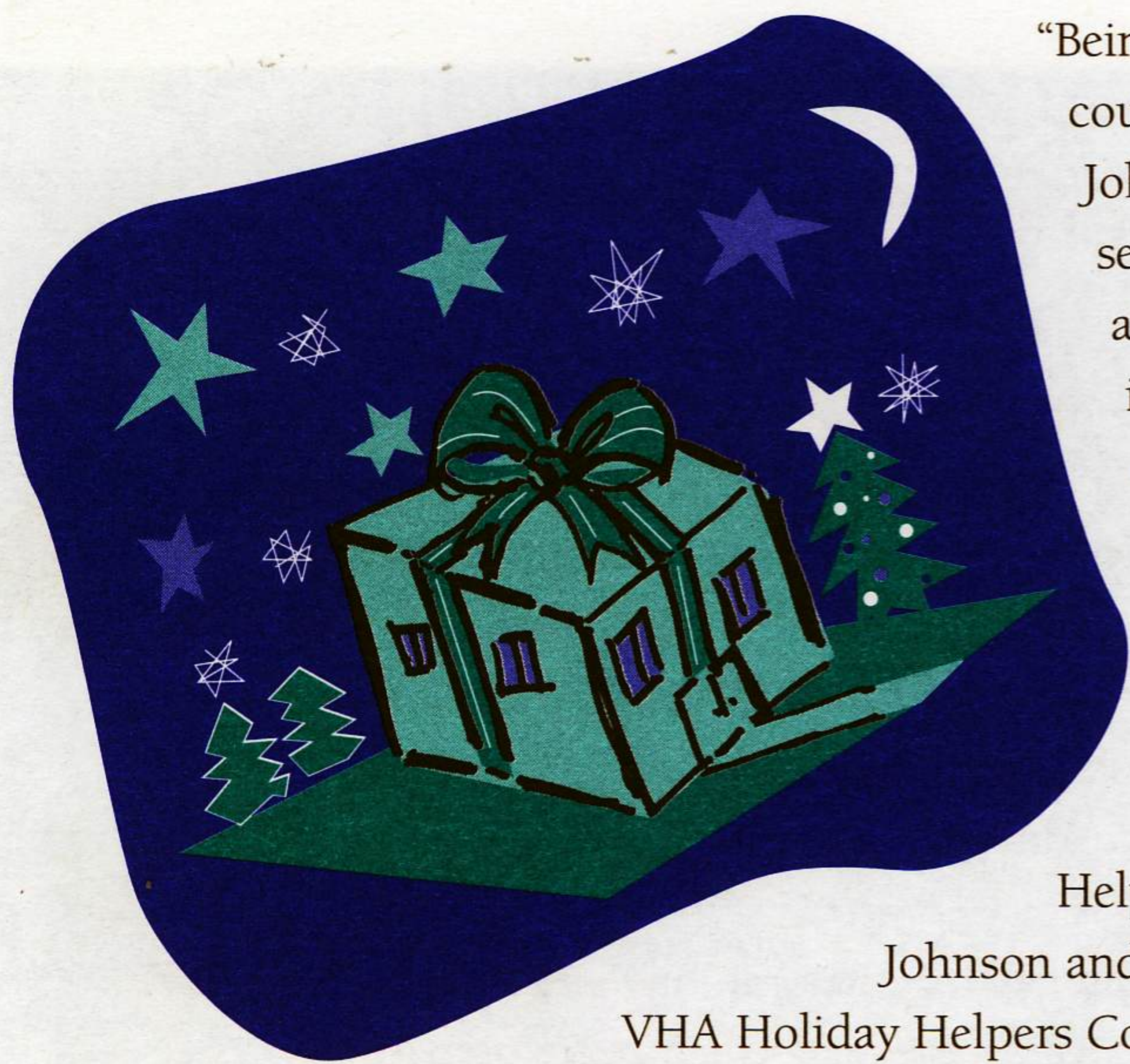




United to Improve
America's HealthSM

VHA Employees Become Holiday Helpers for Homeless Families

As a member of the Mount Pisgah Baptist Church of Dallas, VHA employee Dorothy Johnson first visited the Family Gateway Center while performing in a choir concert. Her audience was a scattered crowd of homeless families—mostly single mothers and children facing the holidays without food, jobs or homes.



"Being there, I realized that could be me," said Johnson, membership services coordinator at VHA, who was introduced to the organization two years ago.

This year's VHA "toy drive" has been changed to Holiday

Helpers, thanks to

Johnson and employees on the VHA Holiday Helpers Committee, who have vowed to help Dallas-area homeless families by supporting Family Gateway, a non-profit organization that operates a temporary shelter, a transitional living facility and offers job and skills training to the homeless.

