

NOVA History 2007

Annual Legislative Roundtable

NOVA held its fourteenth Annual Legislative Roundtable on January 12, 2007 at the DAV National Headquarters in Washington, DC, providing an opportunity for key stakeholders in veterans' issues to gather and share information. John Bradley, Legislative Consultant for the DAV, welcomed everyone to the event. NOVA President Cecilia McVey identified NOVA concerns about the effects of the continuing resolution on VA facilities, and expressed NOVA's support for the Independent Budget. She identified NOVA's concerns regarding providing care for new veterans, the impact of the new regulations for background checks resulting in additional delays in hiring staff, centralization of information technology, and unfunded mandates. NOVA also supports direct hire for nursing assistants. Mary Raymer, NOVA's legislative chair, added her welcome and invited participants to discuss concerns

Major topics and issues presented included:

- Legislation to eliminate the salary cap for registered nurses at grade 5, which currently results in a pay disparity of approximately \$10,000 with similar positions in the private sector
- Legislation to allow restructuring of the nurse pay grades to result in a seven grade pay scale, and allowing nurses in the lowest three grades a more defined rank acceleration and more visible advancement (related to outcomes of National Commission on VA Nursing)
- Legislation to recognize nursing assistants as part of the hybrid title 38 series, which would result in the ability to hire them directly

- A legislative proposal to develop a VA nursing academy, beginning with similar affiliations with schools of nursing to those currently in place with schools of medicine
- Reinstating legislation for the Health Professions Scholarship Program, providing funds for students to obtain a BSN in exchange for work at a VA facility after graduation
- Legislation to waive the federally mandated per diem travel rules so that the Travel Nurse Corps members can be paid according to locality pay
- Implementation of the physician pay bill
- Research identifying occurrence of homelessness in veterans within 8-10 years after discharge
- Supportive services for homeless veterans including access to health care, ensuring income security, affordable housing, and prevention of homelessness
- Concern with VA budget, support of Independent Budget, and need for mandatory funding for VA
- Funding for veterans requiring mental health care
- Ensuring disability compensation for disabled veterans
- A GI Bill for the 21st century
- Support for VA medical care and research
- Accountability from VA regarding funding priorities
- Concerns regarding VA's proposal to use anesthesia assistants

Participants included: NOVA Board of Directors President Cecilia McVey, Past President Dianne Nelson, Vice President Mary Raymer, Treasurer Ron Hopper, Membership

Secretary Nancy Claflin, Secretary Larry Lemos, Directors Joan Clifford, Marian Ehrhart, Magelene James, Cheryl Knowles; and Mary Seaman. Executive Director Deborah Beck; Director of Administration Susan Dove; Account Executive Luke Zorich; Past President Margaret Kruckemeyer; Department of Veterans Affairs Deputy Chief Nursing Officer Audrey Drake RN MS; AMVETS Deputy National Legislative Director Joe Chenelly; Disabled American Veterans Legislative Consultant John Bradley; Veterans of Foreign Wars Field Representative Mark Potter; Friends of Medical Care and Health Research Executive Committee Member Gary Ewart; National Association of VA Nurse Anesthetists President Angela Mund; National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists Executive Director Mike McLendan; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans President and CEO Cheryl Beversdorf; and American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Legislative Staffing Officer Brian Bullard.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Washington D.C. on January 12, 2007. The board reviewed NOVA Foundation Legacy Award to be presented at the gala event on May 9. They also approved support of Office of Nursing Services objectives: The board also reviewed information on the 2008 Annual Meeting to be held at the Radisson in Boston April 12-14, 2008.

The Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence was awarded to Jenice Guzman RN MSN. Jenice Guzman is the Nurse Practitioner in the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC) Outpatient Clinic. She is well-respected and highly regarded as an excellent clinician in her care of frail older adults. She has always believed in the importance of excelling and combining clinical practice, education, research, and community awareness in raising the quality of nursing as a profession. She initiated an interdisciplinary project to develop a GRECC Medication Review Clinic involving members from medicine, nursing, and pharmacy to provide a one-time clinic visit for the

geriatric clinician to review all of the elderly patient's medications, provide education, and make recommendations to the patient's primary care provider using the Beers Criteria for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults. She is both the first nurse and the youngest person to receive one of VA's most prestigious awards, the 2005 Mark Wolcott Award for Excellence in Clinical Care Delivery.

The Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was awarded to Cynthia McCormack RN MS. Cynthia McCormack has served as the Nurse Executive and Associate Chief of Staff for Inpatient Care Service at the Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center in Phoenix, Arizona since 2000. She is an active NOVA member and strong supporter of NOVA, currently serving as the local chapter treasurer. She established a vigorous Evidence Based Practice Committee which has sponsored many exemplary projects directly related to the delivery of safe patient care. In a groundbreaking move, she created and hosted the first Arizona VA Evidence Based Practice Consortium, including VA registered nurses from Phoenix, Prescott, and Tucson. She created a new position of Nurse Researcher for Inpatient Care Services to serve as a resource for staff and management by facilitating nursing professional activities related to research and academic supports, and supporting the evidence based practice culture within nursing.

The Distinguished Service Award was given to Kenneth Kizer MD, MPH. This award is given for distinguished service to the registered nurses of the Department of Veterans Affairs and for dramatically and significantly improving the health care of veterans. Dr. Kizer served as Under Secretary for Health in the Department of Veterans Affairs beginning in 1994. He had a vision for VA health care to change the Veterans Health Administration from a tertiary care, bureaucratic system with poor quality outcomes to a system focused on providing high quality primary care delivered in outpatient community clinics using resources much more efficiently.

He also envisioned VHA using information technology to create a paperless medical record and significantly improve patient care. These goals have been achieved, and VHA is now considered the leading health care organization in the United States, a monumental change from just fifteen years ago.

The Vernice Ferguson Award was given to Phyllis West. Phyllis served as the chair of the first NOVA Foundation Marine Corps Marathon Charity Partners event. Orchestrating NOVA's participation as a charity partner required a tremendous amount of organization and planning, as well as enthusiasm. Phyllis devoted many hours of her personal time to assure the success of this event. Her careful attention to detail assured that all of the NOVA Foundation Marine Corps Marathon participants were well-informed and on schedule with their assigned tasks. Phyllis skillfully organized the volunteers for not only the hospitality tent, but also for the water and first aid stations. The event generated over \$50,000 for NOVA Foundation scholarships and research grants. Throughout the planning and fulfillment of this event, she never wavered in her enthusiasm. On the day of the race, she was on the sidelines cheering the runners and walkers, as well as keeping all of the volunteers on track, and followed up to begin planning for the 2007 event. In addition to her efforts related to the Marine Corps Marathon, she also contributes monetarily to other NOVA Foundation fund raising activities.

In January 2007, a comprehensive study by Harvard Medical School concludes that federal hospitals, including those run by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), provide the best care available anywhere for some of the most common life-threatening illnesses. "This recognition by Harvard should assure veterans of the quality of VA's world-class health care system," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Veterans have earned only the best. And we can prove that's exactly what VA is providing." Researchers looked at congestive heart

failure, heart attack and pneumonia across the health care industry and found that patients in federal facilities are more likely to receive high-quality care than those in for-profit hospitals. The study found that hospitals operated by the federal government and the military received higher performance ratings than other hospitals studied. A large percentage of federal hospitals are operated by VA.

Also in January 2007, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) agreed to make joint inpatient electronic health records a reality -- a move that will transform the way both departments deliver health care and that can be a model for the health care industry nationwide. In recent years, the two departments have developed a string of pioneering initiatives to improve the way they care for men and women transitioning from military to civilian life. In testimony before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, VA Deputy Secretary Gordon H. Mansfield said, "Our two departments understand that we are responsible for the same people, only at different times in their lives. Our greatest challenge, and our greatest opportunity, is to build systems that meet the needs of veterans and DoD beneficiaries for today and tomorrow. We will continue to persevere toward that goal."

