



NWV Messenger

For the week of March 8, 2010

Let's Talk About Patient Safety

March 7 to 13 is Patient Safety Awareness Week. This year's theme is "Let's Talk."

During the week, members of the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (VA NWIHCS) Patient Safety Office will provide patient safety and health information using "Risky Business" rolling information carts. The team will use the carts to take the information to frontline staff and patients at VA NWIHCS sites.

"Let's Talk" will provide an opportunity for staff and patients to

ask questions and receive answers regarding patient safety.

Since 2002, the National Patient Safety Foundation has sponsored the week to make caregivers, other hospital staff and community members more aware of patient safety issues. Facilities across the country are using the opportunity to educate and involve their staff and patients.



Shenandoah CBOC to Mark One-Year Anniversary

The Shenandoah, Iowa Community-Based Outpatient Clinic will host an open house and one-year anniversary celebration March 23.

The clinic serves Veterans in western Iowa, southeastern Nebraska and northwest Missouri. Veterans and community members are encouraged

to stop by and see what Veterans health care services are available, meet the staff and tour the clinic from 1 to 3 p.m. at 512 S. Fremont St., Shenandoah.

To learn more about their services, visit <http://www.nebraska.va.gov/visitors/shenandoah.asp>.

Veterans Outreach Program Coming to Carson, Iowa

A Veterans Interagency Outreach open house will be held March 26 and March 27 in Carson, Iowa, at the Carson Community Center, 316 S. Commercial Street.

The program brings representatives from the following agencies to allow Veterans in rural communities to learn about VA benefits and to talk one-on-one with enrollment counselors:

VA NWIHCS, VA Regional Office, Vet Centers, Iowa Transition Office, State of Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, and county Veterans service officers.

The open house is being held from noon to 8 p.m. March 26, and from 8 to 11:30 a.m. March 27. For more details, call **Cindy Niemack-Brown** at Grand Island, ext 2287.

CALENDAR

March

- American Red Cross Month*
- National Nutrition Month*
- National Kidney Month*
- Social Work Month*
- Women's History Month*
- Ethics Awareness Month*
- 14 Daylight Saving Time Begins
- 14-20 National Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 20 Spring Begins
- 28-April 2 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic
- 30 Doctor's Day

April

- Alcohol Awareness Month*
- National Donate Life Month*
- Physical Wellness Month*
- Occupational Therapy Month*
- 1 April Fool's Day
- 1-7 Medication Safety Week
- 4 Easter
- 9 POW Recognition Day
- 11-17 Health Information Privacy and Security Week
- 11-17 Patient Advocacy Week
- 13 National Radiology Nurses Day
- 14 PVA Established
- 18-24 Medical Lab Professionals Week
- 18-24 National Volunteer Week
- 22 Earth Day

Eat Healthy, Learn About Vegetable Gardening

The VA NWHCS Clinical Nutrition Department is sponsoring a series of lunch 'n learns in March to celebrate National Nutrition Month. Come learn all about vegetable gardening; no green thumb needed.

Each lunch 'n learn is presented by master gardeners from the Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office. Bring your lunch and learn how easy it is to grow a garden.

Each presentation will be held from noon to 12:45 p.m. Locations are: Omaha site 2; Lincoln site 1; and Grand Island site 1. Audio dial-in for CBOCs is (402) 943-5467. The location for March 10 only is Omaha site 2; Lincoln site 3; and Grand Island site 3.

Topics are: March 10: vegetable gardening and seed starting; March 17: vegetable gardening and planting in small spaces; and March 24: fruit and vegetable preservation. Thirty minutes of education credit will be given.

Seeking Iwo Jima Veterans

To celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the end of the Battle of Iwo Jima (March 26, 1945), the Strategic Air and Space Museum at Ashland, Neb. invites area Iwo Jima Veterans to be their guests at weekend events March 26 and 27.