"Historically, VHA employees have worked together to provide toys and clothes for children," said Bob Harper, chairperson of the committee. "This year, employees are doing more than providing toys to children. They're helping families down on their luck who need the basics to help them support and feed their kids, look for a job and find a permanent place of residence."

Ted Schurch, volunteer coordinator for Family Gateway, says VHA employee efforts are needed more than ever.

"We've seen a significant increase in the number of families we're helping," he said.

"We're operating at 85 percent capacity. These families need some help to get back on track. By giving a mop, a broom, dishes or towels, you're helping each family a great deal."

Here's how VHA Inc. employees can help:

- Check out the Family Gateway wish list of needed items (in the *Weekly Memo*, next to the gift boxes on every floor and in all VHA break rooms) and bring your donation to the Holiday Helpers gift boxes located near the elevators on floors five through 11. You can participate any time between Nov. 17 and Dec. 2.

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Backstage and Ballerinas:

English Teams Up with Troupe for Perfect Production

By day, Jo Ann English is a product manager in VHA's Improvement Marketing and Research department. By night, she's delighting in the sugar plums that dance in her head—sugar plum fairies, that is. English is one of 300 volunteers and 250 dancers who spend six months of every year—from June to December—practicing and preparing to present Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker."

As production coordinator for the Festival Ballet of North Central Texas, English makes sure everything proceeds as planned. She helps manage the volunteers who staff dressing rooms, hang sets and handle fog machines, and plans all the details from costumes and ticket sales to refreshments and production of the event program. English is also a seamstress who ends up sewing and fitting costumes and providing an extra hand whenever—and wherever—it's needed. That's why you sometimes find her patiently sewing sequins on the Snow Queen's tutu during her lunch hour at VHA. "Tutus are a real challenge, but all in all, it's therapy," said English.

The work begins in June at the ballet studio of Hugh Nini, a professional

dancer and the show's artistic director. "Hugh can always find whatever it is that a dancer does really well," said English. "I enjoy working with him and all the others who are volunteers. It's creative, the show is a lot of fun, and there's a strong sense of teamwork involved. As long as it's fun, people are willing to work. They call year after year asking, 'When can we get started again?'"

"The best part for me is seeing the impact it has on the kids," said English. "They grow and mature in just one season. Few children have

the opportunity to participate in a semi-professional ballet production. With the exquisite sets and costumes, this is much grander than a recital. It's very exciting for them."

English is also a ballerina's mom. Her daughter danced in "The Nutcracker" for six years, which prompted English to take residence backstage and help behind the scenes. English's husband, Blake, is also "big" into ballet. During the first two years of the production, he played the part of Mother Buffoon. "I knew he'd do anything for his daughter, but not that," said English with a laugh, as she described Blake,

Holiday Helpers in VHA Regions



Employees at VHA Regional Health Care Systems are also spreading holiday cheer. Every year, VHA Michigan employees make it clear that they don't want to exchange gifts with each other. Instead, they pool their money to help a local social services agency or church provide gifts to a needy family, said Ann Grewe, director of operational activities.

"We put our money together and buy gifts," said Grewe. Last year, these regional employees helped a single mother prepare her Christmas dinner and buy bicycles for her two kids. "She was paying off some debts, going to school to be a nurse and didn't have enough money to get bicycles for her 8-year-old daughter and 11-year-old son," said Grewe. "We were able to give them gift certificates for the bikes and help her with a catered Christmas meal. It's a lot of fun and very rewarding."

At VHA Oklahoma, Dick Thompson, VHA account manager, continues his two-year Christmas tradition of working with REST, a local homeless shelter.

"REST gives homeless individuals a place to go during the day and get a cup of coffee," said Thompson, who solicits contributions from area businesses to supply individuals with personal items like soap, shampoo and razors.

who stands six feet, five inches tall. "He shaved his mustache, donned a hoop skirt and gathered 16 preschoolers under his skirt for a dance in the Magic Garden. He surprised me on that one."

When not volunteering, English is a big part of VHA. As a member of VHA's Improvement Marketing and Research department, she helps market programs like the Improvement Exchange and physician leadership services, and

