



# Voice Of The Northwoods



*Focused on Excellence—Putting Veterans First*

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
OSCAR G. JOHNSON VA MEDICAL CENTER  
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## Healthy Living Message



### STRIVE FOR A HEALTHY WEIGHT

If you need to lose weight, losing even a little will help. If you are of normal weight, maintain it. Staying in control of your weight helps you be healthy now and in the future.

Check out this [Patient Handout on Stress](#).

## ONE ON ONE WITH THE CHIEF OF MEDICINE

The VA Voice of the Northwoods recently caught up with the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center's new Chief of Medicine, Dr. Nasimul Ahsan.

Dr. Ahsan reported for duty January 26 after serving previously at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System in Gainesville, FL; Fayetteville VA Medical Center in Fayetteville, NC; and W.G. Hefner VA Medical Center in Salisbury, NC.

**Voice:** Tell us a little about yourself.

*"I have the utmost admiration for these brave men and women who defended this great nation and fought for the freedom of many other nations."*

**Dr. Ahsan:** I was born in Bangladesh. My father was a government official and my mother was a school teacher. After finishing medical school, I came to New York in January 1982 to seek post-graduate education and training. After completion of training in Pathology, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine and Nephrology, in 1992 I started my

academic career as a transplant expert at the Hershey Medical Center in Pennsylvania. Prior to joining the VA in 2010, I was a Consultant and Professor of Medicine at the Mayo Clinic-Florida.

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

**Dr. Ahsan:** Enjoy time with my wife and children. Love traveling, biking, jogging and cooking.

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

**Dr. Ahsan:** I love watching WWII movies. My all-time

favorite is *Patton*, which I watched many times. One of his quotes is, "One of the most frequently noted characteristics of great men who have remained great is loyalty to their subordinates."

**Voice:** What drew you to the medical profession?

**Dr. Ahsan:** The honor of being trusted to be an advocate and the gratitude for helping someone during a difficult illness.

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

**Dr. Ahsan:** I have the utmost admiration for these brave men and women who defended this great nation and fought for the freedom of many other nations.

*(Continued on page 4)*



# Service Spotlight: Finance Service



Finance Service (front l-r): Don Lynch, Dean Finley (back l-r): Wendy Welch, Karen Burkman, Angela Hart, Raegen Walter, Pat Lidwin (retired), Mary Deyaert, Cheryl Johnson, Christine Watt, and Kristi Becker (now in PAS).

The mission of OGJVAMC's Finance Service is, like its name, to provide a full range of Financial Services on behalf of the Medical Center. The *Budget Section* creates and maintains an annual plan for medical center spending, processes requests and needs, and maintains compliance with Congressional Budget Guidelines. The *Payroll Section* provides customer service to all OGJVAMC employees for all issues related to their pay. The *Travel Section* works as a travel agent and provides guidance and support to all employees on their VA training and meeting endeavors in compliance with Federal Guidelines. The *Accounting Section* provides accounts payable, accounts receivable, general ledger support, and appropriation law guidance to OGJVAMC. They also provide regular reviews, audits and quality assurance reports to ensure reasonable assurance to avoid fraud, waste and abuse and ensure employees are stewards of taxpayer dollars. ♦

Specific Finance Service responsibilities include:

- ♦ Audits
- ♦ Appropriation Law
- ♦ Travel Cost effectiveness
- ♦ Resource Management
- ♦ Payroll
- ♦ Financial Stewardship
- ♦ Reports
- ♦ Freedom of Information Act
- ♦ Government Accountability Office
- ♦ Treasury Disbursement Guidelines

## Nutrition Tip Of The Month!

### Something to Nibble on...

The cold season is upon us! It seems like as hard as we try to avoid catching a cold, sometimes we still get sick.

Eating healthy during the cold and flu season may not “cure” the common cold but a healthy diet can help support our immune system by protecting us against viruses and attacking viruses that we encounter. Here are some healthy eating tips for the cold and flu season:

- Eat a variety of foods each day including 5 servings of fruits and vegetables
- Choose more whole grains instead of processed foods and snacks.
- Include lean protein such as fish, poultry, and lean beef or pork.

