



## American Legion Auxiliary honors Lovell FHCC Sailor for stellar service

*Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jessica Buffum nominated for her work with No Veteran Dies Alone program*

**By Hospitalman James Stewart**  
Lovell FHCC Communications

Speaking from the heart, and in front of friends and family and hundreds of other people, Master-at-Arms 1st Class (Air Warfare) Jessica Buffum graciously accepted the



*Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jessica Buffum was recognized for her work with the No Veteran Dies Alone program at Lovell FHCC. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)*

2014-2015 Salute to Active Duty Servicewomen Award for the Navy from the American Legion Auxiliary at the group's national convention in Baltimore Sept. 1.

"The Auxiliary ladies are all amazing women who give back to the community and the Veterans. It was an honor to be a part of what they do and an amazing experience to be recognized and welcomed by them," Buffum said.

The American Legion Auxiliary annually honors a servicewoman from each branch of service for outstanding military service.

As a Navy Master-at-Arms Sailor, Buffum helps provide security at Lovell FHCC by patrolling and conducting investigations. She is a graduate of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Law Enforcement School and has been an MA for 13 years. But it is her volunteer efforts that grabbed her the attention of the American Legion Auxiliary after



*Leaders of the American Legion Auxiliary present Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jessica Buffum the Salute to Active Duty Servicewomen award for the Navy at the Auxiliary's national convention in Baltimore. (Photo provided by the American Legion Auxiliary.)*

she was nominated for her work coordinating the No Veteran Dies Alone (NVDA) program at Lovell FHCC.

Earlier in the summer, Buffum, a native of Cuba, Ill., was selected as the Auxiliary's Illinois Servicewoman of the Year. Buffum volunteered to coordinate the NVDA program at Lovell FHCC after a transfer left the program leaderless and in jeopardy

of being cancelled, said Kenny List, FHCC's chief of voluntary services.

Buffum recruits and trains new volunteers, sends out updates on patients' status, and coordinates volunteers' schedules to ensure Lovell FHCC patients are not alone at their time of death, no matter what the hour.

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## McHenry Veterans Court gives grateful patient a new start

*Veteran Mark Handeland, center, holds his 22nd Judicial Court Mental Health Court diploma. On the left is the Honorable Judge Charles Weech. FHCC Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator LaTia Russell and FHCC Director Dr. Stephen Holt stand to the right. (Photo by Stephanie McCrobie)*



**(Editor's Note:** Veteran Mark Handeland, graduate of the Mental Health/Veterans Court in McHenry County, gives his first-person account of the support and care he received from Lovell FHCC staff and the 22nd Judicial Circuit Court, giving him a new start.)

**By Mark Handeland**  
Veterans Court Graduate

I had initially heard about the McHenry County Mental Health Court, which doubles

as the Veterans Court, through the McHenry County Public Defender Kim Messer. Kim was instrumental in providing a path for me to follow. She also helped me create a sense of stability and manageability in my life, which was one of the biggest goals of the program.

I went into the program looking forward to turning my life around.

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# From the Desk of the Director

## October 1 anniversary is beginning of new future for FHCC

Holt: 'After five years, evidence of our cultural integration abounds'



By Dr. Stephen Holt  
Lovell FHCC Director

You may have recently attended or heard about our celebration of the 68th birthday of the Navy's Medical Service Corps (MSC). It happened to coincide with another important Lovell FHCC event that day – a meeting of the advisory board that has the important duty of making high-level decisions about how we structure and operate Lovell FHCC on a daily basis.

There was much pomp and circumstance as high-ranking civilian and military officials arrived and then participated in the cake-cutting before attending the meeting. We were pleased to have Rear Admiral Terry Moulton, commander, Navy Medicine East, (as well as the director of the Medical Service Corps), and member of the advisory board, help cut the cake. Lovell FHCC Deputy Director and Commanding Officer Capt. Buckley reports to Navy Medicine East.

