

The Salisbury Bulletin

W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center, Salisbury, NC – March 2014

Inside this Issue

- 3 Words of thanks from our Veterans
- 5 From the History Books
- 11 Links and Important Information

March 2014 Observances

- Women's History Month
- National Kidney Month
- Brain Injury Awareness Month
- Irish-American Heritage Month
- National Nutrition Month

Quick Links

- [Salisbury homepage](#)
- [Salisbury Calendar](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)

Women's
HISTORY
MONTH

Salisbury employee retires after five decades of service

By Michael Maddox

Jessie Spencer has spent the better part of her life taking care of our nation's heroes. Now after more than 60 years as a nursing assistant, 51 of those with VA, she's finally going to take some time to take care of herself – she's retiring.

Spencer, who most recently worked in the Specialized Inpatient Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Unit (SIPU) at Salisbury, started here in 1969 after moving home to take care of her aging parents.

"I started nursing at Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Colorado in 1948, until 1962 when I went into the VA system. I came back home because my parents needed me – I'm the only girl," she said. "They were elderly and sickly, and my daddy said, 'You need to come home.'"

There have been a lot of changes at the W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center

over the past 50 years, but one thing that hasn't changed is Jessie Spencer's love of taking care of Veterans. She recalled one Veteran in particular that was close to her heart.

"I started out working Building 2 in surgery. There was this one elderly man - I just took him under my wing," she shared. "They would tell him, 'Other people can give you a bath besides Jessie.' He would say, 'I'll just wait til Jessie comes in, she'll give me a bath.'"



Sam Allen, Chief Nurse of Mental Health, presents Jessie Spencer with her retirement plaque. Spencer has worked at the Salisbury VAMC for more than 50 years, and in the healthcare field for 65 years. (Photo by Luke Thompson, Salisbury VAMC Medical Media)

"When he died, it hurt me so bad. He was 80-something years old back then and I'm 80-something now. I think I've come full circle," she added.

Working in any career for 65 years is quite a feat, but the key to doing anything for so long is enjoying what you do, said Spencer.

"I don't think it's been hard doing anything during my career because I've liked it. I love taking care of folks and making friends, and I try to do

See SPENCER, Page 3



The Xenex robots use a pulsed xenon lamp to emit germicidal ultraviolet light to destroy deadly healthcare associated infection pathogens such as *Clostridium Difficile* (*C. diff*), MRSA, VRE and *Acinetobacter*. (Photo courtesy of Xenex Healthcare Services)

Robot enhancing sanitizing procedures at Salisbury

By Michael Maddox

When most people think of a hospital, they think of a clean, sterile environment.

The W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center has recently taken disinfecting to the next level by adding a new instrument to its arsenal of sanitizing techniques.

The medical center's Environmental Management Service recently incorporated four new Xenex Automated Room Disinfection robots to ensure all areas of the hospital are as free of harmful bacteria as possible.

The Xenex robots use a pulsed xenon lamp to emit germicidal ultraviolet light to destroy deadly healthcare associated infection pathogens, such as *Clostridium Difficile* (*C. diff*), MRSA, VRE and *Acinetobacter*. Within a 5-10 minute cleaning cycle per room, this intense, broad-spectrum light kills harmful microorganisms safely and effectively.

Besides protecting patients from possible infections, the robots can also save tax dollars, as treating a single MRSA infection can cost thousands of dollars; by contrast, the Xenex system eliminates MRSA and other superbugs from VA patient-care areas for less

"It doesn't necessarily make our people's jobs easier; but it gives an extra layer of security from infections."

- Jeffery Tillman

than \$3 per room per treatment cycle.

Jeffery Tillman, Environmental Management Supervisor, said using the Xenex robots doesn't replace past cleaning techniques, instead it enhances his team's effectiveness.

"When we are cleaning, we wipe down everything a person touches, the bed, the floor, everything. Then we go

in and wipe everything down again with soap and bleach," he said. "After we do all of that, then we take the machine in and the Xenon light kills any microorganisms that are left."

"It doesn't necessarily make our people's jobs easier; but it gives an extra layer of security from infections. If anything is left after we've gone in and manually cleaned, this will kill it," Tillman added.

Laura Hodge, Environmental Management Services manager, said the Xenex machines also offer some safety features that others types of similar machines don't.

