FHCC WomenHeart Champions named

Two FHCC heart patients educate, support women; FHCC one of eight hospitals chosen by WomenHeart

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

C aptain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center (FHCC) patients Denise Lear and Kelsey Gumm came back from the WomenHeart Science & Leadership Symposium at Mayo Clinic last year with a life-changing mission – to help women like them who have heart disease and heart conditions.

Former Navy firefighter Kelsey Gumm on the left, and retired Lovell FHCC employee Denise Lear have been named WomenHeart Champions and will run a support group for women with heart disease and conditions. (Photo Provided by Denise Lear)

“I never had someone say, ‘I know what you’re going through,’” said Lear, who worked at the FHCC for 33 years before retiring in 2014.

Lear suffered a stroke in 1993 that left her partially paralyzed for five months. Then in 2001, she had a heart attack and was diagnosed with heart disease and told it wasn’t her first ‘heart event.’ “There was no one there at all to support me,” she said.

Today, the Zion, Ill. grandmother of five has not only recovered, but has amped up her exercise routine, lost weight and took on new hobbies and projects. One of her new projects is volunteering with WomenHeart, The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease.

Through WomenHeart, Lovell FHCC was one of eight hospitals to receive a National Hospital Alliance membership grant in 2015 to provide support and education to women heart patients in underserved communities, such as women combat Veterans with PTSD, and women Veterans at risk for heart disease related to elevated cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.

As a result of the Mayo Clinic symposium, Lear and Gumm were named official WomenHeart Champions for Lovell FHCC. Lear is a Community Educator, and Gumm is a Support Network Coordinator.

One of the first projects for both champions will be to lead a new support group at Lovell FHCC for women with heart disease and heart conditions of any type. The group will begin meeting in March, at 1 and 6 p.m., the second Tuesday of the month, in the Meditation Room at Lovell FHCC in North Chicago.

Both women hope the groups will quickly outgrow the Meditation Room, which is located on the second floor at the main entrance off the parking garage.

Lear said a main goal for her is to spread the word about heart disease to black and Latino women.

Continued on page 6

Marquette Univ. student nurses shadow FHCC Navy nurses

Lt. Cmdr. Tarail Vernon (back, left), and Marquette nursing students Alex Miller and Tierra Brown, observe Sailors conducting the Tactical Combat Casualty Care Course in the Simulation Center. Students shadowed Navy nurses Jan. 28. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

F or at least one Marquette University student nurse who shadowed a Lovell FHCC Navy nurse on a recent visit, the time may prove to be life-changing.

Jackie Falotico said her long-ago dream of joining the military is alive again after she shadowed Lt. Cndr. Amy Stone as part of a Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Academic Partnership (VANAP) exchange event at the FHCC Jan. 28.

“I came in thinking I knew what I wanted to do after graduation, and this experience threw a curveball into my life,” Falotico said after the exchange. “I’ve actually always wanted to be in the military and wanted to go to an academy for undergrad.

Continued on page 3

In this Issue...

Leadership Commentary, p. 2 & 3
New Command Master Chief, p. 2
News Employees Can Use, p. 4

Lovell FHCC planning March 10 Creative Arts Festival

New Daisy Award winner named

Page 3
Page 4
The way ahead for FHCC as integrated facility is assured

Holt: ‘Both Under Secretaries chose the option to permanently continue the FHCC as an integrated facility’

By Dr. Stephen Holt
Lovell FHCC Director

While we are just beginning 2016, it has been a big year so far.

On Jan. 11, FHCC Deputy Director and Commanding Officer Capt. Robert Buckley, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12 Deputy Director Renee Oshinski, VISN 12 Director Denise Deitzen and I briefed the Under Secretaries of Health for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense on the future of the FHCC and proposed recommendations to congress due in March.

Both Under Secretaries chose the option to permanently continue the FHCC as an integrated facility.

WOW! What a success! It’s a success due to the hard work, dedication and compassionate care provided by our employees and volunteers, and the ongoing support from our patients, their caregivers and other stakeholders such as our Veterans Service Organizations! Assuming Congress agrees, and there is no reason to assume otherwise, then our place in history as the first integrated federal health care system is assured.

On the same day, we had a very successful quarterly briefing to the chief financial officers of the VA and the Navy. Both CFOs were impressed with the progress we have made over the last 15 months to improve operational efficiency while also improving quality and access.

On the next day we briefed the quarterly meeting of the FHCC Advisory Board on our progress and received similar accolades. The Advisory Board members (senior VA and Navy health officials) have been overwhelmingly impressed with how well our organization is working and how almost all of the interagency issues manifested previously at the FHCC have disappeared. Put another way, it is clear to them that we are one hospital and one health care team, dedicated to providing outstanding, patient-centered care, regardless of the clothes we, or our patients, wear.

At this meeting, Capt. Buckley and I also proposed some major organizational changes that will allow us to move forward and make the FHCC an even better place. Among these changes, we proposed to institute permanent agency assignments. The initial goal to rotate senior leadership positions between the two agencies was not feasible from a Human Resources point of view.

