

# the link

September  
2011



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System



**Secretary  
Shinseki Visits 5**



September 2011 marks the 10th anniversary of the tragedy of 9/11. I can remember where I was when news of the tragedy first hit. The losses our country endured touch my heart as we near the anniversary date.

Due to our country's commitment to fighting terrorism, many changes have occurred in Veterans Affairs. Stories about some of those changes can be found in this edition of The Link. The feature on the Polytrauma Support Clinic and yoga class associated with that clinic are an example of those changes. Polytrauma services were established in NWI as part of a larger effort to ensure returning service members who have experienced traumatic brain injury can receive the care they deserve and need to return to a full and productive life. If you haven't had the opportunity to visit our Polytrauma Support Clinic, I strongly urge you to do so. The work being done in that clinic is a positive demonstration of the changes that have occurred in the past 10 years.

Also, take a moment to note the story on the Welcome Home Event. It's difficult to adequately describe the energy, effort and commitment the OEF/OIF/OND team puts into these events! The purpose of the Welcome Home Events is to welcome returning service members back from the war, and to provide Veterans and their families information about the services and benefits offered to them through the VA.

So, as we reflect upon the events of Sept. 11, let's not forget the tragedy suffered by many families, and upon our nation. Also, reflect upon the role we have played in VA to care for and provide services for the Veterans serving in the OEF/OIF/OND era as well as all Veterans from all wars.

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FACT: SINCE SEPT. 11, 2001, 6,400 OEF/OIF/OND VETERANS HAVE ENROLLED FOR HEALTH CARE AT NWHCS.

Cover: NWHCS Acting Director Nancy Gregory and Dr. Allan Hancock lead Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki on a tour through the Dental Clinic at the Omaha VAMC. Photo by Joe Fogarty.

“From the moment I’ve worked here, I have felt so blessed to have the chance to help these men and women that have fought for us. It is because of their great courage and selflessness and sacrifice that we get to enjoy the freedoms we do everyday.”

Angela Poor  
Accounts Receivable Technician, Omaha



# the link

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Link welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should not contain any libelous statements or personal accusations. Letters accepted for publication must include the writer's full name and phone number. Letters may be edited for space, but never for content. Email letters to [vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov).

# meet

## tony onstott



ICU Registered Nurse | Omaha

**Q: How long have you been a VA employee?**

A: "Exactly three years."

**Q: What does your job entail?**

A: "Taking care of patients in the Intensive Care Unit and Intensive Care Unit Step-Down – there's a surgical intensive care unit and a medical care intensive care unit, so patients who are just out of surgery or really, really sick."

**Q: What's your favorite part of your job?**

A: "Helping Veterans and the one-on-one patient interaction I get as a nurse."

**Q: Why did you become a nurse?**

A: "It's always challenging, and it's always something a little bit different. I know people have an image of nursing from what they see on TV, which isn't true at all. It's a lot different. The nurses do a lot more." 🗣️

## WELCOME HOME EVENT draws large crowd

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs



Kelli Stott, Health Promotion Disease Prevention program manager, and Jan Carlin, MyHealtheVet coordinator, hand out information to families at the Aug. 26 Welcome Home Event at the Amazing Pizza Machine. About 600 people attended the Friday evening event. Veterans went through three rooms of booths, which included information from VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, Veterans Benefits Administration, Veteran service organizations, area schools and more. The event targeted recently redeployed Nebraska and Iowa troops.

View more pictures from the event at [www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA](http://www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA).

# IntegratedEthics Council

Kelly Hastings | Palliative Care

**h**ealth care professionals, patients and their family members face challenging ethical questions daily at Veterans Health Administration facilities.

To help answer ethical concerns, VHA's National Center for Ethics in Health Care created IntegratedEthics, a unique and innovative national education and organizational change initiative. IntegratedEthics not only provides clinicians with tools and resources they need to address ethical challenges, but it is also a resource for patients and their families when they are faced with ethical concerns.

Not your traditional ethics council, IntegratedEthics seeks to improve ethics on three levels – decisions and actions, systems and processes, and environment and culture.

**VA NWIHCS's IntegratedEthics Council oversees the implementation of this initiative and targets each of the three levels through a different core function:**

- **Ethics Consultation** – responding to specific health care ethical concerns
- **Preventive Ethics** – addressing health care ethical issues on a systems level
- **Ethical Leadership** – fostering a positive health care ethics environment

Within the council, there is a leadership coordinator, program officer, ethics consultation *(continued on page 13)* ►

# The Secretary of Veterans Affairs

## Visits Omaha VA Medical Center

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

**a** large thunderstorm on the evening of Aug. 18 damaged vehicles, knocked out power and delayed Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric K. Shinseki's trip to the Omaha VA Medical Center.

