

the link

November
2013



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System



6 THE HEALING
POWER OF
MUSIC



November is a great time to begin to think of gratitude, giving, and thanks.

This month we will have our Veteran Stand Down event in Omaha; inside this month's The Link, you will see a story on the Lincoln Stand Down. Stand Down is an opportunity to

come together with our community partners to provide resources for homeless Veterans.

You will also have an opportunity to read about quality of life. Dr. Cyrus Desouza's research on methods of prevention of Type 2 Diabetes and the VA Coffeehaus in Lincoln aim at promoting well-being through the arts and healthy lifestyles. As we think about health care, we must think hand in hand about quality of life.

This month we will honor our Veterans during Veterans Day celebrations. At the VA, we do this every day with our service to Veterans. Honoring Service. Empowering health.

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FACT: THE FIRST VERSION OF MY HEALTHEVET DEBUTED ON NOVEMBER 11, 2003, MARKING THIS YEAR AS THE TENTH YEAR OF SERVICE TO VETERANS.

Cover: Tony Church plays his 12-string guitar at the Lincoln VA Coffeehaus Oct. 18. Photo By Will Ackerman.

“It’s my personal mission to help other Veterans understand their benefits and their opportunities at the VA; not only for services and benefits, but employment opportunities.”

Shaunielle Mosley, U.S. Army Veteran
Voluntary Services Assistant | Lincoln CBOC



the link

CONTENTS



Meet an Employee | VA Views | Calendar



Music Coffeehaus Offers the Healing Power of Music



Participants Sought for Research Study



Stand Downs Connect Homeless Veterans to VA, Community Resources



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meet donna higgins



LCSW, Women Veterans Program Manager
Omaha VA Medical Center

Q: How long have you been with the VA?

A: "Six years."

Q: What does your job entail?

A: "I advocate for women Veterans programs, and educate staff on the needs of women Veterans."

Q: What do you like best about your job?

A: "I get to educate women Veterans about their VA benefits that they may not realize they have earned."

Q: Where can you be found when not at work?

A: "I like to work out by riding a bike or running. I also volunteer at my daughter's school."

We roll the clocks back one hour to end Daylight Saving Time Nov. 3.

What do you do with that extra hour?



Sleep, or try to.

Melissa Koon
Dietitian
Bellevue CBOC



Sleep, of course.

Tammie Garcia
Program Support Assistant
Omaha VAMC



Now that I'm older, I use that hour to sleep.

Lisa Almquist Nebraska National Guard Veteran
Program Support Assistant | Lincoln CBOC



I don't even notice the extra hour; and when I work, I get the extra pay.

Tabatha Harders, RN CLC | Grand Island CBOC



Well of course the extra hour of sleep is great! But I usually make sure my affairs are in order and that all my clocks are set to the right time.

Myron Mason U.S. Navy Veteran | Warehouse | Grand Island CBOC

EVENTS what's going on?

- Nov. 1 - 30** Movember (Men's health focus)
- Nov. 1** Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 2** Stand Down, Omaha
- Nov. 3** Ecumenical Memorial Service, Omaha
Daylight Saving Time ends
- Nov. 4** Veteran Food Pantry, Lincoln
Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 6** Veteran Food Pantry, Omaha
Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 8** Last day for Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), Lincoln
Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 11** Veterans Day
My HealtheVet 10-year anniversary
Employee Federal Benefits Open Season begins (through Dec. 9)
- Nov. 12** Veterans Day Celebration, Lincoln
My HealtheVet anniversary celebration, Lincoln
- Nov. 13** My HealtheVet anniversary celebration, Omaha, Grand Island
Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 14** World Diabetes Day
- Nov. 15** America Recycles Day
CoffeeHaus, Lincoln
Last day for CFC, all sites except Lincoln
Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 11-17** Get Smart about Antibiotics Week
- Nov. 18** Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 20** Veteran Food Pantry, Omaha
Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 21** Great American Smokeout
- Nov. 22** Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 25** Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 27** Chanukah begins at sundown
Exercise Class for Veterans
- Nov. 28** Thanksgiving (Federal Holiday)
- Nov. 29** Native American Heritage Day
- Nov. 30** Computer Security Day

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



MUSIC COFFEEHAUS

offers the healing power
of music
Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

In a recent Friday at the Lincoln, Neb., VA clinic, music could be heard echoing through the hallways. It wasn't coming from a radio or television, but from live musicians.

