VA Puget Sound NEWS

Proudly Serving Veterans of the Northwest

VA Puget Sound Health Care System • American Lake & Seattle Issue 2 • 2008

VA Puget Sound Fisher House Opens for Families

SEATTLE - For too many families, a trip to a VA hospital means scheduling flights, finding hotel rooms, living in unfamiliar cities, and balancing everyday routines with the fact that a loved one was seriously wounded and is now recovering in a VA medical center.

In Seattle however, at least some of that stress can be relieved now that the VA Puget Sound Fisher House has opened.

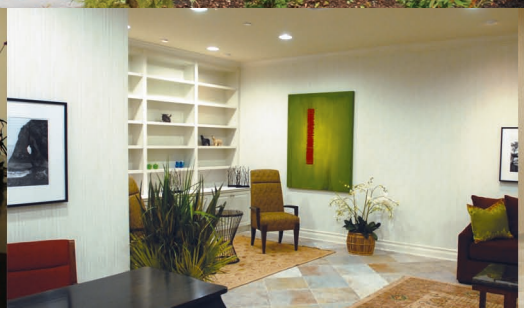
Located in the South parking lot of the Seattle Division, the 21-suite house "will provide a ìhome away from home for family members of wounded veterans," said Stan Johnson, director of VA Puget Sound Health Care System.

At the dedication and grand opening ceremony Sept. 10, more than 350 employees, patients, community leaders and invited guests all gathered to celebrate the opening of the first VA Fisher House in the Northwest.

"I can't express how grateful we are to the Fisher Foundation and the generous people in the community who, through their donations made this dream come true for so many of our veterans and their families," said Johnson. "Without their help and support, this would never have been possible."

Now that the wait is over, VA Puget Sound looks forward to helping hundreds of families while loved ones undergo treatment and recovery.

For more information, visit www.fisherhouse.org.



9.10.2008 FISHER HOUSE GRAND OPENING: A DAY TO CELEBRATE

PATIENT FEEDBACK

Dear VA Puget Sound staff,

During my years of work and military service, I have never received a thank you like what I received from your facility. I am almost 87, and your kindness toward an old veteran really tugged at my heartstrings.

All of you have been wonderful to me during the years I have visited the VA, as I am sure you are to every old veteran. We appreciate the work you do by helping all of us who fought to keep America safe and free.

Dear Mr. Johnson,

It has been two months since I attended the Blind Rehab Clinic at American Lake. The nurses and the faculty exhibited a remarkably kind, compassionate, patient and caring attitude at all times. It is truly amazing. I say amazing because the majority of the veterans are just plain old. I am 83, and believe me when I say that old guys are pretty hard to teach.

My instructor never allowed me to give up, and in the end, she persevered and I actually learned a lot of new things about computers and am very grateful to her. I am very appreciative of the staff there and thank them all for their patience.

Dear Director,

I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the great treatment I received from everyone involved in the treatment process at VA Puget Sound, including the clerical staff! I have always been pleased with the services and treatment provided by VA Puget Sound, but because of my recent ordeal, I was compelled to make a real statement of thanks and appreciation.

Keep up the good work and I thank you and your staff for being there for me. Please pat your staff on the back for all the letters of thanks that should be written.

Under the Needle: Veterans find lots of support at Fisher House, *Seattle P.I.*

VA Puget Sound Fisher House was recently featured at residents celebrated the house's first Veteran's Day. Focusing on the community of healing, the story focused on the families that are now allowed to stay close to their loved ones while they receive care at the Seattle Division. – Nov. 11, 2008

seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/387288_needle11.html

Housing vouchers help bring vets home, *Seattle P.I.*

Column describes the efforts of King County Housing Authority, Seattle Housing Authority and VA to help homeless veterans find a place to live. The story details how program does more than hand out vouchers, it connects veterans with case workers to help keep them from falling back into homelessness. – Nov. 10, 2008

seattlepi.nwsource.com/jamieson/387255_robert11.html

Fisher House offers military families a home away from home, *KOMO News*

The long-awaited opening of the VA Puget Sound Fisher House is profiled. More than 300 people attended the ribbon cutting ceremony that featured Pat Cashman, Gen. (ret.) John Shalikashvili, VISN Director Dennis Lewis and many veterans and community leaders. – Sept. 10, 2008-11-21

komonews.com/news/local/28227964.html

VA breaks ground on American Lake facility, *Tacoma News Tribune*

Recap of the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Community Living Center at the American Lake Division. The ceremony was attended by local officials, current nursing home residents and families of veterans who live in the area. The new CLC will have 81 beds and should be open for residents in late 2009. – Oct. 11, 2008

blogs.thenewstribune.com/military/2008/10/10/va_breaks_ground_on_new_american_lake_ho

