

Veteran's Healthy Times

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Welcome Home Event

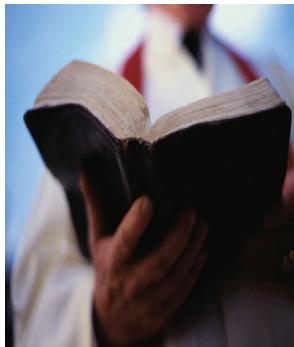
Food, Fun and lots of information were the basic ingredients; add in recently-returned veterans and their families, and you've got a recipe for one Successful Welcome Home Event. Such was the case on Sat., May 18th, when the National Archives Records Administration joined with the VA Boston Health Care System to host this special day at their Headquarters on Trapelo Road in Waltham. A multitude of employees, veterans service organizations and civic groups volunteered to serve in a variety of capacities.

The Welcome Home was geared specifically towards active military and veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as their family members. Dozens of agencies and organizations provided information on such topics as federal jobs, health resources, adaptive sports, current VA research, support groups, and more.

For the young and the young at heart, there were activities including face painting, an exotic animal show, pony rides, a moonwalk, and tempo-

rary tattoos. Plenty of food, raffles and upbeat tunes contributed to the festive, carnival like atmosphere. By all accounts, the day was a great success and a terrific way to welcome home America's most recent heroes.





Reaching out to Returning Service Members

As a result of the White House Faith Based Community Initiatives, staff member of VA BHS along with key community members presented an all day workshop at Welsey United Methodist Church in Hadley Massachusetts. Father Phil, MS, Chief of Chaplin Services, was the workshop organizer and Master of Ceremonies and spoke on Post Traumatic Spiritual Disorder. Dr. Mel Tapper, PhD, LICSW delivered a presentation on Traumatic Brain Injury.

The subject matter for the workshop was

teaching and informing area churches how to reach out to returning veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, to better understand what their needs are and what readjustment issues will surface as they reintegrate back into civilian and family life, as well as, community living. There were 42 pastors, priests and lay leaders in attendance. The program was so well received that it will be repeated in Connecticut with 60 pastors and two military chaplains in attendance; more presentations are being planned for Bedford, MA and Downtown Boston.

VA Home Loans



The U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a home loan guarantee program for eligible veterans. The loans are made by lenders, such as a mortgage company, savings and loan, or bank. The VA guarantees part of the total amount. The result is that buyers are able to obtain a competitive interest rate without having to make a down payment. VA Home Loans can be used to purchase construction of single family homes, townhouses, or condominiums. The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2004(S2486) brought about significant and positive changes in the VA Home loan Program. Until the new law was enacted, the statute

capped the limit on maximum loan guarantee at \$60,000. With the new law, the maximum guarantee now adjust automatically each year. Now for example, veterans purchasing power for a single family residence is increased from \$240,000 to \$359,650. More importantly, the guaranty amount will now keep in stride with market considerations. The local VA office can provide more details on guaranty and entitlement amounts. Contact U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

www.homeloans@va.gov/

VA Regional Loan Center

275 Chestnut Street

Manchester , NH 03101

Halloween Safety

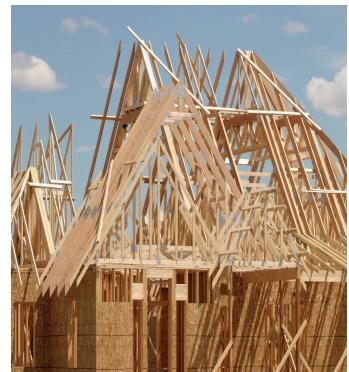


- ~Set a time limit for children for trick-or-treating and together map out a safe route.
- ~Always accompany children and remind them to never enter a strange house or car.
- ~Only eat unopened candies and other treats that are in original wrappers.
- ~Try make-up instead of a mask as they can obstruct a child's vision
- ~Remove objects from your yard that might present a hazard to visitors.
- ~Drive slowly all evening-you never know what creature may suddenly cross your path.
- ~Old kids are to stay with friend, offer them a ride to a safe neighborhood and a time to meet for pick up.