On March 26, the museum will host a dinner for six Marines who served side-by-side with the Iwo Jima flag raisers. These Marines are all Veterans of the 5th Marine Division, 28th Marines, Easy Company; their stories have been immortalized in the book and film, "Flags of Our Fathers." Four of the six Marines are Purple Heart recipients, and one is a Silver Star recipient. On March 27, the Marines will again gather at the museum for autographs, followed by a book signing.

Iwo Jima Veterans are asked to call (402) 944-3100, ext. 245 for an invitation to this event. Members of the public who wish to attend may register by phone at (800) 595-4849 or www.SASMuseum.com.

Patients Encouraged to Provide Feedback During Lincoln Forum

Patients are invited to attend a Patient Forum April 6 at VA NWHCS, Lincoln from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Prairie/Pioneer Conference Room.

The one-hour forum includes general information and small-group breakout sessions. Small-group sessions will give Veterans the chance to offer feedback about their experiences receiving health care at VA NWHCS. Veterans will also receive an update about VA NWHCS services and activities.

Representatives from VA NWHCS Executive Leadership, Patient

Advocate, Public Affairs, and others will be available to answer questions.

In addition, attendees will learn about the Support and Family Education (SAFE) Program at VA NWHCS Lincoln, presented by **Pamela Neujahr**. Family and friends are often the first to notice emotional changes in Veterans later diagnosed with mental illnesses. SAFE provides education and emotional support for family members and friends of Veterans with mental illness.

The patient forum program is part of VA's goal to be better engaged with Veterans and stakeholders, to listen to their opinions about their health care experiences, and to continue down the path of continuous improvement of the VA health care system. A similar program was held in Omaha in February and is also being offered at VA NWHCS Grand Island.

For more information contact **Maggie Oldham** at (402) 995-5547.

Employee Fitness Centers Opening

New fitness centers will open for employees in Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island in March.

Grand openings are scheduled:

VA NWHCS-Omaha: March 16, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

VA NWHCS-Lincoln: March 17, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

VA NWHCS-Grand Island: March 17, 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Employees must complete several requirements before they can use the new centers. Requirements include attending employee fitness center orientation, signing a fitness consent form and a VA NWHCS liability waiver for the fitness center and completing a personal wellness profile and StressMap grid at the Wellness is Now (WIN) VA Web site. <http://vawww.portal.va.gov/sites/EmpWell/default.aspx>.

Omaha and Lincoln employees should send all completed paperwork to **Quin Kelly** in Lincoln: Mail code 11AC. Grand Island employees should send all completed paperwork to **Laura Mader** in Grand Island: Mail code 11AC.

NWI Executive Leadership Invites Staff to Hear Update

The VA NWHCS Executive Team will lead a presentation on recent accomplishments and our roadmap to the future. All employees are encouraged to attend. Below is a listing of the session dates, times and locations. Pre-registration is not required.

VA NWHCS-Grand Island: March 11, 1 to 2 p.m.; March 12, 12 to 1 p.m., Bldg. 6

VA NWHCS-Omaha: March 12, 9 to 10 a.m., Education Conference Room

Bellevue CBOC: March 12, 1 to 2 p.m. Conference Room

North Platte CBOC: March 15, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., Conference Room

Holdrege CBOC: March 15, 1 to 2 p.m., Conference Room

For more information, contact **Tom LaFontaine** at Omaha ext. 4096

-Fitness Center continued from page 2

Fitness center orientation is scheduled at the centers as follows:

VA NWHCS-Lincoln

March 18-19, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

VA NWHCS-Grand Island

March 18, 11 a.m. to noon; 1 to 2 p.m.; 3 to 4 p.m.; March 23, 4 to 6:30 p.m.

VA NWHCS-Omaha

March 22 to 24, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

ROI Office Handles Requests for Information

Changes have been made to the way VA NWHCS Omaha's Release of Information (ROI) office handles requests for information. Use the following office location and phone numbers.