For more information about
VA Puget Sound Public Affairs, call 206-764-2317 or email
publicaffairspugetsound@va.gov

Valet Parking welcomes veterans to Seattle division

Free valet parking for patients is back at the Seattle Division. In addition to the more than 100 parking spaces added through construction, the valet service can hold more than 200 vehicles. Valet parking is available Mon. - Fri., 8 a.m. - 4 p.m., excluding holidays.

The valet booth is located at the front entrance (off Columbian Way) next to the flagpole. There is no minimum amount of time a car needs to be parked. If patients need to stay past 4 p.m. they can collect their car keys from VA Police. The service is free for veterans and no tipping is allowed.

"We are very excited to provide valet parking service because it means better health care for veterans," said Sherri Bauch, Assistant Director for VA Puget Sound. "Having to drive around looking for parking was a huge inconvenience for patients. Even if some veterans choose not to use valet parking, the program and additional spaces makes it easier to find parking in general."

The valet parking program averages between 300-350 cars each day. That is quite a volume of activity and a huge benefit for our veterans. Special thanks goes out to volunteers from the Bothell American Legion Post who donated and put up a parking shelter by the benches for those extra hot summer days or rainy winter mornings.

For more information about valet parking, contact the Veterans Affairs Police Office at (206) 277-3113

Environment of Care

New IntegratedEthics program puts focus on doing **right** thing for **right** reason

Simply put, being ethical is doing the right thing, doing it well and doing it for the right reasons. In health care, difficult ethical decisions are made every day. Treatment options, personal beliefs, family traditions and professional opinions are all balanced and weighed to mold a plan of care that is both effective and ethical.

A new IntegratedEthics program was rolled out to more than 150 VA facilities nationwide. IntegratedEthics shifts the focus from the observable actions of an individual to the underlying organizational foundations that make up a healthcare system.

"Maintaining a high standard in patient care requires focusing on our business practices and ethical culture to enhance the quality, efficiency, and integrity of our programs," said Stan Johnson, director of VA Puget Sound. "The goal of our organization is integration of both rules and values to ensure our employees can carry out the day-to-day tasks that enable us to operate a first-class health care system."

In a health care setting, ethics can be broken down into three levels: decisions and actions, systems and processes, and environment and culture. These are the heart of decision making in health care, from the environment of care and customer service culture, to the hands-on work of a surgeon performing a procedure. "This is why having a strong ethics program ingrained in every employee is so important," said Johnson.

"It doesn't matter if you are a doctor or a housekeeper, your job can make the difference in whether or not someone's experience at VA Puget Sound was a success," Johnson said "The concept of doing the right thing for the right reason is what makes us a leader in health care. Our veterans deserve nothing less."

> *"It doesn't matter if you are a doctor or a housekeeper, your job can make the difference in whether or not someone's experience at VA Puget Sound was a success, The concept of doing the right thing for the right reason is what makes us a leader in healthcare. Our veterans deserve nothing less."*
>
> *- Stan Johnson, Director*

The IntegratedEthics program addresses the culture of ethics through three core areas: ethics consultation, preventive ethics and ethical leadership. Each area is a tool to bring about the best in customer service.

"When all the ethics codes are in place, the training on compliance finished, and the clear lines between right and wrong established, we must ultimately deal with the layers of complexity in large, often multinational organizations. Establishing conscience throughout such a large entity is no small task. But the chances are greater if the checks and balances for ethical collapse are in place," said Marianne M. Jennings, Professor of Business Ethics at Arizona State in her book *The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse.*

What separates this program from a rule bound ethics program founded on following minimum standards is that value-based ethics are not just a set of guidelines to check off during an interaction, said Johnson. Value-based ethics puts the emphasis on the employee to do the right thing because itís the right thing, not because it meets a law or standard.

This higher standard ís a standard that VA employees can begin using now. Instead of striving to comply, strive to excel. Take every opportunity to do the right thing for the right reason. Being an ethically sound health care system requires that every employee, from top to bottom, be working toward the same goal of providing our veterans the best care possible.

