

the link

February
2012



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System



10 Bringing Health Care to Veterans at Home

eye on nwi

Marci Mylan, Ph.D. | Director



The men and women who serve our Veterans at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System embody the principles associated with achieving excellence every day. We accomplish this through exceptional and mission-focused employees who look for continuous improvement opportunities, innovative clinical programming, and investments in research and improvement infrastructures.

The NWI Way means ownership of work and pride in what we do. Whether Veterans reside in rural or urban settings, they are homeless or domiciled, or their wounds are visible or invisible, you stand ready to serve them with Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence (I CARE).

Our collective and steadfast commitment to excellence serves as the foundation for fulfilling our promise to serve America's heroes. For each of us every day, we must ask ourselves, did I do my very best to serve Veterans today? Did I deliver first-class care? These questions are timely to ask when you read stories in this month's magazine about the start of our Planetree journey, and the VA's celebration called National Salute to Veteran Patients Week.

I am humbled to have the opportunity to lead your superior health care system as director. I listened very carefully over the past couple of weeks to your successes, challenges and ideas for improvement during my transition briefings with employees.

Special thanks to the exceptional clinical leadership team of Dr. Thomas Lynch, chief of staff, and Eileen Kingston, RN, BSN, MPA, nurse executive. I especially want to thank and recognize Nancy Gregory, FACHE, associate director, who led NWIHCS with outstanding skill as acting director over the past nine months.

I am privileged to join the NWI team.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marci Mylan".

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Cover: Mary Smith-Zoucha, RN, takes Ron Dufresne's blood pressure during a home visit. Dufresne, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, receives primary care services through the VA's Home-Based Primary Care program. Photo by Anna Morelock.



the link

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“The Veterans are like family to me. It reminds me of growing up, because my father was a World War II Veteran, my brother was Vietnam and my uncles were World War II.”

Bill Boyd, Imaging Supervisor
Omaha VAMC



Photo By Will Ackerman

Meet an Employee | Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week



Enhancing the Patient Experience



Bringing Health Care to Veterans at Home



The Human Caring Program



Health Care Courses for Employees | Make the Connection Campaign



Sim Man 3G | eBenefits for Veterans



VA Views | Grand Island Site Director Makes Rounds with EMS



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meet

francis quevedo

Administrative Officer | Environmental Management Service, Omaha



Q: How long have you been with NWHCS?

A: "Seven years this April."

Q: What do you do in your position at NWHCS?

A: "What have I been doing is everything. No, my main role is developing and implementing the training program for EMS NWI-wide. And then I work with contracts for the cleaning of the CBOCs, pest control, shredding, waste and all of that. Basically those are my two main focuses and then any other projects they need help with."

Q: What's your favorite thing about your job?

A: "Basically everything because I work with everybody within the facility. I work for – well, I work for me. I always say in EMS we're selfish. We clean for us because 85 percent of our department is Veterans. So we always say we're selfish because we never know when we're going to be the next patient in that room. It works out because they do take pride in what they do. No matter what kind of limited resources we have, it ends up we get the job done."

Q: When you're not here what will people find you doing?

A: "I'm very involved with the Philippine community here. We do a lot of event planning. I do master of ceremonies for our big events. That and family, because to me, that is family—to keep our culture going."

Other interesting facts about Quevedo:

Quevedo was born in Manila, Philippines, and moved to Illinois when he was 5 and his mother got a job teaching gymnastics and coaching at the University of Illinois. From age 13 to 28, Quevedo also taught gymnastics. He served on active duty in the U.S. Air Force from 1984 to 1993 and in the Air National Guard from 1993 to 2005. 

VA NWHCS is now engaging Veterans through Twitter and Facebook



www.twitter.com/VANWHCS



www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA

Watch for news, patient information and upcoming events.

Salute to

Hospitalized

Veterans Week

Proud American men and women are serving and sacrificing for freedom around the world as America's military defends against terrorism. Many of these Veterans are coming to the Department of Veterans Affairs with special needs and challenges that require the hearts and hands of a new generation of VA volunteers.

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System invites citizens, young and old, to join in honoring Veterans and learning more about VA's volunteer program Feb. 12 to 18 during the National Salute to Veteran Patients.

Join the "Visit a Vet for Valentine's Day" program or stop by anytime during National Salute week to visit Veterans at a VA facility and remind them their sacrifices are not forgotten.

