

## NATIONAL SALUTE TO HOSPITALIZED VETERANS

**V**A Connecticut joined the nation in celebrating National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Feb. 8-14. National Salute honors hospitalized veterans and serves to increase awareness of VA's role in providing comprehensive medical care. This is also a time when the community is encouraged to visit hospitalized veterans and work as VA volunteers.

National Salute is traditionally observed the week of Valentine's Day. Schools and community organizations are encouraged to send in valentine cards and letters for distribution to patients. Once again the community responded generously with thousands of cards and letters that were distributed throughout the week to inpatients and outpatients at both campuses and the community-based clinics.

Other National Salute activities included the Courage Awards, Walter Camp Football player visit, dignitary bedside valentine card/letter distribution as well as special patient lunches and outings.

While we recognize our patients during National Salute, we would also like to salute all of our staff members who are also veterans and thank you for your service to our country.

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*West Haven High School students Kyla Manghani, Katie Porto and Tawny Horan distributed valentines to patients on the 4th floor of Building 1 at the West Haven campus.*

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### Events



**New On-Site TB Screening Program for Employees**

**Weight Watchers at Work**

**Black History Luncheon**

Red Room

Newington

Feb. 26

**Food-a-Rama**

Staff Dining Room

West Haven

Feb. 27

**Excellence in Government Award**

For more information on these and other events please see *Good Morning VA Connecticut*.

Note: "Good Morning" is now available on Outlook. Look for new editions every Friday.

## NATIONAL SALUTE TO HOSPITALIZED VETERANS



The U.S. Postal Service (left) donated comfort care items to the homeless outreach programs based at the Errera Community Care Center in West Haven. Post Office lobbies in New Haven and Hartford served as collection points for donated items. The Postal Service kicked off the drive Thanksgiving weekend, concluding earlier this month. This is the second year the Postal Service has led a drive to collect items for homeless veterans. Postal Service employees who are also veterans (blue shirts) based in Hartford helped deliver the items to ECCC on Feb. 17.



Sergeant First Class **Peter Tallardy** of the Army National Guard and **Theresa Chachakais, RN**, distributed valentine balloons to inpatients at the West Haven campus.



Members of the Walter Camp Football Foundation gathered in the lobby at the West Haven campus before visiting patients on the wards. They are (left to right): Ken Daglieri, Ann Colquitt, Mark Clayton, Dustin Colquitt, Stanley Konesky, Jr., and Craig Colquitt who proudly showed veterans his Super Bowl ring won with the Pittsburgh Steelers teams of the 1970s.



Director Roger Johnson holds the Courage Award plaque as Recreation Therapist **Stephanie O'Keefe** reads the names of past recipients of the award. The Courage Award is presented annually to patients nominated by staff, who embody perseverance, caring and leadership. Employees were also recognized at the ceremony.



**Kathy O'Neil, MSN, RN**, presented the Special Recognition Award the **Rosie Erkerd, NA**.



**Lucia Payne, MSW** (center), received the Special Recognition Award. With Lucia are her husband **Giles Payne** and **Donna Cramond, MSW, MBA**.

## COURAGE AWARD

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT...



*Melissa Singleton, Business Office, was the winner of the Canteen Service Valentine Basket Giveaway.*



*Deborah Gordneer, Compensation and Pension, was the guest speaker for the Newington campus Black History Month program on Feb. 19.*



*The Primary Care Service Line received a Super Bowl XXXVIII commemorative football at the Feb. 22 director's staff meeting for their successful effort in reducing the wait time for veterans to receive an initial appointment. In "carrying the ball," Primary Care became the first service to be recognized with the football for their efforts in helping the VA Connecticut team fulfill its mission. The ball will be passed to different services/sections at each monthly staff meeting.*



*The Connecticut chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners-of-War recognized **Susan Hill, MSW**, social worker, for her work as the healthcare system POW Coordinator. LtCol. Ed Giering (Ret), American Ex-POWs state president presented the award, signed by the national president, to Susan at the Feb. 22 director's staff meeting. Healthcare system director Roger Johnson is also pictured.*



Patients taking the antipsychotic drug clozapine have a higher-than-average chance of developing diabetes, but recent research suggests that clinicians may not be finding at-risk patients. In a study published in *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* led by **Michael Serynak, M.D.**, Chief of Psychiatry, a screening of 121 patients taking clozapine - none previously diagnosed with diabetes - found that 23 percent showed elevated glucose levels, a frequent precursor to diabetes. The results suggested that a patient taking clozapine should be followed closely. (Yale Medicine, Winter 2004)

**Kathleen M. O'Neil, MSN, RN**, is the newly appointed Nurse Manager for T3 West. Kathleen began her career as a nursing assistant and recently completed her master's degree. Her background includes working on a surgical unit, pediatric clinic, ICU, home care, health spa nurse, peer review organization, geriatric research and a nursing home. A Connecticut native, she is new to the VA and recently relocated back to Connecticut from Massachusetts.

**Colleen Heasely, RN**, the T3 West Minimum Data Set (MDS) Coordinator, recently completed the Association of Nurse Assessment Coordinators (AANAC) course for MDS Nurses and is now a Credentialed Resident Assessment Coordinator. MDS is an assessment tool mandated for use in all long-term care facilities. This tool helps the staff look at the patient holistically. MDS coordinators are nurses with broad-based clinical knowledge appointed to effectively implement the MDS process for all patients in JCAHO accredited long term care beds.

**John Krystal, M.D.**, deputy director for clinical research at the Abraham Ribicoff Research Facilities at the West Haven campus, was recently named the Robert L. McNeil Jr. Professor of Clinical Pharmacology at the Yale School of Medicine. Dr. Krystal, a professor of psychiatry, is the founding director of the Center for the Translational Neuroscience of Alcoholism.

A Yale Medicine (Winter 2004) cover story on women closing the gender gap in surgery, features VA Connecticut's chief of surgery, **Ronnie Rosenthal, M.D.** The article, "Closing the Gender Gap," discusses how surgery is beginning to resemble the rest of academic medicine as women join the faculty ranks. Dr. Rosenthal, who specializes in geriatrics, is pictured on the back cover.

**Venita Godfrey**, Buildings and Grounds, was recognized by the Western Central Connecticut Combined Federal Campaign Committee for her efforts as chairman of the VA Connecticut CFC.

## **SPIRIT ONLINE**

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