For more information about the IntegratedEthics program at VA Puget Sound, please call Paul B. Bauck at (206) 277-5579.

Treating Veterans with Honor and Respect

FACILITY UPDATES IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT OF CARE

Anyone who has been to either the Seattle or American Lake Divisions in recent months can't help notice that things are changing, and changing for the better. New buildings are being built, internal passageways are being redesigned and numerous changes to infrastructure are being planned.

Community Living Center Groundbreaking at American Lake VA, October 10, 2008

During the next five years, veterans and their families can expect to see a number of projects completed, both large and small. These projects are part of an overall shift toward increasing patient access and quality of care in an environment conducive to both the care and healing of our veterans.

"Our goal is not only to update the functional look and feel of the Medical Center with remodel projects, but also to take care of the infrastructure upgrades at both divisions, which makes for a large and complex construction program," said Steve Matthes, energy manager for VA Puget Sound and Anchorage VA Health Care System.

Maintaining full operations while undergoing such large and diverse construction projects can make for unique challenges. However, VA Puget Sound employees are doing everything they can to maintain high standards for patient care.

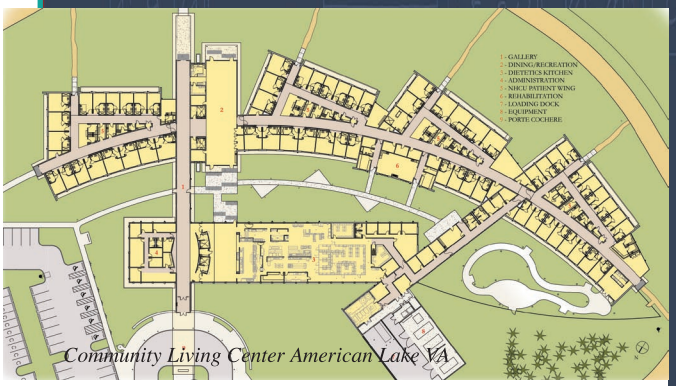
"Our goal is to help provide a better patient experience by improving the facilities in which we provide care," said Matthes. "In the short term, we provide small construction services that allow the medical center to quickly remodel spaces to correspond to changes and upgrades in patient care."

"By being able to manage many small remodel projects, day-to-day operations at the two facilities can continue with only minor disruptions, and allow veterans to keep their appointments and be seen in a timely manner," said Matthes. "It also allows planners to take advantage of the space we have, improving existing resources, and improving the environment of care quickly and responsively."

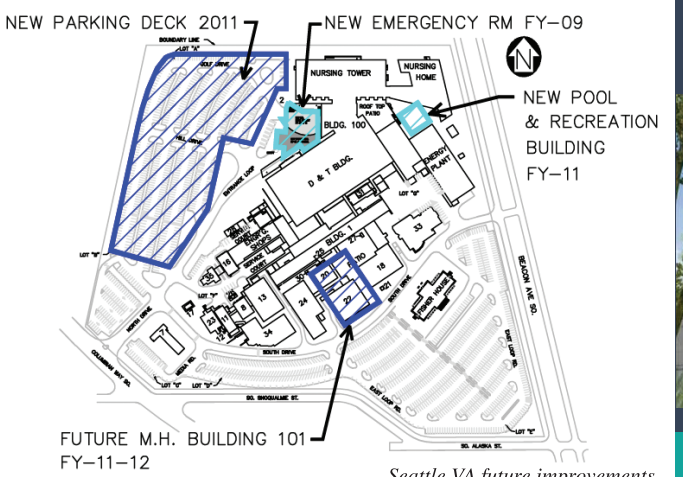
Major construction projects such as the new American Lake nursing home are planned as part of a larger effort to update older buildings.

"The larger construction projects we have planned will affect patients by helping realign services on large scale and will improve the feel of the campuses by removing aging buildings and replacing them with modern and effective space," said Matthes. "Our five-year plan for larger construction projects includes the new nursing home at American Lake, beginning ward remodels in the nursing tower at Seattle, seismic upgrades to the nursing tower, a new ER building at the Seattle Division, and a new Mental Health/Research Building at the Seattle Division."

