



## Homeless Domiciliary celebrates 25 years

*Lovell FHCC program for homeless Veterans was one of 10 piloted by Department of Veterans Affairs in 1998*

**By Jayna Legg**  
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

**V**eteran Aaron Watkins didn't mince words when he spoke at the recent 25th anniversary celebration for Lovell FHCC's Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Program.

"Because of the Dom, I am here today," said Watkins, as he told a harrowing story about what led up to his arrival at the Dom, including more than a decade of drug addiction and alcoholism, even during the time he served in the U.S. Marines.

"They took me in and gave me the necessary tools and support I needed to change my life," he said. Watkins, who is a Lovell FHCC employee, choked up when he said he has been clean and sober since the day he arrived at the facility soon after it opened 25 years ago. It opened with a staff of 20 and 60 beds on what was then the campus of the North Chicago Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC).

The North Chicago Homeless Domiciliary was one of 10 piloted by the Department of Veterans Affairs nationwide to address the growing problem of homelessness among Veterans.

"We filled up fast," remembers Lovell FHCC Department of Mental Health Assistant Chief/Business Manager Greg Gola, who headed the program when it began in North Chicago. "We were serving Vietnam-era Veterans, some Korean War Veterans."

Many homeless Veterans who came through the program then

— staying up to two years — had a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance abuse problems. Today, the program serves many young Veterans of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, homeless for economic reasons as well as PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and substance abuse.

Homeless Domiciliary "alum" Eleanora Carney, who also spoke at the anniversary celebration, heaped praise on the program, saying it gave her a "second chance" when she went through the program and graduated in the spring of 2008.

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*"When I reached out for the help I needed, it was there ..."*

*Eleanora Carney, graduate*

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"When I reached out for the help, it was there," said Carney, who served in the Women's Army Corps during the Vietnam era and today is a Lovell FHCC vocational rehabilitation specialist. "It worked for me."

The 25th year the Homeless Dom has existed at the North Chicago location seemed like a good time to



*Building 66 on the grounds of the main Lovell FHCC campus still looks much like it did when it opened as a Homeless Domiciliary for Veterans 25 years ago. (Photo by Trevor Seela)*

celebrate the program, Gola said.

"We've never marked our anniversary before; we just did our job," Gola said in an interview before the celebration. "But now we are celebrating ... More than 4,000 Veterans have come through our program, perhaps even as many as 5,000.

"That's a lot of people who have had the opportunity to take a

different path and turn their lives around. That's something we think it is important to recognize and value, and we want to acknowledge staff members who have dedicated their

professional lives and careers to make it happen."

People like Laurel "Laurie" Burgess fit that bill. Burgess, a VA nurse who transferred to the Homeless Dom when it opened to serve as a domiciliary technician, was soon known affectionately by the Veterans as "Dom Mom."

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*Former employee Susan Kolenz drew this for the opening of Bldg. 66.*



**10th Annual Lovell FHCC**

# CAR SHOW

for Veterans

**Saturday, July 20th, 2013 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.**

# Leadership Commentary

## How do we promote, recognize and educate about diversity?



By Patrick L. Sullivan  
Lovell FHCC Director

but also to our mission of providing the best patient-centered care to every patient, every contact, every time.

The LGBT Pride event was an excellent time to recognize the great strides we've made in the past 12 months since the LGBT Special Emphasis program was founded. For example, today we have a patient-centered visitation policy that allows same-sex partners full visitation rights and we include gender identity and sexual orientation in our patient non-discrimination and EEO policies.

Also for the first time, we participated in the 2013 Healthcare Equality Index and received a designation as a leader in LGBT health care. This is the first time VA hospitals participated in the survey, and the FHCC was the only Department of Defense facility to participate. We are very proud of this recognition.

Not limited to LGBT, within the last year we established a Cultural Competency Committee to look at how we can better serve our patients and reduce health disparities often present in minority communities.

Diversity is a major component of our recruiting, and now our advertising. You may have noticed new ads on buses and in local publications, either written in Spanish and/or featuring our

services for unique populations such as women Veterans and other minorities.

Approximately one-third of the ads are targeted at employee recruitment. We strive here at Lovell FHCC to be the "employer and destination of choice," a goal of our facility's strategic plan. That means we actively look for employees with diverse backgrounds and life/work experiences, including Veterans of all backgrounds.

