



North Chicago VA Welcomes Naval Hospital Great Lakes as Second Phase of Partnership Is Completed



Alexandar Todd, 17 month old Navy dependent is seen at the NCVAMC Emergency Department. Alexandar was the first pediatric patient seen at NCVAMC. Alexandar with his father James while, Deborah Davis, nursing asst. looks on. Alexandar's Mom Jeannette is active duty Navy.

After 46 years of Naval Service, Naval Hospital Great Lakes (NHGL) shifted their inpatient medical, surgery

and emergency services to the North Chicago VA Medical Center (NCVAMC). On June 1st, NHGL no longer provided emergency services, and eligible beneficiaries were directed to the NCVAMC for all emergency medical needs. Significant multidisciplinary planning has taken place among combined VA-Navy teams to ensure a smooth transition for beneficiaries. Captain Michael Anderson, Commanding Officer, NHGL, says "Our surgeons have been active in the planning teams for this June 1st move to the VA and look forward to practicing in such a state of the art facility." This planning continues as additional programs are implemented. Also on June 1st, NHGL name was changed to Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes (NHCGL).

"These are very exciting times as we continue to move forward with our partnership," says Patrick Sullivan, Director, North Chicago VAMC, as this marks the second of three phases in a partnership between NHGL and NCVAMC. To prepare for this, the VA funded a \$13 million expansion and renovation of their emergency and operating room departments. This provides state of the art facilities including four new operating rooms and a substantially expanded emergency department with 15 exam rooms. The renovated Emergency Department will feature specialized areas for pediatrics, OB-GYN, ENT, trauma, procedures, orthopedics, respiratory isolation, a pediatric waiting room, and a dedicated radiology suite. A separate elevator has been dedicated for the arriving surgical patients outside Building 133, taking them directly into the surgery registration area. With the addition of pediatrics, NCVAMC will be implementing new security measures to ensure for a safe environment for visitors and patients.

In any health care setting parking and access is a concern of everyone. NCVAMC will have designated

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parking for emergency department and surgery patients, and will expand existing outpatient parking by 50 spaces.



The second phase of the integration marks a milestone for federal healthcare with this being the first such relationship between VA & DoD. This integration will mean VA & DoD personnel will be working together to provide top quality care to veterans, active duty and their family members. In addition, for the first time in a VA facility, pediatric care will be provided for Navy family members by Navy pediatricians. Alexandar Todd, 17 month old Navy dependent was the first pediatric patient seen at NCVAMC when he arrived at the Emergency Department on June 1st at 8:30 a.m.



The first phase of the partnership was accomplished in October 2003, when NHGL shifted its inpatient mental health to NCVAMC. The last phase of the partnership will be a \$118 million DoD construction

project to include a new federal ambulatory care center co-located with NCVAMC. This integration will provide opportunities for direct sharing collaboration and coordination of health care resources. The new federal health care facility will have an integrated VA and DoD professional and support staff. The primary goals of this partnership are to improve access, patient satisfaction, and timely delivery of services for VA & DoD beneficiaries while enhancing and expanding health care services, reducing redundancies, utilizing economies of scale in support processes, and reducing costs. The partnership also addresses the unique missions and identities of both organizations and attempts to preserve their primary missions while seeking to achieve the objectives already mentioned. "I want to thank the staff at NCVAMC for the countless hours and dedication they gave to ensure the success of this partnership", says Patrick Sullivan.

This partnership model that North Chicago VAMC & Naval Hospital Great Lakes are creating will be used for future VA/DoD joint ventures. The full integration of this new federal health care system is scheduled for late 2009 or early 2010.

Memorial Day Programs

Proud to be in the Parade



For the second year in a row, Hines participated in the Chicago Memorial Day Parade, held downtown on Saturday of the Memorial Day weekend. The Hines Voluntary Service committee generously donated funds for the facility to rent a flag float and enter a group in the parade.



Employees and their families enthusiastically showed up downtown in their Hines t-shirts to march in the parade as a show of support for the veterans and the facility.

Employees carried banners saying “It’s All About the Vet at Hines VA” and “Hines VA Welcomes our Iraqi Veterans; Now it’s Our Turn to Serve.” The crowd enthusiastically cheered as the Hines float passed the reviewing stand. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace, was a speaker at the opening ceremonies, as well as Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and a number of recently-returned Iraqi veterans.



For the ninth year in a row, the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center participated in Chicago’s Memorial Day Parade on May 27 through its Walk-A-Thon, which raises thousands of dollars annually for VA Voluntary Service.



Over 60 veterans and employees marched in the parade alongside several medical center buses that accommodated disabled veterans. With more than 25,000 participants and 250 marching units, Chicago’s Memorial Day Parade is considered the largest in the country.

The Tomah VA’s Memorial Day program was held on Friday, May 26 in front of Building 400.

The color guard from the Challenge Academy at Fort McCoy presented the colors at the beginning of the program.



Ben, Ethan and Andrew Frei (left to right), students at Tomah Senior High School, sang the national anthem after several patriotic numbers performed by the Tomah Senior High School Band.



About 30 cadets from the ChalleNGe Academy escorted patients to the program. The shade of the trees provided relief from the bright sunshine.



ChalleNGe Academy representatives Cadet Sergeant Major Jake Peterson, left, and Cadet First Sergeant Jake Heider led the program's "Tribute to the Fallen." The cadets read "The Honor Roll:" the names of the 58 men and women from Wisconsin who have been killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF - Iraq) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF - Afghanistan).

Parents of Tomah Marine Sgt. Andy Stevens stood throughout the tribute. While the names were read, Joseph Lanska, a senior at Tomah Senior High and a VA volunteer, played patriotic music on the electric keyboard.

Pastor Bill Rice, a retired Air Force chaplain and senior pastor at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Tomah, was the guest speaker. Sgt. Andy Stevens' funeral was held at Gloria Dei. Pastor Rice was with the Stevens family from the time they learned of their son's death and officiated at Sgt. Stevens' funeral. In his speech, Pastor Rice said, "The world we live in is

not always the world we wish it were. For whatever reason, those forces which we understand to be forces of right and justice are not always honored and not always respected. And sometimes we have to fight, and we have to sacrifice, and we have to be willing to pay a price, because, freedom is not free."

The Tomah VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) committee will purchase a Legacy Stone from the Highground in Neillsville in honor of all of Wisconsin's military personnel who have paid the ultimate price in OIF/OEF. Families of the six servicemen killed from the Tomah VA's primary service area were invited to the program. Pat Flanders, VAVS Executive Committee chairperson, presented the families with a certificate during the tribute.

Members of Tomah's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1382 provided the military rites at the conclusion of the program, followed by "Taps" performed by Michael Derhammer.



CARES Update

VAMC Iron Mountain's Nursing Home Care Unit

Construction is underway for the new VAMC Iron Mountain Nursing Home Care Unit (NHCU). The original NHCU was designed in the 1970s and was located on the sixth floor of the main building. The new unit will be located on the first floor and will offer larger private patient rooms with private bathrooms along with outside access. The area will be going from 9,600 square feet to 23,600 square feet. The renovation will also improve service to female patients and enhance protection of their privacy. These services along with others will greatly enhance the care for our patients.

JBVAMC “Tops Off” New Patient Bed Tower

The Jesse Brown VA Medical Center celebrated the “topping off” of its new patient bed tower on April 28 as the structure’s final beam was installed, completing the framework for the building which will open next year. Over 100 staff watched from the roof of the medical center’s parking garage and cheered as the beam was lifted into place by a crane. This was followed by a short performance by the Jesse Brown Gospel Choir.