Tony Church played his 12-string guitar at the VA Coffeehaus in the auditorium. He said his goal in playing to the audience of about 35 people was to provide a relaxing, healing environment.

"Some studies have shown the awesome power of music," Church said. "My goal is to speak to the audience through my music, and to promote a sense of community."

The coffeehaus was started after the Lincoln associate chief of medicine, Dr. Christie Emler, watched a YouTube video where Veterans who served in Iraq said it was therapeutic in dealing with their post-traumatic stress.

She said it's part of her goal to use non-traditional approaches to improve Veterans' health and well-being.

In addition, it's a non-threatening way to introduce Veterans to the VA.

"I've had Veterans say this is the most-energetic thing they have experienced at the VA," Emler said.

Although the audience size and composition varies, Emler said there are a few Veterans who have attended every coffeehaus. ▶

▶ The events are coordinated in partnership with the Lincoln VA Veterans Advisory Council. Dave Rusk, a VAC member, said he knows a lot of musicians in the community. All have been willing to donate their time and talents to bring their music to the coffeehaus.

"It's been very rewarding. Music reaches the soul like no other sense."

Dave Rusk
Veteran's Advisory Council | Lincoln VA

Veteran Curt Johansen and his girlfriend Venna Mehieron, audience members who were listening to Church play, said in addition to enjoying the music, the coffeehaus is a way for the community to show Veterans they are not forgotten.

"They've done so much for us, so we can do this for them," Mehieron said.

Rusk said they are always looking for people who want to play at the event. Future coffeehaus events may include open jam sessions. ⓘ

Salt Creek Symphony performs at the VA Coffeehaus Oct. 18 at the Lincoln VA CBOC.



Photos by Will Ackerman

MUSIC COFFEEHAUS

The coffeehaus is held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. the third Friday of each month in the auditorium at 600 S. 70th Street. For more information, call 402-489-3802 ext. 7879.

Clinical Study

to evaluate vitamin D as prevention for type 2 diabetes

VA NWIHCs, Omaha and the University of Nebraska Medical Center seek volunteers to participate in a clinical trial to investigate if a vitamin D supplement helps prevent or delay type 2 diabetes in adults who either have prediabetes, or who are at high risk.

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, the \$40 million, 5-year Vitamin D and Type 2 Diabetes (D2d) study is taking place at about 20 sites across the United States, including the Omaha VA and UNMC.

The goal of study is to learn if vitamin D – specifically D3 (cholecalciferol) – prevents or delays type 2 diabetes in adults aged 30 or older with prediabetes. People with prediabetes have blood glucose levels that are higher than normal but not high enough to be called diabetes.

Based on observations from earlier studies, researchers think that vitamin D could reduce the diabetes risk by 25 percent. The D2d study will determine if this is valid. The study will also examine if sex, age or race affect the potential of vitamin D to reduce diabetes risk.

“If this is true, it will show that giving people vitamin D is a very inexpensive way to prevent people from getting diabetes, by giving them a less-expensive vitamin that costs just cents a day compared to the thousands of dollars we spend on diabetes treatment drugs,” said Cyrus Desouza, M.D., the principle investigator for the study at the Omaha VA and UNMC.

Half of the participants will receive vitamin D. The other half will receive a placebo – a pill that has no drug effect. Participants will have check-ups for the study twice a year, and will receive regular health care through their own health care providers. The study will be double-blinded, so neither participants nor the study’s clinical staff will know who is receiving vitamin D and who is receiving placebo. Desouza said Vitamin D generally does not present side effects. 

