

the link

APRIL
2014



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

6 VITAL
PARTNERS IN
COMPREHENSIVE
CARE





In the month of April, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System and other VAs around the nation recognize several awareness events.

This year's theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, "You are not alone: VA supports survivors of military sexual trauma," highlights the fact that one in four women and one in 100 men who are seen in VA have experienced military sexual trauma. This type of trauma is more likely than combat trauma to

result in symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. It can affect the mental and physical health of Veterans for years.

Every VA facility has an MST coordinator; all Veterans who have experienced MST are eligible for free treatment. We need to spread this message and ensure Veterans receive the care they need. Every staff member has the power to help.

We also celebrate our volunteers in April. Throughout the year, NWIHCS' more than 700 volunteers, many of them Veterans themselves, work to provide added services and comforts to our patients. Almost 100,000 hours were donated across our campuses during the past year. Volunteers escort patients throughout the facilities, drive Veterans to and from appointments and perform many other much-needed services. Voluntary Service also is always on the lookout for more volunteers to provide and expand services.

"Building a Culture of Integrity" will be the focus of Compliance and Ethics Week at the end of April. Integrity is essential in all of the work we do at VA. The theme highlights how each employee's personal integrity impacts Veterans' care. Activities and informational events will be planned throughout the week to stress the importance of nurturing a culture of integrity year-round.

These awareness events draw attention to the many programs, people and pieces of information it is important for Veterans and staff to know about so we can fulfill our mission of providing exceptional care to Veterans. Keep an eye out for more information throughout the month.

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FACT: APRIL'S ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH IS INTENDED TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING, REDUCE STIGMA, AND ENCOURAGE ORGANIZATIONS TO FOCUS ON ALCOHOLISM AND ALCOHOL-RELATED ISSUES. VA OFFERS AN ANONYMOUS, SELF-GUIDED ONLINE TOOL THAT ALLOWS VETERANS TO DEVELOP A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR DRINKING, INCLUDING ANY RISKS IT MIGHT POSE TO THEIR HEALTH. VISIT WWW.MYHEALTH.VA.GOV.

Cover: Julie Pettiford, a pharmacy technician, fills a prescription at the Lincoln VA clinic. NWHCS employs more than 100 pharmacists and pharmacy technicians across its sites. Photo by Bruce Thiel.



the link

CONTENTS

“It is an honor to serve our Veterans. Their sacrifices should not go unnoticed. I am grateful to be able to help them with their civilian careers.”

Linda Todd
Human Resources | Grand Island CBOC



Meet an Employee | VA NWHCS Training Center Grand Opening



A Superhero Among Us: VA Nurse Coordinates Potential Organ Recovery



VA Pharmacists: Vital Partners in Comprehensive Care



Hitting the Road to Increase Awareness About Benefits and Services



VA Views | VA Removes Annual Income Reporting Requirement



This magazine is an authorized publication for VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (VA NWHCS). Contents of The Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, or the Department of Veterans Affairs. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the VA NWHCS Public Affairs Office.

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The Link online.



MEET

darrell reimers

Housekeeping Aide
GRAND ISLAND
CBOC



How long have you been at the VA?

"Two years."

What does your job entail?

"Keeping the facility looking good for our Veterans."

What do you like best about your job?

"I enjoy interacting with the Veterans. Each one of them has a story to tell."

What do you like to do when you are not at work?

"My job keeps me busy, but I enjoy traveling, baseball and fishing."

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and upcoming events

VA NWIHCS TO HOST Training Center GRAND OPENING

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

During March, Education held a contest to name the combined simulation center and medical library. The newly named VA Professional Education Resources Center will be officially revealed at an April 24 open house to celebrate the new space and showcase the technology and information it houses. With the opening, staff throughout the facility will have a centralized location where they will be able to keep up-to-date on procedures and equipment.

Although the center hasn't yet celebrated its opening, nursing, pulmonary staff and others have already begun scheduling training. A resident thanked Kami Willett, RN, the simulation center coordinator, after a recent training with the crash carts. During a code overnight, the resident knew exactly how to operate the equipment because of the training completed in the simulation center.