**Some fruits and vegetables that are especially healthy choices are:** Blueberries, Cherries, Berries, Red grapes, Oranges, Plums, Broccoli, Greens, Brussels sprouts, Beets, Red Peppers.

March is **Eat Wisely Month**. For more info and helpful tips click [here](#)

## CREW Grads at Hancock Clinic



Front (l-r): Christy Gerard, Genevieve Kyro; back (l-r): Kim Greene, Karen Duerkop, Lori Karvonen, Rose Gemignani, Paula Kallungi-Zulinski, Karen Byrnes, Dr. Lynn Miller. Not pictured: Dr. Gina Louis, Mary VanCamp, Pam Bastian.

Hancock VA Outpatient Clinic (OPC) participated in CREW – Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workforce. This work unit identified their strengths and areas for improvement with regard to workgroup processes and, most importantly, how the group worked together to solve unit issues and concerns. This group exceeded expectations – Over 30 workgroup issues were discussed and addressed. Jill Bruno-Enright, CBOC Nurse Manager fully supported the program by handling the clinic so the staff could attend. Kim Green, Psychiatric Social Worker noted, “I really feel like we got somewhere and that CREW was well worth it. I really think it helped to make a more cohesive group here in Hancock.” ♦

# Who We Serve

## *Our Veterans and their stories*

*BMCM Art Mitchell, USCG (ret.)*

Art Mitchell served his country for more than three decades, including three years in the Army and 28 years in the Coast Guard. He entered the Army in 1945 and his service spanned three wars: World War II and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam.

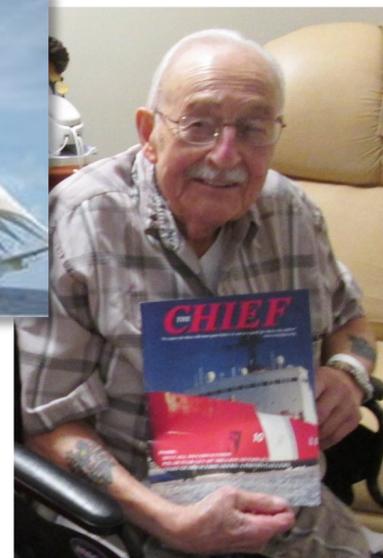
In the Korean conflict he served in the war theater aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Campbell*. In the Vietnam War he served in country as Executive Petty Officer of a Coast Guard river patrol boat. Very early in his Coast Guard career, in 1949, he was assigned as a boatswain mate aboard the 275 foot, three-masted barque *Eagle*, Hilter's naval training ship that was a WWII war prize and converted to the USCG Academy's training ship. As a boatswain mate he scrambled up the 147 foot masts to set and retrieve sails. He retired with the rank of Master Chief Petty Officer Boatswain Mate in 1976.

Art has many wonderful memories of his service. He shares this lighthearted one with us.

When Art served on the *Campbell*, the crew had a long-standing mascot named Sinbad. Sinbad was a small dog. Once while leaving port in St. John's, Nova Scotia, someone noticed that Sinbad had not returned from his "shore leave" and was on the dock gazing at the *Campbell*. After checking with



*Sinbad, the legendary Coast Guard dog at his retirement ceremony with the six 'side boys.' Art Mitchell is fifth from the right just behind Sinbad.*



“the old man” (the Captain), the crew eased the cutter back to dock to pick up Sinbad.

After serving ten years on the *Campbell*, Sinbad the Coastie was retired to a base at Fire Island Coast Guard

*WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veteran (and OGJVAMC volunteer) Art Mitchell.*  
*Upper left: USCGC Eagle.*

Base, New York. On the day of departure, the crew dressed little Sinbad the Coastie as a sailor and gave him a ceremonial exit to the dock, complete with six side boys, including Art, who stood as honor guards on either side of the gangway and piped a proper bosun's call, typically reserved for high ranking officers and dignitaries. Sinbad was retired as Boatswain's Mate First Class with his WW II service ribbons, complete with his dress blue uniform.

