



The Journal

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Bethesda Hosts 3rd Military Research Competition

By Cat DeBinder
Journal staff writer

To review and judge scientific research projects geared toward advancing military medicine, the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) hosted the 3rd Annual National Capital Region Military Research Competition March 21-24.

With nearly 50 researchers participating from the National Capital Area, the competition included poster board presentations displayed in Building 9 throughout the week. In addition, there was an oral competition named after Robert A. Phillips, a former Navy captain, who was known for his significant medical research and contributions to the military.

"We're trying to encourage residents, interns and fellows to do more research,

that supports our wounded warriors," said Elaine Cleveland, management specialist for the director of education at NNMC. "We want people involved with [the process]. We are a teaching hospital and we want to find cures for patients to better their lives during recovery."

Amongst the panel of distinguished judges were Dr. Linda Youngman, senior advisor for the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention; Dr. Wayman Cheatham, special assistant to the Surgeon General of the Navy for Medical Research; Dr. Laura Ruse Brosch, director of the Office of Research Protections; and Dr. Joseph Pellegrini, director of the Nurse Anesthesia Program at the University of Maryland School of Nursing.



(photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Dion Dawson)

Researchers and their clinical studies over the past year were reviewed and judged during the 3rd National Capital Region Military Research Competition, comparing ingenuity and applications to the medical field.

Tied for first place in the staff category of the oral competition were NNMC staff physicians Army Maj. Edward Hulten, who works in Cardiology, and Lt.

Cmdr. Rubin Acosta, who works in Gastroenterology. Acosta's project was on the development of antibodies

See Research page 5

Bethesda Celebrates Women's History Month

By Mass
Communication
Specialist 3rd Class
Alexandra Snow
Journal staff writer

Sailors at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) and Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) celebrated women's history and heritage March 23 with a Navy Enlisted Women's Empowerment Panel at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence (NICoE).

Coordinated by NSAB's Multicultural Committee and Navy Medicine Manpower, Training and Education (NM MPT&E) Junior Enlisted Association (JEA), the panel featured eight female senior enlisted leaders, including a force



(photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alexandra Snow)

Naval Support Activity Bethesda Multicultural Committee members pose for a picture with senior enlisted women who spoke during the committee's Navy Enlisted Women Empowerment Panel on March 23 at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence.

master chief, master chief, senior chiefs and chief petty officers from Naval District Washington (NDW), sharing their experiences as females in the Navy.

"I am a Sailor, I am a mentor, I'm a wife and also a mother, but first and foremost, I am a woman," said Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) Force

Master Chief Laura Martinez. "All of the women sitting on this panel are leaders and women. We share a background of service."

At the event, the "sisters in service" recalled their toughest and most rewarding times in the military, all sharing a time in the not-so-distant past where females in Navy leadership positions were few and far between.

"I didn't see my first female master chief until I was a second class petty officer," recalled BUMED Hospital Corpsman Master Chief Dianne Seymour.

"Since then, female Sailors have come a long

See History page 5

Commanding Officer's Column

The Chief Petty Officer rating, established by the U.S. Navy on April 1, 1893, has changed a lot over the last 118 years, yet one thing remains the same and that is the value and contributions the rank of Chief Petty Officer brings to bear. The rich history and traditions established by this rate, influenced by the Navy ethos of honor, courage and commitment, can be witnessed throughout the fleet.

The title, Chief Petty Officer, carries with it greater responsibility, and one is faced with a number of challenges before donning the fouled anchor, but what is born out of these challenges is an individual whose integrity, trust and strength is steeped in a brotherhood of unwavering commitment to those in their charge.

For HM1 Christopher Daily, who works in the Career Development Division at NNMC, his aspiration became a reality just days ago when he was pinned Chief Petty Officer. He now has the responsibility of passing on the knowledge and wisdom to those who he will no doubt congratulate as they reach this milestone.

I must say I am extremely proud of all our Chief Petty Officers. You are true leaders who set the pace, ensuring those in your charge are able to focus and meet the mission. This esteemed rank, is a statement to all that you have answered the call, that you are one to be respected and revered for your service and love of country.

Please join me in wishing a very Happy Birthday to all Chief Petty Officers.

Commander Sends,
Rear Adm. Matthew L. Nathan
Medical Corps, United States Navy



Bethesda Notebook

Bethesda Celebrates Chief Petty Officers

To commemorate the 118th birthday of the Navy Chief Petty Officer, the National Naval Medical Center invites all staff members to attend a cake cutting ceremony Friday at 1 p.m. in the Laurel Clark Memorial Auditorium.

Watch Your Mouth

Many Americans fear a common dental procedure that could save their teeth - root canals. During Root Canal Awareness Week, March 27 - April 2, the U.S. Navy Association of Endodontists along with the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) want to dispel the myths surrounding this dental treatment and encourage patients who need a root canal to see an endodontist.

