

# the link

October  
2012



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System



## 9 Fighting for a Life Without Cancer



## October is Patient-Centered Care Month.

Recently, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System staff went above and beyond caring for a patient who has been to the Omaha VA Medical Center numerous times for a serious illness.

A group of staff planned a wedding for a young Veteran and his fiancée. The staff “adopted” the family and sponsored a major event for him, his fiancée and their families

at the Omaha campus. None of the nurses and other staff on 7East have “wedding planner” listed as a role in their job descriptions, yet they assumed this role with great competence. NWIHCS employees from Chaplaincy, Environmental Management, Engineering, Police Service and many other departments contributed. And, it extended beyond our employees. Many of our employees’ family members helped, too.

Hospitals are serious places, but on Sept. 1, the Omaha VA Medical Center was a place of joy. These actions by NWIHCS staff exemplified the principles we hold dear:

- Doing all we can to serve our Veterans.
- Owning our work and leading at all levels.
- Thinking broadly about health and well-being.
- Emphasizing the “care” in health care.

Other stories in this month’s Link show how staff get involved with Veteran and community partners to bring the best care to Veterans.

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Cover: Jodette Rose and her 4-year-old daughter, Shealagh, train at Omaha's Lake Zorinski for the upcoming Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure. Photo Courtesy of Jodette Rose.

“I am proud of the health care we provide here at NWI and excited about the direction VA is going. Our future is bright; so bring your shades!”

Aaron T. Howell  
Administrative Officer, Logistics  
U.S. Air Force Veteran



# the link

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VA Views



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### CONTACT US

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# meet

## shayne aldana

Food Service Worker | Grand Island  
U.S. Air Force Veteran

**Q: How long have you worked here?**

A: "One year."

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

A: "Preparing and serving food to our Veterans, generally

trying to make their stay as pleasant and comfortable as we can."

**Q: What do you like best about your job?**

A: "I enjoy helping our Veterans, and I try to make them smile as much as I can."

**A: What do you enjoy doing when you are not at work?**

A: "I have three boys, so I try to spend my time with them when I have them for visitation. I enjoy Bible studies and being with my church family and running."

**Q: What are your future goals?**

A: "Get back into the dental laboratory – I really enjoy making dentures; continue being a positive role model in my boys' lives; continue running - it is my way of relaxing and sorting out things."



## 'Lucky' Heart Attack at VA Leads to Collaboration that Saves Veteran's Life

Paul Baltes | The Nebraska Medical Center

**Cecil Carroll considers himself a very lucky man.** It may seem hard to believe considering Carroll had a heart attack that almost certainly would have ended his life if it happened almost anywhere else.



Cecil Carroll had a heart attack earlier this year while at NWIHCS for a regularly scheduled appointment.

"I had a doctor's appointment at the VA hospital," recalled Carroll, a retired Air Force jet mechanic. "Between the coffee shop and elevators on the first floor, I had a heart attack."

Dr. Ed O'Leary, chief of cardiology at the Omaha VA Medical Center and cardiologist at The Nebraska Medical Center said Carroll was in the right place at the right time. His recovery was far from easy; his treatment far from routine.

**"Cecil had a massive heart attack. We got him right to the cardiac catheterization lab at the VA and opened his artery and put in something called an intra-aortic balloon pump."**

Dr. Ed O'Leary, Chief of Cardiology | Omaha VAMC



VA's Dr. Ed O'Leary saved Carroll's life with a new procedure.

Despite the immediate care by the VA team, Carroll was still slipping away.

"It wasn't enough to keep him going," O'Leary said. "He was on a breathing machine. We had stopped the heart attack, but it caused so much damage that he couldn't keep going. He was not doing well."

O'Leary said he believed a mechanical heart pump called a right ventricular assist device (RVAD) could help Carroll. For that, he would have to be moved up the street to The Nebraska Medical Center. The open-heart surgery normally required to implant the pump would be risky.

Medical center cardiothoracic surgeon Dr. John Um suggested using a percutaneous RVAD; a pump, which could be connected through the heart via the patient's veins instead of open-heart surgery. The

(continued on page 15) ►

# NWI Puts patients at the

# CENTER OF THEIR CARE

Kate O'Dell | Public Affairs

**e**ight years ago, a committee of about 10 people began to look at how the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System could focus on patient-centered care. That effort has grown into an operation of 15 specifically focused service teams that work under the supervision of an oversight committee.

