Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center

The APOLLO

Readying Warriors and Caring for Heroes

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Lovell FHCC breaks ground in McHenry for Community Based Outpatient Clinic

In the above photo, left to right, Lovell FHCC Executive Officer Navy Capt. David Jones, McHenry City Administrator Derik Morefield, Army Veteran Julie Constantz-McBride, Army World War II Veteran Calvin Whitney, Jonah Hetland from CMA Inc. and Lovell FHCC acting Deputy Director Michelle Blakely break ground for the relocated McHenry Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) at 3715 W. Municipal Drive. In the photo on the right, left to right, is Veteran Jerry Connerty, VFW Post 4600 Cmdr. Ronnie Reber, and American Legion Post 491 Cmdr. Ray Rigsby. Dozens of McHenry area Veterans gathered for the groundbreaking. The new facility will be able to accommodate up to 4,400 patients. (Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

Dozens of local Veterans, community leaders, staff attended ceremony May 16

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

World War II Army Veteran and former prisoner of war Calvin Whitney was pleased to be asked to help break ground May 16 on the new Lovell Federal Health Care Center McHenry Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC).

"When they asked me, my thought was that it's an honor," said Whitney, who served in the infantry in Europe, from 1943 to 1945.

Whitney was one of dozens of Veterans who attended the recent groundbreaking ceremony for a bigger, brighter, better-designed building on Municipal Drive to house the growing clinic.

The McHenry CBOC currently serves about 3,480 patients annually and will be able to accommodate up to 4,400 in the new facility.

CBOC staff said the move to a larger space has been a long time coming. "I'm beyond words," said LPN Missy Robel, who rallied many community supporters and McHenry area Veterans for the event. "It's long overdue for our Veterans. We need the space and better equipment to accommodate our Veterans' needs."

For Veterans like Whitney, the new clinic will cut down on the number of trips he makes from his home in Ringwood to the main Lovell FHCC hospital in North Chicago for health care.

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June 14 is Flag Day!

Flag Day is celebrated on June 14, which commemorates the day the United States flag was adopted in 1777 by resolution of the Second Continental Congress.

Our flag has a proud and glorious history. It has been at the lead of every battle fought by Americans, and many have died protecting it. Our flag represents our independence and our unity as a nation!

Leadership Commentary

Review team gives Community Living Center high marks

Long Term Care Institute labels room-service-style dining a best practice, singles out dysphagia program

By Captain José Acosta
Acting Lovell FHCC Director

One of the best feelings when you are a leader in an organization like the Lovell Federal Health Care Center is when you are asked, "Can I have other people call you to talk to you about how you did it?"

I heard that question recently, and I'm happy to report that it was the Long Term Care Institute (LTCI) team that asked it during their recent visit to our Community Living Center (CLC), where they talked to patients and staff.

They asked that question about our room service-style dining, which they identified as a best practice. In fact, they said it was the first time they had seen a successful room service program sustained over the long run, with no complaints on the food.

Kudos, then, go out to Dr. Sarah Fouse, Ms. Wanda Parks, Ms. Laura Dolezal, the rest of the Nutrition and Food Service team, dietitians and CLC staff, for putting our patients at the center of their care on a daily basis. Our Veteran residents in the CLC, and patients elsewhere in the hospital, are very happy to have the ability to order the food they want, when they want it.

Additionally, the LTCI team found what I have always known to be true from my rounding in the CLC – residents "think the world" of the staff members who take care of them, and residents feel like they truly do have a voice in their care.

One CLC program in particular stands out because of its success, and the LTCI team thought so, too. Our dysphagia program is making a genuine difference in the lives of some of our residents.

What I like about it is that it's a multi-disciplinary, hands-on approach to a real problem. A team of speech pathologists, nurses, rehabilitation therapists, pharmacists and dietitians make weekly rounds to visit patients with "swallowing studies" (patients being treated for swallowing problems due to strokes and other conditions). The team makes sure we are doing everything we can, and everything right, to help keep these residents as healthy as possible.

The team makes sure recommendations in the swallowing studies are being followed: things such as ensuring residents sit up at a 90-degree angle when they eat, swallow twice between each bite and don't use straws. These small but important steps may keep a Veteran from ending up in the ER and then intensive care with pneumonia, spiraling into a devastating cycle of illness that can't be broken.