Some prospective Veteran employees are homeless. Some are recovering addicts. Others we recruit right out of military service. All add to our diversity here at Lovell FHCC.

Finally, diversity education is an ongoing process, and much of the responsibility falls on each one of us. At every observance, for example Women's Equality (coming up in August) or Asian-Pacific Islanders Month, educational materials are available. In addition, social media and internet postings appear throughout the month.

But let's not stop there. Be present and attentive when your department goes through TeamSTEPPS training. TeamSTEPPS (Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety) has the ultimate goal of providing safe and skilled patient care, but

to get there, employees have to learn how to work as effective teams. Patient care improves when diversity leads to better communication and understanding between co-workers as well as between providers and patients, and increased understanding builds trust and customer satisfaction. CREW training continues, also. Two new classes just started.

The Joint Commission named CREW (Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace) a best practice in 2011 in the areas of employee health and safety. Small workgroups participate in CREW, and results show improved morale, enhanced supervisor/staff relationships, reduced absenteeism and lower Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint rates.

In closing, please join me in celebrating our diversity here at Lovell FHCC, as we continue to honor our promise kept of "Readying Warriors and Caring for Heroes."

### The Apollo

The Apollo is the official newsletter of the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center. It is published monthly for staff members, Veterans, military family members and volunteers.

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## Fisher Rapid Improvement Event (RIE) results in shorter PHAs

By Seaman Tyler Smith  
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

Every year, normally coinciding with their birth month, Sailors and other military members have to go through a Periodic Health Assessment – more commonly referred to as a "PHA" – to ensure their medical readiness.

Military members go to the Lovell FHCC's Fisher Clinic, at Great Lakes Naval Station, to do the PHA. In the past, this mandatory process was akin to a "grin-and-bear-it" exercise because it could take four hours.

Today, military members can get the PHA done in less than 90 minutes, thanks to a team that tackled a PHA improvement project under the auspices of Lean Six Sigma (LSS). Fisher Clinic and its integrated staff of military and civilian

personnel turned to the successful managerial concept known as LSS to streamline the flow and decrease the time it takes for patients and staff to complete PHAs. Going through the LSS process results in fewer unnecessary procedures and subsequently the elimination of seven kinds of waste: Transportation, Inventory, Motion, Waiting, Overproduction, Over-Processing, and Defects.

Lt. Timothy George, the PHA LSS Team Leader, said Fisher started the process with the goal of reducing the average time spent completing the PHA to under 90 minutes with zero defects. "Taking it in years passed, it would take at least four hours to get through it," he said, which translated into a large number of hours out of the work day and "ultimately took away from the day's mission."

As a result of the LSS project, staff take time to research the patient's electronic medical

record before the appointment to help eliminate unnecessary stations. For example, the top three unnecessary tests are for HIV, glucose, and lipid profiles – all tests the majority of patients are caught up on prior to their PHA. George said with careful reviews and medical record updates, the new Lean PHA process at Fisher has seen "dramatic success."

Mykela Kenny, who was on the LSS team and is a health technician in the PHA department, said, "Rapid improvement has helped tremendously for the patient getting in and out in a more timely manner, cutting the time by 75 percent and helping take a load off by avoiding unnecessary services."

Staff aren't the only happy ones. Patients have been heard to say the new process is, "much more efficient," and many say they are "happy with the new and current process."

## Program has helped thousands of homeless Veterans (cont.)

Continued from page 1

It's a title Burgess said she cherishes and one that has made coming to work a pleasure every day since then.

"There's a love of the staff and the Veterans for each other here," she said in an interview before the celebration.

"They work very hard ... We really care about them and we want to see them succeed. I love my Vets," Burgess said.

Domiciliary alumni presented Burgess with a special plaque during the ceremony, thanking her for her love and support over the years.

Burgess and other current staff members diligently planned the June anniversary celebration. Burgess had the job of calling back "graduates" of the program to invite them to the event. "The first thing they asked is

"what can I do," she said. "The response was overwhelming."

Burgess was excited to reunite with the alumni; many of whom she said were like her own children. "It's exciting," she said. "I've watched them become productive members of the community, get beautiful homes and raise families and change their whole lives."



