

# the link

JUNE  
2013



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System



**12** BURNING  
RUBBER  
FOR BENEFITS



**With 153 hospitals, more than 773 community-based outpatient clinics and 260 Vet Centers, VA is the largest integrated health care system in America.**

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System is one small piece of that system, but for us, it is the most important.

Within our integrated system, we can provide Veterans with anything from routine eye exams to treatment for post-traumatic stress. Our

list of services is extensive, and with the use of telemedicine it now reaches into rural areas that were previously underserved.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki set forth three guiding principles for VA to transform into a 21st century organization that adapts to new realities, leverages new technologies and serves a changing population of Veterans with renewed commitment. The guiding principles are that we will be people-centric, results-driven and forward-looking.

I encourage all VA NWHCS employees to think of these principles and take pride in being a part of the largest integrated health care system in the nation. From bundling appointments to ensuring Veterans feel they are at the center of their care, we can accomplish the secretary's goals while embracing the guiding principles.

Integrated health care means we can provide Veterans with all of the services they need. Through our caring we make VA NWHCS the place Veterans want to receive all of their services.

*Marci Mylan*

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FACT: MORE THAN 700 VETERANS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY PARTICIPATED MAY 30 THROUGH JUNE 4 IN THE GOLDEN AGE GAMES, THE NATION'S LARGEST SPORTING EVENT FOR SENIOR MILITARY VETERANS.

Cover: A Veteran heads out of the parking lot in his Corvette after a car show and information forum May 15 at the Lincoln VA.  
Photo by Bruce Thiel

“The VA is kind of a carryover from the military, and Veterans have camaraderie with each other. They have their past military service in common, and the VA is a social event for them as much as health care. That’s so neat to watch.”

Lin Young, Medical Support Assistant, Lincoln



# the link

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This magazine is an authorized publication for VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (VA NWHCS). Contents of The Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, or the Department of Veterans Affairs. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the VA NWHCS Public Affairs Office.

### CONTACT US

Have a story idea? Call the VA NWHCS Public Affairs Office; Will Ackerman at 402-995-4719, Anna Morelock at 402-995-5547, or email vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov.

### VISIT US ONLINE

Scan with your smart phone to view more issues of The Link online.



# meet cindy stoehr



Licensed Practical Nurse,  
Bellevue Community-  
Based Outpatient Clinic

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

A: "Six years, and I have been in the Bellevue clinic for a little over a year."

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

A: "We check in patients when they come in. We do their vital signs, medical reconciliations and get them ready for the doctor to see them. We draw the labs and send them to Omaha. We do administrative work, as well. We are the support for the clinic."

**Q: What is your favorite thing about your job?**

A: "I love taking care of the Veterans, and I love listening to their stories. There is a wealth of historic information with these Veterans."

**Q: When not at work, where can you be found?**

A: "I like to garden, and I love to read Christian novels. My husband and I like to go out to movies a lot now that we are empty nesters." 🗣️

## Visit Our Social Media Sites



Like Us on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA](http://www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA)



Follow @VANWIHCS

Get news, information for patients and upcoming events

# Highlighting the LGBT COMMUNITY

## Inside VHA

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

**A**fter sexual orientation was added as a protected basis in the Secretary of Veterans Affairs No FEAR Policy Statement in 2009, VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion began working to bring awareness of the issues dealt with in the workplace by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees and Veterans.



In the 1950s, an executive order made homosexuality grounds for denying or dismissing a person from federal employment. Since then, new laws and executive memoranda have been put into place to guarantee rights for LGBT employees. In 2010, the Office of Personnel Management extended certain benefits to the same-sex partners of federal employees. According to the VA Office of the General Counsel, however, benefits limited to spouses are not extended to same-sex partner due to the Defense of Marriage Act.

For employees, VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion plans to expand cultural competency training about LGBT issues and develop an inclusive language guide. It also stood up the Office of Health Equity to address LGBT health care issues, which include less access to insurance and health care services, lower overall health status, higher rates of smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, higher risk for mental illness such as anxiety and depression, and higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases. 🗣️

To help educate Veterans and staff at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System about issues facing the LGBT community, join the LGBT Special Emphasis Program by contacting Equal Employment Opportunity Manager Laura Neal at ext. 3109 in Omaha.



# VETERANS FREEDOM MUSIC FESTIVAL

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs



## JUNE 15 2013

**E**xpanded children's activities and a feature band are two things new to this year's Veterans Freedom Music Festival. For the third year, the Veterans Advisory Council from the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System in Lincoln has expanded its musical event geared toward bringing awareness of VA services to Veterans and providing them with the support of other servicemembers.