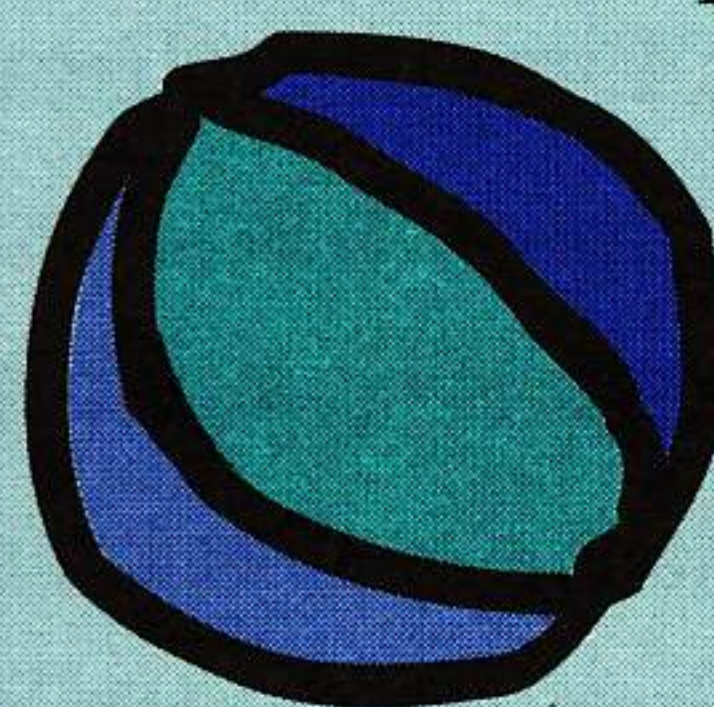
researches new technologies and health services issues. She earned bachelor's degrees in chemistry and medical technology and has 20 years' health care experience working in a number of different medical labs. She also has worked toward a master's degree in computer science and wrote software before coming to VHA in 1990. She and her husband Blake have two daughters.

This year, "The Nutcracker" will be performed four times between Dec. 9-11, at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. During that time, don't expect to see English in the office for a few days. "By the time it's over, I usually need a PDO or two to recuperate," said English.



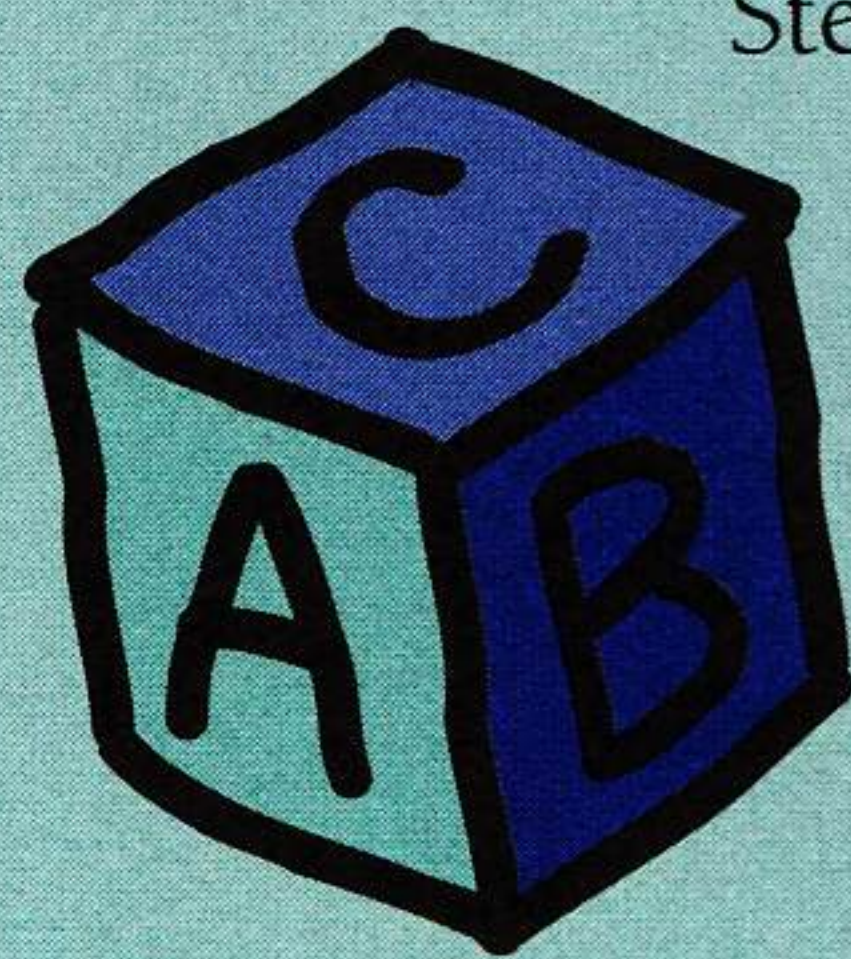
Jo Ann English, product manager in VHA's Improvement Marketing and Research department, and Hugh Nini, artistic director of the Festival Ballet of North Central Texas' production of Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker," put the finishing touches on a ballet dancer's tutu.

"It's crucial to the success of the organization," he said. "It allows REST to spend their budget on other needs like their Alcoholics Anonymous program or the materials for their GED program." Thompson also helps staff an information desk and distribute assistance checks.



"It's a worthwhile voluntary effort getting to meet people in good cheer during the holidays," said Marmurek. "Volunteering is a personal decision and personal experience, but I recommend everyone to get involved in their communities. You gain so much."