We were just as pleased to have Ms. Renee Oshinski, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12 deputy director, here for the celebration and board meeting. I report to the director of VISN 12. The board itself is made up of many other VA and Navy representatives, including Navy Deputy Surgeon General Rear

Admiral Forrest Faison, who was also here. It is these individuals who come together to make decisions and recommendations that drive the FHCC.

So what does this mean to you, as a staff member, a volunteer, a patient, family member or supporter of Lovell FHCC?

Both of these events are excellent symbols of the trailblazing cultural integration that has gone on over the past five years here at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center since we integrated Navy (Department of Defense) and Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities and services in 2010.

We are all united in our mission to provide care for our Veteran and military patients, and military dependents. Our patients' service to their country – whether it was years ago or today – is the bond between us. That shared military background is the common theme to everything we do here. We all appreciate what it means to serve, and about 40 percent of our civilian staff has served in the military. We all talk "military," or should do so, in order to relate to our patients and their families.

Public celebrations of Navy culture, sometimes in the form of birthdays such as the MSC and hospital corpsmen, have become a regular occurrence here for staff, volunteers and patients. And who among us is not awed by the precision and discipline represented during the full command inspections twice a year when the Navy switches uniforms? If you are not a Veteran and haven't watched a uniform inspection, I urge you to do so. You will gain an appreciation of the demands of drill and ceremony – one of the routine activities your patients remember from their days in uniform, if they are not currently serving.

After five years, evidence of our cultural integration abounds. Our

Master-at-Arms Sailors - including MA1 Jessica Buffum featured on this issue's front page, attend the VA law enforcement school. We integrated the staff awards ceremony more than two years ago. Navy personnel have the opportunity to see our civilian staff be recognized for dedicated years of service to Veteran and military patients – decades of service in many cases, usually right here in North Chicago through name changes and many restructurings.

The quarterly "Spirit of Lovell" award has been around for a while now, too. It recognizes departments that best demonstrate this cultural integration and show a singular focus – by those in uniform and out – to get the job done for the benefit of our patients.

Another good example was our fully integrated Nurses Week this past May, when we held an awards ceremony and many joint events for military and civilian nurses. I think most everyone here who is tasked with planning an event such as Nurses Week is well-versed on the need to culturally integrate it.

Are you a staff member who is launching a committee to get a project done? It is a given to most of us, I believe, that planning committees will be made up of both civilian and military members. Running a focus group? It is the same scenario. In addition to the usual effort made to include members from multiple work groups; different pay grades and genders; and diverse ethnic, religious and other backgrounds, we also include Navy and civilian members.

Perhaps this shared culture – this new FHCC culture – that is in evidence in most everything we do here at Lovell FHCC is more important than any of the other "wins" and evidence of success that we can come up with as we mark the end of the five-year pilot project in October and the beginning of a

new future for the nation's first and only federal health care center.

There will always be certain things we can't integrate, some systems or specific rules – for example uniform regulations, or union considerations, or activities related to active military duty – but at the end of the day, if we all have the same values and agree on doing our best every day to meet our mission of "Readying Warriors and Caring for Heroes," the demonstration project was a complete success, and the future of Lovell FHCC will continue to look bright.

*"We all appreciate what it means to serve, and about 40 percent of our civilian staff has served in the military. We all talk 'military,' or should do so, in order to relate to our patients and their families."*

**Dr. Stephen Holt**  
Lovell FHCC Director

### The Apollo

The Apollo is the official newsletter of the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, published monthly for staff, Veterans, military families and volunteers. The Apollo newsletter is designed by the FHCC Communication Department.

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## PASTORAL CARE SERVICES

### PASTORAL CARE STAFF

Chaplain Lyle Swanson  
Father Leoncio Santiago  
Chaplain Lt. Cmdr. John Rudd

Pastoral Care information:  
Bldg. 134 - Room 116A  
224-610-3715

### SUNDAY

*Please note: All services will be held in Building 134, Room C108 until main chapel in Building 4 reopens*

Protestant Worship: 9 a.m.  
Roman Catholic Mass: 10:15 a.m.