"It detects motion and will stop if there's any movement in the room during its cycle. If you were exposed to it though, because it uses xenon bulbs, it's not going to hurt you," she said. "They are also 'greener' than comparable systems. Other types of machines use a mercury bulb and this one uses a xenon bulb - it's a brighter bulb and it's not hazardous if it were to break."

SPENCER, cont'd from Page 1

everything I can to make my patients happy," she said. "I tell these young people, if you like your job, you stick with it."

Pam Dixon, SIPU nurse manager, said Spencer's attitude is one to be emulated.

"If she could teach other people who serve Veterans how to interact and exchange with them, it would be a better place. She's always courteous, professional, dependable, and loves the patients," she said.

Spencer said there have been times

those who find out she works for the Veterans Health Administration question how she can deal with some of the more difficult personalities. This doesn't go over well with Spencer.

"I defend my Vets – I don't like people talking about them. I love my Vets," she said.

When asked why she is retiring, Spencer was quick with a retort:

"At 86 years old, don't you think it's time? I'll find something to do. My doctor said he better not catch me up here in Salisbury," she said with a laugh in her voice.

Stage show coming March 3

The "Sing a Song of America" show will appear at the Salisbury VA Medical Center, bringing a new stage presentation to hospitalized Veterans and their guests March 3 at 2 p.m. in the Building 6 Social Room.

The group represents Re-Creation USA, Inc., which provides a national program of live entertainment for America's hospitalized veterans in VA Medical Centers and State Veterans Homes.

"Sing a Song of America" spotlights great songs and great stars as America's young ambassadors to hospitalized Veterans focus on this nation's best loved music. Dynamic vocal renditions are enlivened by intricate, disciplined dance and choreography as the stage...and the entire room...virtually erupt with Re-Creation excitement.

Re-Creation was founded in 1976 and performs in all 50 states. Credits include appearances at some of the nation's most prestigious fairs and festivals, at local, regional, state and national corporation banquets and conventions, and at major resort areas. Civic clubs, fraternal groups, schools, and public and private organizations now keep Re-Creation booked for more than 300 concerts each year.

The BVL Fund, Re-Creation's longest-running sponsor and a Bowlers of America charity for hospitalized veterans, helps to underwrite the tour costs. The Elks National Veterans Service Commission, in conjunction with local B.P.O.E lodges, house Re-Creation touring groups nation-wide. The entire tour is produced in co-operation with the Department of Veterans Affairs.



Words of thanks from our Veterans

My dad received the best care here. When my dad was in the hospice home they treated him with respect and were a friend to him. They made him happy as possible and made sure he was comfortable. He passed away three days before Christmas and the VA was so kind and helped out with lots of things to make transitions easier.

The Hatteras Clinic team is outstanding! They educated me on diabetes and saw me in a timely manner. Outstanding!

I would like to thank Fred Caldwell, LPN, for the treatment he gave me. He saw me in the waiting room looking very down, and stopped on his way out of the clinic to see if I was okay. He took me into his office and helped me make a much needed appointment. He showed someone cared when that was what I needed.

I would like to put in a good word for Dr. Dan Cotoman at the Charlotte CBOC. He is always attentive to my concerns and it's been apparent during all of my appointments.

Thanks Dr. Steven McClintock for helping me by doing a great job on my root canal!



Senior Prom 2014!

Patients, guests and staff were dressed to impress during the recent "Golden Age of Hollywood" Senior Prom held on Main Street in the Community Living Center. It was a night of fun, food and dancing for all who turned out!



From The History Books....

VA instrumental in TB research, treatment

World Tuberculosis Day was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) March 24, 1882. This annual event commemorates the date when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacillus that causes the disease.

Tuberculosis (TB) is now rare in the United States and other developed nations with ample access to antibiotics, but in poorer regions, it trails only HIV/AIDS as the greatest cause of death due to a single infectious agent.

In VA's history, specialized treatment and care for Veterans with tuberculosis began after the Civil War at the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers

(NHDVS). Fifteen Union Veterans were treated for the disease during the homes' first year of operation.

As the disease spread, special wards or wings were established in NHDVS hospitals for TB patients.

Forty years later, in 1907, the NHDVS opened the Battle Mountain Sanitarium in Hot Springs, S.D., to provide short-term specialized care to Veterans with respiratory, lung, or rheumatic problems. Tuberculosis was referred to as "consumption" until the early 20th century.

