



NWVI Messenger

For the week of June 14, 2010

More Parking Available for Veterans at VA NWIHCS, Omaha

VA NWIHCS has conducted an analysis of its current parking spaces at the Omaha VA Medical Center (VAMC) to provide better access to health care and increase parking opportunities close to the main facility. Parking lot 1, which is the lot closest to the medical center with a large number of handicapped parking spaces, has been reserved primarily for patients and guests Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (excluding federal holidays).

This has increased the number of reserved spaces available for our Veterans. There are still two shuttles operating that will provide transportation to and from the main parking lot and the Center Mall. Each driver carries a cell phone that can be called to facilitate being picked up. The numbers are: (402) 547-6972 and (402) 547-8018. Share this information with Veterans and their families.

Medication Co-Payment Changes

Effective July 1, Veterans with higher incomes and no service-connected disabilities enrolled in Priority Groups 7 and 8 will pay an additional \$1 for each 30-day supply of outpatient medications. The increase from \$8 to \$9 is the first change in VA's medication co-pay since 2006.

This change does not impact Veterans in Priority Groups 2 through 6 who will continue to pay \$8 for each 30-day supply of medications for their non-service connected conditions unless otherwise exempted. Veterans in Priority Group 2 through 6 will also continue to have their out-of-pocket expenses for VA

outpatient medications capped at \$960 per calendar year. Veterans who have an injury or illness connected with their military service resulting in a disability rated 50 percent or greater—enrolled in Priority Group 1—are exempt from this co-pay.

Veterans who have difficulty paying copayments for outpatient medications should discuss the matter with their local VA enrollment coordinator. Veterans may also contact VA at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) or visit VA's health eligibility web site at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

Focus Group for Women Veterans

Women Veterans are invited to attend a Women Veterans Focus Group June 18 at VA NWIHCS Lincoln, 600 South 70 Street. The focus group is from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Prairie Room.

Women Veterans are encouraged to attend and learn what services are available to them. The women

Veteran program manager, women Veterans primary care providers, and Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) team will be available to answer questions about VA health care.

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

CALENDAR

June

Fireworks Safety Month

National Safety Month

10-17 Nursing Assistant Week

14 Flag Day

14-20 National Men's Health Week

20 Father's Day

21 Summer Begins

July

UV Safety Month

Fireworks Safety Month

4 Independence Day

4-9 National Veterans Wheelchair Games

6-12 Alzheimer's Awareness Week

21 VA Created

August

Cataract Awareness Month

National Immunization Awareness Month

4 Coast Guard Day

26 Womens Equality Day

September

National Preparedness Month

Alcohol and Drug Addicton Recovery Month

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Cholesterol Education Month

Prostate Health Month

6 Labor Day

5-11 Suicide Prevention Week

11 Patriots Day

17 POW/MIA Recognition Day

Omaha Patient Forum

Veterans are invited to attend a Patient Forum June 30 at VA NWHCS, Omaha from 5 to 6 p.m. in the Education Conference Room (first floor of the main building).

Veterans can offer feedback about their experiences receiving health care at VA NWHCS. They will also receive an update about VA NWHCS services and activities.

Representatives from VA NWHCS leadership, patient advocate, public affairs, and others will be available to answer questions.

In addition, Mary McElmeel, Patient Education Coordinator, will present information about My HealthVet, VA's award-winning e-health web site, which offers Veterans, active duty service members, their dependents and caregivers anywhere, anytime Internet access to VA health care information and services

This 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 VA's health care system.

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

HIV Testing

Every year, the U.S. marks June 27 as National HIV Testing Day, a time to remind all Americans of the importance of early detection of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS. In 2010, VA is taking this one step further, setting aside an entire week, from June 27 to July 3, to promote HIV testing.

VHA is the largest single provider of HIV care in the United States, providing care to more than 23,000 Veterans with HIV in 2008. Yet, less than 10 percent of Veterans in VA care have been tested for HIV. Our goal is to diagnose HIV infection as soon as possible so that Veterans can receive the excellent care provided by VHA and remain healthy for many years to come.

VA recommends that every Veteran patient be tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime. Routine voluntary HIV testing is now official VA policy.

Omaha Blood Drive

The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive June 16 at VA NWHCS, Omaha, from 7 to 11 a.m.

Schedule your appointment online at http://www.membersforlife.org/midamerica/mobilesch/bdc_sc.php?id=3. Enter the sponsor code 123, or call 1-800-448-3543.

