



On The Beat

Minneapolis VA Health Care System

April 2011

Mission:

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well being.

Vision:

To be a patient-centered, integrated health care organization for Veterans providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner and a back up for national emergencies.

Values:

- Trust
- Respect
- Excellence
- Compassion
- Commitment
- Empowerment
- Continuous Improvement
- Collaboration

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Feel free to "like" us ... We all need good friends

By Jason Rolfe

Web Content Manager

Recently, Minneapolis VA Health Care System joined millions of people, businesses and organizations on Facebook and Twitter.

Some may ask, "Why are we on Facebook?" The answer is simple. Social media sites are where the people are. It is a place that people look for information on everything from iPod reviews to health care. By getting involved in social media, it allows us to engage in two-way conversations about the social issues instead of just putting the information out on a poster or brochure. It allows us to connect with our Veterans both young and old.

Today, Facebook has over 600 million users worldwide. The Department of Veterans Affairs has over 100,000 followers, the largest of any cabinet agency. Social networking site usage grew 88 percent among Internet users aged 55-64 between April 2009 and May 2010. The change in social media use among Baby Boomers 55-64 rose from 9% in Dec. 2008 to 43% in Dec. 2010.

What does this mean for you, the employee?

The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the social media world. Employees should not speak on behalf of the VA or identify themselves as an employee, even in defending VA from negative comments. We need to leave that to our Public Affairs Office. By identifying yourself as an employee, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the position of the organization. You should always ensure that your postings make it clear that it is your opinion and not that of your employer.



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MINNEAPOLIS VA CIVIL SERVANTS OF THE YEAR



Jackie Costabilo

Ms. Costabilo makes a difference in the lives of Veterans who are severely

overweight. She goes the extra mile – literally and figuratively – to help patients in the VA’s successful MOVE program. In 2010, the Minneapolis VA held a “5K Walk, Run & Roll.” Ms. Costabilo arranged for a shorter 2K “walk” around the hospital for her overweight clients. The event became a goal for 22 veterans. On event day, despite the rain, they all showed up. And several participated in the 5K event. The last Veteran to cross the finish line was one of her clients. He was tired but smiling. “I didn’t think I could do it,” he said. Thanks to Ms. Costabilo, he achieved his goal. . . on race day and in life!



Jonelle Draughn

When the VA Secretary made “eliminating Veterans homelessness” his

Number One Priority, a heavy responsibility fell on the shoulders of the Minneapolis VA homeless coordinator. Fortunately, social worker Jonelle Draughn had the ability, leadership skills and community connections to meet the challenge. Ms. Draughn has worked tirelessly and collaboratively with two dozen local organizations (public and non-profit). In 2010, she brought them together in a “homeless veteran’s summit.” She was also faced with the need to add and train new staff. Housing vouchers are being distributed and lives are being changed. Jonelle would be the first to say that this is a “community” effort and all should be recognized.



Michelle Rohde

Ms. Rohde performs in an outstanding manner in all her roles in the Cardiac

Cath Lab. She has exceptional skills in the complex and sophisticated technologies that are used in both the coronary and electrophysiology areas of the lab as well as excellent imaging skills. Ms. Rohde is frequently a resource to other lab staff, sharing her knowledge constructively. In addition, Ms. Rohde demonstrates a warm, kind and empathetic manner in her interactions with patients and families. She often goes out of her way to be of assistance, provide information or help out others with tasks. Ms. Rohde is a highly valued member of the Cardiology team.



Mark Willy

Mark Willy exemplifies an employee worthy of Civil Servant of the Year Status. Mark has been the housekeeper for the inpatient

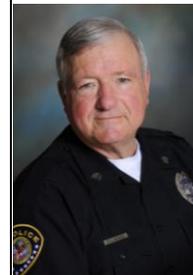
medical on 3L for over seven years. Mark’s pride in his work is demonstrated each Monday morning as he makes his initial rounds assessing the “damages” from the long weekend. He understands the great importance his job plays in delivering quality care to our veterans. If the environment is not clean and safe, the nurses are unable to operate effectively. Mark’s self imposed standards of excellence in his work are shown daily as he takes pride in the quality standards he maintains. Mark is respectful of the patients’ space and is always ready with a hello and a quiet laugh.