Holding a “topping off” ceremony is standard in the construction trade, as is the placing of the American flag and an evergreen tree (symbolizing perpetuity) on the final beam before it is raised and installed.

The day before the ceremony, the 20-foot beam was placed in the medical center courtyard for employees and veterans to sign, giving almost 700 staff and patients the opportunity to permanently include their names in the building’s structure.



A total of 682 staff and veterans signed the final beam before it was installed in the medical center’s new patient bed tower, including (from left) Tyrone Davis, EMS; Carol Lane, Research Service; Karen Lenehan, Research Service; Ricardo English, Nursing Service and Lisa Murphy, Nursing Service.



With the installation of the framework finished, JBVAMC’s new patient bed tower is now 35 percent completed and on target to open in late 2007.

When completed, the inpatient addition will include 200 beds and the medical center’s surgical and intensive care suites. It is on target for completion late next year.

Network News

Hines

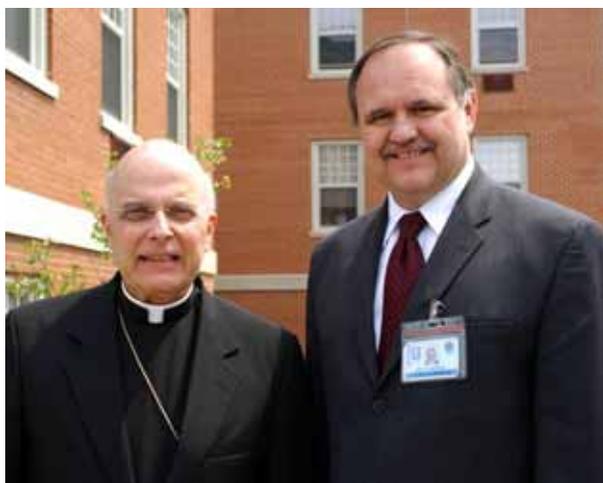
Catholic Charities Housing Opens on Hines Campus

Lt. Gov. Patrick Quinn, Illinois State Treasurer Judy Baar Topinka, and His Eminence Francis Cardinal George from the Archdiocese of Chicago, were all in attendance at a ceremony to celebrate a new Catholic Charities senior housing project opening on the Hines VA Campus.



The new residence, called the Bishop Goedert Residence, houses up to 70 low-income senior citizens in the Chicago area, with veterans receiving priority placement in the new apartments. Currently more than half the residents in the new building are veterans.

The Bishop Goedert Residence, which is a subsidized apartment complex located on the Hines VA Campus, is the first combined effort between a private agency, the State of Illinois and the federal government to serve Illinois veterans. Catholic Charities renovated and leased a previously unused building (Building 53) on the Hines campus to accommodate the program, which offers each participating veteran quality, affordable housing.



The Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital has a rich tradition and history of being on the cutting edge of services and clinical treatment. This project is also one of the first in the nation under the VA's Enhanced Use Lease initiative, which involves revitalizing unused buildings on VA campus.

"I am pleased to be a part of this initiative and to have had the opportunity to work closely with representatives of Catholic Charities, our healthcare network office, and officials in VA Central Office to make this project a reality," said Jack G. Hetrick, Hines Director, who spoke at the ceremony.

"I've said before that one of the things I like the best about this project is that it represents a win-win-win situation. Catholic Charities is able to lease some space in a key Chicago-area location, the VA is able to

put a vacant building to good use, and most importantly, our veterans and seniors will be the ultimate winners," Hetrick added.

All Employee Survey Will Spur Changes and Improvements

Over 2,000 Hines employees took the time to participate in this year's VHA All Employee survey. Hines employees enthusiastically provided the facility with feedback that will be used to make important changes to the culture and organization. Hines is already gearing up with teams of employees assigned to help various services and service lines in the facility address the results of the survey. The facility is committed to responding to the survey results from our most important resource...our employees.

Customer Service Activities

"It's All About the Vet" has been a highly publicized slogan at the Hines VA. All employees attended customer service training last year, focused on improving the level of service and professionalism provided to our patients. "It's All About the Vet" buttons which were distributed to all attendees at the training and the slogan can be found on banners, brochures and bulletin boards around the facility. Employees enthusiastically embraced the "It's All About the Vet" philosophy, working hard to raise our patient satisfaction scores.

In an attempt to better understand the needs of our patients, the Hines Service Excellence Committee began a program that involved calling patients within 48 hours of their discharge from the hospital. The calls are designed to solicit useful feedback from patients on how we can improve our services.

Feedback (both positive and negative) from the calls is shared directly with the providers and staff. The calls themselves have generated a lot of goodwill among the patients, who are happy to provide their feedback and have reported very positive experiences at the facility.

Iron Mountain

First Annual Performance Fair

The Iron Mountain VA Medical Center (VAMC) held its first annual Performance Improvement Fair on April 21-22, 2006, with approximately 200 people in attendance. The VAMC recognizes that increased performance dictates the improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of hospital operations. Staff members were asked to identify a problem and to describe the specific actions taken to improve the process or system. They had to support their actions by comparing data from the improved process to the baseline data. All employees were invited to submit a storyboard using the Plan, Do, Check, Act Performance Improvement Model. Cash prizes were awarded to the top 3 groups along with a People's Choice Award.

Six impressive projects were submitted:

- Improving Customer Service by Improving Communication
- Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) Analysis at Iron Mountain VAMC
- Advanced Surgical Access (ASA)
- Inpatient Nursing Monitor/Documentation Monitor
- Veteran Empowerment
- Keeping Our Patients on Their Feet - The Falling Star Program

The entries were judged by a panel of judges from the community.

The 1st place winner went to the "Keeping Our Patient's on Their Feet – The Falling Star Program." The staff found that there was not an organized way of identifying the patients that were at risk for falling at the medical center. The creators of the program include: Louise Faymonville-Scruggs, RN; Donna Kelly, LPN and Tania Fuller-Hautamaki, RN. Falling Stars have been created and are now placed on the doorways, beds, wheelchairs and walkers of the patients that are at high risk for falls. Using the Falling Stars program has improved communication, identification and care planning for the patients.



Janice M. Boss, medical center Director (right) is shown standing by the winners of the VA medical center's 2006 Performance Improvement Fair; L-R: Donna Kelly, LPN and Tania Fuller-Hautamaki, RN. The third member of the winning team, Louise Faymonville-Scruggs, RN is not pictured.

The VAMC Iron Mountain staff has once again shown the strong commitment they have to improving customer service and performance at the facility.

VA Community-Based Clinic Moves to New Location

The VA medical center in Iron Mountain, Michigan is proud to announce the new location for their Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Ironwood. The new location for the clinic will be at 629 West Cloverland Drive in Ironwood, located in the Sunnyside Plaza.

The VA staff includes a full-time physician, Dr. Kevin Kummerow, a full-time registered nurse, Kelli Stanczak, part-time registered nurse Deb Swartz, with Tamara Westeen and Amy Leinon as the Medical Support Assistants.

The CBOC is fully accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and maintains state-of-the art equipment and technology for primary care. Patients are referred for additional care if/as needed to the VA medical center in Iron Mountain.