That is the importance of practice, Willett said, so procedures go smoothly. If something unexpected happens, providers know how to handle it because they have familiarity with the situation through simulations.

Veterans and staff are invited to stop the VA Professional Education Resources Center, on the third floor of the Omaha VAMC, between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. April 24 to learn more about the training and education offered.



Photo by Kami Willett

Dr. Ann Polich, associate chief of staff for patient safety, demonstrates how to use an ultrasound on a mannequin to Aaron Moore, RN; Alia Creason, RN; and Sue Needham, RN, during a previous simulation open house.

SUPERHEROES AMONG US

VA STAFF COORDINATE POTENTIAL ORGAN RECOVERY

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

Staff at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System recently experienced a first – a patient eligible to be an organ donor. Not only was the Veteran eligible, but according to his family, it was his wish. Staff coordinated with the Nebraska Organ Recovery System to prepare the patient and family for what would come. One nurse in particular worked closely with the family, NORS and administration at VA NWIHCS to coordinate the organ retrieval. For his efforts, Kirt Ringler, RN, was presented with the Nebraska Organ Recovery Green Cape Award.

NORS coordinator Cheryl Jarosz read the award in front of Intensive Care Unit staff, NWIHCS leaders and Ringler's wife March 6 during a surprise ceremony in the ICU:

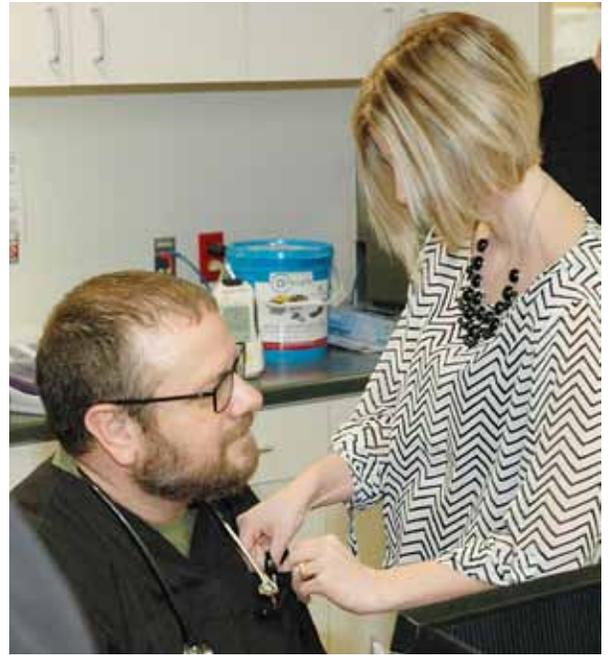
“During the NORS case that began on Feb. 20, Kirt was a constant champion along the way, pushing the difficult conversations all the way up through the administrative channels. Every step along the way, Kirt remained helpful, passionate and vested in the donation process. He was amazingly attentive to the patient’s family while also meeting the needs of the NORS staff. While this donation was not able to be completed, Kirt was a pioneer for the VA hospital, and will be a hero for the donor families and recipients that are served through this hospital in the future.”

The future is what staff in the ICU and other areas at NWIHCS are working toward. Behind the scenes, Eileen Broich, RN, MSN, CNOR, operating room nurse manager, worked with staff over the course of several days after being notified of the possibility for an organ recovery to make sure the OR was ready for the procedure. Once all staff were alerted, Sterile Processing Service was readied to prepare specialized instruments from NORS. Broich had experience with organ recovery from a previous job and shared her experiences with staff.

Although the organ recovery was not completed due to medical reasons, the experience was a positive one for the units, Broich said. “The possibility of being able to contribute to other patients’ lives down the road is a significant one.”

While many organ recoveries happen in trauma centers, staff at VA NWIHCS said they expect to participate in more organ recovery cases in the future. 📌

For more information about organ donation in Nebraska, visit www.nedonation.org.



“Lots of lives are changed by organ donation. It’s huge.”

Kirt Ringler, RN



Photos by Anna Morelock

Top: Tisa Kreikemeier, clinical coordinator for the Nebraska Organ Recovery System, pins the Green Cape Award on Kirt Ringler, an RN in the Intensive Care Unit.