A recent survey by the AAE found two-thirds of respondents want to avoid losing a permanent tooth and two-thirds also want to avoid having a root canal - more than paying taxes or public speaking. Two-thirds also ranked root canals as the dental procedure they most fear, more than having a tooth pulled.

More than 15 million root canals are performed each year in the U.S. and, thanks to the specialized training of endodontists and advancements in medicine, today's root canal procedures are virtually pain-free. In fact, research shows that patients who have experienced root canal treatment are six times more likely to describe it as "painless" than patients who have not had root canal treatment in the past.

Annual Root Canal Awareness Week, organized by the AAE, is dedicated to highlighting the contributions of endodontists in total dental health care and aims to educate the public about the role of root canal specialists on the dental team. For more information about Root Canal Awareness Week, visit www.aae.org/rcaw. If you are active duty, retired and/or have a family member suffering from a toothache, please contact the Endodontics Dental Department at the Naval Postgraduate Dental School at 301-295-1830 to schedule an appointment.

Ridesharing Workshop Next Week

Do you want to save time on your commute? Do you want to save money and park closer to your workplace? Do you need help finding a carpool partner?

To learn more about the benefits of ridesharing, a Ridesharing Workshop will be held April 5 at 2 p.m. in Building 1, room 1643. Staff who live in Germantown, Gaithersburg or Rockville, are encouraged to attend and meet potential carpool partners. Applications for carpool spaces will be available at the workshop. To RSVP, e-mail Naval Support Activity Bethesda's Transportation Program Coordinator at ryan.emery@med.navy.mil.

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Sailors Prep for PFA Cycle

By Sarah Fortney
Journal staff writer

As Sailors at Naval Support Activity Bethesda (NSAB) gear up for the Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) cycle, beginning April 18, experts in nutrition and health care encourage service members to stay fit year round and to avoid using extreme measures to meet Navy standards.

"Readiness means you are ready every day," said Zizette Makary, a staff physician who works in the National Naval Medical Center's (NNMC) Integrated Medical Home. "If you want to be ready, you can't sit six months without exercise. The best way to be ready for the PRT (Physical Readiness Test) is to start six months ago, not a week before."

The PFA, conducted every six months, consists of a PRT and a Body Composition Assessment (BCA). To pass a PRT, Sailors must perform, at the very least, at a satisfactory level to be eligible for promotions and advancements, said Hospital Corpsman Stephen Albright, who works in the PFA office at NNMC.

For the PRT, Sailors must do a set number of push ups and sit ups, and complete a cardiovascular test, for which they may run, bike, swim or use an elliptical machine. Sailors can now schedule their exams, which they must complete between April 18 and June 3, he said.

"A lot of clinics did mock PRTs these past few weeks to see where they are," said Albright. "That's a good thing."

Throughout the year, Makary suggests Sailors maintain a healthy diet and get adequate exercise as opposed to going on any type of crash diet. For those who need to lose a few pounds to meet weight standards, she said, "You have to take it one step at a time."

Using any weight loss supplement can pose a dangerous risk to your health, she said, especially to the kidney and liver, which process the drugs through the body.

"These products are often not controlled by the [Food and Drug Administration] and so there's no guarantee they're safe," said Makary.

People have died from using dietary supplements, said Richard Hyatt, a pharmacist in NNMC's Pharmacy. Many of these products, which may also cause high blood pressure, gastrointestinal and nervous system problems, have been tainted with hidden prescription drugs such as seizure or blood pressure medications, he added.

While many of these types of products are illegally brought into the country from overseas and/or sold on the Internet, there are so many out there that, Hyatt said, "They're hard to nail down."

As the PRT fast approaches, ser-

vice members may feel pressure to turn to extreme measures, but Hyatt recommends staying away from any product promising exaggerated or unrealistic results.

"The tendency for some people is to want to go on some kind of diet. It's [about] getting away from that quick fix. There is no quick fix," said Lauren Thomas, a dietitian in NNMC's Integrated Health Services. She added that the key is to sustain a healthy lifestyle, and not just in preparation for the PFA cycle. When it comes to the exam, she encourages Sailors, "Don't go back to your usual habits [afterwards] and don't stop exercising just because you're not preparing for the PRT."

Sailors at NSAB, instead, are encouraged to take advantage of services and programs available at the command designed to teach healthy eating habits and overall healthier lifestyle changes, said Thomas. Active duty members can sign up for a Ship Shape class, an eight-week weight management class. In addition, all Sailors may participate in the Mindful Eating Group. The group, which is open to all staff, is offered Thursdays and teaches participants to pay attention to their relationship with food, as opposed to eating mindlessly.

"It's a different approach to our relationship to food and our bodies," said Alex Arbogast, a dietitian who runs the group. It's about dealing with stress or other emotions that may drive a person to eat, said Arbogast, adding, "[The group teaches] how to address stress so you may be less likely to take it out on food."

