



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Will Ackerman – Public Affairs Officer  
VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System  
4101 Woolworth Ave. (00PA)  
Omaha, NE 68105  
Office: 402-995-4719  
Cell: 402-332-6780  
Email: [William.Ackerman@va.gov](mailto:William.Ackerman@va.gov)  
Twitter: [twitter.com/VANWIHCS](https://twitter.com/VANWIHCS)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA](https://www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## Nebraska VA Rec Therapists Craft Solutions for Better Living

**OMAHA**, Neb. — Many people take for granted the joys of enjoying recreation activities in their daily lives. Two recreation therapists at the Department of Veterans Affairs are helping residents at its Community Living Center in Grand Island, Neb., enjoy activities in the community.

Between therapy sessions and doctor's appointments, residents at the center have an opportunity to explore their interests because of VA recreational therapists Ken Ward and Jody Powers.

They plan therapeutic activities to meet the individual needs of Veterans in the CLC, as well as those in the inpatient drug and alcohol abuse program.

The recreational therapy program offers social activities, movies, exercise programs such as Tai Chi, a garden club, walking club and community outings. Last summer, the Veterans went to the Nebraska State Fair in Grand Island and an air show in Lincoln, Neb.

Getting residents back out into the community helps them not feel so isolated.

Veterans at the CLC are there for short-stay rehabilitation, skilled-nursing care, respite and long-term care.

Feedback about program has been very positive, Ward said. "Just think about our own lives and the importance of stuff – our interests, things that we pursue individually. The same holds true for the Veterans getting treatment at the VA."

The program helps augment the other therapies the Veterans receive. The activities are designed to provide them increased activity to help them on physical and emotional levels.

Ward uses that knowledge to help design individual programs for the Veterans, as well as the group activities. He was able to set up one Veteran with a volunteer position at the Grand Island Humane Society after learning the Veteran had volunteered at his hometown shelter.

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Many Veterans, including John Beach, an Army Veteran who enjoys woodworking projects and playing music, said the recreation program brings a lot of happiness and peace to those at the CLC.

“It’s an extremely valuable asset to the hospital up here,” Beach said. “The care that Mr. Ward, Ken, does for us guys is extraordinary. The gentleman goes so far out of his way to do things for us. He should receive an award for as much as he does. He goes way beyond what most workers ever go.”

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System’s mission is to honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. VA NWIHCS employees serve more than 161,000 Veterans in Nebraska, western Iowa and portions of Kansas and Missouri. The system includes a tertiary medical center in Omaha and a Community Living Center in Grand Island, Neb. Community-based outpatient clinics are located in Lincoln, Grand Island, North Platte, Norfolk, and Bellevue, Neb., and Shenandoah, Iowa; and a contract outreach clinic in O’Neill, Neb. For more information, visit [www.nebraska.va.gov](http://www.nebraska.va.gov).

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