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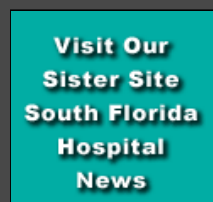
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#### Sheri Ruiz of VN | HA Named Nurse of the Year

Sheri Ruiz, RN, MSN, CFNP, from Visiting Nurse | Hospice Atlanta, was awarded "Nurse of the Year Award" by Piedmont Hospital's Patient Care Coordination Staff during National Nurses' Week. This is the first year the award has been given. Sheri has worked for VN | HA for a total of five years.



Sheri Ruiz, RN, MSN, CFNP (right) from Visiting Nurse / Hospice Atlanta, with Margie Clark, Patient Care Coordinator for the oncology unit at Piedmont Hospital, one of the people who honored her work with the Piedmont's first "Nurse of the Year Award."

According to Piedmont's Melanie Thomas-Bonner, RN, BSN, CCM, who oversaw the award process, Sheri was the obvious choice. "Sheri is always dependable, easy to work with and readily available," she says. "She handles each case from beginning to end. Moving a patient from a hospital to hospice is always a difficult time for patients and families, and Sheri is very sensitive to their needs. She is an expert in her field and is responsive to our calls for assistance. She is definitely an asset to the Visiting Nurse | Hospice Atlanta system."

#### Rockdale Medical Center Announces 2006 Nurse of the Year



Tammy Honeycutt has been chosen as the 2006 Nurse of the Year for Rockdale Medical Center, Inc. Honeycutt, is a RN on the Medical / Telemetry unit and has worked at the hospital for approximately 4 years. She was nominated from a list of 34 other distinguished nurses for the honor.

"Tammy is a tremendous asset to the nursing staff at RMC. The

patient care she delivers is second to none, and she is extremely deserving of this great honor," says Stuart Downs, Chief Nursing Officer. To quote some of Tammy's nominations, it was stated that; "She is never too busy to answer and take care of her patients", "she is the epitome of my definition of a nurse", "she is always positive", "she is a great patient advocate. This was recently confirmed by one of her patients when they stated, "Tammy is such a sweet nurse, you don't even have to ask for anything. She always knows what you need and gets it for you without complaining."

Tammy received nominations from her peers and co-workers throughout the hospital.

### VHA Georgia Hospitals Join Together to Save \$10 Million on Radiology Project

Seventeen Georgia hospitals came together in 2005 to identify common areas they could focus on to improve care and reduce costs. Their common membership in VHA Inc., the national hospital alliance, was the linkage that helped them achieve their goal. The hospitals launched a radiology improvement project that saved them \$5 million last year, and the task force anticipates the initiative will generate another \$5 million in savings this year. The participants in the initiative are Archbold Medical Center, Thomasville; Athens Regional Medical Center, Athens; Columbus Regional Medical Center, Columbus; DeKalb Regional Healthcare System, Decatur; Gwinnett Health System, Lawrenceville; Hamilton Medical Center, Dalton; Houston Healthcare, Warner Robins; Medical Center of Central Georgia, Macon; Northeast Georgia Health System, Gainesville; Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, Albany; Piedmont Healthcare, Atlanta; Satilla Regional Medical Center, Waycross; South Georgia Medical Center, Valdosta; Southern Regional Medical Center, Riverdale; Tift Regional Medical Center, Tifton; University Health, Inc., Augusta; and WellStar Health System, Marietta.



*(l-r) Kurt Stuenkel, CEO of Floyd Medical Center and VHA Georgia Chair; Alicia Smith, VHA Georgia; Karen Wisdom, COO, Hamilton Medical Center; Danny Whitt, Director of Radiology, Southern Regional Medical Center; Mike White, VHA Georgia.*

All of the hospitals belong to VHA, a national health care alliance that helps member hospitals improve supply chain performance and clinical care. In total, VHA works with 61 hospitals in Georgia. All of these hospitals work directly with VHA's regional office in Atlanta.

Working with VHA Georgia staff, the 17 hospital participants each formed teams of three to five people, including radiology directors, data coordinators, chief financial officers and/or chief operating officers, and any other pertinent staff members. As part of the initiative, each hospital selected two or three areas of focus within their radiology department based on their own internal analysis of the data VHA collected through Solucient, an outside comparative data and



benchmarking company. The company Solucient was so impressed with the project results that it gave an award to the hospitals for their results.

VHA Georgia staff, along with Solucient staff, helped the hospitals use the data to set goals and benchmarks for moving forward, while also building a database to track members' data on a monthly basis. "The data was central to the project's success," says Mike White, VHA Georgia's vice president of business development and operations. "It served as our starting point to evaluate each radiology team and ensured that we were comparing apples to apples."

Karen Wisdom, senior vice president and chief operating officer at Hamilton Medical Center, Dalton, GA, was expanding her organization's use of Solucient when she decided to participate in the VHA Georgia Radiology Initiative. Wisdom believed that the synergies possible with a group outweighed any improvements Hamilton Medical Center could make on its own.

"This initiative was an exciting opportunity for us because it proved to be a learning curve for our use of Solucient data," Wisdom says. "We used the comparative data to drill down to find the greatest opportunities and to help us prioritize our efforts."

Through this initiative, Hamilton Medical Center identified \$1.4 million in revenue enhancements and cost reductions, such as:

- improved coding and education in vascular services, as well as supply standardization
- reduced supply costs, improved work flow and reduced full-time employee hours for film librarians
- elimination of a magnetic resonance imaging lease expense

Wisdom also believes the power of networking was a vital contributor to the group's achievements, and she saw that power at work when she attended meetings. The role that VHA Georgia and VHA Inc. played proved crucial as well, says Wisdom. "They were the driving forces that held this group together," she says. "Without VHA as the central vehicle through which we could communicate, our success would not have happened."

"The VHA Georgia Radiology Initiative was a successful cost reduction project for Wellstar Health System," said Andy Tatnall, senior vice president of clinical services at WellStar. "The opportunity for senior leadership, ACTION Coordinators and radiology management to sit at the table together and develop a plan for savings and improvements in patient care was a positive experience. We have completed the implementation of this plan and have demonstrated true cost savings and process improvements to date. The collaboration among the VHA Georgia member hospitals was a great way to share best demonstrated practices."

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For more information about VHA, visit <http://www.vha.com/>.