



New tour offers glimpse of Navy recruit life

FHCC doctors, clinicians get a chance to see what boot camp is like for their recruit patients

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

The tens of thousands of Navy recruits who annually graduate from boot camp and complete follow-on schools at Recruit Training Command (RTC) and Great Lakes Naval Station (NSGL) receive all their medical and dental care from Lovell Federal Health Care Center (FHCC) “East campus” clinics – the majority of them never needing to leave NSGL to get treated.

A fraction of them, however, will have to be transported outside the gates to Lovell FHCC’s North Chicago “West campus” hospital down the road, to see doctors, nurses and clinicians who could benefit from knowing more about what life is like for young Sailors in training. To meet that need, Lovell staff members Cmdr. Walter Dalitsch and Cmdr. Duneley Rochino, branch head at Lovell’s Fisher Clinic at NSGL, created a twice-monthly medical provider tour of recruit training and living areas at RTC and NSGL.

“In about September, 2014, in the middle of a discussion about East campus patients coming over to FHCC’s West campus for care, we perceived that there might be a benefit with



FHCC clinicians trudge through the snow to enter the USS Arleigh Burke recruit barracks aboard Recruit Training Command (RTC) during a tour of the FHCC’s East campus facilities. The tour helps West campus staff members better understand the living arrangements and transportation capabilities for some of their patients coming from RTC and Naval Station Great Lakes (NSGL). (Photo by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

showing the specialists the way that recruits and students live their lives,” said Dalitsch, Lovell FHCC assistant director of specialty care. “So Cmdr. (Duneley) Rochino and I got together and came up with the idea of doing sort of hands-on tours of the clinics and barracks, helping to open the eyes of the specialists as to recruit and student life and living arrangements.”

In January, six West campus staff members participated in the tour, to see for themselves what life is like for Sailors.

The tour was the third of its kind, and Dalitsch said there has already been a lot of improvement made in opening up communication between the East and West campuses.

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Chicago Bears cornerback tops off “Salute Week” at Lovell



Charles “Peanut” Tillman, a Chicago Bears cornerback, called bingo in Freedom Square. (Photo by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

‘Peanut’ Tillman’s visit one of many events thanking Veteran inpatients

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

Lovell Federal Health Care Center celebrated National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans week Feb. 9-13 with many special events and guests, including one recognizable sports figure.

Chicago Bears cornerback Charles “Peanut” Tillman visited Lovell FHCC Feb. 12, as a way to show his support for the military and its Veterans.

Tillman’s visit capped off a week filled with gratitude, Bingo, several volunteer-led pizza parties, and visits from other local leaders including North Chicago Mayor Leon Rockingham, Naval Service Training Command Commander Rear Admiral Richard Brown and Col. Jeffrey Goodes, commanding officer of Marine Air Control Group 48.

Tillman told an audience of nearly 100 Veterans and employees about his family members who were also Veterans, and that had it not been for football, he, too, would have joined the military.

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Leadership Commentary

‘We salute you,’ families, caregivers, as well as our patients



By Dr. Stephen Holt
Lovell FHCC Director

In February, in Lovell FHCC clinics, you may have seen the dozens of heartwarming, hand-made Valentines local school children and volunteers lovingly crafted for our Veteran and military patients. The construction paper cards signed by children of all ages come pouring in every year, symbolizing overwhelming support and love for those who have given so much in the service of our country.

Maybe you attended one of our “Salute to Veteran Patients” events, held in honor of the national recognition of hospitalized Veterans in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities, which occurs every year in conjunction with Valentine’s Day.

We were honored to welcome Rear Admiral Richard Brown, Commander, Naval Service Training Command, and North Chicago Mayor Leon Rockingham, Chicago Bears player Charles “Peanut” Tillman, and others who hosted bingo and helped our patients celebrate with parties in Freedom Square. The mayor has been coming here for 15 years during Salute Week. We also welcomed back Col. Jeffery Goodes, commanding officer of Marine Air Control Group 48.

These military and community leaders recognize the sacredness of our mission here to serve Veterans and military members, and military families, and they make a point of coming here year-round for activities, to show their commitment. We thank them and

every volunteer who baked for our patients, took a pen in hand to sign a card, or came here in person during Salute Week to visit. We appreciate what you do!

At Lovell Federal Health Care, we take the national Salute Week a little bit further, to encompass honoring family members and caregivers, as well as our patients. We understand it is not just the military members who are called on to make sacrifices during their service – and long after. Family members also make sacrifices, every day and in many, sometimes unexpected, ways – whether it is running a household single-handedly while a spouse is deployed, or caring around-the-clock for a Wounded Warrior.

Our pediatrics clinic is a great example of this, where husbands or wives wheel in their children for appointments while their military spouses are on duty. Or in our outstanding Caregiver Support Center, we see loved ones seeking much-deserved respite while their Veterans are undergoing medical procedures, or while they are

hospitalized, some for extended periods of time.

To those family members and caregivers, we salute you, too, and pledge to support you! We promise to do whatever we can to ensure access to quality patient-centered care. We pledge to continually improve our processes to the benefit of our patients and their families.