Since Art's retirement, he has been active in service organizations and has been a faithful volunteer here at OGJVAMC for over 20 years. In 2012, he was honored as the recipient of the prestigious "Citizen Patriot Award" given annually to a Veteran in Dickinson County or surrounding area. It read in part, "Arthur's dedication to his comrades has been visibly demonstrated by more than two thousand documented hours that he has served as a Veterans Affairs Hospital volunteer and by the time and effort that he has put into his volunteer work with other service organizations."

**Editor's note:** *Portions of this article regarding Sinbad were featured in the Chief Petty Officer Association magazine, The Chief, and reprinted here with their permission. The editor (a USCG Veteran) vouches that Sinbad is part of Coast Guard lore and is honored to meet someone who actually knew the legendary canine. ♦*

## One on One (continued from page 1)

They are the most loyal and grateful patients I have ever come across during my post-graduate trainings (1985 -1992). In 2010, I decided to leave the private sector and join the VA Health Administration.

**Voice:** Tell us about your work prior to joining VA.

**Dr. Ahsan:** I was in academic medicine and worked at the Pennsylvania College of Medicine and Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey as the medical director of the kidney and pancreas transplant program, then at the Mayo Clinic –Florida where I was a consultant, Professor of Medicine, and a member of the multi-organ transplant team.

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

**Dr. Ahsan:** I started working in the VA in 2010 at W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center in Salisbury, NC, as Chief of Nephrology, then transferred to Fayetteville (NC) VA Medical Center where I served as Chief of Medicine. Just prior to coming to Iron Mountain, I served as staff physician in the Medicine Service at the North Florida/South George Veterans Health System in Gainesville, FL. While there I was also Adjunct Professor of Medicine at University of Florida College of Medicine.

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

**Dr. Ahsan:** For a physician there is nothing more rewarding than direct patient care. However, as a Chief of Medicine I realize that it is important to take care of the Veterans as it is also important to make sure that Veterans are being taken care of. It is similarly rewarding to work with employees who are dedicating their time serving the Veterans.

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

**Dr. Ahsan:** A tremendous opportunity to serve the Veterans and to work with the friendly employees, and living in Iron Mountain, MI, which is “a small town full of warm hearts and smiling faces.”

**Voice:** What are your priorities as Chief of Medicine?

**Dr. Ahsan:** Create access, expand specialty services, improve quality, partner with other service lines and network VAs, recruit and retain, and continuing education and research. ♦

## MARCH IS SOCIAL WORK MONTH

Did you know that The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is the largest employer of Masters Social Workers (MSWs) in the nation with more than 10,000 social workers serving as licensed independent practitioners in VA's healthcare system? There are 25 *Licensed Masters Degreed Social Workers* (LMSWs), and 1 *Limited License Masters Degreed Social Workers* (LLMSWs, working toward full licensure) employed at OGJVAMC and its seven Community Based Outpatient Clinics.



**The MISSION of VA Social Work is to eliminate psychosocial complications as significant barriers to health care interventions for Veterans, families and caregivers. This is accomplished by developing integrated, quality programs in patient care, research, education, and prevention.**

The work of Social Workers include:

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Crisis intervention</b>
<b>High-risk screening</b>	<b>Discharge planning,</b>
<b>Case management</b>	<b>Advocacy, education,</b>
<b>Supportive counseling</b>	<b>Psychotherapy</b>
<b>Resource referrals</b>	<b>Resource acquisition</b>

Social work services are a key component in the continuum of clinical services provided to Veterans in VA facilities. Social Work is unlike most other helping professions in that its members generally function as specialists and consultants in host settings led by other professions.

For more information on VA Social Work, check out the links below:

[History of VA Social Work](#)

[How Social Workers Help Veterans](#)

[Student Education](#)

# Continuing the Journey Toward Patient-Centered Care

## *Engaging OGJVAMC & CBOC Supervisors*

The January/February issue of the *VA Voice of the Northwoods* highlighted the start of OGJVAMC's journey toward patient-centered care. In December, the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT) provided information sessions to nearly 70 percent of all medical center and community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) employees.

As OGJVAMC continues this journey, the OPCC&CT implementation team was once again on station March 3-5 conducting Supervisory Leadership Engagement Sessions. These sessions brought together supervisors across the medical center and CBOCs to discuss what patient-centered care means to them and how their department or service is a critical component to this journey. Each session started with a panel of three Veterans who use OGJVAMC services and shared their positive experiences as well as areas for improvement.