The service teams focus on different aspects of patient-centered care that ranges from data analysis to employee training. All service teams have the same goal.

**“The idea is to make the Veterans’ health care personal to them. Patients should be partners in their health care.”**

Gayla Gries, Patient-Centered Care Coordinator | VA NWIHCS

The data analysis team is responsible for analyzing data from two different patient-satisfaction surveys. Press-Ganey compares the Veteran experience at NWIHCS to community peers that offer similar health care. Survey of Healthcare Experience for Patients is an internal tool that compares NWIHCS to other VAs.

Veteran advisory committees in Grand Island, Lincoln and Omaha also help to keep the Veteran's voice present in Patient-Centered Care initiatives.

Kevin Smith, an Army Veteran, and clerk in the Silver Clinic, has worked at the VA for five years. He said it is important to get input from the Veterans.

Smith said he comes to work every day hoping to have fun. “I like chatting with ▶



Photo by Kate O'Dell

Kevin Smith, a clerk, engages with Owen Neal at the Silver Clinic check-in desk at the Omaha VA Medical Center.

▶ the Veterans. Anytime I have the time, I ask the Veteran what branch he (or she) served in,” he said. “It’s so fascinating to learn more about them.”

**“It is important so we know what they are thinking and what they want. You are looking at a person, not a patient.”**

Kevin Smith, Clerk, Silver Clinic | U.S. Army Veteran

This is the second year that October has been recognized as Patient-Centered Care Month at NWIHCS. Throughout the month, different activities are scheduled to show employees, Veterans and their families their importance in this mission. Veterans who have chosen NWIHCS as their health care provider will be recognized and thanked. Be on the lookout in the lobbies of NWIHCS for cookies, popcorn and other giveaways. 🍪

## How do you ensure Veterans are the center of their care?



**“I smile and acknowledge each Veteran, not just in my clinic, everyone. I also try to listen and not interrupt so they can be heard. It’s a small way I can show my respect for them and really understand their needs.”**

Suzy Rainforth, LPN Ambulatory Care | Grand Island CBOC

See more staff answers to this question on page 13

## A MARINE AND HIS FIANCE

# Exchange Vows Among Their VA Family

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

**a**fter hosting a garage sale, Evelyn Pano and Scott Brown had just about enough money to head to Las Vegas to be married. Then, Brown woke up one morning and couldn't walk.

Brown's cancer – osteosarcoma – had returned, this time in his pelvis. He returned to the Omaha VA Medical Center and 7 East where he had been a frequent guest during his first bout with the disease.

The staff on the floor were like family, said the couple from Hershey, Neb.

Brown's first stay at the Omaha VAMC began in early 2011. He learned he had cancer Dec. 23, 2010. The final diagnosis was made in January after receiving biopsy results. Despite his diagnosis, Brown carried through with his plan to propose to Pano and their combined eight children Dec. 25, 2010. They all said yes.

**“They've been struggling to get married since I've known them.”**

Jenne Stack, RN, 7 East | Omaha VAMC

“They would save and save. Then something would happen – their car would break down, or something would happen ▶



Photos by Anna Morelock



Courtesy Photo

The Brown family in January 2011, from left to right: Yesinlla, Memo, Sacha, Scott, Evelyn, Francisco, Emilio, Christian, Joseph and Julian.

▶ with one of the kids. It's just been very, very hard,” said Jenne Stack, a registered nurse, and Brown's nurse through his first stay on the floor.

This time around, staff at the VA decided it was time to lend some helping hands. With about one month to plan, staff from around the medical center put together a wedding for the couple.

While they started off with simple plans, Stack said the wedding quickly grew in scope. ▶

Far Left: Gayle Reyes, RN, Jo Meier from 7 East, and Michele O'Connor, Patient Satisfaction Trainer, assemble decorations for the couple's wedding.

Left: Kate Sierra, Reye's daughter, hangs decorations in preparation for the reception.

Right: Memo Solis walks his mom, Evelyn Pano, down the aisle of the VA chapel to her groom, former Marine Scott Brown.

Far Right: Rev. John Besancon officiates the marriage of Evelyn Pano and Scott Brown in the VA chapel Sept. 1.

▶ “Everyone knows somebody who knows someone,” Stack said.

