Val G. Hemming
Simulation Center
CFC in full swing at USU

By Christine Creenan-Jones, editor

The season for federal giving is upon us as this year’s Combined Federal Campaign is now underway at the Uniformed Services University. The CFC – established by President John F. Kennedy in 1961 – is the world’s largest, most successful workplace fundraiser with annual donations that reach well into the two hundred millions.

Each year, USU personnel contribute to the CFC’s enormous success by making donations to one, or several, CFC-sponsored charities. This year’s campaign goal for USU is $105,000.

“Our people have generously supported the CFC for many years now. Last year, we even beat our campaign goal by more than $25,000. We’re hoping for a similar outcome this year, because the CFC is counting on USU’s support to help thousands of charitable organizations in need,” said Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Bonnie Sanchez, this season’s CFC campaign manager for USU.

CFC contributions benefit more than 4,400 non-profit groups, including charities that specialize in education, health, youth development, human services, civil rights, science, employment, animal care, the environment and many other service categories.

“There’s something for everyone, and every dollar counts,” said Sanchez. “The CFC makes it easy to donate a little or a lot by offering several methods for making one-time pledges or multiple tax-deductible contributions.”

Personnel wishing to participate can donate online through the Defense Finance and Accounting Service’s MyPay and CFC websites, by check or cash, and through payroll deduction. Furthermore, each department has a designated CFC keyworker who can guide pledgers through the donation process and answer questions about the university’s campaign this year, which has been themed, “USU makes it possible.”

The CFC leadership team at USU will also sponsor several events throughout the campaign season to raise money and promote awareness for the CFC, including a hot chocolate social, chili cook-off and bake sale.

“We want to make sure everyone at USU knows about the CFC and the good work it does with our help. Every contribution matters, and like our slogan says, each one of us can make it possible,” Sanchez said.

The National Capital Area Medical Simulation Center at the Uniformed Services University was dedicated to Dr. Val G. Hemming, Nov. 18. Hemming, dean emeritus of the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine, was the impetus behind USU’s Sim Center – one of the largest, most advanced simulation centers in the world.

Hemming’s vision – inspired by his efforts to modernize USU’s curriculum through cutting-edge training in a risk-free environment – was lauded at the naming ceremony by the event’s keynote speakers, including Dr. Charles Rice, USU president; Dr. Ronald Blanck, chair of USU’s Board of Regents; the Honorable Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for Health Affairs; and Maryland Congressman Chris Van Hollen.

“In the military, we have a finite amount of time to create the competency for people who are going to be engaged in real-world situations and global situations – often in austere environments in which their talents are the difference between someone living and someone dying,” said Woodson at the dedication ceremony.

Since 1999, the Sim Center has been a place to gain these life-saving medical skills. The 30,000 square feet facility is divided into four divisions – the Clinical Skills Laboratory, the Surgical and Medical Skills Laboratory, the Procedural Skills Training Laboratory and the Virtual Medical Environment. Students use these spaces to practice medical procedures on cutting-edge simulation technologies without any risk to human patients.

Over the past three decades, simulation technology has gradually become a central part of health science curriculums around the world, and USU’s center is a trailblazing facility. It’s the only place in the nation that offers every facet of health care simulation under one roof, and USU medical students participate in nearly 40 different simulation exercises before they graduate.

“Every time I talk to a (wounded) soldier...I always ask them, ‘how is the care that you’re getting over at Walter Reed?’ They always give me a big thumbs up. The reality is, the care is as good as it is because of those who thought of establishing USU,” said Van Hollen, who spearheaded a nearly $7 million Congressional provision to add the Wide Area Virtual Environment to the Sim Center.

The Sim Center has stayed at the cutting edge by incorporating advanced simulation technology and experiential learning into USU’s curriculum, just as Hemming envisioned 14 years ago. Despite his important role in establishing the center, he was humbled by its dedication at the naming ceremony.

“I am absolutely overwhelmed and thank you from the bottom of my soul,” he said.

