

the link

April
2012



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System



5 Advancing health care
through research



The April edition of The Link focuses on sustaining improvements and discovering new ways to support our Veterans' health and well-being. Through novel health care delivery methods using technology and informed by innovative research, employees across VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System are improving models of Veteran care. I encourage all of us to continue to seek improvements, redesign our work and to innovate with our new ideas.

I've been in Nebraska more than two months now, and I've had the chance to meet many enthusiastic and dedicated NWHCS employees. In March, I had the honor of presenting Denene Collura, one of our registered nurses, with her 40-year service pin.

Not only has Denene seen much innovation in her 40 years (check out the story on Denene and the Health Buddies), she has helped implement great health care aided by technology for our Veterans. And, we're lucky, she's going to stay around for more.

Another focus this edition is on NWHCS' Research Service. VA has a long and proud research history. VA research is the foundation of much health care innovation. VA researchers created the pacemaker, developed nicotine patches and performed the first successful liver transplant. NWHCS investigators are working on exciting breakthroughs that will help those who suffer with rheumatoid arthritis. During Research Week, stop by to learn about what researchers are doing at NWHCS and take a tour of the research facility.

As we continue to innovate, improve, and grow at NWHCS, we want everyone's input. Whether you are a patient or an employee, your ideas count. Your ideas will help make NWHCS the leader in quality, safety and service.

Marci Mylan

DIRECTOR AND PUBLISHER
Marci Mylan, Ph.D., MHA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER
Will Ackerman

THE LINK EDITORIAL STAFF
Editor | Anna Morelock
Photographer | Bruce Thiel
Designer | Becky Brown

FACT: ABOUT ONE IN FIVE WOMEN AND ONE IN 100 MEN HAVE TOLD THEIR VA HEALTH CARE PROVIDER THAT THEY EXPERIENCED SEXUAL TRAUMA IN THE MILITARY. VA CAN HELP

Cover: Paul Thomas, Ph.D., prepares alcohol metabolizing cells for biochemical analysis of fats. This is part of a study to determine how alcohol consumption causes fatty liver, a common response to heavy drinking. Photo by Will Ackerman.

“A lot of my family are Veterans. I want to make sure the Veterans here are treated as well as I want my family to be treated at the VA.”

Nichoele Wilson
Eye Clinic Clerk | Grand Island CBOC



the link

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CONTACT US

Have a story idea? Call the VA NWIHCS Public Affairs Office; Will Ackerman at 402-995-4719, Anna Morelock at 402-995-5547, or email vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov.

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meet janey armbrust

Secretary to the Director | Omaha

How long have you been with VA?

"In this position, since 2005, and I have worked for the VA for about 33 years."

What does your job entail?

"I schedule appointments for the director. I track the health system policies for updates, concurrence process and placement on the Intranet. I review incoming and outgoing

correspondence for action. I handle the congressional inquiries, I handle the central office inquiries, I handle Veterans' complaints, phone calls, personal visits and correspondence. I also handle the compliments – that's a nice part of the job. I coordinate the years of service awards for employees and any other secretarial duties. I support the director and any of the programs the VA has."

What's your favorite part of your job?

"I think my favorite thing about this job is the people and the contact with a variety of people. I get to see Veterans, I do have some patient contact. Of course, all the employee contact, the community contact, the VISN contact and even the central office contact. I love that."

What's kept you at the VA for 33 years?

"I feel like it's my home away from home. I consider it a perfect fit. I love it. I love working here. I love being a secretary. 🗣️"

APRIL 22-28
**Administrative
Professionals Week**

OFFICE OF Inspector General

every three years, the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General is required to complete a Combined Assessment Program inspection. The purpose is to monitor the health care provided to Veterans.

A team of seven inspectors from OIG will be at Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System from April 30 to May 4. The team will review selected topics that include environment of care, medication management, polytrauma services, nursing staffing, quality management, colorectal care program, heart failure coordination, mental health continuity of care, point-of-care testing and moderate sedation.

The team will perform environment-of-care rounds at the Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island facilities. They will interview service chiefs, managers and program coordinators.