There's also the Fitness Enhancement Program (FEP), a workout consisting of about 40 minutes of cardio and 20 minutes of strength training, which is open to all active duty members, said NNMC's Command Fitness Leader Chief James Arnold. Service members can also attend a number of fitness classes offered at the temporary gym, he added.

When it comes to staying healthy, Arnold said, it's important to get plenty of rest. "Sleep is a huge [factor], especially in this environment, you work long hours," he said.

Arnold encourages adequate hydration and promotes tracking calories. In the morning, he suggests working out eating fewer carbohydrates, more lean meats and heavier calories.

For FDA consumer updates, visit www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates. For details about the Mindful Eating Group, call 301-319-4960 or 301-295-4454. For information about the PFA and to schedule your exam, or for information about FEP, call the PFA Office at 301-295-5502.

The Patient Navigator

At the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), we want to do everything we can to make your experience extraordinary, each and every time.

Below are the answers to some frequently asked questions that may assist you:

Q: Where, when and who can pick up my prescriptions?

Patients may pick up prescriptions at the Pharmacy in Building 9, on the second floor at the top of the escalators, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon. They can also pick up prescriptions at the Pharmacy in the America Building, behind the customer service desk, which is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. For added convenience, there is an air tube that can send prescriptions between the two pharmacies, depending on the type of medication and its size. To help expedite wait time, patients are encouraged to let their physician know where they plan to pick up their prescription.

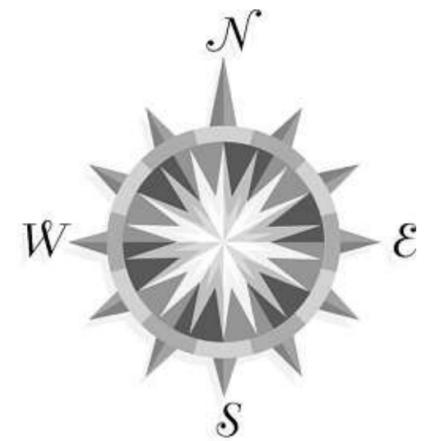
In addition, family members may pick up a patient's prescription, but only with either that patient's ID card or a copy of it.

Q: How and where can I get a refill?

Patients can pick up refills at the Satellite Pharmacy, Building 142, on Taylor Road. They may also go online to NNMC's Web site, under the Pharmacy link, to order a refill or use the Mail Order Program 24/7 by calling 1-800-377-1723. Additionally, patients can pick up and refill prescriptions at other installations in the area, such as Quantico, Patuxent River, or Walter Reed. Patients are advised to request refills 48 hours in advance to avoid any interruptions.

Q: Can I transfer my prescriptions?

Yes, the Pharmacy can transfer your prescriptions. For those who deploy, the Pharmacy will ensure you have access to your prescription, depending on your medication and the length of your deployment. For those who PCS, patients should pick up a 90-day supply of medication used to treat chronic conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma or high blood pressure, to last them until they detach, ensuring they have enough supply on-hand as they check into their new command. Patients should also communicate with their new pharmacy to confirm/verify they will be able to transfer their prescriptions and that their new pharmacy carries the medications on their formulary.



Q: What types of medications does the Pharmacy carry?

The Pharmacy carries medications based on guidelines set by the Department of Defense's Pharmacy and Therapeutic Committee (PTC). For a complete list of formulary medications offered at NNMC, visit www.pharmacyonesource.com/fos/default.asp?L=69009&g=1.

Q: Where can I find more information about Pharmacy services at NNMC?

The Building 9 Pharmacy can be reached at 301-295-2123/2124, and the America Building Pharmacy can be reached at 301-295-6873. Patients may call either Pharmacy for information and may also call to make an appointment with a pharmacist to discuss their medication. To reach the Satellite Pharmacy, call 301-295-6873. For more information about Pharmacy services at NNMC, visit www.bethesda.med.navy.mil/Patient/health_care/clinical_support/pharmacy.

HELP US HELP YOU!

Your feedback is important to us and we are constantly working toward providing an extraordinary experience. You can have a voice in helping us define an extraordinary experience by providing you and your family's perspective on how we can improve our service to you.

If you would like to provide specific feedback on your care experience or have any questions, please e-mail patient.navigator@med.navy.mil. You may also visit the Customer Service Office in Building 9, first floor, near the Information Booth, to talk with a patient advocate.

In addition, we welcome your stories of exceptional experiences, so we can understand what made it so special and explore duplicating it throughout our entire medical center environment.

Sincerely,
Chisun S. Chun,
Chief Experience Officer,
Deputy Commander for
Healthcare Operations and
Strategic Planning

Spring Has Sprung, Coping With Allergy Season

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Alexandra Snow
Journal staff writer

Spring is officially here - and so is allergy season.