While the visit was pushed back about five hours, Shinseki's priority while in town was to host a White House Rural Roundtable with Nebraska community leaders. Shinseki was joined in the Omaha VAMC Education Conference Room by Sen. Ben Nelson, Rep. Lee Terry and about 30 organization leaders from Nebraska, the Midwest Health Care Network and VA Regional Office, Lincoln.

**“We finally got here and what's wonderful is to walk in the room and everybody who was scheduled to be here, despite the fact that we're very, very late, were all here wanting to have the dialogue. It was very open, and I was very pleased at the insights.”**

Eric K. Shinseki,  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The group discussed the challenges of delivering health care to rural communities. The meeting was intended to be a direct line between the voices



Sen. Ben Nelson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki and Rep. Lee Terry lead the White House Rural Roundtable Aug. 19 at the Omaha VAMC. About 30 Nebraska community leaders were in attendance to talk about access to health care in rural areas.

at the meeting and the White House, Shinseki said. Issues discussed will go back to the White House Rural Council

“At VA we're focused on expanding access to Veterans wherever they live. In rural areas access means extending VA's reach to facilities closer to home like the 11 clinics in Nebraska and using telehealth technology to connect them to all of the sites where medical expertise resides. In the last two years the VA has invested \$284 million in telehealth and our commitment is that we must do better at reaching out to all of our Veterans wherever they live and we will do so here,” Shinseki said.

While Shinseki said health care providers in the VA and elsewhere think telemedicine is a great breakthrough, it was also a topic brought up by rural leaders at the roundtable. A lack of access to broadband limits the spread of telemedicine to some communities.

Limited access to broadband is one of the issues government leaders may not hear in the course of their normal duties, Shinseki said.

“We have a tendency to see the large urban areas with the high density populations where you generally (continued on page 13) ▶

# NOT ALL HEROES ARE

# soldiers

Joe Fogarty | Public Affairs

## a nurse's story from world war II

**t**en years ago in September, the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, prompted many men and women to join the service. For Nebraska native Frances Scott that call to duty came on Dec. 7, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Scott had just started training to become a nurse, but Pearl Harbor made her and her friends want to finish as quickly as possible so they could enlist in the military and become a part of the war effort, she said.

Scott had to wait three years, finishing her nursing training and taking the state boards, before she had a chance to help her country. The last couple months of her nurse's training were spent at a Navy hospital in San Diego.

“The Navy nurses told us if we wanted to stay in the states, join the Navy, but if we wanted to travel, join the Army. So we all joined the Army.”

Frances Scott

In January 1945 she was on her way to basic training at Fort Carson, Colo. During her two-week training, Scott and her fellow nurses went to classes, watched films about the war effort and learned to march in formation. Her first assignment after basic training was at Fitzsimmons Hospital in Denver, “the chest hospital.” Soldiers who suffered serious chest injuries in Europe were sent there for treatment.

“I was there for about four months and then there was a call for people who would volunteer to go overseas,” Scott said, “All of us felt that was our duty, so we did.”

On the way to the east coast, Scott's unit had a long layover in Chicago, a memory that still gives her chills, she said. Since it was the troops' last meal in the U.S., they all went to a fancy restaurant and ordered whatever they wanted. When they went to pay their bill, a stranger had already paid it for them. ▶



Frances during her basic training at Fort Carson.

“That was our first experience seeing what people in the public thought of people in the military.”

Frances Scott

For more information on women Veterans health care visit [www.nebraska.va.gov](http://www.nebraska.va.gov).

► Victory was declared in Europe while the nurses were riding the train from Chicago to Harrisonburg, Va., but Scott's unit remained on the east coast awaiting new orders. When her orders finally came, Scott ended up at Fort Jackson, S.C., but she said she wanted nothing more than to join the war effort and help the Soldiers overseas.

"Duties at Ft. Jackson consisted of hikes, movies, and swimming, with every night and weekend off. Fooey – you can have it. Me? I'm ready to move on and work," she wrote in a scrapbook she made while in the Army.

It finally seemed like Scott would get her chance when she got orders to report to the Pacific. From South Carolina she took a train and then a bus to get to the Navy yard in Brooklyn, N.Y., where she boarded a white hospital ship being refitted from its service in the Atlantic to be ready for the Pacific. The ship traveled down the east coast of the United States, through the Panama Canal, on to Hawaii and then finally to the Philippines. The entire trip took 40 days, during which, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

A portrait taken during Frances' service.