Jesse Brown

Healthy Environment Promoted by JBVAMC “Green” Fair

Jesse Brown VAMC held a “Green” Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) Product Fair on April 11, attracting over 350 staff and 65 visitors interested to see what JBVAMC does to promote an ecologically healthy environment. The fair also included displays by 15 businesses that offer ecologically safe, energy efficient and environmentally friendly products, many designed specifically for the health care field.



Leroy Smith, EMS General Foreman (from left); Joe Bazil, EMS Assistant Chief; and Derrick Morrison, Industrial Hygienist, coordinated JBVAMC’s first “Green” Environmental Management System Product Fair, which promoted the use of safe, energy efficient and environmentally friendly products. They also solicited the donation of over 150 pairs of used sports shoes which will be recycled and used to rebuild playgrounds, tennis courts and running tracks.

To support National Green Environment Day, employees, veterans and guests were invited to donate old gym shoes or other sports shoes which they were no longer using. The shoes are being recycled, in conjunction with Nike and The Sports Authority, and used to rebuild playgrounds, tennis courts and running tracks. Over 150 pairs of shoes were contributed and anyone donating shoes was eligible to win a raffle prize of a 20” flat screen TV donated by VA Canteen Service.

JBVAMC has been a leader in ecological and environmental issues for many years. It initiated a waste reduction campaign to “Think Globally and Act Locally” over 15 years ago and received the 1999 Governor’s Pollution Prevention Award from the State of Illinois for its mercury and waste reduction programs after it reduced the amount of mercury in the facility by 90 percent.

National Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

JBVAMC held a program to commemorate National Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month on May 25, paying tribute to the 1.3 million Asian/Pacific Americans who are veterans as well as to the culture and heritage of the medical center’s diverse employee population.

The program included a parade of JBVAMC employees wearing traditional costumes from India, China, Pakistan, Japan, the Philippines and Hawaii as well as Filipino song and dance presentations. The keynote address was presented by Bernarda Lo Wong, Director of the Chinese American Service League.



Lena Leung, Pharm.D., displays traditional Japanese attire while participating in the Parade of Ethnic Costumes during JBVAMC’s annual Asian Pacific American Heritage Month celebration. Dr. Leung serves as co-chairperson of the medical center’s Asian American Pacific Islander Committee.

Throughout the month of May, the medical center displayed an Avenue of Flags in its ambulatory care atrium, with over 40 flags representing countries included among the Asian/Pacific American heritage.

Madison

VA adds a Specialty Clinic for Treatment of PTSD

The Mental Health Service line at VA Madison has added a specialty clinic for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for its veterans. The PTSD Clinical Team (PCT) is staffed by clinicians trained in empirically supported treatments for PTSD such as Cognitive Processing Therapy and Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT). These treatments are consistent with the recovery focus of the mental health service line. Cognitive Processing Therapy, developed by Dr. Patricia Resick from the National Center for PTSD, is delivered as 13 weekly individual sessions. In clinical trials, about half of the treated veterans (46%) showed a remission of their PTSD diagnosis at post-treatment. IRT is a 4 session group treatment that assists veterans in changing their nightmares into less distressing dreams. In addition to these treatments, a PTSD skills group helps veterans with PTSD learn a variety of coping techniques that can improve their quality of living. This is the second specialty clinic for treatment of stress disorders added to the mental health service line. VA Madison also has a Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program (WSDTP). The WSDTP is a dually-sited program treating women veterans who want to learn better ways to work through and cope with the effects of trauma they experienced while on active duty. Women can request an evaluation and treatment at either the Madison VA Hospital or the North Chicago VA Medical Center. Clinicians in the program are women with specialized training and experience in treating women who have experienced trauma. Cognitive Processing Therapy and PTSD Coping Skills classes are among the treatments offered.

In addition to the clinical work of the PCT, several members of the mental health service line are

engaged in cutting edge research on PTSD. A recent front page article in the Wisconsin State Journal, *Horrors of War Haunt the Nights* (Tuesday March 21, 2006), discussed the team's various research projects using physiological measures, new medications and new psychotherapies to further our understanding of PTSD and its treatment.

For further information about the PCT at the VA Madison, contact Dr. Tracey L. Smith at (608) 280-7084. For further information about the WSDTP at the Madison VA, contact Susan Knoedel at (608) 280-7084.

Madison VA Honors Former Prisoners Of War

Former prisoners of war and their family members were honored on April 7th as part of Madison VA's observance of National Former Prisoner Of War Recognition Day. Thirty-five former prisoners of war were in attendance, having been held captive during World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War.

Two former prisoners of war were the keynote speakers. One speaker was captured during the Battle of the Bulge during World War II and was held in Germany for four months. The other speaker was shot down over North Vietnam on his 43rd mission and was held captive in North Vietnam for nearly six years.

Each year all former prisoners of war in attendance are introduced by name, the war they served in, and where they were held captive. The widows, spouses, and family members of former prisoners of war in attendance are also recognized as a group.



During the program, a proclamation from Governor Jim Doyle was presented by the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs along with their remarks. The Sauk Prairie High School Chamber Singers provided two musical selections. Both of Wisconsin's U.S. Senators and the local member of the House of Representatives had staff members in attendance to help honor the former prisoners of war and their families for their unique sacrifices for our country. A lunch sponsored by the VA Voluntary Service Committee was provided following the program. The program received outstanding media coverage which certainly helped to create community awareness about our former prisoners of war.

VA Partners to Conduct OIF/OEF Readjustment Conferences

Madison VA in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs recently conducted two sessions of a conference titled "Seamless Transition: The Journey from Battle Mind to Peace of Mind." Unique to these conferences was a decision by the Wisconsin National Guard Command to allow members to elect to attend these conferences or drill. For more information about these conferences, contact Madison's OIF/OEF Coordinator, Robert Kelter, Chief, Social Work and Chaplain Service at extension 17085 or (608) 280-7085.

Milwaukee

Go Take a Hike

On May 17, many VA employees at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center took a hike as they participated in National Employee Health and Fitness Day. To advertise the event, Roger Mai, a volunteer dressed as a colorful clown, roamed the hallways wearing a sandwich board. This caught the attention of many and increased participation. The participants were asked to "Take A Hike" to retrieve a raffle ticket at the midpoint of the half-mile walking/rolling route. On their return to the start line, participants placed their ticket in a container for prizes. Pedometers, along with instructions in a walking fitness program, were

awarded to the winners. All walkers/rollers were given a sticker proclaiming, "I Took A Hike." Milwaukee's Weight Management Program staff (OT and RD) staffed the booth and offered tips on fitness and healthy eating. Refrigerator magnets and handouts were also given out to promote a healthy



Coming Home...

On September 9, 2003, the first Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veteran visited the Milwaukee VA Medical Center primary care clinic that began a wave of men and women seeking health care and a starting point to transition back to civilian life.

In addition to receiving a complete history and physical examination from a physician, this 29 year old veteran also received an assessment from a social work combat case manager.

It was learned that he had served in Iraq building bridges, erecting tents, and performing other construction type duties. He also mentioned that one day while on duty he heard his shoulder "pop" and continues to have pain and discomfort months later. He talked about his wife of one year, that he had spent his first anniversary in Iraq away from her and their 9-month-old child. He also discussed his work as a volunteer fireman and hoping to be able to return to work doing chrome plating.

The social work combat case manager learned that overall he was adjusting well back to civilian life. In fact, he needed to use the office telephone to call his mother and arrange babysitting since he was running late and his wife needed to leave to attend classes at school.