In 1918, the Bureau of War Risk Insurance and Public Health Service (both part of the Treasury Department) were charged with providing hospitals and medical care to World War I Veterans. They worked with the Ameri-



A group of government nurses after their return from service in Europe — here assigned for special study & training in the field of Tuberculosis at New Haven, Conn. — U.S. Veterans Hospital No. 41 in 1923. (Photo courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society)

can College of Surgeons and others to develop specialty hospitals to meet the needs of not only medical and surgical patients, but those suffering from tuberculosis, neurological, or psychiatric diseases, as well.

Public Health Service nurses received special training to work with patients who had tuberculosis. When the Public Health Service Veterans hospitals were transferred to the Veterans Bureau in 1922, Public Health Service nurses and medical staff, the corps of medical expertise at the time, were transferred as well.

The development of antibiotics during World War II helped bring about the disease's decline. VA was at the forefront as a research partner in several medical studies with DOD and oth-

ers and helped bring TB under control.

The last "new" TB hospital built from the ground up by VA opened in Baltimore, Md., on Oct. 28, 1952.

The last VA tuberculosis hospital, located on Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis, opened on Jan. 4, 1932 and was converted to a TB hospital in 1952. It ceased operations at the end of 1968.

Its conversion into a general hospital, effective on Jan. 1, 1969, closed a chapter in VA's history, while serving as a testament to the great strides made by modern medical research.

After 1969, TB patients were treated in pulmonary or respiratory care units at VA hospitals or on an outpatient basis.

The Salisbury Patient Advocates have been temporarily relocated due to the construction in Building 2. Their new location is on the first floor of Building 3, in the space previously occupied by AFGE, rooms 1056, 1035 and 1036.

Their phone numbers have not changed. You can reach Eladio Cintron, Lead Patient Advocate, at ext. 3981, Teresa Cress at ext. 3602, and Valerie Bennett at ext. 3747.



Minority Veterans Program—serving all who served

Established under Public Law 103-446 on November 2, 1994, the Minority Veterans Program is a coordinated effort to increase awareness of minority Veteran related issues and to develop strategies for increasing their participation in existing VA benefits and health care services.

The Minority Veterans Program serves all Veterans regardless of race or ethnicity, with a primary

emphasis on minority Veterans in the local community. Veterans of minority groups include: Asian American, African American, Hispanic/Latino and Native American, including American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islander.

For more information, you can contact Belinda Dublin, Minority Veterans Program Coordinator, at (704) 597-3500, ext. 7983.

Did you know there is one number to call for your healthcare needs and questions?

The Veterans Call Support Center at (800) 706-9126

The call center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:15 p.m. (excluding Federal holidays).

If you develop a medical problem and would like to see your doctor before your next appointment, please call the Veterans Call Support Line.

If you need to call outside of normal business hours, you can leave a voicemail message to cancel an appointment or to request a callback to schedule an appointment.

For medical emergencies, dial 911.

You can also call the Veterans' Crisis Line at (800) 273-TALK (8255) if you need someone to help you deal with a difficult time in your life.



What's your
health age?

Take the **health**living assessment to find out

The **health**living assessment (HLA) is a first step to understanding—and improving—your health. The HLA asks you questions about your lifestyle and health history, and provides you:

- Your “**health age**,” an estimate of how healthy you are compared with others your age, based on factors like your weight, diet, exercise, and health habits.
- **Personalized reports** on your overall health and risk of certain diseases.
- **Recommendations** on how to improve your health and lower your disease risk.

The HLA is available 24/7 through the **My HealthVet website**. It's confidential and takes only about 20 minutes to complete!

 **health**living assessment

Ready to get on track to better health? It's easy with the HLA:

- 1 Log in to your online account at My HealthVet (www.myhealth.va.gov). If you're new to My HealthVet, just register for an online account at www.myhealth.va.gov.
- 2 Click on the **health**living assessment link.
- 3 Complete the assessment and find out about your health age today!



Your New ID Card: More Secure And Personal

The new Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) offers peace of mind with a personal touch.

Already have the old Veteran Identification Card? If so, VA will automatically mail you a replacement VHIC. Just make sure VA has your current address.

Cards will be mailed starting April 2014. It may take up to 3 months to replace all cards. Once you receive your new card, destroy your VIC as you would a credit card by cutting or shredding it.

If you are already enrolled but do not have a Veteran Identification Card, contact the Enrollment Coordinator at your local VA medical facility or request a new VHIC at your next VA health care appointment.



To learn more about the VHIC, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VHIC or call **1-877-222-VETS (8387)**.