"I volunteer because the homeless need our help," said Thompson. "They're like you and me, and they need a helping hand to get back into society. Plus, it's important to give something back to society. We all need to join in and help our communities."



Steve Marmurek, vice president of VHA Alabama, is helping his community by spending a lot of time at the Vestavia Hills shopping mall just south of Birmingham, Ala. But he's not spending money, he's collecting it.

"I'm the guy next to the big pot of coins who rings the bell to let everyone walking by know that the Salvation Army needs their support," said Marmurek. He's been helping the Salvation Army for five years as part of his commitment to the local Rotary Club. He rings the bell for about one hour, one night a week.

Employees Help Families

continued from page 1

- Donate money by writing a check payable to VHA Inc. and send to Susan Thomsen in the Accounting department. Financial contributions will be used to fulfill remaining wish-list needs. All contributions are tax deductible.
- Volunteer at the center. Individuals and groups can help with child care, painting, cleaning and other tasks.

For More Information

- About Holiday Helpers, call the Holiday Helpers Hotline at (214) 830-0711.
- About volunteering at Family Gateway, call (214) 741-6515.
- About volunteering efforts in Dallas, call (214) 826-6767.

Market Research: Worth Their Weight in Gold

Digging for gold is an everyday routine for Barbara Carr and the rest of VHA's four-person Market Research department.

"Every survey, every bit of analysis and every on-line search we conduct is an archeological dig for valuable data," said Carr, who, even now, is using her keyboard to plow through reams of electronic data pouring across her computer screen. Today's on-line journey is a quest to learn more about electrical power quality.

"Our 'digs' are so diverse," said Carr, who manages to talk, download an electronic file and begin another search. "Now I'm looking for a new product segment for a medical-surgical product manager." She pauses for a few seconds. "Aha! A new industry report. Just what I needed." Another downloaded file and another research project underway. Barbara Carr swivels her chair to her desk and smiles. "This is where all the fun begins," said Carr. "Welcome to market research."

using information, said Carr. "We give VHA employees the information they need, whether it's to help them negotiate that next contract or to learn what materials managers are saying about electronic data transfer. Our ultimate goal is to provide VHA employees with the critical information they need to make smart business decisions." VHA's market research specialists, located on the eighth floor of VHA Place in Irving, Texas, include Barbara Carr, manager; Elizabeth Tomich, senior market research analyst; Lin Ricketson, market research analyst; and Linda Shaffer, market research support. Together, this team helps the rest of VHA prove to its customers that VHA does stand for quality and value.



(left to right) Linda Shaffer, Barbara Carr, Elizabeth Tomich and Lin Ricketson huddle around a computer to "crunch" the latest survey data.

"They're worth their weight in gold," said Mike Love, director of strategic relationships at VHA. "Over the last two years, thanks to a biannual survey of our customers conducted by market research, we now have a thorough, quantitative analysis that provides valuable insight into our customers' perceptions concerning product quality, the quality of manufacturers and the availability of products and product costs."