Steven Kirchner

Steven goes out of his way to assist patients with their billing problems. He has a broad knowledge of the

correlation of Department of Treasury offsets, Debt Management offsets, Tricare billing, first party veteran co-pays and third party billing and utilizes that knowledge to solve problems daily. He explains veterans benefits, how and when to apply for a service connection and whom they should contact to apply for a service connection. He also explains how Tricare works for retired military personnel and the coordination of benefits when they are eligible for Medicare. He takes the time to teach coworkers and to assist with difficult problems at the Customer Service desk.



Sgt. Robert Munson

A true humanitarian while helping his fellow veterans and employees at the Minneapolis VA hospital every day

he works, Sgt. Munson truly and sincerely cares and is interested in the welfare of the veterans he serves. Many veterans know Sgt. Munson by his first name and often refer to him affectionately as “Sgt. Bob.” Often veterans in emotional crisis come to the VA, and Bob is the Police Officer they want to see. He is a professional mentor to all new police officers arriving at the VA. He teaches not only to enforce the rules but to care for and respect veterans and employees first and foremost. His personality and good will are contagious to his colleagues and everyone he encounters.



Mike Rosecrans

Whenever a disgruntled Veteran contacts a congressional office seeking help, the point-of-

contact at the Minneapolis VA is Mike Rosecrans, who works as a patient advocate in the Family Resource Center. He must walk a fine line that 1) protects patient privacy; 2) responds to the complaint or issue; and 3) resolves the matter. He achieves positive results because he is a skilled communicator, a Veteran himself who can speak the military language and a committed civil servant. Mike also is the medical center's emissary to service organizations, where he helps spread the word about services and programs. He is widely regarded in the veterans' community for his positive/friendly demeanor and his "get it done" attitude.



Kevin Burns

Kevin, PharmD, is an integral part of the function of pharmacy and the care of VA patients. Dr. Burns was the key figure

in ensuring patients received their needed medications in a safe, timely, and efficient manner through over 27 drug shortages in 2010. Dr. Burns helped to develop a new integrated call center, providing patients with direct access to pharmacists and technicians, which has decreased phone wait times, improved patient satisfaction and enhanced patient care. He is the director of pharmacy student education and oversees the education of over 70 students annually. In 2010, he was named "Pharmacy Preceptor of the Year" by North Dakota State University. Dr Burns also takes great pride in his community involvement, volunteer work and his five children.



Kelly McCarthy

A nurse in the Minneapolis Chronic Hepatitis Clinic, Kelly tirelessly provides competent,

compassionate, and dedicated service to this very challenging patient population. The Chronic Hepatitis Clinic's patients have much higher rates of substance use, homelessness, unemployment, chronic pain, and mental health difficulties than do other veterans. The clinic's antiviral drugs tend to intensify the patients' underlying pain and mental health problems. She assesses them efficiently, determines who needs extra or urgent attention, diffuses their anger and irritation, and utilizes the VA system effectively. She stays calm and upbeat in the face of challenging situations that could demoralize and frighten others; she maintains excellent rapport with even the most difficult patients, and functions almost as a Nurse Practitioner.



Peggy Engman

An outstanding operative room nurse who has clearly distinguished herself as one of

the best nurses in the OR. She is truly liked by patients, colleagues, and physicians. She is a natural leader, who leads by example and not by demand. But what is truly unique about Peggy is her sincere devotion to the veterans. For almost 10 years, she has organized a bowling day fund raiser. She reserves the bowling lanes, designs teams' shirts specific to each different department, and buys trophies and awards for the competitions. She buys prizes for raffles; the money is donated to not-for-profit organization for disabled veterans.



Kathryn West

An exceptional leader in the Home and Community Care department and the Minneapolis

VA HCS, Kathryn has developed exceptional community relationships with the goal of building bridges between the VA Health Care System and the community. She has developed a successful medical foster home program that has supported the psychosocial well-being of veterans that would otherwise be institutionalized. Always encouraging collaboration with team members in supporting our veterans, Kathy is regularly asked to present at state and national conferences and approaches all tasks in a willing and creative way. She most recently developed a medical foster home caregiver training day and is also part of the national Medical Foster Home conference. Veterans and family members constantly remark on her dedication.