When their train arrived in Chicago, Scott and the rest of the nurses stopped at a photo booth in the station where they got "stamp photos" taken. A reporter for the Chicago Sun happened upon them sitting and looking at their photos and took a picture, which ended up on the cover of the newspaper the next day. A few days later Scott got her discharge orders and then left for New Jersey where her new husband, an engineer she had met during her service, lived.

"They told us that the war was over and that we were going to turn around and go home," Scott said of her arrival Manila. "And then they told us that was just a joke."

Instead, Scott was stationed at a hospital called the Macarthur Limited, which she described as, "kind of like the hospital in the movie 'M\*A\*S\*H' except in the tropics." She was only there for a day or two when a peace treaty was signed with Japan and the war was officially declared over, however, she remained at the hospital for several months to care for those still recovering from war injuries.

At the close of her tour, Scott took a troop ship back to San Francisco. The troops were greeted by music and ships that sprayed water to celebrate their return home. From San Francisco they took a bus to a train that would take them to Chicago. The bus ride was quiet and nobody seemed to know how to react to being home.

"Finally one nurse started crying and said, 'look, they're wearing shoes,' and that was kind of when we knew we were home: when we saw children wearing shoes."

After her discharge from the Army, Scott found her way back to Nebraska where she resides in Lincoln with her daughter. Currently 88, Scott still has the attitude that comes through in the scrapbook captions from her Army days.

"I plan to live till I'm 105. My doctor thinks I'll at least make 100." ①

# suicide prevention month

## SEEKS TO RAISE AWARENESS AMONG VETERANS

Joe Fogarty | Public Affairs

**S**eptember is National Suicide Prevention month, and it is more important than ever to raise awareness about VA's Suicide Prevention Program and initiatives.

As of 2010, it is estimated that nearly one-fifth of all suicides in the United States are committed by Veterans, and up to one-third of returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans will have post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health issues. However, statistics also have shown Veterans who take part in VA's prevention program are at much lower risk than those who do not seek treatment.

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System's Suicide Prevention Program, which has existed since fall 2007, takes a comprehensive approach that emphasizes education, training, and in rare instances, even direct action. The main focus involves working across all service lines throughout the hospital to raise awareness of suicide risks and treatment methods among medical staff.

According to Suicide Prevention Coordinator Dave Tuttle one of the best tools the program has is the Veterans Crisis Line, which was renamed from the Veterans Suicide Hotline earlier this year. Since the name changed, the hotline has received a steady increase in calls. Tuttle said the name change was necessary because the program is designed to help Veterans going through any sort of mental or emotional crisis, even if they are not having suicidal thoughts. In addition to the hotline there is also a 24-hour crisis chatroom.

"The main thing we want to do is to make sure they know there are access points where you don't have to wait for an appointment or the clinics to open in the morning," Tuttle said. "You can receive immediate help at any time of day."

By raising awareness, the program staff hopes to overcome the stigma attached to seeking help for mental health problems

One way program advocates try to combat the stigma is by equating the invisible wounds of mental health with the physical wounds service members suffer. ►

**"There's still the battle of, 'if I seek mental health help that must mean that I'm crazy or weak or deficient,' and that's not the case."**

Dave Tuttle  
Suicide Prevention Coordinator

► "A Veteran will always seek medical care if they have a physical injury or a wound, and we want them to feel like they can do the same thing for their invisible wounds," he said.

The theme for this year's Suicide Prevention Month is "Changing the Legacy of Suicide" and on Sept. 10 the program's members will be participating in the annual "Out of the Darkness Walk" sponsored by the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention.

The number for the Veterans Crisis Line is 1-800-273-8255 and the chatroom is available at [www.Veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.Veteranscrisisline.net).

The program also has an official Facebook page. For more information about the NWHCS program, Tuttle can be reached at 402-995-4063. 

**Veterans  
Crisis Line**



**1-800-273-8255  
PRESS 1**

# The Omaha

# Veterans Advisory Council

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

**O**ne thing members of the Omaha Veterans Advisory Council want Veterans to know is they can contact the council with any questions or issues they have. That's the purpose of the Omaha VAC and the members said they are honored to advocate for their fellow Veterans.

“I've been a patient here for about 10 years, and I think this is a wonderful facility. I've really never had a bad experience, but I know that others have.”

Okley Gibbs  
Veterans Advisory Council member

The Omaha council began about a year ago. The members are working to improve patient satisfaction and provide insight to VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System employees from a Veteran's point of view.