In March 2007 the NOVA Membership Committee created another opportunity for networking and communicating with other NOVA members. The NOVA website contains message boards for members to post information or ask questions. There are categories for Membership & Chapters, Newsletter, Legislative Issues, and NOVA Foundation.

The 2007 Annual Educational Program was held in Crystal City, VA, May 9-12, 2007. The program began Wednesday afternoon with a strategic planning session facilitated by NOVA President Cecilia McVey RN, MHA and NOVA Board Member Joan Clifford RN, BSN, MSM.

NOVA members had the opportunity to provide input towards the strategic direction of the organization.

Wednesday evening, members had the opportunity to attend the NOVA Foundation Gala 2007 “The Tapestry of VA Nursing: Weaving a Profession and a Passion.” The event included a silent auction to support the NOVA foundation, a keynote address by Adrian Cronauer, and the presentation of awards. The GLHN Scholarship Award was given to Beatrice Grant. The NOVA Foundation G. V. “Sonny” Montgomery Award was given to Adrian Cronauer, who is perhaps best known as the inspiration for the Robin Williams film, “Good Morning, Vietnam.” He currently serves as the Special Assistant to the Director of the POW/MIA Office at the Department of Defense. The NOVA Foundation inaugural Legacy Award was given to Audrey Drake, RN, BSN, MSN, CNAA. She is the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

On Thursday morning, after opening remarks by Ron Hopper, RN, BC, MSN, CNAA, Program Chair; and Cecilia McVey, NOVA President, a moment of silence was held for lost friends. Participants heard a powerful keynote address “Women in Military Service” from Brig. Gen. Wilma Vaught USAF, Ret. MBA. Frank Purcell, BS, Senior Director, Federal Government Affairs for the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, next spoke on “Making a Difference: Practical Advocacy for Nurses.” The Veterans Services Organizations Panel provided insight on key concerns from these veterans’ groups. Participants in the panel included Joy Ilem, Assistant National Legislative Director, Disabled American Veterans; Teresa P. Morris, Manager, Action Corps, VFW National Legislative Service, and Kimo Hollingsworth, Legislative Director, AMVETS. This panel was followed by the Senate and House VA Committees Panel. Participants heard from Kim Lipsky, Deputy Staff Director, Committee on

Veterans' Affairs, U. S. Senate and William T. Cahill, Republican Chief Counsel, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U. S. Senate.

Following this panel, participants boarded buses for a trip to Capitol Hill. NOVA nurses met in the basement of the Capitol and heard presentations from Rep. Julia Carson, D-IN and her Chief of Staff. Ms. Carson spoke highly of nurses. "Nurses are unsung heroes. You alleviate pain and trauma, and you do such a tremendous job. Thank you." The meeting was followed by an afternoon of Congressional visits. At the end of the day, NOVA members met with Cathy Wiblemo, a staff member for the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Friday morning opened with the exhibit hall. NOVA members had the opportunity to talk with vendors and see new patient care products. Cathy Rick RN, MS, CNAA, FACHE, Chief Nursing Officer, Office of Nursing Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, introduced the nursing services panel from her office. Oyweda Moorer, RN, MSN, CAN; Karen Ott, RN, MSN; Marla Weston, RN, PhD; Becky Kellen RN, MS; and Alan Bernstein, RN, MS. This was followed by a town hall session with Cathy Rick and the panel. The town hall session was followed by an opportunity for participants to view an outstanding display of posters. This was followed by the Awards Luncheon and Annual Business Meeting.

Cathy Rick, RN, MS, CNAA, FACHE presented an Outstanding Service award to Dianne Nelson, RN, BSN, NOVA Past President. NOVA President Cecilia McVey RN MHA presented the Professional Nurse Award for Clinical Excellence to Jenice Guzman, RN, MSN. The Professional Nurse Award for Leadership was presented to Cynthia McCormack, RN, MS. Phyllis West received the Vernice Ferguson Award, and the Silver Star Award was given to the Tucson Chapter. Ken Kizer, MD, MBA will receive the Distinguished Service Award as unexpected circumstances kept him from being able to attend the ceremony.

