

the link

JULY-AUG
2015



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

10 VETERANS HONORED
AT MUSIC FESTIVAL &
WELCOME HOME EVENT

6 29th National Veterans Golden
Age Games Special Pull-Out

In the days to come, the Department of Veterans Affairs, to include Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS), will continue to be challenged with the budget shortfalls being reported in the news.

As was noted by VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson during his testimony in front of the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the VA budget June 25, VA has experienced a 10.5 percent increase in workload over the past 12 months, which ended in April. This was because of "increased demand by Veterans for health care," according to Gibson. Consequently, VA currently faces a significant budget shortfall for this fiscal year.

Our aim at VA NWIHCS is to increase efficiency and continue to function within our means. The additional longer-term goal is to efficiently and effectively take care of our Veterans, which can and will increase future VERA (funding) allocations to the health care system.

It is important that at VA we deliver high-quality, timely health care for our Veterans; however, it's important that during these times of constrained budgets, that we also operate within our means.

NWIHCS, as part of the VA, is committed to providing accessible, quality health care for our nation's heroes. We are confident that the Veterans Health Administration and Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System will continue to do what is necessary to provide our Veterans the health care they have earned through their service to this nation.



DIRECTOR AND PUBLISHER
B. Don Burman, MHA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER
Will Ackerman

THE LINK EDITORIAL STAFF
Editor | Lori Bultman
Designer | Becky Brown
Photographer | Bruce Thiel

Cover: Tech Sgt. Dan Bragdon plays with the U.S. Air Force Vortex band at the Veterans Freedom Music Festival June 20 in Lincoln, Neb. (Photo by Bruce Thiel).

“It is fun to see Veterans get excited as they make healthier lifestyle choices and do things they had not been able to do for a long time.”

Shelly Oestmann | MOVE! Weight Management Program Coordinator | Omaha VAMC



the link

CONTENTS

VA Begins Summer of Service to Bolster Volunteer Assistance for Veterans



When Disaster Strikes, VA NWHCS is Ready



29th National Veterans Golden Age Games Special Pull-Out



Veterans Honored at Music Festival & Welcome Home Event



Women Veterans Program Holds Mini Residency



Choice First Improves Veterans Access to Care | DAISY Award



Development Group Holds Town Halls to Discuss Concept to Re-Develop Lincoln VA Campus



NWHCS Professional Receives National Recognition



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 or Lori Bultman 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

candeece hansen

MS, RD, LMNT

Clinical Dietitian - Telehealth | Norfolk CBOC



How long have you worked at the VA?
"Five years."

What does your job entail?

"I am privileged to see Veterans in an outpatient setting in Norfolk and via telehealth at the Holdrege VA

clinic. I counsel Veterans in a variety of health issues related to nutrition."

What do you like best about your job?

"The Veterans. I enjoy getting to know each one of them and accepting the challenge to build a relationship in which I respect their lifestyle choices and work with them to make lifestyle changes that benefit them."

When you are not at work, where can you be found?

"Spending time with family." 📞

Visit Our

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Like Us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA



Follow @VANWIHCS

Get news, information for patients and upcoming events

VHA Communications

VA Begins Summer of Service TO BOLSTER VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced a new nationwide initiative designed to build upon its existing partnerships to grow the number of individuals and organizations serving Veterans in their communities. VA is renewing its commitment to Veterans and embarking upon a "Summer of Service" that seeks the help of citizens across the country to honor that commitment.

"We have made progress over the past year addressing the challenges we face in delivering care and benefits to millions of Veterans and their families," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "While there is more work to do to honor our sacred commitment to Veterans, we also recognize that VA cannot do it alone. We are asking Americans everywhere to join the Summer of Service and help us give back to those who have given so much to our nation."

In the coming weeks, VA will be working closely with congressional partners, Veterans service organizations, mayors and local communities, private sector and non-profit organizations, and VA employees to identify new and innovative ways to support VA's commitment to care for those who "have borne the battle" and their families.

As part of VA's Summer of Service, the Department has committed to holding an open house in VA facilities this summer to spur increased local engagement and welcome members of the community interested in supporting the needs of Veterans. VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System held their a Summer of Service open house at the Omaha VA Medical Center July 10. Prospective volunteers and community partners were encouraged to attend to receive more information about volunteer opportunities, to see what VA offers Veterans and to tour Omaha VAMC primary care clinics.

For more information about Summer of Service activities at NWHCS, go to the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA

VA has an outstanding volunteer program, which will be highlighted throughout the country this summer. VA will build upon the ongoing work of its more than 350,000 employees and 76,000 volunteers around the nation. While the central focus of the campaign will be increasing volunteerism and partnerships, it will also provide individuals and communities an opportunity to support other important priorities.

(continued on page 15) ▶

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES, VA NWIHCS IS READY



to prepare for a national emergency.

Nebraska is well-known for many things, including Husker football and the College World Series. However, the state is also known for being inside the Midwest's "tornado alley." Tornadoes are not the only potential hazard emergency managers prepare for though.

"Offutt Air Force Base is our primary partner for the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)," Jenkins said. "To ensure medical

"Severe thunderstorms, floods, hazardous spills and active-shooter threats are each included in the NWIHCS Hazard Vulnerability Analysis (HVA)," said Jim Jenkins, emergency manager, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS). "NWI has a three-year plan for training and exercise design, which is based on the most recent HVA."

readiness, we have frequent planning meetings and a major exercise every two years. In a real-world situation, Offutt provides the resources and manpower to operate a Patient Reception Site (PRS) at the base and is supported with members of the NWI Hospital Emergency Response Team (HERT)."