Walk-in assistance for Veterans is available in Room 1201. This room is staffed primarily by **Ginny Warner** from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, with very few exceptions (lunch, breaks, training, unplanned employee absence, etc.).

All phone calls requiring ROI assistance should be directed to the following at the Center Mall:

Brenda Gregoire, (402) 599-2148

Lori Pirie, (402) 599-2149

Nick Osborn, (402) 599-2150

Fax number, (402) 599-2147

To transfer a call to ROI, use the 8-887 prefix and the extension (i.e., 8-887-2148).

New Hospice Wing Will Open at Grand Island CLC

A new Hospice and Palliative Care unit wing at the VA NWHCS Grand Island Community Living Center (CLC) officially opens April 7 at 10 a.m.

The Hospice and Palliative Care Unit is served by a team of providers and staff to help veterans spend their final days with dignity and comfort. The team is committed to VA's mission of honoring a Veteran's preference at the end of life, which includes the relief from pain, the integration of the

physical, social and spiritual aspects of care and bereavement counseling for their families. This opening will also serve as an opportunity to educate Veterans, the public and the media about VA's increasing focus on hospice and palliative care.

For more information, call Grand Island ext. 4719. For the CLC location, visit http://www.nebraska.va.gov/visitors/grand_island.asp.

New Standards for Paper Shredders

VA NWHCS employees are now required to follow new standards of shredding. The particles of shredding must now be 1x5mm in size. VA will no longer use shredders that produce a particle size that is larger than the new standard.

To follow the new standards, VA-owned shredders that are non-compliant should be turned in using VA Form 2237. All other personal shredders should be removed from the premises immediately. Staff are encouraged to use the locking paper shred bins and to contact the Environment Management Services (EMS) supervisor at Omaha, ext. 4567 if one is needed. If you have questions, contact **Janice Sandquist**, Privacy Officer, at Omaha ext. 3427.

Program Helps Family, Friends of Veterans with Mental Illness

Veterans with mental illness receive intensive treatment and services from the health care system. Family and friends who care for these Veterans also need compassionate and caring support.

A program called Support And Family Education (SAFE) provides education for family and friends of Veterans with mental illness to help them help their Veterans. The program is held the third Tuesday of every month at the Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island facilities from 6:30 to 8 p.m. The next program March 16, focuses on "boundary setting."

For more information, or to learn about the specific program topics and locations, call Omaha, ext. 3912.

Expressing Appreciation for VA Social Workers

March is Social Work Month, a big month for social workers and the VA.

There are more than 8,000 master's prepared social workers serving as licensed independent practitioners in the VA health care system. They are an integral and vital part of VA's health care team and serve Veterans in all inpatient and outpatient settings.

They support and advance the mission of VHA by providing high quality psychosocial services to Veterans and their families. These services include assessment, crisis intervention, high-risk screening, discharge planning, case management, advocacy, education, supportive counseling, psychotherapy, resource referrals and resource acquisition.

Social workers are assigned to VA health care facilities, CBOC's, and readjustment counseling centers across the country. Social workers bring training and expertise in mental health specialty areas such as post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use and provide an advanced level of clinical practice.

They provide specialized case management services to Veterans in Mental Health Intensive Case Management, OEF/OIF, Community Residential Care and other VHA programs. To learn more about VHA social workers, visit www.va.gov/socialwork.

VA and Women's History Month

National Women's History Month grew from an effort to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women in American history.

In 1980, President Carter issued the first presidential proclamation calling on the American people to remember the contributions of women. By 1987, 14 governors had declared March as Women's History Month. That same year, Congress and the President followed by declaring March as National Women's History Month.

This year's theme, "Writing Women Back in History," recognizes the

-Continued on page 4

important contributions women have made throughout history, and the importance of capturing and telling the stories of the women behind them.

Diversity/Special Emphasis Programs Need Members

VA NWIHCS Special Emphasis Programs are seeking members to lead and participate in these groups.