Those who suffer from seasonal allergies understand the misery associated with the constant nasal drainage, itchy, watery eyes, runny nose and sneezing.

Perennial, or seasonal, allergies are especially common in the Washington D.C. area, added Lt. Cmdr. Michael Kaplan, Chief of the Allergy and Immunology Department at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC).

"February, March and April are tree season, grass season is mid-May until July and July through October is weed and mold season. That's a huge block of time for a patient's allergies to act up," he said, adding if allergy symptoms continue through November, December and January, then they may be year-round allergies.

Additionally, nearly 50 percent of all trees in the D.C. area can be classified as oak - an allergen that affects a large percentage of the population, he said.

Ali Dastouri, a pharmaceutical representative at NNMC, knows first-hand what it's like to cope with seasonal allergies.

"I'm allergic to grass. I sneeze a lot and get

runny eyes when I start mowing the lawn," he said. To cope with the aggravations, he added, "I use a nasal spray so that it doesn't stop me from doing things."

Kelly Herford, an executive representative from a pharmaceutical company, suffers from allergies year-round.

"I'm allergic to everything - dogs, cats, mold, pollen, dust - you name it. They get worse in the fall and spring though, so I take an over-the-counter pill and prescription nasal spray to manage them, she said."

To determine whether a patient has certain allergies, an allergist conducts a small "prick test" on their skin, Kaplan explained.

"A liquid version of the potential allergen is placed under the skin to induce a response. We carefully detail the results. If the area becomes red and irritated, there is a sixty percent chance the patient is allergic," said Kaplan. "Negative results are substantially more accurate. If a patient has no adverse reaction to the allergen, we can be 95 percent sure they are not allergic to that substance."

When diagnosed with an allergy to a tree, plant or other common substance, patients are often prescribed a nasal steroid or spray, or oral medication. Another option, though less common, is allergy immunotherapy, a series of immunizations that changes the way the body reacts to the allergen over time,

said Kaplan.

"For food allergies we recommend a strict avoidance," he added. "Avoidance is still the gold standard for all allergies, but we understand that getting rid of a pet or not going outside isn't always feasible for patients. However, even on medication, patients who are repeatedly exposed to the allergen may not enjoy the same benefits as someone who limits their exposure."

Many people who take over-the-counter medications to treat allergies are actually experiencing symptoms unrelated to any allergens, said Kaplan.

"Fifty percent of people who think they have allergies don't and are most likely suffering from non-allergic drainage," he said.

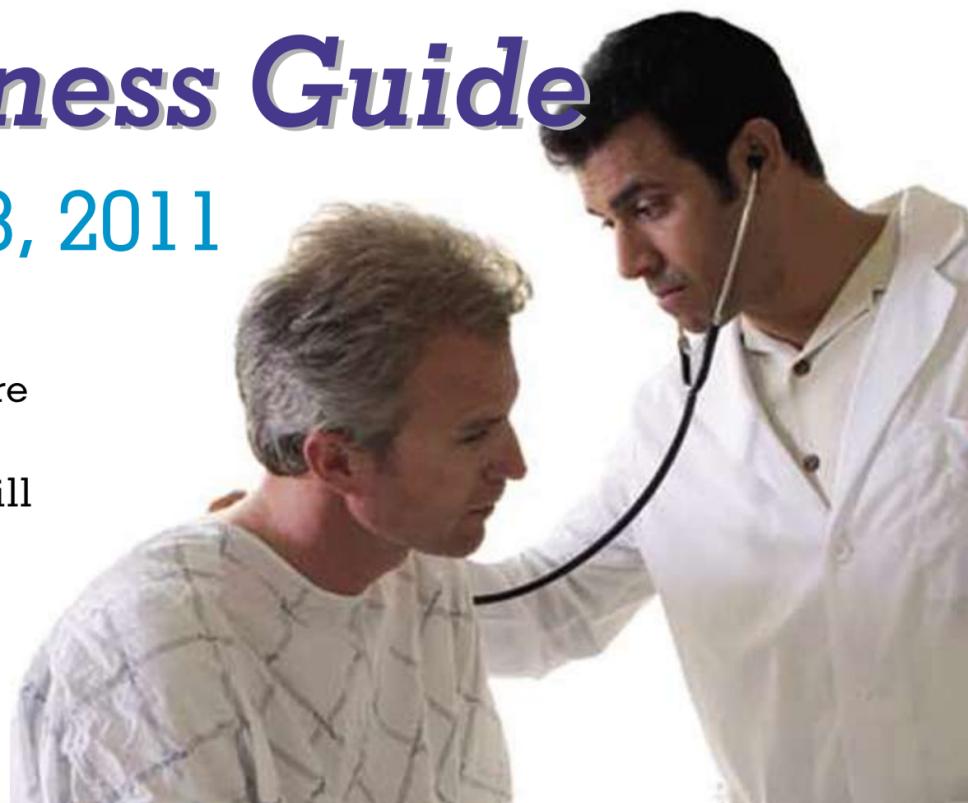
Seasonal allergies can be difficult to diagnose because they share symptoms similar to those of the common cold, said Kaplan, adding, "However, patients with colds typically suffer from fever, muscle aches and nasal discharge that is thicker and darker in color than most allergy sufferers."