"NWI medical facilities each assess and prepare for several different hazards specific to their facility," Jenkins said. "We assess our 'top-5' potential hazards based on our HVA and then design our response procedures. From there, we conduct a table-top exercise to walk through our procedures. Finally, we have a full-scale exercise, which is followed by an after-action review to make any additional improvements or changes to our plans."

To practice for large-scale emergencies, there is an active-shooter exercise scheduled for Aug. 20 in which NWIHCS will partner with Offutt AFB and will receive a number of "simulated" casualties. This exercise will not affect patient care at the Omaha VAMC.

“NWI medical facilities each assess and prepare for several different hazards specific to their facility.”

Jim Jenkins, Emergency Manager | VA NWIHCS

"Preparedness is a partnership between NWI, other federal organizations and local communities," Jenkins said. "NWI rarely conducts an exercise without the involvement of the local medical response community. VA personnel are active participants in the Omaha Metropolitan Medical Response System (OMMRS) and the Local Emergency Planning Commission (LEPC). NWI is well represented with 12 staff members on various committees, and two of those are committee cochairs." "One of our key players when working on disaster preparations with hospitals has been the Omaha VA Medical Center," said Phyllis Dutton, Omaha Metropolitan Medical Response System (OMMRS) and Hospital Prep Program coordinator.

"When NWI facilities are part of an exercise or a real-world event, it is important to know that anyone at the location may be asked to participate," Jenkins said. But, the exercise on Aug. 20 should not affect patients' health care at the VA. "All of our exercise plans include patients and visitors," Jenkins said. "They should follow a VA staff member's lead if they are present during an exercise, or in the case of an actual emergency."

In an actual emergency, having a plan at home can be just as important as the plan at your job, Jenkins said. "I encourage everyone to have a family emergency preparedness plan at home. A truly resilient organization focuses on preparedness at work and at home." 📌

The Lincoln and Grand Island VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinics are represented in their local Metropolitan Medical Response System's (MMRS) as well. NWIHCS also partners with the Department of Defense

For more emergency preparedness information visit www.ready.gov or www.511.nebraska.gov for current road conditions in Nebraska.

Women Veterans' Program Holds Mini Residency

Donna L. Higgins, LCSW | Women's Health Program Manager

The Women Veterans' Health Care Program, in collaboration with SimLEARN staff members, held a mini residency training course at the Sorrell Center, University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) May 8.

Women's Health Services developed this training to assist VA providers who are interested in becoming designated women's health providers. The training will assist clinicians with providing high-quality care tailored to the specific needs and requirements of women Veterans.

"The purpose of the training is to support primary care providers with knowledge and skills related to women's health, and specifically women Veterans' health, in order to provide excellent, comprehensive care to our women Veterans," said Dr. Stephanie Hartman, women Veterans' medical director, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS).

Women are the fastest growing subgroup of U.S. military Veterans. More than 400,000 women Veterans are currently receiving care at the VA health care system. These numbers are expected to dramatically increase in the next few years, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

By delivering this training at the local level, 21 NWIHCS clinicians had the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of women's health topics. "Women Veterans have unique health care requirements; and being familiar with their needs is necessary to offer them the highest quality care possible," Hartman said.

The residency covered a range of health care topics and included lectures, case discussions, face-to-face training and hands-on training with breast and pelvic simulation trainers.

"The use of simulation equipment in a learning environment improves clinicians' best practices and enriches their interactions with women Veterans," Hartman said. "SimLEARN utilizes the train-the-trainer model to competently prepare clinicians in a training environment, replicating actual patient treatment."

"The mini residency was a well-organized, relevant update on the care of women Veterans," said Dr. Erica Cichowski, a VA physician, and participant at the mini residency. "I gained several new tools that will allow me to provide even better care to my female patients."



Photo by Donna Higgins

Kami Willett, MSN, RN-BC, and Airman First Class Kayla Barrows assist Dr. Sussy King with trying on the military field gear women Veterans might have worn during their military service.

“Women Veterans have unique health care requirements; and being familiar with their needs is necessary to offer them the highest quality care possible.”

Dr. Stephanie Hartman, Women Veteran's Medical Director
VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

"The providers found the simulation equipment to be very beneficial," said Kami Willett, RN, SimLEARN coordinator, NWIHCS. "It increased their understanding of care for women Veterans."

The collaborative efforts of the VHA's employee education system and the UNMC Center for Continuing Education helped ensure the residency was a success, Hartman said. Providers received 7.5 hours of continuing education credit for the residency.

"Special thanks are in order for Dr. Rachel Bonnema, UNMC, who is a subject-matter expert in women's health and was the keynote presenter for the residency," Hartman said. 



29th National Veterans Golden Age Games

Aug. 8-12, 2015 ★ Omaha, Neb



Welcome to the National Veterans Golden Age Games. The City of Omaha is proud to be your host for "Patriots on the Plains."

This competition gives Veterans the wonderful opportunity to participate in events that demonstrate personal excellence and perseverance and the commitment of the Department of Veterans Affairs to quality programs and health care.

Whether you are a competitor, a spectator, a proud family member, or a volunteer, I am sure you will enjoy the many competition venues.

