Lake County, Illinois veterans who seek shelter get help through collaboration between FHCC, local agencies

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

No community has totally eradicated the life challenges that may cause someone to become homeless. But Lake County, Illinois, now has a support network in place that effectively ends veterans’ homelessness nearly as soon as they seek help.

After four years of intense collaboration between the FHCC homeless veteran program, the Lake County Coalition for the Homeless and Lake County government, it is official.

Lake County is now among an elite group of communities throughout the nation that has achieved functional zero veteran homelessness, based on certifications from both the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and Built for Zero, a national nonprofit organization.

“I got into a situation where I was homeless and sleeping under a tree,” said Air Force veteran Christopher Richard. “I didn’t know what to do. I walked into Lovell Federal Health Care Center in North Chicago, and they treated me like family.”

Richard said he first went to a county Public Action to Deliver Shelter (PADS) location, and they asked if he was a veteran. The fact the question was asked, and the PADS worker knew what to do next, is a testament the system works, he said.

“The FHCC homeless veteran team worked closely with Lake County Coalition for the Homeless to get the homeless veteran count to zero. Pictured front row, left to right, is Yareli Salgado, Lake County; Melvin Ford, Public Action to Deliver Shelter; Sherisa Benson (blue coat) and Jennifer Olden, FHCC. Pictured in the middle is Emily Nelson, FHCC, and Brenda O’Connell, Lake County. At the top is Lillie Prince, Karin Bloom and Jenny King, FHCC. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Weston Mohr)”

Podiatry Clinic ranked high for access, direct-scheduling

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

The night after Army veteran Patsy Delp’s foot surgery, she received a call from her doctor to see how she was doing.

Then Dr. Jonathan Rouse called again the next day to check in on her. During a recent follow-up appointment in the FHCC’s Podiatry Clinic, Delp couldn’t say enough about her podiatrist, who, until recently, was also known as Navy Lt. Rouse. Rouse recently left active duty after serving six years and was hired back as section chief.

“He’s more than outstanding,” Delp said. “He’s an amazing surgeon and doc and a great teacher. He’s great at educating medical students. He explains everything. He’s very interactive.”

Delp isn’t alone in praising the Podiatry Clinic. Earlier this year, the clinic was ranked second in the country among Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities for access and direct-scheduling.

That means the clinic has been able to maintain less than 20 days of wait time for appointments for new patients, and less than four days for established patients. That’s no easy feat, pun intended, for a clinic that handles approximately 12,000 appointments annually.

Simulation team trains Coast Guard

FHCC Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Eric Epstein demonstrates tourniquet application to members of the Coast Guard in Milwaukee. He was part of a FHCC Simulation Center team that conducted a Bleeding Control course and helped facilitate a water rescue training in Lake Michigan. (Photo by Ricky Kuebisch, Simulation Specialist)
New urgent care benefit is key part of 2019 MISSION Act

Eligible veterans may go to conveniently located urgent care and retail locations for minor medical needs

By Dr. Robert Buckley
Lovell FHCC Director

At Lovell FHCC, we continually strive to provide the best patient experience and quality care. Among the many improvements for veterans under the MISSION Act, which kicked off June 6, the availability of urgent care has already proven to be quite popular.

Urgent care is not meant to replace emergency department care, for true, time-dependent conditions that need laboratory and X-ray support, or specialty consultations. Nor is urgent care meant to replace ongoing care with a primary, mental health or specialty care provider. It is an ideal option to address minor after-hours needs such as sore throat, cold symptoms, skin conditions, muscle strains and medication refills.

It is important to know eligible veterans may only go to network-approved urgent care centers. The locator is at the web address: https://vaurgentcarelocator.triwest.com/Locator/Care.

As an example below, the FHCC’s North Chicago address currently pulls up nine approved urgent care providers within a 15-mile radius. The same information can be obtained by phone by calling 847-688-1900 and selecting 6 to be connected to the VA MISSION Act Customer Care team.

Note that veterans should not be asked to pay fees upfront to be seen at one of these community urgent care centers.