Visit [http://simcen.usuhs.edu/Pages/default.aspx](http://simcen.usuhs.edu/Pages/default.aspx) to learn more about the Val G. Hemming Simulation Center.
App for safe supplement use is launched

By MC2 Brittney Cannady, writer

Service members, retirees, dependents, Department of Defense clinicians and healthcare providers now have a tool that will help them make smart decisions when it comes to using dietary supplements.

Through a joint military initiative between the Human Performance Resource Center (HPRC) at the Uniformed Services University, the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database, and the DoD, a new mobile application called Operation Supplement Safety will provide users with access to information on dietary supplements and possible adverse effects and drug interactions.

“We made this application because we wanted a mobile app that the warfighter could use and have at their fingertips at any time,” said Dr. Patricia Deuster, scientific director of CHAMP.

Experts at HPRC and the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database collaborated to provide app-users with important information, including safety, interaction and effectiveness ratings for dietary supplements.

The app, which took nearly a year to complete, is also supported by an “Ask the Expert” guide found on HPRC’s website. This feature allows users to submit their questions online about dietary supplement products. Experts at HPRC will provide feedback about products, including warnings to stay away from harmful products, such as OxyElite Pro, a diet pill that was linked to 29 cases of liver failure and one death before it was pulled from store shelves.

“The amount of participation over the past few months has been amazing. We’ve gotten about 75 questions a month about supplements. If the product isn’t in the database, we can go to NMCD and they add it right away,” said Deuster.

Currently, app users can find information on more than 50,000 different dietary supplements within the database. Although the app has broad appeal, it was created with a specific demographic in mind.

“The app is particularly marketed to young people who use what we would consider high-risk supplements for things such as weight loss, fat burners and testosterone boosters, but I think it’s a good tool for all ages,” Deuster added.

Personnel can sign up for free access to the app by creating an online account at http://hprc-online.org/blog/dietary-supplements/ and clicking the “Warfighter Version” icon. A complete version of the app can also be downloaded for free in the iTunes or Google stores by searching for “Operation Supplement Safety.”

Attention all USU faculty

Take advantage of the opportunity to become involved with a dynamic group of faculty at the Uniformed Services University and represent your school, network with other faculty and staff by providing an important service to USU through leadership positions in the Faculty Senate.

The Faculty Senate is currently seeking nominations for 2014 Faculty Senate President-Elect (School of Medicine basic science faculty member), secretary/treasurer, and senators (four SOM basic sciences faculty members, one GSN faculty member, two PDC faculty members, and one non-billeted SOM faculty member).

Interested faculty are encouraged to contact Dr. Susanne Gibbons, chair of the Faculty Senate’s Nominations and Elections Committee, via e-mail at susanne.gibbons@usuhs.edu for a candidate form.
Elective course promotes resilience through listening

by Christine Creenan-Jones, editor

Burnout happens in every profession, but it’s especially common in the medical community. In fact, some reports estimate that up to 75 percent of fully-trained physicians experience feelings of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion at some point in their medical careers.

Unfortunately, the problem – often called the hidden crisis in medicine – appears to have deep roots. Large numbers of medical students and physicians-in-training also experience classic symptoms of burnout, which can lead to feelings of apathy, failure and cynicism.

These numbers – while striking – are hardly surprising. Between the long hours, often heavy workload and repeated exposures to traumatic illness – burnout is inevitable.

Or is it?

Uniformed Services University alumnae, Air Force Col. (Dr.) Arnyce Pock and Air Force Lt. Col. (Dr.) Alyssa McManamon, co-direct a course called The Healer’s Art at USU, which combats physician-burnout through expressive, patient-focused techniques.

“The Healer’s Art promotes resilience by teaching students and faculty ways to connect with patients and other providers in meaningful ways through a seemingly simple, but powerful technique called generous listening,” Pock said. “Generous listening involves the ability to really listen and hear what another person is telling you – without judgment, bias, or interjection – to gain a better understanding of what they – not science – hold to be true about their condition at any given time.”