Many Vietnam Veterans never got a welcome home when they returned from combat. Many also never used VA services or sought help of any kind when they left the service, said U.S. Marine and Vietnam Veteran Terry Gillispie, one of the festival organizers. The festival is one way for the older Veterans to reach out to younger Veterans and make sure they don't slip through the cracks, he said.



Photo by Bruce Thiel



Photo by Bruce Thiel

The daylong festival, which is open to the public, will kick off at 9 a.m. with a presentation of the colors by local Veterans service organizations. Eleven bands will play throughout the day including Switchbak at 6 p.m. and again at 8 p.m. after the Nebraska National Guard's 43rd Army Band.

From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., children's activities will include a visiting fire rig and fire safety house from the Lincoln Fire Department, National Guard inflatable sports activities, clowns, temporary tattoos, face painting, yard games with prizes, coloring stations and more. VA NWIHCS employees will be available all day to answer questions about VA benefits and enroll Veterans for services. Representatives will also be available from the Veterans Benefits Administration and The Vet Center.

The festival will be at the VA clinic at 600 S. 70th St., in Lincoln. Participants are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or blankets. Coolers and alcohol are not permitted on site; however, food vendors will be available. 📍

Those who can't make it to the festival will be able to watch live streaming video of the festival at [www.vfmf.net](http://www.vfmf.net).\*



Like the festival Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/VeteransFreedomMusicFestival](http://www.facebook.com/VeteransFreedomMusicFestival)\*



\* External Link Disclaimer: The Department of Veterans Affairs does not endorse and is not responsible for the content of these non-government-linked websites.

## BAND SCHEDULE

9 A.M.	Presentation of the colors and service songs
9:30 A.M.	Salt Creek Symphony
10:30 A.M.	The Kramer Sisters
11:30 A.M.	Bolzen Band
12:15 P.M.	Announcements and presentation of the Bill Harris Award
12:30 P.M.	Lincoln Ukulele Band
1 P.M.	Rockerfellers
3 P.M.	Oasis Bluegrass Band
4 P.M.	21st Street Band
5 P.M.	Retirement of the colors
5:15 P.M.	Pinkertones
6 P.M.	Switchbak
7 P.M.	43rd Army Band
8 P.M.	Switchbak

# Seeing a Difference

## IN PATIENT CARE

Kate O'Dell | Public Affairs

**The Eye Clinic at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System medical center in Omaha serves more than 10,000 Veterans each year by providing a range of services from routine eye exams and glasses to more complex surgical procedures.**

Barb Simmons, lead eye technician, has worked at the eye clinic in Omaha for 18 years. She said she believes in the importance of the continuity of care provided to Veterans through the on-site eye clinic.

"If the primary care doctor or the (Emergency Department) needs their patient seen today, they can come right here," she said. "They don't have to drive somewhere. In most cases, they know the same day exactly what the problem is with that patient."

Eye exams can often be used to diagnose serious conditions including diabetes, high blood pressure, multiple sclerosis and even brain tumors. To help with this, the Omaha eye clinic ▶

▶ now uses digital retinol photography. A specialized camera examines the back of the eye, the retina, and can provide early detection of conditions that affect not just the eyes, but overall health.

**"The patient's eyes are dilated, and then the camera is used to take pictures from about five different locations of the eye."**

Barb Simmons, Lead Eye Technician  
Omaha VAMC Eye Clinic ▶



Photo by Kate O'Dell

► Diabetic patients should have this scan done yearly. The photos taken in Omaha are sent to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center where they are read by an ophthalmologist who specializes in diabetic retinol degeneration.

Another exam performed in the eye clinic is called a visual field exam. The purpose of the exam is to test peripheral vision for patients who have glaucoma. Changes can indicate pressure building in the eye that may need to be treated surgically.

U.S. Air Force Veteran Karo Harper has been treated at the VA eye clinic for traumatized glaucoma for a little over 10 years. He was referred to the clinic after a car accident that injured his left eye.

Harper didn't know what to expect, and that was scary, he said. "I was nervous about it at first, not knowing anything about glaucoma. I was thinking I might be going blind; I didn't know for sure."

In 1999, Harper had cataract surgery. "I was treated really well," he said. Since his first operation, Harper has had five more eye surgeries at the Omaha VA Medical Center. Harper is a regular at the eye clinic along with his wife, Kathleen, who also served in the U.S. Air Force. They often schedule simultaneous appointments.