Debra Hanson

In 2010, Hanson continued her multi-year history of making numerous outstanding professional contributions to the

Neurology Service and the Minneapolis VA. She serves as the head technologist in the Clinical Neurophysiology Laboratory, which is part of the Northwest Epilepsy Center of Excellence. Deb manages a state-of-the-art EEG/EMG and Video-EEG laboratory which serves VISN 23. She has shown exceptional ability in troubleshooting and maintaining complex equipment. She is patient focused and organizes scheduling so there are rarely any unused appointment slots. She teaches medical students the complex skill of reading EEG. She does all of this, and much more, with enthusiasm and a "ready to serve attitude."



Salute Our VHA Social Workers in October



There are 90+ social workers in the Minneapolis VA Health Care System. They are an integral and vital part of VHA and they serve Veterans in all inpatient and outpatient settings, including Community Based Outpatient Clinics. They support and advance the mission of VHA by providing high quality psychosocial services to Veterans and their families. These services include assessment, crisis intervention, community outreach, high-risk screening, discharge planning, case management, advocacy, education, supportive counseling/psychotherapy, resource referrals and resource acquisition within the VA and community. Social workers bring training and expertise in a variety of specialty areas such as PTSD, substance abuse, TBI, post-op surgical care and provide an advanced level of clinical practice.

They provide specialized case management services to Veterans in Mental Health Intensive Case Management, Primary Care Specialty Areas, Polytrauma, SCI and many other VHA programs. Social workers also develop new programs to meet the needs of veterans and their families and coordinate a number of medical center programs such as Mental Health Homeless Programs and OEF/OIF. Take time this month to thank a social worker for their unique contribution to the VHA mission.

Here are just some of the ways that VA social workers help:

- Financial, housing or transportation assistance
- Explaining end-of-life issues, generally called advance directives and living wills.
- Arranging for respite care for caregivers
- Accessing assisted living facilities, medical foster homes and nursing homes.
- Grief counseling and help accessing mental health services.
- Outreach to homeless veterans.

To learn more about VHA social workers, visit www.va.gov/socialwork.

A Day at the Education Fair



VA STAFF NEWSMAKERS

- The American Veteran Television series, produced by the VA Educational Service, has profiled a patient's recovery at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. A VA film crew was here in November and the story is now posted online. You can view the story by clicking [LEARNING TO LIVE](#).
- The National Center for Patient Safety presented the Root Cause Analysis (RCA) gold award to the Minneapolis VA. The award was presented to **Linda Kraemer**, head of patient safety program, who along with staffer **Neil Sigler**, completed 21 individual RCAs and three aggregate RCAs. The award is presented based on meeting national timelines and quality criteria for effective actions and quantifiable outcome measures.
- Patient self-testing (PST), alone or in combination with patient self-management (PSM) of anticoagulant doses, reduces thromboembolic complications and all-cause mortality without increasing major bleeding events, according to a meta-analysis published in the April 5 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. **Hanna E. Bloomfield, M.D., M.P.H.**, and colleagues conducted a literature review to determine whether outpatients receiving oral anticoagulant therapy for more than three months could use PST, alone or in combination with PSM, to reduce thromboembolic complications and all-cause mortality, without increasing risk for a major bleeding event.

WORK THERAPY THAT WORKS

VA's Veterans Industry Program



PICTURED (L-R): Carol Ellingsberg, Vocational Rehab Specialist; John Merladet, Psychologist; Joseph Chapman, Assistant Chief, EMS; Brian Engdahl, Psychologist; Steve Anderson, Occupational Therapist; Gene House, Chief, EMS; Franklin Rich, Vocational Rehab Specialist; and Lynn Pinske,

**By Rachel Walters
Administrative Fellow**

If you've spent much time in the medical center, you've probably noticed that our Environmental Management Service (EMS) has a huge impact on operations. But did you know that it's also changing lives?