One nurse donated a wedding dress. A secretary made the cake. The fiancé of one nurse took photographs. A Police Service employee provided all of the flowers for the reception. An Environmental Management Service employee had the reception catered. Another nurse, with help from her husband and daughter, decorated the Education Conference Room for the reception.

The couple provided their rings and marriage certificate, and requested their wedding colors – pink, red and white – which Pano said were the colors of love.

During 2011, Brown had chemotherapy for a total of nine months and got to know many of the staff. Each month, he was on 7 East for two or three weeks at a time. When he first came to the floor, the couple’s son Joseph was 5 weeks old. ▶

▶ “It’s hard not to get attention from all of those (nurses) when you have a baby,” Brown said. Joseph, who is nearing his second birthday, was dubbed the 7 East baby, and even hit a few milestones, such as crawling, while on the ward.

“(The staff) just really got to know us, and they’re like our family. They’re really supportive. Even the housekeeping staff got to know us; the kitchen staff got to know us. They’re our support group.”

Scott Brown, U.S. Marine Veteran

The family was easy to care for, Stack said. “They are very hopeful. It’s a scary thing. He’s only 28. He loves those kids. They think of him as their dad. You can just feel the love.”

On 7 East, what Pano called their home away from home, the U.S. Marine Corps Veteran credited the nurses with helping to save his life.

“They gave me the love when I needed, and they gave me the care and compassion that helped me stay alive,” he said. “You know when you’re going through something like that, it’s not just the medicine that saves your life.” *(continued on page 15)* ▶



Photos by Will Ackerman



# DAISY NURSE Delivers Personalized Care

Kate O'Dell | Public Affairs

**t**hank a nurse and the response is often, "I am just doing my job."

This is the mindset that comes naturally to the men and women who spend their days caring for others. It is this same mindset that inspired an award to recognize nurses for doing their job, and doing it well. The DAISY Award is meant to remind nurses just how important their work is to patients and their families.

Jenne Stack, a registered nurse on 7 East at the Omaha VA Medical Center, received the DAISY Award Sept. 5. Award founders Mark and Bonnie Barnes started the ceremony via video conference, to recognize the significance of the recognition.

**"Medal of Honor winners say, 'I didn't do anything special,' and nurses say the same. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you. You are heroes."**

Mark Barnes,  
Co-Founder DAISY Foundation

This isn't the first award Stack has received in her 10 years of nursing. However, she said this award meant a lot to her as it was given to her from a patient. ▶

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Left: Scott Brown embraces Jenne Stack, RN, as she is awarded the DAISY Award Sept. 5. Stack cared for Brown while he was undergoing chemo treatment earlier this year at the Omaha VA Medical Center.

Right: Staff applaud Jenne Stack, RN, as the DAISY Award winner.

▶ Stack was nominated by former Marine Scott Brown and his family for her extraordinary care during his chemotherapy. Brown said he may not have survived his treatments if it wasn't for Stack's attentive care. He described the way Stack cared for him as similar to the way a mother cares for her own.

**"When I couldn't eat, she would find something that I could. Even if she had to sit there and make sure I ate it, she would."**

Scott Brown, U.S. Marine Veteran

Following one of Brown's chemotherapy treatments, Stack pulled her mobile computer desk directly outside of his room and worked there her entire shift.

"I remember that day. He was very sick and he needed somebody," Stack said. "We were short staffed, and we didn't have a nurse aid to check on him regularly."

Stack has been a stand-out nurse to Brown, and to other patients. She is especially respectful of patient privacy by making a point to always close the patients' doors when she is in and out of their rooms, Brown said. This may seem small, but to a patient it is the courtesy of understanding they would rather not be on display to passersby. *(continued on page 15)* ▶



Photos by Kate O'Dell

# The Power of Pink

## MAKING BREAST CANCER AWARENESS PERSONAL

Kate O'Dell | Public Affairs

**“W**e’ve done what we can, so far,” doctors told Jodette Rose, after medical tests came back inconclusive. This left the Omaha VA Research Service health system specialist unsure if her biggest fear had become a reality – did she have breast cancer?

When Rose was 4 years old, her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. She spent the following years alongside her mother offering care and comforts the best she could. Rose’s memories of these years are filled with hospital stays and entire summers at home, she said. But they are the cherished memories she has of her short time with her mother. Her mother died when she was 11 years old.

For Rose, family genetics are a serious concern. Her family has a long history of serious illnesses that include ovarian, liver, testicular and skin cancer. Rose’s aunt and uncle passed away within a year of the news of their diseases.

