

SPIRIT ONLINE

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VA Connecticut Healthcare System

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BLIND REHAB SERVICE CELEBRATES 35 YEARS

The Eastern Blind Rehabilitation Service celebrated its 35th year of helping visually impaired and blinded veterans gain confidence and independence on July 15-16 at the West Haven campus. The EBRS offers a comprehensive program designed to equip veterans with the skills and equipment necessary to cope successfully with the many problems loss of vision presents.

The service hosted an Open House in their area on July 15. EBRS staff members introduced visitors to the many tools and techniques used as part of the six to eight-week residential program that enables veterans to adapt to their visual impairment. The Open House included poster displays of the various EBRS sections to include Orientation and Mobility, Living Skills, Manual Skills, Visual Skills and Diabetes Management. Visitors also had the chance to learn about Computer Access Training where patients learn that their loss of vision does not mean the end of computer usage.

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Katie Borgiovanni, Blind Rehabilitation Specialist, discusses a poster display with Patricia Pitkin, Nurse Manager, Firm A, at the EBRS open house on July 15.

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Events

FIT TESTING
West Haven Campus
Aug. 2-6
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

BLOOD EMERGENCY
Blood supplies in Connecticut are low. To donate, call the American Red Cross at 1-800-448-3543. 

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

On July 16, a special ceremony was held in the courtyard attended by former EBRS students and their families in addition to healthcare system staff. **Paul D'Andrea**, the EBRS Regional Program Consultant was the master of ceremonies for the 90-minute program. Guest speakers included **Tom Miller**, Director of the National Blinded Veterans Association, **Curtis Noel**, a local businessman and longtime volunteer in the EBRS and **Cornelius Appleby**, President of the National Blinded Veterans Association. The Swing Thing Band provided music for the outdoor reception following the ceremony.

Former students and staff also attended a formal luncheon at the Savin Rock Conference Center following the reception. Congratulations to the EBRS staff on 35 years of service.



Penny Schuckers, Chief, Blind Rehabilitation Service, addresses visitors and guests at the EBRS 35th anniversary celebration on July 16 in the West Haven campus courtyard.

NEWINGTON STAFF SEND GREETINGS TO BAGHDAD

More than 140 letters and greeting cards from veterans and Newington campus staff members are on their way to the soldiers of the 118th Medical Battalion currently stationed in Baghdad, Iraq. The National Guard 118th Medical Battalion is based at the Newington campus and deployed to Iraq in January 2004.

Rita Golden, a longtime Newington campus volunteer with more than 40,000 hours of service, assisted the staff in putting the package together. The package also contained an additional 140 letters, pictures and color drawings created by Girl Scout Troops of Berlin.

In a letter to the soldiers staff wrote "the Newington Campus staff misses seeing you in the Canteen, Cappuccino's and outside on the grounds. When you return, VA Connecticut Healthcare System looks forward to providing you Veterans Healthcare benefits".



*Hello
from the staff of the
Newington VA Medical Center*



WE SUPPORT THE 118th!

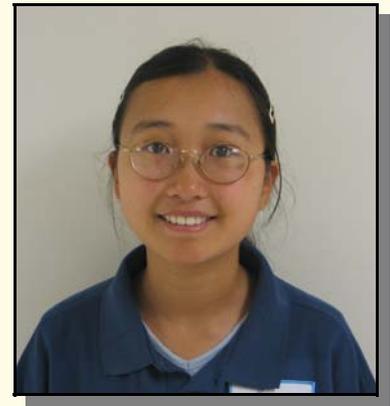
SUMMER YOUTH VOLUNTEER

I'm Monica Liu, and today marks the beginning of my second year as a Youth Volunteer at the West Haven campus. I am excited to be back among the veterans, staff, and students who make the VA such a wonderful place to volunteer!

I enjoy volunteering because it gives me a unique opportunity to give back to my community. I am eager to lend my help and to reciprocate the goodness with which I have been nurtured. Working at the VA, in particular, allows me to play an active role in a hospital environment, which will undoubtedly be valuable to me as I pursue a career in medicine.

In my free time when I am not studying as a sophomore at Cheshire High School, I like to read, write, hike, play golf, and watch movies. (My favorite movie is Young Sherlock Holmes, starring the talented but virtually unknown Nicholas Rowe.) I am currently enrolled in a Johns Hopkins University Distance Education Program for writing. In addition, I volunteer at the Peabody Museum in New Haven where I am training to present a fossil cart to the public.

Meanwhile, my work with Pamela Redmond and Richard Thompson in the Public Affairs Office will take me once again around the hospital interviewing student volunteers and staff. I look forward to meeting new people and learning about each individual's role in the overall workings of the community. I like to think that if everyone did something to brighten the lives of others—no matter how insignificant the act may seem—we could make the world a better place. This year, as a youth volunteer at the VA, I will strive to make my own contribution.



Monica Liu



Margo Veazey, MSN, RN, Associate Director for Patient/Nursing Services, addresses nurses at an awards presentation in the Donaldson Education Center at the West Haven campus on July 20. 20 nurses were recognized for their outstanding contributions to VA Connecticut.



in the **NEWS...**



Local veteran's art selected for new CARF headquarters

West Haven native **Carlos Robles**, a veteran in the VA Connecticut Healthcare System Giant Steps Program, had artwork selected to hang in the new The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission (CARF) offices in Washington D.C.

CARF is an independent, not-for-profit accrediting body that provides accreditation in the human services field -- focusing on the areas of rehabilitation, employment, child and family, and aging services. Out of 2,200 submissions, the artwork of Robles was one of 150 chosen for purchase. It is a black and white drawing entitled "Just Be What You Are."

The drawing depicts a boy blowing a bubble, and Mr. Robles wrote "American society stresses that you have to be so important, powerful and rich. This picture symbolizes stripping all of that superficial veneer off of ourselves and just being what we are. You don't have to be a superstar. Just like the boy blowing the bubble, **Just Be What You Are.**"

CARF invited consumers of services in programs it accredits to submit artwork. Robles participates in CARF accredited programs at the VA's Errera Community Care Center. The new CARF offices will host many consumer activities, meetings, and educational events, and through viewing the artwork and reading the artists' descriptions, people from around the world will learn about and appreciate the diversity of the persons served in CARF accredited organizations.

Giant Steps is a program that uses art as a form of healing. The program provides structure, activities, comradeship and support to help veterans cope with stress, function in their communities and enjoy their lives.

Research ACOS named to national advisory committee

Fred Wright, M.D., Associate Chief of Staff for Research, was named to the newly formed Field Research Advisory Committee (FRAC). The group will provide the Office of Research and Development with input and feedback from investigators and research administrators at VA sites nationwide. The nine-member group includes five associate chiefs of staff for research, two medical center directors, a cooperative study chairman and one non-clinician PhD scientist.

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