Staff can learn how to minimize fraud, waste and abuse in Veteran Health Administration programs, activities and functions during two, one-hour sessions May 3, from 9 to 10 a.m. and 2 to 3 p.m. The locations will be posted on the NWI Intranet, in the Daily Briefs and other internal communication media once confirmed.

The OIG provides an overview of findings to NWIHCS leadership at the end of the inspection and then submits a report to Congress. 🗣️

VA Office of Research and Development

CARING FOR VETERANS THROUGH DISCOVERY AND COLLABORATION

va Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System is well-known for its employees who provide high-quality care to Veterans.

What many don't know is a robust VA Research Service at the Omaha VA Medical Center has nearly 150 active projects under way.

VA Research Week is designed to call attention to the achievements of VA researchers and the role they play in providing high-quality care for Veterans and advancing medical science. This year, VA Research Week is April 23 to 27. The week is a chance to educate Veterans, employees and the community about the research at the Omaha VAMC, and its impact on treating and preventing disease and disability.

This year's theme is "Caring for Veterans through Discovery and Collaboration," to emphasize the translation research findings into advancements in Veterans' health care; and the ongoing collaboration between VA and its academic affiliates. Omaha VA researchers have affiliations with Omaha's Creighton University and University of Nebraska Medical Center, and active partnerships with a number of other universities and colleges including the University of Nebraska in Omaha and Lincoln.



Photo by Will Ackerman

Research is being conducted in many areas at the Omaha VAMC, including mental health, liver studies, rheumatoid arthritis, lung disease and diabetes, and obesity.

(continued on page 12) ▶

Karuna Rasineni, Ph.D., examines liver tissue under the microscope



“VA research develops new concepts, treatments or therapies to enhance the care of our Veterans.”

John Davis, Ph.D.
VA Research Career Scientist

Research Week Events in Omaha:

April 23 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., R308
VA Research Service Employee Appreciation Lunch

April 27 8:30 to 10 a.m.
Education Conference Room
Speaker: Dr. Sanjay Sethi, Vice Chair of Medicine for Research, Division Chief, Pulmonary/Critical Care/Sleep Medicine, VA Western New York Health Care System, and University at Buffalo, State University of New York, Buffalo, NY

April 27 9:45 a.m.
Education Conference Room,
Friends of VA Research Award presentation

April 27 10:30 a.m. to Noon
meet in front of Education Conference Room
Employee and public tours of VA Research Service

April 27 1 to 3 p.m.
Durham Research Center 1 atrium at the University of Nebraska Medical Center
VA research posters presentations demonstrating collaboration with affiliate partners at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton University.

Clinical Research

VETERAN PARTICIPATION LEADS TO ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

a rmy Veteran Kim Vanderloo said he feels much better after vascular surgery restored blood flow to his legs. He was recently at the Nebraska Biomechanics Core Facility at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to get a measurement of that difference.

Vanderloo is a patient in Dr. Iraklis Pipinos' study – "Mitochondrial Dysfunction, Oxidative Damage and Inflammation in Claudication." Claudication is the most common clinical presentation of peripheral arterial disease (PAD), which afflicts 5 percent of the U.S. population more than 55 years of age. PAD is a chronic condition that decreases blood supply to the legs, producing significant damage to the muscle. Patients with PAD limp and can only walk very short distances because the muscles in their legs are damaged and their legs hurt.

The major focus of the laboratory of Pipinos and his close collaborator Dr. George Casale is the development of regenerative medicine strategies for skeletal muscle tissue in the legs of patients suffering from PAD. Their National Institute of Health-funded research involves the combined efforts of biomechanists, life scientists, biomedical engineers, physicians, veterinarians and technical support staff.

Their work evaluates the mechanisms that produce the leg dysfunction of claudication, Pipinos said. Its successful completion can ultimately improve patient prognosis and produce significant new diagnostic and treatment strategies for the care of claudicating patients.

"It is our sincere hope that our research will eventually make a contribution to the health of patients like Mr. Vanderloo. That would really make all of us very happy," said Pipinos.

The latest research protocol by Pipinos and Casale started enrolling Veterans at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System in 2011. When patients are enrolled in the study, they are placed in one of three groups dependent on their course of treatment.

