The BOISE FRONT

November 2016

*The official newsletter of the Boise VA Medical Center*

# PINK OUT

In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month staff of the Boise VA Medical Center and Boise VA Regional Office gathered to take photos wearing pink to show their support for breast cancer awareness.

Staff of the Boise VAMC and Boise VARO (below)

Laralee Edsall of the Salmon Outreach Clinic (left)

Staff of the Twin Falls CBOC (right)

## Highlights and Upcoming Events from the CFC:

High school/College Throwback Day on 10/14/16 (see photo)

Chili/Cornbread Cook Off 11/29/16 11a-1pm at Mountain Cove Gym.

Holiday Bake Sale 12/7/16 8am-2pm or until supplies last Bldg. 85 near elevators by the Canteen and Pharmacy dept.

Congratulations to the November parking spot winners: Heidi Oftedal and Janis Glenn!

The raffle for the reserved parking spots for December and January has already started. This will be the last raffle for reserved parking for this year. The two winners will win the reserved parking spot for both months!

**Total Amount Raised this Campaign (estimate) $16,804.41**

CFC®
Combined Federal Campaign

**ENDS DEC. 15th**

## Why should I give through the CFC?

Choice. Convenience. Confidence. Care.

Choice. The CFC is your campaign. You choose the designation amount, which organization(s) (among over 1800) receive your gift, and how you give.

Convenience. With the CFC you can give via payroll deduction and have the ability to automatically support the causes of your choice year-round. Or you can give via cash or check. Your gift is tax-deductible.

Confidence. All charities in the CFC are screened by federal employees who serve as volunteers. Local charities are screened by local volunteers. National and international charities are screened by a national CFC committee.

Care. Your gift improves the quality of life for you and your neighbors. You have access throughout your lifetime to the thousands of vital health and social services not supplied, or only partially covered, by government sources. These services stabilize lives, arrest social problems, encourage productivity, and increase the resources and prosperity of the entire community, our nation, and overseas.

## What is the benefit of payroll deduction?

Through payroll deduction, a donor-specified amount is withheld every payday (beginning in January of the calendar year following the fall pledge drive) and continues throughout the year. This is convenient and easier on the budget. Payroll gifts often makes a crucial difference in campaign results as they are usually more substantial than cash gifts.

Visit MyPay https://mypay.dfas.mil/mypay.aspx and select "Combined Federal Campaign" on the home screen. The rest is easy! Remember to use 999121 for your Agency Code.

*For info contact Jeremy Lemro (ext. 7356) or Kennedy Meyer (ext. 1118)*

**The local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America has donated $1000 to the Boise VAMC's Women Veterns Program.**

It is a great honor for the Women's Wellness Center to be the recipient of a cash donation from the Treasure Valley Vietnam Veteran of American, local Chapter 1025.

This group is committed to partnering with women veterans to help meet their needs. The monies donated are earmarked for gas cards to assist with travel costs to appointments and to purchase exam robes used in the clinic.

We are very thankful for this generous donation and the support and kindness from the Vietnam Veterans of America!

For those who have served in Vietnam, the local Chapter is looking to increase their membership. If interested, please call JD Poss at 208-353-2495 President or Ron Titus 916-213-4423 Vice President. The Chapter 1025 meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7pm at the Meridian American Legion Hall.

# VA RESEARCH BECOMES INFECTIOUS FOR C of I GRAD

*(Idaho Press Tribune / Photo courtesy of College of Idaho)*

At 19 years of age, Alabama native Pamela Dockstader, who graduated from the College of Idaho in 2016, signed up for the United States Army. Over the course of six years repairing armament on M1 Abrams and M2 Bradley tanks and serving two tours in Afghanistan, Dockstader fell in love with the military.

And while transitioning to civilian life and attending the College of Idaho, she discovered a love of microbiology.

Today, she's found a way to combine her two passions.

Dockstader became the first person ever awarded the Partnership to Advance Veteran's Education in Research Fellowship at the Boise Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

"I completed an internship at the VA in the pathology lab back in 2014, so I already knew this was a pretty good place to try to get into," Dockstader said. "I'm a veteran, so I want to stay within the veteran community."