Later that afternoon participants heard from two NOVA Foundation scholarship winners. Jill E. Bormann, PhD, RN, presented “Efficacy of Mantram Repetition for PTSD Symptoms in Veterans.” Connie Uphold, PhD, RN, presented “Readjustment Process of OEF/OIF Veterans and Families Living in Puerto Rico.” Friday evening participants attended a reception in honor of NOVA President Cecilia McVey, sponsored by Dianne and Bill Nelson.

Saturday morning began with a thought-provoking presentation on “OIF/OEF Women Veterans Issues” by Juanita Warman, RN, NP. This was followed by a special recognition ceremony honoring the NOVA Membership Committee, NOVA Chapter Contacts, and NOVA Chapter Membership award winners. Cheryl Beversdorf RN, MHA, MA spoke on homeless veterans, “The Crisis Facing America.” Maureen Levesque gave an introduction to Boston and invited everyone to attend next year’s meeting. Mary Seaman RN, MS closed the program with an enlightening presentation on Florence Nightingale.

President Cecilia McVey opened the annual business meeting as she presented an integrated report from the entire NOVA board detailing NOVA’s accomplishments for the year. NOVA ended the 2006 fiscal year with net assets of \$16,232. NOVA is heavily dependent upon membership dues and continues to research nondues sources of revenue. A detailed version of NOVA’s 25-year history is available on the website. This is an elegant, keepsake document which outlines the history of NOVA. The document includes an appendix listing Board members and award winners during NOVA’s 25 years, since it’s formation at the Hines VA in 1980. Chapters should think about purchasing the history book for both members as well as potential members.

The Membership Committee, under the leadership of Membership Secretary Nancy Claflin, increased membership to over 3200. The committee also worked diligently to establish a

contact at each VA facility, with 103 contacts identified. The NOVA membership video was converted to a DVD format and sent to all NOVA chapter contacts who are members. The 2006/2007 Committee members were: Jeff Allen, Marian Allen, Providencia Cardona, Joan Clifford, Marian Ehrhart, Lee Fealy, Magelene James, Cheryl Knowles, Kathleen Lehmann, Janet Parrish, Ron Patrick, Mary Powe, Jay Purser, Thelma Roach-Serry, and Mary Seaman. The Membership Committee developed a NOVA poster which was presented at the first VA Advance Practice Meeting in San Antonio by Beverly Ross. The Membership Committee implemented message boards on the NOVA website to increase networking among NOVA members. The NOVA chapter awards for the greatest increase in membership were awarded to Las Vegas (small chapter), Lebanon (medium chapter), and New York (large chapter).

NOVA underwrote a reception at the April Nurse Executive Leadership Conference in Crystal City, VA. President Cecilia McVey and Vice President Mary Raymer addressed the group of approximately 260 leaders and asked everyone to join NOVA. Additionally, Cheryl Knowles presented a NOVA poster at the American Organization of Nurse Executives meeting in April.

The NOVA foundation funded a \$3000 Jesse Brown Scholarship as well as four \$1500 scholarships in 2006. Additionally, \$20,000 and \$5,000 research grants were funded. The NOVA Foundation became the first nursing organization selected as a charity partner for the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, DC. NOVA had 17 individuals who participated in the marathon and 28 who participated in the 10K walk/run. Together, the NOVA team was able to raise over \$90,000 to create scholarship and research grants for VA nurses.

Maureen Levesque of Boston served as the Teller for the 2007 elections. Nancy Claflin from Phoenix was elected President-Elect. Larry Lemos from Los Angeles was elected Vice

President. Ron Hopper from Baltimore was re-elected Treasurer. Joan Clifford from Boston was elected Secretary. Cheryl Knowles from Bath was appointed Membership Secretary. New directors elected to the board include Sharon Johnson from Baltimore and Sharon Simpson from Tucson. The following chair assignments were made: Annual Meeting Chair, Maureen Levesque; Awards Chair, Sharon Johnson; History Chair, Sharon Simpson; Legislative Chair, Nancy Claflin; Nominations Chair, Dianne Nelson; Publications Chair, Larry Lemos, and Website Chair, Joan Clifford.