### WEEKDAYS

Building 134, Room C115  
(Satellite Chapel)

-Roman Catholic Mass  
Mon.-Fri., 11:30 a.m.  
-Protestant Communion Service  
Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.

-Bible Study  
Wednesday at 11:45 a.m. in  
the Prayer/Meditation Room,  
Building 133EF, Room 2E103

# From the Desk of the Commanding Officer

## High Reliability Organizations (HROs) learn from mistakes

*Buckley: 'We, the staff of the Lovell FHCC, are on a journey to become a highly reliable health care organization'*



**By Captain Robert G. Buckley**  
Lovell FHCC Deputy Director/  
Commanding Officer

**A** High Reliability Organization (HRO) is an organization that manages to consistently operate safely and effectively, despite facing risks for significant errors to occur. It does this by constantly seeking to learn and ultimately improve from what

it learns. We, the staff of the Lovell FHCC, (who comprise the FHCC's main hospital, clinics, skilled-nursing and residential treatment facilities) are on a journey to become a highly reliable health care organization, as we continuously try to learn and get better at the care we provide for our patients.

While this goal to "get better" and "improve" primarily centers around patient safety and reducing "never-ever events" to zero, we also strive to improve quality of care overall, ease access to primary and specialty care, smooth the coordination of the efforts and ultimately improve the overall experience of care provided across all settings.

As we strive to provide the very best care possible, it is certain that errors will occur along the way. This is where the concept of "Just Culture" comes into play. (I suggest reading: "Patient Safety

and the 'Just Culture: A Primer for Health Care Executives, by David Marx, Juris Doctor, 2001).

A Just Culture is one where all staff and leadership openly acknowledge that competent, compassionate health care professionals occasionally make mistakes, but that those errors must be evaluated and learned from in the context of systems factors that contributed to the error being made.

A Just Culture does not mean that individual staff members should never be held accountable. There are instances, rarely, when individual staff members are found to have committed gross misconduct or more commonly, have demonstrated conscious disregard to safety procedures.

A Just Culture seeks to understand why less egregious errors, oversights and use of risky shortcuts are carried out. Often, we

find that these errors occur because of reasonable attempts to "work around" or "short-cut" a faulty, frustrating process.

We, the leadership and staff at Lovell FHCC, need to get better at how we approach errors and adverse events. From the command suite, directorates, departments and sections on down to units and work spaces, we all need to recognize that well-meaning health care professionals can and do make mistakes.

But let's work together to learn from those mistakes, understand the condition and systems – problems – that contributed to them and, ultimately, hold each other accountable for learning, improving and getting better. That is the culture that will make Lovell FHCC a truly high reliability health care organization.

## Buffum honored by Ill., national American Legion Auxiliary (cont.)

*FHCC's No Veteran Dies Alone program 'one of the most rewarding experiences of my life' Buffum said*

*Continued from page 1*

Buffum herself also sits with dying patients in their time of need.

"This program is very close to my heart because I can directly impact the lives of Veterans, and it's one

of the most rewarding experiences of my life," Buffum said in a separate interview.

List said he nominated Buffum for the award because her work with NVDA has been "remarkable and above and beyond."



*Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jessica Buffum is part of the Lovell FHCC security force and heads No Veteran Dies Alone. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)*

"She ensured the continuation of this very important program that is the epitome of patient-centered care," said List, who attended the national award ceremony in Baltimore.

"Under her leadership, the program is thriving

and providing a very crucial service to our patients," List said. "Sometimes family members and friends can't be there for a patient's last moments, and that's when the No Veteran Dies Alone volunteers step in."

Lovell FHCC MA1 Cody Rugg said he was not surprised Buffum was selected for the state and national awards.

"When it comes to work itself, Buffum is just outstanding, whether it's the department or junior Sailors that need help, she's a great role model and mentor in the Navy and at the FHCC," Rugg said.

In her speech, Buffum spoke about the importance of working for a

*"When it comes to work itself, Buffum is just outstanding, whether it's the department or junior Sailors that need help, she's a great role model and mentor in the Navy, and at the FHCC."*

**Cody Rugg**  
**Master-at-Arms 1st Class, FHCC**

greater purpose.