Participants also can honor Veterans by participating in the Valentines for Veterans initiative. Simply drop off a Valentine addressed to a Veteran to one of the VA NWHCS facilities. The Voluntary Service staff will do the rest.

Every citizen can make a positive difference in the life of a Veteran patient. Visits from community groups do much to lift the spirits of VA patients. Every member of the community is invited to participate.

For a list of events scheduled at VA NWHCS, visit www.nebraska.va.gov. 

Call Voluntary Service at 402-995-3284 to schedule a visit and learn how to join VA's National Salute to Veteran Patients.

ENHANCING

The Patient Experience

Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System is on a patient-centered care journey.

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

the main message employees should take away is to always put Veterans first, said Eileen Kingston, RN, BSN, MPA, nurse executive and executive team champion for patient-centered care within NWHCS.

The focus on patient-centered care began several years ago when NWHCS' patient satisfaction scores weren't measuring up within the network. Although performance measures looked good, patient satisfaction lagged.

"I think we were very geared into the technical aspects of care," Kingston said. "but not so much on the patient experience."

The journey began with revamping the patient satisfaction council, adding the necessary committees and getting Veterans involved in improving their experiences.

Since NWHCS has been working toward a better patient experience, The Department of Veterans Affairs has made patient-centered care a focus for VA facilities nationwide. On Jan. 17, 2011, the VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation began operations. More recently, VA partnered with Planetree, an organization that teams with health care systems to transform their cultures into ones focused on individual patient needs.

"We've been preparing for this for a long time, but as soon as the VA embraced this model, we knew we were on the right track."

Eileen Kingston, RN, BSN, MPA | Nurse Executive

A Planetree consultant met with NWHCS leaders in December 2011 and with employees during hour-long information sessions to explain the Planetree philosophy and the 12 principles of patient-centered care. In February, Planetree consultants will return to NWHCS to complete an organizational *(continued on page 12)*



Cindy Hall, RN demonstrates patient-centered care in the chemotherapy infusion clinic. Photo by Bruce Thiel

Veterans Health Administration 12 Core Principles of Patient-Centered Care

Honor Veterans' expectations of safe, high quality, accessible care

Enhance the quality of human interactions and therapeutic alliances

Solicit and respect Veterans' values, preferences and needs

Systematize the coordination, continuity and integration of care

Empower Veterans through information and education

Incorporate the nutritional, cultural and nurturing aspects of food

Provide for physical comfort and pain management

Ensure emotional and spiritual support

Encourage involvement of family and friends

Ensure architectural layout and design are conducive to health and healing

Introduce creative arts into the healing process

Support and sustain an engaged workforce

bringing

health care to Veterans

at home

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

Improving the Patient Experience Through Service

Six years ago, Mary Smith-Zoucha, RN, showed up at the home of Veteran Ron Dufresne, one of the first patients enrolled in Home-Based Primary Care at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System.

Today, Dufresne said, Smith-Zoucha knows more about him than he does.

“She knows every aspect of my condition, and that’s priceless.”

Ron Dufresne, Veteran enrolled in HBPC

While a fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force, Dufresne was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1993. Almost 20 years later, he spends his days in a motorized wheelchair he runs with his right hand – the only part of his body he still controls. A trip outside of his home is traumatic and a logistical challenge, he said.

HBPC was created for Veterans, like Dufresne, who have long-term conditions and problems getting out of their homes to come to the Omaha VA Medical Center or one of the community-based outpatient clinics for care. The program is operated by staff in Omaha, Grand Island and North Platte – each of which cares for patients in a roughly 35-mile radius from the facilities.

More than 200 patients receive care through NWHCS’ HBPC program and more are on the waiting list.

A board in the middle of the HBPC office in Omaha holds a waiting list of patients seeking to get into the program.

“It’s really hard for me to look at that every day, because I know what kind of good we do when we go into their home.”