Breast cancer accounts for 22.9 percent of all cancers in women. The chance of a woman being diagnosed with invasive breast cancer some time during her ▶



Jodette Rose and her 4 year-old daughter Shealagh train at Lake Zorinski, Omaha, for the upcoming Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.

▶ life is a little less than one in eight. However, the chance of dying from breast cancer is about one in 36. Over the years, breast cancer death rates have decreased, likely due to earlier detection and better treatment. According to the American Cancer Society, there are 2.5 million breast cancer survivors in the United States.

Rose remembered what it felt like to be a young girl with a mother fighting cancer. “I was the kid with the sick mom,” she said of the way she felt at school among other kids.

**“I’ll do everything to prevent my daughter from going through (what I did).”**

Jodette Rose, Health System Specialist | Omaha VAMC

Since doctors told Rose her family genetics significantly increased her risk of developing breast cancer, she made a decision to take control. Rose had a bilateral mastectomy and a full hysterectomy. She didn’t want to live in fear, she said. “I was in charge of my ship. It’s my way of having my say of what happens to my health.”

Talking to other survivors and family members about experiences fighting breast cancer can be a great way to cope. “Being open normalizes what is going on,” said Rose. *(continued on page 15)* ▶

## Pink Out Day

NWIHCS will be “pinked out” Oct. 16 in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Staff are encouraged to wear pink that day. The Canteen will offer a pink lunch menu item, and a booth will be set up in the lobbies with information about early warning signs.

Each site will arrange to have employees join together for a group “Pink Out” photo, which will be entered in the VA’s contest. Times and locations will be in the Daily Briefs.

# EMERGENCY NURSES: ready for the unexpected

Kate O'Dell | Public Affairs

**Camaraderie, teamwork and fun were the most-common terms used by the emergency staff to define their work environment.**

In that environment, Emergency Department nurses at the Omaha VA Medical Center face different challenges daily. Their 12-hour shifts begin with taking reports from the previous shift, establishing assignments and checking crash carts. However, the pace of the day always depends on the unexpected.

**“No day is ever the same. You can go from treating a sore throat to doing chest compressions in a matter of seconds.”**

Shawna Manning, RN | Emergency Department

## Controlled Chaos

Dr. Scott Menolascino has worked in the Omaha VAMC ED for 11 years and has seen the way the pace can change drastically. Not every day brings gunshot wounds, the ED director said, but each day comes with the unspoken understanding that any given moment could be someone's last. “It's like a hammer,” he said.

Sue Sealy, RN, recalled her busiest day when they had 68 patients in the ED. They had two code blues – when a patient's heart stops. “People were just coming in right and left,” Sealy said. “You learn how to prioritize. You just figure out who needs to be seen first.”

Caring for the patients while also staying calm is essential to successfully managing high-stress scenarios. “It may look like chaos, but everyone knows what's going on,” said Craig Green, RN, triage nurse. “You don't get flustered in emergent situations.”

## What it takes

Loretta Pierce, RN, began her position as ED manager more than two years ago. “It takes a special kind of nurse to work in the ER,” Pierce said. “Not everyone can control the adrenaline rush that comes with the job,” she said. “ER nurses are unique in that they can handle it.”

Menolascino said he is consistently impressed by the nurses and the work they do in the ED.

**“They know reflexively when something happens, and they know to jump into their roles. It's a pretty remarkable thing.”**

Dr. Scott Menolascino,  
Emergency Department Director | Omaha VAMC

The nurses need to work seamlessly as a team because there is not enough time to struggle with miscommunication. “By definition what we do here is emergent,” Mary Ann Bates, RN, said. “If someone comes in with chest pain, there are multiple things that need to happen, and one person can't do all those things in the same minute.” ▶

Left: Craig Green, RN, hands off a label to Erik Taylor, RN, while they are treating a patient for chest pains.



Photo by Kate O'Dell



Photo by Kate O'Dell

► The nurses have learned to respect and use each other's strengths.

**“We have a cohesive team, where everyone knows everyone's strengths and is able to work together and utilize those strengths and improve the patient's outcome.”**

Loretta Pierce, RN, Emergency Department Manager | Omaha VAMC

## A strong team

The camaraderie in the department wasn't developed over night. Many of the nurses have worked together for many years and have established both productive and enjoyable working relationships. “We enjoy each other as professionals and have a mutual respect. It is a winning combination.” Bates said.