In addition to escorting the new veteran to another part of the building to have x-rays done, education and information to pursue possible service connected benefits and other resources were reviewed. The

veteran now had many pieces of information at his disposal, direct phone numbers to contact service organizations, the Vet Center, Veterans Employment Assistance, 24-hour Nurse Advise Line, a direct clinic phone number, and a name, face and phone number to his social work combat case manager.



Dale Christiansen, lead primary care social worker and one of 12 combat case managers at the Milwaukee VA and Clinics, extends his hand to say, "Thank you" to a returning Wisconsin Army National Guard soldier. "It is one of the most important things I do," says Mr. Christiansen.

According to Dale Christiansen, lead primary care social worker who is one of 12 combat case managers at the Milwaukee VA and Clinics, the goal is to see the OEF/OIF veteran immediately following the visit with the physician. "There are occasions when they either don't have time or don't wish to talk to us. That's OK" said Mr. Christiansen. "In those cases, we at least make face contact with them; thank them for their service and let them know we are available." He explained that in the majority of the cases a full cycle social assessment is made. "It is our goal to get them help now rather than them coming back 20 years from now. We are trying to get on board early."

Since that initial assessment in 2003, more than 1,500 of these veterans' comrades have sat down with their social work combat case manager to assess their individual needs.

Each has served their country with pride and determination. It is now their turn to receive the exceptional service that they have earned. Each is unique and has diverse needs. Some are doing just great and are best served with a firm handshake and sincere, "Thank you." Others need more information, direction where resources may be available,

coordination for their serious health condition or other complex needs.

The combat case manager is trying to get a handle on what they were exposed to and how they are handling all that. The process is explained to them with regard to service connection. "We try to empower people so they can take charge on their own," continued Mr. Christiansen. "We want to get them treatment. We want to get them access to benefits. We are their point person."

Clinic Named for Navy Medic Who Said He Was Not a Hero

The legacy of a World War II Navy medic from Appleton who helped raise the American flag on Mount Suribachi, the highest point on Iwo Jima, will be the namesake of the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Appleton, Wisconsin.

On Feb. 23, 1945, Pharmacist Mate Second Class John H. Bradley, USN, with the 5th Marine Division and five U.S. Marines were immortalized in a historic photo by Joe Rosenthal as they hoisted a large American flag on this island in the Phillipines. "Doc" Bradley was a Navy Corpsman who "just jumped in to lend a hand." He won the Navy Cross for heroism and was wounded in both legs. Joe Rosenthal received the Pulitzer Prize for his iconic portrait.

Legislation introduced by U.S. Representative Mark Green, of Wisconsin 8th Congressional District, before Congress last spring sought to change the name of the clinic to honor this hero. On March 23 of this year, Public Law 109-206. H.R. 1691 was approved by Congress – an Act to Designate the Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in Appleton, Wisconsin, as the "John H. Bradley Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic."

The Appleton VA Satellite Outpatient Clinic opened in 1994 and is located in the Fox Valley in east central Wisconsin. It is a large VA clinic employing 102 and serving 13,610 veterans. The Milwaukee VA Medical Center is the parent facility. The Clinic is located about 130 miles north of Milwaukee.

Mr. Bradley, a quiet, private man, gave one interview in his life. In it he said, "People refer to us as heroes

– I personally don't look at it that way. I just think that I happened to be at a certain place at a certain time and anybody on that island could have been in there – and we certainly weren't heroes – and I speak for the rest of them as well. That's the way they thought of themselves also."

Mr. Bradley's widow, Betty, said her husband, who died at the age of 70 in Antigo, WI, over a decade ago always shunned publicity surrounding the flag raising. "He might have turned down the Marines' request for help if he had realized the attention it would draw toward him."



Taking a quiet moment. Betty Bradley, wife of John H. Bradley, reads the statement for the Congressional Record just presented to her by Wisconsin Congressman Mark Green at the renaming ceremony in Appleton, Wisconsin. In the background, the historic photograph taken by Joe Rosenthal shows her husband, Pharmacist Mate Second Class John H. Bradley, USN (second from right), placing the flag into Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima along with five U.S. Marines from 5th Marine Division. Mrs. Bradley addressed the clinic staff by saying, "You'll be honoring my husband every day with your selfless and caring service to our veterans." She went on to say that her husband would have been proud to have a medical facility as a namesake. The VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic at Appleton was renamed the John H. Bradley Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic in a ceremony on June 10. Mr. Bradley was born in Antigo, Wisconsin and spent his boyhood years growing up in Appleton. He returned to Antigo after his military service where he owned a small business until his death in 1994. The picture was gifted to the clinic by Congressman Green.

"He never showed up for anything honoring him." She said. "We always had to make excuses. He always was proud that he saved many wounded boys, but to put a flagpole in the ground was not heroic."

Another of Bradley's sons, James Bradley, authored a book in 2001, "Flags of Our Fathers," about the six men who were involved in raising the flag over Iwo Jima. Bradley's daughter, Kate Bradley, who lives in Appleton and is the oldest of Bradley's eight children, said her father didn't talk about his experiences on Iwo Jima.

The name of the clinic at 10 Tri-Park Way is now the John H. Bradley Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic. The name of the building was quietly named on June 10 which just happened to be the day of the community's big Flag Day parade. It overshadowed the renaming event. Those that knew John Bradley knew he would have wanted it that way.

How is the salsa?



Is there a pat of butter in the house? Apparently, butter relieves the mouth that suffers from an overload of spiciness according to Texas native, John Brecheisen. Mr. Brecheisen, executive assistant to the director at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, is joined by (above, l to r) Jacqueline Pinager, Denise Ott and Jill Zahn celebrating Cinco de Mayo in a special way. They were honored by being selected to judge tantalizing salsa recipes at the infamous salsa cook off. Yes-SALSA! Not the dance, but the zesty, tomato concoction. Other activities included whacking

a piñata and learning the historical significance of this holiday. The judges sampled, acquired a red glow, engulfed a pat of butter and re-sampled again just to make sure. According to Mr. Brecheisen, "It was a red-hot time" and he passed on lunch that day.

Reclaiming Our Heritage- Purple Heart



Paying tribute to those who have sacrificed for their country, students from Milwaukee area schools unveiled the newly reissued Purple Heart stamp at the 39-cent rate. The U.S. Postal Service ceremony was a part of Civil War School Day at Reclaiming Our Heritage on the historic campus of the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. Over 600 students spent the morning interacting with the reenactors in this educational experience. The weekend event reached new levels of interest with an estimated attendance of 15,000. The Purple Heart definitive stamp was first issued in 2003 at the first-class rate of 37-cents to honor the sacrifices of the men and women who served in the U.S. military. The unveiling and issuance of this stamp commemorates the oldest military decoration in the world still in present use.

North Chicago

Spring Into Health!

The 3rd annual All Employee Wellness Fair was held on March 21. Once again, the fair had an excellent attendance. A wealth of information was available for all employees and retirees to take away with them.

The fair offered additional hands-on and alternative health option information including two reflexologists, ion cleansing, sleep evaluations, Take off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS), and introduced the Managing Overweight/Obesity for Veterans Everywhere (MOVE) program. Besides these services, the always popular massage therapists, acupuncture and acupressure evaluations returned. The "circuit room" gave employees the opportunity to have their blood pressure, blood glucose, spirometry, pulse oximetry, height and weight, and waist-hip ratio measured. In addition, employees were given the opportunity to sign up with the Employee Association and the decontamination team.