Outgoing board members Magelene James and Mary Raymer were recognized with plaques in recognition of their contributions to the NOVA Board of Directors.

The NOVA Board of Directors met in Crystal City, VA on May 9 and May 12, 2007. The board approved a dues increase of \$10 annually beginning July 1, 2007. The board also approved upgrading the Director of Administration staff position to Deputy Director. A Website Chair responsibility will be added to the Board of Directors; Joan Clifford will serve as the Website Chair

On May 25, 2007, the United States Senate confirmed Dr. Michael J. Kussman as Under Secretary for Health for the Department of Veterans Affairs. "I am extremely honored that the Senate has approved my nomination. I am proud to be given the opportunity to lead VA's dedicated health care workers in serving our nation's veterans," Dr. Kussman said.

Dr. Kussman joined VHA in 2000 following a distinguished, quarter-century career in the U.S. Army in which he served as commander of the Europe Regional Medical Command and command surgeon for U.S. Army in Europe. As commander of the Walter Reed Army Health Care System in Washington, he received the rank of Brigadier General. With VA, he served in a number of progressively responsible positions, including Principal Deputy Under Secretary for

Health. At the time of his confirmation, he held the title of Acting Under Secretary for Health. He was sworn in on May 30, 2007.

Overall, VA fared well with HR 2206, receiving nearly \$1.8 billion in additional funding for medical services, administration, facilities, research, IT, and minor construction. Credit for this good news and the House Mil-Con Appropriations Subcommittee recommendation of \$480 million for VA R&D in FY 2008 goes to the many members of Congress who responded positively to the hard work of the Friends of VA Medical Care and Health Research (FOVA), the Independent Budget (IB), and the Federation of American Scientists for Experimental Biology (FASEB), all of which coordinate their VA research advocacy efforts for greater effectiveness, and other VA research supporters.

In May, 2007 VA announced a formal, 17-person committee that will advise on ways to improve VA programs serving veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and their families. Members of the VA Advisory Committee on OIF/OEF Veterans and Families are: Lt. Gen. Barno of Washington, D.C.; Dawn Halfaker of Washington, D.C.; Lonnie Moore of San Diego; Jack L. Tilley of Riverview, Fla.; Gary Wilson of Carlsbad, Calif.; Liza Biggers of New York City; Pam Estes of Dayton, Md.; Caroline Maney of Shalimar, Fla.; Kimberly Hazelgrove of Lorton, Va.; Michael Ayoub of Ashburn, Va.; Rocky McPherson of Tallahassee, Fla.; John Sommer of Annandale, Va.; Dennis Donovan of Atlanta; Frances Hackett of South Plainfield, N.J.; Paul F. Livengood of Manassas, Va.; Tim McClain of Alexandria, Va.; and Chris Yoder of Baltimore.

On May 30, 2007, the formation of a workgroup to make recommendations to streamline the hiring process for Title 5 and 38 employees was announced. This group consists of representatives from VAs across the country.

In June 2007, to address a shortage of nurses across the nation and ensure that veterans continue to receive personalized, world-class care in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities, VA has announced creation of a new multi-campus Nursing Academy. VA has one of the largest nursing staffs of any health care system in the world, with about 61,000 registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, vocational nurses, and nursing assistants at the Department's 153 medical centers and nearly 900 clinics. A five-year, \$40 million pilot program will establish partnerships with 12 nursing schools across the country during the next three years, beginning with four for the 2007-2008 academic years. The VA nursing academy is a virtual organization with central administration in Washington and teaching at competitively selected nursing schools across the country who partner with VA. VA currently provides clinical education to nearly 100,000 health professional trainees annually, including students from more than 600 schools of nursing. The first nursing schools selected to participate for the 2007-2008 academic year are the University of Florida in Gainesville, San Diego State University in California, the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, and Fairfield University in Fairfield Connecticut.