Lincoln Health Fair

A Veterans Health Fair will be held June 18 from 1 to 5 p.m. in the auditorium at VA NWHCS, Lincoln. There will be various community and Veterans groups along with information for Veterans about their VA benefits. A break-out session will be hosted by the Patients Advisory Council and Dr. Christie Emler, Associate Chief of Medicine at Lincoln, from 5 to 6 p.m.

Personnel Notes

Karyn Stodden is VA NWHCS's new Privacy Officer/Freedom of Information (FOIA Officer). Karyn is located in room B626 at the Omaha facility and can be reached at Omaha, ext. 3427.

Contact Karyn if you have any privacy concerns or issues. Karyn is replacing Janice Sandquist, RHIA who was promoted to Assistant Chief, Health Information Management Section. Janice will continue to act as the Alternate Privacy Officer. Janice is located at the Center Mall in Omaha and can be reached at (402) 599-2108.

Employees Receive 4-Hour Time Off Award

Congratulations to VA NWHCS employees who helped us reach our goal for the All Employee Survey (AES). The 90 percent participation mark was reached during the April-May 2010 all-employee forums, and now all employees will enjoy four hours off as a reward.

Tips for using your time off award

- Time off awards must be used by November 19, 2010 and at one time (unless your daily tour is less than four hours in length).
- Employees may begin scheduling and using the time off award with prior approval of their supervisor.
- Supervisors should handle requests to use the time off award similar to other requests for time off in your service.
- Employees on-board, on or before May 9, 2010 are eligible for the award.
- Intermittent, fee basis, students (without compensation), and trainees are excluded from the award.

Welcome Home Event Planned for July

The OEF/OIF Veterans Welcome Home Event is scheduled for July 31 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This year it is being held at the Heartland Event Center in Grand Island, at 700 East Stolley Park Road.

Right: Jim Rose, a VA NWHCS OEF/OIF mental health practitioner (and a lieutenant colonel in the Nebraska National Guard) presents a \$1,500 donation on behalf of the Nebraska National Guard Officers Association to OEF/OIF team members Heather Bojanski, Jody Kennedy and Donna Higgins to help support this year's Welcome Home Event.

Activities will include informational booths, promotional items, and family activities. Tickets for the Island Oasis Waterpark or the Stuhr Museum will also be provided for OEF/OIF Veterans and their immediate family members.



Beware of Phishing Scam

Some VA NWHCS employees have received an e-mail titled "Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)." This is a phishing scam designed to get the recipient to download a piece of malicious software which could allow the attacker to gain access to your computer.

If you receive this message, do not click on any of the links within it and contact your Information Security Officers (ISOs): **Joe Elbaum** at Omaha, ext. 3558 or **Stephen Quinn** at Omaha, ext. 3858.

VA Learning Management System Upgraded

The VA Learning Management System (LMS) has been upgraded. Users will notice more functionality to scheduled offerings and curriculum status. Supervisors are no longer restricted to their own catalog when recording learning for a subordinate. Users are now prompted to provide their password when personal data is changed, and may successfully register for items that allow self registration.

If you have questions, contact the VA LMS Help Desk at valmshelp@va.gov or call 866-496-0463 Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. EST.

myPay System Will Replace Employee Express

VA will migrate from Employee Express (EEX) to myPay effective June 24.

MyPay is an innovative, automated system that electronically manages certain discretionary pay data items, and allows you to view, print, and save leave and earning statements (LESs) and W-2s. The system is convenient and easy to use, anytime, anywhere, as long as users have access to the Internet. Every VA employee will have the ability to control many aspects of their pay account by tailoring their account to what they need.

Users will have the option to:

- Create up to seven allotments
- Make changes to their deposits
- Change addresses
- Manage U.S. savings bonds, thrift savings plans (TSP), and more

Enhancements through myPay:

- Provides users confirmation of changes/elections within three days versus 14 days with EEX
- Allows VA employees to view their LES on Thursday before payday
- Allows VA employees who are retired military or Reservists to access their military and civilian accounts with one PIN
- Allows VA employees to establish/change a limited access login for those who wish to grant another individual (such as a spouse) view access to his or her account
- Confirmation of all account changes is sent to a user's e-mail account.

Effective June 18, VA employees will not be able to make changes using EEX. Employees will have "view only" access to EEX to view and print historical data such as LES for pay covering May 12, 2007, through June 19, and W-2's for calendar years 2006 through 2009.

ESGR Program Praised

Today was a day that took me down memory lane and updated me to today's world. Thanks to **Robert Montag**, the Omaha Vet Center Global War on Terror (GWOT) Outreach Worker, who made it possible for me to go as his "boss."