“We're all Veterans, and I think we have a little bit better understanding in some cases where we can stand back and look at these things from a Veteran's perspective,” said council member Richard Harrington. “We understand. We're trying to make things better for the people, the Veterans, who are using this hospital.”



Members of the Omaha Veterans Advisory Council include (front row): Richard Harrington, Betty Albanez, David Hansen, (back row) Chuck Real, Glenn Freeman and Larry Albert. Not pictured: Okley Gibbs and Daryl Rose.

Harrington sees hundreds, if not thousands of Veterans and their family members walk into the Omaha VA Medical Center lobby each week in another volunteer role as a greeter.

“Probably 99 percent of the people are having real good experiences, but that 1 percent ... we can always improve on things, and somebody needs to serve as an advocate for the Vets,” he said.

“All of our Veterans have given a lot to their country. I'm really happy to get to do this and consider it a privilege to be able to represent their interests.”

Richard Harrington, Veterans Advisory Council member

The Omaha council is working on several projects including a “Fresh Eyes” survey, a women Veterans survey, and working with hospital administration on the design process for the new Omaha medical center facility. At each monthly meeting the group also addresses issues brought to their attention by Veterans. *(continued on page 13)* ►

# Mindful Yoga Therapy for PTSD & Polytrauma Veterans

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

**L**iz Mery danced in movies such as “Love Me Tender” and “Carousel.” She worked with Ethel Merman, Marilyn Monroe, Liberace and Elvis Presley. Today, Mery is helping Veterans with the Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System harness the benefits of yoga to deal with the results of multiple injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Jesse Engle, an Army infantryman in Vietnam, is one of the Veterans who rolls out his yoga mat each week in the Education Conference Room at the Omaha VA Medical Center. Engle had never tried yoga, but after his third session said he would highly recommend the class to other Veterans.

“I recommend it from the standpoint of just helping to calm, and to have ways to focus on something that’s not stressful. That is, you’re controlling your body, and it’s really helping from that standpoint.”

Jesse Engle,  
Army Veteran and Yoga Participant

Mery’s VA class, Yoga for PTSD and Polytrauma, began after two Omaha VAMC psychologists brought their heads together on the benefits of a yoga class for Veterans.

