Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center

The APOLLO

Readying Warriors and Caring for Heroes

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TeamSTEPPS methods improve patient safety

Corpsman's use of TeamSTEPPS tools helps ill Sailor

By Stephanie McCrobie
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

One Friday afternoon, Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Hanniel Diaz, a laboratory technician in Recruit Training Command clinic USS Tranquillity on the East campus of the Lovell Federal Health Care Center, noticed a Sailor waiting for phlebotomy services looked ill. Although the Sailor had just seen the doctor, Diaz felt that something was not right.

Remembering her TeamSTEPPS training, Diaz took the Sailor's temperature and proceeded to "CUS" to the nurse on duty, a TeamSTEPPS acronym to remind staff to notify their leadership that they are "concerned, uncomfortable and worried about safety."

"Even though he just had an appointment in the clinic, his internal body temperature had changed from the time he walked in the door to when I saw him in the lab waiting area," Diaz said. "I was very concerned and felt uncomfortable sending him back to the ship. I didn't think he would be safe in his current condition."

USS Tranquillity staff ended up transferring the Sailor to the emergency department, where he was admitted as an inpatient, and it was discovered he had a significant heart condition. The condition had not been picked up in routine medical appointments. Diaz's quick actions helped save the Sailor from major health problems.

"HM3 Diaz used one of the TeamSTEPPS initiative's central tools focused on speaking up," said Lt. Lanae Hickman, TeamSTEPPS team leader for Lovell FHCC.

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Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Robert Trottman, a TeamSTEPPS trainer, leads a training session for current Lovell Federal Health Care Center staff on different TeamSTEPPS communication tools. (Photo by Mary Waterman)

Right to left, World War II and Korean War Veteran Jim Frohnapfel, OEF/OIF/OND Veteran & Vet Center Social Worker Debbie HH-Cole, Persian Gulf Veteran & Vet Center Outreach Specialist James Harkins, Evanston Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl and Lovell FHCC Commanding Officer/Deputy Director Capt. José Acosta cut the ribbon. (Photo by Mary Waterman)

Lovell FHCC helps celebrate relocated Evanston Vet Center

WWII Veteran resident of Freedom Square helps cut ribbon

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

The irony wasn't lost on World War II and Korean War Veteran James Frohnapfel as he waited to help cut the ribbon on the Evanston Vet Center's new building at 1901 Howard Street – about a block away from where he left to join the Navy in 1942.

"Now 72 years later, I'm back where I started," joked Frohnapfel, who today resides in the Lovell Federal Health Care Center's Community Living Center (CLC), known as Freedom Square, in North Chicago, Ill.

"It's a pleasure to associate with the guys I've met here over the years," Frohnapfel continued, commenting on the many years he frequented the center at its previous location before he moved into the CLC to receive long-term medical care.

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Leadership Commentary

Patient-centered care starts when we walk in their shoes

By Patrick L. Sullivan
Lovell FHCC Director

If you haven't had a chance to see it yet, "Empathy: The Human Connection" – the first video shown during the recent Patient-Centered Care training many of us attended – is unforgettable, and therefore completely appropriate.

Dozens of patients and family members who can be seen on a typical day in most any hospital, and even some employees, are each identified only by text that appears above, to the side or across their faces, telling their stories in one sentence: "Taking son off life-support today," "Car accident six months ago; still in pain," "Has been waiting three hours," – the stark labels keep coming throughout the video.

A middle-aged woman sits alone on the examining table in shock from a diagnosis; a young girl and her mother are greeted by a volunteer and pet therapy dog on their way to say goodbye to her father; a family member waits anxiously for news from the doctor; a clinician in the elevator smiles as he thinks about his impending fatherhood; another employee daydreams about his vacation starting the next day … without any dialogue and only soft music in the background, the message is loud and clear: We are asked quite simply to *walk in the shoes* of the people we encounter every day.

After the video, the trainer emphasizes that patient-centered care is about every one of us at Lovell FHCC, no matter what our job is, filling the role of caregiver. Everyone here has an impact on each patient's experience, whether you are a groundskeeper, volunteer greeter, a scheduler, a housekeeper, a social worker or clinician.

The experience of care begins the moment a Veteran steps off the shuttle to walk into one of our buildings, or in the few first minutes when a mother in uniform walks in pushing an infant in a stroller. It begins for recruits when they march into USS Red Rover on one of their first days in the U.S. Navy. For others, it starts when they pick up the phone to make an appointment, or when they send a secure email message to their doctor.