While the brunt of most health science curricula focuses on either diagnosing or curing illness, techniques like generous listening are gaining international favor as a useful method for helping patients.

The Healer’s Art is currently being taught at more than 70 medical schools worldwide, and has been offered at USU since 2012 after Pock and McManamon attended a workshop hosted by Dr. Rachel Remen, who founded The Healer’s Art curriculum and serves as the director of the Institute for the Study of Health and Illness at Commonweal in California.

Remen created the course to explore the humanism in medicine through discussions about deeply personal topics, from honoring loss and sharing grief to recognizing and accepting the mystery and awe in medicine. At USU, it also created unique bonding experiences for faculty and students alike.

“It’s a joy to connect with those around us, to understand how we have all grown through our experiences. There’s a level of trust and closeness in both the large and small groups that helps us realize we are never alone,” said Dr. Paul Hemmer, who is a vice chair for Education in USU’s Department of Medicine and has served as a faculty facilitator for the university’s The Healer’s Art course.

Creating a community of inquiry – one of the goals of The Healer’s Art curriculum – helps prevent physician burnout, because it gives providers an outlet for discussing the highs and lows of being a physician among peers who understand their plight. It also teaches skills – like generous listening – that help make them better doctors.

The next iteration of The Healer’s Art will begin next spring. The elective course is open to all first-year students and School of Medicine faculty.

USU sponsors blood drive

Air Force Col. Kevin Glasz, the brigade commander at the Uniformed Services University, gets his blood pressure taken before donating blood at the 3rd Annual USU Blood Donor Challenge, Nov. 22. The USU drive was held in support of the Armed Services Blood Program, which oversees 81 blood banks and donor centers worldwide.
USU faculty member named “Outstanding American by Choice”

By Sharon Willis, managing editor and deputy vice president for External Affairs

The Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, presented its annual “Outstanding American by Choice” awards on Nov. 13, and a faculty member at the Uniformed Services University was among the recipients.

Dr. Rahul Jindal, a professor in USU’s Norman M. Rich Department of Surgery and a transplant surgeon at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, received the award in a ceremony at the Women in Military Service Memorial Auditorium at Arlington National Cemetery.

According to the Department of Homeland Security’s website, the Outstanding American by Choice initiative “recognizes the outstanding achievements of naturalized U.S. citizens. Through civic participation, professional achievement, and responsible citizenship, recipients of this honor have demonstrated their commitment to this country and to the common civic values that unite us as Americans.”

Jindal was honored for his pioneering work in developing countries. Among his many credits, Jindal set up the first comprehensive kidney dialysis and kidney transplant program in Guyana and successfully performed the country’s first living kidney transplant. He also performed the first ever pancreas islet cell transplant for trauma, wrote more than 150 manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals, and co-authored a book that is being used as a standard textbook in health care programs around the world to raise awareness about the psychological issues patients with kidney diseases face throughout diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

University expertise sought by international audiences

By Christine Creenan-Jones, editor

Faculty members at the Uniformed Services University have unique expertise across broad scientific disciplines, and their knowledge is sought by many international organizations, including the Council of Canadian Academies.

The CCA recently invited Dr. Jennifer Roberts, an assistant professor of Occupational and Environmental Health Sciences at USU, to serve on an expert panel on wind turbines and human health. The panel will present evidence to relate wind turbine noise and adverse health effects in humans, identify knowledge gaps in scientific and technological areas, and examine the new engineering technologies and best practices currently employed in other countries.

Roberts was selected for this prestigious appointment based on her work in public health, environmental epidemiology and human health risk assessment as well as her extensive research portfolio.

“As a post-doctoral fellow at The National Academies here in the United States, I contributed ‘behind the scenes’ and assisted with the tasks for various expert panels related to environmental health projects and studies. Although I really did enjoy my work at The National Academies, I always thought that I would love to be able to actually serve on an expert panel and provide direct input when possible based on my research, experience and training. So here I am years later, presented with this opportunity to serve on a CCA panel that deals with such a significant issue and I am just thrilled, honored and excited,” said Roberts.

