



NWVI Messenger

For the week of March 22, 2010

Eat Healthy, Learn About Vegetable Gardening

The VA NWIHCS Clinical Nutrition Department is sponsoring a lunch ‘n learn March 24 about fruit and vegetable preservation.

The session is from noon to 12:45 p.m. at Omaha site 2, Lincoln site 1, and Grand Island site 1. Audio dial-in for CBOCs is (402) 943-5467.

The lunch ‘n learn is presented by master gardeners from the Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office. Bring your lunch. Thirty minutes of education credit is given.

Wellness Is Now (WIN) Staff Opens New Fitness Centers

VA NWIHCS employees now have a fitness center on the Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island campuses. The Wellness Is Now (WIN) program funded the fitness equipment that will provide employees the venue to exercise and improve their health. The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN23) WIN Director along with the VA NWIHCS WIN program coordinator opened the three facilities March 16 and March 17.

Employees who wish to use the fitness centers must complete a wellness profile and stress mapping at <http://vaww.portal.va.gov/sites/EmpWell/default.aspx>. Employees with questions can call Quin Kelly at Lincoln ext. 7902.



Shenandoah CBOC to Mark One-Year Anniversary

The Shenandoah, Iowa, Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) staff 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 Open House

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 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

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

21 Administrative Professionals Day

22 Earth Day

May

Asian-Pacific American Month

Older Americans Month

Spring Tornado Test

With the upcoming severe weather season approaching in the Midwest, VA NWIHCS will join with local counties in a statewide tornado drill March 24 at 10 a.m. All service chiefs and employees are encouraged to review their response plans before March 24, and have at least one staff member walk through the plan to ensure it is still accurate. The preparation that employees perform now will help to ensure we are prepared in the event of an actual tornado. For more information about emergency preparedness, contact **Diana Nordboe** at Omaha ext. 4703.

Focus Group for Women Veterans

Women Veterans in the Omaha area are invited to attend a Women Veterans Focus Group meeting March 30 at VA NWIHCS Omaha. The meeting is from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Education Conference Room.

The program is sponsored by VA NWIHCS and Veterans service offices in Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie Counties. The women Veterans program manager, women's health provider consultant, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Team and representatives from the county Veterans service offices will be available to answer questions about VA health care.

For more information, call **Cindy Niemack-Brown** at Grand Island, ext. 2287.

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.

Lincoln Forum Gives Patients the Opportunity to Provide Feedback

Veterans are invited to attend a Patient Forum April 6 at VA NWIHCS, 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 NWIHCS. Veterans will also receive an update about VA NWIHCS services and activities.

The VA NWIHCS director, 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 NWIHCS, 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. A similar program was held in Omaha in February and is being offered at VA NWIHCS, Grand Island.

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

New Hospice Wing Will Open at Grand Island CLC

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

The Hospice and Palliative Care Team is comprised 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. 2147. For the CLC location, visit http://www.nebraska.va.gov/visitors/grand_island.asp.

VA and CareerTV Team to Bring on VA's Next Generation of Employees

Who operates the most viewed career video Web site featuring the most recruiting and career videos? CareerTV! Where has VA just placed a video highlighting the dynamic and diverse VA workplace and the opportunities VA offers those starting careers? Career TV!

CareerTV helps students and young professional learn about careers with the world's top organizations and now features a three-minute video outlining the breadth and scope of VA career opportunities and the rewards and satisfactions of working to fulfill the VA mission. CareerTV offers employers the opportunity to connect with job seekers in the 18-29 year old demographic that VA is counting on to carry the torch through the 21st Century.

Check out VA's CareerTV video at <http://careertv.com/>. Share it with people you want to see at work with VA and check out VA's new jobs Web site at <http://www.vacareers.va.gov/>.

What's New with the Thrift Savings Plan

IRS Form 1099-R—In January, the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) mailed IRS Form 1099-R to participants who received withdrawal or other taxable distributions during 2009. If you have not received your mailed form, you can print out a copy from Account Access or call the ThriftLine toll free at 1-TSP-YOU-FRST [(877) 968-3778] and press 3 to speak to a TSP service representative. Callers outside the United States and Canada should call (202) 233-4400 (not toll free).

Tax-deferred benefit of the TSP—When you prepare your 2009 tax return, remember that your taxable wages reported on your W-2 will be different from your annual salary. Your TSP contributions are tax deferred (or may be tax exempt for some members of the uniformed services) and are not considered part of your income for Federal income tax purposes. Paying less tax on your current income is one of the benefits of the TSP.

Tax Credit—If you participated in the TSP during tax year 2009, you may be eligible to claim the Retirement Savings Contributions Credit, as long as your modified adjusted gross income for 2009 is not more than \$55,500 if married filing jointly, \$41,625 if head of household, or \$27,750 if you are single or married filing separately, or a qualifying widow or widower.

For more information about the TSP, visit the TSP Web site at www.tsp.gov and click on "What's New." Questions

Lincoln Telephone Blitz

The VA NWIHCS Lincoln Telephone Team held a phone directory blitz in February to update inaccurate or missing information in the official VA NWIHCS online phone directory. Over two days, 140 or about 71 percent of VA NWIHCS Lincoln employees attended the blitz.

The team invited staff members to come, review their information in the directory and make changes if needed. Attendees also received education about how to use the online phone directory.

A total of 88 updates were made to the online directory. By attending the blitz, employees received 15 minutes of education credit, a healthy snack and entry into a door-prize drawing for a \$10 gift card from a local restaurant or an electric ice scraper. Prize winners were **DeAnn Engle** from Specialty Clinics and **Louis McGlothlin** from Facilities.

Members of the Lincoln Telephone Team are **Tyler Bowley** (chairperson),



Lincoln Telephone team member Rodger Green assists Marva Howe and Angie Hutchinson with finding and updating their online information.

Rodger Green, Lin Young, Mike Quinn, Bruce Wagner, Tim Daly, Aaron Howell, Connie Gordon, Sandy George, and Kim Shambaugh-Miller (facilitator).

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2009 Heart of the Midlands CFC Acknowledgments

VA NWIHCS, Omaha and Grand Island staff were officially recognized for their contributions to the 2009 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) during an awards luncheon at Offutt Air Force Base March 18.

The Heart of the Midlands CFC presented the awards based on the total money raised divided by the number of employees assigned to the organization.

VA NWIHCS, Omaha received a Bronze Award for donating \$50 to \$75 per capita. VA NWIHCS, Grand Island received a Certificate of Merit for contributions at \$25 to \$49 per capita.

During the 2009 campaign, Grand Island employees donated \$17,198, with 222 employees participating; Lincoln employees gave \$15,166 with 160 employees participating, and Omaha employees pledged \$76,658 with 641 participating. VA NWIHCS Lincoln participates in the Lincoln and Lancaster County Campaign.



Linda Floyd (right) accepts VA NWIHCS Omaha CFC award from Kathy Bogus, 2009 Chair of the Local Federal Coordinating Committee.

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regarding the TSP should be directed to Human Resources, Omaha ext. 4373.

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-chairperson.

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.
- Be willing to remain at VA NWIHCS for the duration of the academic program.
- 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.

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.

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://vaww.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.