**AVASW Social Worker of the 1st Quarter**
**Eileen Burke, LCSW**


Eileen Burke is the AVASW Social Worker for the first quarter of 2016.  Eileen is a HUD-VASH Case Manager at the Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System in Biloxi, MS. Eileen was nominated by Jodie Picciano-Swanson, LCSW, ACSW, the Assistant Homeless Program Manager DV/IPV Coordinator at Gulf Coast Veterans Healthcare System.  Ms. Picciano-Swanson says: ‘There is not a day that goes by without Eileen demonstrating the VA core values and characteristics.”

**Trustworthy**-she always follows through with a promise made to her supervisor, peers, or Veterans.

**Accessible**-she never turns a homeless Veteran away; she will always make time for those in need.

**Quality**-her documentation is clear and concise and she communicates with other Social Workers, Providers, and outside resources as needed to serve Our Veterans.

**Agile**-she can juggle multiple tasks without complaint.

**Innovative**-she will find resources, or develop referral ideas for Veterans who may not meet the HUD/VASH criteria, but are certainly in need of services.

**Integrated**-she is skilled at creating a non-judgmental, safe environment, which enables Veteran to have a sense of trust during their assessments.  She is inclusive of all team members in the Homeless Program and is a real team player and leader.

The nomination goes on to give examples of how Eileen carries out the **ICARE** commitment to Veterans in her work.  She has **integrity**, she is honest and reliable.  She is **committed** to serving the Veteran and addressing needs as they present themselves through her advanced clinical skills and her dedication to the Veterans she serves to get them the services they need.  She is an **advocate** for Veterans to the VA and to community programs, she does Outreach services and serves Veterans as well as non-Veterans in the local soup kitchens as well as being a active participant in a local coalition of community services for the homeless.  She **respects** the Veterans that they serve as wells as her peers and she is well respected by others as well. She exemplifies the role of a VA Social Worker, she provides **excellent** care every day.

When asked what brought her to the VA ( because from her resume it looked like she has been doing private practice for a number of years after she graduated from her MSW program),  she stated that she came to the VA sort of by accident.  She indicated that when Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, her New Orleans private practice was necessarily shuttered for 9 months. She started thinking about looking for employment that offered contingency plans to deal with these types of events.  She applied to the VA and got hired and found that it has been a positive rewarding experience professionally for her.  She informed me that her father had joined the Navy in WW11, the Marines in the Korean War, and the National Guard in peacetime.  She also indicated that she found that she really enjoys working with Veterans.

When I asked her what she was passionate about, she stated that “everyone wants to be seen and valued, and the ones that we may pass over or are invisible to us, they deserve to been seen and listened to. “  Her advice to new social workers at the VA: STOP and LISTEN, be quiet and listen to what you are being told, talk less, listen more.  Her challenge to us as social worker is to not let the ones that smell bad, or are drug addicts, or have mental health problems be invisible or passed by, they are the ones that need our help, we are not always going to able to work with the articulate middle class Veterans, these other Veterans are the ones we need to use our skills to help.

The AVASW is thrilled to award Eileen Burke, MSW, LCSW as our 1st Quarter SW of the year 2016.  Thank you for your wonderful work with our Veterans who may sometimes be overlooked but always need to be honored and assisted for the service they gave to our country.