On July 17, 2007, Secretary of the VA Nicholson announced his resignation to be effective 10/17/07. His intention is to return to the private sector.

On July 19, 2007 the NOVA Board went to Capitol Hill and met with legislative staff member David Tucker for the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and legislative staff members Kim Lipsky and Ted Pusey for the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. The topics discussed were as follows:

- Resignation of Secretary Jim Nicholson
- Support for the VA Health Professions Scholarship Program
- Problems with hiring staff due to length of time to complete Vet Pro

- Removal of the cap on Nurse V Salary
- Direct hire of nursing assistants
- Locality pay issues
- Retention and recruitment of nurses
- Information and technology support
- Budget issues with continuing resolutions
- VA Nursing Academy

The NOVA Board of Directors met on July 20, 2007 in Washington, DC. The NOVA Strategic Plan was a major focus of this meeting. The board is working to strengthen the plan's Professional Practice section. Issues supported by the NOVA Board are evidence-based practice as the basis for clinical and administrative practices in VAs nationwide. Other issues that NOVA supports are funding initiatives for the reestablishment of the VA Professional Scholarship Program, employee debt reduction program, Nursing Academy Initiatives, the implementation of the Clinical Nurse Leader role, and impact of information technology centralization on professional nursing practice. Membership, communications, legislation and support of the NOVA Foundation were also included in the strategic plan.

The NOVA Board heard the members' comments about holding the NOVA Annual Meeting every other year in Washington DC and now will hold a one day Legislative Session beginning in January, 2009 and the locations for the NOVA Annual Meetings will be Boston in 2008, New Orleans in 2009, and San Francisco in 2010. NOVA would like feedback from the membership concerning these plans.

Also in July, the Shalala-Dole report was released. This report describes methods for veterans to receive better health care.

Ann Narciso RN, MPA who is a Clinical Application Coordinator at the Palo Alto Health Care System and Thelma Roach –Serry RN, BNS, CAN, BC who is a Clinical Nurse Manager of Specialty Clinics in Ambulatory Care at the Hunter- Holmes Mc Quire VAMC in Richmond Virginia were appointed to the NOVA Board of Directors after the July, 2007 NOVA Board Meeting to fill vacant board positions

Plans for the NOVA Annual Meeting entitled A Revolution in VA Nursing, which will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, on April 9-12, 2008 are underway. The Annual Meeting starts on Wednesday afternoon with a strategic planning session led by NOVA President Cecelia McVey. Wednesday evening the NOVA Foundation will hold a reception and silent auction. The keynote session on Thursday morning is titled “Serial Murder by Healthcare Providers: Lessons Learned - Healthcare Administration & Quality Management Departments & Direct Care Providers & Clinical/Forensic Investigation”. Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, MD, MPH and Mary K. Sullivan MSN, RNC, CARN, FAAFS will present this timely session. The day continues with sessions on hospice care, polytrauma, system redesign, and ends with a bit of humor. That evening an optional event is conveniently located in the hotel theater. Instead of the traditional HRT, (Hormone Replacement Therapy) there will be an opportunity to embrace the new HRT (Humor Relief Therapy), celebrating life over 40, with “Menopause the Musical”.

Friday begins with “Revolutionary Thoughts from the Office of Nursing Services” and a town hall meeting with Cathy Rick. The poster session, awards luncheon, and annual business meeting also takes place. The day finishes with a team building event which will take participants into the city. Saturday is the final day and features exhibits, sessions of success in education, and writing for publication. The grand finale features Mary Seaman creatively

preparing participants for the next annual meeting, which happens to be in New Orleans in 2009. Don't miss out on the fun, friendships, and learning!