North Chicago VA was happy to welcome back community social service groups including, Catholic Charities Elder Abuse, A Safe Place, and Lake County Against Sexual Assault. New to this years fair was the exercise demonstration room, where employees were able to attend and participate in a Walking Your Way to Fitness at Work, Low Impact Aerobics with Weights, Tighter Assets, Chair Exercises & More!, Taebo, and/or a T'ia Chi Chih class. For more information on classes offered at North Chicago VA, please go to the North Chicago Homepage and select the "Employee Wellness Program" link.



Marge Ferraresi and Minnie Brown of Rehab Medicine Service, check Rosie Elder's balance as part of "Test Your Fitness" booth sponsored by Rehab Medicine.

The professional staff members and medical center leadership are committed to assisting staff in improving their health and fitness. Statistics show that if employees are more fit physically they are more productive at their jobs, have less on the job injuries occur, absenteeism is lowered and the overall workplace environment and morale is improved.

A special thanks and appreciation to all staff that contributed to the planning and execution of the Wellness Fair. It was a resounding success and would not have been so without the wonderful creative participation of so many. This was truly a medical center wide initiative where staff members from all across the medical center came together for the good of their fellow co-workers and were proud to care!

Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission Visits

The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission visited NCVAMC recently. The Commission's purpose is to carry out a study of the benefits under the laws of the United States that are provided to compensate and assist veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths attributable to military service, and to produce a report on the study. This visit was the third of eight fact-finding site visits that the Commission will be conducting in 2006 throughout the United States to gain first-hand knowledge of what veterans and service members encounter in their efforts to obtain disability benefits. The Commission members are appointed by the President and leaders of Congress, and the Commission is independent of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense. Their report will go to Congress and the President.

Rear Admiral Gary R. Jones USN, Commander Naval Service Training Command/Navy Region Midwest, Captain Michael H. Anderson, Commanding Officer, Naval Hospital Great Lakes and his wife, Mrs. Paula Anderson and Mr. Mike Olson VBA Regional Office Director, Chicago also participated in the visit with the Commissioners. The Commissioners were complimentary of North Chicago programs, Special Medical Exams, OIF/OEF and the facility and commented that

the partnership with Naval Hospital Great Lakes is truly the future of seamless transition.

The Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission thanked everyone for the outstanding briefings and hospitality provided by the staff at NCVAMC. Their feedback had nothing but outstanding words of praise for the support and information provided. It was exactly what they were looking for and they sincerely appreciated the warm welcome.



From left: Captain Michael H. Anderson, Commanding Officer, NHGL; Captain Maureen Zeller, NHGL VA/DOD Project Officer; Commissioner Donald M. Cassidy; CDR Susan Lichtenstein, Deputy Director, Healthcare Ops & Analysis; William M. Matz Jr. Major General US Army Ret; Ms. Nancy Gallagher, Social Worker MSW, LCSW, Ms. Jackie Garrett, staff member to the Commission; Commissioner Rick Surrant; Patrick L. Sullivan, medical center Director, NCVAMC

The Commission spent Tuesday in Chicago at Jesse Brown VAMC and in a Town Hall forum met with several hundred veterans Tuesday night. On Thursday they visited Hines VA Hospital.

Bring Your Child To Work

North Chicago VAMC held the yearly event, "Bring Your Child to Work" on Thursday, April 27. An organized program was planned for all children who wished to participate. The program began with breakfast provided by the Canteen, followed by the children viewing the video, "Our Turn to Serve." The children toured pulmonary, bio-medical

engineering, medical library, rehabilitation, and supply, processing and distribution. One highlight of the day's event was the K-9 demonstration by Police Sergeant/K-9 Enforcement Officer, Bill Poirier and his canine partner Chako. The children were treated to a pizza luncheon. The day wrapped up with an arts and crafts activity provided by Community Affairs. The children made a combination Earth Day and Mother's Day project which consisted of decorating a flower pot and planting a flower in the pot. They also created a wood picture frame and door handle signs. Each child was thrilled with creating the unique gifts for a special someone for Mother's Day. During this last activity, the children were treated to drinks and cookies. Based on comments received from the children, this was truly an exciting and fun day at the VA.



Over twenty children spent the day learning about the North Chicago VA.

North Chicago VAMC Host Decontamination Operations Level Training

The North Chicago VA Medical Center was the host facility for the VACO Little Rock, Arkansas Mass Casualty Decontamination ("DECON") Operations Level Training Initiative. The training took place during the week of May 22.

John Beatty and Donna Edwards from the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, Employee Education System provided DECON Operations Level Training to a team of staff that is comprised of

motivated, outgoing, and physically inclined employees for this unique and important medical center emergency preparedness program. Team members reported that although they are excited to be trained and prepared for such an event, they are hopeful to never have to activate the team for a real time event. They are looking forward to activating the Decon Team twice a year during exercise events only as required by VACO regulations.



Course participants included staff from the North Chicago VAMC, DoD Navy personnel in conjunction with the VA/DoD merger of services that is available to our nations veterans, active duty servicemen and their families; and staff from other network facilities. The training and exercise was a big success. The training concluded on Wednesday, May 24, 2006, with a full-scale decontamination exercise where VA and Navy personnel erected the decon tent, dressed out in full decontamination gear and decontaminated 10 to 20 personnel. The North Chicago facility along with many other VA medical centers and hospitals are now in full compliance with this very important VACO initiative.



Tomah

It's Construction Time Again!!!

This spring the Tomah VA is undergoing a face lift for the Admissions/Outpatient area in Building 400. "Why?" you may ask. "HIPAA!" will be the reply! HIPAA stands for Health Information (or in some circles, Insurance) Portability and Accountability Act.



The purpose of this project is to increase the privacy for veterans when they meet with administrative personnel. The front desk by the revolving doors in Building 400 is history. It has been replaced with more private meeting areas for use in interviewing veterans.



The project impacted the main entrance of Building 400, causing all outpatient traffic to be rerouted. Information alerting veterans to this change was sent with patients' appointment letters. Compensated work therapy staff were stationed in key areas to help veterans find their way to appointments. Signs were posted as well.

Once finished, veterans will enjoy greater privacy when meeting with VA staff and discussing their medical, financial, and other private information.

National Hospital Week

National Hospital Week kicked off on May 8 with a "Fun Walk/Run." About 40 staff and volunteers participated, with the pack being led by runners (left to right) Rob June, Audiologist; Stacey Wiegert, volunteer; and Randy Hoyles, Roads and Grounds.

The group barely made it safely inside after the mile-long walk before it started to rain!



Billed as a "fun" run, it was a competition and the winners posed for a picture. Front row, left to right: Stacey Wiegert, 1st place in Ladies' division; Randy Hoyles, 1st place in Men's division; and Rob June, 2nd place Men's. Back row: Linda Larson 2nd in Ladies', Maureen Bernhardt 3rd and Colleen Carl, Honorable Mention.

Veteran's Golf Course Hosts First Annual "Jim Thielen Memorial Golf Tournament"

When people are asked what they remember about Jim Thielen, the first response is almost always, "His laugh."

Jim was the Roads and Grounds foreman at the Tomah VA for many years and was responsible for converting the patient-only golf course into a public course in 1996 when the Department of Veterans Affairs mandated that VA facilities with golf courses either close them or make the courses self-sufficient.