Mary Smith-Zoucha, RN, HBPC Nurse ▶

▶ While each patient is assigned a registered nurse to manage his or her care, the HBPC teams also include psychologists, nurse practitioners, dietitians, social workers, physical therapists and other staff who travel to patients’ homes to provide care. ▶

Criteria for program eligibility:

- Veteran enrolled at VA NWHCS
- Live within 30 miles of a VA NWHCS facility that provides the HBPC program
- Veteran with multiple chronic, complex diseases such as diabetes or chronic heart failure

Other inclusions might be:

- Veterans who need transportation for clinic visits
- Two or more hospital admissions or emergency room visits within the last six months
- More than ten medications
- Palliative Care patients with advanced disease

Talk to your primary care provider and let them know you are interested in finding out more about the program.



Photo By Anna Morelock

Mary Smith-Zoucha, RN, takes Ron Dufresne's blood pressure during a recent home visit. Dufresne was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1993 while he was an active-duty pilot in the U.S. Air Force. He was one of the first patients enrolled in NWHCS' Home-Based Primary Care program.

► “It makes our life much less stressful,” Dufresne said, “and the bottom line is it’s the best possible program to be devised for people like me, Veterans like me. It’s absolutely invaluable for us. I can’t stress that enough.”

Rick Missell, RN, and director of community programs at NWHCS, said the program is an option for Veterans so they don’t have to go into some type of institutional setting for care.

Of the just more than 150 patients seen by the Omaha staff, Missell said, 37 percent would have to be in an institutional setting if they weren’t participating in HBPC. In Grand Island, the number is closer to 50 percent.

Relationship building is another benefit to the program, Missell said.

“Staff have developed that relationship. They’ve developed that closeness with

the Veteran. When they go out and see a subtle change in that Veteran, they may know something’s going on long before a physician would in a clinic because they only see them maybe once a year.”

The fact the care providers are coming into the home makes them like friends and family, Dufresne said.

“You couldn’t ask for a better situation than to have a regular nurse come and visit you at least once a month,” Dufresne said.

“From a medical standpoint, I couldn’t possibly get any better care than I’m getting because of this home-based primary care program.”

Ron Dufresne, Veteran enrolled in HBPC

Dufresne said he hopes to see the program get more funding to be able to expand and help other Veterans in situations like his.

“I think this is the most successful program I’ve heard of in the VA,” he said. “It absolutely hits the target right on. You couldn’t ask for more.”

THE human caring program

PUTTING THE PERSONAL TOUCH BACK IN HEALTH CARE

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

Putting Dr. Jean Watson's theories and practices on human caring to use has helped Kat Hirsch, a registered nurse on 7 East at the Omaha Veterans Affairs Medical Center, feel less stress and connect more with her patients.

It benefits the Veterans in each and every way possible, she said.

“It restores their human dignity and humanity. It lets them feel like a person instead of a diagnosis. Not only the Veterans, but staff—everyone would benefit from the theory being implemented.”

Kat Hirsch, RN | Omaha

Hirsch and more than 40 employees from VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System attended a three-day conference Jan. 9 - 11 about the Human Caring Program. The conference, presented by Watson and staff from the Watson Caring Science Institute, taught attendees about caring science and the theory and practice of human caring. The theory is focused around 10 Caritas Processes, which give a language to the processes involved in caring.



Photo By Anna Morelock

Participants practice hand massages during one of the break-out sessions at a three-day conference on the Human Caring Program.

It's about caring and not just treating and curing someone, Watson said.

“The Veterans deserve the very best compassionate, knowledgeable, caring and healing practices that they can possibly experience from all of the health care practitioners and all of the staff,” Watson said. ▶



Staff from the Watson Caring Institute huddle with NWHCS staff before the second day of the Human Caring Program. During the conference, care providers learned how to focus on caring for patients and seeing them as more than treatments and cures.

“This program is interdisciplinary, and it really takes the staff into a deeper level of their own humanity so they connect with the human experiences and the human presence so needed to connect authentically with the Veterans.”

Dr. Jean Watson, Watson Caring Science Institute

► Nursing staff at NWHCS started their journey to establish an organizational culture of caring in 2009 using Watson’s theory of caring. This year, the goal is to include more staff in the process, said Peggy Gound, DNP, APRN-BC, and nurse researcher at NWHCS. Conference attendees included staff from Nursing, Medicine, Physical Therapy, Chaplain Service and Nutrition, as well as more than 30 staff from other area health care systems.

“We don’t want to operate in a silo,” Gound said. “The only way to establish an organization of culture is if all disciplines participate, and so that is our emphasis this year.