Omaha is a grateful community of friends, neighbors and families. We thank you for your service and dedication.

Enjoy your visit to Omaha and Good Luck!

Jean Stothert, Mayor, City of Omaha

WELCOME!

As the Director for the Department of Veterans Affairs Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, I am honored to welcome you to the 29th Annual National Veterans Golden Age Games in Omaha, Neb.

Hosting the National Veterans Golden Age Games, which promotes a healthy lifestyle for our Veterans over 55 years old, is a natural extension of the Veterans Health Administration's mission to "honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being."

Our dedicated employees have committed countless hours above and beyond their normal responsibilities to host an event that will create lasting memories for the nearly 900 participants from 47 states.

This event could not take place without the dedication of volunteers. Volunteers donate their time and energy for everything from assisting with events, to carrying participants' luggage, to behind the scenes administrative duties. We are grateful for each of you who volunteered.

We are also excited to partner with the City of Omaha and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to host this event. We are excited to work closely with our community partners in the Heartland, not only to make this a successful event, but also to showcase the Omaha metropolitan area to the hundreds of Veterans, their families, and others who will visit the area for the Games.

Let the Games begin!

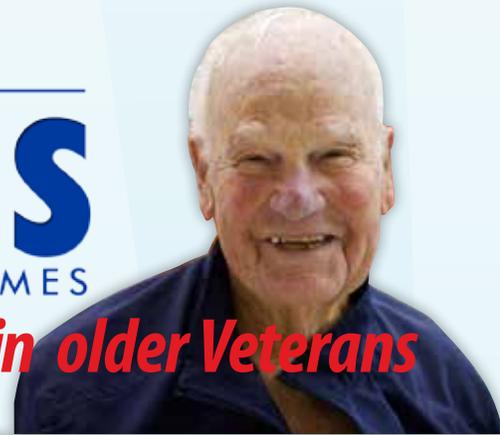
B. Don Burman, VA NWIHCS Director





NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES

Celebrates 29 years of promoting fitness in older Veterans



Veterans from 47 states and two territories will converge on Omaha Aug. 8-12 with their sights set on winning gold, reconnecting with friends and continuing their fitness journeys.

The National Veterans Golden Age Games is the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program in the United States. It is the only national, multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition designed to improve the quality of life for older Veterans, including those with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.

"Many Veterans look forward to this event each year, and we are happy to be able to host them in Omaha," said Anna Morelock, local coordinator for the 29th National Veterans Golden Age Games.

The National Veterans Golden Age Games came about through the historic involvement in geriatric programs by the VA. For many years, VA has put major emphasis on health and fitness with the goal of Veterans living healthier, longer lives. The Games are open to Veterans, ages 55 or older, who receive health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Many of the events Veterans compete in at the Games today began as recreational activities at VA hospitals and nursing home care units

"We are registering volunteers for everything from helping with horseshoes to carrying baggage at the airport. We want to show these Veterans a warm welcome to Omaha and the great volunteer spirit of our community. We would love to pack the CenturyLink arena for the opening ceremony on Aug. 8."

*Anna Morelock | Local Coordinator
2015 National Veterans Golden Age Games*

across the country. Inspired by the health and fitness movement for America's senior citizens, the Games extend that concept to the nation's aging Veterans. In 1985, the first National Veterans Golden Age Games took place in Albany, Ga., with 115 competitors representing VA medical facilities across the United States.

Registration for this year's games ended in May, and boasts a record number of participants, Morelock said. This year more than 800 Veterans will participate, making it the largest of VA's six rehabilitation special events. More than 2,000 volunteers will be needed, as well.

"We are registering volunteers for everything from helping with horseshoes to carrying baggage at the airport," Morelock said. "We want to show these Veterans a warm welcome to Omaha and the great volunteer spirit of our community. We would love to pack the CenturyLink arena for the opening ceremony on Aug. 8."



