



NWVH Messenger

For the week of May 10, 2010

VA NWIHCS Seeks Veterans for Focus Group

Would you like to help the leadership of VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (VA NWIHCS) to design tomorrow's health care facility today? The leadership team of VA NWIHCS would like to invite you to share your ideas of the characteristics you would like to see in VA in the future.

VA NWIHCS is hosting several focus groups at the end of May and first week of June to gain insight from our Veterans and their families about a shared vision for achieving world-class health care. We will take your feedback and explore how those ideas can translate into Veteran-centric care.

The President's fiscal year 2011 proposed budget included \$56 million for design and planning of a replacement VA medical center in Omaha. With advanced design funding from VA, we are beginning to build a vision for tomorrow's health care system.

We are in the early stages of creating an understanding and appreciation of the projected health care needs of our current Veterans as well as those serving us today. Your input to this vision of the VA's health care system for Nebraska and Western Iowa is a very critical component to creating a Veteran-centric service that meets the needs of our Veterans well into the future.

We want to hear your ideas about what health care means to you; what a positive health care experience looks like; how you desire to communicate with your health care providers, and your ideas about creating positive customer service experiences within health care.

If you would like to learn more, or would like to participate, contact Public Affairs at Omaha ext. 4719 or 5547, or e-mail William.Ackerman@va.gov.

2010 All Employee Survey Extended

The 2010 All Employee Survey (AES) is extended through May 17. This allows VA nationwide to meet the 72 percent participation goal. Employees may access the survey either by web site or phone.

Paper copies of the AES were provided to VA NWIHCS employees during the All Employee Forums in April. As of April 29, with one forum left and additional paper copies still being counted, VA NWIHCS had recorded an 87 percent participation rate. Final numbers are still being tabulated. The nationwide extension to the AES provides another opportunity for VA NWIHCS staff who were unable to complete the survey during the forums.

The survey is confidential; anonymity is protected throughout the process. Completing the survey is voluntary.

Instructions for completing the survey:

Completing the AES on-line: Access the survey at <https://survey.sirota.com/va/survey10>. Enter your seven-digit work group code. Select the occupation that best fits from the occupational list displayed. Complete the survey by clicking the response buttons that best represent your answers. You must complete your survey in one sitting. If you log off, you cannot return later to

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CALENDAR

May

Asian-Pacific American Month

Older Americans Month

Mental Health Month

National Arthritis Month

6-12 Nurses Week

9-15 National Police Week

9-15 National Hospital Week

15 Peace Officer Memorial Day

15 Armed Forces Day

16-22 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week

31 Memorial Day

June

Fireworks Safety Month

National Safety Month

6 National Cancer Survivors Day

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

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finish it. You can log on again and start over. When you are satisfied with your answers, click on the "Submit" button. You will then see a "Thank You" page stating that your answers were captured.

Completing the AES by phone: Call (877) 671-6843 (available 24 hours a day). After the welcome message, enter your seven-digit work group code. Then enter the one, two, or three digit occupational code selected from the occupational list included with the instructions. Next, you will hear the survey questions. Answer each question by pressing the numbers

that correspond to your answers. To return to the previous question, press the * key. To repeat a question, press the # key. To start over, hang up and redial into the system. You will need to re-enter your work group code and occupational code.

VA Celebrates National Nurses Week

National Nurses Week (May 6 to 12) focuses on the important contributions made every day by nurses. Talented VA nurses meet Veterans' needs with compassion and skill in a time

of rapid changes in technology, knowledge, and approaches to health care. This year's Nurses Week theme, "Nurses: Caring Today for a Healthier Tomorrow," describes the excellence and the mission of more than 77,000 VA nursing staff across the Veterans Health Administration.

Five VA NWIHCS, Omaha nurses were recognized at the 2010 Nebraska Nurses Association, District 2 recognition brunch April 24.

Recipients of the Positive Image of Nursing Award were **Lara Colton, Shanna Manning, Dean Degner, Sonia Murillo and Valerie Cook.**

Employee Named Dietetic Technician of the Year

Marsha Sanley received the Nebraska Dietetic Association's (NDA) 2010 Recognized Dietetic Technician of the Year award during the NDA annual conference April 30.

Sanley works in the clinical nutrition department at VA NWIHCS, Omaha. Her duties include a wide variety of specialties in both inpatient and outpatient areas of care.

Her nomination package described her as: "Compassionate, caring, thorough and appropriate can describe Marsha's beside manner and approach to her job. She will go out of her way to fix an incorrect tray given to a patient or modify a Veteran's diet pattern without notice.

Best of all, Marsha always has a smile on her face, which improves the spirits of many Veterans and staff."



