### May:

- 2 National Day of Prayer
- 6-12 National Nurses Week  
National Hospital Week  
End of the Viet Nam Conflict (1975)
- 8 V-E (Victory in Europe) Day (1945)
- 12 Mother's Day
- 12-18 National Nursing Home Week  
National Women's Health Week  
National Police Week
- 15 **VA2K Walk & Health Fair at OGJVAMC**
- 18 Armed Forces Day
- 25 **James D. Priestap Drive Dedication**
- 27 **Memorial Day**

### June:

- 1-4 National Veterans Golden Age Games
- 2 National Cancer Survivors Day
- 6 D-Day Anniversary (1944)
- 10 Alcohol Anonymous Founded (1935)
- 14 Flag Day & US Army Established (1775)
- 16 Father's Day
- 21 Summer Begins
- 25 Korean War Begins (1950)
- 27 National HIV Testing Day
- 28 **Blood Drive at OGJVAMC**

Visit us online at [www.ironmountain.va.gov](http://www.ironmountain.va.gov) and follow us on:



Comments? [Email bradley.nelson@va.gov](mailto:bradley.nelson@va.gov)

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