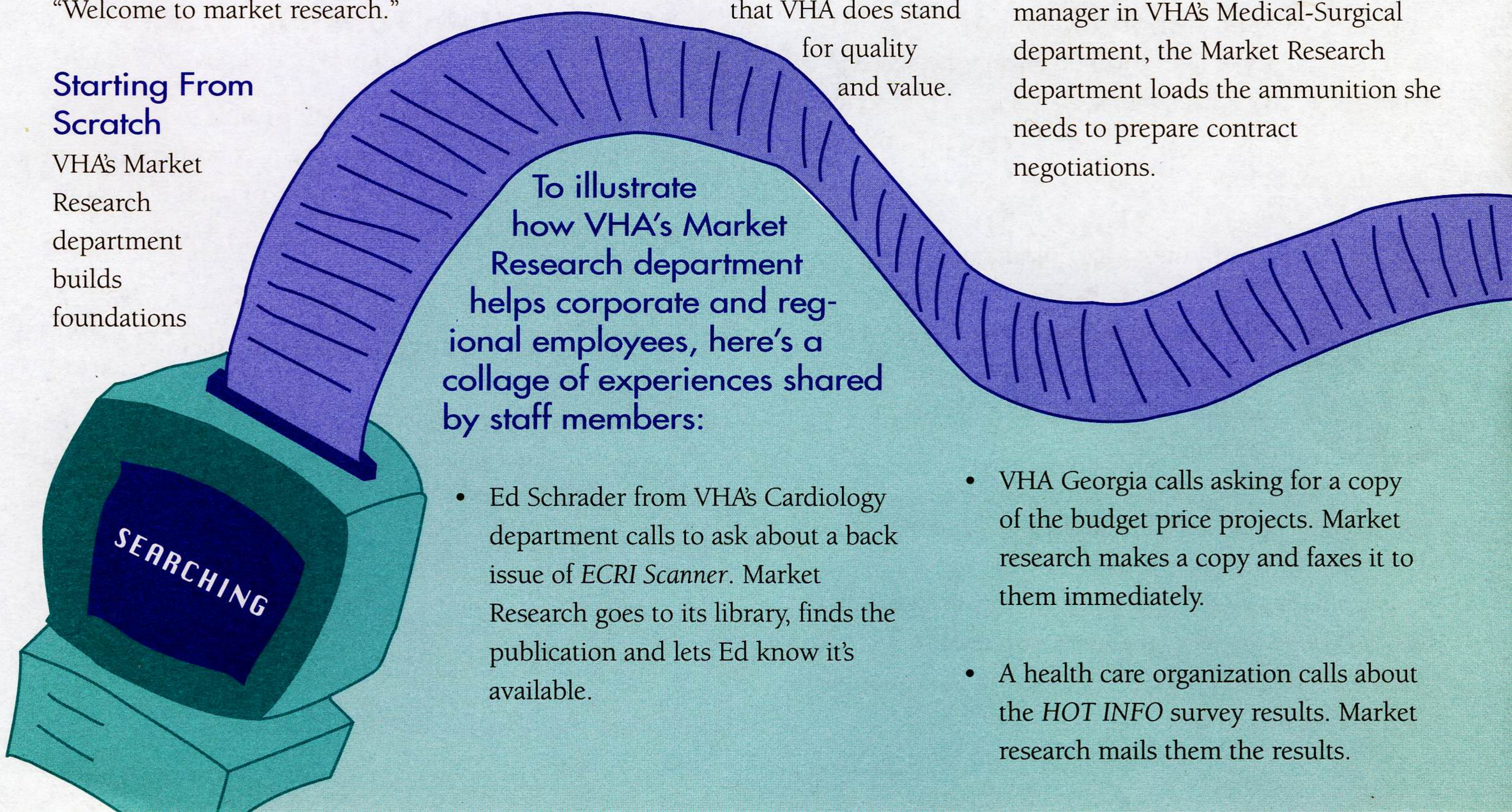
For Allyson Orum, associate product manager in VHA's Medical-Surgical department, the Market Research department loads the ammunition she needs to prepare contract negotiations.

Starting From Scratch

VHA's Market Research department builds foundations

To illustrate how VHA's Market Research department helps corporate and regional employees, here's a collage of experiences shared by staff members:

- Ed Schrader from VHA's Cardiology department calls to ask about a back issue of *ECRI Scanner*. Market Research goes to its library, finds the publication and lets Ed know it's available.
- VHA Georgia calls asking for a copy of the budget price projects. Market research makes a copy and faxes it to them immediately.
- A health care organization calls about the *HOT INFO* survey results. Market research mails them the results.



"I have three renewals to negotiate this year so they are helping me survey health care organizations to learn if they are satisfied with the products and manufacturers," Orum said. "Even our manufacturers recognize the value of the market research team because the manufacturers get to hear direct customer input."

Surveys, Surveys, Surveys

At any given time, the market research team is developing, writing and tabulating 10 to 15 surveys while also receiving survey results, getting them organized, entering the data into the computer and then "crunching" them for analysis.

"Very few people realize what it takes to develop a survey," said Carr. "It's a little more involved than drafting questions and mailing them out." Carr says the survey process, from start to finish, involves 27 steps "by the time the survey report is written and delivered to the customer."

Linda Shaffer is VHA's survey in-basket; she's the gatekeeper who receives all survey results. "I get more mail than the president," said Shaffer with a laugh. She enters the survey data and gives the data to Ricketson.

"I crunch the raw numbers and make them readable," said Ricketson, "then I pass along those

numbers to Beth and Barbara for interpretation." Interpretation is the painstaking process of figuring out what is being said. "We've got to ferret out the important information, bring it to the surface and recommend an action plan," said Carr.



VHA's Market Research team often find themselves buried by survey responses, mailing labels and data-analysis reports. It's just another day at the office.

Finding Help

Assistance from Market Research comes in a variety of ways, from quick advice on the telephone to in-depth consultations and surveys.

"If you have any question or are unsure about our role or potential role in some project you're working on, give us a call. We're always willing to help."

Discovering the Library

On the eighth floor of VHA Place in Irving sits a largely empty room filled with magazines,

the library, you must get a key from Shaffer or Beverly Farmer, technology development assistant. This resource center includes national news magazines like *BusinessWeek* and *Fortune* to trade and industry publications like *CAP Today*, *Hospital Purchasing News*, *In Vivo* and *Modern Healthcare*.

- Laboratory analyst Cheryl Mason needs the latest information on a specific point-of-care-testing manufacturer. Market Research retrieves several files from its on-line database and delivers reports to Cheryl.