"Whether it means carrying yourself as a great role model for junior Sailors to look up to, or volunteering your spare time to take care of Veterans who've gone before you, the feeling you get when you look in the mirror is a great feeling we should all strive to achieve."

## Veterans helping Veterans key to recovery (cont.)

*Continued from page 6*

The most monumental part of my recovery process is the daily reflection that I participate in at the TR and also the Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) Sessions with my psychologist. The combination of support that I get from the staff has helped to build my self-esteem and how "I see me!"

I advise other Veterans that share my situation to use the very same situations that may have bound you

to your problems to *prevail!*

For years I've grieved over losing:  
1. My career in the Air Force  
2. My sanity in the wake of my addiction  
3. Relationships (family and otherwise)  
4. Most disheartening (as if those prior events weren't enough loss), life really pulled the carpet out from under me when my mother passed in August of 2012.

I now use these potential detours as

my stepping stones for my personal pathway to success:

1. Even though I am no longer active duty, God has blessed me with employment through this FHCC with Clinical Support.
2. Sanity is replacing my addiction (July 7th will be my one-year anniversary [of many] in recovery.)
3. Relationships are being repaired, full circle.
4. I feel the pride of my mother's smiles from Heaven.

"Now, I get it Mama!"

### Just Find It!

On our new  
Lovell FHCC  
App



*To Just Find It, scan QR code above or search:  
"Lovell FHCC" on the Google Play or Apple App stores*

# ONE TEAM *Extra*

## News Employees Can Use

### FHCC staff present at Toronto conference

Lovell FHCC staff were honored to be presenters at the 2015 Annual American Psychological Association Conference in Toronto.

Lovell FHCC was represented by Dr. John Bair, Dr. Courtney Barrett, and Lt. Ashley Shenberger. They were joined by Lt. Kathleen Saul from Naval Hospital Bremerton and Lt. Hammad N'Cho from Portsmouth Naval Hospital.

The group presented on "Family-Focused Care for PTSD Veterans and their Families." Bair, who serves as a clinical psychologist in Lovell FHCC's Stress Disorders Treatment Unit, said the mission of the presentation was to promote systematic efforts for family-focused treatment services, staff training and research work for Veterans and their families suffering with PTSD and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Bair also noted that Lovell FHCC is undertaking a number of research projects studying the relationships and communication dynamics of Veterans with PTSD and their partners.

"PTSD and TBI can have a serious impact not only on the Veterans, but also their partners and the whole family," Bair said. "This is a vital function in the public health promotion of psychological wellness in current and future generations of service members and their families. The Department of Veterans Affairs has made inclusion of partners and families suffering with PTSD and TBI a high priority and it has been in their treatment guidelines for years."

Barrett, who serves as a graduate psychologist in Lovell FHCC's Special Medical Exams and Outpatient Mental Health units, added that the presentation helped attendees understand



*Pictured left to right is: Lt. Hammad S. N'Cho (Portsmouth), Lt. Ashley Shenberger (Lovell), Lt. Kathleen Saul (Bremerton), Dr. John Bair and Dr. Courtney Barrett (Lovell).*

that treatment for PTSD Veterans and their families needs to incorporate family-centered, empirically supported practices into systematic efforts for treatment.

"Family-focused work is essential because PTSD symptoms can erode and shatter the family structure," she said. "This can have lasting, inter-generational effects on the current and future structure. Proactive, systematic intervention to support families provides the opportunity to decrease the severity and longevity of the impact of PTSD on the family unit."

Saul, psychologist at Naval Hospital Bremerton, said the presentation was very well-attended and she received many compliments, including a comment from an attendee about appreciating that their presentation called attention to the family of origin in the development of PTSD.

Barrett said she also received comments from attendees that they were enlightened and inspired by the family-focused treatment provided at Lovell FHCC. The treatment at Lovell FHCC tries to help partners and families through a biweekly support group. Barrett believes the support group, individual and couples counseling help the entire family.