With all this construction, facilities management is working to ensure that patients will still have easy access to clinical areas of both the Seattle and American Lake Divisions. "We ask that our patients be patient while we work to make our facilities the best they can be," said Matthes. "We are working to make VA Puget Sound a place our veterans can be proud of."



Community Living Center American Lake VA



Seattle VA future improvements

Community Living Center American Lake VA

Community Based Outpatient Clinics

Community Based Outpatient Clinic, Sedro-Woolley, Washington

Construction has begun on the new Community Based Outpatient Clinic located near Skagit Valley Hospital in Mount Vernon, Wash. The new clinic will use more than 6,000 square feet and provide care for more than 6,500 veterans in the region. VA Puget Sound is looking toward a Spring 2009 opening for the long-awaited clinic.

"This permanent clinic gives us the ability to actively reach out to the veteran community and bring them into the VA family of care," said VA Puget Sound Director Stan Johnson. "We are bringing VA care closer to our veterans and this clinic is just one example of VA Puget Sound's commitment to making health care more accessible to our veterans."

"This clinic is a testament to the power and persistence of our veteran population," said Sen. Patty Murray at the announcement press conference. "By making sure their voices were heard, these veterans have ensured that VA health care will be available in Northwest Washington for the generations of veterans who will follow."

"In addition to the men and women who served our country in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, we are going to have thousands of veterans of the current Global War on Terrorism who will be transitioning from military healthcare to VA healthcare in the next decade," said Johnson. "Clinics like this one will allow us to prepare for the increase in primary care patients that we know are coming."

During construction, VA Puget Sound opened an interim clinic in Sedro-Woolley to bring care to vetreans who were reluctant to drive the 90 minutes to Seattle for primary care. Since its opening in May, more than 1,600 veterans have enrolled at the interim clinic. This is in addition to the more than 1,500 veterans served by check-up clinics in Bellingham and Friday Harbor.

> "This permanent clinic gives us the ability to actively reach out to the veteran community..."

By elminating the 130 mile round trip from Mount Vernon to Seattle, more than 700,000 miles will be saved by veterans during the first year alone. With traffic concerns and the time commitment involved in traveling such a distance, the Northwest CBOC is a cornerstone in a strategy that will expand care and bring VA facilities closer to rural veterans.

"This clinic will -- at long last -- bring health care closer to veterans in Northwest Washington," said Representative Rick Larsen. "Local veterans have led the way in bringing this clinic to Northwest Washington, and Senator Murray and I have been proud to be your advocates in Congress to help make this clinic a reality."

CBOC LOCATIONS

1 Bremerton
925 Adele Avenue
Bremerton, WA 98312
Telephone: (360) 782-0129 Fax: (360) 377-8029

2 Port Angeles
1005 Georgianna Street
Port Angeles, WA 98362
Telephone: (360) 565-9330 Fax: (360) 457-0618

3 Northwest Washington
(Temporary location until Summer 2009)
Cedar Grove Building B, 2031-C Hospital Drive
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
Telephone: (360) 856-4700 Fax: (360) 856-9080

4 Bellevue (Valor Healthcare)
13033 Bel-Red Road, Suite 210
Bellevue, Washington 98005
Telephone: (425) 214-1055 Fax: (425) 453-1619

5 Federal Way (Valor Healthcare)
34617 11th Place South, Suite 301
Federal Way, WA 98003
Telephone: (253) 336-4142 Fax: (253) 838-3006

6 North Seattle (Valor Healthcare)
12360 Lake City Way NE, Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98125
Telephone: (206) 384-4382 Fax: (206) 440-3137

BRINGING CARE CLOSER TO VETERANS

During the last few years, VA Puget Sound has worked closely with community leaders and elected officials to expand access to VA health care in Western Washington. This includes opening community based outpatient clinics in Bremerton, Port Angeles and Mount Vernon, partnering with Valor Healthcare in the Seattle Metro area, and beginning the process to open another CBOC in the Lewis/Thurston County region.

These clinics, along with numerous construction projects and a commitment to decrease appointment wait times, are part of VA Puget Sound's multi-pronged effort to improve access and quality of care.

"We are continually upgrading our facilities, adding clinics and working on innovative ideas and projects to improve our patients experience at VA Puget Sound," said DeAnn Dietrich, deputy director for VA Puget Sound. "We view ourselves as leaders in not only veteran's health care, but in the Northwest medical community."