From left: Miriam Flack, Jan Carlin, Sherri Plugge, and Lori Bonner gather around Marsha Sanley (center) who was named the Dietetic Technician of the Year by the Nebraska Dietetics Association.

National Police Week

National Police Week, May 9 to 15, provides an opportunity for the nation to recognize the service and sacrifice of US law enforcement.

As part of National Police Week, the VA Police Service in Omaha is sponsoring several events that are open to all VA employees.

Employees can see a demonstration of the MILO Training Range Simulator, which is used by VA police officers for training purposes.

The MILO Training Range is located in the VA Police Office in Room B580. Demonstrations are May 14 from 9 to 11 a.m.

The VA Police Service in Omaha will also have an open house May 13 from 1 to 3 p.m. Stop by to meet VA Police staff and have a piece of cake.

VA NWIHCS Chief and Captain Take Top VA Police Honors

VA named Dennis Moore as Chief of the Year at its annual awards banquet in Tampa, Fla. April 27. Moore is the chief of police for VA NWIHCS.

Captain Ray Brantis, also with VA NWIHCS, was named Lead Officer of the Year at the awards event.

Chief Moore leads a police force of 44 members, which serve at facilities in Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island. He was recognized for his innovation, which included securing funding to overhaul VA NWIHCS's security systems in excess

of \$1.5 million that covered the three facilities. Chief Moore's leadership gained his police force one of the highest positive results from annual all-employee surveys.

Brantis was recognized for outstanding work in creating an investigation and training program as a detective prior to his recent promotion to captain. He has great rapport with the VA police, employees and Veterans at VA NWIHCS facilities.

VA's Police Service is comprised of more than 3,500 officers at more than 140 health care facilities across the US.



From left: Dennis Moore, VA NWIHCS Police Chief and Ray Brantis, VA Police Captain

Speaker's Bureau Program Launched

VA NWIHCS Public Affairs Office launched a revised Speaker's Bureau program May 10.

The program goals are to:

- Increase awareness of VA health care benefits and services available for eligible Veterans
- Increase public and community awareness about the high quality health care that today's VA provides to America's Veterans
- Offer subject-matter experts who can provide discussions on a variety of health care related topics to organizations
- Highlight the role that the VA provides in honoring and caring for America's Veterans

A new Speaker's Bureau brochure and speaker request form is now available by contacting the Public Affairs Office at Omaha ext. 4719 or 5547, or visiting www.nebraska.va.gov. The brochure can be sent to organizations interested in a speaker from VA NWIHCS to provide a presentation and answer questions about services provided to Veterans.

Public Service Recognition Week

Leadership at VA NWIHCS facilities presented thank you cards and greeted staff during Public Service Recognition Week, May 3 to 9.

VA NWIHCS Director Al Washko presents an Omaha employee a thank you card for serving Veterans May 6.



The SAFE Program

The Support And Family Education (SAFE) program is a free 90-minute confidential workshop for families and friends of Veterans. It is held the third Tuesday of each month.

The next topic is Creating Low-Stress Environments and will be held May 18 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at these locations:

VA NWIHCS Omaha
4101 Woolworth Ave
Education Conference Rm, First Floor

VA NWIHCS Lincoln
600 S. 70th Street
Prairie Room, Second Floor

VA NWIHCS Grand Island
2201 Broadwell Ave
Room S-502, Fifth Floor

Family and friends are often the first to notice emotional changes in Veterans later diagnosed with mental illnesses. Attendees will learn about mental illness causes, treatments and medications, receive emotional support and encouragement. They will also learn about treatment options for Veterans at the VA NWIHCS, and learn how caregivers can take care of their own well-being.

Reservations are not required. For more information contact a SAFE program coordinator in Grand Island at (308) 382-3660 ext. 2298; Lincoln at (402) 489-3802, ext. 9-6610; or Omaha toll-free at (800) 451-5796, ext. 9-4944 or 9-4396.

Temporary Closure of Medical Library

To accommodate the final steps of remodeling, the VA NWIHCS, Omaha Medical Library (located on the third floor) will close May 19 to June 1. Computers and other equipment will be disconnected during this time, the librarian will be unavailable, and the pic tel 2 conference room will not be accessible.

Jim Rood will reschedule pic tel 2 meetings to other sites if available. Omaha staff, scheduled to use pic tel site 2, will need to use another room with only a speakerphone, using a dial-in number, which Rood will provide. Alternate sites and dial-in calls will be handled daily.

For more information, contact Darrel Willoughby at Omaha ext. 3530, or Jim Rood at Omaha ext. 3518.