Additionally, veterans may have any prescriptions written by the network urgent care provider filled at a network pharmacy for up to a 14-day supply.

If you have any questions about the MISSION Act in general, or urgent care in particular, you may contact our Community Care office at 224-610-8632.

Bleeding control, lifesaving part of Coast Guard training

FHCC simulation specialists with their high-tech manikins recently traveled to Milwaukee to train 16 active duty and reserve Coast Guard members in bleeding control and other lifesaving techniques. Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Eric Epstein, Chris Strassburg and Ricky Kaebisch also assisted with a simulated helicopter rescue in Lake Michigan. The “Coasties” had to master medical intervention on a rocking boat. The rescue swimmer had to provide lifesaving care, communicate with the helicopter and prepare the “victim” to be lifted.

In the top photo, members of Coast Guard Sector Lake Michigan, in Milwaukee, use a FHCC manikin to perform a simulated helicopter water rescue. In the left photo, FHCC Simulation Specialist Ricky Kaebisch demonstrates lifesaving techniques, and in the above photo, FHCC Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Eric Epstein conducts training.

(Photos provided by Sector Lake Michigan Public Affairs)
NMRTC Great Lakes is coming soon - October 1, 2019!

A
s you may be aware, the administrative control (benefit mission) of all Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) is in the Department of Defense that will be transitioning from the individual services to the Defense Health Agency (DHA) in October of this year. This was mandated by Congress in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017. Each branch of service, therefore, is then tasked with concentrating on the readiness of the medical forces.

The Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) has taken on this Optimizing Navy Medicine for the Warfighter mission by developing a Navy Medicine Readiness Training Command (NMRTC) at each current Navy MTF. While we are not an MTF in the traditional sense, we are standing up our own NMRTC here at Lovell FHCC.

Ultimately, this will allow BUMED to track and monitor what Navy Medicine is now specifically tasked to do – READINESS.

So, what does this actually mean and entail? For patients, there will be no difference in how, where and when you receive your care and no change to who provides it. Our patients here at FHCC should expect the same top-notch, high-quality care that they have always received. It will be completely transparent to veterans, active duty members, dependents, retirees, and anyone else who comes through our doors.

The biggest change will rest on me as the commanding officer of the NMRTC in that I will now report directly to DHA, BUMED and the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12.

For FHCC sailors, the job you do and where you work will remain the same. Some of you will be assigned as “core” members of the NMRTC – those functions that are inherently readiness specific. For example, the urinalysis coordinator does not get involved in patient care, and because that task falls under readiness, the coordinator will be a core member of the NMRTC.

For the majority of sailors who do participate in patient care, either directly or indirectly, you will be a member of the NMRTC but will be “loaned back” to FHCC as an integral member of the healthcare team to continue taking care of our patients.

“For patients, there will be no change in how, where and when you receive your care and no change to who provides it.”

By Captain Gregory Thier
Deputy Director/Commanding Officer

Lovell FHCC Podiatry Clinic doesn’t just ‘treat feet’ (cont.)

“...put patients before themselves, which is outstanding.”

Delp said. “It’s easy to get an appointment. You can always get in with a resident. They are always smiling here.”

The clinic well-represents the unique integration of Department of Defense (Navy) and VA health care services at the FHCC. It is staffed by two civilian and two military providers. Additionally, the clinic has one nurse, two schedulers, two podiatry technicians and six medical residents.

Carabeth McDonald, Delp’s partner, said everyone is friendly at the “efficient” clinic, especially the schedulers. “The girls out front are outstanding, every single time we come, even when there’s a line,” she said.

Delp has been a patient at the clinic for two years, since she had to have her Achilles tendon reconstructed. Her job requires her to stand all day, and a recent fall caused a setback. She said Rouse always “figures out innovative ways” to make things easier, even drilling a hole in her shoe in one instance to ease discomfort.