Another new development is the approval of a mobile medical unit for VA Puget Sound. As part of VA's national Rural Health Care Initiative, this mobile unit will allow our staff to deliver care closer to the thousands of veterans who live in some of the more rural and remote areas of Washington state. It has already begun monthly trips to Aberdeen and Shelton.

"In addition to increasing access, we want to ensure that we are being efficient with the taxpayer's money, that they are getting the most out of every dollar we receive," said Dietrich. "The more efficiently our dollars are spent, the more we can concentrate on providing the best care to our veterans."

For more information about VA Puget Sound's Community Based Outpatient Program, please call Chris Foster at (206) 306-6123.

New Initiative to Improve Rapid Access to Mental Health Services

Mental Health Service at VA Puget Sound has recently expanded its operating hours in response to a national directive to improve timely access to mental health care.

Outpatient mental health clinics at both divisions are now open until 8:00 p.m. at least one evening per week with many of these clinics offering additional after-hours appointments.

"This means that veterans with mental health problems will receive a risk assessment within 24 hours of referral for mental health care, ensuring our veterans' safety," said Miles McFall, MD, director of VA Puget Sound's PTSD program. "Veterans will also be seen in clinic or phoned within 14 days of a mental health services referral for a comprehensive evaluation."

"...veterans with mental health problems will receive a risk assessment within 24 hours of referral..."

In addition to increasing access, the mental health clinics at the American Lake and Seattle Divisions are also restructuring how they process newly referred patients. For example, the electronic consult that clinicians use to refer patients for mental health care has been redesigned. Referring providers are now prompted to assess a patient's level of urgency for care and provide that patient with a point of contact who can provide immediate assistance.

"These changes ensure the safety of veterans by increasing their access to our facilities, making available timely risk assessments, and at hours that are convenient for veterans," said McFall.

At the American Lake Division, a newly established Intake Clinic provides rapid evaluations for veterans referred for mental health services. At the Seattle Division, a triage coordinator now calls veterans who need an urgent care assessment within 24 hours and makes a follow-up appointment within two weeks.

"Veterans appreciate having access to appointments at early morning hours as well as during evening hours," McFall said. "After-hours appointments are more accommodating for veterans who are busy working and use child care."

For more information about VA Puget Sound's mental health clinic at the American Lake Division, call (253) 583-1703. For information conerning the Seattle Outpatient Mental Health Clinic call (206) 764-2007.

ELIGIBILITY EXPANDS TO 5 YEARS FOR OEF/OIF COMBAT VETERANS

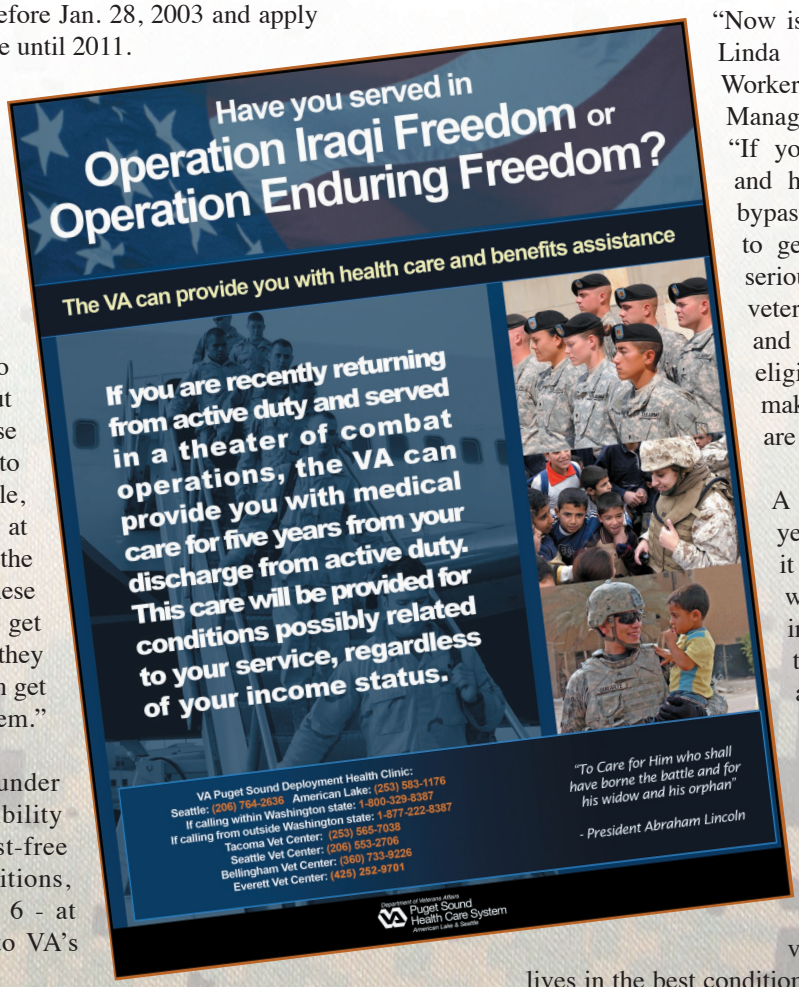
New eligibility rules for combat veterans who served after Nov. 11, 1998 may now apply to those who were previously denied VA medical treatment benefits for combat related injuries. A section in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 extends the eligibility period for veterans to five years after discharge for veterans who were discharged after Jan. 28, 2003. Veterans who were discharged before Jan. 28, 2003 and apply after Jan. 28, 2008 will be eligible until 2011.