On the right, Veteran Aaron Watkins speaks at the 25th anniversary of the Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Program. Watkins, who today is a Lovell FHCC employee, participated in the program soon after it opened in North Chicago. Below, Veteran Eleanora Carney, on the left, presents a plaque from alumni to Laurie Burgess, who has worked in the Homeless Domiciliary since it opened and is affectionately known as "Dom Mom." Carney graduated from the program in the spring of 2008 and today is a vocational rehabilitation specialist at Lovell FHCC. (Photos by Trevor Seela)



So, what is behind the talk? What are we doing here that promotes diversity, recognizes it (monthly observances, for example), encourages it (targeted recruiting and marketing), or educates us how to work with people who not only hale from various cultures, countries or backgrounds, but who think and act differently than we do?

We recently held our first Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride celebration. Last October's observance of LGBT History Month was also a first. Both events were a public acknowledgement of our commitment not only to promoting and serving a diverse work force,

## Lovell FHCC earns 5-Star Quality Rating

FHCC ranked in top 10 percent of 128 Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals

### Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

Lovell FHCC's recent "Five Star Designation for Quality of Care" from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of staff and volunteers, said Patrick Sullivan, Lovell FHCC director.

The 5-Star Quality rating came as the result of a ranking by the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) for the first

quarter of fiscal year 2013. The SAIL model was adopted to understand and provide a mechanism to benchmark VA medical centers on quality and efficiency. SAIL ranked 128 VA facilities on quality and efficiency.

Lovell FHCC was not rated under "efficiency" because the Department of Defense patient population could not be captured in the data.

Lovell FHCC was among the top

10 percent of high performers of the 128 VA hospitals.

"We owe this recognition to the hard work of our staff and volunteers who are dedicated to providing high quality, safe care that places the patient at the center of all services," Sullivan said.

"This is another example of how we fulfill our promise, 'Readying Warriors and Caring for Heroes.' Congratulations again on this outstanding accomplishment."

### CLC courtyard opens

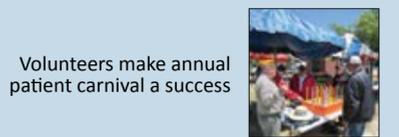
Donations from The Grainger Foundation and AMVETS helped pay for a new Community Living Center (CLC) courtyard. It opened after a May ceremony. From left to right, Gloria Sinclair from The Grainger Foundation; Patrick Sullivan, Lovell FHCC Director; John Howard, The Grainger Foundation; Community Living Center resident James Frohnapfel; Capt. James A. Lovell in the center holding the scissors; CLC resident Ralph Barzowski; Tony Altieri, Wheeling AMVETS Post 66; Capt. José Acosta, Lovell FHCC Deputy Director/Commanding Officer; and Joyce Wadlington, Associate Chief Nurse for the CLC, cut the ribbon (Photo by Trevor Seela)



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Lovell FHCC celebrates LGBT Pride for first time



Volunteers make annual patient carnival a success



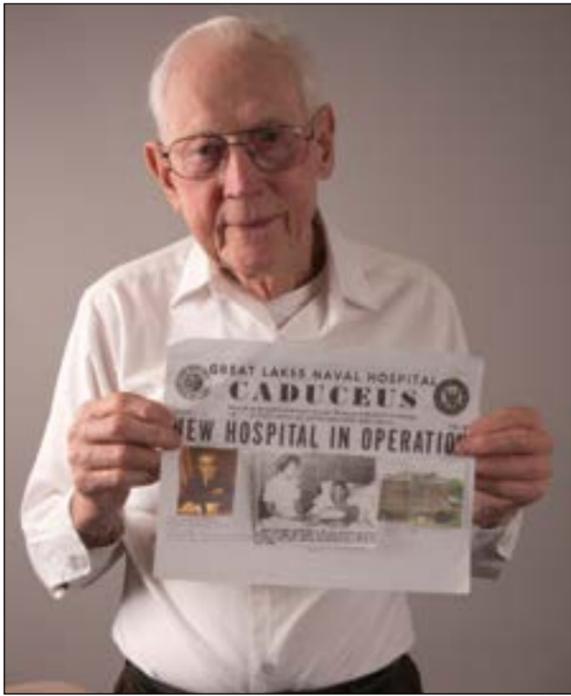
Staff celebrate Memorial Day with McHenry County special education students

- PTSD Awareness Month marked
- Hospital Week, Navy Nurses celebrated
- Navy Dental Corps lieutenants graduate
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# Bldg. 200H's first patient reminisces, visits demolition site



*Lt. Fred Wolter was admitted in 1961, seen by future Navy Surgeon General*

would admit him. Wolter spent eight months as a patient in Building 200H and collected many memories in and about the hospital.