Also shared was the video "Empathy: The Human Connection to Patient Care" released by Cleveland Clinic. It beautifully depicts the different perspectives of patients AND staff and the importance of under-



*OGJVAMC and CBOC supervisors in one of the three Patient-centered Care supervisor engagement sessions held March 3-5*

standing, e.g., putting oneself in another 'person's shoes'.

In April, the OPCC team will be back on station conducting listening sessions for randomly selected Veterans and staff. To learn more about Patient Centered Care and how to get involved, please contact Mary Kay Campbell (800-215-8262, x32055) or Larry Heers (x32005). ♦

## 2014 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Nationwide, VA medical facilities use the creative arts as one form of rehabilitative treatment to help Veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities. Across the country each year, Veterans treated at VA facilities compete in a local creative arts competition. The competition includes **53 categories in the visual arts division** that range from oil painting to leatherwork to paint-by-number kits. In addition, there are **120 categories in the performing arts** pertaining to all aspects of music, dance, drama and creative writing. A national selection committee chooses 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners among all of the entries. Select winners are invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival each year. **Deadline to enter: March 28, 2014.**



### **Creative Arts Festival:**

October 27-November 2, 2014  
Milwaukee Theatre  
500 West Kilbourn Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI

### **For more information:**

<http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/cafi/index.asp>

or contact Greg Weiss:  
800-215-8262, 32781

# Caught on Camera



**Jay Harry, RN (ED)**, received a Special Recognition Award from Dale LaPalm (Adjutant) and Eugene Cavicchioni (Commander) of the Upper Peninsula Chapter 1879 Military Order of the Purple Heart.



Volunteer **Tracy Blagec**, Community Living Center (CLC) resident **Walter Britton**, and **Selena Okler, RN**, having fun at the CLC Stache Bash on February 21. Framed photos were provided to the residents.



**Jim Rice**, Medical Center Director meeting with Hancock VA Clinic staff after their CREW graduation.



It was Wear Red Day in support of Healthy Heart Month, and Imaging staff got into the spirit. (l-r) **Michelle Perino, Erin Recla, Bonnie Pietrantonio, Ashley Staples, Bill Johnson, and Carla Steinbrecher**. To see more Wear Red photos [click here](#)



OGJVAMC's 4:45 p.m. daily exercise group meets in the Holman Room. The group dedicated this day's class to expectant mother Mary Fornetti, PA, by exercising with a balloon under their shirts.



# Kudos!

## Employees of the Month

December



**Beth Penegor, RN** (p.m. Nurse Supervisor) and **Pam Dubrow, RPSGT**, (Sleep Tech, night shift), Nursing & Patient Care Service. They are lauded for jointly helping a Veteran loitering in the outpatient area with a severe skin condition but reluctant to be treated. They also pitched in (with other staff) and purchased new shoes and socks for this Veteran that very evening. Their compassion and decisive action alleviated further complications. Beth and Pam have been employed at OGJVAMC since 2010 and 2011 respectively.

January



**Karen Swiss, RN**, Nursing & Patient Care Service (4E). Karen is recognized for voluntarily foregoing her vacation to precept a student RN that was assigned to her. Her co-workers also state that Karen is always willing to help others and pitch in when the floor is short staffed. Karen has been employed at OGJVAMC since 2006.

## Systems Redesign Recognition



L-R: **Brenda Reed, PsyD** (Behavioral Health), and **Andria Nichols** (Nursing & Patient Care). Not pictured: **Andrea Millan** and **Bridget Gala** (Dieticians, Nutrition & Environmental Support)

These individuals worked together as a team completing a year-long systems redesign project on the OGJVAMC Move! (weight loss) Program. This project was presented at the National FY2013 Bright Spots Sharing Session and was recognized by the National Center for Health Promotion Disease Prevention, who stated OGJVAMC's "presentation 'MOV6 Systems Redesign Project' was an excellent example of using a quality improvement process to promote Veteran-centered health promotion and disease prevention services."