*- Stephanie McCrobie*

### Kudos to Fisher Clinic

This email was received recently in the FHCC Communications Department:

"I am writing to you to tell you what about the fantastic group of Navy medical staff you have at your facility in Great Lakes. My daughter, who currently is in ATT school and resides on the ship Wisconsin, developed a staph infection on her leg a little over a month ago. She had to be seen every day at the Fisher Clinic and on weekends at Lovell FHCC for three-plus weeks. Her treatment was outstanding. These men and women treated her with the utmost care and kindness.

During this time she even contracted pneumonia. What an awful thing to add another medical problem to her existing infection. These medical personnel that helped her through and made her smile and feel the comfort that is so missed when you are away from all your family and friends deserve recognition and reward. Even the drivers she used for transportation helped a sailor to keep her chin up. I just wanted to make sure that you are aware of what fine staff you have trained at the medical facilities as well as those sailors who are on hold doing odd jobs like transportation, but still giving their best.

She REALLY appreciated her main caregiver Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Martinez at the Fisher Clinic. I wish I could personally thank him for his tender care. I am hoping that you will see that he receives a big pat on the back for consistently doing a great job! One person can make such a difference to another! She would be happy to share her thoughts as well.

Thanks for letting me share this with you. Thanks and Peace."

*(Signature withheld to protect patient privacy)*

### Congratulations ...

**- Hospital Corpsman (HM1) 1st Class (FMF) Joseph R. Deering** was selected as the FHCC 3rd Quarter Senior Sailor of the Quarter.

**-HM2 (FMF/SW) Stephanie L. Hadley** was selected as the FHCC 3rd Quarter Sailor of the Quarter.

**-HM3 Helen C. Bromley** was selected as the FHCC 3rd Quarter Junior Sailor of the Quarter.

**-Hospitalman (HN) Amber J. Pinchback** was selected as the FHCC 3rd Quarter Bluejacket of the Quarter.

**-HM1 Andrea J. Anderson** was selected as the FHCC 2nd Quarter Senior Sailor of the Quarter.

**-HM2 Alexander P. Faber** was selected as the FHCC 2nd Quarter Sailor of the Quarter.

**-HM3 Melony M. Pufpaf** was selected as the FHCC 2nd Quarter Junior Sailor of the Quarter.

**-HN Sabrina J. Barnes** was selected as the FHCC 2nd Quarter Blue Jacket of the Quarter.

**-Lt. Julia Hardy-Carr** was selected as the FHCC 2nd Quarter Junior Officer of the Quarter.

### Staff members win awards for outstanding efforts



#### Green Idea Award

*On the left, Joe Bozeman III, Green Environmental Systems (GEMS) program manager, presents Andrew Yunker, from Biomedical Engineering, with Lovell FHCC's 2015 Green Idea Award. Yunker's idea was to partner with a company that recycles medical devices that are normally considered single-use devices. The company disassembles, sterilizes, remanufactures and tests the single-use devices and sells them back to the original owner for a fraction of the cost. The program is already in use at some government medical facilities.*



#### Daisy Award

*On the left, Mae Quinain RN staff nurse in inpatient acute care, was awarded the Daisy Award in July for nursing excellence after she was nominated by family members of a recruit who was a patient in the ICU. Patients and co-workers may nominate nurses for the award. Also nominated was Lt. Taryn Marschall, center, and RN Nancy Decker, not pictured. Lois Gault, clinical coordinator, is standing on the right.*

# McHenry Veterans Court graduate thanks his supporters (cont.)

Handeland: 'I am really looking forward to my future now that I have graduated from the Vet Court'

Continued from page 1

I was not really apprehensive about doing the program, as much as being apprehensive about what would happen if I ended up in court. I was more in awe that there really was a program such as the veterans court, which enabled those involved to lead a positive, happy, productive life despite the challenges that life imposes.

Justice is said to be blind, but with the special court programs, justice is able to peek under the blindfold and provide support for those in need, thereby reducing recidivism.