All Veterans enrolled in the study participate in an evaluation of their leg muscle, using a needle biopsy, a test in the vascular lab, blood work and a walking test at the UNO biomechanics facility.



Army Veteran Kim Vanderloo participates in biomechanics testing at the University of Nebraska at Omaha Biomechanics Core Facility. The reflective markers on Vanderloo's feet and legs help lab technicians create a 3D model of Vanderloo on the computer (inset) to measure his gait. Vanderloo was completing the testing after having vascular surgery on his legs as a part of a research study through NWHCS.

After the baseline measurements are taken, they either receive no intervention, vascular surgery or a supervised exercise program, which they complete at the Creighton Cardiac Rehab Center. *(continued on page 12)*

GOING green

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

W While recycling is something all Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care

System employees can play a part in while at work, the GEMS program – or Green Environmental Management Systems—is about much more.

Around 14 major environmental laws impact NWIHCS, said GEMS Coordinator Robin Fried.

“As a health care facility, we generate a lot of waste,” said Fried who’s been with NWIHCS since December. “We generate hazardous waste with some of the pharmaceuticals we use and chemicals. We’re obviously generating medical waste, radioactive waste, our solid waste stream and chemotherapy waste. All of those, there are very special requirements that go into those and how we dispose of them.”

Besides the health system’s different waste streams, Fried also keeps an eye on what’s going into the water and air. Making sure the health system complies with regulations and has all of the proper permits falls under GEMS, as well.

“We’re playing with the state, and we’re playing with the Environmental ▶

▶ Protection Agency EPA and just making sure everyone’s happy,” Fried said.

One way to ensure compliance within NWIHCS for different environmental areas is the GEMS Committee. The multidisciplinary team acts as Fried’s eyes and ears across the facilities to find out what may need attention, or who may need kudos for a job well done.

“They’re the ones who know their areas the best and what impacts those areas are having on the environment,” Fried said of the committee members. “So, as a committee, you come together and you kind of equip that team to catch the red flags that pop up in their area.”

Fried started her Veterans Affairs’ career as a microbiologist with the Fargo, N.D., VA and took over their GEMS program as a way to use her science background and have a hand in program development.

While she said she’s still in evaluation mode at NWIHCS, Fried said she’d really like to see the recycling program at NWIHCS beefed up, as well as meet other VA goals in areas such as energy use.

“It’s a great way to create awareness and get everyone involved,” Fried said.

“How much are you printing? Are you using reusable mugs? It could be as simple as requesting a recycling bin for an office.”

Robin Fried, GEMS Coordinator

GEMS Committee members will host awareness activities for Earth Day, April 19 and 20. Fried said she’d like employees and Veterans to use the day to think about how their processes impact the environment. 📄

April 22
earthDAY


For more information about Earth Day, visit www.earthday.org/2012.

the Patient-Centered Care journey

PUTTING VETERANS BACK AT THE CENTER OF HEALTH CARE

Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System is on a patient-centered care journey. In the last few years, NWHCS has initiated and integrated several different caring initiatives that focus on patient-centered and people-centered care and caring. This diagram identifies five of these initiatives, including Magnet, Planetree, VA's Veteran-Centered Care Principles, ICARE and Jean Watson's Caring Theory. It also illustrates their alignment with

NWHCS' guiding principles of Leadership, Ownership and Value Improvement.

While each caring initiative has a particular focus and application, they all overlap and provide a solid framework for the building of a strong patient-centered care environment. 