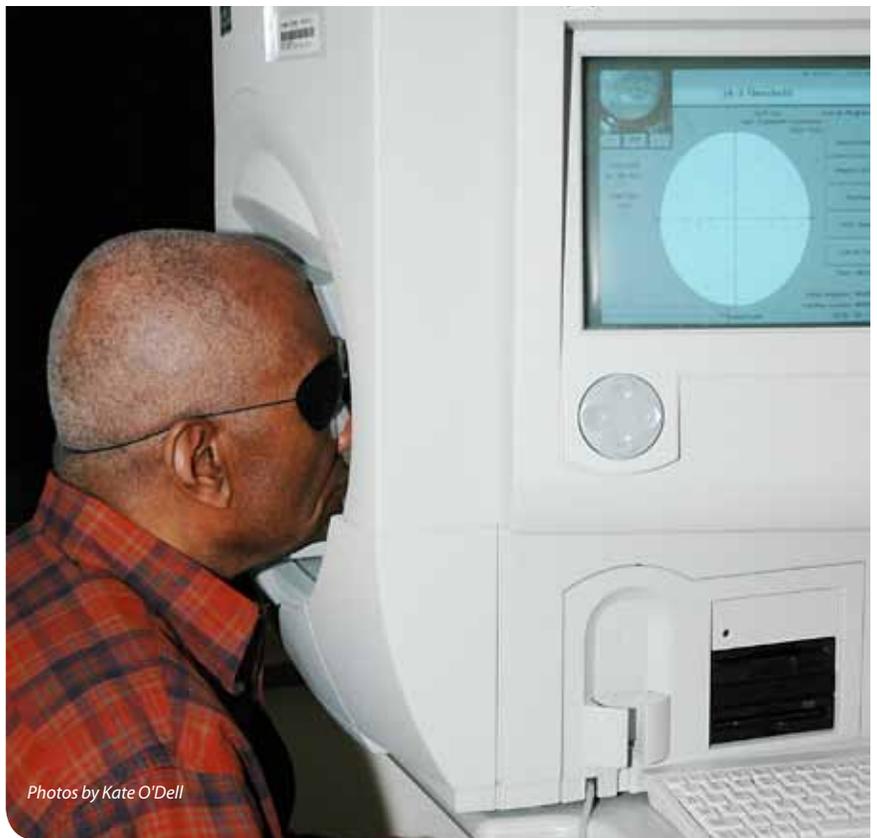
The clinic is staffed mostly by residents. Over the years, most of those residents return to work at the clinic after graduation, Simmons said.

"We are like a family here. Everyone knows everyone," she said. "It's a tight-knit environment, and we really love taking care of the Veterans."

Barb Simmons, lead eye technician at the Omaha eye clinic, checks the eyes of U.S. Air Force Veteran Kathleen Harper for changes in her eyesight.

Right top: Barb Simmons, lead eye technician at the Omaha eye clinic, puts a patch over the eye of U.S. Air Force Veteran Kathleen Harper before performing a visual field exam

Right bottom: U.S. Air Force Veteran Karo Harper receives a visual field exam at the Omaha eye clinic to check for any changes in his peripheral vision.



Photos by Kate O'Dell

“(The staff) is friendly. I know them, and they know me. They treat me well, and that is important to me because I feel welcome and comfortable when I come here.”

Karo Harper | U.S. Air Force Veteran

The Omaha clinic also sees patients from around the VA NWIHCS service area. The Lincoln and Grand Island community-based outpatient clinics have full-time optometrists who conduct routine eye exams and refer patients to Omaha for surgical procedures. ⓘ

# VA Encourages Men TO OWN THEIR HEALTH

Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

**J**une is Men's Health Month. The goal is to highlight how men can take a proactive approach to preventing health-related problems, and encourage preventive disease detection and screening for men and boys.

"You own the responsibility to care for your health," said Kelli Stott, RN, MPH, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System Health Promotion Disease Prevention program manager. "At the VA, we partner with Veterans to help them be more accountable for their health."

An important step to preventing and detecting potential disease is to get health screenings regularly according to your provider's recommendations. Some of the more-common screening tests are for colon cancer, high cholesterol, diabetes and high-blood pressure.

**"You should talk to your provider about the appropriate screenings that are recommended."**

Kelli Stott, RN, MPH | Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager ▶

## 9 Healthy Living Messages

- Be involved in your health care
- Be tobacco free
- Eat wisely
- Be physically active
- Strive for a healthy weight
- Limit alcohol
- Get recommended screening tests and immunizations
- Manage stress
- Be safe

Visit [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov) for more tips

▶ Men also should consider screening for prostate cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, prostate cancer is the most-common type of cancer found in men, second only to skin cancer. However, research is not conclusive that finding prostate cancer will stop men dying if they contract the disease.

A point experts agree upon is men should consult with their health care providers to make informed decisions whether prostate testing is the right choice, and the risk and benefits of treatment if prostate cancer is found.

"The important consideration is to discuss testing, and treatment options if necessary, with your provider to make an informed decision based upon the risks versus benefits," Stott said.

Another important component to living a healthier life involves eating wisely and being physically active.