At NNMC, patients in the Allergy and Immunology Department are seen on a referral basis only. Referrals are available through your Primary Care Manager (PCM).

Health and Wellness Guide

Publishing May 12 & 13, 2011

This guide will feature hospitals, emergency care centers, cosmetic surgeons, and many more medical specialties military families need when they move to a new area. This section will be divided by regions (MD, DC and VA) to help people find facilities near them. Distributed to over 125,000 military and civilian personnel within 11 military newspapers in MD/DC/VA.



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History:

From Page 1

way," she said.

Operations Specialist Chief Sharon Rogers, counselor intern for NNMC's Substance Abuse and Rehab Program (SARP), believes female Sailors are now largely considered a driving force within all ranks of the Navy.

"Today, when one of my male Sailors asks how he should treat females, I tell him to treat her exactly the same as you would her male counterparts. Just treat them with respect," said Rogers, adding, "I am in a very male-dominated rate, but I know that I am just as good as any male. I need everyone to know that I'm a female, but they also need to know that I'll get the job done."

Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman (FMF) Indira Kozak went on to offer words of encouragement to all Sailors.

"If someone says you can't do something, tell them 'Just give me the time and you'll see that I can do the job.' Don't let anything take your inspiration away."

Nearly all panel members spoke about the importance of mentorship in the military.

"I have learned so much from and have had so many great mentors - male and female," said Rogers. "Find yourself a good mentor."

Additionally, the speakers reminded Sailors as they achieve rank, they should not forget to guide their fellow service members.

"Your job as you move up the ranks is to touch

people's lives," said Martinez. "Ships don't sail and planes don't fly without people. We're in the business of people, and if you leave this Navy better than when you joined, that is a successful career."

The Multicultural Committee also hosted guest speaker Navy Capt. Raquel Cruz Bono, a physician and chief of staff for the deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity, Thursday in NNMC's Memorial Auditorium. Bono noted the importance of female input in today's society.

"No country can get ahead if half of its citizens are left behind," she said.

Bono said she comes from a long line of military service - her grandfather and father have served and her brother continues to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. She explained she once told her father - a physician - that she wished to become a nurse, and he asked why she did not want to be a doctor.

"Girls can be doctors, too?" Bono recalled asking him. "My father said to me, 'You can be anything you want. The only thing that is going to hold you back is you.' Fast forward several years and my second grade daughter asked me, while I was explaining what I do for a living, if boys can be doctors, too. It's nice to see it come full circle."

Nearly 50 percent of the medical profession billets in the Navy are currently manned by females, said Bono. When the Hospital Corpsman rate was established, there were 100 females in the rate. Now, there are nearly 5,000, she added.

"I've been in the Navy a long time, and I've seen it. This is a change for the better," said Martinez.

Research:

From Page 1

in response to infection, "seroconversion," amongst deployed military members and Hulten's was on the cardiac computed tomography, a machine that captures detailed images of the heart.

"Research is important because it keeps military medicine on the edge of innovation and allows us to deliver the finest and most up to date care to our service members and their families. It is this focus on research that will make the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center [Bethesda] the finest medical center in the country," said Acosta, who is advancing to compete in the Navy-wide Academic Research Competition in May.

Lt. Alan Strawn, a surgical resident in NNMC's General Surgery Department, took first place in the resident category of the oral competition for his study that involved the process of dehydrating platelets. Strawn, who will also go on to compete in the Navy-wide competition in May, was honored to receive the award and grateful for those who assisted with this project.

"All of the presentations were quite good," said Strawn. "It feels great to be recognized with such a distinguished award for all of our hard work and accomplishments."

Acosta and Strawn will go on to participate in the 26th annual Navy-Wide Academic Research Competition, which will be held May 12 in Portsmouth, Va. They will compete against researchers from National Naval Medical Center San Diego and National Naval Medical Center Portsmouth.