Omaha Construction

The Fitness Center located in Modular Building A has reopened. The Americans With Disability Act ramps for all three modular buildings are being completed, along with the last of the landscaping.

Remodeling of Building 6 continues with inside work in progress.

The new south stairway to the Center Street sidewalk can now be used. One handrail is in place and the second is on order. Use the sidewalk to access the crosswalk at 42nd Street.

The replacement of the kitchen coolers and freezers is expected to start in May.

The sound-proofing project in the Clinical Research Unit, in C Wing, on the first floor, is expected to start in late May or early June.

Off-site warehouse space has been leased for receiving supplies for Logistics. This will relieve congestion at the loading dock lot and eliminate the storage and clutter problems. Completion is expected in mid-June.

If you have questions, contact Roy Mockelstrom at Omaha ext. 4449.

Employee Lunch-N-Learn

The Employee Wellness Is Now (WIN VA) and Wellness Committee will sponsor a Lunch-n-Learn May 13 from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. The topic is Nutritional Management of Osteoporosis and Osteoarthritis. The presenter is Alice Baden, Lincoln Ambulatory Care Registered Dietitian. The event is at Omaha Site 1, Lincoln Site 2, Grand Island Site 1, and CBOC Conference Rooms. Nutrition impacts our overall health in many ways. Learn more about the important role nutrition plays in the status of osteoporosis and osteoarthritis. Bring your lunch and earn 30 minutes of education credit.

Do You Know the HIPAA Policy?

All VA employees are responsible for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of their patients and patient information.

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Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)-mandated regulations govern privacy standards for health care information as well as rules governing the use and disclosure of individually identifiable health information in certain transactions.

Employees should only access VA patient medical records if you are authorized and have a legitimate official need to access. All VA employees receive HIPAA training annually through Learning Management System (LMS). Violation of this policy can lead to a federal offense and potential incarceration. If you have questions about a legitimate need to access patient medical records, or the HIPAA policy, contact the VA NWHCS Privacy Officer at Omaha ext. 3427.

The VA NWHCS Director encourages all staff to read and share the article at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/cac/pressroom/pr2010/079.html> as an example of the potential repercussions if employees violate the HIPAA policy.

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 the VA health eligibility Web site at <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez>. Veterans may also contact VA at 1 (877) 222-8387 (VETS) or visit the VA health eligibility Web site at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

Benefit Honors Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry

The children of military personnel who died in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001, can apply for an educational scholarship similar to the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. Benefits are retroactive to Aug. 1, 2009.

The scholarship, which is administered by VA, is named after Marine Gunnery Sgt. John David Fry, 28, a Texas native who died in Iraq in 2006 while disarming an explosive. He was survived by three young children.

VA began accepting applications for the Fry scholarship May 10. For more information or assistance applying, call toll-free 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551), or visit the VA GI Bill Web site at www.gibill.va.gov.

VA Secretary on The Potential Impact of Health Care Reform on VA Health Care

VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki released the following statement about the potential impact of health care reform on VA Health Care:

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, I accepted the solemn responsibility to uphold our sacred trust with our nation's Veterans. Fears that Veterans health care and TRICARE will be undermined by the health reform legislation are unfounded. I am confident that the legislation being voted on today will provide the protections afforded our nation's Veterans and the health care they have earned through their service. The President and I stand firm in our commitment to those who serve and have served in our armed forces. We pledge to continue to provide the men and women in uniform and our Veterans the high quality health care they have earned.

President Obama has strongly supported Veterans and their needs, specifically health care needs, on every major issue for these past 14 months—advance appropriations, new GI Bill implementation, new

Agent Orange presumptions for three additional diseases, new Gulf War Illness presumptions for nine additional diseases, and a 16% budget increase in 2010 for VA, that is the largest in over 30 years, and which has been followed by a 2011 VA budget request that increases that record budget by an additional 7.6%.

To give our Veterans further assurance that health reform legislation will not affect their health care systems, the Chairmen of five House committees, including VA Chairman Bob Filner and Armed Services Chairman Ike Skelton, have just issued a joint letter reaffirming that the health reform legislation as written would protect those receiving care through all TRICARE and VA programs.

New ID Card System

A new ID card system is coming to VA NWHCS. This is a national program. Equipment has been installed; training has been held for sponsors, registrars and issuers of the new ID cards.

All employees, contractors, providers, volunteers and affiliates will be required to either have a new employee ID card or flash pass. A flash pass is typically provided to vendors and contractors who do not require security clearances or access to our computers.

This is going to be implemented in two steps. The first step is issuing ID cards to new employees. The second step is to issue new ID cards for existing employees. This is anticipated to take about 13 to 14 months to complete. Information on how the new cards will be issued will be provided soon.

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.