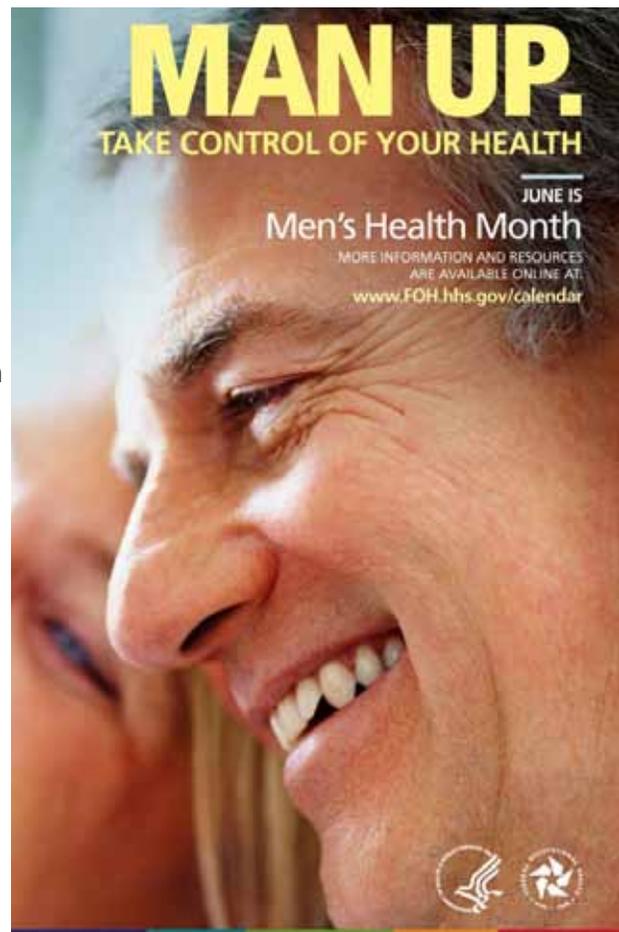
**"Being overweight can lead to many other health conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease."**

Linda Swenson, RD, LMNT | VA NWIHCS Clinical Nutrition Chief

She said men often carry more fat around their bellies, which is dangerous.

"The fat around the belly is often covered by some muscle on the outside but the fat is inside, which is where many of the internal organs are," Swenson said. "This can affect the ability of these organs to work properly."

(continued on page 14) ▶



## VA Launches Hotline to

# Answer Questions on VA Health Care and Benefits for

# Women Veterans

Department of Veterans Affairs

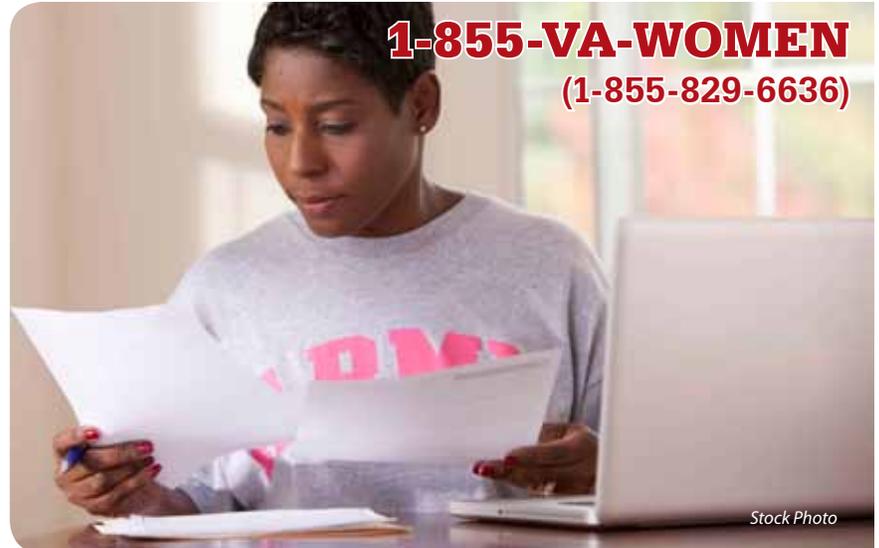
**t**he Department of Veterans Affairs launched a new hotline – 1-855-VA-WOMEN – to receive and respond to questions from Veterans, their families and caregivers about the many VA services and resources available to women Veterans.

“Some women Veterans may not know about high-quality VA care and services available to them. The hotline will allow us to field their questions and provide critical information about the latest enhancements in VA services.”

Eric K. Shinseki  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The hotline is staffed by VA employees who can provide information about benefits including health care services for women. Callers can be linked to information about claims, education or health care appointments, as well as information about VA cemeteries and memorial benefits. Staff can answer urgent questions and provide referrals to homeless and mental health services, as well as provide Vet Center information.

