

STAFF SOUNDINGS

By and about the staff

at the Northwest Center for Outcomes Research in Older Adults
Health Services Research & Development
VA Puget Sound Health Care System

June 2007

Annual Report Director Retires

HSR&D bids farewell to Jean Sullivan on April 30, 2007, after 20 years of federal service. Jean came to HSR&D after ventures in fiction writing, candle making, homesteading, and owning a health food store. Jean began her research career in 1978 in Arizona. When a project brought her to Washington she fell in love with the ocean, mountains, and trees.

Jean recently sat down with Jared LeClerc, Research Assistant, and discussed her career, ART, and her plans for retirement.

Jared LeClerc: ART: What is it, where did it start, how did you get involved in it, etc.?

Jean Sullivan: ART means Annual Report Template. It started out as a means of collecting data and narratives summarizing HSR&D Centers' annual activity. Who had done what and why was it important? This was in 1998, when I was between projects, looking for something to do. Steve Fihn had volunteered our Center to develop this new software. As I was interested in information technology, Paul Westcoat, Monica Hayes, and I pursued what we originally thought was going to be a three-month project. In the beginning, there were 14 Centers and data from those centers would be sent to us on floppy disk, merged into documents, and then sent to CO.

"Jean is legendary for her dedication to HSR&D, our center, and all the projects she has shepherded to completion."

Over the years, the project grew significantly, and now all data is collected on our SQL server or through the ART Website. Because the data is accessed so easily, CO can quickly respond to the frequent requests from Congress about how we are spending public research dollars and the impact research is having. Congress wants to know details. What are we doing on COPD, cancer, women's

issues, diabetes? What are the impacts that research has had? Since ART is now routinely updated, current data about the Centers' research activities is available whenever it's needed. It is available without having to ask Centers to collect it and create ad hoc reports to respond to those requests. ART is a critical link in the information flow from our researchers to Central Office, to HSR&D's Center for Information Dissemination, which maintains the HSR&D Internet Website, and to the NLM ClinicalTrials.gov website. Congress and most importantly veterans and the wider public have access to summaries of our research through project abstracts and our research results through citations that are linked to these abstracts. I think the dissemination of this information is very important. It's important that Congress and the public know what we're doing here. ART has become much more than just an Annual Report Template.



Susan Schiffner (right) from Central Office presents a plaque to Jean Sullivan at a retirement

Continued on page 2

About ART

ART (Annual Report Template) is a VA Central Office automated reporting system that was developed specifically for HSR&D research. ART gathers, tracks, and organizes data from VA HSR&D centers around the country.

Uses of ART:

- Quarterly and Annual Reports for each center

- Assistance with the Intent to Submit process for requests for funding

- Project and Dissemination Reports

- Ad hoc reports for quick response to Congressional information requests and other management purposes

- Oversight of progress for HSR&D funded projects, Career Awardees and Training activities

- Automated E-mail notifications for due dates

- Citation information provided to HSR&D and NLM Websites

Continued from page 1

JL: What are some career highlights?

JS: I was originally hired in 1986 by Susan Hedrick as an interview supervisor for the Adult Day Health Care Study. The last study I did with her was the Assisted Living Pilot Project for which I was Co-Investigator

and Project Director. Working with Susan was definitely a career highlight. She was a wonderful mentor. She encouraged me to explore my abilities and treated me as a collaborator. I've been blessed to work with some incredible people: Diana Lynn on ADHC; Jayne Lewis-Kulzer and Laura Hebert on the Hawaii Vietnam Veterans Study; Heather Kelly, Sarah Barry, and Carol Simons on the Assisted Living project; and then there is the ART team: Paul Westcoat, John Messina, Dan Heidel, and Tom Dyer. Whatever I've accomplished, it has been in great measure because of the wonderful staff I've had working by my side. I really love the work with ART. I have a wonderful team who care about what they do and work far beyond what's expected of them. There's a very dedicated workforce here at Seattle HSR&D and I feel lucky to have been a part of it.

"I've rarely had the opportunity to work with someone who was so hard working, driven, and perfectionist while also maintaining a pleasant disposition, a patient attitude, and a solid understanding of her staff's personal and professional needs."