We also proposed the addition of an additional senior executive to help deal more effectively with the complexities of an integrated organization. And the good news is that all of our proposals were unanimously approved by the Advisory Board.

So what’s next?

I have two top goals for 2016.

The first is to recruit and hire for the senior leadership positions that have been vacant since April, 2014. We have been fortunate to have a long list of people willing to step up for extended periods of time to fill these positions in “acting” roles. But now is the time to ensure greater leadership stability and direction by finalizing the permanent leadership team and forging them into a highly effective group that will lead the FHCC to be the best health care organization in the federal government.

My second top goal is to fulfill the Secretary of the VA’s goal of enhancing the “employee partner” experience. Our employee partners make everything happen at the FHCC and perform the noble work of Preparing Warriors and Caring for Heroes, as well as their families. We simply have to constantly improve how well we take care of you, our employees, so you can care for those who come to us for help.

So in conclusion, I want to thank each and every one of you for the important difference you make in people’s lives every day. I also want to ask you to constantly look for ways we can do things better and help make those changes reality.

Command Master Chief Thomas Moore takes over at FHCC

By Hospitalman James Stewart
Lovell FHCC Communications

Command Master Chief (Surface Warfare/Air Warfare) Thomas Moore recently joined the Lovell Federal Health Care Center and is ready to continue the facility’s proud tradition of Preparing Warriors and Caring for Heroes.

“The day I walked in the doors of the FHCC, I felt welcomed as a leader and as a member of the team,” Moore said. “I am extremely proud to be a part of a mission of quality health care and integration.

“I really like how here at the FHCC everyone is always looking for ways to improve, whether it’s through Lean Six Sigma, LEAD or countless other committee-based programs. I can tell everyone is always looking and willing to change for the better,” Moore said.

Moore, who took over as CMC last November, is a Navy surface nuclear machinist mate by trade. He was “born and raised” in Mission, Texas, a town located on the border of Texas and Mexico, and joined the Navy right out of Mission High School.

Moore is a third generation Navy man, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. He enlisted in the Navy in June, 1988, and upon completion of recruitment training in Orlando, Fla., he attended Machinist Mate “A” School and completed nuclear power training in January, 1990.

Moore has earned the Meritorious Service Medal (four awards), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (four awards), the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and various unit and campaign awards. He has earned both the Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist and Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist qualifications.

His sea duty assignments include tours on the USS Enterprise (CVN 65), USS Simon Lake (AS 33), USS Mississippi (CGN 40), USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), and USS NIMITZ (CVN 68) as the reactor department Chief; and as the Command Master Chief on the USS Chancellorsville (CG 62) and USS Makin Island (LHD 8).

His shore duty assignments include Navy Recruiting District St Louis; Naval Nuclear Power Training Unit, Charleston, S.C., and he was the Force Reactor Department Master Chief at the office of the Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet in San Diego. Moore is married, and he and his wife have two children.

At this meeting, Capt. Buckley and I also proposed some major organizational changes that will allow us to move forward and make the FHCC an even better place. Among these changes, we proposed to institute permanent agency assignments. The initial goal to rotate senior leadership positions between the two agencies was not feasible from a Human Resources point of view.

We also proposed the addition of an additional senior executive to help deal more effectively with the complexities of an integrated organization. And the good news is that all of our proposals were unanimously approved by the Advisory Board.

So what’s next?

I have two top goals for 2016.

The first is to recruit and hire for the senior leadership positions that have been vacant since April, 2014. We have been fortunate to have a long list of people willing to step up for extended periods of time to fill these positions in “acting” roles. But now is the time to ensure greater leadership stability and direction by finalizing the permanent leadership team and forging them into a highly effective group that will lead the FHCC to be the best health care organization in the federal government.

My second top goal is to fulfill the Secretary of the VA’s goal of enhancing the “employee partner” experience. Our employee partners make everything happen at the FHCC and perform the noble work of Preparing Warriors and Caring for Heroes, as well as their families. We simply have to constantly improve how well we take care of you, our employees, so you can care for those who come to us for help.

So in conclusion, I want to thank each and every one of you for the important difference you make in people’s lives every day. I also want to ask you to constantly look for ways we can do things better and help make those changes reality.

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.

www.lovell.fhcc.va.gov

www.facebook.com/lovellfhcc

www.youtube.com/lovellfhcc

Director
Stephen R. Holt, MD, MPH, MSNRS
Deputy Director, Commanding Officer
Capt. Robert G. Buckley, MC, USN
Communication Chief
Mary Schindler
Public Affairs Specialist
Jaya M. Legg
Public Affairs Specialist
Stephanie C. McCooeit
Visual Information Specialist
Trevor Sisla
Mass Communication Spec. 2nd Class
Duren M. Moore

Factual Accuracy and Disclaimer:
Accuracy is important to us. We want to correct mistakes promptly. If you believe an error has been published, please alert us via email at lovellfhcc.media@va.gov. Use of any social media product does not imply endorsement by or support from our patients, their families or other stakeholders. Content on these sites is not edited for accuracy and may not necessarily reflect the views of the federal government.

