



(January 21, 2016)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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In This Briefing: A Message from the Interim VA Chief of Staff

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On behalf of the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, thank you for your dedicated work each and every day that provides the benefits and services our Nation's Veterans and their families have earned and deserve. In the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing today, the Secretary highlighted one of the many noble stories we received about employees who demonstrate our commitment to put Veterans first. That story follows this employee listing.

**VA EMPLOYEES WHO RECEIVED A THANK YOU NOTE FROM THE
SECRETARY OR DEPUTY SECRETARY
FOR PROVIDING VETERANS OUTSTANDING CARE OR SERVICE
DECEMBER 2015**

VA Medical Center, Atlanta, GA
Orania Tigaiaru, M.D.
Deborah Wilson, NP

VA Regional Office, Montgomery, AL
William L. Glass, Veteran Service Representative

Ralph H. Johnson VAMC, Charleston, SC
Hannah P. McCoy, Patient Advocate
Charles J. Tomasello, Patient Advocate

VISN 7 VA Southeast Network, Duluth, GA

Gilbert S. Page, Secretary

VA Montana Health Care System, Fort Harrison, MT

Maire Brennan, M.D.

Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center, Indianapolis, IN

Andrea Meredith, RN

VA Medical Center, Long Beach, CA

Angelica Ruby C. Del Carmen, M.D.

Rhona E. Cortez, RN

Joanna K. Erford, RN

Regina M. Joseph, RN

Christina Koh, M.D. (Resident Physician)

Dennis R. Malkasian, M.D.

Lin Mao, RN

John L. Royce, CRNA

Karen Shore, NP

Ronald K. Takemoto, M.D.

Samuel E. Wilson, M.D.

Jan Wong, RN

VA Regional Office, Portland, OR

Natalie Erickson, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Todd Ellsworth, Rehabilitation Technician

VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Palo Alto, CA

Kathleen A. Butler, Supervisory Social Worker and HUD-VASH Program Team

VA Regional Office, Philadelphia, PA

Lisa Mayne, Rating Veteran Service Representative, Congressional/Advocacy Team

David Strulovitz, Assistant Coach, Advocacy Team

VA Salt Lake City Health Care System

Alec Griffin, DDS

Sierra Debenham, Medical Student

VA Regional Office, St. Paul, MN

Nicholas R. Andro, Coach, Veterans Service Center

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, FL

Kevin Danaher, Veteran Service Representative

Erik Thompson, Veteran Service Officer, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

VA Regional Office, Waco, TX

Stacie M. Roseborough, Veteran Service Representative

Veteran-focused Employees: Living our VA Values, Serving our Nation's Veterans.

In December 2015, Registered Nurse Sharon Levenson, who works in a clinic in Battleboro, Vermont, noticed that one of her regular patients did not come in as scheduled. She could have been thankful for a lighter workload that day, but instead, she called her patient. He did not answer so she grew concerned. She contacted the VA Police. When VA Police Chief John A. Richardson received Ms. Levenson's request for a home welfare check, he cited the rules and informed Nurse Levenson that unless there was a threat of harm, they were not supposed to conduct home welfare checks.

Chief Richardson could have been satisfied that he followed the rules. Instead, he directed Officer Guy Gardner to investigate. Officer Gardner also failed to reach the Veteran. He could have stopped there. Instead, he decided to call the Veteran's emergency point of contact. The emergency point of contact visited the Veteran's home, but no one answered. A lack of tracks in the snow indicated no one had recently come or gone from the home. Concerned, Officer Gardner called local police and requested a welfare check. Local police entered the home and found the Veteran unconscious, but alive. He was rushed to the hospital where he was revived and began his recovery to good health.

These three VA employees demonstrated every bit of the Veteran-focused cultural change VA is undergoing. We hear stories like this every day. These are the stories that don't make the newspapers and blogs, but they make a difference in the lives of Veterans. I encourage each of you to celebrate the kind of initiative displayed by these employees and herald their stories to inspire our other employees to be led by principles and values rather than rules and fear.

Robert D. Snyder

PLEASE PRODUCE LOCALLY FOR ALL THOSE WHO DO NOT ROUTINELY ACCESS EMAIL DUE TO THEIR SPECIALTIES.