“The VA itself is putting an emphasis on patient-centered care. Sometimes you verbalize that, but you really don’t know how to live it,” Gound said. “So with this program, what it’s doing is trying to help people put a special

(continued on page 12) ►

10 Caritas Processes

- 1 Embrace altruistic values and practice loving kindness with self and others.
- 2 Instill faith and hope and honor in others.
- 3 Be sensitive to self and others by nurturing individual beliefs and practices.
- 4 Develop helping – trusting – caring relationships.
- 5 Promote and accept positive and negative feelings as you authentically listen to another’s story.
- 6 Use creative scientific problem-solving methods for caring decision making.
- 7 Share teaching and learning that addresses the individual needs and comprehension styles.
- 8 Create a healing environment for the physical and spiritual self which respects human dignity.
- 9 Assist with basic physical, emotional and spiritual human needs.
- 10 Be open to mystery and allow miracles to enter.

MORE THAN
400 HEALTH CARE COURSES
 available online for employees

Learning Resource Service

Veterans Health Administration clinicians now have access to more than 400 online health care courses available through a national contract with Swank HealthCare.

These courses have been opened for all VHA employees to increase learning opportunities and can be accessed via the VA Talent Management System (TMS).

Most courses are accredited and offer a minimum of one contact hour of continuing education credit. The learning can be accessed around the clock, and course completions are automatically recorded in employee learning history in TMS. For those not in a clinical role, courses under the "General Staff Education" category are not accredited but may offer valuable information.

Find answers to frequently asked questions and instructions on finding and taking one of these courses in VA TMS.

Check out the current course catalog at <http://vaww.ees.lrn.va.gov/Training/21153>.

Courses are available for these disciplines:

- Central sterile
- Clinical laboratory science
- Dental
- Dietetics
- Emergency management
- Medical records
- Nursing
- Nurse aide/nurse assistant
- Occupational therapy
- Pharmacy
- Physical therapy
- Physician
- Radiologic technology
- Social work
- Surgical technology
- Respiratory therapy

VA Introduces

Make the Connection

Shared Experiences and Support for Veterans

Make the Connection, a campaign launched by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is creating ways for Veterans and their family members to connect with the experiences of other Veterans. The program goal is to connect Veterans with information and resources to help them confront the challenges of transitioning from service, face health issues or navigate the complexities of daily life as a civilian.

"I have seen over and over again how important it can be for a Veteran to hear a message from another Veteran."

Eric K. Shinseki,
 Secretary of Veterans Affairs

"This type of communication will be especially useful in helping to break down the stigma associated with mental health issues and treatment," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA is leveraging this powerful connection using an approachable online resource that links Veterans to personal stories from their peers, to VA resources and support, and to reliable information about mental health and resilience."

The campaign's central focus is a website, www.MakeTheConnection.net, featuring numerous Veterans who have shared their experiences, challenges and triumphs. It offers a place where Veterans and their families can view the candid, personal *(continued on page 12)*



*Bring your personal laptop or wireless device to use this service.

Connect to the Wi-Fi Service:
 Set Up Your Wireless Card to SSID: VA_WIFI
 Open Your Web Browser and Accept the Terms and Conditions to be Connected.

SimMan 3G Mannequin

Simulating emergency situations to better prepare staff

Kami Willett, RN-BC, MSN | NWHCS Simulationist



A Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System staff recently were introduced to SimMan 3G, an \$86,000 mannequin that simulates a human patient.

The wireless mannequin is used to create medical scenarios for training medical personnel. Some of SimMan's abilities include chest movements that simulate breathing, heart beats, sweating, coughing, eye reactions and speech, as well as the ability to make breath, heart and bowel sounds.



Joel Brannan, Vicky Brannan and James Brannan pose with HAIL, NWHCS' newest SimMan 3G mannequin. Joel, the son of NWHCS patient, James, named the mannequin during an open house. HAIL stands for Helping Another Individual Live.

Without risking harm to live patients, SimMan allows staff to practice procedures such as placing intravenous lines, chest tubes and breathing tubes. Besides brushing up on procedural tasks, NWHCS simulation program staff designed scenarios with SimMan 3G to address clinical, communication, safety and critical-thinking skills.

During an open house to introduce SimMan 3G to staff and Veterans, a contest was held to name the mannequin. Joel Brannan, the son of a Veteran, submitted the winning name – HAIL, an acronym that stands for Helping Another Individual Live.