—John Messina, ART Program Assistant

JL: What is your legacy? What do you leave behind?

JS: ART.

JL: Ah, yes...

JS: ART was very fulfilling to me. And I was very ambitious with it. While discussing finding my replacement, Susan Schiffner, the Central Office ART Program Manager, said, "I want someone as pushy as you are! If you hadn't pushed, ART wouldn't be what it is today."



The ART team (l to r): John Messina, Tom Dyer, Jean Sullivan, Dan Heidel, Paul Westcoat

JL: Do you retire? Plans? Are you ready? Will you retire well?

JS: I love my work, but I'm ready to retire. I'm replaceable; someone else can continue this work as well or better. It's not easy to give up something you've done for a long time and enjoy doing, but there are other things I want to do. I'm looking forward to having time to take classes and draw and paint on a regular basis. I want to better understand an idea I worked on in grad

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

school and still think about, something I figured I'd put off really understanding till some other day. Now is that day! I look forward to having more time for

relaxed weekends and for seeing friends and maybe doing some volunteer work in environmental issues or human rights. I think retirement is not as much about playing as it is about re-creating – finding another purpose in life.

JL: Looking back, what would you have done differently? For those of us who are at the beginning of a career and are sweating about decisions, could you comment on circumstance and free will?

JS: I had an early goal to be a writer. I had thought that other jobs would support my writing career. But I also had early exposure to the data processing field, and I've always been interested in logical connections between things. In the late 1960s, I very nearly got a job in programming, which would have led me in a very different direction in life. I've pursued what I like doing. I had considered finishing my PhD but found that I already liked what I was doing. I've never been driven by a sense of "this is my goal." You have to "follow your bliss," follow your inner life.



*Jean in Australia, September 2005
(above)*

*Jean and her husband,
Paul Bauck,*



Jean is an accomplished artist, and we've been fortunate to have been able to have



*"Roseate Spoonbill,"
watercolor and gouache,
by Jean Sullivan*



*"Mama and Baby," pastel,
by Jean Sullivan*



*"Papayas," acrylic,
by Jean Sullivan*

The Back Page

Getting to know you....

Welcome to the premiere issue of Staff Soundings, a newsletter “by and about the staff” here in HSR&D at VA Puget Sound. The more formal, research-focused newsletter—geared towards keeping other research centers within the VA updated on our research endeavors—will continue to be published. Staff Soundings will be distributed within the division only, and will be focused on staff. This is a venue for us to keep in touch with what’s happening with staff and getting to know each other better. With this in mind, we’ve prepared a little quiz about some of our staff (below). **We will send out emails periodically asking for material, but in the meantime, please share your good fortunes, milestones, adventures, etc. with us!**

By now you've all met Leon Knippling and Dawn Sakaguchi, who joined the administration core in October 2006. But did you know:



Dawn moved to Washington two years ago to attend a counseling graduate program at Central Washington University. She is currently plugging away at her thesis and hopes to graduate this year. Born and raised in Honolulu, she misses the sounds of the ocean, da pidgin language and especially broke 'da mouth kine food. Shaka brah!



Leon retired from the Navy in January 2006 after spending 20 years on active duty. His last assignment was aboard the USS GONZALEZ (DDG-66) as the Ships Secretary, performing duties as the administrative officer. His goal is to convert all Seattle Seahawk fans into Dallas Cowboy fans.

Mary McDonell, Project Director (PI: Fihn)

I watched a movie with Bill Gates

I ate crab ovaries for Thanksgiving dinner last year

I was an exchange student in Germany



Jane Emens, Program Assistant (PI: Reiber)

I crossed the U.S. six times in a Volkswagon Squareback

I met Picasso's niece

I caught lobster in the Atlantic Ocean

McDonell: Was not an exchange student in Germany
Gillespie: Did not aspire to work with computers

Fact or Fiction?

One statement

about each staff is false.



Brian Gillespie, IT Programmer/Analyst (PI: Fihn)

I wanted to work with computers when I grew up

I hold the rank of second degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do



Soundings Staff:

Michael Donahue (Editor)

Jane Emens