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Retiree Activity Day offers wealth of information, services

By Phil Reidinger
FSH Public Affairs Office

More than 2,000 retirees and their family members from the San Antonio and the south Texas area visited the Army Medical Department Center and School's Willis Hall Saturday for Retiree Activity Day.

The annual event, sponsored by the Fort Sam Houston Retiree Council, offers an opportunity to deliver a wide range of information to retirees in one central location, said Salvador Toscano, chief of Fort Sam Houston Retirement Services. The event featured information from numerous sources, such as private organizations, health care companies, TRICARE and finance.

Health care representatives from 24 Brooke Army Medical Center departments, both clinical and health promotion, filled Willis Hall with displays and exhibits. Under the supervision of Staff Sgt. Anthony Smith, 32nd Medical Brigade, 20 Soldiers helped set up displays and escort retirees who needed assistance.

"This is my third year coordinating the event, and today the participation by retirees and family members is larger than the previous years," said Lt. Col. Suzanne Jardine, who was responsible for classroom and equipment support in Willis Hall.

Flu shots drew a large crowd at the event. Col. Barry Sheridan, chief of BAMC's Department of Primary Care, talked with many retirees waiting in line for a flu shot.

"We brought 1,000 flu shots and the experience talking with retirees is always great as they patiently wait in line, talk to staff members giving the shots and complete administrative paperwork," Sheridan said. "The process went well under the direction of Lt. Col. Shaun Kueter and her staff."

The Staff Judge Advocate offered classes on estate planning, probate, medical directives and powers of attorney, and scheduled legal assistance appointments for consultations. A line began to form shortly after 7:30 a.m. at the In/Out Processing Center. The ID card section and the vehicle registration office opened from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. for retiree services.

In Blesse Auditorium, Maj. Gen George Weightman explained the latest on planning for the anticipated growth of more than 15,000 new members to the community at Fort Sam Houston as a result of the base realignment and closure 2005 decisions. Weightman said the Army's success today is founded on the history of the veteran's service.

“You represent an era of our history,” he said. “Our Army, that has never been stronger than it is today, is built on your shoulders.”

Brig. Gen. James Gilman, BAMC commander, outlined the restructuring of Army and Air Force medical facilities due to BRAC. Referring to the closure of Wilford Hall at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and the creation of the regional military medical center at BAMC, Gilman said, “We have been a joint hospital for a long time as part of our patient care mission. BAMC will focus on trauma and inpatient medical care that is reflective of the original scope and design of the medical center. We will be a primary surgical site and also provide labor and delivery, neonatal and pediatric intensive care that is currently at Wilford Hall.”

Gilman said a large ancillary care facility focused on primary care with clinics for services such as ophthalmology; ear, nose and throat; dermatology; podiatry; gastrointestinal; and oral surgery will be constructed at Lackland Air Force Base.

“We are consolidating and integrating services without reducing quality and availability of medical care,” he said.

Gilman also reminded people of alternate locations for medical services in the area, such as clinics at Randolph Air Force Base and Camp Bullis, and the future joint Air Force and Veterans Administration clinic at Stone Oak.

For more information on retiree services, call 221-9004.