Above: Cheryl Jarosz, a NORS liaison, reads the commendation from the Green Cape Award for Kirt Ringler, RN. NORS staff surprised Ringler with the award, which recognized him for helping during a possible organ recovery.

VA Pharmacists: Vital Part

Pharmacists manning the windows at pharmacies in Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island facilities may be the most visible pharmacists at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, but they are not the only ones.

VA NWIHCs employs more than 100 pharmacy staff including pharmacists, residents and pharmacy technicians in ambulatory care clinics, inpatient pharmacy, oncology, the Community Living Center and more.

Since she began with VA NWIHCs 15 years ago, Lourdes Heuermann, PharmD, has seen the role of pharmacists expand so VA pharmacist are working at the top of their scope of practice, a reason many pharmacists are drawn to VA to work. Pharmacists were employed in ambulatory care clinics to monitor patients on blood thinners and help them manage their cholesterol. They also consulted often about medications with physicians. With the implementation of patient-aligned care teams, pharmacists were added to the teams, and they are often some of the first people patients meet when enrolling in VA for care.

Pharmacists review medications with patients, help them manage side effects and work with individuals to reach their goals in the management of many chronic diseases.

“I have worked a lot of different places, but I don’t think I could go back anywhere. I think the VA, just working with Veterans, is such an honor.”

Lourdes Heuermann, PharmD | Grand Island CBOC

Jennifer Rother, PharmD, a pharmacy resident in Omaha, said she hopes to join Heuermann and others as a full-time pharmacist at VA when her yearlong residency ends in June.

“When I first came into residency, that was my hope, to find out where I fit and what I liked because I like so many different things,” Rother said. “I’ve just come to conclude that I still like so many things in pharmacy, so my options are very open in terms of my career and future. I like both inpatient acute care and ambulatory care.”

“Because I am a Veteran, I just have a really special place in my heart for the patient population here. I’ve always wanted to work at a VA and give back to those Veterans who sacrificed so much for us.”

Jennifer Rother, PharmD | Omaha VAMC



Photo by Anna Morelock

Partners in Comprehensive Care

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

Being able to experience pharmacy in so many settings, including PACT, was one of the reasons Rother applied to complete her residency at VA NWIHCS. Another reason VA appealed to Rother was because of the camaraderie with her fellow Veterans. Rother was deployed with the Army National Guard to Iraq where she was injured in 2006. As a part of VA's vocational rehabilitation program, she attended pharmacy school.

It is important pharmacists who work at VA understand the importance of the mission, said Janelle Wormuth, PharmD, NWIHCS' chief of Pharmacy.

Often times, pharmacists are able to meet with patients more often, in between visits with their physicians and to provide patient education. In fiscal year 2013, pharmacists completed more than

75,000 clinic visits in Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island combined. Outpatient pharmacists filled more than 200,000 of the 1.5 million prescriptions written during the year. The remainder were filled through centralized facilities and mailed to Veterans. For NWIHCS' inpatients, the pharmacy filled more than 130,000 intravenous and other medications during FY13. 

“Pharmacists build great relationships with the Veterans, and they help providers with the vast questions that medications bring to a visit. Patients should always talk to the pharmacist about all of their new medications or any changes in medications, even if they've been on them a long time.”

Janelle Wormuth, PharmD
VA NWIHCS' Pharmacy Chief



Caption: Lourdes Huermann visits with Veteran James Dealey about his prescriptions during an appointment at the Grand Island clinic. PACT pharmacists help patients monitor many disease states and reach their goals managing ailments such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, thyroid disease, and many others.

Hitting the Road

TO INCREASE AWARENESS ABOUT BENEFITS AND SERVICES

Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System Outreach and Retention Committee is collaborating with the Lincoln Vet Center to reach out to Veterans.

“The Lincoln Vet Center Mobile Vet Center is tasked with outreach in all 93 (Nebraska) counties this year,” said Kirk Beute, readjustment counselor, and MVC driver.

Dr. Tommy Sowers, former VA Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, announced the initiative during a visit to Nebraska in February.

Although the NWHCS O & R committee sends employees to community events, the built-in opportunity to reach Veterans in every county through the Mobile Vet Center initiative will provide extended reach.