She's spent her summer researching a staph bacteria that has become resistant to most antibiotics— Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA. Her work is part of developing a better medication to fight this rapidly evolving foe.

"This is something that really grabbed me in micro class," Dockstader said. "It's scary how fast these pathogens are evolving to resist antibiotics. Researchers are in this constant race to beat them."

Her love for microbiology began at the C of I — more specifically, in her lab classes where she could leave the textbook behind and "see science in action." For Dockstader, no other form of science is as visible as micro. Just one look into a microscope can unearth a zoo of organisms — sometimes harmful organisms.

"It's like a little garden that can kill you," she said.

Her passion and work ethic became evident to her teacher, Dr. Ann Koga, who employed Dockstader as a teacher's assistant to prepare lab materials.

"She completely reorganized the lab her first week," Koga said. "She implemented a new system of cleaning test tubes and kept everything organized and clean throughout the semester. I am excited she has been able to pursue this research opportunity at the VA because I know how much she has been wanting to work in a microbiology lab."

Going into her internship this summer, Dockstader wasn't sure if she'd like it. The work seemed confusing at first, and she felt like she wasn't keeping up. But when Dockstader plotted her first

Pamela Dockstader became the first person ever awarded the Partnership to Advance Veterans Education in Research Fellowship at the Boise VA Medical Center. She graduated from College of Idaho in 2016.

set of results on a chart, and saw it all come together, she couldn't wait to do it again.

"I love research now," Dockstader said. "I love the unknown, testing to see my results, and doing something no one else has done before. I love (studying) infectious disease."

Dockstader, who graduated this spring with a degree in health science, chose to attend the C of I to get a quality education and have a strong foundation going forward in her educational career.

Next up for Dockstader is a master's degree in medical laboratory science. And she hopes to return to the VA, or similar setting, in a more permanent role.

"I have a big heart for the military and veterans, and I just want to stay in the community because I feel like I identify more with veterans," Dockstader said.

IDAHO VETERANS
RESEARCH & EDUCATION
FOUNDATION

# Biomedical Research Fellowship Opportunity!

## PAVER Fellowship for Summer 2017

The Idaho Veterans Research and Education Foundation (IVREF) is now accepting applications for the **Partnership to Advance Veterans' Education in Research** (PAVER) Fellowship. This competitive Fellowship is awarded annually to a veteran who is exploring a career in biomedical research or related healthcare fields. The program runs from late May to August.

**The PAVER Fellowship** provides an opportunity for veterans to have a 10-week mentored, summer biomedical research opportunity in the basic science laboratory of established Infectious Disease investigators at the Boise VA Medical Center. The intent is to provide a "real-life" experience for those students who may be considering further graduate education and/or a career in the healthcare sciences.

Selection for the award is competitive. The PAVER Fellow will receive $6,000 for the 10-week program. The award also includes the cost of travel to Idaho's annual *IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE)* meeting in Moscow, Idaho where student research fellows will present poster abstracts of their scientific findings.

The PAVER Fellowship is made possible through a generous donation from the John and Alma Stevens Educational Trust to the Idaho Veterans' Research and Education Foundation, which is a non-profit affiliate of the Boise VA Medical Center's Research and Development Service.

**Equal Opportunity Employer**: IVREF is an EEO institution. We encourage applications from men and women of all ethnicities and religions, and members of underrepresented groups. All candidates must successfully complete a Federal criminal background check.

**Interested applicants**: Applicants must be US Veterans, and must be current /former college students or recent graduates from an accredited Idaho college or university. Please send an email expression of interest with subject line "PAVER FELLOWSHIP" to Amy Bryant, Ph.D. at abryant@ivref.org. More information can be found at www.ivref.org.