The Fisher House Program

The Fisher House program is a unique private-public partnership that supports America's military in their time of need. The program recognizes the special sacrifices of our men and women in uniform and the hardships of military service by meeting a humanitarian need beyond that normally provided by the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs. Because members of the military and their families are stationed worldwide and must often travel great distances for specialized medical care, Fisher House Foundation donates "comfort homes", built on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers. These homes enable family members to be close to a loved one at the most stressful times - during the hospitalization for an unexpected illness, disease, or injury. There is at least one Fisher House at every major military medical center to assist families in need and to ensure that they are provided with the comforts of home in a supportive

environment. Annually, the Fisher House program serves more than 10,000 families, and have made available nearly 2.5 million days of lodging to family members since the program originated in 1990. By law, there is no charge for any family to stay at a Fisher House operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs; the Fisher House Foundation uses donations to reimburse the individual Fisher Houses operated by the Army, Navy, and Air Force. No family pays to stay at any Fisher House! In addition to constructing new houses, Fisher House Foundation continues to support existing Fisher Houses and help individual military families in need. Families and friends of patients at any of the military's hospitals can now receive up-to-the-minute reports on a loved one by going to the patient's own customized web page, thanks to new services provided through Caring Bridge.



Let us help you prepare for Flu Season

VA BHS has a full supply of the flu vaccine; there will be more than enough vaccine for all eligible veterans and employees. The VA takes seriously the threat influenza poses to our veterans, our staff, our medical system and the health of the country as a whole. Influenza vaccination in the VA is a priority. This year, VA has a special focus to ensure employees, woman veterans and spinal cord injured veterans get a flu vaccine. Influenza and its serious medical complications can be prevented by vaccination. All of our veterans, especially those over 50 and those with other medical problems should be encouraged to get a flu vaccine. Influenza vaccination is an

important patient safety issue because unvaccinated staff can spread influenza to patients, coworkers, and family members, leading to influenza-related illness and death. When health care workers transmit influenza to patients, some of them may experience serious, even life-threatening complications or secondary pneumonias. Vaccination protects you and your family from the flu.

Please contact your VA primary care physician to find out more about upcoming flu clinic schedules beginning in November.



Latest Generation Committee

VA Boston Healthcare System
1400 VFW Parkway
West Roxbury, MA 02132



Talk, Listen, Connect with Sesame Street

In recognition of the contributions made by the United States Armed Forces, Sesame Street Workshop presents a bilingual educational outreach initiative designed for military families and their young children to share.

This new multimedia program is designed to help support military families with young children experiencing deployments, multiple deployments, or when parents return home injured.



Deployments, Homecomings, Changes

FREE Sesame Street Kits are available by visiting Military One Source on line at www.militaryonesource.com or call 1-800-342-9647

Golden Heart



Have you received outstanding customer service from our staff? Do you want to say thank you for a job well done? Why not nominate the employee for a

Golden Heart Award. The Golden Heart Award is an award for excellence in customer service. The “Golden Heart” award is another of the Customer Service Committee’s innovations. Patients are given the opportunity to submit the name of an especially helpful employee, who will be recognized by the Medical Center Director, Michael M. Lawson, with a personalized letter of thanks, a gold heart pin, and two hours of excused absence. **Take a minute and nominate an Employee by:**

1. Writing a letter to the Service about the employee.
2. Making a phone call to the service or patient advocate.

Student Volunteer Program

Student volunteers are an important part of the VA Medical Centers' treatment team. Students receive valuable experience and training which will benefit them in applying for college and jobs. The *James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award* provides scholarship opportunities to students who volunteer at VA medical centers. Student volunteers are liaisons with their communities and provide a valuable element of caring for veterans. The VA Voluntary Service program offers students excellent opportunities for exploring health care career opportunities, gaining experience in a health care environment, learning new skills, as well as, providing many important functions needed at the Medical Center. To learn more about volunteering and qualifying to be nominated for James H. Parke Memorial college scholarships please visit our local volunteer service offices located at each campus or check us out on the web and download an application. <http://www.volunteer.va.gov>.