Recent outreach took the MVC and NWHCS employees to Alma, David City, and Ainsworth, Neb. They also participated in a St. Patrick’s Day Parade in O’Neill, Neb. This provided an additional opportunity to increase awareness about the NWHCS outpatient clinic in O’Neill.



Photo by Jody Ring

Kim Moore and Kirk Beute from the Lincoln Vet Center pose with the Mobile Vet Center in Ainsworth, Neb., during a recent outreach event. The Mobile Vet Center’s mission for the year is to visit each county in Nebraska to share information with Veterans about their VA benefits.

“(Outreach) provides an opportunity for us to meet with Veterans who have not enrolled in the VA and enroll them through personal contact.”

Jody Ring | NWHCS Minority Veteran Program Coordinator and Returning Veterans Transition Patient Advocate

“It’s important to conduct outreach, since Veterans in rural counties may not be informed about VA benefits or services,” Ring said.

“I also think it gives the rural community Veterans a feeling of pride that we actually come out to see how they are doing and ask them how the VA can help them,” Ring said.

No county event has been typical.

“We find that operating at a local government building parking lot or American Legion or VFW is best,” Beute said. “The most-common question is, ‘Am I eligible for health benefits?’”

“We have had excellent success, serving more Veterans than ever before,” Beute said. 📍

Upcoming Outreach Events:

April 11, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. VETERANS’ FAIR
Indian Creek Museum; Emerson, Iowa

April 12, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; April 13, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
OMAHA HEALTH & WELLNESS EXPO
Century Link Center, Omaha

April 12, 7:30 to 11 a.m. BEATRICE HEALTH FAIR
Southeast Community College-Beatrice Trauma Center

May 3, 6:30 p.m. CREIGHTON BASEBALL, TRIBUTE TO MILITARY/VETERANS NIGHT
TD Ameritrade Park, Omaha

What is your favorite way to

April 16 is National Stress Awareness Day

relieve STRESS?



"To relieve stress, I like to go for a walk or do something fun with my kids."

Charla Rasmussen
Social Worker | Grand Island CBOC

"Watching sports ~ Go Seahawks!"

Brain Crytzer
Police Officer | Grand Island CBOC



"I spend time sewing quilts and with my three dogs."

Linda Bruning
Cardiology Case Manager | Omaha VAMC



"Anything outdoors like fishing and hunting."

Chad Bartholomew, PharmD
Pharmacy | Lincoln CBOC



"I like to play with my dogs – two German short hairs – it helps me to relax after a long day at work."

Sara Weyers
Nuclear Medicine Technician | Omaha VAMC

VA Removes Annual Income Reporting Requirement Eliminates Burden on Veterans, Improves Customer Service

VA News Release

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs is eliminating the annual requirement for most Veterans enrolled in VA's health care system to report income information beginning in March 2014. Instead, VA automatically will match income information obtained from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration.

"Eliminating the requirement for annual income reporting makes our health care benefits easier for Veterans to obtain."

Eric K. Shinseki | Secretary of Veterans Affairs

"This change will reduce the burden on Veterans, improve customer service and make it much easier for Veterans to keep their health care eligibility up-to-date," said Shinseki.

Some Veterans applying for enrollment for the first time are still required to submit income information. No change is being made in VA's long-standing policy to provide no-cost care to indigent Veterans, Veterans with catastrophic medical conditions, Veterans with a disability rating of 50 percent or higher, or for conditions that are officially rated as "service-connected."

VA encourages Veterans to continue to use the health benefits renewal form to report changes in their personal information, such as address, phone numbers, dependents, next of kin, income and health insurance. ⓘ

For more information, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost or call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).



events WHAT'S GOING ON?