Jim retired in April 2005, and died in June 2005. It only seemed appropriate to hold a golf tournament in his memory and honor. The tournament was held Saturday, May 20, and although his laugh wasn't heard, many believed Jim was smiling at them from above – the weather was perfect with sunny skies and cooling breezes.

The tournament began with a tree-planting ceremony by the VA pond. Jim's wife, daughters and brother helped plant the tree. Then, as Jim's brother, Ron Thielen announced, it was time to "Play ball!" Sixteen four-person teams spread out over the course shortly after 10 a.m. and play they did!



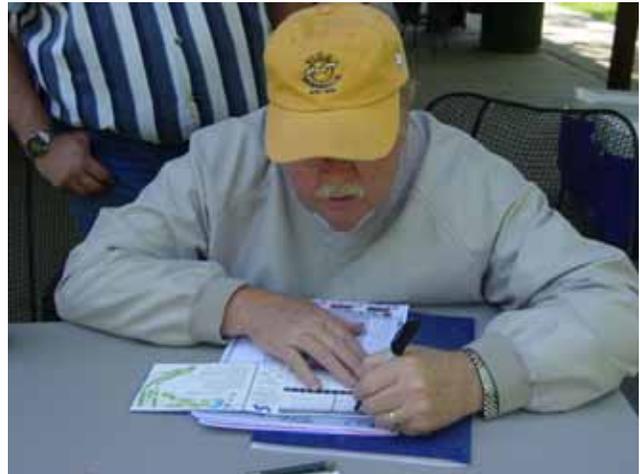
Caddies were provided by the golf teams at the Tomah Senior High School and Middle School. A couple of VA staff also pitched in to meet the caddy demand. One high schooler really got into the spirit and dressed the part! That caddy is pictured (above center) with members of Elks Lodge 665 of Marshfield, one of the tournament's sponsors.

SPECIAL THANKS to the following organizations who sponsored holes and helped raise an additional \$450 for the golf course:

- BPO Elks Lodge 665, Marshfield *
- Masonic Service Association *
- BPO Elks Lodge 402, Eau Claire (two holes)
- American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Wisconsin
- Polish Legion of American Veterans, State Department
- Knights of Columbus #4125, Tomah
- Howard and Adah Jones
- Tomah VAVS Hospital Committee

Those organizations with an * by their name donated additional funds which were used for advertising the tournament as well as to purchase prizes and food. The tournament raised about \$2,000 for the golf course.

All participants had the chance to win a variety of door prizes and some lucky golfers won prizes for various contests at each hole.



Three teams had scores of 34, but Pete Peterson (above), volunteer golf expert and tie breaker, revealed the winning team.



The winning team consisted of Kathy Blackdeer, Ron Calkins, Eric Frederickson, and Ken Schelfhout (pictured left to right with Mary Thielen, Jim's wife).

The 2nd Annual Jim Thielen Memorial Golf Tournament will be May 19, 2007!

Happy 60th Anniversary

Veteran Gay Gilpin and his wife, Mary, will soon celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary! The entire staff on 402A collaborated to provide an anniversary party for the happy couple.



With Mr. and Mrs. Gilpin sneaking an anniversary kiss, 402A staff look on. From left to right: Danita DuBord, Recreation Therapist; Tina Williams, Nursing Home Unit Coordinator; Charlene Powless, CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant); Susan Hesper, RN; Katie Manske, RN; Cassandra Ferries, student NA; and Jacquelyn Martin, CNA.

Gone Fishin'!



Here are some scenes from the 2006 Fishing Tournament on May 17. The weather cooperated for the most part and no one was rained on too badly! Thanks to the generosity of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the veterans caught LOTS of great fish!



The veterans were escorted to the pond by 110 seventh grade students from the Tomah Middle School. The students helped the patients cast their lines and reel in their fish. It was a great day for the veterans and the students!

Thanks to the American Legion for sponsoring this wonderful event for our patients!!!

National Nurses Week

"Strength, Commitment, Compassion" was this year's theme for National Nurses Week, celebrated May 6-12 each year. National Nurses Week is always held the week of May 12, which is Florence Nightingale's birthday.

The medical center wanted to pay tribute to the number of registered nurses who provide highly skilled, safe and quality care in a variety of settings, and who encounter increased challenges to their professional and ethical commitment to deliver essential health care.

Some of Nurses Week highlights included the announcement of the Excellence in Nursing Award winners. Congratulating this year's winners. They are:

Administrative Registered Nurse winner – **Jolene Renda**, ND, APN/CNP

Jolene was recognized for making a difference at Tomah. She was characterized as being open and knowledgeable; bringing innovative ideas and conveying her knowledge to staff by teaching and empowering them. Jolene has given a new respect to nursing, by demonstrating her knowledge of nursing practice and validating and legitimizing the dimension

of compassion. She is a leader, mentor, encourager, and motivator.

Registered Nurse winner – **Sheila Jessen**, RN, Ambulatory Care Sheila was described as a clinical leader among ambulatory care nurses. She shows outstanding concern for patients, and works diligently to facilitate all of their care needs, even across providers. Sheila is identified as an outstanding asset to the Tomah VAMC and one of their very best nurses.

Licensed Practical Nurse winner – **Diane Larson**, LPN, Loyal CBOC

Diane is in charge of the delivery of care at the Loyal Clinic which serves 780 patients. Diana has efficiently developed skills to provide care to the patients at the CBOC independent of a supervisor. She ensures the needs of the patients are met and the mission of our facility is accomplished. Diane is an excellent representative of the facility providing a very positive reflection of VA and the profession of nursing.



Wednesday Nursing Week events included the program, “Magnetize Your Profession,” featuring speaker, Jackie LeFevre, RN. A candlelit ceremony was held Thursday evening.

Employees Association WalkAmerica 2006

The VA Employees Association Walk Team participated in the March of Dimes WalkAmerica 2006 on Saturday, May 6th. The team goal was 10 walkers and \$1000 in donations. The goal for walkers was surpassed with twelve Association members along with several family members and together they reached \$678 of the

donation goal. Mother Nature was good to the group and they enjoyed a beautiful sun shiny-day and walked a 6-mile route beginning and ending at Winnebago Park. Stations with water, fruit and granola bars were along the walk and afterwards a great pizza lunch was served. Collectively, Tomah had over 100 walkers and more than \$8000 was donated. Many thanks to the walking members and their support to “helping babies everywhere!”



Front Row: Kayla McGarry, Katie McGarry, Harrison Sherman, and Janelle Arnold; Second Row: Ellen Frazier, Robin Frazier, Valerie Nelson, Kathy Flatoff, and Terri Soderlund; Back Row: Sarah Frazier, Steve Urbatsch, Susan McGarry, Debbie Thorpe, Kim Dechant, Pat Mennicke, Kaleigh Organ, Danielle Frazier, and Susan Urbatsch.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program Completes Second Successful Tax Season

Volunteers at the Tomah VA’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program completed their second tax season, doubling the number of tax returns filed from 2005.

Volunteers prepared income taxes for inpatients and outpatients, as well as VA staff and volunteers, and “individuals from the community. Utilizing computers donated by an AMVETS post, the volunteers e-filed the majority of their tax returns.