Women make up nearly 15 percent of today's active-duty military and 18 percent of National Guard and Reserve forces. The population of women Veterans using VA benefits, including health care, is growing rapidly. Since 2000, the number of women using VA health care more than doubled, ▶



**1-855-VA-WOMEN**  
(1-855-829-6636)

▶ from nearly 160,000 in 2000 to more than 354,000 in 2012. Based on the upward trend of women in all branches of service, the number of women Veterans – and female VA users – will keep climbing.

“In VA health care alone, women constitute only 6 percent of VA patients, but those Veterans have a high perception of the quality care they are receiving,” said Irene Trowell-Harris, director of VA's Center for Women Veterans.

“Many women who served don't self-identify as Veterans and therefore don't think they qualify for VA benefits. We need to correct existing misinformation and misperceptions so we can serve more women Veterans with the benefits they've earned.”

Women Veterans are entitled to apply for the same benefits as their male counterparts, which include health care and pharmacy benefits, as well as education benefits, disability compensation, home loans, employment assistance and more.

The hotline, 1-855-VA-WOMEN, joins numerous other VA hotlines that provide critical information and assistance to Veterans, such as those for Veterans in crisis and in danger of becoming homeless. 📞

Veterans also can receive information and apply for benefits online at VA's [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) and manage their health care at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov). Women Veterans within VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System can reach the local Women Veterans Program manager, Donna Higgins, at 1-866-451-5796, ext. 4906.

Chaplain Curtis McLilly is new to VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, but has worked as a chaplain for the VA since December 1995. McLilly moved to Omaha from Cheyenne, Wyo. However, his home is in Leavenworth, Kan., where he returns each weekend to visit his college sweetheart – now his wife to whom he has been married for almost 30 years.

Becoming a minister was not initially what McLilly wanted to do with his life. As a young boy, he wanted to work as an attorney.

“Civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshal was my hero, and that’s what I saw myself doing,” he said. “I saw myself making those closing arguments before those nine black robes in the Supreme Court.”

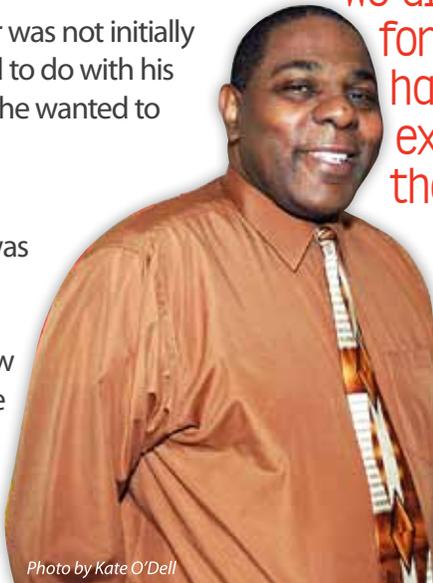


Photo by Kate O'Dell

Later in life McLilly felt a calling to the ministry. That calling was clear to him when he was face to face with a tornado. During the storm, he prayed to God for his safety. “If you’ll save me, I’ll preach,” he said. “And the winds outside ceased. That was good enough for me.”

McLilly enjoys working as a chaplain because he believes it is a great way to connect with people. Working for the VA was a smooth transition after retiring from the U.S. Army after 23 years, he said.

“We all have worn the uniform in the armed forces. I understand what (Veterans) have been through in their military experience because I was going through the same thing with them.”

Curtis McLilly, Chaplain | Omaha VAMC

In honor of McLilly’s arrival, the Chaplain Service will have an open house from 10 to 11 a.m. June 7 in the Omaha VA Medical Center chapel. Employees and Veterans are invited to meet with the Omaha chaplains and familiarize themselves with chapel resources. 

## Courage, Competition, Camaraderie

# DEFINE THE NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES

Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

For 33 years, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Paralyzed Veterans of America have joined forces to host the world’s largest annual wheelchair sporting event. This year’s games will be July 13 to 18 in Tampa, Fla. On average, more than 500 Veterans with disabilities compete in the games.

“The idea behind our event is to get Veterans involved in adaptive sports as part of their rehabilitation,” said Jordan Schupach, public affairs officer for the VA’s National Veterans *(continued on page 15)*



Courtesy Photo

Members of Team Nebraska celebrate competition in the 2011 National Veterans Wheelchair Games: Mark Linqvist, Jim Toelle, Craig Enenbach, Dave Gardner, Will Leavitt, Mike Moore, Ricky Harris, Chris Parnell, John Scott, and Randy Squier.

# Veterans *MAKE MOVES TOWARD* healthier lifestyles

Kate O'Dell | Public Affairs

**A**pproximately 70 percent of Veterans in VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System are overweight or obese. Make Your MOVE! is a new eight-week program designed to jump-start Veterans toward healthier lifestyles. The program brings the MOVE! Weight Management Program to the primary care clinics giving Veterans the support they need to make big changes.