- VHA Tri-State calls Market Research with a concern that VHA is sending too many surveys to materials managers. Market Research responds by outlining its research objectives and making a live presentation to the region's materials management meeting.

- Decision Support calls and asks for help developing a survey on CFIS database maintenance. They jointly develop a survey. Market Research agrees to compile data and analyze survey results.

"What Do You Think About Casual Day?"

Employees at VHA Place are trading in heels, hosiery, suits and ties for pants, flats, short-sleeve shirts and casual slacks. Here's what six VHA Place employees recently said during an informal survey about VHA's new casual day policy:

I Like Casual Day Because...

"...it's good for employee morale, and I get more work done when I'm comfortable and not wearing heels."

—Mitzie Gutierrez

"...who likes to wear a suit?"

—Don Leatherman

"...it allows me to wear my suits 50 less times a year, which means less wear and tear. Plus, it doesn't cost anyone anything and makes everyone feel good."

—Craig Lea

I'd Like to See Mr. Smith Wear...

"...a Dallas Cowboys sweatshirt."

—Mitzie Gutierrez

"...a teal IZOD polo shirt with camel-colored dockers, loafers and socks that have some teal in them."

—Mari Tietze

"...a plaid flannel shirt, baggy shorts and high-top Reeboks."

—Craig Lea

"...a bright-colored shirt. No tie."

—Colleen Aitches



VHA Employee Mitzie Gutierrez asked for it, she got it! Tom Smith, VHA president and CEO, wears a Dallas Cowboys sweatshirt, and it doesn't even meet Casual Day specs....hey, is that a tie under that sweatshirt?



Craig Lea, therapeutic market manager, Pharmacy

VHA's Regional Health Care Systems...

"...just need to do it."—Mari Tietze

"...definitely need a casual day."

—Mitzie Gutierrez

"...need to hang in there. Maybe they'll get one."