It's the human connection we make with each patient along the journey that makes the difference in their experience of their care. Our mission, which encompasses the goals of both the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense, is not about patient's diseases, or symptoms, or situations. It's about treating the whole person, providing for his or her health and wellbeing, and putting the patient at the center of his or her care.

In coming weeks, those of you who missed this training will have another opportunity to take it. The VHA (Veterans Health Association) Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation Field Implementation Team trained a group of your fellow employees to provide the one-hour block of training in your departments and work areas.

I urge every employee of Lovell FHCC to go to one of these sessions, to internalize the message, and then make it your goal no matter what your job is to put *every patient at the center of his or her care - every patient, every contact, every time*.

Lovell FHCC to hold Homeless Summit 2014

Resource Fair will educate Veterans, providers, and community about services

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

The Homeless Summit Feb. 26 at Lovell Federal Health Care Center will feature a resource fair, where patients as well as providers and community members may learn about the wide array of resources available to help prevent homelessness among Veterans. (Photo by Trevor Seela)

Many more resources – new programs with increased funding and personnel – are available to help prevent homelessness among Veterans than ever before as a result of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) initiative to end homelessness among Veterans by the end of 2015.

That is a fact that Lovell Federal Health Care Center homeless program staff want to promote both in the community and among the many providers and clinicians who work at the North Chicago hospital and at Lovell FHCC clinics in Evanston and McHenry, Ill., and Kenosha, Wis.

The Lovell FHCC Homeless Summit 2014 this month will serve the dual purpose of collaborating with community partners and Veterans to develop strategies to end homelessness, as well as getting the word out to Veterans about what services are available and where and how to get them.

The summit will be from 1 to 4 p.m., Feb. 26, in Bourke Hall, Building 4, at the Lovell FHCC North Chicago campus. Registration will begin at 12:30 p.m.

"We haven't had the resources until now," said Bill Flood, head of homeless programs at Lovell FHCC. "Now, there are many ways we, and our community partners, can help prevent Veterans from ever becoming homeless."

The summit will bring together representatives from state, county and community agencies and Lovell FHCC staff to collaborate local efforts to help Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It will also include a resource fair, where attendees may find information on Lovell FHCC programs and health care services as well as state of Illinois, and Lake and McHenry County resources.

Resource fair participants will provide information on mental health resources, emergency housing, short-term and long-term housing, consumer credit counseling, Vet Center services, community colleges, employment and disability services, legal services for low-income Veterans, and state and federal Veteran benefits.

"We're making big strides at Lovell FHCC in keeping up with larger VAs to serve homeless Veterans," said Lovell FHCC Health Care for Homeless Veterans Coordinator Elizabeth Morgan, who is organizing the summit.

"We look forward to collaborating even more with our community partners to end homelessness among Veterans in Northeast Illinois and Southeast Wisconsin," Morgan said.

For more information, contact Morgan at Elizabeth.morgan2@va.gov or 224-610-5782.

The Apollo

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Evanston Vet Center is like a second home for many *(cont.)*

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A crowd of community supporters and Veteran clients of the center joined Frohnapfel, Evanston Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl, Vet Center staff, and leaders from Lovell FHCC Jan. 10 to celebrate the new space.

The Evanston Vet Center is one of approximately 300 operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) nationwide to provide readjustment counseling and other support to returning combat Veterans, including helping them access their VA benefits. Lovell FHCC – where Department of Defense and VA health services are integrated at the nation's only federal health care center – partners with the Evanston Vet Center to care for Veterans.

"We were eager to move for a while," said Evanston Vet Center Team Leader Betsy Tolstedt. "It's very exciting, and we're very happy to have such a nice place for Veterans. For many who come here for services, it's like a second home."

The Evanston Vet Center has helped more than 9,000 Veterans and their family members since it opened its doors in 1985. Of the 507 clients it served in fiscal year 2013, 128 were new.

"There are a lot of heroes in this audience," said Lovell FHCC Deputy Director and Commanding Officer José Acosta during his remarks. "I was talking to Jim (Frohnapfel) about World War II, and I told him I read a book named Halsey's Typhoon, and he said, 'You should have been there; you should have seen how bad it was!'"