	Leadership	Ownership	Value Improvement
Magnet	Transformational leadership Nursing involvement at all levels	Structural empowerment Professional practice model Professional and career development Professional education Decision-making at the bedside	Exemplary professional practice New knowledge, innovations and improvements Improve patient outcomes through EBP Increased patient satisfaction Quality of care and quality improvement
Planetree	Creating ambassadors to the community using the Patient Partnership Council (PPC)	Human interactions Connection with staff Retreats Creative solutions and using staff and community resources Patient Partnership Council (PCC) Empowering patients through information and education	Patient-centered care Healing arts and spirituality Importance of human touch Complementary therapies Architectural design conducive to health and healing Including the voice of the patient
Veteran-Centered Care Principles	Apply architectural and interior design conducive to health and healing Support and sustain a satisfied, engaged workforce	Enhance the quality of human interactions and therapeutic alliances Solicit and respect the Veteran's values, preferences and needs Empower patients/families through education and information Encourage involvement of family and friends	Honor the Veteran's expectation of safe, high quality and accessible care Systematize the coordination, continuity and integration of care Incorporate the nutritional, cultural and nurturing aspects of food Provide for physical comfort/pain management Ensure emotional support Introduce creative arts in the healing environment
ICARE	Advocacy Integrity	Commitment Respect	Excellence
Watson's Caring Theory 10 Caritas Factors	Embrace altruistic values and practice loving kindness with self and others Be sensitive to self and others by nurturing individual beliefs and practices Instill faith and hope and honor others	Develop helping, trusting, caring relationships Promote and accept positive and negative feelings as you authentically listen to others Assist with basic physical, emotional and spiritual human needs Share teaching and learning that addresses individual needs and comprehension styles	Use creative scientific problem-solving methods for decision making Create a healing environment for the physical and spiritual self which respects human dignity Be open to mystery and allow miracles to enter

For more information about any of these initiatives at NWHCS, contact Learning Resource Service at 402-995-5809.

Why do you VOLUNTEER AT THE VA?



"It's fun. You meet people. You talk to people. You get out of the house."

Louise Ripa
Volunteer | Lincoln VA



"Most of my family are military. I volunteer to keep my dad's memory alive."

Jessica Anderson Volunteer | Omaha VA

"I love to be around the Veterans and hear their stories."

Bonnie Dumler Volunteer | Grand Island VA



"I volunteer because I want to."

Clayton Hydo
Army Veteran
DAV Transportation
Volunteer | Grand Island VA



"My husband was in the military, and I knew they needed help. So, I came out and signed up."

Eileen Rich Volunteer | Lincoln VA

Military Sexual Trauma

No judgement, just help and support for Veterans.

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

ann Thieman was a chaplain's assistant at Fort Gordon Ga., in 1982. To promote the upcoming vacation Bible school, she went to do an interview at the post radio station. Instead of an interview, she was raped.

"It happened so fast," she said.

Now, 30 years after the incident, Thieman said, she wouldn't have come out of it like she did if she hadn't received help through VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System.

About 20 percent of women and 2 percent of men tell their VA providers they have experienced military sexual trauma. Because of the disproportionate numbers of men and women in the service, they work out to be almost equal in numbers, said Dr. Connie Logan, the Military Sexual Assault coordinator in Omaha. ▶

▶ Treatment for military sexual trauma – all of which is free at VA – is all about overcoming the affects of trauma.

"We don't really care about anything else except we help people get better," Logan said.

While Thieman got physical exams and uncomfortable questioning during a pre-trial hearing for her attacker, she experienced numerous side effects over the next 20 years before seeking further help.

"It still blows my mind today – how do you think this helped me?" she said of her experiences in the months after her rape.

(continued on page 13) ▶

Health Buddy:

Veterans' Tool for Self-Management

of Mental Health

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

denene Collura, RN, started with the VA in 1969. She was a head nurse when the Omaha VA Medical Center had more than 400 inpatient beds. She saw the VA implement its electronic health care records in the 1980s. In 2008, she started working with home telehealth as a case manager in mental health.

While she just received her 40-year service pin, Collura said there are a few more innovations she'd like to see before she retires.

"Not often does a person get a chance to work with something so innovative, the cutting edge of technology, to make a big difference in health care. I would like to see that a little more developed yet before I retire," she said.

Collura works with Veterans in Mental Health to self-manage and self-monitor their symptoms using a home monitoring device, the Health Buddy. The goal, she said, is to keep patients out of emergency rooms and out of inpatient care by intervening in a timely manner when they need the intervention.

Each day, Veterans using the Health Buddy are required to answer a list of questions and complete a disease management program on the device. Programs are targeted for each Veteran's diagnosis and include information for depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar ▶



Photo by Anna Morelock

Denene Collura, RN, shows off a Health Buddy, a home telehealth device that allows patients to self-monitor their conditions. The device comes with a small modem so even Veterans without a phone line or Internet connection are able to use the system. Collura works with patients in Mental Health and manages about 70 Veterans who use the Health Buddy.