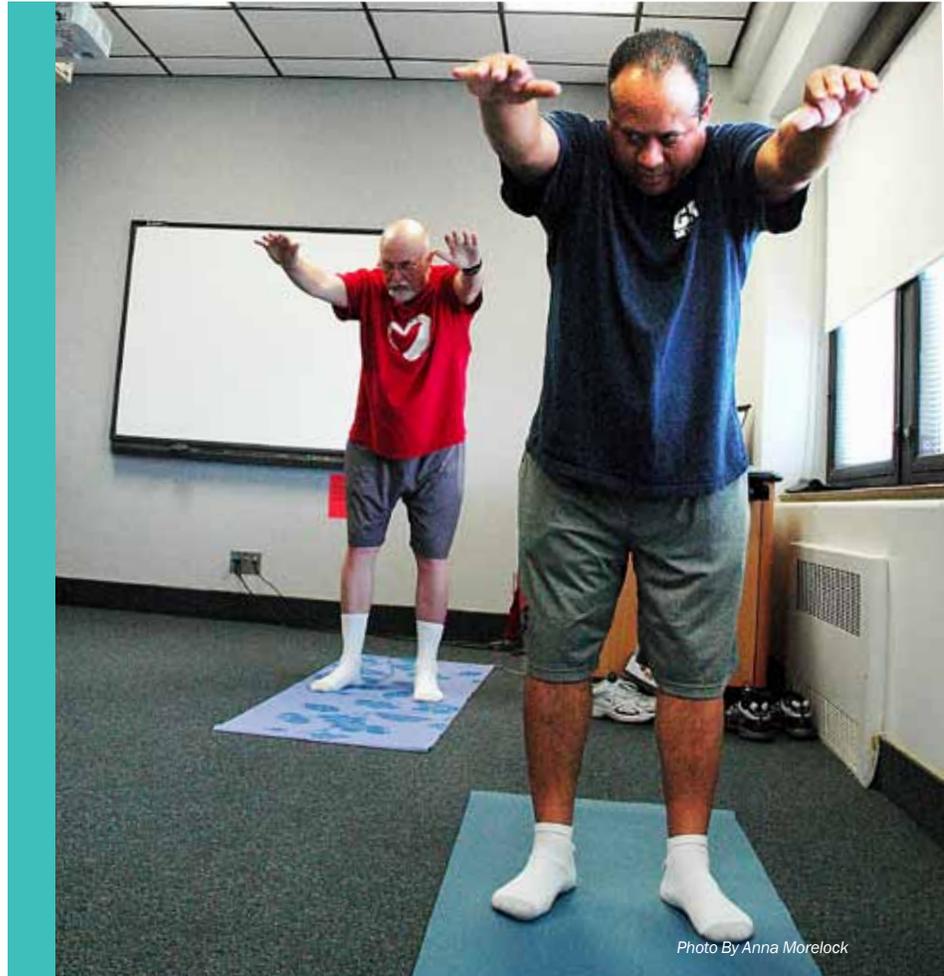


Photo By Anna Morelock

Jesse Engle and James Brown participate in the Yoga for PTSD and Polytrauma class taught at the Omaha VAMC. The class was begun recently as an adjunctive therapy for Veterans dealing with PTSD and the results of multiple injuries.

Dr. Jocelyn Ritchie, a psychologist in the Polytrauma Support Clinic at the Center Mall, and Dr. Terry North, director of the PTSD program at the Omaha VAMC, had each been thinking of ideas for a class.

North contacted Dr. Dan Libby, a postdoctoral fellow at Yale University and the VA’s Mental Illness Research and Education Clinical Center, and Ritchie contacted her friend, Mery, a yoga teacher. Mery and Ritchie, a yoga novice, attended teacher training through the Veterans Yoga Project in Newington, Conn., and sat in on a class taught by Libby at the West Haven, Conn., VA. ▶



Photo By Anna Morelock

Liz Merrey, yoga instructor, leads the Thursday evening Yoga for PTSD and Polytrauma class at the Omaha VAMC. Merrey has been teaching yoga for about 50 years.

► Upon their return, Merrey began teaching a VA yoga class in Lincoln. Ritchie and North attend classes as participants and in their roles as mental health clinicians. The classes have expanded to include two classes in Lincoln, two at the Center Mall in Omaha, and one at the Omaha VAMC. Merrey also instructs an employee class and two classes specifically for women Veterans.

Libby and his colleague Suzanne Manafort outlined numerous benefits of yoga reported by Veterans with PTSD including better sleep, improved self-concept, decreased anger, greater self-acceptance and improved ability to concentrate.

When people experience a traumatic event they can sometimes feel very disconnected from their bodies, North said. For instance, Soldiers in combat who are exhausted

and experiencing physical pain have to keep going. They may get so accustomed to blocking the pain and discomfort out they stop paying attention to physical sensations such as being tired or hungry.

Ultimately, this disconnection may result in them having difficulty taking good care of their bodies. Yoga can help Veterans reconnect with their bodies and learn how to be comfortable in silence, Ritchie said.

“A lot of times people spend a lot of energy filling up their lives with distraction whether that’s working three jobs so they’re on the go all the time, or other forms of distraction or alcohol,” Ritchie said.

“Having this experience of feeling calm while doing something, but not at the intense level of activity or other distraction, really helps people find a way to bring that into their daily lives as well.”

Dr. Jocelyn Ritchie, VA NWIHCS Polytrauma Support Clinic Psychologist

(continued on page 13) ►

# EVENTS what's going on?

- Sept. 4-10** National Suicide Prevention Week
- Sept. 5** Labor Day
- Sept. 6-9** National Veterans TEE Tournament, Iowa City, Iowa
- Sept. 10-11** VA Outreach Team at Guardians of Freedom Air Show, Lincoln, Neb.
- Sept. 11** Patriot Day
- Sept. 11-17** National Assisted Living Week
- Sept. 12-16** National Health IT Week
- Sept. 16** POW/MIA Recognition Day
- Sept. 18-23** National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, San Diego, Calif.
- Sept. 18-24** Deaf Awareness Week
- Sept. 18-24** Prostate Cancer Awareness Week
- Sept. 18-24** National Rehabilitation Week
- Sept. 21** Health Fair, Grand Island, Neb.
- Sept. 22** Health Fair, Lincoln, Neb.
- Sept. 23** Autumn begins
- Sept. 25** Gold Star Mother's Day
- Sept. 27** Health Fair, Omaha, Neb.
- For more information about VA NWIHCS events, visit [www.nebraska.va.gov](http://www.nebraska.va.gov).**

## VA NWIHCS is now Engaging Veterans Through Twitter and Facebook



[www.twitter.com/VANWIHCS](http://www.twitter.com/VANWIHCS)



[www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA](http://www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA)

Watch for news, patient information and upcoming events.

