



NWII Messenger

For the week of August 2, 2010

VA and Veteran Agencies to Hold Open Houses in Harlan, Iowa, Alliance, Neb.

An outreach initiative to provide rural-area Veterans information and counseling about VA and other Veteran-related benefits takes place in Harlan, Iowa, and Alliance, Neb., in August.

The Harlan event is Aug. 6 and 7 at the Veterans Memorial Auditorium, 1104 Morning View Drive. Veterans and their family members with questions about benefits are encouraged to stop in at the open house from noon to 7 p.m. Aug. 6 or from 8 to 11 a.m. Aug. 7.

The event in Alliance is Aug 13 at the American Legion, 1504 West Third Street from 1 to 8 p.m.

These agencies will be available to provide Veterans assistance and information: VA NWIHCS, Veterans Benefit Administration Regional Office, Vet Centers, State Department of Veterans Affairs, and the State Transition Assistance Advisor. Other

Veteran service agencies will also be available.

Veterans who are not currently enrolled for VA benefits are encouraged to bring their DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty," to the open house to assist the agency counselors assess individual eligibility for VA benefits. VA counselors will assist Veterans to complete eligibility and enrollment applications.

The open house is an outreach program that is intended to reach Veterans in rural communities across the VA NWIHCS service area, which includes Nebraska, western Iowa, and portions of Kansas and Missouri.

The interagency outreach team's goal is to increase awareness about VA and other benefits and services available to Veterans, and to assist with applying for these benefits.

CALENDAR

August

Cataract Awareness Month

National Immunization Awareness Month

4 Coast Guard Day

26 Womens Equality Day

September

National Preparedness Month

Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Cholesterol Education Month

Prostate Health Month

6 Labor Day

5-11 Suicide Prevention Week

11 Patriot Day

17 POW/MIA Recognition Day

19-24 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic

19-25 National Surgical Technologist Week

October

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Pharmacy Month

Dental Hygiene Month

Hispanic Heritage Month

Physical Therapy Month

Cyber Security Month

6-12 Physician Assistants Week

10-16 Emergency Nurses Week

11 Columbus Day

15 Boss's Day

24-30 Respiratory Care Week

Veterans Forum-VA NWIHCS, Lincoln

A Veterans information forum will be held Aug. 18 from 5 to 6 p.m. in the VA NWIHCS-Lincoln Pioneer/Prairie Room. The forum is for all Veterans to have an open dialogue with VA NWIHCS leadership, program managers and patient advocates.

Each session features an educational presentation as well. The presentation will be about the Patient Centered Medical Home being implemented across VHA. Please share this date and event with any Veterans you may know who are interested in attending.

New VISN 23 Network Director

Janet P. Murphy has been appointed by VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki as Network Director of the VA Midwest Health Care Network, VISN 23 effective Sept. 12.

Murphy has extensive knowledge of VA and VISN 23 as Director of the VISN 23 Primary and Specialty Medicine Service Line the past nine years. Through her leadership, the service line expanded the number of Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) to 50 clinics, implemented a

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chronic disease management model and is currently implementing the patient centered medical home model.

Under her guidance and strong vision, VISN 23 will continue its mission of honoring America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well being.

Garden Swap

The Employee WIN/Wellness Committee is again sponsoring a garden swap for employees at VA NWIHCS, Omaha.

If you have excess produce from your garden, you will be able to bring it to work and make it available to others.

Employees can bring, take or trade produce. The swap will begin in August, so watch for more details and keep weeding that garden.

This will be in addition to the farmers market held Monday afternoons in Omaha.

2010 Summer

Voice of VA – Integrated Ethics Staff Survey

As VHA strives to continue to deliver the highest quality patient care, it is critical to continually assess employees' perceptions of their work environment.

Now it is time for the 2010 Summer Voice of VA–Integrated Ethics Staff Survey. The purpose of this survey is to collect information on employees' perceptions of ethics in the work place.

This survey is part of an ongoing effort to improve ethical practices throughout VHA. The survey will be administered every other year.

If you haven't had an opportunity to take the survey, the link is www.drcsurveys.com/VOVA/Summer2010, The survey is open July 26 through Aug. 13.

Participation is voluntary and responses are anonymous. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete.

New Chief of Psychology

The new chief of psychology for VA NWIHCS Mental Health and Behavioral Science Department is **Todd Fleischer**.

Dr. Fleischer has been a psychologist with VA NWIHCS since December 2007, serving as psychologist with the Omaha Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) clinic, followed by his current position in Lincoln in the Mental Health Primary Care Integration program.

His background experience in health psychology, coupled with his familiarity and experience with VA programs will provide strong leadership within the discipline of psychology, integration of psychology with other programs, and growth and development of high quality psychology services across VA NWIHCS.

Learning Needs Assessment Survey

Employee Education is conducting the annual learning needs assessment to identify and prioritize the learning needs of VA NWIHCS employees.

This survey is an opportunity for employees to submit their personal and department-level professional education needs. Data from the survey will be aggregated to identify knowledge and skills needed by employees to support the VA NWIHCS strategic plan for fiscal year (FY) 2011. Participation is voluntary and responses are anonymous.