Keith Garrett and Dale Pohlman, initial founders of the Tomah VA's VITA program; Carol Zindorf, screener, and Chris Zindorf, preparer and Co-Coordinator of the 2006 VITA program; Pat Flanders, preparer and Co-Coordinator of the 2006 VITA program, Ruth Bailey, preparer; Barb Stoda, preparer, and Jerry Molnar, Associate Director; front row: Pat Soulier, receptionist.

Network Awards and Recognition

Iron Mountain VA Medical Center Practitioner Named Federal PA Practitioner of the Year

The American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) has named **A.J. Kent**, of Iron Mountain, Michigan, the recipient of its 2006 Federal Service Physician Assistant of the Year Award. The Federal Service Physician Assistant of the Year Award honors a Physician Assistant (PA) who has demonstrated exemplary service to the PA profession within all the federal services and has furthered the image of PAs within the setting of the uniformed services, Department of Veterans Affairs, the Public Health Service, or any other federal agencies. The award was presented on May 26, at AAPA's 34th Annual Physician Assistant (PA) Conference in San Francisco, California.

Over the years, Kent has made significant contributions to the PA profession. He has used this experience, and his passion for helping veterans, to organize the Veterans Affairs Physician Assistant Association

(VAPAA). He has served as a member of the Board of Directors, past vice president, and is currently treasurer.

Kent has made multiple trips, on his own time and using his own resources, to Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress to obtain prescriptive privileges, and salary and benefits for PAs working for the Veterans Administration. He was also instrumental in achieving the first PA Utilization Guidelines in 1974 and 1975, which were later used by many states to draft their respective state guidelines for PAs. Today, the VA is the largest single employer of PAs. More than 1,500 PAs are responsible for more than 4,000,000 veteran medical care visits a year.



A.J. Kent, PA, Vietnam veteran dedicated to expanding the role of federal PAs

Jesse Brown VA Staff Recognized with FEB Awards

The Federal Employee of the Year luncheon for the Chicago area was held on May 2 at the Hyatt Regency. Jesse Brown VA had its largest number of employees ever to be nominated with a total of 26 individual nominees and 86 staff nominated for team awards. The medical center was extremely pleased with the results, especially considering there were over 800 nominations competing for a total of 11 awards in a Chicago metropolitan area that includes tens of thousands of federal employees:

Joan Murray, LPN, from the Beverly CBOC, was one of three finalists for the Outstanding Technical or Program Support Employee.

Dr. Salar Khan, FEB Award Recipient (below right) with Dr. Joseph DeSimone, ACOS for Research and Development Service, was named as Outstanding Program Specialist employee.



Tammi Ostrowsky, Nursing Service; **Mike Huck**, VISN 12 Education Officer; and **Preston Taylor**, IRM, were members of the FEMA Call Center Team, which received the Outstanding Team Award for its efforts following the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

Madison Social Worker Receives State and Chapter Awards

Gail Gunter Hunt, ACSW, LCSW, social worker at the VAH Madison, has been selected to receive the Distinguished Social Worker of 2006 Award by the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). Candidates for this prestigious award are rated according to the impact of their work, the diversity of the client populations served, and whether the candidate is an outstanding professional in his/her field of practice. One person is selected for this award each year and is honored at the Wisconsin NASW Annual State Conference in May.

Gail Hunt has a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Arkansas-Little Rock and a Specialist in Aging Certificate from the University of Michigan. She has worked at the Madison VA since 1982 as the Coordinator/Social Worker of the Geriatric Evaluation and Management Program in the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center

(GRECC). She has collateral assignments as the Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) and Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinator. She also has an adjunct appointment as Senior Preceptor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Social Work.

Ms. Hunt currently serves as a member of the VISN Women Veterans Program Managers Committee, the National Planning Committee for the 2006 WVPM Conference "Promoting Excellence in Business," the University of Wisconsin Center for Women's Health Research Advisory Board, and the Professional Consultative Committee for the UW-Madison School of Social Work. At her facility, she is a member of the Federal Women's Committee, Social Work Professional Practice Committee, Social Work Student Education Committee, Interdisciplinary Plan of Care Committee, GRECC Education Committee, and GRECC Clinical Advisory Committee. She chairs the Women Veterans Advisory Board and the Visual Impairment Services Committee as well. Each year, she co-chairs a conference for women veterans held at the Madison VA.

During her social work career, Gail Hunt has published 12 papers in professional journals, and co-authored a book and a book chapter. She has presented papers at numerous national conferences and spoken at state, university, and local conferences as well. In 2003, she was one of three Women Veteran Program Managers selected to appear in a satellite broadcast for the VA Knowledge Network in Washington DC regarding "Advanced Management Principles." Another area of expertise is Advance Directives. She has published a paper in this area and spoken at national and local conferences regarding this important topic.

Ms. Hunt has a strong commitment to the education of social work students. She has supervised almost 100 graduate social work students during her career, and routinely supervises four students per year from the UW-Madison.

In March of this year, Gail Hunt was also honored as the 2006 Distinguished Social Worker by the South Central Branch of the Wisconsin Chapter of NASW and the School of Social Work at UW-Madison.

50 Years of Service

Ivory "Andy" Anderson celebrated 50 years of service at the North Chicago VAMC. "Andy" started at North Chicago VA Medical Center on April 18, 1956. He has worked 50 years as a cook in the Nutrition and Food Service with no thoughts of retiring in the immediate future. Employees and former employees were on hand to celebrate with "Andy" as well as a few of his family members.



Tena Shealey (left), Chief of Nutrition & Food Service and Doris Reeves (right) former/retired Chief of Nutrition & Food Service celebrate with Mr. Anderson.

Tomah VA Receives Award For Tissue Donation

The Tomah VA received an award from Regeneration Technologies, Inc. Donor Services.



Nicole L. Waite, Development Specialist, Regeneration Technologies, Inc. Donor Services, far right, presented the award to Trish Ten Haaf, Nurse Executive (center) and Stan Johnson, medical center Director, left

In 2005, four veterans agreed to be tissue donors upon their death. Each tissue donor (bone, skin, ligaments, tendons, veins and heart valves) has the potential to impact 50 - 75 recipients. Given the fact that the Tomah VA Medical Center had four donors, the potential existed to impact 200 – 300 recipients.

Tomah Employee Wins Photo Contest



Rachel Eagleson, Pharmacy Technician/Support Service Line, recently entered the above photo in the Greater Tomah Area Chamber of Commerce photo contest promoting tourism. Ms. Eagleson was recently notified the VA Medical Center Flag Day photo won in the "local events" category of contest. The photo was featured in the Tomah Journal during National Tourism Week (May 15-19). Congratulations Ms. Eagleson!

Recognizing Our Volunteers

Jesse Brown VA Volunteer Awards Luncheon

Jesse Brown VAMC's annual Volunteer Awards Luncheon was held on April 22, recognizing the medical center's volunteers for contributing over 86,000 hours of service last year.

The top recipient was Vi Jember, who was presented with an award for 22,500 hours since joining the medical center in 1977.



Volunteers receiving the new “President’s Call to Service” Award, which is given to all volunteers with 4,000 or more hours, included (back row, from left) Joe Stacy, Ruben Garcia, Ellen George, Robbie Henderson, Jack Schons, Robert Jacobs, Harry Carlisle, (front row, from left) Joe Elbenberger, Moshen Modaressi and Walter Harrell.

Heroes Among Us - Toki Provides 55 Years of Volunteer Service

Akira R. Toki served as a volunteer tour guide when VA Madison opened in 1951, and he continues to serve as a volunteer today. Toki recently turned 90 years of age. He continues to volunteer three days per week, serving as the coordinator of the patient craft program, as well as being the VAVS representative for the Military Order of the Purple Heart and a member of the Madison Veterans Council Firing Squad performing at military funerals.