June 19 to Aug. 13

LEAVING

NEW

employees

## HELLO

Rolland Adams, VCS  
 Thomas Alexander, *Fee Basis*  
 Warren Ancheta-Thorp, *Fee Basis*  
 Daniel Anderson, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*  
 Venkata Andukuri, *Chief of Staff's Office*  
 Meagan Antle, *Surgery Patient Care*  
 Maurice Birdwell, *Fee Basis*  
 Jeanne Boyd, *Nurse Executive's Office*  
 Bradley Britigan, *Research*  
 Brent Cernik, *Pharmacy*  
 Rosa Crawford, *Inpatient Care*  
 Matthew Crotty, *Pharmacy*  
 Peter Daher, *Fee Basis*  
 Amanda Davison, *Pharmacy*  
 Melinda Dye, *Quality Management*  
 Susan Fry, *Pharmacy*  
 Nicholas Haglund, *Fee Basis*  
 Darin Henley, *Pharmacy*  
 Amanda Hunt, *IRM*  
 Sherri Hutcheson, *Nurse Executive's Office*  
 Jennifer Imes, *Nurse Executive's Office*  
 Tiffany Jarosik, *Patient Care*  
 Larry Krafka, *Research*  
 Joan Merkel, *Pharmacy*  
 Kenneth Miller, *Nurse Executive's Office*  
 Jose Novoa, *Fee Basis*  
 Kellie Ommert, *Extended Care*  
 Matthew Parsons, *Human Resources*  
 Linda Phan, *Pharmacy*  
 George Pratt, *Fee Basis*  
 Amy Richards, *Nurse Executive's Office*  
 Kimberly Richardson, *Patient Care*  
 Jeffery Rundell, *Engineering*  
 Megan Rustad, *Pharmacy*  
 Kathryn Schmid, *Pharmacy*  
 Christopher Smith, *Fee Basis*  
 Theresa Soucy, *Nurse Executive's Office*  
 Julie Stout, *Contracting*  
 Mary Tadros, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*  
 Laurie Tejral, *Nurse Executive's Office*  
 Andrea Walter, *Pharmacy*  
 Elizabeth Wear, VCS  
 Regina Wessel, *Outpatient Care*  
 John Wewel, *Fee Basis*

## GOODBYE

Joan Bowen, *Safety*  
 Heather Breece, VCS  
 Cecilia Buchanan, *Police*  
 Cynthia Buchmeier, *North Platte CBOC*  
 Wanda Carter, *Bellevue CBOC*  
 Samuel Cemaj, *Surgery*  
 Krati Chauhan, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*  
 Megan Dethlefsen, *Pharmacy*  
 Crystal Donovan, VCS  
 Kimberly Dreesen, *Pharmacy*  
 Susan Foster, *Patient Care*  
 Adrianna Garcia, *Pharmacy*  
 Dexter Griffin, *SPD*  
 Wayne Griffith, *EMS*  
 Barbara Harmston, *Business Office*  
 Marjorie Heier, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*  
 Sheryl Hemmer, *Finance Office*  
 Windell Hill, *Surgery Patient Care*  
 Barbara Jordan, *Imaging*  
 Megan Kingston, *Student*  
 Lorri Latzke, *Outpatient Care*  
 Adrienne Liggins, *Human Resources*  
 Dean List, *Mental Health*  
 Jenny Martens, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*  
 Ray McBride, *EMS*  
 Dawn Moore, *Chief of Staff's Office*  
 Ly Nguyen, *Pharmacy*  
 Markham Nichols, VCS  
 David Pappa, *Quality Management*  
 Beverly Petersen, *Patient Care*  
 Courtney Peterson, VCS  
 Susan Pope, *Surgery*  
 Fahd Quddus, *Fee Basis*  
 Teresa Rainey, *Outpatient Care*  
 Chad Reade, *Fee Basis*  
 Jason Reynoso, *Surgery*  
 Kara Riskowski, *Pharmacy*  
 Myron Rother, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*  
 Matthew Schaecher, *Pharmacy*  
 Sue Shobe, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*  
 Gerald Smith, *EMS*  
 David Stubbs, *Surgery*  
 Emily Trejo, VCS  
 John Urbanski, *Inpatient Care*  
 Lyndsay VanMarren, *Inpatient Care*  
 Jacob Vestecka, *Finance*  
 Marlene Vogel, *Research*  
 Wanda Walton, VCS  
 Eric Williams, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*

Would you like to submit employee news? Send it to [vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov](mailto:vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov).