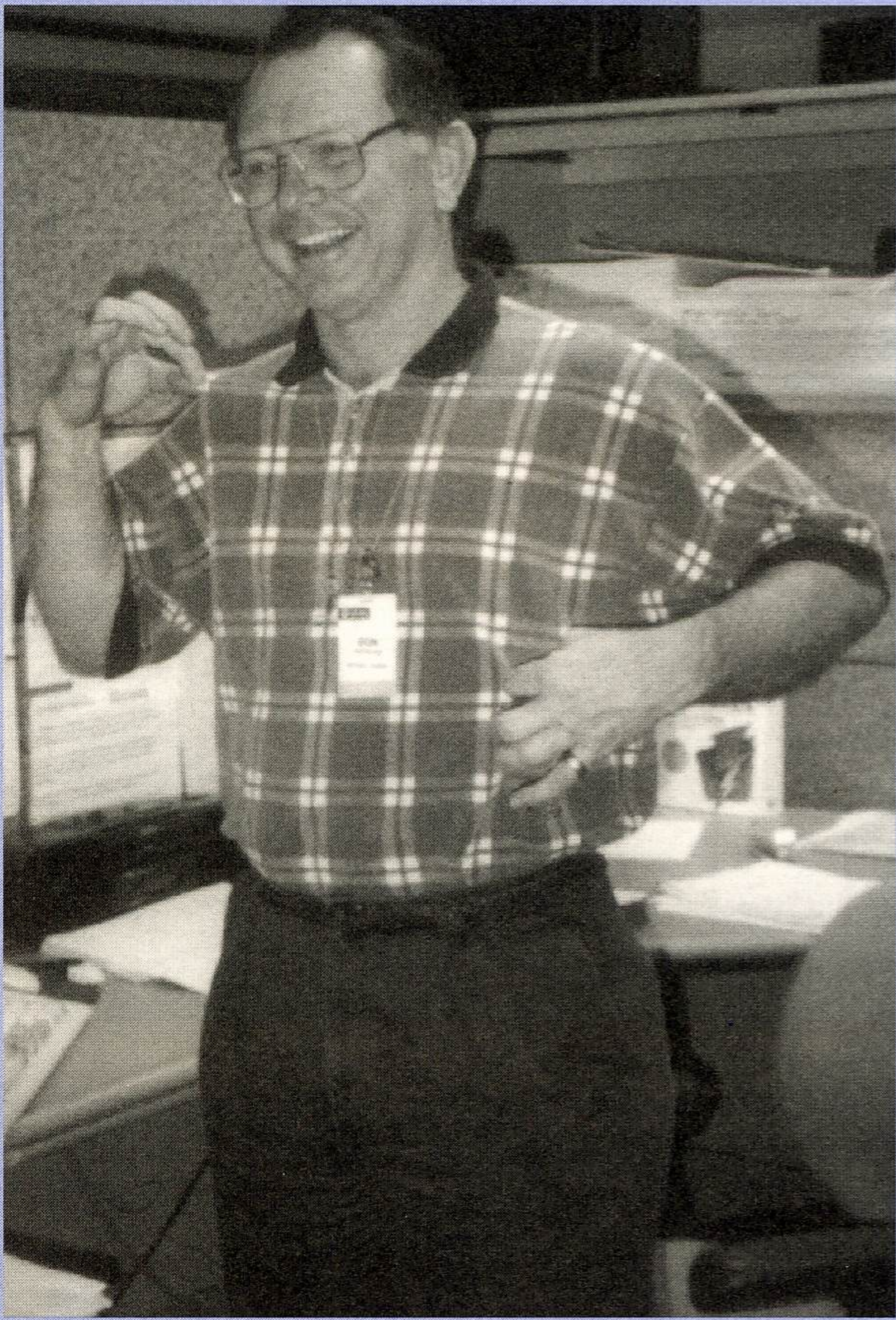
—Don Leatherman

"...need to get one instituted."

—Dorothy Johnson

"...should try it. They might like it."

—Colleen Aitches



*Don Leatherman, senior program analyst,
Information Systems*

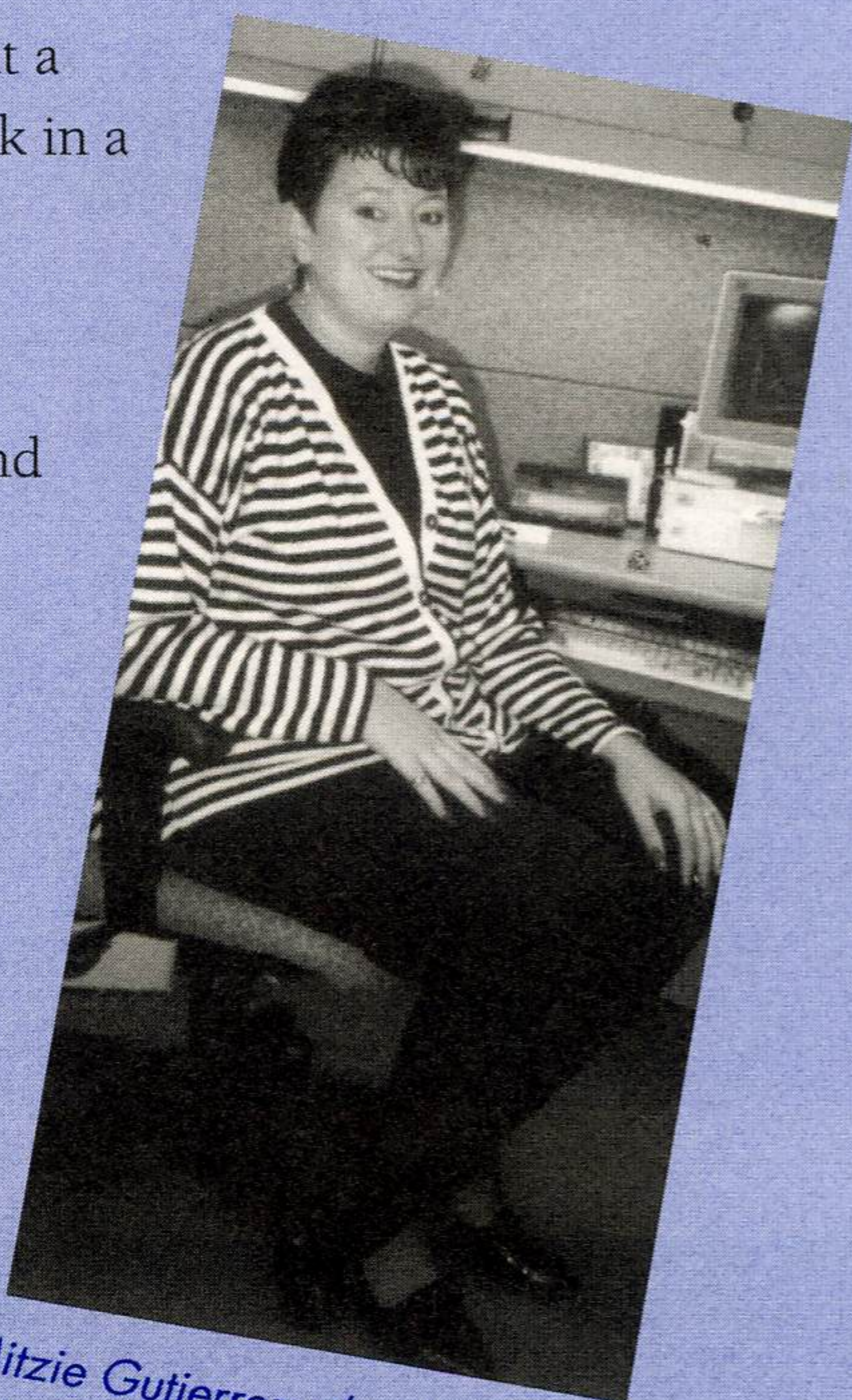
Some Regional Response..