**Application Deadline: January 10, 2017**

# Cigdem Hyder

Behavioral Health Employee of the Month

**November 2016**

About Cigdem a veteran wrote:

*"I wish to enter an employee of the month nomination for Cigdem Hyder. I see her 1 on 1 and healthy thinking and healthy changes for about 2 years. She has 'bent over backwards' for me. I have brain damage but can see past my illness now. When I do show up with lots of problems, she is able to give profound help. Keep her; she's a great one."*

VA | Boise VA Medical Center

# Hello's

# Goodbye's

The Boise VAMC would like to welcome our new employees who came aboard:

**Paula Mahlandt**
Health Administration Service

**Aleric Dubbels**
Human Resources

**Shawna Mathis**
Nursing Service

**Sandra Piotrowski**
Social Work Service

**Katherine Vergara**
PALMS Service

**Diane Bearss**
Medical Service

The Boise VAMC would like to say goodbye to the employees who left us:

**David Barclay**
Medical Service

**Sandra Campbell**
Veterans Canteen Service

**Kenneth Khatain**
Psychiatry Service

**Leslie Blackford**
Nursing Service

**Angela Biggs**
Veterans Canteen Service

**Aiyana Jackson**
Nursing Service

# Monty B. Wynn

## Volunteer of the Month
## November 2016

*Monty Wynn has served our nation with distinction and continues to volunteer significant time to assisting fellow veterans. He was born in Baker City, Oregon and entered the U.S. Navy in 1974 after high school and served for twenty years. He followed in his brother's footsteps in becoming a submariner. Monty is known for his determination. He joined the Navy toward the end of the Vietnam War, and became a qualified submariner in less than six months, in half the time it typically took to earn qualification at the time. Monty wrote curriculum for the next generation of Ballistic Submarines, the Ohio Class Submarine (Trident). He earned a number of medals and recognitions throughout his service. This includes him being awarded top naval instructor numerous times.*

*Monty learned at a young age to help, be kind and do the right thing, and that is what he does. In 1988, he was awarded the Humanitarian Service Medal for help with Hurricane Hugo. His story of his special retirement - underwater at 200 feet with family, friends and shipmates present - is documented at the War Hawk Museum in Nampa and in the Veterans History Project compiled by the Library of Congress. Monty believes his greatest service is what he does now volunteering at the Boise VA Medical Center. In his words, "My service in the Navy, my friends and family, schoolteachers and God groomed me well for my service to all our vets." Monty's extraordinary service and leadership through example is commendable, and because of this he was presented with the 2012 Spirit of Freedom Award through Senator Crapo's Office.*

***Monty has served the veterans at the Boise VAMC since 2011 and has in over 5400 hours. He represents what it is to be a volunteer, and we appreciated everything he does here at the VA!***

# Congratulations to everyone on an excellent FY17 OIG inspection!

During the week of October 24-28, the Boise VAMC underwent a Clinical Assessment Program Inspection by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). The OIG are Congressional agents with responsibility and authority to: 1) investigate all VHA programs, activities, and personnel, 2) evaluate compliance with VA/VHA policies, and 3) detect and prevent waste, abuse, mismanagement, and criminal activity to ensure that safe, high quality, and efficient health care is provided to our Nation's Veterans.

The OIG team of 4 inspectors and 1 observer completed their inspection of hundreds of documents for 22+ programs prior to arrival, reviewed scores of Veterans' CPRS records, then completed their onsite inspections of the facilities, questioning staff about policies, processes, and documentation.

Site visits were done at the Burns-Hines Outreach Clinic and the Boise Main Campus.

The OIG had no recommendations for these programs/areas: Quality, Safety, and Value; Anticoagulation Therapy; Point-of-Care Testing, and Management of Disruptive/Violent Behavior. OIG confirmed that FY14 OIG recommendations were corrected.

The OIG made 6 preliminary recommendations for improvements related to administrative/policy/documentation issues. All were minor and did not present a significant risk to the health and safety of Veterans or staff. Recommended improvements included:

- Environment of Care Committee minutes
- Coordination of Care: physician approvals
- Moderate Sedation: timeout checklist policy
- Community Nursing Home Oversight: Committee members, meetings; annual facility reviews; monthly clinical visits

Improvement teams are already working on or have finished correction plans.