Don’t be afraid to let us know how we are doing. Right inside our “front door” (the main four flag-pole entrance), you’ll find our newly named “Office of Patient Experience.” We formerly called it the patient advocate office, or customer service. The advocates still do the same job, but we think their new name better signifies what they care about – which is improving the overall experience of our patients. They are here to listen to you, and to help you. Stop by, or call 224-610-7505.

Your feedback helps us honor our sacred mission of *Readying Warriors and Caring for Heroes*.

Black History Month

Over the past century, African American life, history, and culture have become major forces in the United States and the world. In 1915, few could have imagined that African Americans in music, art, and literature would become appreciated by the global community. Fewer still could have predicted the prominence achieved by African Americans, as well as other people of African descent, in shaping world politics, war, and diplomacy.

This transformation is the result of effort, not chance. Confident that their struggles mattered in human history, black scholars, artists, athletes, and leaders self-consciously used their talents to change how the world viewed African Americans. The New Negroes of the post-World War I era made modernity their own and gave the world a cornucopia of cultural gifts, including jazz, poetry based on the black vernacular, and an appreciation of African art. African American athletes dominated individual

and team sports transforming baseball, track-and-field, football, boxing, and basketball. In a wave of social movements, African American activism transformed race relations, challenged American foreign policy, and became the American conscience on human rights.

At the dawn of these strivings and at all points along the road, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) has played a vital role. When he founded the Association in 1915, Carter G. Woodson

labored under the belief that historical truth would crush falsehoods and usher in a new era of equality, opportunity, and racial democracy, and it has been its charge for a century. In honor of this milestone, ASALH has selected “A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture” as the 2015 National Black History theme.

Employees: Are you interested in helping the FHCC meet its mission of recruiting, maintaining and celebrating a diverse workforce? Contact Adrienne Fisher, Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist, at adrienne.fisher@va.gov.

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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Recruit life focus of RTC, Naval Station tours (cont.)

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The improvement in communication is thanks in large part to the feedback received from the providers who have gone on the tour.

Bill Lauth, a physician in the emergency department, said the tour was very eye-opening, and he appreciated being able to see where some of his patients were coming from.

“We really have very little understanding of where they come from, what they do and how they do it,” Lauth said. “I think it’s very important for us to understand when they come to see us where they’ve been and what we’re sending them back to; so it’s been very enlightening.”

Seeing the buildings recruits live and train in – for example, ledges, steps and other obstacles – may help doctors better determine discharge plans for recruits who may be on crutches, or otherwise have temporary physical limitations.

The January three-hour tour made stops at USS Red Rover and USS Tranquility clinics at RTC – two of Lovell FHCC’s four East campus clinics – and at living quarters aboard both RTC and NSGL.

“We saw an inside view of not only the basic training, but the student life of the Navy,” Lauth said. “I think it was just fascinating for me, not having been in the military.”

Karen Brodlo, a registered nurse in the dermatology clinic on the West campus, said it makes plenty of sense for both East and West campus employees to see what each other is doing.

“I think the tour is excellent,” Brodlo said. “Learning how the recruits and active duty

students live, and how they have to get their medical treatment, presents a new perspective to following through on our side.”

Brodlo said it was also nice to see the dedication of East campus staff members to providing the best patient care for recruits and students.



Lovell Federal Health Care Center staff members receive an overview of student berthing aboard Naval Station Great Lakes (NSGL) during a tour of FHCC East campus facilities. The tour is designed to give West campus staff members a better understanding of how their Sailor patients live and train at Recruit Training Command (RTC) and NSGL. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

Peanut Tillman delighted patients, staff (cont.)



Peanut Tillman signs a football for Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Mark Watts. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

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Tillman’s visit began in Freedom Square, Lovell FHCC’s Community Living Center, where he called a game of bingo for long-term residents. He then walked around the room and talked

to each individual, posed for photos and even signed a few autographs. From there, he was escorted to the inpatient floor, where he visited with several more patients.

“His personality made it special,” said Kenny List, chief of voluntary services at Lovell FHCC. “They really got a charge out of him getting into it and calling the bingo. People who might not have even been Bears fans were getting a kick out of it . . . and I think he got as much out of it as they did.”

Tillman delighted the crowd with a fair amount of banter and encouragement as he called bingo, and was rooting for the Veterans as he called each number. “He basically treated everyone like they mattered to him, like they were special,” List said. “He took the time to really become a part of it.”

List said it raises the morale of Veteran patients when military leaders and local public figures come to visit them.

Charles “Peanut” Tillman, cornerback for the Chicago Bears, on the right, signs autographs after calling bingo for patients at the Lovell Federal Health Care Center. Tillman spent an afternoon visiting with inpatients and staff as part of the FHCC’s celebration of the annual National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans week. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)



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Healing: Recovery in FHCC Transitional Residence homes

(Editor's Note: "Healing" is an occasional series highlighting the recovery stories of patients who have experienced significant medical recovery in their lives. The focus in the January issue, and again this month, is on a Veteran currently undergoing treatment in

the Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) program, and a CWT/TR house manager who successfully completed the program himself. Lovell FHCC's CWT/TR program was featured in the January issue of *The Apollo*.)