To learn more, visit www.D2dstudy.org. To learn if you are eligible to participate, call Penny Anzures at 402-995-3924 or e-mail penny.anzures@va.gov.

employees | NEW | LEAVING

HELLO

Aug 25 to Sept. 21

- Darby Adams**, Mental Health
- Garner Anderson**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Colin Beal**, Logistics
- Tia Bieber**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Patricia Brau**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Karen Cooper**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Lisa Costanzo**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Jacquelyn Craig**, Surgery
- Laura Deaver**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Sayantana Deb**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Matthew Devries**, Imaging

- Shane Doxzon**, Logistics
- Lindsey Halstead**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Neil Hansen**, Imaging
- William Harrison**, Imaging
- Devin Holdorf**, Imaging
- Nicole Holland**, Nursing
- Lora Hurst**, Imaging
- Lewis Jones**, Veterans Canteen Service
- Gregory Keane**, Mental Health
- Margie Keiser**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Linda Lieswald**, Human Resources
- Laci Majorins**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Lashley Marks**, Mental Health
- Byron Miller**, Logistics
- Rise Mitchell**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Donna Mitchem**, Nursing
- Mary Morales**, Surgery
- Charles Morris**, Imaging
- Michael Oltman**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Jeffrey Ostwald**, Mental Health
- Tanya Payne**, Surgery
- Richard Piontkowski**, Chaplain Services
- Tina Randles**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Carl Robinson**, Surgery
- Ashley Rupp**, Mental Health
- Richard Schuster**, Prosthetics
- Starla Stecki**, Surgery
- Kerry Takeda**, Surgery

- Daniel Thomas**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Erika Tucker**, Police
- Sovida Tran**, Lab
- Laura Walklin**, Imaging
- Andrea Walter**, Pharmacy
- Herbert Young Iii**, Environmental Management Services
- Fiyyaz Karim**, Mental Health
- Andrea Mahrt**, Prosthetics
- Jose Palacios**, Police
- Marilyn Perez**, Business Office
- Natalie Smith**, Veterans Canteen Service
- Douglas Stoehr**, Research
- Debra Tuttle**, Mental Health
- Maria Wollen**, Chief Of Staff Office

GOODBYE

Aug 25 to Sept. 21

- David Anderson**, Veterans Canteen Service
- Marco Gilli**, Information Technology
- Margaret Gound**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Oscar Hansen**, Nurse Executive Office
- Martie Hensley**, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
- Patricia Brezenski**, Prosthetics
- Francis Dye**, Biomedical Engineering
- Pauline Soucy**, Nursing

RETIRING

Aug 25 to Sept. 21

STANDDOWNS *connect homeless Veterans with VA, community services*

Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

Former homeless U.S. Army Veteran Michael Stinson calls the Department of Veterans Affairs homeless programs a lifesaver.

He and about 60 Veterans accessed a variety of services at a VA Stand Down at the Pershing Center in Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 10. The event is an opportunity for area Veterans to access an array of VA services and have their benefits questions answered.

Veterans stopped into the Stand Down and learned about vocational rehabilitation opportunities, and medical benefits and services through the VA health care system. There were representatives from various agencies that included the Veterans Benefit Administration and county Veterans service offices.

The Lincoln event was held in conjunction with Project Homeless Connect, which brought myriad community services for all homeless in the Lincoln area under one roof for the day. VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System also partnered with the Grand Island Project Homeless Connect program at their Stand Down Oct. 24. ▶

“This is an opportunity for Veterans to receive lots of different services all in one day so that they don’t have to go to multiple agencies.”

Jana Langhorst, Grant and Per Diem Liaison | Lincoln VA

▶ The Stand Down in Omaha is a stand-alone event held at the Omaha Civic Center Exhibition Hall at 1804 Capital Ave from 9 a.m. to noon Nov. 2. VA will provide an array of services including health screenings, flu shots and foot care. Eligibility staff will be available to assist Veterans with questions regarding their VA health care benefits.

Many community agencies will participate including the Lions Club, Salvation Army, Omaha Vet Center and Nebraska Workforce Development.

Although the Stand Downs bring myriad services together for homeless Veterans, VA homeless staff performs outreach every day to bring Veterans into the system.

“We see a lot of street homeless Veterans who say they don’t deserve the VA benefits or services because they only served a year or two,” Langhorst said. “They chose to serve our country. We are here to give back to them.”