Acosta also mentioned recent news stories about the increasing number of Veterans committing suicide. "It shows just how relevant this Vet Center is," he said. "This is a great example of being able to provide the services where the Veterans are, where they live. You can have great services but they don't help if they are too far away."

Veteran Jim Frohnapfel poses with his grandson Kevin Carlson, who accompanied him to the ceremony. Carlson said every day he wears his grandfather's dog tags from World War II out of respect for Frohnapfel's military service. (Photo by Mary Waterman)

Acosta thanked the Vet Center staff for their day-to-day support of Veterans, "probably saving immeasurable lives."

> *"There's just something about these places. You walk in, and you know the people here are going to help you. And there's no price to come here. You already paid the price."*
>
> ***Joshua Ray Bentley***
> ***Deputy Director, VA Regional Counseling Service***

During her remarks, Tolstedt, too, praised her dedicated and compassionate staff members and noted that about 75 percent of them are Veterans themselves.

The life-changing assistance Vet Center staff members provide Veterans in the inconspicuous storefront at Howard and Dodge streets came out in stories shared by Veterans in attendance.

"They have one of the best support groups for PTSD around, right here," said Veteran Orlando Richardson, as he waited in the comfortable lobby area before the ceremony. "It's led by a Vietnam Veteran (Howard Harris), who was a young paratrooper in the Army, and now is one of the best counselors … who returned from Vietnam, went to college, started working. He made something of himself. And now he's here.

"They take good care of us. I'm really grateful," continued Richardson, who said he comes to the center every day.

Navy Veteran David Hurwitz called himself a "long-time client" of the Vet Center. Hurwitz started naming the many services he has taken advantage of – "counseling, book clubs, group therapy, meditation, and trips … Betsy took us to Harvard one time, and to Minnesota on a canoe and camping trip."

Hurwitz, who served on the USS Independence during Operation Southern Watch, said he would not have gotten to the point of recently enrolling in graduate school if it hadn't been for the help he's received at the Vet Center. He called the center a "Godsend."

VA Regional Counseling Service Deputy Director Joshua Bentley also helped cut the ribbon and spoke during the ceremony. The Navy Veteran, a former chief gunner's mate, remarked that when he walked into the center years ago and found out "they pay you here to talk to Veterans," he never expected he would get a job as a team leader, move up the ranks, and one day return as the regional deputy director.

"There's just something about these places," Bentley said. "You walk in, and you know the people here are going to help you. And there's no price to come here. You already paid the price."

With his grandson Kevin Carlson by his side, Frohnapfel told reporters and audience members before the ceremony the story of the price he paid.

"We were in the biggest sea battle of the world, the Battle of Leyte Gulf, for four days in 1944," Frohnapfel said. "We were hit by two Kamikazes and lost almost 300 men in two days."

Frohnapfel recounted how he jumped 50 feet to abandon ship, into the burning Philippine Sea, and spent eight hours in the water, clinging to a mop handle, until he was picked up by a destroyer escort ship. He credited his survival on a Navy training film that demonstrated how to make uniforms buoyant.

Carlson quietly listened until it was time to show his grandfather's dog tags, which he wears every day around his neck. One of the tarnished grey tags contains Frohnapfel's fingerprint, put there with acid according to Frohnapfel.

"I didn't grow up with a father," Carlson said. "He (Frohnapfel) was always around for me. He was always the most hard-working man I knew. He inspires me."

The Evanston Vet Center is located at 1901 Howard Street in Evanston, 847-332-1019.

The Lovell Federal Health Care Center color guard participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the relocated Evanston Vet Center. Pictured from left to right are Hospitalman William Porter, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Shawn Hayes, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Clement McKenzie, and Hospitalman James Briggs is partially pictured on the far right. (Photo by Mary Waterman)

TeamSTEPPS tools overcome communication barriers (*cont.*)

Hickman is a nurse in the general surgery department.

"The CUS tool, like other TeamSTEPPS tools, empowers anyone on the team to voice their concerns without fear of being ignored or reprimanded. Diaz's action shows how important this training is. She was concerned that the patient was still ill, despite having just walked out of a medical appointment, and she was right."

