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Health Headlines

For Immediate Release
April 29, 2011



Mental Health Community Support Services Program Team*



Gregory Elder, MD

New York Federal Executive Board Announces 2011 Employee of the Year Awards

Bronx, New York - The New York Federal Executive Board, representing more than 150 federal agencies and more than 47,000 federal civilian employees, have named their 2011 FEB Award winners. Among the local award winners are James J. Peters physician and researcher, **Gregory Elder**, named the 2011 Distinguished Scientist of the Year, and the **JJP Mental Health Community Support Services Program**, which was selected for the Special Achievement Team Award.

In the category of Distinguished Scientist of the Year, Doctor Elder was noted for having been at the forefront in the development of a process whereby specific populations of cells can be marked with red and green florescent proteins. This innovation offers a tool to the medical community that can be used for a variety of applications, including the preparation of selective cell-types for transplantation. In addition, the process allows the construction of cell maps used in the imaging of complex cellular relationships, such as might be used in the studies of Alzheimer 's disease and Traumatic Brain Injury.

The James J. Peters VA Medical Center Mental Health Community Support Services Program was awarded the Special Achievement Team Award for their extraordinary efforts to address the needs of the chronically homeless and unemployed. Among other things, the team was credited with the

development of comprehensive programs and outreach activities, which ultimately engaged veterans into mental health care who had not previously felt a need to seek treatment. During FY 2010, 1571 veterans were screened for housing and health needs, 595 housing vouchers were issued, and 436 veterans were successfully housed - including 11 formerly street homeless, 77 Veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom /Operation Enduring Freedom, 68 families and 37 female Veterans. Their efforts have demonstrated tremendous and verifiable success in improving social, occupational and mental health outcomes in an exceptionally challenged population of veterans.

“Our program has recognized that it is not enough to just provide housing for homeless veterans,” stated Mental Health Program Director, Rachel Yehuda, “We have to address the root cause of homelessness, and this ultimately involves the provision of a much larger cadre of mental health and supportive services.”

The Keynote speaker for the awards presentation, General Duncan J. McNabb, Commander U.S. Transportation Command, praised the hard work and dedication of the sixty one federal employees and teams; not only for meritorious service, but for acts of heroism and extraordinary dedication to the public.

“The federal community’s good work reflects the best of our country. Public service remains a noble calling that provides its employees with greater rewards than monetary ones”, stated Carmine Gallo, Chairman of the Federal Executive Board.

The Federal Executive Boards (FEBs) were created by Presidential Directive in 1961 to foster communication, coordination and collaboration among Federal field agencies. FEBs build interagency partnerships and community involvement to create and nurture working relationships that address issues of shared interest. Currently, approximately 88% of Federal employees are located outside the Washington, DC area. Across the nation, in 28 locations with a high concentration of Federal agencies and Federal employees, FEBs provide a forum for local Federal leaders to share management challenges and strategies to meet agency missions and goals, identify common issues, develop collaborative efforts to address those issues, and share best practices among their peers.

For more information related to this story or the James J. Peters VA Medical Center, please contact Jim Connell, Public Affairs Officer, at 718.584.9000, Ext. 6620.

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* Mental Health Community Support Services Program Team awardees pictured above in no particular order: Rachel Yehuda, LaTonya Heyward, Danny Balkcom, Kaydeen Bishop, Jamil Davis, Deidre Forbes, Heather Frey, Tamara Halsell, Tracy Haynes, Alma Ismailgeci, Charmaine McPherson, Devorah Morton, Markey Parkes, Nancy Pollock, Osvaldo Rios, Anthony Robinson, Brenda Rodriguez, Juan Rodriguez, Linda Ruban, Samantha Simms, Christine Sullivan, Laura Toro, Jade Williams. Not pictured, Julia Golier, Joan Deutchman, Theresa Santiago.