VA NWIHC S Seeks Veterans for Focus Group

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

VA NWIHC S is hosting several focus groups 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 next focus group is scheduled:
June 1, 5 to 6 p.m.
VA NWIHC S, Grand Island

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.

Two Employees Help Launch National Nursing Award Program at Walter Reed Medical Center

Two employees of VA NWIHC S, Omaha helped Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. to become the first in the Department of Defense (DoD) to participate in a national program to recognize extraordinary nurses.

Kami Willett and Tysa Ferguson helped launched the DAISY Award for extraordinary nurses at VA NWIHC S, Omaha last September—the first VA facility VA to do so.

DAISY, which means Disease Attacking the Immune System, is a national awards program recognized by about 600 hospitals in the United States and in Saudi Arabia.

Willett and Ferguson were inspired by the meaning behind the DAISY Award and decided to try to expand the recognition to nurses at DoD health care facilities. They felt the logical place to start was at Walter Reed, -Continued on page 2
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where Ferguson’s mother, Christie, is a clinical nurse and officer in charge of the emergency department.

After some coordination efforts, the award program was adopted by Walter Reed staff; they awarded their first DAISY May 14. Willett and Ferguson both attended the award ceremony to help honor the first DoD DAISY recipient.

“Presenting the first DAISY Award to a military nurse was an honor and a thrill we will never forget,” said Bonnie Barnes, President and Co-founder of the DAISY Foundation. “Our goal is for The DAISY Award to soon be recognizing military nurses in all services everywhere.”

The award, presented in collaboration with The American Organization of Nurse Executives, is part of the DAISY Foundation’s program to recognize the super-human efforts nurses perform every day.

The not-for-profit DAISY Foundation is based in Glen Ellen, Calif., and was established by family members in memory of J. Patrick Barnes. Patrick died from complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura, a little known but not uncommon auto-immune disease.

Barnes praised the efforts of Willett and Ferguson in bringing the program to Walter Reed and VA NWIHCS, Omaha, calling them “Power DAISY Coordinators.”

Willett, a program manager in patient care at VA NWIHCS, Omaha, served on active duty and in the Air Force Reserves as a medic for 12 years and as a nurse for almost 10 years. Ferguson is a nurse recruiter.

The awards program recognizes nurses not only for their clinical skills, but their compassion, professionalism, team work and their commitment to patient care. Nominations are accepted from fellow nurses, patients, family, visitors, doctors, staff and volunteers.

### Veterans Outreach Open House

A Veterans Interagency Outreach Open House will be held June 4, noon to 7 p.m.; and June 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Broken Bow, Neb., at Veteran’s Memorial, Inc., 416 S. First Avenue.

The program brings representatives from the following agencies to allow Veterans in rural communities to learn about VA benefits and to talk one-on-one with enrollment counselors: VA NWIHCS, VA Regional Office, Vet Centers, Nebraska Transition Office, State of Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, and county Veterans service officers. For more information, call Cindy Niemack-Brown at Grand Island, ext. 2287.

### Personnel Notes

Kathleen Amyot will become Acting Associate Chief of Medicine (ACOM) for VA NWIHCS, Grand Island June 1. As a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force Medical Corps, Amyot served as an AFB Chief of Medical Services and also taught in a family practice residency program. She joined VA NWIHCS, Grand Island in 2007. Colene Andersen has decided to step down from her position as ACOM for VA NWIHCS, Grand Island, after providing outstanding leadership there for the past nine months.

Timothy Longacre has joined the Shenandoah Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) as lead physician.

Candance Hoaby is the new nurse manager for the Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at VA NWIHCS, Omaha. Candy has been with VA about eighteen months, functioning as Quality Program Analyst, RN.

Suzanne Huerta is the new nurse manager for the Mental Health Recovery Center at VA NWIHCS, Omaha. Her career in mental health spans more than 30 years; 24 years of them are at this facility.

Christine Ellett, ICU Nurse Manager, will be moving into a new position in the Safety Department as Harm Prevention Nurse effective June 6. This position was created to help assure the highest quality care for Veterans across our facility. Dean Degner will serve as acting nurse manager for the ICU.

### Leading at All Levels

The following employees and their mentors have completed the VA NWIHCS 2009-2010 Leading at All Levels Program and were recognized at an awards ceremony and luncheon May 11:

- Cynthia Belgrave (mentor Charlotte Thiessen); Robert Bennett (mentor Katie Landwehr); Vanessa Bornemeier (mentor Cathie Schmit); Karen Hickle (mentor Dennis Moore); Michelle Russell (mentor Greg Atchley); Nancy Vohl (mentor Jean Meyer Hoagland); Robert Wiegert (mentor Denise Harrison) and Kami Willett (mentor Pat Moffatt).

Please congratulate these individuals on their achievement.

From left: 2009-2010 Leading at All Levels graduates Bob Bennett; Michelle Russell; Bob Wiegert; Nancy Vohl; and Cynthia Belgrave.