For those who didn't have the chance to meet HAIL, another open house is planned for this spring in Omaha.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Online for E-Benefits Enrollees



eterans, their families, and survivors receiving benefits from the Department of

Veterans Affairs saw a 3.6 percent increase in their compensation and pension benefits beginning Jan. 1.

The new compensation rates will range from \$127 monthly for a disability rated at 10 percent to \$2,769 monthly for

100 percent. The cost of living adjustments (COLAs) also apply to disability and death pension recipients, survivors receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation, disabled Veterans receiving automobile and clothing allowances, and other benefits. The full rates are available on the Internet at www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/#BM01.

Under federal law, COLAs for VA's compensation and pension rates are the same percentage as for Social Security benefits. The last COLA for VA benefits was in 2008 when the last Social Security increase occurred.

(continued on page 15) ►

► *Patient-Centered Care continued from page 5*

assessment. After that, all employees will attend retreats designed to reenergize and let them experience patient-centered culture.

NWIHCS and its leaders are committed to patient-centered care for the long run, Kingston said. “We’re going to continue on this journey, and it is a journey to provide the best patient experience that we can for Veterans.”

Money and space will always be issues, she said, but Planetree offers a framework where NWIHCS staff can come together to put Veterans in the middle and work on obstacles together. ①

► *Human Caring Project continued from page 9*

emphasis on the interpersonal relationships between the patient and the nurse or the physician, or whoever.”

Hirsch has not only been spreading the word about caring theory to her fellow nurses, she was chosen to attend the Caritas Coaching Education Program through the Watson Caring Science Institute. When she graduates in April, Hirsch will be a Caritas Coach who will help other NWIHCS employees adopt caring practices.

“I think it’s a wonderful program. At first it’s a bit more intimidating. It’s theory,” Hirsch said. “I myself am very concrete, and it’s a little abstract – but I think if people just give it an opportunity. In my own practice, I’ve been using it the best that I can, and I’ve noticed differences in my patients.”

It’s not something extra you have to do, Hirsch said, it’s just a different way of doing things. ①



Marcilee Albert, RN, works on a collage project during a breakout session at the Human Caring Program conference.

► *Make the Connection continued from page 10*

testimonials of other Veterans who have dealt with and are working through a variety of common life experiences, day-to-day symptoms, and mental health conditions. The website also connects Veterans and their family members with services and resources that may help them live more fulfilling lives.

At www.MakeTheConnection.net, Veterans and their family members can explore information about mental health issues and treatment—and easily access support—in comfort and privacy, anywhere, anytime. Visitors to the website can customize and filter their online experience, directly connecting with content that is the most relevant to their own lives and situations. ①

For more information, visit www.MakeTheConnection.net or VA’s mental health services website at www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

FREE TAX ASSISTANCE

*2011 federal and Nebraska state tax returns will be prepared **FREE** by IRS-certified volunteers for Veterans and employees.*

The volunteers are **NOT certified to prepare complicated or business returns***

Lincoln VA, Pioneer Room

Feb. 10, March 9, April 13
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

No appointments necessary, first-come first-serve basis.

Bring pertinent tax documents (e.g., pension statements, W-2s, Social Security cards, child care information, checking and/or savings account numbers).
A copy of last year’s tax return would be helpful, but is not necessary.

IRS tax consultants will be available to answer questions about current or past IRS issues.

For questions regarding the event contact Jana Jacobson-Langhorst at 402-489-3802 ext. 6804

how do you PAY TRIBUTE TO Veterans? DAILY



Denise Albrecht, LPN
Norfolk CBOC

"I honor Veterans daily by empowering them with information so they can make well-informed decisions to improve the quality of their health care."



Clare Miller, NP
Norfolk CBOC

"I pay tribute to Veterans every day by giving them high-quality care, which is VA care."



Cindy Eads
Medical Clerk | Grand Island

"I pay tribute to them by respecting them, being nice to them and doing the best I can for them every day because they deserve it for what they did for us."



Tracie Pfeifle
Radiology | Grand Island

"Our Veterans have sacrificed their time they could have spent with family. They deserve our honor and respect for that sacrifice. Our Veterans deserve the best service we can provide. They have made a sacrifice not everyone would be willing to make."