Twice a month, the team observes a meal on every CLC unit to check the same things and make more recommendations.

These improvements represent a true team effort from a dedicated group of people who came together, worked hard and implemented a real solution.

I will close with what many of you have heard me say before. We appreciate these types of visits, because they make us a better institution, which translates to better care. Again, congratulations to the staff for making Lovell FHCC the model for future federal health care centers!

Relay Health helps patients advocate for their health

Tricare Prime patients can communicate with providers safely and securely online

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore,
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

The Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center offers many services in an effort to provide exceptional patient-centered care, and one service is making communication between the doctor and patient even easier.

The Relay Health service allows patients who are enrolled in Tricare Prime to communicate with their doctors in a safe, secure and confidential manner in support of their non-urgent healthcare needs.

"Relay Health empowers the patient to be more of an advocate for their own health, and by them being empowered this way, it makes those doctor's appointments go a lot more smoothly with communication going both ways," said Lt. Laura Beth Bartlett, staff nurse.

Relay Health also offers patients the ability to request prescription renewals or lab results, route electronic prescriptions to their pharmacy for filling, schedule appointments and request referrals.

"We always tell our patients, 'if this condition stays the same or gets worse you need to give us a call to make an appointment,'" Bartlett said.

Using Relay Health not only helps patients with their routine health care needs, it is helping the doctors and nurses, too.

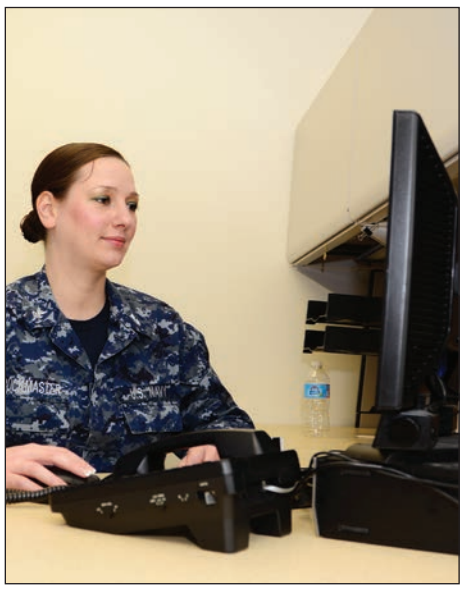
"It helps the staff because of the ease of convenience of getting ahold of people," said Sharon Bartmer, staff nurse. "It helps for people that work because of the fact that they may not be able to receive calls at work. They can e-mail us, and we'll get back to them as soon as we can."

William Ryherd, staff nurse, agreed. "It allows us not to play phone tag with the patient so that people who check their e-mail quite often, even once a day, can contact us and we get right back to them and we're not playing phone tag," Ryherd said. "It's beneficial for both of us."

Nurses emphasize to patients that Relay Health is used only for routine services, and never for emergencies.

The website also provides patient education on more than 5,000 health topics and more than 6,000 medication products. It offers information through text and video examples.

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Janessa Buckmaster said she has used Relay Health for about two years and she finds it to be helpful and convenient. "It saves a ton of time, because I don't have to make an appointment to get a refill for medications that are already prescribed," Buckmaster said.



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Janessa Buckmaster browses the Relay Health website. The Relay Health service allows patients who are enrolled in Tricare Prime to communicate with their doctors in a safe, secure and confidential manner in support of their non-urgent health care needs. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

Relay Health also is used to send out mass messaging for scheduling appointments such as flu shots and school or sports physicals.

For more information about Relay Health, contact nurse Sharon Bartmer at 224-610-7720, or visit www.relayhealth.com online.

The Apollo

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PTSD partner support group is a help

New group offers a social and supportive environment for caregivers, families of mental health patients

By Stephanie McCrobie
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

Dr. Jen Griffin, wife of a Lovell Federal Health Care Center post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) patient, said, "I felt like something was missing ... The Partners' Empowerment Program filled that gap."