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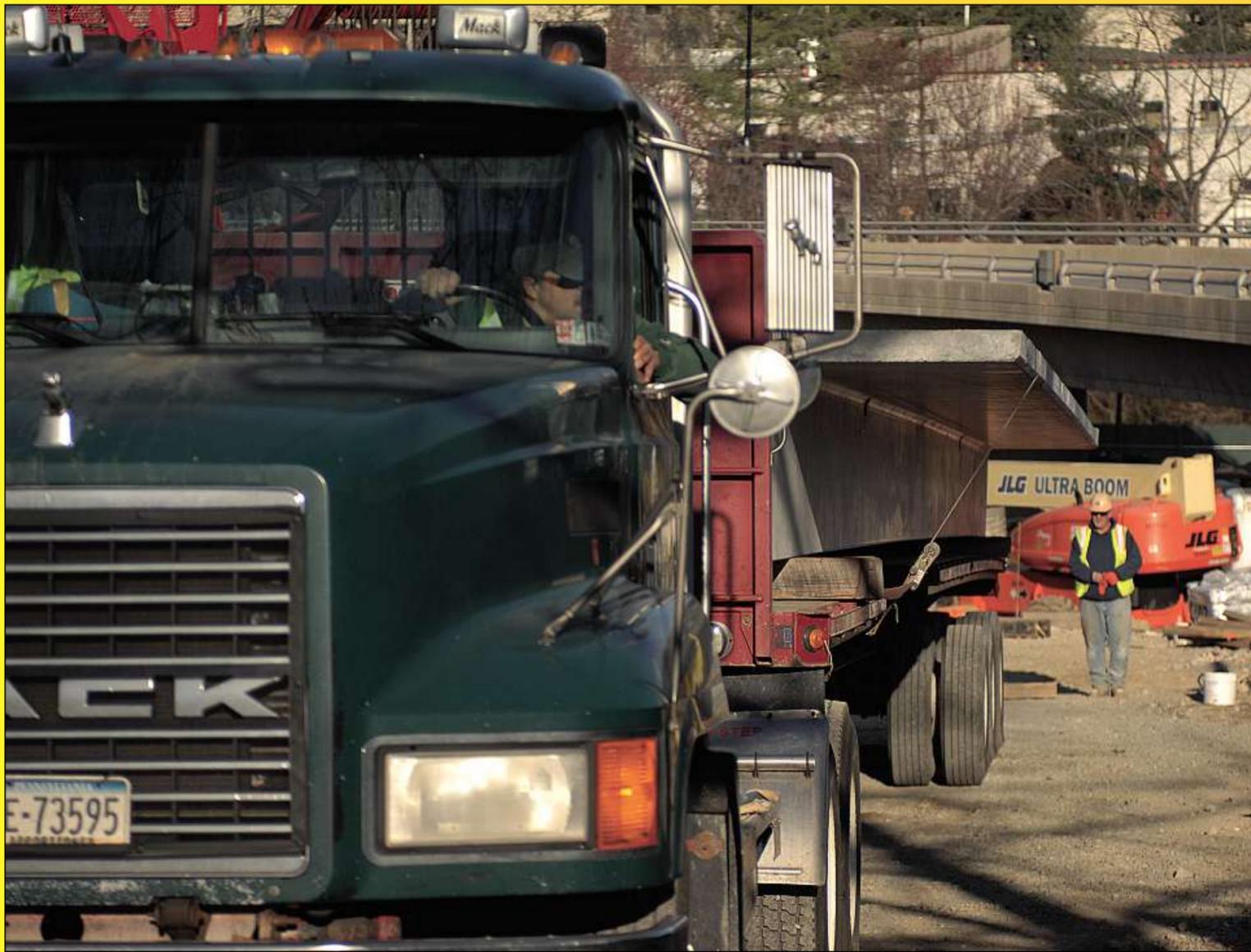
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Construction crews make progress on the multi-use parking garage, which will provide 1,200 spaces.



Construction for the multi-use parking garage, near the Fisher Houses, is well underway.

Safety Re

By Mass Communication
Seaman Dion Dawns
Journal staff writ

As several construction projects throughout Naval Support Activity (NSAB), staff members and visitors make safety a priority while on base.

"The OICC (Officer-in-Charge of Public Works and Security) staffs are here to coordinate the projects improve and increasing vehicle, bicycle safety. Our coordination efforts include tenants, local, state and federal agencies grateful for their support," said Public Works Commandr. Paul McComb.

McComb has been responsible for construction, renovation, maintenance and site planning, and has led efforts in Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) projects.

"Construction is a big contributor to the business on base," said James Ganz, superintendent at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC). "It is vital that users of this facility maintain a level of safety awareness during construction [and] we work to inform staff, patients and the ever-changing environment around us."

Amongst the sites currently under construction are a new Pass & ID facility by the main gate, the Multi-Use Parking Structure coming weeks, construction will be completed at the Gate and on a new state-of-the-art 1,200-foot Navy Exchange (NEX) along with a new parking garage.

Until the new facility opens, customers will use a temporary NEX, located near the main gate. The temporary store offers a small grocery, including jewelry, small appliances and has an optical office and a bar. Ruben Chonna, Construction Project Manager for the FEAD (Facilities Engineering and Acquisition Department) at NNMC. It will be a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified project.