People make mistakes. This concept is no more self-evident than in the case of transitioning from the military. Transitioning from military life to civilian life is not like other life transitions. Generally, other people go through single transitions at a time — buying a car, moving, a new career

— but when you leave the military, you do all these transitions at once. It can be overwhelming and can cascade into circumstances that lead one's life away from success.

However, once I was in the McHenry Veterans Court, I found a good path. There was a revolving door of a supporting cast that enabled me to achieve success, although none of this would have been possible without the guidance of the honorable Judge Charles P. Weech. Jessica Pinder was the initial (Lovell FHCC) Veterans Justice Outreach representative, and then Latia Russell, with both of them becoming a critical part of my success.

In the beginning, I knew that while everything had seemed like it was out of control, I had to make forward progress. This led to positive action on my part, which was then supplemented by the therapy provided through

the (Department of) Veterans Affairs, most notably therapist Karla Solis, at the (Lovell FHCC) McHenry CBOC (Community Based Outpatient Clinic), as well as the McHenry County Court staff, probation officer Becky Self, as well as the nurse Joanna Hansen, whose candid advice was well-heeded.

The constant was the unfaltering support provided by all of the personnel. From the inception into the program, I had hit the ground running. The support staff had kindled a fire within me that was translated into positive change as I appreciated the fragility of the second chance that I had received.

I was able to separate from my ego and to gain an altruistic sense. I started volunteering at the Woodstock Food Pantry and the Huntley Area Public Library. I wished to achieve a grip on the buoy that was emotional and

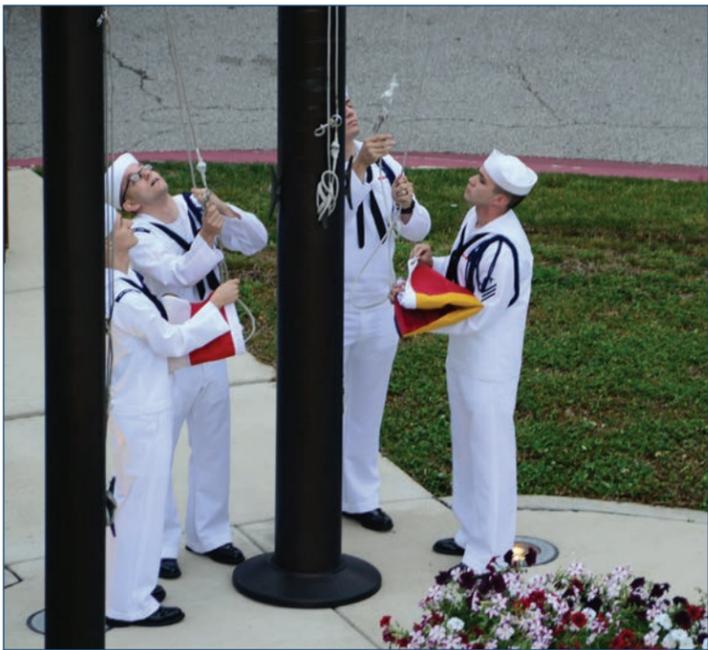
mental stability, amidst the sea of shifting unpredictable situational tidal forces.

Participation in the McHenry Veteran Court also changed my relationships. There was not a single person that I had any negative issues with during the duration of the legal proceedings. I was ready to let go of the past, and make forward progress towards the future that I had envisioned all along.

I am really looking forward to my future now that I have graduated from the Vet Court. My plans for the future include attending university, and eventually getting accepted into medical school. After that becoming a Pathologist with the CDC, Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

## Lovell FHCC raises new 'Ready to Care' Navy Signal Flags

Lovell FHCC is proud to signal its 'readiness to care' in same way Navy ships at sea communicate



The Lovell FHCC Color Guard raised new, larger signal flags spelling, "Ready to Care," at a morning colors ceremony in August. Lovell civilian and military staff members and volunteers gathered to watch. (Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

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2nd annual block party enjoyed by CLC residents



August monthly awards ceremony honors staff

- Navy bloggers weigh in on students' backpacks
- Leaders' video promotes App
- Veteran artists to exhibit
- ... and many more stories and photos!