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Robert Trottman, a TeamSTEPPS trainer, leads a class for staff members at Lovell Federal Health Care Center. All current employees completed the training, and new employees receive it during orientation. (Photo by Mary Waterman)

TeamSTEPPS, which stands for team strategies and tools to enhance performance and patient safety, is a patient safety initiative developed by several health care organizations, including the Department of Defense (DoD) Patient Safety Program (PSP) and the Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The program is designed to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of health care delivered to patients by enhancing communication and mutual support between team members.

TeamSTEPPS is meant to counteract years of findings by the Joint Commission, the leading accrediting organization for hospitals, showing communication failure was the leading root cause of adverse events in hospitals in the past 10 years.

Dave Keating, a risk manager in Lovell FHCC's Organizational Performance Improvement Department, was one of the first advocates for the implementation of TeamSTEPPS at Lovell in 2012.

"We wanted to use TeamSTEPPS at Lovell to decrease safety incidents where a lack of, or casual communication was the contributing factor, as well as increasing effective communication and teamwork," Keating said.

Lovell FHCC's day-long training teaches staff to overcome these communication failures by identifying the barriers to effective communication and teaching strategies to overcome those barriers.

Hickman and Keating established the program with the goals of decreasing safety incidents caused, in part, from a lack of communication,, and also increasing effective communication and teamwork throughout the facility.

"We teach staff to identify when they are uncomfortable and concerned about an issue whether the issue is an exam room or in a conference room," Hickman said.

Another goal of the training is to expand the thinking of employees.

"One of the big challenges of the TeamSTEPPS program was to get the staff to think beyond just the departments they work in; we want staff to think broader and think as 'Lovell FHCC' bringing patients the safest level of care, regardless of whether they work in the Canteen or in Surgical Services," Hickman said. "We have to think about how what we do in our own individual departments affects our team members the next department over."

At the beginning of 2013, Hickman and her TeamSTEPPS trainers began the arduous task of educating all 3,000 FHCC employees. The team represented all six directorates and was made up of both civilians and Sailors.

"My team is the best," Hickman said. "Everyone was very enthusiastic about participating and leading sessions for fellow employees. This helped make the implementation of TeamSTEPPS very smooth. I really can't say enough about the dedication and support from the trainers as well as their departments. Remember, this is a collateral duty for every single facilitator, meaning they do this in addition to their primary jobs."

To date, more than 95 percent of FHCC staff is trained on TeamSTEPPS. Employees either received the training during new employee orientation or through day-long seminars. The training incorporates lectures, videos and team-building exercises, so that staff not only hear the material but have a chance to try out the tools in the classroom.

From Hickman and Keating's perspective, the implementation of TeamSTEPPS has been a huge success. Not only do they hear general feedback that the training has helped improve staff communications, but they said they have also received positive reports of TeamSTEPPS in action.

"From maintenance staff voicing safety concerns to their supervisors, to nursing staff voicing concerns about personal protective equipment, we've already begun to see how instrumental TeamSTEPPS is to improving patient safety; and this is just the beginning," Hickman said.

Veteran artists, performers needed for festival

Entries needed include paintings, sculpture, drawings, photography, and music

By Stephanie McCrobie
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

The Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center will be hosting its annual Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Thursday, Feb. 27.

Veterans are encouraged to submit artwork in the following categories: painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, music (vocal and instrumental performances). The deadline for submission is Feb. 17.

Local artists will judge the artwork and determine first, second and third place in each category. First-place winners may have the opportunity to advance on to the national level, where their pieces and performance art will compete with entries submitted by Veterans from other Department of Veterans Affairs facilities around the country.

The festival provides Veterans the opportunity to participate in creative self-expression in art and performance, and to gain recognition for these artistic accomplishments.

First place winners from Lovell FHCC's competition will be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, hosted this year by the Milwaukee Veterans Affairs Medical Center, the week of Oct. 27 - Nov. 2.

For more information on eligibility and submission rules, please contact Sean Gartland, 224-610-4201.

What: Annual Veterans Creative Arts Festival 2014

When: Submissions due by Feb. 17 for Creative Arts Festival, which will be held Feb. 27

Where: Lovell Federal Health Care Center, 3001 Green Bay Rd., North Chicago, Ill.

Who: Submissions will be accepted from Lovell FHCC Veteran patients. Employees who are Veteran patients also may enter.

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Lovell FHCC celebrates Dr. MLK, Jr. Day

Civilian employees of the quarter named

- Lt. Cmdr. Ayala's research honored
- Lovell FHCC Director's 2014 message
- *... and many more stories and photos!*

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