For patients in the Veterans Industry program, that's precisely

what's happening. Veterans Industry is a program housed within EMS that works with vocational rehabilitation staff to offer work

therapy to Veterans. The program includes several options for work therapy, which range in time commitment, compensation, and level of independence.

At any one time, approximately 100 Veterans are a part of the program, which started in Minneapolis about 20 years ago. The mission of the program is to remove the barriers that might keep a Veteran from obtaining or keeping a job. To accomplish this, participants are plugged in with counselors who help them develop skills that lead to successful job performance; and all the while, participants get to practice these skills firsthand through working for the Veterans Industry program.

For Gene House, the man responsible for instituting the program in Minneapolis, "it is a passion." He goes on to say, "Work therapy is one of the best therapies I can think of. Oftentimes what keeps [participants] holding together is coming to work every day." According to House, "To watch clients grow and come of age is wonderful."

The Veterans Industry program has a long-term success rate of 68%. It has seen this level of success because a patient's length of stay in the program is determined entirely by his or her individual needs. When a participant has completed a course of vocational rehabilitation and work therapy, he or she may decide to seek employment in the community. Through the Veterans Industry program, MVAHCS staff can provide helpful tools, such as resume reviews and mock interviews.

Vocational rehabilitation counselor, Carol Ellingsberg, has a first-hand view of the benefits of the program. Carol is one of three counselors that provide vocational support to Veterans in the program. These counselors help Veteran groups through case management, employment preparation, and job search skills. In her own words, Carol says, "the Veteran population is an incredible population to work with. It's good to help them with their resumes and then have them come tell you that they start work on Monday!"

One graduate of the program gave an account of the effect Veterans Industry has on his recovery.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Career Awards - Congratulations!

<p>35 Years Ruth Harmon Jeanne Oelrich Reed Root Larry Smith Joseph Wagner</p> <p>30 Years Mark Selvog Richard Wratz</p> <p>25 Years Kenneth Burris John Clark, MD Lori Clausen Joan Lutmer Monica Schantzen Judith Sikes Lawrence Thompson Brian Wiggins</p>	<p>20 Years Marci Collins Alan Duppler Carol Farmakes Jane Gornowicz Timothy Keple Michelle Martin Susan Miller Sandra Molik Rosemary Moore Steven Nelson Bernice Ohmann Michelle Sather Mark Svidron</p> <p>15 Years Angela Baker Stephon Bell Lisa Johnson Paulette Patterson</p>	<p>15 Years Tracy Reese Dwight Schultz Laura Swanson</p> <p>10 Years Parbattie Baijnath Amber Derks Lorna Chiu Rhonda Donahue Kari Hansen Wendell Hauble Judy Helgeson Christian Hermanson Janet Murphy Nenita Petsinger Christopher Stenseth Daniel Watzl</p>
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Work Therapy Works – Continued From Previous Page

According to this individual, because of some poor decision-making, he had lost sight of what he wanted in life. But fortunately, the VA program helped him “regain focus and chill out.” He says, “The program asks you to follow simple instructions. It’s hard to do, but it’s necessary. Eventually I began to see what I really wanted. I would recommend this program to anybody who’s having problems.” He adds, “The program allows you to prove yourself to yourself. It shows you that somebody took interest in you, but in order to be successful you have to take interest in yourself.” This particular graduate started a job with a well-known, global company three days after being interviewed. He is one of many examples of the success of this Veteran-centered program.

Social Media – Continued From Page 1

Remember, we are held fully responsible for the information we post whether it is on a public site or even on a personal site. Always follow VA guidelines about releasing sensitive information, personal identifiable information and especially patient information.

And now that employees can access Facebook and Twitter from VA computers, we need to remember those rules and regulations on personal use of VA equipment. You can always read through VA Directive 6001 for more about what is and isn’t allowed on VA computers. Your supervisor may have his/her own ideas of how much time you should be on social networks while at work. So, maybe this is a great time to ask and have that conversation.

We want you to follow us and even take part in the conversation on Facebook and Twitter. Just remember that what happens on Facebook is broadcasted to the world. Want to see your service’s information on Facebook or Twitter? You can send requests to VHAMINWebRequest@va.gov.

Annual VA Health Fair Draws Staff and Veterans