2015 Schedule of Events

Saturday, August 8

REGISTRATION
8 AM–5 PM

RACQUETBALL (EXH)
9 AM 11 AM 2 PM

HEALTH AND WELLNESS EXPO
8 AM–5 PM

OPENING CEREMONY
5:30 PM: DOORS OPEN
6:30 PM: CEREMONY BEGINS

*EXH: Exhibition Event
(Does not receive medals)*

*VI EXH: Visually Impaired
Exhibition Event*

*W/C EXH: Wheelchair
Exhibition Event*

PATRIOTS
ON THE
PLAINS

Sunday, August 9

AIR RIFLE
9 AM 11 AM 1 PM 3 PM

BLIND DISC GOLF (VI EXH)
9 AM 1 PM

CHECKERS TOURNAMENT
6 PM

DOMINOES
1 PM: 70-74 2 PM: 80-84
3 PM: 85+ 5 PM: 55-59
6 PM: 75-79

NINEBALL
8 AM: 65-69 9 AM: 60-64
11 AM: 70-74 1 PM: 55-59
3 PM: 75-79 5 PM: 80-84, 85+
6 PM: W/C

RACQUETBALL (EXH)
9 AM 11 AM 2 PM

TABLE TENNIS
8 AM: W/C, 80-84, 85+
9 AM: 55-59 11 AM: 75-79
1 PM: 65-69 3 PM: 60-64
5 PM: 70-74

TRACK
8 AM–1 PM: 1500m, 100m, 400m,
1 mile power walk, 200m, 800m

Monday, August 10

AIR RIFLE
8 AM 10 AM 1 PM 3 PM

BADMINTON
9 AM: Singles
11 AM: Doubles, Mixed Doubles

BOCCIA (W/C EXH)
9 AM 11 AM 1 PM

BASKETBALL 3 ON 3 (EXH)
9 AM 11 AM 1 PM

BOWLING
8 AM: W/C 9 AM: VI
10 AM: 80-84, 85+
11 AM: 75-79 1 PM: 70-74
5 PM: 65-69

CHECKERS TOURNAMENT
6 PM

DOMINOES
8 AM: 65-69 10 AM: 60-64

MEDAL CEREMONY
1-3 PM: BOWLING, W/C, VI,
80-84, 85+, 75-79, 70-74, 65-69

SWIMMING
8 AM: 25yd, 50yd Freestyle
10 AM: 25yd, 50 yd Backstroke

Tuesday, August 11

AIR RIFLE
8 AM 10 AM

BASKETBALL 3 ON 3 (EXH)
9 AM 11 AM 1 PM

BOWLING
8 AM: 60-64 10 AM: 55-59

CYCLING ½ MILE
8 AM: 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85+
10 AM: 55-59, 60-64, 65-69

GOLF
8 AM-3 PM

MEDAL CEREMONY
1-3 PM: BADMINTON

SHUFFLEBOARD
8 AM: VI 10 AM: 85+
11 AM: 80-84 1 PM: 75-79
3 PM: 70-74

HORSESHOES
8 AM: W/C 10 AM: 85+
11 AM: 80-84 1 PM: 75-79
3 PM: 70-74

Wednesday, August 12

CYCLING ROAD RACE (EXH)
8 AM

FIELD-DISCUS
8 AM: 55-59
10 AM: 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85+
11 AM: 60-64, 65-69

FIELD-JAVELIN
8 AM: 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85+
10 AM: 60-64, 65-69
11 AM: 55-59

FIELD-SHOTPUT
8 AM: 60-64, 65-69 10 AM: 55-59
11 AM: 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85+

HORSESHOES
8 AM: VI 10 AM: 60-64
1 PM: 65-69 3 PM: 55-59

MEDAL CEREMONY
1-3 PM: BOWLING, 55-59, 60-64;
CYCLING, GOLF; FIELD; AIR RIFLE

SHUFFLEBOARD
8 AM: W/C 10 AM: 60-64
1 PM: 65-69 3 PM: 55-59

**CLOSING CEREMONY &
AFTER PARTY WITH LIVE BAND**
6 PM

For the past several years, the aging Vietnam Veteran population has entered the Games in greater numbers each year, making up the largest group of competitors by period of service, according to the Games website. By age group, the over-70 age categories are now the largest.

Since 2004, the National Veterans Golden Age Games have been a qualifier for the National Senior Games, a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Through this partnership, gold, silver and bronze medalists in certain events at the National Veterans Golden Age Games have the opportunity to compete further among America's elite senior athletes.

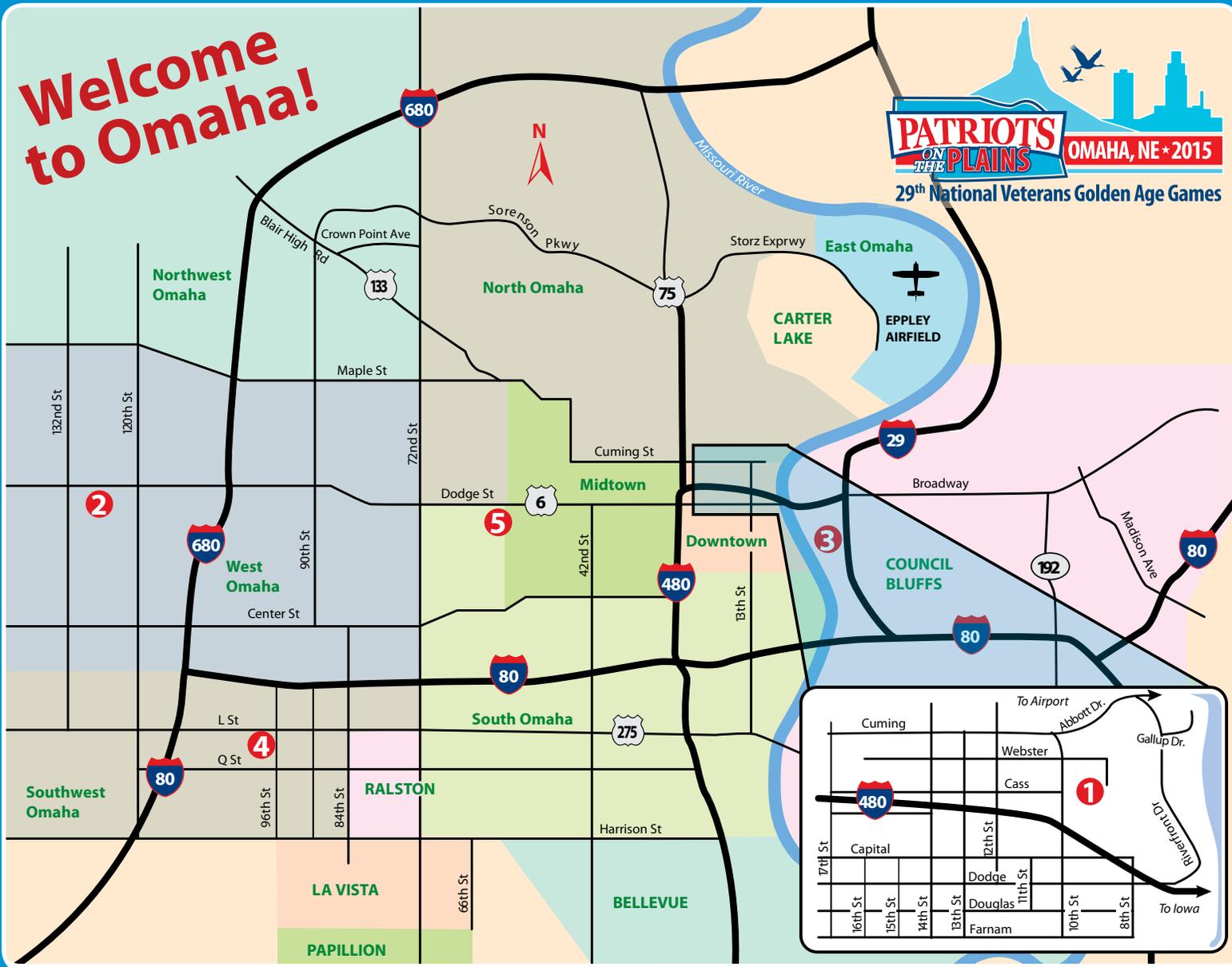
One participant at each National Veterans Golden Age Games is selected as the "Most Inspirational" person to compete, Morelock said. That Veteran exhibits the qualities of fitness, sportsmanship and competitive skill. In 1995, the name of this award was changed to the "George Gangi Inspiration Award," in honor of the late George Gangi, a participant at the Games in Dallas that year. The award will be presented at the Games closing ceremony Aug. 12, 6 p.m., at the CenturyLink Center, Omaha, Neb.