The Partners Empowerment Program (PEP) – which expanded beyond the mental health outpatient program in 2012 to include patients and families of the stress disorders treatment program – includes outpatient couple counseling and a spouse support group. Psychologists Dr. Courtney Barrett and Dr. John Bair started the program to address the needs of partners and families of combat PTSD patients who were struggling as much as the Veterans with PTSD.

Barrett said, "Many Veterans diagnosed with PTSD often struggle with marriage and familial relationships. We were providing treatment to Veterans and couples, but we heard from many partners that they also needed increased intervention and support; they needed a place where they could discuss their difficulties as a partner of a PTSD Veteran."

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has made inclusion of partners and families in PTSD/traumatic brain injury (TBI) treatment a high priority. VA trauma treatment experts have found in research that PTSD can have a serious impact on partners and families. Partners and children of Veterans with PTSD can develop secondary traumatization as a result of taking on their traumatized loved one's feelings, experiences, and memories. Partners can also develop caregiver burden, which is caused by the partner's stress of shouldering excessive burdens and taking care of their loved one.

Barrett knew from her work at Lovell FHCC and from clinical research that families of PTSD patients can suffer from psychological and physiological effects of the diagnosis. For example, Barrett noted "The symptoms of PTSD, particularly avoidance and emotional numbing, can cause marital dissatisfaction, distress, parenting challenges and detachment from family structures.

"Therapeutic services for families, like support groups, strengthen family coping and increase emotional connections," Barrett said.

Research has shown there can be physical side effects of the partner's diagnosis. In the December 2013 issue of American Psychology Association Monitor, it was noted that, "Military and Veteran couples with PTSD may be at greater risk for heart disease and sleep problems than their peers."

The culmination of these concerns led Barrett and Bair to form the therapeutic group just for partners. The group format was essential to helping partners learn more about PTSD, including increasing their coping skills and building a social support network of committed partners and family members.

"Participation in the group often allows partners to discover and reclaim their voice through shared experiences with other peers," Barrett said.

Griffin, a group member since 2012, agreed. "Members are more open to sharing in the group setting," she said. "They can bring up issues and things without offending their spouses."

The support group has proven to be a huge success, with more than 30 partners participating since it started. The members find it offers a great mix of a social and supportive environment.

Griffin, who was referred to the group by Bair, said it has helped improve her relationships at home with family and with her husband. "I think it has helped me become a better mother and wife," she said.

"It has been helpful to get stories and advice from other women who have been through this," Griffin continued. "Our kids were definitely affected by the situation at home. So the group has not only helped my relationship with my husband, but also my children."

Barrett, who leads the bimonthly meeting on Friday afternoons at Lovell FHCC, said through discussions and guest lectures, participants learn skills and techniques for managing stress, communicating and engaging in mindfulness, and self-care. Barrett has heard from group members that the group has really helped in the healing process. "It promotes trauma recovery, not just the Veteran patient, but for the whole family. They learn how to cope with PTSD," she said.

Left to right, Roberta Becker, April Long, Dr. Courtney Barrett, Cornelia Nephew, Lucy Amann, Jane Berg, Minna Rae Friedman and Mary Maraventano, FHCC volunteer, participate in the Partners Empowerment Program support group that meets twice a month on Fridays. (Photo by Stephanie McCrobie)

The group participants agreed. Roberta Becker, a member, said, "I enjoy learning with and talking with the other women and look forward to these vital meetings."

Griffin added, "The group offers amazing perspective. It is invaluable to find support from a fellow group member who understands."

For more information on the support group, please call Dr. Courtney Barrett at 224-610-4685.

Interactive Customer Evaluation useful tool

Online evaluation site gives FHCC patients a voice to rate their customer service

By Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Austin V. Songer
Lovell FHCC ICE Site Administrator

Lovell Federal Health Care Center wants feedback from patients, and the Interactive Customer Evaluation System (ICE) is one way patients – our customers – can provide that input to help us improve the facility.

ICE is a web-based Department of Defense program patients may use to get information about the services provided at Lovell FHCC and to provide feedback about those services.

ICE is a system that lets FHCC service providers know how they are doing and how they can improve, and what they are doing right.

Managers rely on ICE to get feedback on the job performance of subordinates, and to find out who is providing excellent customer service.

