

# SPIRIT

ONLINE

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## ALL-EMPLOYEE PICNIC

The first of the two All-Employee Picnics took place Sept. 15 at the West Haven campus. Employees and volunteers were treated to burgers, hot dogs, soft drinks, potato salad, chips and cookies during this annual festivity held in the courtyard.

We once again enjoyed favorable weather conditions on a bright but somewhat cool day with about 1000 staff and volunteers taking part in the picnic.

Thank you to all of the staff who volunteered to cook and serve with special thanks to **Melissa Alpert** for organizing the West Haven picnic. Special thanks also goes out to the FMS Buildings and Grounds crew for their assistance in setting up and cleaning up the area for this annual event.

Food and beverages were provided by the Veterans Canteen Service (**Bill Prenzler**) from funds generated by profits from the food court and retail store. The Newington picnic will be Sept. 22.

*See more picnic page 2.*



*Pat Dumas, Pamela Redmond and Karen Meffert prepare for the noon rush at the All-Employee Picnic at the West Haven campus.*



Secretary of Veterans Affairs **Anthony Principi** (left) greets VA Connecticut volunteer **Al Faticoni** at VFW Post 511 in New Britain on Sept. 10.

The Secretary answered veteran's questions regarding VA health care, benefits and cemetery services at a town hall meeting.

**See page 3 for more on the Secretary's visit...**

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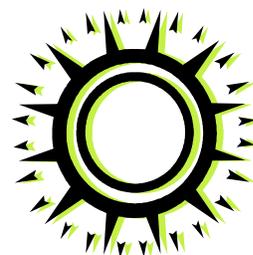
### Events:

**All-Employee Picnic  
Newington Campus  
September 22  
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

**FEGLI Open Season  
thru Sept. 30**

**Retirement Seminar  
West Haven**

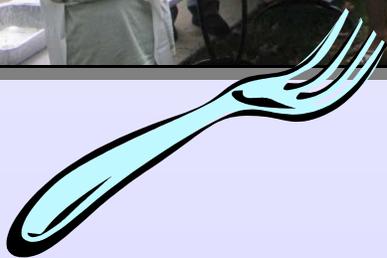
For more information on these and other events please see **Good Morning VA Connecticut**.



**Summer ends next week.**

All-Employee

# PICNIC



## SECRETARY HOSTS TOWN HALL MEETING

More than 300 veterans, their family members and local residents attended a town hall meeting with VA Secretary **Anthony Principi** on Sept. 10 at VFW Post 511 in New Britain.

Congresswoman **Nancy Johnson** (R-5<sup>th</sup>) invited Secretary Principi and VA New England Healthcare System (VISN 1) Network Director **Jeannette Chirico-Post, M.D.**, to participate in the meeting to answer veteran's questions regarding VA healthcare, benefits and cemetery services.

The Secretary addressed questions taken in advance ranging from VA's plan to handle long-term care issues, the budget, waiting lists for specialty care and the impact of CARES for Connecticut veterans.

During his opening remarks, the Secretary commented that despite claims to the contrary, the VA budget has increased, not decreased, under the current administration. "There have been no cuts," he said. "I've gone from \$48 billion to \$65 billion in 3 ½ years. And I'm going to \$71 billion in October if I get an appropriation bill. Our budget has been increased about 40 percent."

He stated that as a result of this increase, VA has been able to treat an additional 1 million veterans than it did in 2001. "We've gone from 3.8 million veterans treated in VA healthcare facilities to almost 5 million today," he said. "That's extraordinary. And it's not just the money. It's because of the dedication of people in VA hospitals and clinics that we have been able to accomplish that."

VA Connecticut Associate Director **Karen Waghorn** served as moderator for the meeting that was also attended by VA Connecticut Director **Roger Johnson**, VBA Regional Office Hartford Director **Rick Randle**, Commissioner **Linda Schwartz** of the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs and **Rick Boyd**, Director of the VA Calverton National Cemetery in New York.