To register as a volunteer, or for a complete schedule of events visit
www.VeteransGoldenAgeGames.va.gov.



Welcome to Omaha!

PATRIOTS ON THE PLAINS
OMAHA, NE • 2015
 29th National Veterans Golden Age Games



2015 National Veterans Golden Age Games Official Sporting Venues

- 1** **CenturyLink Center Omaha**
 455 North 10th Street
 Omaha, NE 68102
Air Rifle, Basketball, Blind Disc Golf, Boccia, Checkers, Cycling, Dominoes, Horseshoes, Nine Ball, Racquetball, Shuffleboard, Table Tennis, Opening Ceremonies, Closing Ceremonies
- 3** **Dodge Riverside Golf Club**
 2 Harrah's Boulevard
 Council Bluffs, IA 51501
Golf
- 5** **University of Nebraska Omaha-HPER Building**
 6001 Dodge Street
 Omaha, NE 68182
Badminton, Swimming
- 2** **Burke High School**
 12200 Burke Street
 Omaha, NE 68154
Field, Track
- 4** **Mockingbird Lanes**
 4870 South 96th Street
 Omaha, NE 68127
Bowling
- 6** **Miller's Landing**
 151 Freedom Park Rd
 Omaha, NE 68102
Exhibition Road Race

To register as a volunteer, or for a complete schedule of events visit www.VeteransGoldenAgeGames.va.gov.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Honored

at Music Festival & Welcome Home Event

Music filled the air at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System's Lincoln, Neb., campus June 20. The 5th Annual Veterans Freedom Music Festival and Welcome Home brought Veterans, their families and the community to the campus for a day of music, food, fun and informational displays. The event was sponsored by the Lincoln VA Veterans Advisory Group and the Veterans Freedom Music Festival Committee.

It was Joe Godemann's second time attending the festival. "They did a really good job putting this together," the U. S. Army Veteran said.

The skies stayed clear for the festival, which was a first, said Dr. Christie Emler, associate chief of medicine, Lincoln VA, and a volunteer at the event. "This was the first year without a drop of rain. The Veterans Advisory Group and the Veterans Freedom Music Festival committee did a ton of work, and it all paid off," she said. "Families came out – the children seemed to love the Kid Zone, where they were able to play games, create patriotic art and get their faces painted."

Anne Bremer was a first-time attendee. She and her granddaughter came to the festivities with



her best friend, who happens to be a Veteran. "I am really surprised to see all of this at the VA," she said. "My dad was in the Army for 32 years."

In addition to the music and food, informational displays were available in the Lincoln VA auditorium where attendees could learn what the VA and other local Veteran service agencies offer.

Gerald Wolf stopped by the VA eligibility table to find out if he is enrolled in the VA health care system. "I thought I signed up a long time ago, but I am not sure." As it turns out, Wolf is enrolled, but needed to update some of his information.

Emler particularly loved the opening and closing ceremonies. "The opening ceremony included a short service for (prisoners of war and missing in action), which set a very respectful tone for the entire day," she said.

The event featured six local bands who donated their time and talents, Emler said. Bands included: U.S. Air Force Vortex, Skylark, Chickn Fried Moses, The Pinkertones, Hayseed Cowboys and The Usual Suspects. In addition to the bands' contributions to the event, many volunteers worked hard to ensure the day was a success.