"We are going to have a green roof parking garage that will connect to the new NEX. It will be the number one NEX in the region. That is our goal," said Chonna.

Additionally, in the coming months, the new Pass & ID facility and other projects, are slated to be completed.



Keeping traffic moving, a flag

Remains Top Priority

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will have four lanes of travel and pedestrian access. Vehicles will be able to veer to the side of the entrance where they can park in a designated area while using the Pass & ID facility, said Ganz.

As construction progresses for the multi-use parking garage, which will offer 1,200 spaces, safety officials urge everyone to be cautious traveling around the base as crews work with massive amounts of concrete. Richard K. Pfau, Occupational Safety & Health Manager at Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) said it's his job to not only keep construction workers in good hands, but also to keep staff members and visitors out of harm's way.

"We're moving pre-cast concrete for the parking structure and some of those pieces weigh 20,000 or more pounds," said Pfau. "Twenty-thousand pounds is tough to stop. Someone can get seriously injured or even killed and that's not something we want."

He urges everyone to pay close attention to flaggers directing traffic and pedestrians. Flaggers, who can be seen throughout the base, especially around the gates, aim to keep traffic moving, said Pfau.

"The flaggers are there for the safety of everyone, not to hold [drivers] in traffic," Pfau added. "The construction activity is still extremely involved. We are still here in force and we still have a lot to accomplish. We need to continue to work safely."

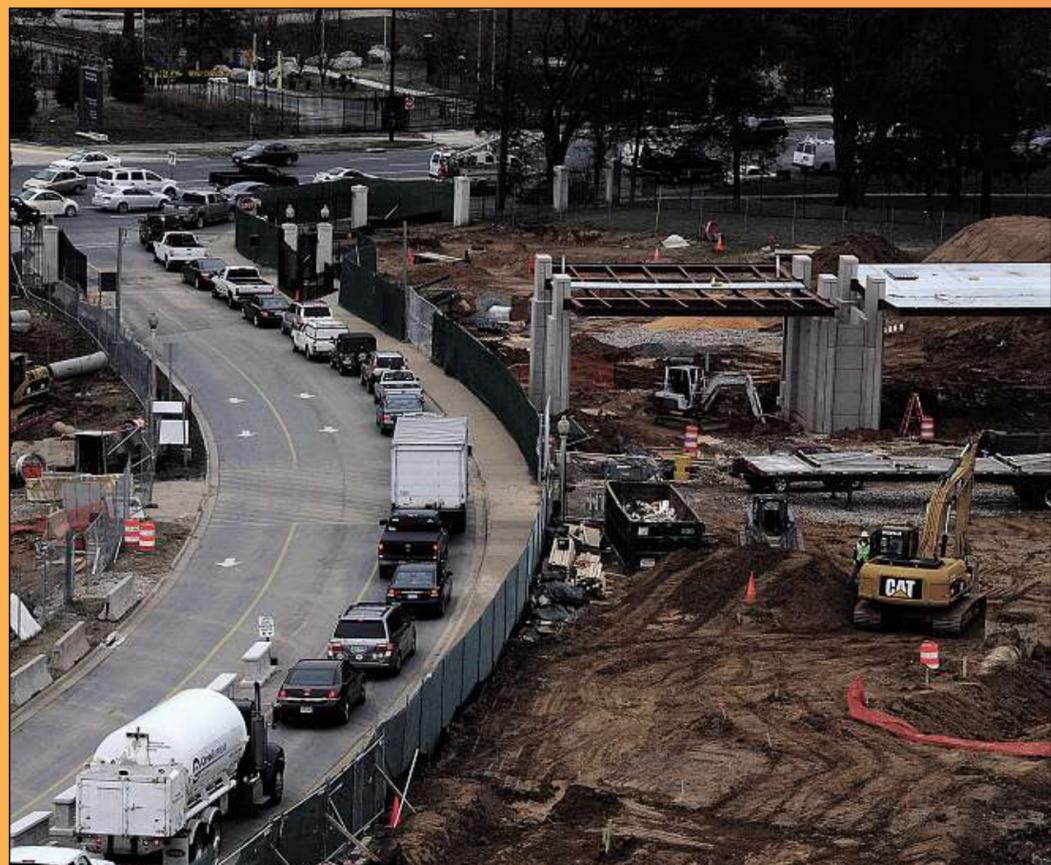
"Patience, along with common sense, [are] two behaviors that can be used to maintain safety awareness and reduce safety risk in all aspects related to safety," Ganz added. As these projects and renovations continue, safety officials and project managers also want to ensure everyone who is impacted is well informed.

"We use a number of mediums to keep our patients, visitors and staff informed of the latest construction activities," said Jeffrey Miller, NSAB Transportation Program Manager. "We provide articles in the Journal and conduct routine town halls for staff. We also provide presentations to the community, state and county at the Montgomery County BRAC Implementation Committee meetings and on-base Home Owners Association meetings. Our articles and presentations focus on the construction details and safety plans that we implemented to ensure successful execution."