Name: Steven Garrett
Branch of Service: U.S. Army

When you are in the military, everyone knows you don't go "into battle" by yourself, which is a fact that Army Veteran Steven Garrett falls back on every day that he serves as a house manager in the Lovell FHCC Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) program.

Garrett is a 2012 graduate of the CWT/TR program, and as such, he said he appreciates the value of Veterans helping Veterans.

"I can't get too complacent in my own recovery," he said. "By being here, I continue to get the help I need. We (house managers) help the guys, and we help ourselves."

Garrett is one of three Veterans who successfully completed the program and then were selected to be house managers. House managers must hold down a job outside the program, stay clean and sober, as well as manage the household where they reside with four fellow Veterans in recovery.

"I get to give back what was so freely given to me," said Garrett, who came here from Michigan after completing a year-long recovery program that he said didn't measure up to what is offered at the FHCC.

"They didn't stress working on the core issues," he said. "Recovery is more than staying away from the 'core substance' ... The drugs are a symptom of underlying issues."

The 18 Veterans who participate in CWT/TR at any given time are referred from other FHCC programs, other Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, and through community organizations. They come with a background of substance abuse and addiction, and/or other mental health conditions including PTSD

and depression. Many also have complicated health issues.

The modest CWT/TR homes are located in a quiet neighborhood a few blocks from the FHCC's main North Chicago campus. Life in the homes is highly structured. Residents are required to do chores such as grocery shopping and cooking, attend internal and external support group meetings, hold jobs and participate in treatment.

"I was given the help I needed," said Garrett, who works at Lovell FHCC as a psychiatric nursing assistant. "It's working for me. You give some of that back, and you motivate them as you go."

Garrett said it took a while before he was able to "humble" himself and admit he needed help to make major changes in his life. "Change is the buzz word – you don't leave the program the same man you came in," he said.

Fellow House Manager Darryl Brown laughs when he talks about Garrett's first weeks in the program. "He didn't like me at all," Brown said. "He thought I had it in for him."

Garrett said, "It took him (Brown) saying, 'Why don't you take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth' before I started to get it right."

That's the greatest difficulty with all new residents, Garrett said. "You have to get that thinking out of them that they can do it by themselves, that they can go back to their old lives, and 'use' recreationally. And do you know how hard it is to convince a person of that?"

Being a house manager is a great job, he said. "It's the most rewarding job I've ever had. When you see the change in a person, it's very satisfying."

-Jayna Legg



Air Force Veteran Stewart Harris stands in the kitchen of one of Lovell Federal Health Care Center's Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence homes. Known to his house mates as a "signature chef," Harris makes a mean marinade. He also gardens in a new flower bed around the flagpole the homes share. He looks forward to reuniting with his wife and children after the program. (Photo by Mary Waterman)

Name: Stewart Harris
Branch of Service: U.S. Air Force

Stewart Harris remembers well the day he moved into one of Lovell FHCC's four Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) homes in a neighborhood a few blocks from the FHCC's main North Chicago hospital.

"It was Aug. 12, 2014, which just happened to be my 52nd birthday," said the lanky native of New Orleans, who served two years in the Air Force in a transport squadron.

He sees the CWT/TR program as his chance for a "do-over" in life.

"Even after just 90 days here, the statement, 'brand new life,' has taken on a whole new meaning," Harris said. "It's no doubt a 'life-saving station,'" he said, repeating an oft-used phrase for the Veterans, house managers, social workers and counselors involved in the program.

At any given time, 18 men live in the homes and receive intensive treatment for addictions and mental health conditions including PTSD and depression. They also receive comprehensive medical care and vocational rehabilitation services, for a period of six months to a year.

They are referred to CWT/TR from other Lovell FHCC programs, from outside organizations and other Department of Veterans Affairs facilities.

The structure of daily living in the group homes is part of the recovery process. Residents are required to work, participate in chores, house meetings, homework and treatment, and attend Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Narcotics Anonymous group meetings in the community.

Veterans are assessed before they

enter the program and initially placed in a CWT job on the nearby FHCC campus. They are required to pay a program fee and save money to pay for housing after they are released from the program.

Harris came to the program with a background in cooking, Louisiana-style. He's known amongst the group as a "signature chef" who creates memorable marinades.

"There is no true 'graduation.' It's a life-long effort. You make the transition from one stage to another."

Stewart Harris
Veteran, CWT/TR Program

He also volunteers his gardening skills. Last autumn, he planted a perennial flower bed by the flagpole shared by the homes.

His ready smile belies underlying insecurities. "I'm learning to trust," he said, "to trust the VA, this facility, and other people."

Harris already works a full-time job with a local electrical wire and cable company. His next step after "graduating" from the program will be to get his own apartment and then reunite with his wife and 15-year-old daughter, the youngest of his seven children.

He knows the road ahead will be challenging.

"There's no true graduation," he said. "It's a life-long effort. You make the transition from one stage to another."

-Jayna Legg



Left foreground, Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence program House Manager Steven Garrett meets with Veteran residents. (Photo by Mary Waterman)