"The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) drivers and parking volunteers kept the traffic flowing smoothly between the *(continued on page 15)*



Photos by Bruce Thiel

Choice First improves Veterans access to care

Lori Bultman | Public Affairs

The Veterans Health Administration implemented the Choice First initiative June 10, which allows VA medical facilities to use Veterans Choice Program options when they can't provide health care services to a Veteran. Choice First expanded the Choice Basic program eligibility requirements pertaining to the 30-day waitlist from the clinically indicated date (date provider determines care is needed), Veteran's preferred medical appointment date or if he or she lives more than 40 miles from a VA medical facility.

Major Improvements under Choice First are the use of a VA provider-medical consult in lieu of the Veteran Choice progress note. Then, non-VA Care employees make the initial Veteran contact instead of the Choice Program third party administrator. When services are not available within VA, the Veteran is then considered Choice eligible.

There are several key components to Choice First. If a VA facility doesn't offer the required service, and is unable to refer the Veteran to another VA medical facility, the VA provider creates a traditional non-VA Care consult. The 30-day and 40-mile Choice eligibility rules still apply.

Non-VA care employees receive the consult and review the Veteran's Choice First eligibility. Once the Veteran is determined to be eligible, non-VA care contacts the Veteran to inquire if he or she wants to use the Choice benefit and be referred to a participating community provider.

If the Veteran decides to use Choice, non-VA care provides the third party administrator the necessary documentation to establish the Veteran's appointment with a participating community Choice provider.

If the Veteran declines to use the Choice benefit, the Veteran is placed on an electronic wait list at a VA facility that offers the needed care.

Veterans who have copayments for their care at VA will continue to be billed for those. 

CHOICE PROGRAM INFORMATION

- The Choice Program does not impact your existing VA health care or any other VA benefit.
- If you did not receive a Choice Card or if you cannot find your card, call 1-866-606-8198 to learn more about eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program.
- If you are satisfied with your wait time at a VA facility and wish to continue waiting for VA care, there is nothing you need to do.
- Care in the community is only covered by VA for medical needs which have been approved by your VA provider. VA can schedule an appointment in the community for other medical needs; however, it can only cover the cost of care related to your VA-approved health needs.

For more information about the Choice Program, go to www.va.gov/opa/choiceact or call the VA NWIHCS Choice Champions at 402-995-3104.



Corie Keating, RN, emergency department, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, received a DAISY Award June 24 in Omaha. The DAISY Award For Extraordinary Nurses is given to outstanding nurses. The program's goal is to ensure that nurses know how deserving they are of profound respect for the education, training, brainpower and skill they put into their work, and especially for the caring with which they deliver their care. Also pictured are: Ellen Long, RN, nurse manager, emergency department; Tammy Bockman, RN, nurse director, inpatient and surgery; and Eileen Kingstorn, RN, MPA, nurse executive/associate director, patient care.



Photo by Lori Bultman

DEVELOPMENT GROUP HOLDS TOWN HALLS TO DISCUSS CONCEPT TO RE-DEVELOP LINCOLN VA CAMPUS

Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

An enhanced-use lease (EUL) is a process the Department of Veterans Affairs employs to maximize returns on underutilized assets. An EUL was approved for the 59-acre Lincoln VA campus, 600 S. 70th St, which was originally a hospital, built in 1930.

The project will include a 75-year lease, in which VA will obtain property development in exchange for development of the Lincoln campus. VA signed an interim agreement with Seniors Foundation to develop the campus.

Although a final lease is still pending, negotiations between VA and Seniors Foundation are ongoing. "Although the timeframe for negotiations varies based upon the complexity of the details, VA is optimistically hopeful that a final lease contract will be executed by this fall," said Alan Hackman, project manager, VA Office of Construction and Facility Management.

A separate capital lease will benefit Veterans who receive care at the current clinic through development of a new, state-of-the-art community-based outpatient clinic within the city of Lincoln. The VA is evaluating developer proposals submitted for the new 100,000-square-foot clinic. VA hopes to make a selection by the end of the year, according to Duncan Fallon, site manager, Lincoln VA.

Conceptual plans presented at two town hall meetings at the Lincoln VA June 16 will focus on serving Veterans, seniors and a one-stop health care campus, according to Craig Gies, with Sampson Construction, the construction firm working with Seniors Foundation to develop the VA campus.

Although the EUL and the capital lease process for locating a new VA clinic are



EUL PLANS INCLUDE:

- Renovate the main VA clinic building and turn it into 100-plus housing units and include office space for Aging Partners and Seniors Foundation.
- America First Realty Group would build VA Supportive Housing (VASH) on the campus that would be apartments for homeless Veterans, or those who are at-risk of homelessness or low-income. This would be similar to the 90-unit Victory Apartments, at 8th and Dorcas Streets in Omaha, Neb., which the realty group built. Services for these Veterans would also be housed there to include vocational rehabilitation, addiction counseling.
- A 60-unit, single, four-plex housing complex for seniors who are 55 years and older.
- Sixty units of apartments, which would give Veterans and seniors first preference for renting.
- Aging Partners will consolidate its services from around Lincoln to the campus and operate a senior center in the current clinic building. VA and Aging Partners would collaborate to offer programs that include counseling, training, and others.
- Two, two-story, 80,000-square foot medical office buildings with parking for 400 cars.

separate, Gies said they did submit a proposal for the clinic, and have reserved an area in its plans in case they are successful in being awarded the contract to build it.