Julie LaBreche, RN
Care Manager | Grand Island

"First, I want to always provide excellent care to my Veterans and see that their needs are being met; and at the end of the visit, I always make sure to thank them for their service."

site director

makes rounds with Environmental Management Service

Site Director Angela Williams joined the Environmental Management Service crew in Grand Island. EMS won four hours of Williams' time during a Combined Federal Campaign silent auction.

"This has been great for staff morale, and Angela has been a great sport about it," said Dennis Hawkes, GI EMS supervisor. "It raised funds for the CFC."

Williams said she enjoyed the experience and has a better appreciation of the tasks EMS handles.

"But best of all," she said, "I loved interacting with the EMS staff. They are a great group of individuals." 



Grand Island employees Doug Nitzel and Lonnie Vincik prepare to show Site Director Angela Williams the ropes during her four-hour tour with Environmental Management Service.

Photo By Coral Selden

HELLO

Nov. 20 to Jan. 14

Ashley Andersen, *Veterans Canteen Service*
 Leigh Anderson, *Fee Basis*
 Kinda Bauerkemper, *Lab*
 Jamie Bentzinger, *Nurse Executive's Office*
 Katherine Berger, *Fee Basis*
 Diana Bullington, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Daniel Calhoun, *Police*
 Anna Cook, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Christopher Cox, *Engineering*
 Harold Delasalas, *Fee Basis*
 Ashle Erickson-Stanley, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 John Essay, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Richard Evans, *Fee Basis*
 Robin Fried, *Safety*
 Brandi Goforth, *Nurse Executive's Office*
 Joshua Hall, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Jane Kennedy, *Lab*
 Michelle Leenerts, *Fee Basis*
 Jerry Lewis, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Olena Lineberry, *Fee Basis*
 Christine Masat, *Business Office*
 Suzanne McDonald, *Inpatient Care*
 Timothy McFarland, *Veterans Canteen Service*
 Britta Mitzlaff-Jensen, *Veterans Canteen Service*

Brian Moon, *Student*
 Rebecca Noble, *Mental Health*
 Peter Piperis, *Fee Basis*
 Sandra Plantenga, *Bellevue CBOC*
 Joyce Portz, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Stephanie Potter, *Surgery*
 Erin Radloff, *Nurse Executive's Office*
 Brianna Renninger, *Student*
 Brandon Rieke, *Quality Management*
 Megan Rustad, *Pharmacy*
 Donald Scott, *Patient Care*
 Kathrine Smuskiewicz, *Surgery Patient Care*
 Gena Vidlak, *Surgery Patient Care*
 Janet Walden, *Veterans Canteen Service*
 Joseph Welch, *Vet Center*
 Sara Weyers, *Imaging*

Candance Hoaby, *Mental Health*
 Avery Holmes, *Finance*
 Sheralyn Jarvis, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Cami Jones, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Timothy Judge, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Carla Karcher, *Environmental Management Service*
 Kathleen Kohlbek, *Imaging*
 Katie Landwehr, *Director's Office*
 Elizabeth Larson, *Veterans Canteen Service*
 James Lattimer, *Environmental Management Service*
 Brooke Naylor, *Veterans Canteen Service*
 Deborah Laux, *Nurse Executive's Office*
 Barbara Lundvall, *Outpatient Care*
 Susan McGurn, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Deborah Meissner, *Mental Health*
 Loren Moore, *Engineering*
 Margaret Morris, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Alex Olds, *Research*
 Nicklaus Reeves
 Mike Rhodes, *Business*
 Kim Rolf
 Judith Russell, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 David Sheffer, *Engineering*
 Mark Showers, *Extended Care*
 Janet Vallery, *Safety*
 James Werner, *Outpatient Care*
 Michael Whitaker, *Engineering*

GOODBYE

Nov. 20 to Jan. 14

Alice Baden, *Nurse Executive's Office*
 Cheryl Berman, *Nutrition*
 John Blaiotta, *Mental Health*
 Stephanie Brennan, *Inpatient Care*
 Richard Campbell, *Mental Health*
 Betty Carlson
 Dale Davis, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
 Kathryn Eppel, *Mental Health*
 Phillip Ernstmeyer, *Business Office*
 Sandra George, *Patient Care*
 Kelly Hastings, *Separation Payment*

Interested in working as a Veteran for Veterans?

