



# Monthly Report from the Director



**Scott R. Isaacks, FACHE**  
Medical Center Director

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Savannah VA Outpatient Clinic  
Veteran Health Fair**  
Dec. 12, 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

**VAMC Red Cross Blood Drive**  
Dec. 19, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM  
Bloodmobile parked  
at the VAMC

## CHECK IT OUT!

2017 Annual  
Report Video



Ralph H. Johnson  
VA Medical Center

**H**ealth care is an incredible calling – an incredible profession - and I can't think of a better way to spend my days than taking care of our Veteran patients. As I look back over the past year and really over the past several years, I could easily tell you about the incredible journey that we have been on and the numerous accomplishments realized here at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center that have led to our VA, your VA, rising to the level of one of the most highly regarded hospitals in the U.S. in terms of quality, efficiency, and innovation.

As I've shared with each of you now for several years through these monthly messages both our successes and challenges, I've also made the point that any recognition that our hospital has received is not about us. Rather, it is about doing all we can for those who deserve nothing but the best, our veterans. However, as we bring this year to a close, I want to talk about something that may not be in vogue and certainly isn't talked about much in what has been a very public discourse on the job that the VA is doing to keep the promise of "caring for those who have borne the battle."

Today, I want to talk to you about the close to 3,000 staff at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center that I have the privilege of working with each day and tell you the story of their professionalism, dedication and innovative spirit. It is truly their passion for our mission that has led to the many accomplishments that we've seen at our facility, and to the continued drive to never let up in getting even better each day.

It's employees like Cardiologist Michael Zile, M.D., who personally calls several of his patients every Thursday evening to provide the extra layer of care they need, Medical Technologist Lolanya Rivers who treats each test she runs as if she is help-

ing diagnose a family member's condition, and Veteran Eduardo Gonzalez, RN who brings his personal connection to military service with him every day as he cares for his fellow Veterans in our ICU.

Its employees like Medical Instrument Technician Bianca Powell who literally gave of herself to Veteran Frank Ancrum, donating her kidney in a life-saving procedure. She met Ancrum, who volunteers at our VA, less than a year earlier. When she learned he needed a transplant, she offered to get tested and – with less than a 35 percent chance – found out she was a match! That's right - Bianca cared so much that she was willing to donate her kidney as a way to give back to the Veterans who have given so much for our country!

We have staff that check on our veterans when they miss appointments, do all they can to address patient transportation issues that may preclude patients from getting the care they need and even, on occasion, send help to a patient's house when they are concerned about them. Each time there is potential inclement weather, many of our staff put our patients' needs before family needs, contacting literally thousands of our most vulnerable patients who are homebound or have other special needs to make sure they are safe. And many of our staff shelter in place at our medical center during storms sometimes for days at a time to ensure needed care is available to both our inpatients and our community.

This month, as we celebrate the holidays, our staff are participating in the Angel Tree program, providing holiday gifts for children of our Veteran patients. So far, more than 70 percent of these children are sponsored by our employees who are happily playing the part of Santa's elves. At our incredible Fisher House, in addition to the wonderful volunteers and community partners who assist and serve

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meals to families, many of our hospital departments volunteer on their own time to help. In addition to their work at the VA, many of our staff are also involved in community groups, church groups, professional organizations and other programs on their own time to benefit veterans in need.

We have staff that give their all to ensure that our veterans struggling with homelessness aren't left without a suitable place to sleep each night and without the care they need. Our staff have literally celebrated birthdays, weddings and other special occasions with our patients. They have also been there to ensure that our patients are honored at the time of their passing with our Honor Escort Program, draping the deceased Veteran in our nation's colors and escorting him or her from the hospital unit.

The word that I hear time and time again when I talk to our staff about our patients is "family." Our staff truly work as long and as hard as they need to work to ensure that the veterans in their communities are not only provided top notch health care, but are honored and celebrated for their service to our nation.

I could go on, but these are just a few examples of the incredible people who work here at your VA and their stories that too often go untold. I truly do appreciate the countless

letters, cards, emails and comments that I receive literally every single week from our patients and their families about the great care and compassion our staff give to our nation's heroes and their families. During this holiday season and throughout the upcoming year, I ask you to join me in recognizing our outstanding VA team for their hard work and dedication.

Our employees are proud to be public servants. They're proud to be health care providers. Most of all, they are proud to take care of the brave men and women who have defended our freedom.

And I am proud to serve alongside each and every one of them.

Sincerely,



Scott R. Isaacks

Director & CEO



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