Toki’s story is quite unique. He was born in Madison in 1916 and grew up helping on the family farm where fresh produce was grown and sold to neighborhood grocery stores throughout Madison. His was the only Japanese-American family in Madison when Pearl Harbor was attacked in 1941. Interestingly, there were only 23

Japanese-Americans in all of Wisconsin at that time. Following the Pearl Harbor attack, he enlisted in the U.S. Army at age 25 to prove his loyalty to our country. It was questioned if Japanese-Americans could be trusted in combat, so he was frustrated with stateside duty until 1943 when President Roosevelt approved a combat team consisting of loyal American citizens of Japanese descent. Toki served in the 100th Infantry Battalion of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. These Japanese-Americans fought in Europe with tremendous courage, being the most decorated unit of its size and length of service in United States history. Toki earned the Bronze Star for meritorious achievement in ground combat and the Purple Heart for being seriously wounded in the head by shrapnel that pierced his helmet, resulting in three months of hospitalization.

When the Madison School District undertook the process of renaming its middle schools to reflect cultural diversity, Toki was nominated by the family of a Madison VA employee that had children attending the school. Competition was keen during the renaming process, but on September 9, 1993, Orchard Ridge Middle School became the Akira R. Toki Middle School, with two Madison VA staff members participating in that renaming ceremony.

Toki and his wife, Mary, who is also a VA volunteer, recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.

Toki was recently recognized for his volunteer service with the naming of the new and expanded patient craft room in his honor. The plaque that hangs in that room reads as follows:

Akira R. Toki Patient Craft Room - In recognition of Akira’s devoted volunteer service in support of his fellow veterans which began in September 1951 with the opening of our hospital. Your sense of humor, warm smile and caring attitude helps brighten the day for everyone who comes in contact with you.

Helping Off Duty

VA Volunteer Day at the UCC

Employees of the VA Medical Center in Milwaukee participated in the first VA Volunteer Day organized by

the EEO-Hispanic Committee. On April 28, employees with their smiles beaming, hair pulled back and dressed in their finest black pants and white blouses were yearning to lend a hand. They willingly rolled up their sleeves to serve and bus tables at the annual fund raising dinner at the United Community Center (Centro de la Comunidad Unida) in Milwaukee. The United Community Center provides quality programs to the local community, including an adult day center, the Bruce Guadalupe Elementary and Junior High Schools and a state-licensed clinic for alcohol and drug abuse.

“As The Knob Turns”

The North Chicago VA volunteers were entertained by this year’s theme, “As the Knob Turns” on April 27th at the Country Squire Restaurant in Grayslake, where over three hundred volunteers, guests and staff were in attendance at the 2006 Annual Volunteer Awards Program. The program focused on the history of radio and the highlight was guest speaker Trish Biondo from US 99, Chicago’s country radio station. Ms. Biondo entertained the crowd with her stories of her over twenty years of interviewing the stars of country music. She even surprised them by giving away 2 tickets to the sold out Tim McGraw – Faith Hill concert.



Mr. Sullivan, medical center Director, presents Jerry Vleck the 20,000 hour outstanding service tray.

The volunteers were honored with awards for their many hours of devotion and dedication to our veterans. Claiming top honors was Jerry Vleck, Grayslake, who received a 20,000 hour outstanding service tray. Other

prestigious VAVS awards followed with Tony Martino, Salem, WI, who received a 17,500 hour outstanding service plate; Otis Norsworthy, North Chicago, received a 12,500 hour pyramid award and Vic Belec, Grayslake, received a 10,000 hour silver bowl. Also, a 4,000 hour Presidential Award from President Bush’s initiative encouraging all Americans to serve volunteer hours to community and country was presented to a total of 29 volunteers. Other volunteer awards ranged from 6,250 hours to 50 hours.



Trish Biondo, US 99 radio station, selects the raffle winners while Kenny List, Chief of Community Affairs, assists.

The National theme “Volunteers Inspire By Example” couldn’t be truer of our VA volunteers. Congratulations and a special thank you to each and every volunteer for your service to our Nation’s veterans.

Volunteers Receive Much-Deserved Recognition

The annual Tomah Volunteer Awards and Appreciation Program was held April 27 at the American Legion Post 100 in Sparta. About 150 volunteers, staff and guests attended. Awards were presented to volunteers based on cumulative hours served as of September 30, 2005.

The program celebrated the accomplishments of the Tomah VA’s 400+ volunteers and the more than 36,000 hours of service they contributed in FY05. The theme centered on the Department of Veterans Affairs’ 75th Anniversary and the VA Voluntary Services’ (VAVS) 60th birthday.



Cindy Gluch, above, Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary and Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, received from Jerry Molnar, Associate Director, the "Outstanding Merit Award" for 8,750 hours. Cindy manages the Disabled American Veterans Transportation Network and also volunteers for recreation events and serves as the facility's VAVS representative for the DAV Auxiliary.

Volunteers with a lifetime achievement of serving 4,000 hours or more received the "President's Call to Service Award."

A special tribute was held for Tomah VA volunteers who are World War II veterans. The volunteers were introduced, with a little of their history shared. After the introduction of the volunteers, a Power Point slide show was viewed called "Before You Go."



Tomah VA volunteers who are World War II veterans are pictured above.

One of the volunteers on recreation therapist Danita DuBord's unit nominated her for the "Friend of the Volunteer Award". During the nomination conversation, this volunteer said the following about Danita: "She's

the best; I go to her for everything. She's the sweetest and she helps me out in every way. I admire all the work she does up there (402A). She helps me out so I don't feel lost and she puts me on the schedule so I feel needed and expected. She is organized. She's the BEST!"



Danita DuBord (center) Jerry Molnar, Associate Director (left) and Laura Bishop, Voluntary Services Coordinator (right).

She Shines!



Amanda Framberg (center) proudly displays her Voluntary Service Awards certificate at the Milwaukee VAMC's voluntary service awards recognition held May 2. The award represents a scholarship for Amanda who maintained a 3.9 grade point average and since has graduated from South Milwaukee High School. Sue Framberg, RN (left) her mother and research coordinator and Eileen Wilson, a secretary in mental health, who nominated her for the award, escorted her to the luncheon ceremony. Amanda plans to enter UW-LaCrosse this fall to pursue a career in athletic training.

Secretary Nicholson Announced Recovery of Stolen Data

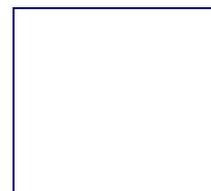
VA Secretary James Nicholson announced before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on June 29, 2006, that the VA had successfully recovered a stolen laptop computer and hard drive with millions of veteran's personal information after a person turned it in. Mr. Nicholson insisted that it will never happen again. "This has brought to the light of day some real deficiencies in our department. And the manner in which we've handled personal data and cyber information. And if there is a redeeming part of this, and I believe there is, it is that we can—we can really turn this place around. And I sincerely think we can make it into the gold standard for information security," said Secretary Nicholson.

Privacy: It's Everyone's Business!!

How "YOU" Can Ensure Privacy:

- Take privacy seriously
- Respect the privacy of veterans and your coworkers
- Curb your own curiosity
- NEVER discuss private data in public places or leave written records left out in the open

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