For information about transportation and commuter news, please visit NNMC and NSAB's intranet sites for the commuter newsletter and construction alerts. Staff members can also find construction alerts on the intranet. For questions about safety, contact James Ganz at James.Ganz@med.navy.mil.



A flagger recently directs traffic on Naval Support Activity Bethesda.



(courtesy photo)

A recent aerial view shows construction is underway for a new Pass & ID facility.



Flagger directs traffic on base.

Chance!

From Page 8

you at a high risk of infection.

I was running out of options. It was once recommended to me, if I still wanted a shot at a cure, that I consider an allogeneic transplant, which involves receiving a donor's marrow. This was the last option I wanted, having gone through an autologous transplant, and knowing the odds of getting through it alive. I wasn't getting any younger and knew my bone marrow was depleted and, for the very first time in the last few years, I began to have some physical restrictions of edema and swelling. I could not exercise or get around as easily as I could in the past.

Making a Tough Decision

Knowing I faced another transplant, I was in turmoil about it and where I would go to have it, but still consider myself fortunate I was given the opportunity to participate in various transplant trials in the past - many people do not meet the criteria to participate in a trial. I felt compelled to have it at Johns Hopkins with the same transplant doctor who worked with me during my first transplant in 1993 - they knew my history. Hopkins required me to receive a haplo transplant which involves the use of stem cells only from a related donor. A sibling has the possibility of being a 100, 50 or 0 percent match (determined by a blood test). Parents and children are automatically a 50 percent match. Unfortunately, my only sibling was a 0 percent match, and if I wanted my transplant at Hopkins, it would have to be with a 50 percent related match.

MD Anderson had performed more transplants on my type of cancer than anywhere else, but if I chose to go there, I would have to relocate to Texas with a full-time caretaker for at least six months to a year. I would then need continued follow-up treatment for some time. Having gone through a transplant once already, I knew the importance of having the support of your family and friends nearby. In the spring of 2010, in my own backyard, I met a doctor at the NIH who explained everything in detail and answered all my questions. It all began to come together and my decision was clear - I would have the transplant at NIH.

Having a Transplant for a Second Time

My doctor at NIH went to the National Blood and Bone Marrow Bank Registry and found a perfect 10-out-of-10 unrelated match. The gift of a possibly extended life would be given to me by a 21-year-old woman who agreed to donate her stem cells. There are no words to describe this selfless act.

In August 2010, I began a pre-transplant regimen of chemotherapy. I underwent my allogeneic stem cell transplant Sept. 10, 2010. I reached my 100-day, post-transplant milestone Dec. 18, 2010 with the most wonderful news: complete full remission. There is no evidence of tumors anywhere and my body is completely accepting my donor's stem cells and new immune system. I am still at a very high risk for infections but so far all things are going very well and in the right direction. My doctors say this will be a slow healing process and I will be monitored closely at NIH over the next few years. I am humbled, thankful and positive. I couldn't be happier with my decision to have this done at NIH. I'm alive, writing this article.

Getting Back to the Phrase "Be Positive"

"Be Positive" has been my motto - I thought this was interesting given my blood type prior to the transplant was "O" positive, but is now "B" positive thanks to my donor. This miraculous procedure has been incredibly amazing.

What helped me through battling this disease and in all facets of my life is that I always tried to stay positive. You don't have anything if you lose your hope and faith.

The outpouring love, prayers and support from family, friends, co-workers and donor leave program volunteers has been the most integral part of my successful recovery. Looking back at when I was first diagnosed, my kids were six and four; they are now 24 and 22, and I have seen them graduate college. I cherish life to the fullest and try to celebrate every moment. I wish I could be a donor on the bone marrow registry, but since I can't, I vow to do as many good deeds as possible for others every day. I am forever indebted to my donor and everyone who gave me "another chance at life."

Barbara Weller, a Security Specialist in NSW-CCD Ship Signatures' Electromagnetic (EM) Signatures Division, was also placed on the Carderock Donor Leave Program. This program is for people who are facing extended illnesses, it helps to relieve the financial burden and difficulties of leave without pay. This leave program allows one to focus on getting well. The National Blood and Bone Marrow Registry would like you to consider giving someone another chance at life.

At the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), individuals who wish to donate their leave to this program can contact Mike Jones at 301-295-6823. For more information on the National Blood and Bone Marrow Bank Registry at NNMC, call 301-295-2100.

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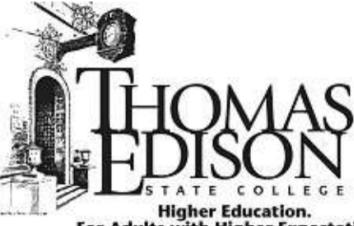
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