

## **VA Illiana Health Care System Hosts Hat/Mitten/Scarf Drive for District 118 Elementary School**

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee of VA Illiana Health Care System (VAIHCS) hosted a Hat, Mitten and Scarf Drive to support the children of Meade Park School. The committee garnered the support of the medical center staff and collected donations of children's hats, gloves and scarves for three weeks to present to Meade Park. The donations were presented to the school and the principal, Mendy Spesard on December 18, 2013 at Meade Park. Mrs. Spesard was excited when she got the news that Meade Park would be a recipient of the drive. "We thank [the VA] so much for this generous offer. What a fantastic thing to do for the children, states Spesard!" A nationwide survey conducted by AdoptAClassroom.org reported that as many as 91 percent of teachers from K-12 spend as much as \$1,000 per year of their own money on necessity items for their students.

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee at VAICHS exists to build a diverse workforce and cultivate an inclusive workplace. The committee hosts various events throughout the year at the VA and the community to promote the different Special Emphasis Programs and raise awareness of the affinity groups that are present as employees and patients at the VA. Each year, a grand holiday program to support diversity is usually done, but this year, the committee chose to do something different. The Chair of VA Illiana's committee, Dr. Katasha S. Butler said, "I was thrilled that the committee decided to do this drive and that we got the full support of our leadership team, the committee and most importantly, the employees! We had so many items to take over to Meade Park and we couldn't have done it alone. We have such a caring and committed team."

VAIHCS consist of a medical center in Danville along with five community based outpatient clinics located in Decatur, Mattoon, Peoria, Springfield, Illinois and West Lafayette, Indiana. Illiana is the 8th oldest VA facility with services available to more than 150,000 Veterans living in the surrounding 34-county areas of Central Illinois and West Central Indiana.