All discharged veterans of active duty, reserve and the National Guard are eligible if they served on active duty status in a combat theater after Nov. 11, 1998 and received an other than dishonorable discharge.

"This is great for veterans who didnít enroll when they first got out because of family issues or because they just werenít ready to come to us for help," said Mark Correale, Social Worker and care manager at the Deployment Health Clinic at the Seattle Division. "Sometimes these veterans weren't ready or able to get the help they needed because they missed the deadline. Now, we can get them into our system and help them."

Veterans who are eligible under the Combat Veteran eligibility authority will be entitled to cost-free care for combat-related conditions, enrollment into priority group 6 - at a minimum - and full access to VA's medical benefits package.

"At VA Puget Sound, all a veteran has to do is fill out an enrollment form or come to our Deployment Health Clinics said Leann Stephens, MSW/Care Manager in the Deployment Health Clinic at the American Lake Division. "We have a unique program for our OEF and OIF veterans that allows a patient to come to one place for medical and mental health care and be advised by a social worker."



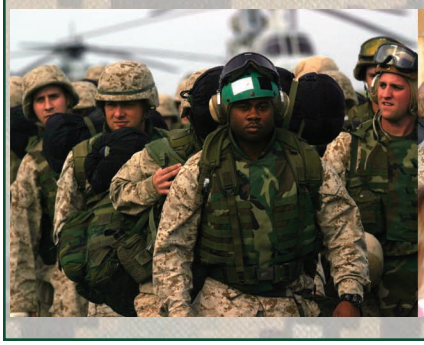
When their eligibility period ends, these veterans will than be assigned to a priority group based on their income and disability. For veterans who do not enroll during this time, eligibility will based upon outside factors such as disability, VA pension status and financial status.

"Now is the time to enroll," said Linda Gillespie-Gateley, Social Worker, OEF-OIF Program Manager and VISN 20 Lead. "If you are a combat veteran and haven't enrolled, you are bypassing a great opportunity to get excellent care. We are serious about getting all our veterans the help they need, and this extended combat eligibility is a great way to make sure that our veterans are being taken care of."

A major benefit of the five-year eligibility period is that it provides combat veterans with five years of health care in the VA system, allowing their health care providers a significant amount of time to help returning combat veterans adjust to and transition back into civilian life.

"Our number one priority is helping veterans get back to their lives in the best condition possible," said Gillespie-Gateley. "Whether they are dealing with emotional issues or physical injuries, we want them to recover and get back to their regular lives." This change in eligibility rules for combat veterans is a huge piece toward helping VA Puget Sound do that.

For more information, contact the Deployment Health Clinic at (206) 764-2636 or (877) 222-8387



GETTING BACK Into the SWING of THINGS

Volunteers at the American Lake Veterans Golf Course recently received the Hospital Award for Volunteer Excellence (HAVE) from the American Hospital Association (AHA). The award celebrates the contributions of hospital volunteers men and women who go the extra mile for their patients and communities.

"The HAVE Award reflects nationwide admiration of your colleagues for VA Puget Soundís volunteer program," wrote Rich Umbdenstock, President of the AHA. The award spotlights a very active volunteer program, with more than 140 volunteers involved in maintenance, operations, planning, and a wide range of patient services.