Pierce would not want to work anywhere else in the hospital, she said. She has grown to respect and care about all of the staff in the ED.

“They are an incredible team,” Pierce said. “It's an honor to be associated with them.”



Photo by Kate O'Dell

Above: Michelle Fulcher, business office, (left) verifies an incoming patient's personal information during a transfer from another medical facility. Donna Hume, RN, (right) helps the emergency medical technician with the medical equipment.

Left: Toni Trafton, RN, cares for a patient who arrived at the Emergency Department complaining of chest pains.

# October is PATIENT-CENTERED CARE MONTH

**Michele O'Connor** | Patient Centered Care  
Training Coordinator

**a**ctivities to celebrate October's "Patient-Centered Care Month" are in full swing! This is the second year VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS) will acknowledge and give thanks for the various patient-centered care efforts that occur daily at all sites. It continues to be our honor and privilege to provide service to all the men and women who served our country, and it is our firm commitment to keep Veterans' needs at the center of our health care efforts.

October is also a time to thank our employees for their ongoing support and participation in our patient-centered care efforts. These focus on the ▶

▶ Veteran's health and well-being and creating a healthy environment throughout NWIHCS.

Activities planned for the month include special days when popcorn, cookies or patient-centered care giveaways will be available to Veterans and staff. Leaders, supervisors and managers also plan to greet people at our facilities' front doors and personally thank employees and Veterans who help make NWIHCS a quality health care facility. Other surprises are planned throughout the month, so watch for additional patient-centered care activities at your VA location. 📢



**The Patient-Centered Care Grapevine is a feature to highlight activities and training. Watch the Daily Briefs and the Intranet for this logo.**

If your department or program has a unique way of being patient centered and wants to be featured, contact Michele O'Connor in Omaha at ext. 5809 or [micheleoconnor@va.gov](mailto:micheleoconnor@va.gov). For more patient-centered care information, visit the Intranet page at [vaww.nebraska.va.gov/PCC.asp](http://vaww.nebraska.va.gov/PCC.asp).

# Influenza Vaccinations

Starting October 9

## Walk-In Flu Shot Clinics

VETERANS\* VOLUNTEERS & EMPLOYEES\*\*

Check the NWIHCS Events Page for Clinic Locations and Hours at [www.nebraska.va.gov/calendar.asp](http://www.nebraska.va.gov/calendar.asp)



Veterans may receive their flu shot at regularly scheduled appointments.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

\*Enrolled & Eligible Veterans Only

\*\*The schedule for the Omaha VAMC and Center Mall employees will be posted in the Daily Briefs.



# How do you ensure

# VETERANS are at the center of their care?



a.

By taking care of the Veterans' needs; whatever they need to make their life better.

**Jackie Schneider**  
Purchasing Agent,  
Prosthetics – Lincoln CBOC



c.

I'm always willing to be the Veteran's friend, and assist them.

**Gino Rodeghier**  
Security Assistant | Omaha VAMC  
U.S. Navy Veteran



a. The facility is a Watson Caring Science Institute affiliate. My personal and professional goal as a Caring Advocate is to create a compassionate, calm, healing and caring environment for the Veterans. Nursing is a caring profession and providing authentic, intentional caring is what I strive to accomplish every day.

**Wanda Davis**  
Staff Nurse, Community Living Center | Grand Island CBOC

d. Include the Veteran in the decision-making process for all their care decisions. It's the Veteran who is going to benefit from the decision.

**Ryan Flugge, PharmD, BCPS**  
Clinical Coordinator,  
Pharmacy Service | Omaha VAMC



b.

b. They are always first and that's my No. 1 goal is to serve them.

**Monty Herrick**  
Compensated Work Therapy, Logistics – Grand Island CBOC  
U.S. Air Force Veteran

e. I am a Veteran – retired Air Force. I know how they feel. I try to treat them with courtesy and professionalism and support their needs.

**Rich Ruiz**  
Lead AD PAC Coordinator | Omaha VAMC  
U.S. Air Force Veteran



d.

By taking in the whole picture and listening closely to what the Veteran says. I also refer them to other specialty clinics, when necessary, to help them out.

**Chris Murphy**  
Ophthalmology Technician | Lincoln CBOC



e.

c. I take care of the patient's needs in a timely manner and answer their questions to their satisfaction.