Although this was the first town hall held with Veterans and the community to unveil conceptual plans, the development group has promised to meet with adjacent property owners this summer to listen to their concerns and ideas, said Kent Seacrest, a Lincoln attorney working with the development group.

VA and the development group have promised to hold continuing town halls with Veterans and the community throughout summer to provide updates on the EUL process and to glean feedback. 

VA NWIHCS Professional Receives National Recognition

Lori Bultman | Public Affairs

The Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI) recognized one of VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System's own June 6 at its annual conference and expo in Denver.

James Mazurek, supervisor, Biomedical Engineering, VA NWIHCS, was named the 2015 AAMI & General Electric (GE) Healthcare Biomedical Equipment Technician (BMET) of the Year.

Over the past 30 years, Mazurek has helped maintain the equipment that keeps patients safe and has been a mentor to his colleagues, according to the AAMI announcement.

In a letter supporting his nomination, Steve Fogerty, administrative officer, Medicine Service, NWIHCS, said Mazurek is recognized as a leader. "Individuals and entire departments go to him with all types of questions ranging from contracting to finance to facility engineering questions," he said.

Mazurek was also selected as one of five instructors across the Veterans Health Administration to recruit and train the first-ever class of technical support specialists as part of the technical career field program, Fogerty said.

Mazurek said receiving the award is reflective of the two great health care technology management programs he has had the



Courtesy Photo
From Left: Mary Logan, JD, CAE, President and CEO, AAMI; Kurt Finke, CCE, Director, VA HTM; James Mazurek, CBET, VA NWIHCS AAMI BMET of the year award; Michael Scholla, PhD, Chair, AAMI Board of Directors

pleasure of being a part of. "The Veterans Health Administration Healthcare Technology Management (HTM) and U.S. Air Force BMET programs have provided me ample opportunity to grow through training and work experience," he said. "I want to thank the leaders of those programs and all of my colleagues for their professionalism, support and camaraderie over the years." 📞

employeeUPDATE

HELLO

MARY BECKER, Nursing
HEATHER BRYDEN, Pathology and Lab
JOHN CAVANAUGH, Mental Health
TRONG CHAU, Prosthetics
DEREK EMANUEL, Nursing
REGINA FRERICHS, Nursing
NANCY HAVLOVIC, Nursing
ROBIN HOCHSTEIN, Nursing
DANIEL HOEHN, Prosthetics
COURTNEY HORMANN, Nursing
JANAE JOHNSON, Prosthetics
RUTH JONES, Nursing
KRISTI KLEINSASSER, Nursing
KELLY LYBOLT, Finance
RUSSELL MATTHEWS, Engineering
NINA MEDINA, Nursing

ERICA MINNER, Nursing
MARY MORALES, Surgery
WILLIAM RATEKIN, Engineering
KRISTA SCHARDT, Nursing
ELLEN WILSON, Nursing
MORGAN WILSON, Social Work
ALAN WOODS, Chief of Staff Office
WILLIAM WAYT, Finance
NYLA WOLFF, Nursing

GOING

JURRY BATANGAN, Nursing
COLIN BEAL, Logistics
JENNIFER FLUGGE, Nursing
JENNIFER GODEK, Nursing
JODY HALCOTT, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

DAVID HALSTED, Surgery
SHAARAIM JAMIER, Environmental Management Service
KELCI KILTHAU, Surgery
PHYLLIS KNIGHT, Veterans Canteen Service
SANDRA KRIZ, Veterans Canteen Service
SCOTT LIESWALD, Business Office
LISA WHITE, Prosthetics

RETIRING

BARBARA NESS, Business Office
CHRISTOPHER SHIPP, Voluntary Service
JAMES SETLAK, Environmental Management Service
KATHERYN GREBE, Business Office
MARVA HOWE, Nursing
SANDRA TODERO, Research

events WHAT'S GOING ON?

- July 15** Food Pantry, Community Resources and Referral Center, 825 Dorcas St., Omaha
- July 17** VA Coffeehaus, Lincoln CBOC
- July 21** Department of Veterans Affairs 85th Anniversary
- July 22** VA Community Book Club, Lincoln CBOC
- July 26** Parents' Day
- Aug. 3** Food Pantry, Lincoln VA Clinic
- Aug. 4** National Night Out
- Aug. 5** Food Pantry, Community Resources and Referral Center, 825 Dorcas St., Omaha
- Aug. 8-12** 2015 National Veterans Golden Age Games in Omaha
- Aug. 19** Food Pantry, Community Resources and Referral Center, 825 Dorcas St., Omaha
- Aug. 21** VA Coffeehaus, Lincoln VA Clinic
- Aug. 26** Women's Equality Day

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



► *Summer of Service continued from page 4*

Despite a hiring effort that brought more than 11,000 net new employees onboard over the past year, VA still needs more health care providers, claims specialists, medical support assistants and cemetery directors to continue to expand needed services. VA's partners can help by getting the word out this summer.

"There is no mission more noble than serving Veterans and their families. At VA, we constantly strive to improve the way we do our job," said McDonald. "State by state, community by community, person by person, there are a number of ways we can all come together to serve Veterans. From expanded partnerships with the private sector and non-profit organizations, to accelerating hiring, to celebrating the commitment of VA employees and volunteers - we need the help of communities everywhere to succeed." 