Or Visit Our Website  
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# Veteran wheelchair athlete donates medals to supporters

By Jayna Legg  
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

Every medal Veteran athlete Steve Aoyagi has won over the years competing in wheelchair sports comes with a host of good memories as well as the proverbial “blood, sweat and tears.”



Veteran athlete Steve Aoyagi presents a medal to Lake Forest Faith Lutheran Church members Richard Hocking and Carol Marwede. (Photo by Jayna Legg)

Aoyagi also knows that his many wins at Veterans’ wheelchair athletic events across the nation wouldn’t be possible without a dedicated supporting cast, notably the Lovell Federal Health Care Center staff members and community supporters who make travel and participation in the events possible. So the Air Force Veteran has begun his own campaign to present his hard-fought gold medals to people who have helped him and his Lovell Legends Veterans Wheelchair Games teammates – all patients of Lovell FHCC – along the way.

“I know the hard work and the competition that went into each one, and if that means so much to me, I hope it means a lot more to the person receiving it,” Aoyagi said as he gave out three of his gold medals each framed with a plaque, at a recent luncheon with the team and supporters at Lovell FHCC.

“I am so thankful and grateful for these people and these organizations that have raised funds through bake sales and dinners, I would like to give them something meaningful from the whole team,” Aoyagi said.

Kenny List, head of voluntary services at Lovell FHCC, was the first at the lunch to receive one of Aoyagi’s medals. List received a gold medal Aoyagi earned at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Tampa in 2013.

“I’ve been involved in the wheelchair games for a long time,” List said. “There are many people involved and there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to get the athletes to the games and ready to compete,” he said, giving a nod to long-time Legends Coaches Susanne Brown and Karen Fleming, FHCC recreation therapists, and the community organizations that raise funds. “Thanks so much for doing this. It really means a lot to me.”

Two of the organizations that routinely raise funds for the Lovell Legends team also received medals at the luncheon. Aoyagi gave a gold medal he won at the Pittsburgh games in 2011 to representatives from the Lake Forest, Ill., Faith Lutheran Church, for holding an annual bake sale at the FHCC. Richard Hocking and Carol Marwede accepted the medal.

“We have the perfect place for it,” Hocking said. “We’ve created a Veterans’ prayer wall that lists the names of all the current active military and Veterans we know.”

Marwede added, “We have 25 listed right now, and we keep every one of them in prayer at every single service we have.”

On behalf of Evanston American Legion Post 42, which holds an annual spaghetti dinner for the Legends, James Brusek accepted a gold medal Aoyagi won at the Philadelphia games in 2014. “We love doing it,” said Brusek, post 42 commander. “There is a lot of support out there for what you do.”

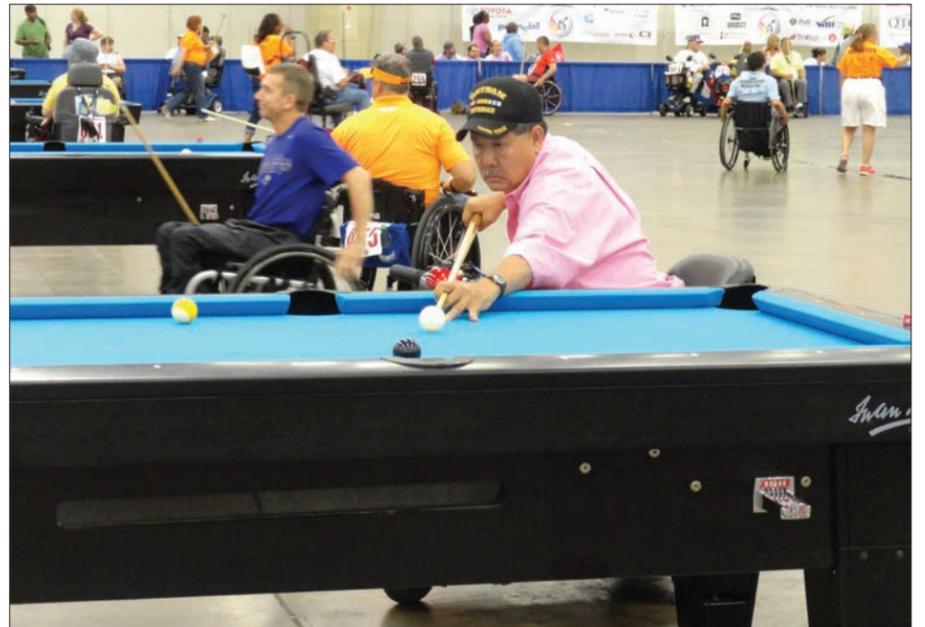
On a different day, Aoyagi presented one of his gold medals to Casey Corrao, from the FHCC prosthetics department, to recognize the extraordinary efforts Corrao makes before every competition to ensure the athletes have the proper equipment, including items such as raised toilet seats and shower benches. Corrao also makes sure the athletes’ competition wheelchairs are “in top shape,” Aoyagi said. “We couldn’t do it without him.”