► *VA Secretary continued from page 5*

get lots of dialogue,” Shinseki said. “Unique to the rural culture – people don’t scream for help a lot. But that doesn’t mean there aren’t needs. Our responsibility coming here was to make sure there was a voice for these communities.”

After the roundtable Shinseki took a brief tour of the Omaha VAMC including the operating rooms and Dental Clinic. While talking with media, Shinseki commented briefly on the need for a new medical center in Omaha, which is scheduled to be completed in 2018.

“This project is necessary because the current facilities don’t provide the support Veterans in this area – a four state area – deserve,” he said. “A very top priority for me is safety and security both for our Veterans and the workforce, so we think this is a much-needed project that will satisfy all those requirements.”

► *Ethics continued from page 4*

coordinator and preventive ethics coordinator. New team members are receiving ethics education and guidance from local and network ethics experts in preparation for taking on their new roles. In addition, the council is working on ways to improve accessibility to the ethics team and identify education needs for staff, patients and families who may have ethical concerns.

By envisioning new ways of looking at ethical concerns in health care, new approaches for addressing them in all their complexity and new channels for achieving integration across the system, IntegratedEthics empowers VA facilities and staff to "do the right thing."

For more information on IntegratedEthics, visit [www.ethics.va.gov](http://www.ethics.va.gov). For more information on dealing with ethical concerns, call the VA NWHCS IntegratedEthics hotline at 402-486-7852.

► *Veterans Advisory Council continued from page 9*

The hospital has been very receptive, said Glenn Freeman, chairman of the Omaha Veterans Advisory Council.

“When we bring an issue up we’ll ask someone to come before us and explain what the procedures are,” Freeman said. “For the two instances we’ve had the hospital’s been very receptive to us, and we hope to modify and make some changes.”

“We may not see immediate resolution,” said council member Larry Albert, “but at least it brings the problem into the forefront, and there’s a capability of taking action on it.”

Those Veterans who would like to get in touch with the Omaha VAC should send an email to [OMA\\_VetsCouncil@va.gov](mailto:OMA_VetsCouncil@va.gov) or call 402-995-3283.

► *Yoga continued from page 11*

Yoga is highly adaptable to all physical levels and a way to learn relaxation while strengthening core muscles. During her class, Merey reminds participants that yoga is a practice. Students are encouraged to go at their own pace and listen to their bodies.

Engle said yoga has helped him relax during the class and outside of class where he practices breathing in stages.

“I’m enjoying the dexterity it’s giving me and learning how to control the breathing and the body,” Engle said, adding that he and his wife are now looking for a Tai Chi class to join, as well.

## ELIGIBILITY

Veterans of any era receiving care through the Polytrauma Support Clinic, OEF/OIF Transitions Clinic or PTSD/PCT Clinic are eligible for the class. Veterans in Grand Island may be referred to the Lincoln or Omaha classes but should coordinate through one of the below psychologists.

**To receive a referral to the class, contact:**

**PTSD/PCT Clinic in Omaha:**

**Dr. Terry North**

402-995-3488 or 402-995-4944

**PTSD/PCT Clinic in Lincoln:**

**Dr. Amber Kutayli or Dr. Amy Turner**

402-486-7923

**Polytrauma Support Clinic or OEF/OIF Transitions Clinic:**

**Dr. Jocelyn Ritchie**

402-599-4000

For more information about the Veterans Yoga Project, visit [www.veteransyogaproject.org](http://www.veteransyogaproject.org).

SEPTEMBER IS

# National Preparedness **month**

Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

**a**re you ready? That's what Federal Emergency Management Agency encourages everyone to ask during September, which is National Preparedness Month.

An emergency can strike any time. Joplin, Mo., residents had about 20-minutes warning before the EF5 tornado struck May 22, killing 122 people. Closer to home, an EF3 tornado struck the Little Sioux, Iowa, Scout Ranch June 11, 2008, killing four of the 96 scouts who were attending a leadership training program.

These two disasters demonstrate how a crisis can strike with minimal notice. Emergencies are usually unpredictable and can cause chaos in their aftermath. Preparing for emergencies can make the difference for survival and recovery.

“Preparation can reduce the risk of devastation to you and your family following a major event, such as the Joplin tornado or the current Iowa and Nebraska flooding.”

Diana Nordboe, Emergency Management Coordinator for NWIHCS



Photo By Anna Morelock

Neal Harris pushes Casey Bode, an Airman from Offutt Air Force Base and mock accident victim, to surgery during the portion of the Major Accident Response Exercise at the Omaha VAMC. The exercise simulated an aircraft crash at an airshow.