Thanks to each of you, for all that you do every day to serve, honor, and provide veterans with care that is safe, excellent, effective, and timely!
**Congratulations on a successful OIG inspection!**

## 2017 Idaho Nurse Practioner Award for Excellence by the American Association for Nurse Practioners

# Melanie Nash

Our very own Melanie Nash, DNP, FNP-C has been chosen for the prestigious 2017 Idaho NP State Award for Excellence by the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. Recipients are nominated by their peers for demonstrated excellence in NP clinical practice.

Dr. Nash is a graduate of Gonzaga University and currently works as an FNP on the orange team and in the Emergency Department. Her most rewarding task was building an NP clinical education program and NP residency in her five-year role as Co-director for the Center of Excellence in Primary Education. Both have helped to improved NP training, inter-professionalism across disciplines, increase NP salary and increased hiring of NPs. She has numerous publications and presentations at local and national conferences.

Answering the 2010 Institute of Medicine's call, Ms. Nash earned her Doctorate of Nursing Practice at Gonzaga University. Her scholarly project identified practice challenges for independent and rural nurse practitioner practice owners. Her findings have supported legislative efforts for NP regulation and reimbursement, in efforts to maximize patient access, continuity of care, and encourage sustainable NP practice ownership in Idaho.

Ms. Nash regularly travels abroad providing medical care. She volunteers locally at the Genesis Clinic. She is clinical and adjunct faculty at Gonzaga, and routinely mentors NP students at the VA. Her legacy is evident by the students she has taught; they are her greatest achievement. Because of her example and mentorship, they will continue to change the face of the NP profession for the future.

**Please join me in congratulating Dr. Nash on this award!**

# Process Improvements Make a Big Difference to Veterans and Staff

The improvement efforts of staff members throughout the Boise VAMC are very impressive. Each week the Medical Center Leadership (Director, Chief of Staff, Associate Director for Patient Care Services/Chief Nurse Executive, Associate Director, and Administrative Officer to the Director) and I visit a service or work unit to learn about process improvement efforts that have been completed, are underway or are in the planning stages. The number and scope of your improvement projects show the dedication of our staff to provide safe, high quality, and efficient care to the Veterans we serve.

In the coming months, information about process improvement projects throughout our local organization will be highlighted in the Boise Front and at Director's Staff and Town Hall meetings. The System Redesign SharePoint site will be updated and Lean training opportunities will be made available to staff. Look for announcements in the coming weeks and months.

The process improvement programs highlighted today are Direct Scheduling for Optometry, as well as Direct Scheduling for Audiology. Prior to this year, persons interested in routine Optometry and/or Audiology appointments needed consultation requests submitted by their primary care provider (PCP). This meant that the Veteran had to schedule a visit with their PCP and then wait for scheduled appointments with Audiology and Optometry. This created demand on Primary Care for these routine services. In addition to affecting Primary Care access, it created workload for PCP staff and also for Health Administrative Services (HAS) staff to contact the Veteran and schedule the needed appointment(s). And, it created additional steps and delays for Veterans to receive their desired care.

In 2016 the VA, at the national level, determined that the requirement for a consultation request from Primary Care would no longer be required for routine Audiology and Optometry services. This change allows Veterans to contact these clinics directly for scheduling routine appointments for hearing and sight health. To prepare for these changes two project teams were established at the Boise VAMC.

The Optometry Direct Scheduling Team was formed through the efforts of Adele Smith, the Surgery Administrative Officer. Team members represented Surgery, HAS, Primary Care, the Clinical Application Coordinators, and all members of the Eye Clinic staff – located in Boise and Caldwell. The team began meeting in July with mapping of the current process for scheduling and managing eye care concerns, including who and what was involved at each step, and then developed a "target state" – what the process would look like when direct scheduling is implemented. At every meeting the team considered how best to create an effective process that keeps patient safety and quality care as the priority, while also considering staff workload and requirements. Numerous details were addressed, including scripting for how calls would be managed, triaging of concerns between the Eye Clinic staff and PCPs, and how to manage non-routine eye/sight concerns. Due to the efforts of the team members, the Optometry Direct Scheduling for routine appointments (eye tests for adults without risks factors) started Oct. 1. As with all process changes a few minor modifications were needed after implementation, but in general this change has been smooth and is being well received by both Veterans and staff.