Not pictured: Vanessa Bornemeier; Karen Hickle; and Kami Willett.
Omaha Construction
The remodeling of the Cardiac Cath Lab-B is complete and the unit is open. The renovation of the Library is also complete with the opening tentatively scheduled for June 1.

The PET-CT (Positron Emission Tomography) site prep project is underway. This is a new and updated piece of equipment for the Radiology Department. Construction is expected to be complete early next year.

The remodeling of Building 6 (Dental Clinic) project continues with work in progress on the interior and the new addition. The project is scheduled for completion in November.

Projects starting in June include the replacement of the kitchen coolers/freezers and the sound-proofing project in the Clinical Research Unit, in the C Wing on the first floor.

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

The Polytrauma lease in the Center Mall has been signed and work is progressing. This area will support patients with multiple, related afflictions and offer a newer way to approach the treatment.

Questions should be directed to Roy Mockelstrom at Omaha, ext. 4449.

Focus Group for Women Veterans
Women Veterans in the Lincoln area are invited to attend a Women Veterans Focus Group meeting June 18 at VA NWIHCS Lincoln, 600 South 70 Street. The meeting 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 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.

VA Migrating from Employee Express to myPay
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:
• MyPay provides users confirmation of changes/elections within three days versus 14 days with EEX
• MyPay allows VA employees to view their LES on Thursday before payday
• MyPay allows VA employees who are retired military or Reservists to access their military and civilian accounts with one PIN
• MyPay 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, 2010, and W-2’s for calendar years 2006 through 2009.

Omaha Blood Drive
The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive June 16 at VA NWIHCS, Omaha, from 7 a.m. 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. GIVE.LIFE (1-800-448-3543) to schedule your blood donation appointment.

Disaster Preparedness Education
The American Red Cross and staff of VA NWIHCS’s Emergency Management Department will have a booth in the lobby of VA NWIHCS, Omaha June 10, from 8 a.m. to noon to provide Veterans and staff with information on disaster preparedness for individuals and families.

Employee Health Fair
VA NWIHCS, Grand Island will hold an employee health fair Wednesday, June 2 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Building 6, the main lobby, and the fitness center. Visit more than 17 booths with health and wellness information.

Participation by vendors does not constitute an endorsement or an approval by the VA of their services or products.

Joint Commission Visits VA NWIHCS
The Joint Commission (JC) survey team conducted an unannounced survey of VA NWIHCS, May 17 through May 21 to assess our compliance with JC standards and our ability to provide safe and high-quality health care. The survey provided us with an opportunity to demonstrate how VA NWIHCS is providing our Veterans the best care anywhere.

The Joint Commission accredits and certifies more than 17,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. Joint Commission accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization’s commitment to meeting performance standards.

The Joint Commission conducts unannounced surveys to:
• Enhance the credibility of the accreditation process by ensuring that surveyors observe organization performance under normal circumstances.

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• Help health care organizations focus on providing safe, high quality care at all times.
• Affirm the expectation of continuous standards compliance both by JC of its accredited organizations and by these organizations of themselves.
• Reduce the unnecessary costs that health care organizations incur to prepare for survey.
• Address public concerns that JC receives an accurate reflection of the quality and safety of care.

For more information about the JC and their mission, visit their Web site http://www.jointcommission.org/AboutUs/Fact_Sheets/unannounced.htm.

Employees Receive
4-Hour Time Off Award

Congratulations to VA NWIHCS 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.

NAMI Walk

The National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) will be holding its annual walk June 12 at Elmwood Park in Omaha. NAMI is a grassroots mental health organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness.

The 3.1 mile walk will begin at 10 a.m. There is no fee for the walk, but walkers must be registered. Veterans and staff are invited to join “Team Salute” and participate in this fun event.

Contact Jan Carlin at Omaha ext. 4987 if you are interested. To register online, visit http://www.nami.org/walkTemplate.cfm?section=NAMIWALKS&template=/customsource/namiwalks/teampage.cfm&teamID=18265.

Parking Reminders

Parking Lot 1 at VA NWIHCS, Omaha is reserved for only patient and guest parking from 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Two shuttles still provide transportation to and from the main parking lot and the Center Mall. Call for a ride to your car: (402) 547-6972 and (402) 547-8010.

Welcome Home Event
Planned for July

The Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom (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.

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.

Do You Know
the HIPAA Policy?

Employees are responsible for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of their patients and patient information.

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.

You should only access VA patient medical records if you are authorized and have a legitimate official need. All VA employees receive HIPAA training annually through Learning Management System. Violation of this policy can lead to a federal offense and incarceration.

If you have questions about accessing patient medical records, or the HIPAA policy, contact the VA NWIHCS Privacy Officer at Omaha ext. 3427.

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 1 (877) 222-8387 (VETS) or visit the VA health eligibility Web site at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

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://www.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.