The VA has opened a National Suicide Prevention Hotline to provide veterans with emotional crises with 24 hour access to trained help. A veteran or concerned person can call 1-800 273-TALK (8255) and they will reach trained staff at the Canandaigua VA in Canandaigua, NY. Canandaigua is being remodeled and modernized. These plans include construction of a one story 120 bed nursing home, a 50 bed residential rehabilitation center, and renovating an outpatient building to meet the changing needs of area veterans. The center is also being designated as a "Mental Health Center of Excellence" which will focus on suicide prevention, post traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health issues.

Audrey Drake, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer for the Office of Nursing Services received the Legacy Award from NOVA and in May 2007 a health and dental clinic was named after her by the District of Columbia Army National Guard (DCARNG). Carolyn Bennet RN, BSN, CRN, a NOVA member from Phoenix Arizona was honored with a scholarship established in her name. This honor was bestowed upon her by the Grand Canyon State Chapter of the American Radiological Nurses Association. Lynda Oleander Chief Nurse Executive at the James J Peters Medical Center was presented with the 2007 New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) Nursing Service Administrative Award. Bridget Maybury, who is the Performance Improvement Coordinator at the James J Peters Medical Center, had an article, describing a creative approach to the national nursing shortage, published in *Advance for Nurses*.

In July 2007, NOVA annual dues were increased from \$90 to \$100. Payroll deductions increased from \$3.80 to \$4.10 per pay period.

The NOVA Foundation is a charity partner in the Marine Corps Marathon for the second consecutive year. The NOVA Foundation is also a charity participant in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Therefore VA employees can choose to contribute to the foundation as a charity. Fundraising items that are being sold in support of the Marathon by the NOVA Foundation include duffel bags, blankets, and sweatshirts. A portion of the proceeds will go toward scholarships and research grants. Another NOVA Foundation fundraising program and chapter fundraiser is that of selling bumper stickers that say “VA Nurses Caring for America’s Heroes” The NOVA Foundation said goodbye to a very loyal and dedicated board member at the last meeting. Joan Clifford, Associate Chief Nurse at VA Boston Healthcare, has decided to step down from her role as the treasurer/secretary for the NOVA Foundation. Joan was very active on the Scholarship Selection Committee. She will continue her term as secretary for the NOVA Board. Thank you to Joan for a job well done.

Written testimony was submitted by NOVA in October, 2007 to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs on the topic of Retention and Recruitment in the Department of Veterans Affairs. NOVA continues to monitor the issues important to registered nurses and the NOVA Legislative Committee welcomes input. NOVA supports the following:

- Mandatory Funding
- Equity Pay for Nurse Executives at the Nurse V Level
- Consistent Implementation of the Locality Pay Law
- Adequate Funding
- Adequate Training and Support for Human Resource Departments
- Hybrid 38 Status for Nursing Assistants
- Health Care for Part Time Employees

- Nurse Travel Corps
- Scholarship Programs
- VA Health Professionals Assistance Program(38 USC7601-7636)
- Programs to Help Decrease Delays in Hiring Licensed Staff
- VA Nurse Academy
- 36/40 Work Schedule
- Information Technology
- Computerized Patient Record
- Decentralized System
- Evidence Based Practice

October 1, 2007- Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield was named acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs following the resignation of Jim Nicholson on July 17,2007 to become effective October 1,2007. Mr. Mansfield assumes this position under the terms of the Federal Vacancies Reform Act. He will serve as Acting Secretary until the next nominee is confirmed by the President.

Genomics is coming to the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is according to an article by Christine Kasper, PhD, RN, FAAN, VA Office of Nursing Services in the Fall Issue of News from NOVA. In March, 2006 “the formation of a committee of internationally recognized scientists and veteran’s advocates was announced to advise the Department on emerging issues in genomic health care. The new Genomic Medicine Advisory Committee will assist to establish policies for the use of genetic information to better customize treatments and therapies to the individual patient. For example, the response of each person to a specific drug is unique and currently often unpredictable. Genetic screening for the unique metabolism and efficacy of drugs

can be used to accurately prescribe and dose medications to prevent adverse drug reactions. The use of a patient's own genetics to drive their healthcare has come to be known as 'genomic' or 'molecular medicine' and will move us from providing care that is prevention based to care that is predictive of future health status." Currently genomics is not consistently included in "entry level nursing programs or licensing exams. The successful provision of individualized genetic care will center on the ability of nurses to create the necessary evidence based care and interventions."