Three teams of 10 Veterans meet weekly. They track their progress individually, work toward group goals and win prizes for their efforts along the way. Care providers from the Blue, Yellow and Red clinics at the Omaha VA Medical Center coach participants and offer guidance, support and medical expertise as Veterans accumulate points for healthy choices.

Each week a speaker presents on the weekly topic before the teams meet. "We have a variety of speakers," said Kelli Stott, RN, MPH, and the VA NWIHCS Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program manager.

**"It is not just about exercise and weight loss. It is about stress management, how to pay for healthy food when you are on a budget and how obesity affects your body."**

Kelli Stott, RN, MPH  
VA NWIHCS Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager

Thomas Lake, U.S. Army Veteran, is on the Blue Team during this pilot program. He said he joined hoping to get answers to ▶



Thomas Lake, U.S. Army Veteran, checks in with his primary care team before his weekly meeting for the Make Your MOVE! Program. During his check-in, Lake learned that he lost weight in the program's first three weeks.

▶ his questions about weight loss and to benefit from the support of his teammates. Keeping track of his food intake has helped him better understand the effect nutrition has on his goals to lose weight.

"Logging food everyday makes me think about what I am eating," he said.

Eight weeks isn't necessarily long enough to see drastic change, but the hope is Veterans will continue to incorporate what they learn about healthier living into their lives beyond the Make Your MOVE! Program.

At the end of the eight weeks, the team with the most healthy-living points will win a grand prize. The next session will be held this fall in Omaha. Eventually, the Lincoln and Grand Island sites also will host the program. 📍

For more information about Make Your MOVE!, talk to a primary care provider, or contact Kelli Stott at 402-995-4987 or [kelli.stott@va.gov](mailto:kelli.stott@va.gov).



# Burnin Rubber for Benefits

Veterans of all ages brought their cars, old and new, to the Lincoln VA May 15 for an information forum and car show. Representatives were on hand to talk to Veterans about their eligibility for benefits and answer any questions they had about their health care.

**The next information forum is scheduled for Aug. 14 at the Lincoln VA, 600 S. 70th St.**



Photos by Bruce Thiel

## Celebrating the commitment of nurses at NWHCS

Staff celebrated Nurses Week across VA NWHCS May 6-10. In Omaha, Dennis Miller, RN (right), receives recognition for completing his master's degree in nursing, along with numerous other nurses who received recognition for completing advanced degrees over the past year. In Grand Island (below) staff dedicate their Caritas Sanctuary, a place for staff to refocus. In Lincoln (inset) Chaplain Curtis McLilly blesses the hands of an employee during a Blessing of the Hands service. (Photo by Bruce Thiel).



Photo by Anna Morelock



Photo by Coral Selden

# how has the GI BILL? helped you?



It allowed me to complete my bachelor's degree with little or no out of pocket expenses.



**Nicholas Guerrier**  
Security Specialist, Police Service | Omaha VAMC  
U.S. Air Force Veteran

It helped me pay my living expenses mostly, because going to school full time and having money to pay for housing, food, transportation and things like that is a challenge. So the GI Bill helped me to be able to go to school and focus my time on school versus work.



**Kathy Veiman**  
Pharmacist | Bellevue CBOC  
U.S. Air Force Veteran

The GI Bill provided me with the funds to support my daughter and complete my bachelor's degree in three years as a single parent.



**Rachel Anschutz**  
Program Specialist, Engineering | Omaha VAMC  
U.S. Army Veteran

The GI Bill helped me complete my undergraduate degree and medical school, graduating with my MD in 1975.



**Dr. Frederick J. Echternacht**  
Associate Chief of Medicine | Grand Island CBOC  
U.S. Air Force Veteran

It helped me get my associate's degree, which took the place of experience to qualify for the current position I hold at the VA. Plus, it gave me a sense of accomplishment since I didn't go to college until I was in my early 30s. It was very easy to use, and the college helped me to complete the paperwork.



**Tamara Walls**  
Medical Support Assistant | Omaha VAMC  
U.S. Army Veteran

## Lincoln VA Coffee House

**Mission: To Improve the Health & Well-being of Veterans through Music.**



Please join us on the third Friday of every month from 11am – 1pm in the Canteen on the ground floor of the Lincoln VA, 600 South 70th Street.

"Music speaks what cannot be expressed, soothes the mind and gives it rest, heals the heart and makes it whole, flows from heaven to the soul."

## LEADING AT ALL LEVELS Graduates

The latest Leading At All Level graduates, Angela Swaney, Kelli Stott and Rebecca White pose with two of their mentors, Linda Swenson and Janelle Wormuth. Not pictured is mentor Kim Shambaugh-Miller. Leading At All Levels is a yearly leadership development program for VA NWIHCS employees. Employees interested in becoming mentors or mentees in the yearlong program should contact Nancy Brock at 308-382-3660 ext. 2352 or Char Thiessen at 402-995-5814. Applications for the next available program will come out in February 2014.