VA Human Resources is seeking applications from:

- Veterans with a service-connected disability of 30% or more
- Veterans who qualify for Schedule A hiring authority
- Veterans who qualify for Veterans Readjustment Act
- Only completed applications will be considered

Bring in all of your Veteran documentation including:
 Resume, DD214 with discharge type, Schedule A letter,
 disability letter with total percentage rating,
 OF-306: Declaration of Federal Employment (www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/OF306.pdf)

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

Building 5, Human Resources
 4101 Woolworth Avenue
 Omaha, Nebraska 68105
 402-995-4947

Human Resources
 2201 North Broadwell Avenue
 Grand Island, NE 68803
 308-389-5177

EVENTS what's going on?

- Feb. 1** My HealtheVet registration assistance, Omaha
- Feb. 1-7** National Patient Recognition Week
- Feb. 1-7** Women's Heart Week
- Feb. 4** National Wear Red Day
- Feb. 5-12** Burn Awareness Week
- Feb. 7-14** Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week
- Feb. 8** My HealtheVet registration assistance, Omaha
- Feb. 13-19** National Salute to Veteran Patients Week
- Feb. 14** National Donor Day
- Feb. 14** Valentine's Day
- Feb. 14** National Salute Dinner, Grand Island
- Feb. 15** Veterans Forum, Lincoln
- Feb. 15** My HealtheVet registration assistance, Omaha
- Feb. 15** Blood Drive, Omaha
- Feb. 15** Ice Cream Social, Grand Island
- Feb. 17** Afternoon Card Party, Grand Island
- Feb. 20** Presidents Day
- Feb. 20-26** National Eating Disorders Awareness Week
- Feb. 22** My HealtheVet registration assistance, Omaha
- Feb. 29** Leap Day
- Feb. 29** My HealtheVet registration assistance, Omaha

For more information about VA NWIHCS events, visit www.nebraska.va.gov.

► *E-Benefits continued from page 11*

"Veterans receiving VA disability and pension payments can now check their new 2012 COLA increase online," said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey.

"I encourage all Veterans, their dependents and survivors to sign up for eBenefits, VA's popular website that recently crossed the one million mark in registrations."

Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey.

In close collaboration, the Department of Defense (DoD) and VA jointly developed the eBenefits portal (www.ebenefits.va.gov) as a single secure point of access for online benefit information and tools to perform multiple self-service functions, such as checking monthly benefit rates, filing a claim, or checking its status.

Veterans may enroll in eBenefits and obtain a premium account by verifying their identity in-person at the nearest regional office or online depending on their status, or calling VA's toll free number at 1-800-827-1000.

Servicemembers may also enroll in eBenefits using their Common Access Card at any time during their military service, or before they leave during their Transition Assistance Program briefings.

VA is enhancing its online eBenefits services with newer features such as online selection of Veterans organizations or other advocates to represent applicants for benefits where representation is desired. Another new feature automates messages sent to Veterans and servicemembers to notify them of benefits that they may be eligible to receive based on recent life events, such as military separation or marriage.

Web access to information and benefits management tools for Servicemembers, Veterans and their families is part of VA and DoD's lifetime engagement strategy from an individual's entry into the military through the twilight years in civilian life as a Veteran.

For more information about VA benefits or new payment rates, visit www.vba.va.gov or call 1-800-827-1000.



Veterans Forum

Get help enrolling on eBenefits and MyHealtheVet Feb. 15 during the Lincoln Veterans Forum. The forum will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Prairie/Pioneer Room at the Lincoln VA facility, 600 S. 70th St., Lincoln, Neb.



COLLABORATION: Patient Aligned Care Teams

With the Veteran at the center, Patient Aligned Care Teams provide a team approach to care. A PACT is made up of a primary care provider, nurse, social worker, pharmacist and administrative support assistant. These team members communicate openly and frequently about their patients' care. Together, PACT members work with Veterans to achieve their health care goals. They understand and respect each Veteran is the subject-matter expert on his or her care.



ex·cel·lence [ek-suh-luh'ns], *n.*, **1.** the fact or state of excelling; superiority; eminence. **2.** an excellent quality or feature. **3. VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System**
—Syn. **1.** preeminence. **2.** merit, virtue.



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