▶ disorder, schizophrenia and other mental health conditions. The system provides a new program for each day of the year.

If the patient is feeling great, back in Omaha, Collura gets a green flag for that patient. If the patient has worsening symptoms or a medication problem, Collura will get a yellow or red flag to alert her to follow up with that Veteran.

For the most part, Collura said, Veterans find the self-monitoring system very helpful.

(continued on page 14) ▶

Volunteers make the

DIFFERENCE

RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERS

FOR THEIR DONATION OF OVER

\$2 million IN LABOR OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

Volunteers across VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System do the 1,001 things employees don't have the time to do or can't do, said Chris Shipp, chief of Voluntary Service.

Over the past few years, those 1,001 things have totaled more than \$2 million in labor contributions that have gone toward improving the Veteran experience.

One of the biggest areas where volunteers help out is transportation, Shipp said. Drivers at all of NWHCS' sites bring Veterans to the Omaha VA Medical Center for appointments.

Red-coated volunteer greeters work in the lobby to direct patients around the medical center. Some volunteers bake cookies ▶



▶ for inpatients. Others roll a craft cart around the floors to offer projects to Veterans. Volunteers answer phones, provide office assistance and "provide a dynamic that staff maybe can't provide," Shipp said.

While there are more than 800 volunteers registered with NWHCS, Shipp said he is always looking for more and is looking to expand the volunteer program.

Volunteers at NWHCS vary in age and background. Some are Veterans themselves. Many are in their 60s, are retired and don't want to lose that contact with the community, Shipp said.

"What motivates a volunteer? It's not money, right? They just want to be a part of something," he said. *(continued on page 15)* ▶



Photo by Bruce Thiel

From Left: Joe Scripter, Sherry Jewett, Larry Dukes, Fritz Lee, Sally Wenzel, Jack Bower, Bonnie Dumler and Pat Jewett of Grand Island drive patients to appointments in Omaha and Lincoln.

► *Research Service continued from page 5*

In addition, nurses, pharmacists and physicians perform research to determine best practices and procedures to deliver health care to Veterans.

The Omaha VAMC is fully accredited to conduct biomedical laboratory research and clinical research. It has 25 scientists with doctoral degrees who conduct Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development studies that explore basic biological or physiological principles in humans or animals, but does not involve intact human beings. For example, it includes research on animal models and investigations of tissues, blood or other biologic specimens from humans.

More than 60 physicians, who focus on intact human beings as the unit of examination, are involved in Clinical Science Research. Examples include interventional and effectiveness studies, clinical, epidemiological and technological studies. These are investigator-initiated studies or large multi-center clinical trials and epidemiological studies.

The Omaha VA also supports two Rehabilitation Research and Development projects that focus on improving the quality of life of impaired and disabled Veterans.

Research studies are invaluable because they are methodical ways to learn about a specific concern, determine if a treatment is effective, answer questions about the best ways to treat or prevent illnesses, or to test if a medicine or piece of equipment is safe and effective.

Volunteers who participated in local and national VA research have helped contribute to advances in health care including the creation of the nicotine patch, invention of the cardiac pacemaker, and performance of the first successful liver transplant. ⓘ

-Will Ackerman contributed to this story.

Caring for Veterans through Discovery & Collaboration

www.research.va.gov/researchweek



IT'S YOUR CALL

Confidential help for Veterans and their families

 **Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net

► *Clinical Research continued from page 6*

If they receive an intervention (including a vascular operation or exercise therapy), like Vanderloo, the Veterans then retake all the tests after six months to assess whether they have experienced a significant improvement in their leg muscle and its function.

The biggest reason Veterans volunteer for clinical research is to help other Veterans, said Holly DeSpiegelaere, RN, clinical research nurse coordinator for the study.

“They’re not even thinking they’re going to have any immediate result for themselves. That’s not their main focus. They just want to help another Veteran.”