- April 1-7 Medication Safety Week
- April 1 Employee Health Fair, Omaha
Veteran Service Officer VA Update, Grand Island
Veterans Freedom Music Festival Planning Meeting, Lincoln
- April 2 VA Food Pantry, Omaha
Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
- April 5 VA team to complete Race for Grace, Grand Island
- April 6-13 National Volunteer Week
- April 7 VA Food Pantry, Lincoln
Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
Veteran Clothing Drive, Lincoln
- April 9 Former POW Recognition Day
Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
- April 14 Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
- April 15 Tax Day
- April 16 VA Food Pantry, Omaha
Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
- April 18 VA Coffeehaus, Lincoln
- April 20-26 Administrative Professionals Week
- April 21 Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
- April 22 Veterans Freedom Music Festival Planning Meeting, Lincoln
- April 23 Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
VA and Community Book Club, Lincoln
- April 24 VA Professional Education Resource Center Open House, Omaha
- April 28 Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha
- April 28-May 2 National Compliance and Ethics Week
- April 30 Veteran Exercise Class, Omaha

For more information about VA NWIHCS events, visit www.nebraska.va.gov.



employees | NEW | LEAVING

HELLO

Feb. 9 to March 8

William Alekseyevets, Lab

Jane Angeroth, Surgery

Taylor Ashmore, Imaging

Beth Bamesberger,
Extended Care and Rehabilitation

Jurry Batangan, Inpatient Nursing

Sarah Bedtelyon, Inpatient Nursing

Mary Belt, Inpatient Nursing

Kelly Caverzagie, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

Peggy Ellingrud, Outpatient Nursing

Alyssa Evans, Imaging

Donald Haferbier, Inpatient Nursing

Angela Hamilton, Inpatient Nursing

Katie Long, Inpatient Nursing

Sheila Love, Inpatient Nursing

Stephanie Massing,
Veterans Canteen Service

Stephanie Meyers, Surgery

Jodi Molnar, Mental Health

Jesika Nussbaum, Inpatient Nursing

John Payne, Biomedical Engineering

Maria Papageorgiou, Prosthetics

Carmen Peshek-Kiolbasa, Logistics

Valerie Reviere, Mental Health

Lois Sabata, Veterans Canteen Service

Teresa Scherff, Grand Island Nursing

Rex Schmidt,
Extended Care and Rehabilitation

Nicole Schneider, Mental Health

Heather Shelley, Business Office

Jason Shiffermiller, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

Timothy Terrell, Business Office

Michelle Williams, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

Jessica Zoerb, Inpatient Nursing

LEAVING

Jacqueline Bieker, Human Resources

Ernest Gutha, Chaplain Service

Shelly Menard, Inpatient Nursing

Tamara Mielock, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

Tania Monette, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

Michael Moninger, Environmental Management Service

Jack Nelson, Police

Cameron Pesek,
Veterans Canteen Service

Julie Schultze, Lincoln Nursing

Patricia Thompson, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

Laura Walklin, Imaging

Tia Whalum, Inpatient Nursing

RETIREMENT

Claudia Brown, Finance

William Corum, Nurse Executive's Office

Gwendolyn Crossley,
Food Production

Edward Kerrigan, Inpatient Nursing

Gary Kilian, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine

Kathleen Nesiba, Business Office

National Compliance & Ethics Week