The 86-year-old recently traveled from his farm in Missouri to North Chicago to stop at Lovell FHCC and see the former hospital. Associate Director of Facility Support Marianne Semrad escorted him to the demolition site, where a kind construction worker gave him a brick.

“It was great to see this place one more time,” Wolter said. “They took care of me and saved my life.”

Overall, he was supportive of the integration of Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense health care services for Veterans, Retirees, Active Duty and their families at Lovell FHCC, but he admitted, “It’s a little sad to see it [Building 200H] go.”

Wolter served in the Navy in 1945 and 1946. He then went to college and joined the Navy Reserve in 1950. He still farms land purchased by his grandfather, who came to America from Prussia.



*In the photo top left, Lt. Fred Wolter holds up a newsletter article about his time in what was then the new hospital at Naval Station Great Lakes. (Photo by Mary Waterman.) Top right, the facility stayed open until 2010, when the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs integrated medical services at Lovell Federal Health Care Center. Bottom photo shows demolition proceeding on the building. (Photos courtesy Naval Station Great Lakes)*

**By Seaman Tyler Smith**  
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

**F**irst opening in 1961, the former Naval Hospital admitted its first patient, Lt. Fred Wolter (Ret.) on January 4.

Prior to being moved to Great Lakes, Wolter was medically retired from Philadelphia Naval Hospital in September of 1960 and was then transferred to the old barracks hospital at Great Lakes until the new facility opened.

Wolter was admitted for a punctured lung and still tells the story how Vice Admiral Donald Curtis (Ret.), who later became the U.S. Navy Surgeon General from 1973-1976, “saved his life.”

When he needed care in 1961, Wolter remembered it wasn’t easy to find a hospital that

## Healthy Teaching Kitchen initiative teaches shopping, cooking, life skills

**By Trevor Seela**  
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

**E**ating well on a budget isn’t always easy. For instance, deciding which vegetables to buy — fresh, frozen, or canned — can be a challenge. But graduates of the FHCC Healthy Teaching Kitchen program are ready for the challenge.

Since its start in 2010, the FHCC’s Healthy Teaching Kitchen program has given many patients the skills necessary to buy and prepare healthy, affordable meals.

“The Healthy Teaching Kitchen is a class to give domiciliary residents healthful independent-

living skills,” said Valerie Furst, the Clinical Section Chief of Nutrition and Food Services. Furst explained the residents attend class for three consecutive days.

“They receive group instruction about nutrition and take a trip to a local grocery

store to use their skills to buy affordable groceries, which they cook on the final day,” she added.

On a recent training day, students prepared a menu consisting of tacos, black beans and brown rice with fresh cilantro, low-fat shredded cheese, low-fat sour cream and fruit salad.

“In the past, I used to buy a packet of taco seasoning, but these tacos from scratch are quicker, not as salty and packed with flavor,” said Veteran Courtney Pinnick, who recently completed the program.

Veteran and recent student James McAlpin was impressed with the training. “I have been cooking for myself for 55 years, and this is a lot lower in fat and tastes just as good,” he said.

The first step to preparing patients to partake in their own healthy kitchen is to teach them about nutrition, said Roberta Cooper-Meyer, the Healthy Teaching Kitchen coordinator.

The first day of the three-day class consists of a discussion about the MyPlate model ([www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)), learning which foods to eat more of, such as high-fiber foods and



*In the left photo, Veteran and recent student James McAlpin, chops fresh vegetables for a Mexican meal. In the above photo, Veteran Courtney Pinnick on the left, and McAlpin sit down to enjoy their meal of tacos, black beans and rice. (Photos by Mary Waterman)*

whole grains, and how to decipher and compare nutrition labels.

“Patients in the program learn all about food budgeting, cost comparison and putting together a manageable shopping list,” Cooper-Meyer said. “We also give them a packet of simple, healthy recipes.”

When the residents visit a grocery store on the second day of the class, they get to put their training to good use. They are given a budget to prepare an entrée, side, and dessert on the third day. The Nutrition and Food staff picks the entrée, and residents pick the side dish and dessert.