The seven-member Lovell Legends team recently competed at the 35th annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Dallas and brought home 26 medals: 14 gold, 10 silver and two bronze in events to include softball, track and field, table tennis, bowling, power soccer, nine ball, weightlifting, archery, swimming, slalom and motor rally. Aoyagi won a gold medal in nine ball, silver in motor rally and a bronze in softball.

Aoyagi didn’t stop there. He competed at the Golden Age Games in Omaha, Neb., winning three medals. Lovell Legends team member Karen Van Benschoten also competed and won a gold medal. Soon after that, Aoyagi and fellow Legends team member Babette Peyton competed in the Valor Games Midwest in Chicago. The other members of the 2015 Legends team were Ed Tolliver, Ramon Calderon, Bill Watson, and Nate Davenport.



Veteran wheelchair athlete Steve Aoyagi recognized Casey Corrao, FHCC prosthetics, for ongoing support of the Lovell Legends. (Photo by Kenny List). Below, Aoyagi won gold in nine ball at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. (Photo provided by Coach Karen Fleming)



## Healing: Recovery in their own words

**(Editor’s Note:** “Healing” is a series written in the first-person by Veterans and service members who have experienced significant medical recovery in their lives and are willing to share their stories.)

**Name:** Courtney Pinnick  
**Branch of Service:** U.S. Air Force  
**Dates of Service:** April 1997-Dec. 2000

I joined the military because I wanted to make a difference. I was the first in my generation of siblings and first cousins to make this commitment to my country. I wanted to eventually go to school and to make a career of my active duty service.

I’ve been in and out of treatment numerous times (33) since I was 24 years old. The treatments have been for addiction, PTSD, depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety and/or any combination or interpretation thereof. Last year, I began to think that my only relief would be by way of suicide.



Courtney Pinnick

still had reservations of when I might use again and only stayed clean for about seven months. But fortunately for me, this time, I started my process on the acute mental health unit to first stop the drugs and the influence and effect they were having on me; then I went to the Addiction Treatment Program (ATP) to get positive reinforcements.

A friend then told me about a program called the

I first came to the FHCC for help on Memorial Day weekend of 2013. I went to the domiciliary, cleared my head, somewhat. I stayed clean for a period of time, got a job, moved to a one-bedroom apartment in Waukegan and purchased a car. I

Transitional Residence (TR). The seriousness of what I’d heard about the program and how Vets were helping Vets really peaked my interest. I then had my screening with Ms. (Stephanie) James, and soon after, I joined the TR program, where I’ve been encouraged to spread my wings and become the man that I was supposed to be years ago. TR has taught an addict like me, with multiple times in the recovery process, “It’s never too late!”

While I was attending the ATP, I started seeing a psychologist weekly about my depression, PTSD, anxiety and other issues. We still currently meet weekly. I also attend a weekly group at the FHCC. At the TR, I attend two in-house groups per week, three 12-step meetings per week, a monthly recovery group led by my house manager, and chapel on Sundays (when work permits), where I volunteer to help our wheelchair-bound Vets and with the music ministry.

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