The clinic routinely receives positive customer comments, like this one: “I’ve been 100 percent satisfied with the podiatry clinic over the 10 years I have been coming here. I am an under-control diabetic, and podiatry has been the most instrumental in maintaining my foot health.”

The podiatrists also see patients at two of the FHCC’s outpatient clinics – 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. every other Friday at the Kenosha Community Based Outpatient Clinic.

Heel pain is the most common complaint. Rouse said. When asked what he wants people to know about the clinic, Rouse replied, “We just don’t treat feet. We treat complex foot and ankle deformities and traumatic injuries.”

Other podiatry clinic services include elective and reconstructive surgery, wound care, sports medicine, biomechanics and diabetic foot care.

“For patients, there will be no change in how, where and when you receive your care and no change to who provides it.”

Captain Gregory Thier
FHCC Commanding Officer & Deputy Director

Making these changes will go a long way to ensure our Navy fighting men and women are at their most medically ready status and can help support and defend the United States at a moment’s notice.

Lovell FHCC Podiatrist Dr. Jonathan Rouse treats a veteran patient in the FHCC podiatry clinic, which is ranked high for access and praised widely by patients. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Weston A. Mohr)

Dr. Jonathan Rouse - then a Navy lieutenant - treats a veteran patient, James Mares, in the podiatry clinic at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center. Rouse recently left active duty and was hired as the FHCC podiatry section chief. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Weston A. Mohr)

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Lovell FHCC Podiatrist Dr. Jonathan Rouse treats a veteran patient in the FHCC podiatry clinic, which is ranked high for access and praised widely by patients. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Weston A. Mohr)
Practice Greenhealth honor goes to FHCC

Congratulations to the FHCC Green Environmental Management System (GEMS) Committee - and the FHCC - for winning the Practice Greenhealth award for exceptional energy and environmental programming last year. Specifically, the FHCC found innovative ways to reduce its steam and energy impacts by building automation system design and steam line upgrades. The FHCC also has started down the path of improving sustainability in FHCC food practices.

Meet your ombudsmen

Surjee Lee and Cynthia Anguiano met for the first time in the spring when they were named the FHCC’s new ombudsmen. Despite not knowing each other, they clicked and “got things rolling,” Anguiano said. Besides being Navy spouses, they had another thing in common. Both have prior ombudsman experience.

Ombudsmen are volunteers who are liaisons between the commanding officer and Navy families in his or her command. “Our main priority is families,” Lee said, which includes parents, aunts and uncles as well as spouses and children. “We provide resources, referrals, relocation and local area and school information, and promote events.”

They send out newsletters and man a table at monthly No Dough Dinners. One of their main tools is their “FHCC Ombudsman” Facebook group that family members can request to join. They also present at New Employee Orientation, and they communicate daily with families via email. Email them at fhccombudsman@gmail.com.

“If they need help, I want to be there for them,” Lee said, adding that ombudsmen don't gossip or share anyone's personal information. “This is a professional volunteer position.”

LEAD class graduates

The 2019 Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability and Development (LEAD) class graduated in June.

Students learned about the FHCC and what it takes to climb the career ladder. Other topics included time management, leadership styles, best methods for leading thoughtful and productive meetings, and they experienced “Own the Moment,” the FHCC’s impactful customer service training. Each created a vision and met with a mentor to develop goals and activities for a Personal Development Plan. Graduates are Zachary Dane, Niral Patel, Yamini Patel, Anna Stanchinskaya, Joyce Williams, Sherieda Gray, Bryonna Reliford and Cathy McBride. Not pictured: Victoria Bone, Lester Chan and Lori Harper.

Find More Online @ facebook.com/LovellFHCC

• Cap Toss and many more stories and photos!

Lovell Legends medall at National Veterans Wheelchair Games

Or Visit Our Website @ lovell.fhcc.va.gov

Congratulations!