**Clark Lowe**  
Clerk, Counter 1 | Lincoln CBOC  
U.S. Air Force Veteran

f. With each patient who calls into the call center, I listen to their symptoms, and use my expertise to help them to the ER or appointment, whatever they need.

**Lisa Longwell, MSN, RN**  
Call Center | Omaha VAMC



f.

The care we provide focuses on the patient, so that they get the best care possible.

**Arif Subhan**  
Chief, Biomedical Engineering Services | Omaha VAMC



I smile and acknowledge each Veteran, not just in my clinic, everyone. I also try to listen and not interrupt so they can be heard. It's a small way I can show my respect for them and really understand their needs.

**Suzy Rainforth, LPN**  
Ambulatory Care | Grand Island CBOC

I give them care that they deserve. They've done so much for us. I treat Veterans how I would like my family to be treated.

**Ashley Freeman**  
Nuclear Medicine Technologist | Omaha VAMC



It's giving timely, high-quality service, and following through every step of the care process to the final step.

**Karyn Stodden**  
Privacy Officer | Omaha VAMC



## HELLO

Aug. 12 to Sept. 8

**Joshua Akerson,**  
Mental Health

**Nicole Becker,**  
Business Office

**Wesley Blaha,**  
Sterile Processing Service

**Denise Cottingham,** Primary  
Care and Specialty Medicine

**Anne Elliston,**  
Nurse Executive's Office

**Marsha Fields,** Food Service

**Kerry Held,** Mental Health

**Siobahn Hruby,** Fee Basis

**Fiyyaz Karim,** Mental Health

**Sarah Larson,** Fee Basis

**Robert Lippert,** Fee Basis

**Mariela Marius,**  
Mental Health

**Jessica McCowan,**  
Nurse Executive's Office

**Bianca Meehan,**  
Mental Health

**Jon Monk,** Primary Care and  
Specialty Medicine

**Douglas Moore,** Fee Basis

**Kate O'Dell,** Director's Office

**Barbara Pope,**  
Veterans Canteen Service

**Kelly Purdy,** Surgery

**Jodette Rose,** Research

**Debra Tuttle,** Mental Health

**Lorrie Van Roekel,**  
Inpatient Care

**Clayton Vetterman,**  
Nurse Executive's Office

**Shelly Westerholt,** Primary  
Care and Specialty Medicine

**Mary Zoucha-Steinkraus,**  
Extended Care

## LEAVING

Aug. 12 to Sept. 8

**Beverly Anderson,**  
Patient Care

**Jeremy Anderson,**  
Pharmacy

**Dorian Bunker,**  
Veterans Canteen Service

**Jimi Carpenter,**  
Inpatient Care

**Daniel Chadwell,** Surgery

**Julie Divis,** Prosthetics

**Christine Ellett,**  
Chief of Staff's Office

**Kimberly Floyd,** Veterans  
Engineering Research Center

**Brandi Goforth,**  
Nurse Executive's Office

**Kevin Hill,** Environmental  
Management Service

**Sherry Kennon,**  
Shenandoah CBOC

**Douglas Nitzel,**  
Environmental Management  
Service

**Johnny Roebuck,**  
Police Service

**David Shane,**  
Shenandoah CBOC

**Sean Soucy,** Environmental  
Management Service

## EVENTS what's going on?

- Oct. 1** Patient-Centered Care Month kick off
- Oct. 5** Volunteer Orientation, Omaha
- Oct. 8** Columbus Day
- Oct. 7-13** Emergency Nurses Week
- Oct. 7-13** Mental Illness Awareness Week
- Oct. 8-14** National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Boston, Mass.
- Oct. 9** PCC Month popcorn day
- Oct. 11** Nachos for CFC, Grand Island
- Oct. 14-20** Medical Assistants Recognition Week
- Oct. 16** National Boss Day
- Oct. 16** Pink Out Day
- Oct. 17** PCC Month giveaways
- Oct. 17** Ancient Greeks, Modern Lives workshop and dramatic reading, Lincoln
- Oct. 21-27** National Respiratory Care Week
- Oct. 22** Ancient Greeks, Modern Lives lecture, Lincoln
- Oct. 23** Chili Cook-Off for CFC, Omaha
- Oct. 23** Soup Cook-Off Contest for CFC, Grand Island
- Oct. 25** PCC Month cookie day
- Oct. 31** Halloween

**For more information about VA NWIHCS events, visit [www.nebraska.va.gov](http://www.nebraska.va.gov).**



► *'Lucky' Heart Attack continued from page 4*

medical center had just received this type of pump two weeks before.