Participate by taking the learning needs assessment survey by close of business Aug. 6. Access the survey at <http://vaww.visn23.portal.va.gov/nwi/SiteDirectory/nwilrn/Lists/Employee%20Education%20Needs%20Assessment/overview.aspx>.

Click on "Respond to This Survey" to enter the survey. Ignore the save and cancel buttons. Use the next button to progress from page to page. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

For more information contact **Brianna Renninger** at Omaha ext. 4411 or **Jan Carlin** at Omaha ext. 4987.

You Spoke: We Listened

More Parking Available for Veterans at VA NWIHCS, Omaha

The number of parking opportunities has been increased for patients at VA NWIHCS, Omaha.

Parking Lot 1: This lot is adjacent to the main hospital entrance and just north of the front circle. Parking is reserved (unless specifically posted by signage) for patients and guests Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (excluding federal holidays).

Service-Connected Lot: This is the lot adjacent to the Emergency Department entrance. The entire lot is reserved for Emergency Department patients and service-connected Veterans who are present for an appointment. The lot is reserved Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, during the hours of 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. A gold parking placard is used to denote service connection.

Lot Between Bldg 5 (Human Resources) and Bldg 4 (Engineering):

This lot has handicapped parking spaces reserved specifically for employees with handicapped parking privileges denoted by a blue placard or a handicapped license plate. Except for two parking spaces marked with specific signage, the entire lot is for employee handicapped parking and reserved Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays, during the hours of 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. There are three additional spaces for lift-equipped vehicles and eight additional handicapped spaces.

Off-site Parking: VA NWIHCS leadership is actively looking for off-site parking that will be used for employee overflow parking. There are spaces available at the Center Mall. To assist with pedestrian access, steps were constructed on the hill along Center Street. In addition, two shuttles provide transportation to and from the main parking lot and the Center Mall. Each shuttle driver has a cell telephone. Their numbers are 547-6972 or 547-8018.

The Omaha Parking Committee continues to explore options to ease the difficulties associated with finding a place to park at VA NWIHCS, Omaha.

Farmers Market Offers Healthy Choices

The VA NWIHCS, Omaha farmers market will be held in the parking lot in front of Modular Building A every Monday through Sept. 20, with the exception of Labor Day. The market will move to Sept. 7 following Labor Day. The hours are 1 to 5 p.m.

The VA NWIHCS, Lincoln farmers market will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. at the exterior entrance to the outpatient clinic every Wednesday through September.

Veterans and the community are invited to stop by and purchase from a selection of locally grown vegetables and fruits.

West Nile Virus

The first cases of West Nile virus have been reported to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The cases involve two men—one in his fifties from Scotts Bluff County and the other in his forties from Colfax County. The Scotts Bluff County man was hospitalized and released.

“People should take care to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, no matter what part of the state they live in,” said Dr. Annette Bredthauer, the state’s public health veterinarian. “It only takes one bite to infect you.”

So far, Nebraska has had four pools of mosquitoes test positive for the virus—in Red Willow, Douglas, Lincoln and Cherry counties. The virus is likely in other parts of the state, and people should take precautions.

West Nile is transmitted through the bite of a mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird.

To avoid mosquito bites, DHHS recommends:

- Applying mosquito repellent containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535;
- Wearing long-sleeved shirt, pants and socks;
- Avoiding going out at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active; and
- Eliminating standing water to reduce mosquito breeding sites.

Most people who are infected by a mosquito have no symptoms or only mild flu-like symptoms. Less than one out of 150 people who get bitten by an infected mosquito and become infected will get seriously ill. However, people over 50 and those with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable to the disease and are more likely to experience serious consequences.

West Nile fever includes flu-like symptoms such as fever and muscle weakness. Symptoms of the more serious West Nile encephalitis include inflammation of the brain, disorientation, convulsions and paralysis.

More information can be found on the DHHS website at www.dhhs.ne.gov/wnv.

Check Your Listing

Telephone Operations is asking all employees to check their contact information in the intranet phone directory. Employees should visit <http://vaww.visn23.med.va.gov/nwi/Telephone/branch.asp>, select “Employee Extensions” from the drop-down menu, and enter their name to check the listing for errors or omissions. Services should also check their listing. If you need to make a change, send an e-mail to PhoneDirectory.NWIHCS@va.gov with the change.

Free Access Pass to National Parks and Recreational Lands

The Interagency Pass Program which was created by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and authorized by Congress in Dec. 2004 provides a lifetime pass for U.S. citizens or permanent residents with permanent disabilities.

The pass provides access to, and use of, Federal recreation sites that charge an entrance or standard amenity fee. The pass admits the pass holder and passengers in a non-commercial vehicle at per vehicle fee areas and pass holder plus three adults, not to exceed four adults, at per person fee areas (children under 16 are admitted free).

The pass can only be obtained in person at the park. The Access Pass provides a

50 percent discount on some expanded amenity fees charged for facilities and services such as camping, swimming, boat launching, and specialized interpretive services. In some cases where expanded amenity fees are charged, only the pass holder will be given the 50 percent price reduction.

Documentation is required to obtain the pass. Acceptable documentation includes: statement by a licensed physician; document issued by a Federal agency such as VA, Social Security Disability Income or Supplemental Security Income; or document issued by a State agency such as a vocational rehabilitation agency. For more information, visit http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/access/access_pass.htm.

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.