FEMA officials promote three basic steps people can take to be better prepared for emergencies: get a kit, make a plan and be informed.

Since utilities may be affected and relief agencies may be stretched to the limit following emergencies, families may need to survive on their own for a few days. FEMA recommends storing a minimum of three-day's supply of food, water and other supplies.

Unless it's in the middle of the night, families might not be together. A family emergency plan should include information on how to contact family members and what to do in different scenarios.

Being informed is key to recovery during or after emergencies, Nordboe said. “Being ready means not only knowing your emergency role during disasters (at work) but also being prepared to care for yourself and loved ones during and immediately following a disaster.”

Whether at work or at home, people should learn about the most-likely emergencies that could occur in the area (e.g., tornadoes, flooding, blizzards, etc.) and the appropriate ways to respond to them.

To learn more about preparing for emergencies, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov). For links about emergency information and responses in Nebraska and western Iowa, visit [www.nebraska.va.gov/emergency](http://www.nebraska.va.gov/emergency). 

2011 is the 10-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks.

# what were you doing september 11?



**Rolene Fountain**  
Environmental Management Service | Omaha

"I was driving a school bus for OPS. I just remember it being all over the news. Everything else was shut down."

**Corliss Bunas**  
Secretary | Omaha

"I was at work at the VA. I walked over to the Eye Clinic and watched the second building go down and just stood there and cried."



**Cindy Niemack-Brown**  
Women Veterans Program Manager  
Grand Island

"I was working on VA NWHCS CLC. One significant memory is veterans of all eras stating they 'wish they could re-enlist to protect the United States of America.' The mentality was solemn with genuine integrity, perseverance, resilience and dedication to respond of what was being unfolded before our eyes - that the United States was being attacked on its own land."



**Jan Youngblood**  
CBOC Manager | Omaha

"I was seeing Veterans in the yellow clinic. A social worker who has since retired came to my office with an ashen look. She stated that there were events taking place that were on national news. I continued to see patients and as the events unfolded the magnitude of the situation led to a sickened feeling and concern for the families who would be touched by the events. In the next few days I noticed the profound quietness of the skies."



**Sonia Gunter**  
Telephone Clerk | Omaha

"I was at Mutual of Omaha. It was chaotic there because a lot of the women had sons who had just enlisted."

## NEW CANTEEN opens in grand island

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

**a**fter more than five years in the making, staff at the Grand Island CBOC cut the ribbon Aug. 11 opening the new canteen in the remodeled lobby.

"This shows the Veterans we're not old school anymore," said Roy Mills, chief of Nutrition and Food Services for VA NWHCS. The new canteen includes nicer décor, a healthier menu and should have speedier service, Mills said. Construction is still underway on the outside entrance for the lobby, but that is expected to be complete within a month, said Larry Selzler, administrative officer for Grand Island. It's the same great quality, just a nicer location, Selzler said.



Caption: The ribbon cutting ceremony included remarks by Selzler, Mills and Jim Vaughan from the Veterans Canteen Service Central Office.

For more information on Veterans Canteen Service, visit [www.vacanteen.va.gov](http://www.vacanteen.va.gov).

# health FAIRS

FOR VETERANS AND EMPLOYEES



## GRAND ISLAND

**Sept. 21**

11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
*Building 6 and Garage*

## LINCOLN

**Sept. 22**

11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.  
*Auditorium, Pioneer  
and Prairie Rooms*

## OMAHA

**Sept. 27**

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
*Education  
Conference Room*

### Information On:

- Dental care
- Tobacco cessation
- Aging
- Living well with Chronic Diseases
- Alzheimer's
- Financial planning (Lincoln and Omaha only)
- Wellness information
- Nutrition
- Much More

### Get Screened:

- Glaucoma and vision screening
- Blood glucose screening
- Osteoporosis screening
- Colon cancer screenings
- BMI, blood pressure screening

*Door prizes provided throughout the fair*



### VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

4101 Woolworth Ave.  
Omaha, NE 68105  
402-346-8800  
1-800-451-5796  
[www.nebraska.va.gov](http://www.nebraska.va.gov)

2501 Capehart Road | Bellevue, NE 68113  
2201 N. Broadwell Ave. | Grand Island, NE 68803  
1118 Burlington St. | Holdrege, NE 68949  
600 S. 70th St. | Lincoln, NE 68510  
710 S. 13th St. Ste. 1200 | Norfolk, NE 68701  
600 E. Francis, Ste. 3 | North Platte, NE 69101  
300 N. Second St. | O'Neill, NE 68763  
512 S. Fremont St. | Shenandoah, IA 51601