Photos by Will Ackerman

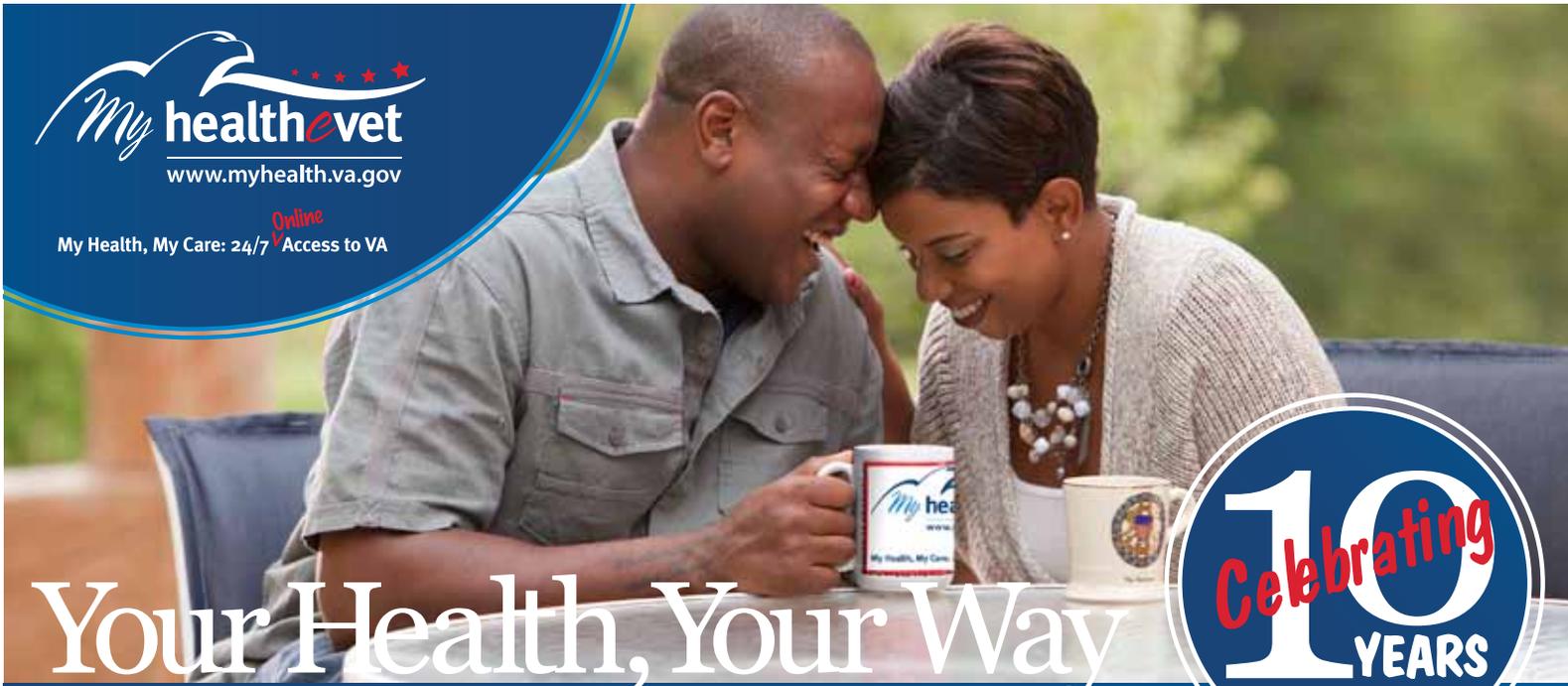
Stand Down is a military term that means to bring the troops in from the battle field for rest and recuperation.

Left: Jana Langhorst, Grant and Per Diem Liaison, Lincoln VA, talks with Jim Nissen, U.S. Army Veteran and his Stand Down escort Scott Siemper, Oct. 10 at the Pershing Center.

Right: Sylvester King, U.S. Marine Veteran selects a pair of boots at the Stand Down.



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To learn more about the VA Blue Button go to: www.myhealth.va.gov

For more information, contact: Omaha: Ext. 4966, Lincoln: Ext. 6571, Grand Island: Ext. 2132

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