Following the meeting, the Secretary toured and met with the staff of the Waterbury Primary Care Center located in St. Mary's Hospital.



*Secretary Principi answers questions at a town hall meeting held at VFW Post 511 in New Britain. Also on the panel are U.S. Congresswoman Nancy Johnson (center) and VISN 1 Network Director Jeannette Chirico-Post, M.D.*



## NEWINGTON HOSTS POW/MIA OBSERVANCE

The healthcare system observed national Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Day with a special ceremony on Sept. 14 at the Newington campus. Members of the Connecticut Department of the Ex-Prisoners of War, staff, visitors and patients attended the morning ceremony held in the courtyard.

Keynote speaker **Steven Stupak**, a World War II former POW, recounted his military service, capture and liberation followed by remarks from **Mary Beaulieu** who spoke on behalf of families of service members missing in action.

POW/MIA Recognition Day is set aside to honor the commitment and the sacrifices made by the nation's Prisoners of War and those who are still Missing in Action, as well as their families. By custom, it is often observed on the third Friday in September, however, this year it was moved to Sept. 14 to avoid conflict with religious observances.



in the  
**NEWS...**



VA Connecticut and Yale neurologist **Albert Lo, M.D., Ph.D.**, received the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy in recognition of his achievements and potential in the field of neurology. The award was presented at a White House reception on September 9.

The Presidential Award is a five-year award established in 1996 by President Bill Clinton. It is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government to outstanding scientists and engineers beginning their independent careers. It recognizes and nurtures scientists and engineers who show exceptional potential for leadership at the frontiers of scientific knowledge.

Dr. Lo is Assistant Professor of Neurology at Yale University School of Medicine and a Research Career Development Awardee of the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Service. He is also the director of the multiple sclerosis (MS) clinic at VA Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, Conn. Dr. Lo has dual training in clinical neurology and neuroscience, and has already contributed significantly to the development of new therapeutic strategies that may prevent the development of disability and restore function in people with MS.

MS is an autoimmune disease as well as a neurodegenerative disease in which loss of neurons results in progressive and permanent disability. Dr. Lo's research efforts in developing innovative therapies for neuroprotection in MS have led to the first demonstration of a robust protection of white matter axons both in the optic nerve and the spinal cord in animal models of MS. These concepts are now being translated into pilot clinical studies of neuroprotection to prevent axonal degeneration in people with MS.

Dr. Lo has also just begun to establish a clinical neurorehabilitation research program at VA Connecticut where he is examining new innovative robotics and their novel application in neurorehabilitation to help shape nervous system reorganization and recovery of function in patients with neurological impairments.

According to Dr. Stephen Waxman, chair and professor of neurology at the Yale School of Medicine and director of the VA Rehabilitation Research Center, "During the coming decade, neurology may be revolutionized via new therapies that will substantially improve the quality of life of people with neurological disorders. This development will be hastened by the addition of new, energetic researchers. We are fortunate to have Dr. Lo on our faculty, since he will play an important role in this transformation of neurology, and we are indeed proud that he has been given this prestigious award".

Dr. Lo's research was supported by the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Service as well as by funds from the Paralyzed Veterans of America, United Spinal Association, and the Nancy Davis Foundation.



VA Connecticut marked "Patriot Day" (9-11) with gatherings for prayerful commemoration on September 10. A program was held at the Newington and West Haven campuses.

## **SPIRIT ONLINE**

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**Director**  
Roger Johnson

**Associate Director**  
Karen Waghorn

**Chief of Staff**  
Michael Ebert, M.D.

**Associate Director for Patient/  
Nursing Services**  
Margo Veazey, MSN, RN

**Chief Information Officer**  
Joseph Erdos, M.D., Ph.D.

**Chief Financial Officer**  
Karen Meffert

**Public Affairs Specialist**  
Pamela R. Redmond

**Editor:**  
**Visual Information Specialist**  
Richard G. Thompson



VA Connecticut  
Healthcare System  
950 Campbell Ave.  
West Haven, CT 06516  
(203) 937-3824