"...Tom Smith casual? I can't imagine it, but I'm sure he looks great."

—Cathy Higgins, integrated health care specialist,
VHA Mountain States

"...casual day? What a great idea! We sneak in a casual day every so often, and it does wonders for our attitude, comfort and productivity."

—Cie Karp,
executive secretary,
VHA West



*Mitzie Gutierrez, decision support
administrator, Decision Support*

I&R Builds the Community by Giving Hearts, Hammers

Twenty-eight employees and family members from VHA Inc.'s Information and Research division spent an eight-hour day on Saturday, Sept. 17, improving the home of Myrtle Gillaspie, a Dallas resident who's lived in the house for 30 years.

The project was sponsored by Hearts & Hammers, a Dallas-based non-profit organization that refurbishes homes of low-income homeowners. It provides materials and management and seeks volunteers to do the work. The VHA group spent the day scraping old exterior paint and priming and painting exterior walls and trim. VHA employees also helped Gillaspie install new window coverings inside the home.

"I feel like we did some good," said Kathy Kier, senior producer for the VHA Satellite Network. "The project was very fulfilling, and I really had fun working so hard side-by-side with my communications buddies. A big part of the fun was getting to know Mrs. Gillaspie."

But Mrs. Gillaspie wasn't the sole beneficiary of the group's kindness. Blackie, her dog, received a brand-new house of his own.



St-t-r-e-t-ch!
Kathy Kier, producer
with the VHA Satellite
Network, hits the
high spots.



The Race Is On: Runners Jockey for Position

Here's how VHA's 401(k) investment options performed between April 1-Sept 30.

With improved returns in the second and third quarters of 1994, Mike Woodhouse maintained his first-place lead while Paula Santmyer moved into second, bumping both Anne Renner and Pat Vick for the first time this year. Vick remained in fourth place. These VHA employees are running VHA's 401(K) race by choosing their individually preferred investment options.

To date, the strongest fund, is Equity, which has a year-to-date gain of 5.97 percent. Despite positive year-to-date gains by the majority of investment options, all four "runners" have experienced some kind of financial loss, which is not uncommon, said Jeff Hayes, VHA assistant treasurer.

"We're all going to have some short-term losses, even Mike experiences a loss from time to time," said Hayes with a laugh. "We've got to think long term, which means looking beyond just quarterly standings." He says he commits to keeping his funding options for at least a year before considering a change. Voice will feature a year-round roundup of 1994 401(k) findings in its next issue.

Investment Option	Q2 gain/loss (%)	Q3 gain/loss (%)	Year-to-date gain/loss (%)
Short-Term Fund:	+1.40	+1.42	+4.28
Fixed Income Fund:	-1.18	+0.30	-4.97
Total Return Fund:	-2.89	+6.37	+0.31
Equity Fund:	+2.45	+5.39	+5.97
Index Fund:	+0.35	+4.91	+1.60

Current Standings

Q2 1994	Q3 1994	Fund
\$0.00	\$0.00	Short Term
\$0.00	\$0.00	Fixed Income
\$0.00	\$0.00	Total Return
\$10,272.66	\$10,826.36	Equity Fund
\$0.00	\$0.00	Index Fund
\$10,272.66	\$10,826.36	Total

First Place

Mike Woodhouse
Director, Operational Finance



\$0.00	\$0.00	Short Term
\$0.00	\$0.00	Fixed Income
\$4,598.71	\$4,891.65	Total Return
\$5,136.33	\$5,413.18	Equity Fund
\$0.00	\$0.00	Index Fund
\$9,735.04	\$10,304.83	Total

Second Place

Paula Santmyer
Executive Assistant and
Office Manager
VHA Pennsylvania



\$2,057.63	\$2,086.85	Short Term
\$1,895.91	\$1,901.60	Fixed Income
\$1,887.01	\$2,007.22	Total Return
\$2,012.30	\$2,120.77	Equity Fund
\$1,937.92	\$2,033.07	Index Fund
\$9,790.77	\$10,149.50	Total

Third Place

Anne Renner
Senior Communications
Specialist, Publications &
Creative Services



\$2,610.33	\$2,647.40	Short Term
\$7,032.93	\$7,054.03	Fixed Income
\$0.00	\$0.00	Total Return
\$0.00	\$0.00	Equity Fund
\$0.00	\$0.00	Index Fund
\$9,643.26	\$9,701.43	Total

Fourth Place

Pat Vick
Administrative
Assistant
System Services
Administration