Holly DeSpiegelaere, RN,
clinical research nurse coordinator

“This unselfishness is typical for our Veterans” Pipinos said. “After all, they volunteered to go to war to protect us. And, after they finished their duty in the armed services, they continue to enjoy serving all of us by participating in research like ours.” ⓘ

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► *MST continued from page 9*

The nightmares and nausea started almost immediately after her attack. She always felt like she was in trouble or being punished, she said. Then the other physical symptoms began – bowel problems, throwing up, and depression so bad she didn't want to get out of bed.

"It took everything out of me," Thieman said. "It felt like no matter how hard I tried to do right, it wasn't good enough."

Thieman said she went to doctors several times for her symptoms, was given medicines to mask them and sent home. She lost weight and didn't eat much.

When she came back to the United States for college, Thieman said she still didn't get help because she didn't know what else she could do.

One weekend, while watching the winter Olympics in 1999, Thieman said, she saw a commercial about Navy Veterans who were sexually harassed. It told other female Veterans to call if they'd had similar experiences. Thieman waited until Monday and called the VA.

“It's almost like I have permission to grieve and to talk about it without being judged.”

Ann Thieman

Thieman's advice to other Veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma: "This is VA. They're here to help us, not judge us. We have the right to get the best care we can get, and if you feel like you're not getting it, then you need to go see the person who will help you. We need to support each other."

To get care for military sexual trauma, the Veteran need only ask, Logan said.

"They don't have to have any kind of written record. They don't have to have any sort of proof that it might have happened. They don't have to have reported it. They don't even have to have had counseling or any contact with health care providers at the time. In order for us treat a Veteran for military sexual trauma, the Veteran only has to ask." 📞

To find out about treatment for military sexual trauma, call:

Connie Logan in Omaha at 402-995-4741

Lisa Barnes in Grand Island at 308-382-3660, ext. 2145

Bev Lindell in Lincoln at 402-489-3802, ext. 6609

About 1 in 3 people 60 years old and older will get shingles

Jose, 74

Lili, 66



Susie, 60

Paul, 69

Reduce YOUR risk of shingles. GET VACCINATED.



For more information, ask your healthcare provider, call **800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)**, or visit

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/default.htm



HELLO

Jan. 29 to March 10

Wattana Barrett,
*Nurse Executive's Office*Mitzi Bever, *Inpatient Care*Kathryn Bowers, *Pharmacy*Tina Chambers, *Inpatient Care*Elizabeth Clayton,
*Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*Lori Cudaback, *Surgery*Larae Dixon, *Inpatient Care*Angela Fowler, *Inpatient Care*Angelicia Hughes, *Quality Management*Krystle Johnson, *Sterile Processing*Elizabeth Johnston, *Fee Basis*Danille Kamler, *Business Office*Kimberly Kelleher, *Outpatient Care*Frank Kerkemeyer, *Fee Basis*Christopher Killion, *Inpatient Care*Leann Klein, *Mental Health*Scott Kubicek, *Patient Care*Megan Kucera, *Inpatient Care*Gregg Liedke, *Business Office*Cheryl Lockett,
*Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*Andrew Loehr,
*Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*Douglas Lombard,
*Veteran Canteen Service*Brooke Lewis,
*Veteran Canteen Service*Andrea Mahrt, *Prosthetics*Paige Mathew, *Pharmacy*Randy May,
*Veteran Canteen Service*Jose Palacois, *Security*Amy Patten, *Business Office*Suzanne Rainforth, *Patient Care*Kevin Reagan,
*Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*Darrell Reimers,
*Veterans Canteen Service*Bernadette Schrader,
*Outpatient Care*Stephanie Siemsen,
*Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*Lance Smith, *Police*Jill Sonder, *Norfolk*Carita Spears, *Sterile Processing*Kelsey Uhing, *Pharmacy*Jeremy Vojtech, *Outpatient Care*Surayyo Wang,
*Nurse Executive's Office*Wendy Zenor, *Bellevue*Caroline Zuehl,
Nurse Executive's Office