"It's a pretty new idea," Um said of the percutaneous RVAD. "Instead of putting the pump into the heart itself, the pump is outside the body."

Using the percutaneous approach, Um and O'Leary used tubes placed in the veins to guide blood into the pulmonary arteries and around the right ventricle, allowing the heart to recover.

"The affect on him was immediate," O'Leary said. "We saw him come in a white, pale color – he just wasn't getting enough blood flow to his lungs. As soon as we turned the RVAD on, he 'pinked up,' his color improved. Over the next 24 hours, he improved remarkably."

"A lot of these patients require just short-term mechanical support for several days and then have a rapid recovery," Um said. "It's unusual because these patients proceed to death rather quickly. That's what his trajectory was."

Carroll woke up at The Nebraska Medical Center three days after his heart attack unaware of the groundbreaking treatment that allowed him to wake up at all.

"I lost three days," Carroll said with a smile. "I feel so lucky because they didn't have to open my chest."

Carroll also said he felt lucky to have the care of the VA and The Nebraska Medical Center staff. His doctors agree.

"This really demonstrates the excellent collaborative work between the VA and the med center," O'Leary said. "The VA provides excellent care, and if a patient requires something they can't provide, they'll send a patient down the street to get it."

After recovering from his heart attack and having the RVAD removed, Cecil had a heart pacemaker implanted and spent several weeks in rehab to help regain his strength. 

► *Wedding at the VA continued from page 7*

Pano said she wanted to thank all of the Omaha VAMC staff. "From travel to the kitchen to the cleaning to education, so many different people at VA have touched our lives and helped us in one way or another. Even if it's just been a smile on a really horrible day, it's been amazing."

The Browns were married Sept. 1 in the chapel at the Omaha VAMC. Scott was scheduled to begin treatment for the tumors in his pelvis about a month after the wedding.

Scott's type of bone cancer, osteosarcoma, is a disease typically found in children, occur in 400 to 500 adults each year in the United States, said Dr. Apar Ganti, his oncologist at VA.

While Scott's prognosis depends on many factors, Ganti said, "he's doing a great job of trying to fight it as best he can, learning all about it, and trying to be as positive and proactive as possible." 

► *DAISY continued from page 8*

Brown said he has been impressed by all of the nurses on 7 East. He and his family have always been well taken care of during his stays. When his kids were with him, they were always given somewhere to sleep, snacks when they were hungry, and most of the nurses knew the kids by their names.

"Nurses do so much; they can get burned out," Brown said. "They do so much and get so little back. I just wanted to give her something back." 

► *Breast Cancer Survivor continued from page 9*

The response from other people can have such positive results.

"Tell your story. It takes a lot of courage, but it allows us to heal," Rose said about reaching out to others. "I don't think I would have healed the same without that love." 

## BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

- \* Yearly mammograms are recommended starting at age 40.
- \* Clinical breast exams are recommended every three years for women in their 20s and 30s and every year for women 40 and over.
- \* Breast cancer also affects men. In 2012, about 2,190 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in men. About 410 men will die from breast cancer.

For more information visit the American Cancer Society at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).





# STANDDOWN



**for Homeless Veterans Eligible for VA Health Care**

*Stand Down is a military term meaning Soldiers are removed from the field of combat to receive rest and rehabilitation.*

**Registration Encouraged at Your Nearest VA Business Office**

**Thursday, Oct. 11**  
**10 am to 3 pm**

Held in conjunction with  
Project Homeless Connect at:

**Pershing Auditorium**  
226 Centennial Mall South  
(15th & "N" Street)  
Lincoln, Nebraska

**Thursday, Oct. 25**  
**10 am to 3 pm**

Held in conjunction with  
Project Homeless Connect at:

**Evangelical Free Church**  
2609 South Blaine Street  
Grand Island, Nebraska

**Saturday, Nov. 17**  
**9 am to Noon**

**Civic Auditorium,  
Exhibition Hall**  
(East Entrance to Civic Auditorium)  
Omaha, Nebraska

## **VA Health Care and Other Services Offered**

Veteran Benefit Information | Health Screening | Lunch | Counseling

*\*No Alcohol, Drugs or Weapons Allowed*



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