## Service Pins



Employees presented with Service pins for December-January are (l-r): **Sharon Anastas** (Behavioral Health, 10 years), **Rita Rosen** (Patient Admin Service, 10 years), **Lisa Mitchem, RN** (ICU, 10 years), **Ed Champion** (Chief of Staff Office, 20 years), **Brian Watt** (Human Resources, 25 years), and **Becky Padgett, RN** (OEF/OIF, 30 years). Not pictured: **Robin Rappley, RN** (ED, 15 years), and **Kevin Connon** (Behavioral Health, 10 years)

Employees presented with Service pins for February are (l-r): **Louise Faymonville, RN** (4E, 15 years), **Deb LaCourt** (Canteen Service, 20 years), **Shannon McKindles** (Logistics Service, 30 years), **David Ulrey** (Behavioral Health Service/Compensated Work Therapy (Marquette CBOC), 25 years), **Teresa Aichner** (Chief of Staff Office, 30 years), and **Carol Hinds, LPN** (Primary Care, 30 years). Not pictured: **Pamela Bastian** (Hancock CBOC, 20 years), **Mark Martello, LMSW** (Rhineland CBOC, 10 years), **Rosemary Romick** (Director's Office, 35 years), and **Steve Bagley** (Finance Service, 10 years)



## Mentor Certification



**Tania Fuller-Hautamakim, RN** and **Kit Demuri, RN** (not pictured) were recognized for achieving VHA mentor certification at the Fellow level. They demonstrated a strong commitment to teaching, growing and developing our next generation of leaders. Each Fellow has completed a core mentoring course and dedicated at least 50 hours of focused time to mentoring others.

## Welcome To OGVAMC!

<b>Behavioral Health</b> Gregory Asgaard Mark Krist	Christine Harris Tracy Hiatt
<b>Engineering</b> Eric Willman	<b>Nutrition &amp; Environmental Support</b> Joshua Pawlak
<b>Medicine Service</b> Dr. Nasimul Ahsan	<b>OIT</b> Dwayne Ingebrigsten
<b>Nursing &amp; Patient Care</b> Tonia Bosanic Sara Hansen	<b>Surgery</b> Bobbie Domaradski
	<b>Escanaba Vet Center</b> Kenneth Milam

## Farewell Wishes! (\*retired)

<b>Behavioral Health</b> Pamela Aalto Dr. Jeffrey Zigun	<b>Patient Admin Service</b> Sherry Dawson* (33 years)
<b>Director's Office</b> Amanda Klitzke (Intern)	<b>Quality Management</b> Pamela Boucher
<b>Nursing &amp; Patient Care</b> Michelle Pirkola	<b>VA Police</b> Larry Moses* (6 years) Thomas Unger* (10 years)

## Upcoming Events & Observances

### **April:**

- \* Alcohol Awareness Month
- \* National Occupational Therapy Month
- \* Stress Awareness Month
- \* Sexual Assault Awareness Month
  
- 1 Battle of Okinawa Begins (1945)
- 6 U.S. enters WWI (1917)
- 6-13 National Volunteer Week
- 10 Bataan Death March (1942)
- 11 National Alcohol Screening Day
- 13 Palm Sunday
- 14 Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Established (1946)
- Passover Begins at Sundown
- 19 Oklahoma City Bombing (1995)  
Battle of Lexington & Concord (1775)
- 20 Easter Sunday
- 20-26 Administrative Professionals Week
- 24 **Administrative Professionals Day**
- 28-May 2 National Compliance and  
Ethics Week
- 30 Fall of Saigon (1975)

### **March:**

- \* National Nutrition Month
- \* National Social Work Month
- \* National Eye Donor Month
- \* Ethics Awareness Month
- \* Women's History Month
- \* Brain Injury Awareness Month
  
- 2-8 Patient Safety Awareness Week
- 9 Daylight Savings Time Begins  
(Clocks "Spring" ahead)
- 12 Registered Dietician Day
- 15 VA Cabinet Status
- 16 15-17 American Legion & Auxiliary  
Established in Paris (1919)
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 19 Operation Iraqi Freedom Began (2003)
- 20 Spring begins
- 30 **National Doctors' Day**

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