GOODBYE

Jan. 29 to March 10

Kelley Anne Alt, *Business Office*Carter Bold, *Engineering*Gerald Butler,
*Environmental Management Service*Chris Cornett, *Surgery*Kimberly Creamer, *Surgery*Sonja Cross, *Inpatient Care*Irene Hallgren, *Outpatient Care*Mary Kline, *Extended Care*Jackie Leveille, *Mental Health*Justin Lovell,
*Veteran Canteen Service*Laura Mader,
*Primary Care and Specialty Medicine*Kevin Martzett,
*Veteran Canteen Service*Alice Renken, *Surgery*Rickey Thomas,
*Environmental Management Service*Sheila Tinnell,
*Veterans Canteen Service*Kristin Willman, *Extended Care*Jeffry Woods,
*Environmental Management Service*Meredith Wright,
Nurse Executive's Office▶ *Health Buddy continued from page 10*

"They really appreciate the ability to matriculate through the health care system with a case manager by their side – virtually by their side," Collura said. "Not too close, but close enough to help them get the right care at the right time in the right place."

Veterans even get so used to working with Collura, they often call her for other needs, as well.

Recently a Veteran was having pain in his legs.

"Did he call his primary care? No. Did he call his cardiologist? No. He called me," Collura said "since he does the buddy every day. It's not

just one part. Even though we concentrate on mental health, we treat the whole patient."

Patients who use the Health Buddy through Mental Health are mostly older, sicker Veterans who have a hard time getting to the VA, Collura said. She estimated about two-thirds of her approximately 70-patient caseload live in rural areas.

With an aging Veteran population, Collura said, she sees the Health Buddy and other home telehealth products as the thing of the future.

"I would hope that this becomes a very integral part of our health care, soon," Collura said. "I think we could do that.


"The sky's the limit because you have a virtual office. I just need a computer and a phone and electricity." 📞

► *Volunteers continued from page 11*

This year, Shipp said, Voluntary Service will be looking to expand its pool of high school and college-age volunteers. Like everything else, however, Shipp said volunteer recruitment is a competitive business. But the VA has something different to offer.

“We feel we are unique in that we’re a Veterans’ organization. When a volunteer comes to volunteer here, they are volunteering for a special group of people. And that puts us on a different plane than everyone else in the community.”

Chris Shipp, Chief of Voluntary Service

Volunteers will be recognized during three banquets for April’s National Volunteer Recognition Week. Banquets will be April 17 in Grand Island, April 26 in Omaha and May 3 in Lincoln. 

For more information or to volunteer, call:

Grand Island: 308-382-3660 ext. 2146

Lincoln: 402-489-3802 ext. 7938

Omaha: 402-995-3283



Screening Saves Lives

Colorectal cancer is the 2nd leading cancer killer in the U.S. But it can be prevented. Screening helps find precancerous polyps so they can be removed before they turn into cancer. Screening can also find colorectal cancer early, when treatment is most effective. If you're 50 or older—don't wait. Talk to your doctor and get screened.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/screenforlife
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

“Why Should I Get Screened?”

EVENTS what's going on?

- April 1-7** Medication Safety Week
- April 8** Easter
- April 8-14** Testicular Cancer Awareness Week
- April 9** National Former POW Recognition Day
- April 13** Free Tax Preparation, Lincoln
- April 17** Spring All-Employee Forums Begin
- April 22** Earth Day
- April 15-21** National Volunteer Week
- April 22-28** Administrative Professionals Week
- April 23-27** VA Research Week
- April 27-28** Veterans of Armed Forces Outreach, South Sioux City, Neb.
- April 30-May 4** Office of the Inspector General Assessment

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



VA NWIHCS is now engaging Veterans through Twitter and Facebook



www.twitter.com/VANWIHCS



www.facebook.com/NebraskalovaVA

Watch for news, patient information and upcoming events.



EXPERIENCE: Nursing Staff

Patients within Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System are being taken care of by nurses with more than 300 bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees under their belts. NWHCS nurses are using that experience to march toward Magnet, a designation that recognizes nursing excellence. During the Magnet process, the NWHCS nurses work as a team to make continuous improvements in care to Veterans, and create and sustain a professional, high-quality work environment based on quality indicators and standards of nursing practice.

ex·cel·lence [ek-suh-luh'ns], *n.*, **1.** the fact or state of excelling; superiority; eminence. **2.** an excellent quality or feature. **3. VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System** —Syn. **1.** preeminence. **2.** merit, virtue.



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