On October 18, 2007, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that 46 grants worth over \$16 million have been awarded to public and private non profit groups to help homeless veterans. This will create 950 beds for homeless veterans for a total of more than 12,000 VA funded community based beds in 34 states and the District of Columbia.

On October 28, 2007 Gordon Mansfield Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced a conference with the Department of Veterans Affairs., Department of Defense, and the National Institutes to improve the designs and methodologies of research studies concerning Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).The Institute of Medicine released a report on October 18, 2007 that stated that exposure based therapies have been proven to be effective for PTSD. The IOM report also stated that more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of pharmacotherapy.

The NOVA Foundation was again a charity partner in the 32nd Annual Marine Corp Marathon on October 28, 2007. Thank you to everyone who walked, ran, or volunteered time and resources to the success of this event. A special thank you goes to Bill and Dianne Nelson and Bill and Margaret Kruckemeyer for their work in the NOVA Hospitality Tent. This year NOVA had a team of 8 marathon participants, 30 -10K participants, and 46 volunteers at the

water station, medical tent, and hospitality tent. Checks are still arriving in the mail and so far more than \$40,000 has been raised this year for nursing scholarships and research grants. Again, thank you to all who participated in the success of this event.

NOVA MARATHON RACE WINNERS: Official Time

First Place:	Paul McMartin	4:44:23
Second Place:	Tom Chaney	4:48:57
Third Place:	Terri Bortot	4:57:00

NOVA 10K RACE WINNERS:

First Place:	Steve Lieberman	0:57:29
Second Place:	Barbara Conly	0:58:10
Third Place:	Larry Lemos	1:07:22

NOVA FUNDRAISING WINNERS:

First Place:	Janine Young
Second Place:	Steven Gordon
Third Place:	Jack Woodruff

James W. Peake MD was sworn in as the sixth Secretary of Veterans Affairs by President George W. Bush on December 20, 2007. Dr Peake is a native of Saint Louis Missouri who obtained his Bachelors of Science Degree from West Point Military Academy. He served in Viet Nam and was awarded the Silver and Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart. He retired from the Army in 2004 after serving four years as the Army Surgeon General.

On December 18,2007, Dr Michael Kussman Under Secretary for Health , signed a VA Memorandum dated December 7,2007 and titled Request for Exception, Administrative Requirements Relating to Appointment VA Handbook, 5005.This will expedite hiring of nurses

and other clinicians. VA facilities, nationwide were advised to implement the content of this memo immediately.

Membership Chair Cheryl Knowles announced in the winter issue of News from NOVA that the NOVA Member –Get –A Member Campaign is ongoing and ends on April 1, 2008. Any member who signs up five new NOVA members receives a free membership for the next year. If a member signs up 15 new NOVA Members he or she will receive free registration for the 2008 Boston Annual Meeting. The NOVA membership count remains at 3200 members as of December, 31, 2007.

The officers for 2007-2008 were:

President:	Cecilia McVey (Boston HCS)
President-Elect	Nancy Claflin (Phoenix VAMC)
Vice President:	Larry Lemos (Long Beach VAMC)
Secretary:	Joan Clifford (Boston VAMC)
Membership Secretary:	Cheryl Knowles (Bath VAMC)
Treasurer:	Ron Hopper (Maryland HCS)
Directors:	Marian Earhart (Pittsburgh VAMC)
	Sharon Johnson (Maryland HCS)
	Ann Narciso (Palo Alto VAMC)
	Thelma Roach-Serry (Richmond VAMC)
	Mary Seaman (Tampa VAMC)
	Sharon Simpson (Southern Arizona HCS)
Immediate Past President:	Dianne Nelson (Southern Arizona HCS)