As one would expect being located so close to a VA medical facility, there is a strong rehabilitation program with patients from American Lake Division, the Wounded Warriors Battalion from the Madigan Army Medical Center, the Washington State Soldiers' Home and individuals in the community using this course for rehabilitation. VA recreational therapists are also involved in making this golf course more than playing a quick nine holes.

Every Monday during golfing season (March - November), volunteers are available to teach fundamentals and work with those challenged by either the game or the course. Michael Kearney, golf course director, explained that there is a lot of planning, teaching and labor required to reach out and help those who could not otherwise use this facility. "This is all supported by VA, therapists, golf pros, and the community," Kearney says. "They teach how to swing a golf club, hit a ball, work with balance issues, and use special carts."

Initial lessons are given at two golfing workshops held every year in the spring and summer. These "First Swing Clinics" are part of the recreation therapy outpatient program, overseen by VA physicians and coordinated by recreation therapists. With local golf professionals offering lessons and volunteers available to help patients play, everything is in place for individuals to succeed. As an added bonus, golf cart are provided at no cost for the clinics. A barbecue afterwards completes the clinics.

After the inaugural First Swing Clinic, the volunteers created a three-hole course next to the driving range where newcomers to the game could learn at a slower pace without holding up players on the regular course.

Kristie Goedhard, Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, has been involved with programs at the golf course for several years. She has seen first hand the therapeutic benefits golfing can offer. "One patient, an avid golfer before suffering a spinal cord injury, became depressed, isolating himself at home with multiple issues about going out in public. Once he discovered that he was able to take up the game and go golfing with his friends again, it was a life-changing event," said Goedhard.

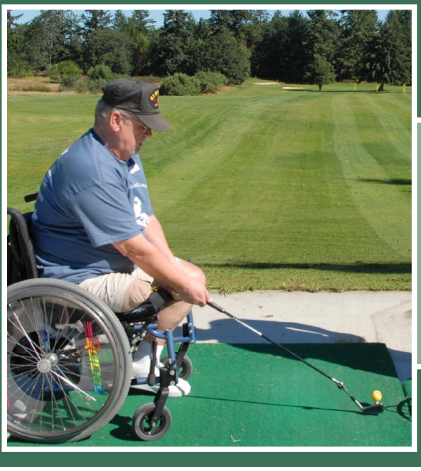
"The program reaches out to people at all levels of rehabilitation, whether they suffer from spinal cord injuries, upper or lower limb amputations, strokes, traumatic brain injuries, post traumatic stress disorders, or other conditions," Goedhard said. Blind rehabilitation patients now walk the fairways.

The American Lake Golf Course dates back to 1926 when Fort Lewis donated land for a therapeutic golf course. The course was managed by American Lakeís Recreation Therapy Service until 1995 when a bill was passed removing federal funding for such recreational facilities throughout the country. That is when the volunteers stepped forward and began managing the golf course.

In 2002, a group of volunteers and community leaders created the nonprofit charitable organization, The Friends of American Lake Veterans Golf Course. This non-profit group primarily raises funds for the program; many of the members also serve as volunteers at the golf course.

The contributions of the golf course volunteers cannot be understated. ìIf it werenít for the volunteers, there wouldnít be a golf course," said Stan Johnson, medical center director at VA Puget Sound. "The volunteers are the heart and soul of the course; they have developed a model program."

The American Lake Veterans Golf Course and its rehabilitative programs have been the subject of numerous news stories recently, including ABC nightly news with Charles Gibson, AP news, King 5 news, the Tacoma News Tribune, and has been highlighted in golfing magazines.



For more information about volunteering at the American Lake Veterans Golf Course, call Michael Kearney at (253) 583-1058.

The Power of Purpose

VA Puget Sound brings community, veterans together

For military veterans returning from an overseas deployment, welcome home is a phrase that can mean a lot of different things. However, during a May 9, 2008 celebration, more than 350 newly returning veterans took part in a combined day of information sharing and golf activities at the American Lake Veterans Golf Course.

The program included two golf clinics, informational briefings and a round of golf. "Welcome Home meant golf, food and thanks for a job well done," said Stan Johnson, medical center director.

Along with volunteers from the golf course, the Vet Centers, the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, the Friends of American Lake Golf Course, Madigan Army Medical Center, community groups and local leaders, VA Puget Sound hosted a contingent of soldiers from Fort Lewis's Wounded Warrior Transition Battalion to take part in the all-day golf and resource event.