Volunteers can help to serve Veterans by visiting www.volunteer.va.gov to find out the needs of your local VA facility. Follow #VASummerOfService on Vantage Point, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, and join VA in caring for America's Veterans.



"We are in the process of creating a bug-out bag that has everything you would need to leave on short notice. We also keep all of our important documents locked in a safe. We have a crawl space in our house where we keep a safety box with an ax, water and a few basic supplies."

Lisa Crouch, RN | Grand Island VA

"As with every summer, we have put together our 'storm' kit for the basement of our house. We make sure the batteries in the radio are good. We have a case of bottled water and non-perishable food items, candles and matches, flashlights and extra batteries, pillows and blankets, fire extinguisher, a deck of cards and extra portable chargers for cell phones. We make sure emergency phone numbers are updated and in the kit. We put a similar kit together to keep in each of the vehicles. We also try to remove any of the larger tree branches that are dead or broken and near power lines to prevent them from falling either through the lines or on top of the house or garage."



Jennifer Trompke, LPN | Telehealth | Holdrege CBOC



"I have plenty of food and water at home and a generator. We have blankets and first aid supplies. Everyone knows what to do, depending on what the emergency is. They go to the southeast corner of the basement in case of a tornado. It is the safest place."

Doug Reed | Plumber/Steamfitter
Omaha VAMC | U.S. Navy Veteran

"I keep flashlights by my bed and around the house. I know to exit to go out of my apartment, then downstairs, depending on the disaster."

Jeff Williams | Environmental Management Service, 7 East
Omaha VAMC | U.S. Army Reserve



► *Music Festival Continued from page 11*

Lincoln VA campus and the Lincoln East High School parking, where overflow parking was available," Emler said. Volunteers also worked at the kid's activity area, distributed water to attendees and cooked lunch, which was also donated.

The day's activities concluded with a color guard retrieving the colors and the playing TAPS. Emler said the sight brought tears to her eyes. "This event reminds me of all the things I love about the VA," she said, "the Veterans being number one on that long list." 

2015 NATIONAL VETERANS



GOLDEN AGE GAMES

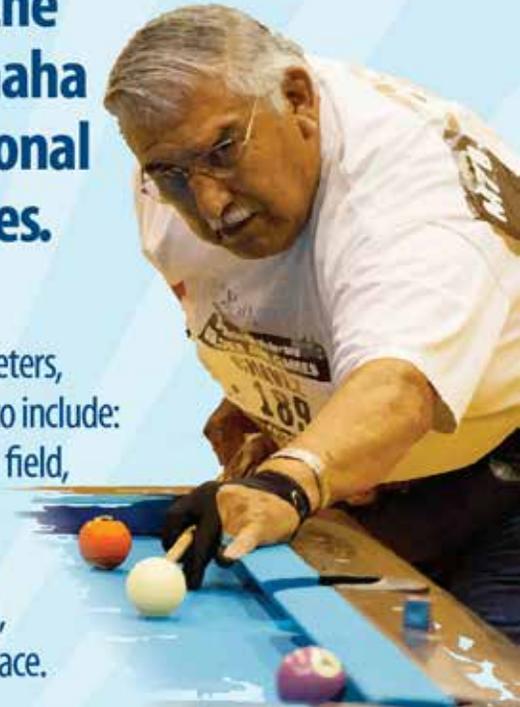
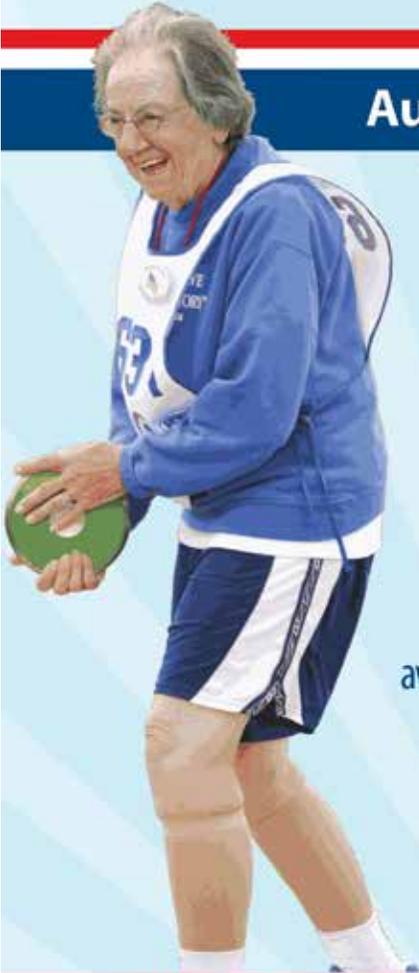
August 8-12, 2015 | Omaha, Nebraska

Volunteer to support more than 800 Veterans from across the country as they come to Omaha to compete in the 2015 National Veterans Golden Age Games.

Volunteer Opportunities

Registration assistance, event photography, greeters, award presentations, hospitality, support for sports to include: air rifle, badminton, bowling, cycling, dominoes, field, golf, horseshoes, nine ball, shuffleboard, swimming, table tennis, and track.

Exhibition events include 3-on-3 basketball, blind disc golf, bocchia, racquetball, and a road race.



Sign Up to Volunteer at www.VeteransGoldenAgeGames.va.gov.



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



**Veterans Health
Administration**

Nebraska-Western Iowa
Health Care System

402-346-8800 | 1-800-451-5796
www.nebraska.va.gov