Photo by Anna Morelock

# HELLO

April 7 to May 4

- Christine Anderson**, *Surgery*
- Aaron Beaty**, *Surgery*
- Lyudmyla Berim**, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*
- Kevin Boswell**, *Environmental Management Service*
- Robin Brooks**, *Lab*
- Victor Cabriales**, *Environmental Management Service*
- Chinhwa Chong**, *Surgery*
- Lisa Crouch**, *Patient Care*
- Julie Davis**, *Surgery*
- Thomas Dollison**, *Surgery*
- Travis Donnelly**, *Police Service*
- Michael Falk**, *Environmental Management Service*
- Kathryn Farrens**, *Veterans Canteen Service*
- Bichchan Fleming**, *Mental Health*
- Michael Gass**, *Inpatient Care*
- Drey Ihm**, *Human Resources*
- Korey Jones**, *Police Service*
- Kristi Lindahl**, *Surgery*
- Curtis McLilly**, *Chaplain*
- Daniel Meinke**, *Environmental Management Service*
- Gary Mosley**, *Environmental Management Service*
- Cameron Pesek**, *Veterans Canteen Service*
- Charles Price**, *Environmental Management Service*
- James Schrack**, *Human Resources*
- Sean Scribner**, *Surgery*
- Andrea Shoemaker**, *Surgery*
- Dwight Stowe**, *Environmental Management Service*

# GOODBYE

- Doris Henke**, *Office of Information and Technology*
- Ellen Piskac**, *Learning Resources Service*
- Rolland Adams**, *Veterans Canteen Service*

# RETIRING

- Delores Chmielewski**, *Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*

► *Men's Health continued from page 8*

The fat can affect the pancreas' ability to digest enzymes, or the liver's ability to filter toxins.

Swenson said there are many ways to live healthier: eating a variety of foods that include fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains; limiting alcohol use; and being physically active. Experts recommend aiming for at least two and one-half hours of moderate intensity aerobic activity each week. Taking these steps can also help with weight control.

"The human body was designed to be active," Swenson said.

VA has many programs to assist Veterans with losing weight, if necessary, or maintaining a healthy weight. Nutritionists can help design a healthy living plan that includes food portion size and nutritional balance. The MOVE! program teaches Veterans about eating properly, exercise and behavioral changes.

"The important point is that you should talk to your medical provider to ensure you are physically capable of starting an appropriate program," Swenson said. Stott and Swenson said regardless where a man's health condition is today, "your health is in your hands." 📞

## walking for

### HEALTH AND HOMELESS VETERANS



Photo by Anna Morelock



Photo by Anna Morelock



Photo by Bruce Thiel

More than 220 employees in Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island participated May 15 in the VA2K Walk and Roll. Besides encouraging employees to keep fit, event organizers collected donations for the VA homeless program. Across VA NWIHCS, an estimated \$1,300 worth of items was collected.

► *Wheelchair Games continued from page 10*

Sports Programs and Special Events. "It's a different way for them to be challenged, to face their disability head on and ultimately to achieve their personal bests. That's the meaning behind our office's slogan: Mission ReDefined."

The game's competitive events include air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field events, hand cycling, a motorized wheelchair rally, nine ball, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting and weightlifting. Athletes compete against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age.

Veterans competing from the Omaha and central Nebraska area train with the Great Plains Paralyzed Veterans of America chapter. The chapter provides a program where local Veterans who are interested in competing can come together and train. The chapter provides opportunities for the Veterans to train in all of the events that the games feature, said Amanda Vasquez, the chapter's government relations director.

"The wheelchair games is a great confidence booster for the Veterans who compete," Vasquez said. "It's a great opportunity for Veterans."

In addition to providing training resources for the Veterans who are going to compete, the PVA also assists with fundraising to help defray the costs of travel and lodging for the athletes at the games.

"PVA has a grant program to assist the Veterans who compete in the games, and we supplement the fundraising that they do," Vasquez said.

Veterans are eligible to compete in the games if they have spinal-cord injuries or other disabilities that require the use of a wheelchair for athletic competition. They also must be eligible to receive health care through VA.

Vasquez said 11 Veterans, sponsored by the Great Plains PVA, will compete; four are novices. 

For more information about the 33rd Annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games, visit [www.va.gov/opa/speceven/wcg/index.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/wcg/index.asp).



