WINTER WON'T QUIT!

Icicles on the VBA Bldg.
taken by Carol Zografos
In May 2016 VHA published the Improvement Guidebook 2016. This 64-page guidebook has a wealth of information about a variety of improvement methods – including Lean, VA TAMMCS, PDSA/PDCA, Root Cause Analysis (RCA), Healthcare Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (HFMEA), Sigma and others.

In addition to providing information and guidance with large scale process improvement projects, the Guidebook also provides guidance for small-scale, unit-level improvements by encouraging Continuous Daily Improvement (CDI). CDI focuses on problem-solving efforts of front line staff. Front line staffers are key in effective improvement efforts. Persons in these positions know where the problems exist and have ideas for solutions.

Directly involving front line staff in process improvement, providing them with tools to identify problems, and develop and implement solutions can result in the following benefits:

Decreased “fire-fighting.” When staff members focus on what gives them the biggest headaches, much of the daily “fire-fighting” that results from problems, barriers, and work-arounds are addressed.

Improved morale. Staff morale and employee satisfaction increases when staff are involved in identifying and solving problems. They are being heard and their knowledge, experience and insights are valued.

Improved communication. One vehicle for enhancing team communication is the use of a huddle. Often huddles are held at the beginning of the day.
It is a short meeting (15 minutes) to review the day’s plans, identify any challenges anticipated that day and determine how they will be managed.

Widespread improvement. As your work unit improvement ideas begin to expand they will engage other areas of the organization (e.g. Logistics, OI&T, HRMS, etc.). As efforts expand senior leadership gets involved in addressing how to support your improvement efforts and spread improvement ideas across the entire organization.

Significant improvement in quality. These can include patient safety and Veteran satisfaction.

Increased productivity. Improved efficiencies can increase productivity/increase access for care.

Decreased costs and increased return on investment. With limited funding and rising costs anything cost savings is a positive outcome.

Improved customer satisfaction. This results in increased Veteran satisfaction and improved relations with other internal and external customers.

*Front line staff members are key to the effective process improvement!*
On Tuesday December 13th we had three patient's waiting in the Emergency Department for evaluation for admission at 2:00 PM. Though Dr. Harris was not assigned to triage this day, he volunteered to see evaluate a very complicated veteran both medical and psychiatric impairment. This process became more complicated when the patient was determined to be gravely disabled and had a Guardian and was not allowed to return to his ALF. Dr. Harris spent numerous hours working with the patient and staff, ALF and Guardian to determine what the best course of action. The patient was initially placed on a physician's hold. His work with this veteran took him over 2 hours beyond his typical duty day. The following day, Dr. Harris volunteered to trade on-call duties with a colleague who had a conflict that night. He was asked to evaluate the same patient who had spent 24 hours in the ED awaiting placement. The ED, the patient, the nursing staff, the social work staff did great work, and collectively lamented that we did not have the best situation for the veteran but felt our hands were tied. Dr. Harris had numerous conversations and advocated for an outside-of-the-box approach which was to admit to 2P even though he was not a voluntary patient. He measured the risks and benefits and determined that our unit could appropriately manage this gentleman's needs while he was awaiting disposition. He communicated his recommendation to nursing, psychiatry and ED leadership to obtain buy-in for an excellent disposition that benefitted the veteran and our system.

Two days in a row Dr. Harris volunteered to help out. Both times he took on extra burden carrying for a complicated veteran that took creative thinking to bridge our system constraints, dialogue across teams, and work that took him beyond the duty day for a vulnerable patient in need. He was not merely collecting a paycheck; he was serving our shared VA mission. His work is an example of our I CARE values with honoring his commitment to his colleagues and his veteran centric care, respect for team members with conducting many difficult conversations in the pursuit of excellence. For this, we enthusiastically recommend him for BH Employee of the Month.
The Boise VAMC would like to welcome our new employees who came aboard:

- Billie Von Englen, Dental
- Erin Martin, HAS
- Leslie Holloway, Nursing
- Kristin Kaschmitter, Nursing
- Kimberly O’Neil, Nursing
- Alisha Crawford, Nursing
- Angela Enlow, Psychology
- Kristen Leenhouts, Surgery
- Chelsea Roberts, Nursing
- Travis Masmeyer, FMS
- Benjamin Cornett, MSO
- Emery Nunley, Nutrition
- Taylor Ellerd, Nutrition
- Kenneth Weybright, Nursing
- Clara Gibson, VCS
- Warren Mackey, Nursing

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

- Staci Kidder, Nutrition
- Sarita Kishore, Surgery
- Stacy Connolly, MSO
- Chris Jammerman, FMS
- Debra Potts, HAS
- Grant Ragsdale, Director

Dr. Gregg presents Trish Berglund with her Certificate of Retirement
Lynda Benson

Volunteer of the Month
January 2017

Lynda Benson is a native of Idaho, living most of her life in Boise. She graduated from Borah High School, Boise Junior College, and University of Idaho.

After 20 years in administrative support, Lynda began a second career, teaching at Boise State University, then College of Western Idaho. She retired from CWI in 2014.

Lynda has two sons who live in Boise, much to her joy. They have enriched her life with six grandchildren, who bring her tremendous happiness.

After retirement, Lynda’s volunteer career started with the Red Cross. A year later, she discovered her true calling when she applied for a volunteer position at the Boise VAMC. She currently volunteers in the Messenger and Escort Office and drives the shuttle van for the Disabled American Vets (DAV). She currently has 824 volunteer hours since July of 2015. In the time she has spent there, she has been honored to serve the men and women who have given so much for their country. Although not a veteran herself, Lynda is proud to volunteer on behalf of her two sons, who are both veterans.

On behalf of the Voluntary Service, we want to thank Lynda for everything she has done and will continue to do for our Nation’s Heroes!