



Washington Lincoln

VA Heartland Network

Truman VA BULLETIN

February 22, 2008



Welcome

- Jennifer Ferguson**, Graduate Nurse Technician (PS)
- Marsha Hammer, RN** (PS)
- Beth Harris**, Physical Therapy Aid (CS)
- Lindsey Penick**, Physical Therapy Aid (CS)
- Crystal Rech**, Respiratory Therapist (SC)
- Lisa Snowden**, Student Nurse Technician (PS)
- Jeremy Trustee, LPN** (PS)



Farewell

- Otis Bailey**, Housekeeping Aid (FM)
- Terry Gardner**, Supply Technician (BUS)
- Renda Hill, RN** (PS)
- Tracy Moister**, Physician Assistant (SC)
- Betty Turner, RN** (PC)

Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

Caitlin Donaldson (BUS) has been approved for the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program. Contact **Lena Warren** (HR) at extension 56397 for information.

VA Careers Web Site Launched

Welcome to the new VA careers Web site! On Feb. 14, a new Web site – www.vacareers.va.gov - was launched. Its theme is "One Source – One Solution" and its enhanced features include the ability to do the following:

- access streamlined search criteria that help you select career opportunities by occupation, internal merit promotion, geographic location, series and grade
- enjoy improved customer support to answer inquiries about job announcements, qualifications, benefits and application requirements
- learn about valuable scholarship programs, employee benefits and legislative issues pertaining to employment
- create your profile, manage your resume, access required forms and get e-mail alerts in your career interests as jobs become available.

The target audience for the new Web site includes:

- current VA employees looking for new and exciting career opportunities throughout the entire VA system;
- potential Executive Career Field or Senior Executive Service applicants; and
- individuals looking to start a VA career.

VA Boosts Psychology Training Programs

VA is adding \$5.3 million a year to its budget to expand training programs for psychologists to provide more mental health services for returning combat veterans. To meet increased needs for mental health services, VA has added mental health programs in primary care, polytrauma, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health specialty areas. VA has hired more than 800 psychologists in the last three years to meet these needs. Because psychology is a key discipline in comprehensive health care, VA anticipates an ongoing need to employ additional psychologists to meet new and ongoing needs of veterans.

The best resource for VA recruitment of psychologists has been VA's own training programs, as 73 percent of psychologists hired in the past two years have had VA training. As a result, VA's Offices of Academic Affiliations and Mental Health Services have partnered to increase the number of psychologists receiving training through VA programs each year, beginning with the 2008-2009 training year. The new positions will include 61 internship and 98 postdoctoral fellowship positions, bringing the number of psychology training positions nationwide to 620 per year. The recently awarded positions include four new internship training programs and 26 new postdoctoral fellowship programs. In addition, 31 existing internship programs and 17 existing postdoctoral fellowship programs, including Truman VA's, have been expanded.

New Beneficiary Travel Rates

Over a million eligible veterans saw their mileage reimbursement more than double earlier this month for travel to VA medical facilities. The 2008 appropriations act provided funding for VA to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile. The increase went into effect on Feb. 1.

After little more than a month on the job, VA Secretary James B. Peake used his authority to establish the first increase in the mileage reimbursement in 30 years, fulfilling a pledge he made during his Senate confirmation hearing in December. While increasing the payment, VA, as mandated by law, also equally increased the deductible amounts applied to certain

mileage reimbursements. The new deductibles are \$7.77 for a one-way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month.

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH NEW VA SECRETARY JAMES B. PEAKE

Q: You are the first physician and the first general to hold the position of Secretary of Veteran Affairs. How will your past medical and military leadership help you lead VA?

A: I believe I understand today's military. I have done a lot of work in the joint military environment. Health care has brought great pieces of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines together. I have many contacts there whom I have tremendous respect for and collegial relations with. Therefore, I think I can work across the organizational lines and help VA to work as a member of a great federal team. I guess having spent 38 and a half years in the Army, I bring a passion -- I deeply care about these kids. These are America's finest. They are our soldiers, men and women who we have put in harm's way, and it is a blessing for me to continue to be a part of their care. From a physician's perspective, I would say that when it comes down to touching the individual, a big chunk of what we do really relates to health care. That is why we have Mike Kussman, an absolute, superb leader, as VA Under Secretary for Health. When he comes to me with issues, I understand them. We have been on the same team before and we share an understanding of the health issues of soldiers. As a heart surgeon, I have dealt with an older population, as well. Therefore, I think that will help inform my support of VA health care, too. I think it is a good combination.

Q: And you are no stranger to VA.

A: True. For about 10 years, I had the privilege of being a member of the VA Senior Medical Advisory Board. I was here when Ken Kizer was doing the great work of re-structuring VHA and really putting us on this road to excellence continued now under Dr. Kussman's leadership.

Q: You come from a medical family, but started your military career as an infantry officer. Was your interest in medicine there from the start, or did it come later?

A: Actually, I was on my way to Vietnam and had a couple of weeks of leave during which I interviewed with a number of medical schools. I was accepted into medical school while in Vietnam, but I got shot and made by final decision while I was a patient at the 8th Army Field Hospital.

Q: How would you describe your leadership style? Who has inspired you as a leader?

A: I have had the great privilege of working for a lot of excellent leaders from company commanders in Vietnam to surgeons' general of the Army, and I have had a lot of senior noncommissioned officers that have mentored me along the way -- great leaders. Leadership is not necessarily position-dependent. You asked about my style. I believe in people, that is what makes this organization run. In VA, it is 250,000 of them out there doing good work everyday and so I believe you need to engage them. I talked before about leader development because it is the leaders that wind up really making things happen. What you want are leaders at all levels synched with what you are trying to do from the strategic perspective. I believe my style amounts to a combination of engagement and trying to provide quality direction and example.

Q: What is your message to VA employees as you take the reigns of the Department?

A: I believe in them and I care about them and I know that together we can do the right thing by our veterans. I just absolutely believe that.

Q: And to our veterans?

A: As one of them, I absolutely appreciate their service. I see it and feel it every place I go. At the Richmond VA Medical Center the other day, I stopped and talked to a gentleman in a wheelchair wearing a baseball cap that said World War II and Korea and Vietnam. And we had a chance to chat a little bit about where he had been in each of those conflicts. That is sobering. And when I went later to Walter Reed, I talked to a young woman who showed me her prosthetic arm. That is sobering. These are the best of America. I appreciate them and I am sworn to take care of them.

THANK YOU

I would like to thank everyone who donated leave to me in order to care for my newborn son. His surgeries have gone well and he is doing great. Your generosity and prayers helped our family through difficult times and words cannot express our gratitude.

Shelby Hall

MEALS ON WHEELS FUND RAISER THANK YOU

On behalf of the Meals On Wheels Board of Directors, I would like to thank the VA employees that purchased 116 lunches during the annual "Big Wheels" Fund Raiser. Your generosity will provide 116 free lunches to clients unable to pay for their meals. Your community support of our special business partner is very much appreciated.

Linda Duffen

Enjoy Your Freedom? Thank A Veteran!