"The local community was so instrumental in making this event happen," said Linda Gillespie-Gately, OEF/OIF program manager for VA Puget Sound. "It just shows how important these veterans are to so many people. Business leaders, community leaders, they all wanted to show their support to our veterans." She adds, "Col. Bolton's leadership with the Battalion and his passion for his units made this a great success."

For half of the soldiers, the day began with a handful of classes on how to play the game of golf, from swinging a club to course etiquette. Following the classes, the soldier began a nine-hole tournament.

"The golf course was originally created as a rehabilitative therapeutic tool," said Mike Kearney, community volunteer and manager of the American Lake Veterans Golf Course. "But, we wanted this event to be about more than just golf. It's about the sacrifices our veterans make and how we as a community can give back to them."

The other soldiers had to wait until after lunch for the golf tournament, but were able to attend a resource fair with tables from local and national organizations who were there to help these soldiers transition from military to civilian life.

Events like this, part of a national VA program to extend a hand to veterans, offer a chance for local communities and leaders to show their appreciation and give thanks to those who made the choice to serve their country.

"This year's theme, "Paying Tribute to Those Who Served", is really a testament to what we try to do here everyday," said Gillespie-Gately. "These soldiers who came out today really are such special men and women. Most of them are going to be leaving the military soon, and we just want to ensure they have the resources available to them to be successful in the civilian world."

Voting Assistance Drive a success!

To help with the increased demand for voting registration assistance before the Oct. 4 registration deadline, VA Puget Sound sponsored two voting registration assistance drives to help veterans and employees register.

The first, held Sept. 30 at the American Lake Division Canteen, helped register more than 25 people. Many more veterans and employees had questions answered by the volunteers from the League of Women Voters.

Following the American Lake voting assistance drive, a second drive was held at the Seattle Division Oct. 2. Again, many veterans and employees were able to either register or have their questions answered by volunteers from the League of Women Voters, while 35 people were registered to vote.

All in all, the two drives helped register more than 50 people and provided answers to another 40 people.

Following a recent VA Directive, the League of Women Voters was selected to help register veterans and employees at VA Puget Sound. They were selected by a firstócome, first-serve process after contacting VA Puget Sound and asking if they could conduct a voting registration drive at VA Puget Sound. After being determined that they were a non-partisan group, the two drives were scheduled.

VA Puget Sound has a history of helping veterans register to vote through its voluntary service program. All veterans who are admitted into VA Puget Sound are given a flyer explaining their options if they want to register to vote or require assistance in doing so.

VA Puget Sound News is published quarterly. VA Puget Sound Health Care System proudly serves veterans throughout the Northwest with facilities located in Seattle and at American Lake. VA Puget Sound is part of the VISN 20 network of health care facilities.

VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Stan Johnson, Director
DeAnn Dietrich, Deputy Director
Sherri Bauch, Assistant Director
Gordon A. Starkebaum, MD, Chief of Staff
Frankie Manning, Nurse Manager
Jeri A. Rowe, Public Affairs Director

Department of Veterans Affairs
Puget Sound Health Care System
American Lake & Seattle

1660 South Columbian Way
Seattle, WA 98108-1532
(206) 762-1010

Editorial Board:

Sheila Arié
Cecile Bagrow
Robin Cook
Chris Foster
Linda Gillespie-Gateley
Mercedes Gross
Lin Hoisington
Alisa Holcomb
Jeff Honeycutt
Michele Huber
Charlie Keelin
Ken LeBlond
Lisa Kelly
John Mangan
Ellen Martin
Steve Matthes
Joe Matthews
Eileen McCormick
Angeli Medina
Barb Olson
Sami O'Neill
Chris Pacheco
Nathan Phair
Wendy Riverman
Jeri Rowe
James Simpson
Shane Suzuki
Dave Tostenrude
Walt Werkhoven

Comments or future story ideas may be submitted to the VA Puget Sound News Editorial Board. All photos for newsletter inclusion must be taken or approved by the Editorial Board.

Back issues of VA Puget Sound News are available on the VA Puget Sound web site

www.Puget-Sound.med.va.gov

Celebrating Excellence in Support of Veterans

Department of Veterans Affairs
Puget Sound Health Care System
American Lake & Seattle