- Sailors of the 3rd Quarter were named: Senior Sailor HM1 Brittani Zarzeck; Sailor of the Quarter HM2 Lindsey Rude; Junior Sailor HM3 Kyle Tylutki; Blue Jacket HM Nicholas Vasta.
- Dr. Frank Maldonado, CME, was given the Chicago Medical School Champion Award.
- CDR Josephine Nguyen was selected Dermatology Consultant to the Navy Surgeon General.
- Sailors of the 2nd Quarter were named: Senior Sailor HM1 Adam Hubert; Sailor of the Quarter HM2 Anthony Wagner; Junior Sailor HM3 Anthony Ramirez; Blue Jacket of the Quarter HM Wyatt Stafford.
- FHCC earned an "excellence rating" for its low prevalence of pressure injuries through the Hill-Rom International Pressure Injury Survey.
- Kudos to FHCC’s Skin Committee, Skin Champions and nurse managers.
- The January Daisy Award for excellence in nursing went to RN Gisella Dorog-Leysón, who works in Primary Care. The March Daisy Award went to RN Cheryl Lehman, who works in Critical Care. Lt. j.g. Jody Fox, ICU, and RN Betsy Kakkanad, GEC, received the May Daisy Award.
- A special lifetime achievement Daisy Award went to RN Rick Madison, who retired in June. Recreation Therapists Karen Fleming and Susanne Brown won the “2019 Humanitarian Award” from RevelationGolf, for “working tirelessly alongside RevelationGolf to provide programs to hundreds of veterans ... They give from their hearts each day as they serve our veterans with dignity and respect.”
Interfacility Tele-Audiology team
the Hines and Lovell FHCC
effort resulted in an award-winning access to appointments, and the Hines patients continued to have based outpatient clinics (CBOCs).

During their off-hours, from home, audiologists to provide patient care – from home.

For many homeless veterans, the FHCC’s Walk-in Center for Homeless Veterans is the first place they get help. The center actually is a suite of offices just down the hall from the main entrance to the hospital’s North Chicago campus. The center stocks some pantry and emergency supplies and is checked full of pamphlets and posters about resources. But the key component is the social workers, including Prince, who staff it. Because of their expertise and the foundation of county and community resources, coupled with VA benefits and services available through the FHCC, staff have solutions at their fingertips.

“Today is a day of hope,” said Lovell VHHC Director Dr. Robert Buckley at the July 2 event. “When veterans are identified as homeless in Lake County, there is now a safety net in place to help them get housing, health care and other vital resources needed to end their homeless status almost immediately.

Veteran Matthew Pritt also spoke at the event. The former Army engineer said a part of him was missing after he was discharged in 2011. “I had no one to talk about it,” he said. “I fell into a trap of alcohol and addiction.”

He got into treatment at the FHCC, including the Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Residence (CWT/TR) program. It took three tries before it “took,” but today Pritt has been clean for more than a year and was chosen to be a house manager in one of the four TR homes, which are located within walking distance to the FHCC.

In exchange for free room and board, house managers are on staff with the job of enforcing house rules and ensuring the homes are supportive spaces for veteran residents. They are required to work an outside, full-time job. Pritt was hired as a housekeeper at the FHCC, where he volunteers at the gym. He plans to become a kinesiotherapist at a Veterans Affairs hospital.

“I’m forever grateful for this program and this family,” Pritt said. “They helped me build a foundation … it helped me turn my life around.”

Lake County Board Chairman Sandy Hart said in her remarks she was “incredibly proud” of the team that worked relentlessly to end veteran homelessness and thanked everyone involved for their “unwavering dedication.

“No one should worry about their next meal or be out in the threatening weather without a roof over their head. No veteran should be homeless … They’ve made sacrifices we don’t know about. Now it’s our privilege to serve them,” Hart said.

The FHCC’s namesake, Gemini and Apollo astronaut and retired Navy Capt. James Lovell, also spoke. “I’m pleased to be here today to honor the hard work, dedication and collaborative efforts of all the organizations represented here, which led to this important milestone,” Lovell said.

Lovell referred to the fateful Apollo 13 mission he commanded nearly 50 years ago. An oxygen tank exploded on board, and his mission to land on the moon became one of survival. He said it took an innovative, collaborative group of people on the ground to bring the crew home safely.