Do you have a story for the Pulse?
Submit your ideas to christine.creenan-jones@usuhs.edu. Pulse staff members are always looking for new leads about the people, programs, research and scholarship at the Uniformed Services University.
Four-legged friends help heal invisible wounds

By Yolanda Arrington, writer at Health.mil

Anyone who has ever welcomed a pet into their home and heart can attest to the bonds this friendship can create. Research has long shown that companion animals — specifically dogs — help reduce blood pressure and ease stress. Military researchers aim to uncover the scientific reasons for human-to-dog connections, particularly as they apply to wounded warriors.

Dr. Patricia Deuster, scientific director of the Consortium for Health and Military Performance at the Uniformed Services University, said some sort of biological marker is released upon contact with a dog that helps soothe or relieve the mind. “We all have a sense that it really works, but to bring something into mainstream practice, you have to have a scientific base. We’re trying to establish that base.”

The university received funding from the Department of Defense to look at the mechanisms by which pets help relieve the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and other invisible wounds.

The university is partnering with a nonprofit organization called the Warrior Canine Connection to research the effects of having a wounded warrior train a dog to become a service animal for another veteran. This practice dates back to 2008 but only now does DOD plan to closely study it. Deuster said it is a form of therapy for the servicemembers. “If a wounded servicemember learns to train a dog, it gives them purpose in life because they are training the dog to help their buddy. They get unconditional love from the dog. They also have to go out and socialize the dog. They learn to be more optimistic, nurturing and how to control their anger.”

Warrior Canine Connection executive director Rick Yount said that service members with PTSD or mild traumatic brain injuries benefit greatly from working with service dogs. It can take two years and as many as 50 service members to train one dog. During that process, the veterans learn to become more patient, handle stressful situations better, interact with the public and shower praise upon the dog. Some even take the dogs home and, as a result, their sleeping patterns improve. One Marine credits the dog training methods with saving his marriage because it taught him to be a more patient parent and connect with his family, Yount said. “We are using the dog to teach [the veteran] that the world is a safe place.”

Deuster said the results of this study could greatly impact the way military doctors treat invisible wounds. “If we find out that people with PTSD can get better by training with service dogs, we’ll likely have more long-term programs instead of drug prescriptions.” That research should begin in 2014 and will take three years.

While USU researchers are taking a closer look at service animals, one nonprofit is working to match pets with service members simply for companionship. The Long Beach, N.Y.-based Pets for Patriots has a partnership with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury’s Real Warriors campaign. Pets for Patriots is able to place dogs that would otherwise not be adopted such as older dogs or dogs with special needs. Beth Zimmerman, executive director and founder of Pets for Patriots, said her organization finds that “service members feel a strong bond with these animals who are also somewhat left behind or outside the norm.”

In addition to working with service members who have physical wounds, Pets for Patriots has provided companion animals for veterans with PTSD and those who have experienced sexual trauma. Zimmerman said the pets do more for wounded warriors than provide kinship. “Some [of the veterans] are off all medications as a result of adopting a pet who also had wounds.”

Yount said it’s “easy to dismiss this as a warm, fuzzy, ‘pet the puppy’ kind of a thing,” but that it’s “foolish to overlook [the benefits of a dog,] no matter how simple it looks.” Through this new research, he hopes the hard science will reaffirm what he’s known all along, that the mental health benefits of having a dog are “very significant.”
Jatinder Singh, a postdoctoral fellow at the Uniformed Services University, is swabbing the inside of his cheek, so the C.W. Bill Young Department of Defense Marrow Donor Program and the National Marrow Donor Program can type and test his DNA to see if it is a match for somebody waiting for a bone marrow transplant. The Asian-Pacific American Medical Student Association at USU brought the life-saving program to campus. Nov. 20. It drew more than 120 potential donors.