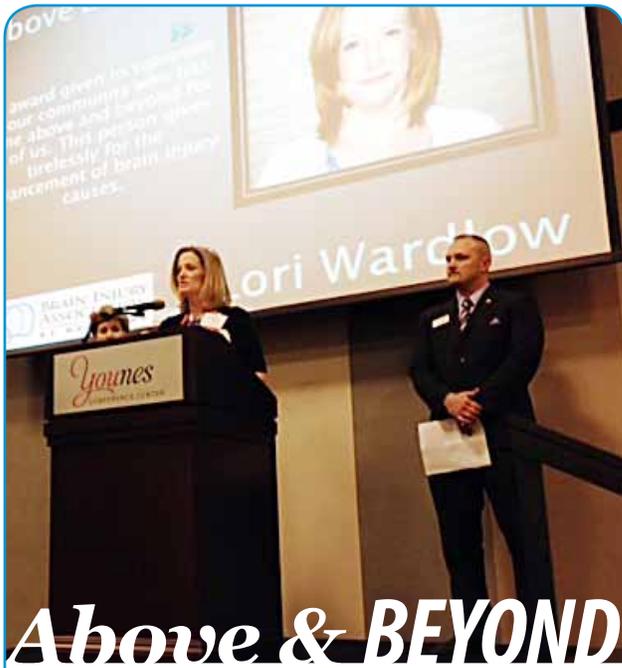
April 28-May 2, 2014



Building a Culture of Integrity

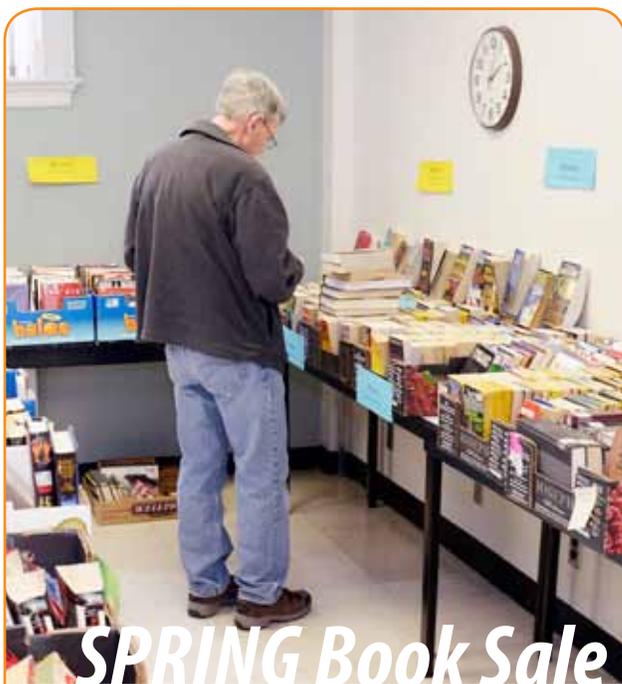
Have a business compliance or ethics question?

Contact your CBI Officer/Liaison or IntegratedEthics® Program Officer



Above & BEYOND

Lori Wardlow, OEF/OIF/OND Administrative Officer, was recently awarded the Above and Beyond Award from the Nebraska Brain Injury Association for her work with Veterans. The Above and Beyond Award is given to a community member who has gone above and beyond and gives tirelessly for the advancement of brain injury causes. According to the award write-up, "with a contagious smile and a willing heart, Lori Wardlow has been one of the most influential change makers in the recent history of brain injury in Nebraska." The award cites Wardlow's work, not only helping Veterans with brain injuries and their families, but also traveling across the state to educate employers, educators and community leaders about brain injury. (Courtesy Photo)



SPRING Book Sale

Voluntary Service in Lincoln hosted its Spring Book Sale in March raising \$606.15, which will go to support its programs and activities for Veterans in Lincoln. The next book sale is planned for October. (Photo by Bruce Thiel)

Bellevue CBOC to Relocate in June 2014

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System's Bellevue Community-Based Outpatient Clinic will move in June to a new location in the same community.

The clinic is currently at 2501 Capehart Road, in the lower level of the Ehrling Bergquist Clinic at Offutt Air Force Base. The new location will be in the Bellevue Professional Center at 2206 Longo Dr. in Bellevue.

Veterans currently served at the Bellevue clinic will continue to have access to a full scope services at the new location including primary care, mental health, telehealth, telemental health and consultative services. The VA provided health care services to more than 2,200 Veterans at the clinic in Bellevue last year.

Veterans who are not enrolled but are interested in VA health care services at the Bellevue clinic are encouraged to stop in and talk to the staff between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, or to call 402-591-4500.

Veterans who are not enrolled in VA health care can apply for enrollment at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting the Omaha VA Medical Center at 4101 Woolworth Ave.

Become a Volunteer

Volunteer opportunities are found in the medical center, and community-based outpatient clinics.

The goal is to meet the needs of our Veterans while meeting your interests, skills, and talents as a volunteer.



Call Voluntary Service to See What You Can Offer:

Omaha: 402-995-3283 or 3284 | **Lincoln:** 402-489-7938 | **Grand Island:** 308-382-3660, ext. 2146



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

IN RECOVERING FROM
MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

VA CAN HELP.

VA has free services available for Veterans who experienced sexual assault or harassment during their military service.

No documentation is needed.

You may be able to receive services even if you are not eligible for other VA care.

www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp



FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT YOUR FACILITY'S MST COORDINATOR



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