“The problems I faced on the Apollo 13 mission were unique but many of my fellow veterans face other challenges every day that are equally daunting,” he said. “Sometimes those issues cause them to lose their homes, or worse, their lives. These are tragedies we all wish no one would ever have to experience, and certainly not those who have served our nation.”

Veterans Services Team of the Year” honored

Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

Continued from page 1

In the left photo, former homeless veteran Christopher Richard poses with his fiancé Shelley Hamilton after the Lake County event to celebrate the county reaching “functional zero” veteran homelessness. (Photo by Jayna Legge)

In the photo below, veteran Matthew Pritt, also formerly homeless, speaks at the event about how he was helped by Lovell FHCC, a partner in the effort to end veteran homelessness. (Photo provided by Lake County Associate Communications Specialist Angela Panatier)

The Lake County Coalition for the Homeless press release summarized the county’s achievement this way: “Ending veteran homelessness does not mean that Lake County veterans are no longer facing challenges that may cause them to become homeless. Rather, it means that a coordinated system of care has been established that swiftly connects homeless veterans to housing and services, effectively ending their homeless status soon after they’ve been identified.”

To contact the FHCC: Walk-in Center for Homeless Veterans, call 224-610-1148.

In the right photo, former homeless veteran Richard poses with his fiancé Shelley Hamilton after the Lake County event to celebrate the county reaching “functional zero” veteran homelessness. (Photo by Jayna Legge)
Fourth Corpsman Trauma Training class graduates at FHCC

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

When Navy Hospitalman Nicholas Rocklin signed on for Corpsman Trauma Training, he never dreamed he’d find himself bedside, assisting with a clamshell thoracotomy in one of the busiest trauma centers in the country.

But that’s exactly what happened on one of his shifts at the John H. Stroger, Jr. Hospital in Chicago. Rocklin, assigned to Naval Hospital Twentynine Palms, said helping with the trauma procedure to open the patient’s chest and perform cardiac massage is one experience of many that stands out.

“I definitely didn’t expect to see all of this,” said the Albany, Georgia native, referring to the traumatic injuries he helped treat during the seven-week program at Stroger and Lovell Federal Health Care Center in North Chicago, Illinois.

Rocklin and 15 other corpsmen from around the country were in the fourth Corpsman Trauma Training class. At the graduation ceremony at Lovell FHCC May 31, Rocklin was one of two graduates presented the Corpsman Comeback Award.

“Rocklin said he won’t be shocked now when he sees traumatic injuries and will “know exactly what to do,” which is precisely the goal of the training.

“We don’t want corpsmen to see blood for the first time when it happens on the battlefield,” said Force Master Chief Hosea Smith, Jr., director of the Navy Hospital Corps. “As a junior sailor, I wish I would have had this unique opportunity,” Smith said in his graduation remarks. “This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

The trauma training program represents a longstanding collaboration between Navy Medicine, Stroger and the FHCC. Corpsmen complete 62 hours of didactic and practical skills training at the FHCC in topics to include tactical combat casualty care, trauma care concepts and burn management before starting clinical rotations at Stroger. At Stroger, they work side-by-side with Stroger medical professionals in the Trauma Resuscitation Unit, Trauma Intensive Care Unit, Burn Intensive Care Unit and ER.

Dr. Frederic Starr, administrative division chief at Stroger, has been part of the training from the beginning in 2017 and was a guest speaker at the ceremony. “You should all be proud,” Starr said. “You set the gold standard for this program. The real key to its success is you all. We wanted you to jump in there and be clinically active, not just be observers. And you did. You really became an asset. You were truly members of the team.”

Honor graduates were HN Yadel Canez and HM3 Austin Chaffee-Poor. Hospitalman Solomon Winn was the other recipient of the Corpsman Comeback Award.

Corpsmen are front-line enlisted medical professionals. They serve in Navy medical facilities around the world and care for Marines and Navy personnel when they deploy to battlefield locations.