Feedback can be submitted anonymously but for better customer service, patients are encouraged to input their contact information so the issue can be resolved. Lovell FHCC policy is to resolve issues within seven business days.

ICE allows service providers the opportunity to see how the public views their facilities, whether positive or negative. It is the first step to allow clinic managers the chance to directly fix issues.

Customers may go directly to the Lovell FHCC webpage and scroll down to the ICE logo on the left-side menu, or they can go provide feedback by going to this link: http://is.gd/CaptainJALFHCC.

Customers also may submit comments on paper by putting them in one of the many drop boxes located around the facility.

Warm temps mean more ticks

Ticks are most active in warmer months when they lay eggs and mature into six- and eight-legged larvae, needing to eat blood at every stage to survive.

Ticks are not only annoying because of their bite, but also their ability to spread Lyme disease. In 2012, a little more than 22,000 confirmed cases and 8,817 probable cases were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Cases are increasing in both Illinois and Wisconsin.

It's difficult to avoid ticks but there are precautions you can take. For information, go to our website at: http://www.lovell.fhcc.va.gov/.

New McHenry CBOC to have more space, services (*cont.*)

Continued from page 1

"We definitely need the room," he said as he waited for the ceremony to begin. "And the expansion might mean we don't have to travel to North Chicago as often for services."

Whitney and the other Veteran patient who helped break ground at the new site, Army Veteran Julie Constantz-McBride, both participate in Lovell FHCC's MOVE weight-management program using Telehealth equipment at the McHenry CBOC.

Constantz-McBride has lost 54 pounds since she joined MOVE a year and a half ago. "It's fantastic," she said. "It will be nice to have an updated clinic and have more access."

Constantz-McBride served three years in the Army at Ft. Eustis, Va., and in South Korea. She said she, too, was honored to be asked to help with the ceremony.

"It's my pleasure to be here," she said. "It's another way to help out. I feel like I've been rewarded."

Lovell FHCC acting Deputy Director Michelle Blakely said during her remarks, "I know the staff is very proud to serve Veterans. I've heard today about something called the 'Lovell Blues' scrubs they wear to many local outreach events … They are really a part of this community."

Several McHenry CBOC nurses purchased their own specially made scrubs with the Lovell FHCC logo they proudly don for many community events involving Veterans and Veterans organizations.

Blakely went on to say the new clinic, set to open this winter, will allow for more patient-centered care. "It's great to be able to provide an expansion of services," she said.

The new CBOC will be approximately 9,900 square feet – about double its current size – and will continue to offer primary care, women's health, social work, mental health, limited lab, audiology and Telehealth services.

Telehealth – the use of video-teleconferencing technology to allow CBOC patients to interact remotely with clinicians in North Chicago – is a "great example" of patient-centered care, said Navy Capt. David Jones, Lovell FHCC executive officer. "It brings care closer to where people live."

McHenry CBOC patients participate in smoking-cessation classes, MOVE, diabetes-care sessions and mental health support groups using Telehealth technology. The CBOC also offers tele-audiology services, and some consults for medical procedures such as colonoscopies can be done via Telehealth.

McHenry City Administrator Derik Morefield, speaking on behalf of McHenry Mayor Susan Low, thanked the many Veterans organization representatives in the audience for their support of the CBOC and the community.

"If she could be here, the mayor would say she's proud and honored to be asked to participate in this ceremony," Morefield said. "This new clinic is very well-deserved by all of the Veterans."

Lovell FHCC Executive Officer David Jones speaks at the groundbreaking in McHenry. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

Nurses Week 2014 highlights contributions, accomplishments of Lovell FHCC nurses

Above, clockwise, nurses on the medical-surgical ward decorated for Nurses Week; nurses volunteered at a food bank in Libertyville; nurses participated in a poster day; Navy nurses celebrated the Nurse Corps anniversary, and in the center photo, the week's activities started wtih a Blessing of the Hands at the quarterdeck. (Photos by Lovell FHCC Communications)

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Lovell FHCC holds Life Skills Fair

Chicago Bears rookies visit FHCC residents

- Biomed Week celebrated
- Asian American Pacific Islander Month
- *… and many more stories and photos!*

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