The Employer Support of Guard and Reserve Program (ESGR) in Nebraska took employers of Nebraska National Guard and Reserve troops on a "field trip." Eighteen employers flew in an Air National Guard refueler to Scottsbluff and then a Chinook helicopter to Camp Guernsey in Wyoming. It's been forty years since I was in web seats like that. We were oriented by the Brigade Commander of the 67th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and saw a unit of the 1-134 Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron in training.

Forty years ago I was a "two digit midget" (means I had less than 100 days in Vietnam before my DEROS date [Date of Expected Return from Overseas]). It was a much more emotional experience than I thought it would be. Getting on the airplane and strapping in reminded me of getting on a plane in Saigon and flying to Da Nang where I then took a Chinook to Camp Eagle (end of July 1969).

Both vehicles had the web seating like they do now. Only this time on the flight from Lincoln to Scottsbluff we were allowed to roam the cabin and check out the refueling boom the Nebraska Air National Guard uses.

We were then showed a new, state of the art, training system that is now being used to train all troops going to Iraq or Afghanistan. Training includes simulated Iraqi or Afghanistan villages with civilians used as villagers that U.S. troops are expected to encounter.

Everyone participating in the training has a GPS pack that pinpoints their location and actions. That information is recorded and then used in debriefing to discuss what happened, what went well, and what could be improved. It was an interesting day watching those events, as well as touring the facilities of the civilian contractors who design and run the set up.

I highly praise the ESGR program. It is a Department of Defense (DoD) agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees.

ESGR recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of the law, and resolves conflicts through mediation. If an employer is offered a chance to take part in such a program I encourage you to participate. Again, I'd like to thank Robert for nominating me.

L. S. (Roy) Schoen, Team Leader
Lincoln Vet Center # 427
Readjustment Counseling Service
Department of Veterans Affairs
May 18, 2010

Persons with Disabilities Committee Highlights Albinism

Members of VA NWHCS Persons With Disabilities Committee (PWD) are writing a monthly article of interest. The group meets the fourth Tuesday of every month in the Director's Conference Room in Omaha. This month's topic is albinism.

Albinism is a group of genetic conditions that causes a lack of pigment. It can affect only the eyes (ocular albinism). It can also affect both the eyes and skin, a condition called oculocutaneous albinism.

Most albinism is inherited when both parents pass along the albinism gene. The exception is one type of ocular albinism in which the condition is passed on from mothers to their sons.

Although most people with albinism have very light skin and hair, not all do. In less pigmented types of oculocutaneous albinism, hair and skin are cream-colored. In types with slight pigmentation, hair appears more yellow or red. People with ocular albinism usually have normal or just slightly lighter than normal physical appearance.

A common myth is that by definition people with albinism have red eyes. In fact there are different types of albinism, and the amount of pigment in the eyes varies. Most individuals with albinism have blue eyes. Some have hazel or brown eyes.

VA Updates Online Application for Health Benefits

Veterans will find it easier and faster to apply for their health care benefits now that VA has updated its online Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits.

This revised online application provides enhanced navigation features that make it easier and faster for Veterans to apply for their health care benefits. This new version also allows Veterans to save a copy of the completed form for their personal records.

The most significant enhancement allows Veterans to save their application to their local desktop and return to the application at any time without having to start over.

Veterans may complete or download the 10-10EZ form at VA health eligibility Web site at <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez>.

Veterans may also contact VA at 877-222-8387 (VETS) or visit the VA health eligibility Web site at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

National Veterans Wheelchair Games

The Fourth of July celebration in Denver takes on special importance this year when more than 500 wheelchair athletes who are all military Veterans begin competition at the 30th National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG). The event, presented each year by VA and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), runs July 4 through 9.

NVWG provides an annual multi-event sports rehabilitation program that is open to Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, amputations or certain neurological problems and who receive care at any VA medical facility. Athletes attending can be first-time wheelchair athletes or experienced Paralympians. Six of this year's participants have

previously competed at the world-class Paralympic level.

At NVWG, Veterans will compete in 17 different sports, including air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field events, handcycling, nine-ball, a motorized wheelchair relay, power soccer, quad rugby, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting, weightlifting and wheelchair slalom. This year, an exhibition event will also be held in kayaking.

The VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System in Denver and the Mountain States Chapter of PVA are hosting the 2010 Games. For many injured Veterans, NVWG provides their first exposure to wheelchair athletics.

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.