The Black Special Emphasis Program meets the second Thursday of every month at 11:30 a.m. in the Director's Conference Room (DCR) in Omaha.

The Women's Special Emphasis Program meets the second Tuesday of every month at 11 a.m. in the DCR in Omaha and at site 1 in Lincoln and Grand Island. This program is currently recruiting a co-chair.

The Persons with Disabilities Committee meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at 11 a.m. in the DCR in Omaha and at site 1 in Grand Island. **The Hispanic Special Emphasis Program** is recruiting a chairperson and members.

The Asian/Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program is currently recruiting a chairperson and members.

If you would like to participate from any other site, email Bradley.shaff@va.gov.

National Nursing Education Initiative (NNEI) Scholarship

Are you a bachelor's of science nursing registered nurse interested in earning a master's degree with a nurse practitioner (NP) focus, or post master's credit hours with an NP focus (adult practice NP for placement in a medicine, surgery or mental health service line practice area)?

VA offers the NNEI scholarship program to support nurses with such an interest. Application packets will be accepted through June 1 for consideration of scholarship support starting with the August 2010 school term.

To be eligible, the employee applicant must:

- Have been continuously employed a minimum of one year with VHA at the time of signing the NNEI application. Applicant must meet this one-year requirement by June 1.
- Have a record of employment that demonstrates a high likelihood that the employee will be successful in completing the education and employment in the field.
- Submit written evidence (on school letterhead paper, signed by the nursing program dean) of being unconditionally accepted for or enrolled in an accredited school of nursing, dated by June 1.
- Submit a semester-by-semester, written plan of study that was developed in collaboration with the school's nursing academic advisor.
- Apply for all and be willing to be placed in any VA NWIHCS medicine, surgery, or mental health service line vacancy for NP upon completion of the degree/credit hours in order to meet a calculated service payback obligation of up to three years; placement will be at any VA NWIHCS division or CBOC, depending on the need at the time of the participant's graduation. Relocation fees will not be paid.
- Not be obligated under any other federal program to perform service upon completion of the course of education.
- Be willing to incur a liability to VA for failure to successfully complete the program of study and/or licensure examination.
- Be willing to be interviewed for the limited scholarship positions available. Only those who submit a complete application packet by the deadline will be interviewed.
- Be willing to remain at VA NWIHCS for the duration of the academic program.

If interested, apply by:

Contacting **Sharon Fusco** at Lincoln ext. 6717 by March 30 to obtain a scholarship application packet and to set up a time to review the packet/forms.

Submitting an accurate, complete application packet to **Sharon Fusco** at 142E/Lincoln by June 1.

Qualified applicants will be considered regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, marital status, non-disqualifying disabling condition, age, membership/non-membership in a labor organization, or other non-merit factors.

Home-Based Primary Care

Extended Care and Rehabilitation is now offering Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) at VA NWIHCS Grand Island. Primary care services will be provided to Veterans within a 60-mile radius.

Providers can refer Veterans to the HBPC program by completing a consultation to Grand Island's HBPC. About half of the HBPC team is hired and they are located in Building #3.

The staff and phone numbers are (all Grand Island extensions):

Dr. Heidi Beckett, ext. 2026

Phyllis Gundersen, APRN, ext. 3004

Toni Brooks, RN, ext. 3006

Dale Pearson, RN, ext. 3003

Amy Walker, RD, ext. 3007

This newsletter is for VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (Grand Island, Lincoln, Omaha, Norfolk, Holdrege, North Platte, Bellevue, Nebraska and Shenandoah, Iowa). It is published weekly to provide employees, patients and visitors with information about VA programs and activities. This newsletter may be found on the Intranet at <http://vawww.visn23.med.va.gov/nwi/index.asp>. Submit news items through e-mail to G. POSTINGS in Vista or to VHANWI MESSENGER in Outlook by close of business each Tuesday.

For further information, call **Maggie Oldham** at (402) 995-5547.