

## **Birmingham Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) Safe Harbor Palliative Care Unit**

In November 2005, the Birmingham VAMC opened the Safe Harbor Palliative Care Unit, a 10 bed inpatient palliative care unit located on the sixth floor. The Safe Harbor Palliative Care Unit is the culmination of a 4-year Safe Harbor Palliative Care Program developed to meet the needs of veterans. In addition to inpatient Palliative Care services on the Safe Harbor Unit the Safe Harbor Program provides inpatient palliative consultations, outpatient clinic, home hospice supervision, and continuing education for medical providers, nurses and other ancillary health care providers throughout the medical center. Home Based Primary/Palliative Care is an integral part of the overall Safe Harbor Program. Veterans are often referred to these programs from the Safe Harbor Unit or after palliative care consultation as appropriate. In addition veterans in HBPC are often referred to the Safe Harbor Palliative Care Unit when inpatient care is needed. The Safe Harbor Palliative Care Unit also serves as one of the clinical experiences for the Palliative Medicine fellowship program and the Palliative Care rotation for medical students and internal medicine residents.

The Safe Harbor Palliative Care Program and Unit has been recognized as a center of excellence. The Birmingham VAMC is the first VA facility in the country to be appointed a Palliative Care Leadership Center (Joint Program with UAB) by the Center to Advance Palliative Care and was given a citation of honor by the AHA Circle of Life Award (Joint Program with UAB). The Birmingham VAMC has been selected as one of four Centers of Innovation by the VA nationally. The Safe Harbor Palliative Care Unit is an example of patient-family centered care highlighted at our COI.