The Audiology Direct Scheduling team began its work in late August. The full team came together for a Rapid Process Improvement Workshop (RPIW) on October 11. Team members for this event included the process owner, Dr. Kevin Bolen, representatives from Primary Care, HAS, the Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic, the Clinical Application Coordinators, Public Affairs, the AFGE, and many representatives from the Audiology Clinic. A national MyVA Coach was present and provided direction and input to the team. This team worked through the same general process as the Optometry team, mapping the current and target states, working through details of scripting, triage, and the management of non-routine hearing and ear concern. A resulting service level agreement was approved by the Clinical Executive Committee. Implementation of direct scheduling for routine (hearing tests, hearing aid checks and repairs) Audiology appointments began Nov. 14 and appears to be a smooth transition.

Josh Callihan developed patient information flyers, postcards, and electronic bulletin board postings. These informational items are being distributed through Primary Care, HAS, Audiology and Optometry staff members.

The teams will monitor these processes to see if additional modifications are needed and also to determine their impact on access to each of the clinics and Primary Care. Many thanks go to both the clinical and administrative members of both these teams. Your efforts to represent the interests of the Veterans and how we can meet their needs are appreciated.

Veterans who are already enrolled may schedule routine appointments for Audiology and Optometry by calling:
Audiology - (208) 422-1111 / Optometry - (208) 422-1072

# BOISE VAEA NEWS

The VAEA held its annual Halloween Costume Contest in the CLC. More than 30 employees dressed in wonderful costumes. Winners received prizes including coffee cards and gift cards to local pizza and bowling venues. After the contest, the participants paraded the CLC so that Veteran residents and CLC staff could join in on the Halloween fun!

**Most Creative:** Kelly Hackbarth, Jenn Snyder, Ellen Jones, Bryan Cruthirds - Hippies

**Scariest:** Jessica O'Connor – Ghost Rider

**Funniest:** Brenda Gard, Ehron Kaska, Norka Helmick, Kristi Funk, Jana Iverson – as Tetrad: David Wood, Dr. Andrew Wilper, Grant Ragsdale, Angela Brothers and Denise Plowman *(photo right)*

# BOISE VAEA NEWS

The VA Employees' Association hosted its first annual Trunk or Treat event on Saturday, October 29th. It was a great turnout with roughly 75 kids participating, all dressed in wonderful costumes. Some parents and grandparents dressed up as well!

The VA Employees' Association would like to thank our volunteers listed below who generously donated their time and purchased candy to hand out to the kids. Their generosity made the event such a success!

Boise Fire Station #1
VA Police Department
Tamlyn Ulin-Gilson and AFGE
Glenda Young
Cindra Goldenstein
Shyamala Thirunavukkarasu
James Burrup
Michael Brown
Ernest Huber
Maritza Lorenzana
Anthony Martinelli
Lindsey Hunt & Pharmacy Residents
Oreana Harless
Linda Truman
Heather Peterson

There was a "Best in Show" competition for the best decorated trunk. The winner was employee Cindra Goldstein chosen by Boise Fire Station #1.

# BOISE VAEA NEWS

Over the weekend of November 12th, multiple members from the Boise VA Medical Center donated their time to Rake Up Boise. The VA had enough volunteers to be able to form two teams- both of which not only raked up their assigned yard but other yards in need in the neighborhood. A huge thank you to all the employees who donated time on their Saturday to help these individuals!

Raking and volunteering in style as a "Pharmily" ***(left to right)*** Tracy Wright, Kathleen Nesbit, Chet Beebe, Taylor Shaffer, Vanessa Milligin, Jose Lamas, Savannah Bartram

BVAMC Pharmacy staff showing the leaves they raked ***(left to right)*** Savannah Bartram, Vanessa Milligin, Taylor Shaffer, Jose Lamas, Chet Beebe, Annie Ortiz, Kathleen Nesbit, Tracy Wright