My Health, My Care: 24/7 <sup>Online</sup> Access to VA

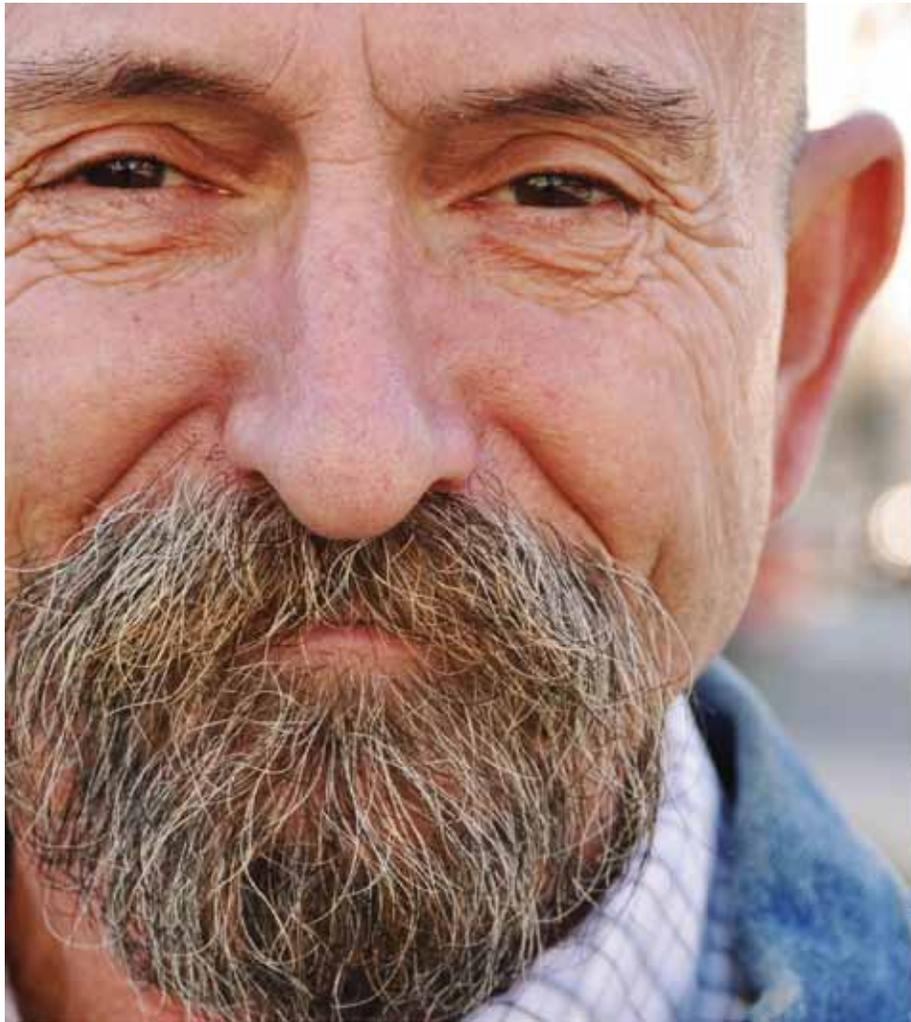
**Access Health Resources**  
**Track Your Health**  
**Refill VA Prescriptions**  
**Register Today!**

## EVENTS what's going on?

- June 3** VA Food Pantry, Lincoln
- June 4** Patient-Centered Care Employee Retreat, Omaha  
Pandemic Flu Open House, Omaha
- June 5** VA Food Pantry, Omaha
- June 7** Chapel Open House, Omaha  
New Volunteer Orientation, Omaha
- June 10-16** Men's Health Week
- June 12** Patient-Centered Care Employee Retreat, Omaha
- June 14** Flag Day  
VA NWIHCS new web design launches
- June 15** Veterans Freedom Music Festival, Lincoln
- June 16** Father's Day
- June 19** VA Food Pantry, Omaha
- June 20** National PTSD Screening Day
- June 21** Summer Begins  
EEO Special Emphasis Program Open House, Omaha  
VA Coffeehouse, Lincoln
- June 21-22** Veterans of Armed Forces Outreach, Oxford, Neb.
- June 23** Veterans Memorial Service, Omaha
- June 25** Patient-Centered Care Employee Retreat, Omaha
- June 26** VA and Community Book Club, Lincoln
- June 27** PTSD Awareness Day
- June 28** EEO Special Emphasis Program Open House, Lincoln

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





**ONE THING I'D LIKE TO SAY TO ALL OF YOU IS YOU'RE NOT CRAZY.**

## **ABOUTFACE**

I had a complete meltdown with PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder). I thought I was losing my mind. I'd never been out of control before, and it was hard to admit I needed help, but I wanted my old self back. I've gotten that and more. I'm strong. I'm healthy. I have tools, I have knowledge, and I have strength and courage to deal with it. I'm doing just fine.

**RON WHITCOMB** SGT US ARMY 1968 - 1969 SQUAD LEADER, VIETNAM

PTSD TREATMENT CAN TURN YOUR LIFE AROUND.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV/ABOUTFACE](http://WWW.PTSD.VA.GOV/ABOUTFACE)



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