From the Desk of the Director

The way ahead for FHCC as integrated facility is assured

Holt: ‘Both Under Secretaries chose the option to permanently continue the FHCC as an integrated facility’

By Dr. Stephen Holt
Lovell FHCC Director

While we are just beginning 2016, it has been a big year so far.

On Jan. 11, FHCC Deputy Director and Commanding Officer Capt. Robert Buckley, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12 Deputy Director Renee Oshinski, VISN 12 Director Denise Deitzen and I briefed the Under Secretaries of Health for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense on the future of the FHCC and proposed recommendations to congress due in March.

Both Under Secretaries chose the option to permanently continue the FHCC as an integrated facility.

WOW! What a success! It’s a success due to the hard work, dedication and compassionate care provided by our employees and volunteers, and the ongoing support from our patients, their caregivers and other stakeholders such as our Veterans Service Organizations! Assuming Congress agrees, and there is no reason to assume otherwise, then our place in history as the first integrated federal health care system is assured.

On the same day, we had a very successful quarterly briefing to the chief financial officers of the VA and the Navy. Both CFOs were impressed with the progress we have made over the last 15 months to improve operational efficiency while also improving quality and access.

On the next day we briefed the quarterly meeting of the FHCC Advisory Board on our progress and received similar accolades. The Advisory Board members (senior VA and Navy health officials) have been overwhelmingly impressed with how well our organization is working and how almost all of the interagency issues manifested previously at the FHCC have disappeared. Put another way, it is clear to them that we are one hospital and one health care team, dedicated to providing outstanding, patient-centered care, regardless of the clothes we, or our patients, wear.

At this meeting, Capt. Buckley and I also proposed some major organizational changes that will allow us to move forward and make the FHCC an even better place. Among these changes, we proposed to institute permanent agency assignments. The initial goal to rotate senior leadership positions between the two agencies was not feasible from a Human Resources point of view.

We also proposed the addition of an additional senior executive to help deal more effectively with the complexities of an integrated organization. And the good news is that all of our proposals were unanimously approved by the Advisory Board.

So what’s next?

I have two top goals for 2016.

The first is to recruit and hire for the senior leadership positions that have been vacant since April, 2014. We have been fortunate to have a long list of people willing to step up for extended periods of time to fill these positions in “acting” roles. But now is the time to ensure greater leadership stability and direction by finalizing the permanent leadership team and forging them into a highly effective group that will lead the FHCC to be the best health care organization in the federal government.

My second top goal is to fulfill the Secretary of the VA’s goal of enhancing the “employee partner” experience. Our employee partners make everything happen at the FHCC and perform the noble work of Preparing Warriors and Caring for Heroes, as well as their families. We simply have to constantly improve how well we take care of you, our employees, so you can care for those who come to us for help.

So in conclusion, I want to thank each and every one of you for the important difference you make in people’s lives every day. I also want to ask you to constantly look for ways we can do things better and help make those changes reality.
I

Lovell FHCC Deputy Director/By Captain Robert G. Buckley

In February, we celebrate American Heart Month, and here at Lovell FHCC, we recognize Women’s Heart Week. According to the American Heart Association, each year, well over 400,000 Americans suffer non-traumatic cardiac arrest – but unfortunately, only 10 percent of these victims survive. While these figures sound dismal, there is good evidence that when a strong chain-of-survival is in place, the chances of survival markedly improve. The chain includes rapid bystander action.

The first step in the chain-of-survival occurs the minute someone loses consciousness, stops breathing and becomes unresponsive. The journey to potential recovery begins with bystander action to (1) call for a 911 emergency response, (2) initiate aggressive chest compressions (CPR), and (3) if available, apply an AED (automatic external defibrillator) to the victim’s chest.

The next phase of survival depends on a rapid response and resuscitation by EMS (emergency medical service paramedic ambulance) using ACLS (advanced cardiac life support), followed by rapid transport to the nearest hospital emergency department for ongoing ACLS resuscitation and stabilization. Depending on the patient’s condition and findings on an EKG, the patient may then need to be admitted or transported to the closest hospital with a cardiac “cath lab,” where a cardiologist can open blocked coronary arteries using tiny catheters passed from arteries in the groin or wrist. Ultimately, the patient will require days to weeks of intensive care before they can be discharged.

Over the last several months, I have seen instances where the highly trained staff members from Lovell FHCC have worked together, (as part of the long chain-of-survival), to care for victims of cardiac arrest outside the hospital who ultimately survived to hospital discharge. This was no small accomplishment. It took the expert care of our ED staff, Critical Care and Cardiology specialists, nursing, and ancillary support staff from Radiology, Laboratory, Pharmacy and Respiratory Therapy to assure every step of patient care was completed. In these cases, once the patients were stabilized, our Patient Administration staff rapidly coordinated transfer to tertiary care medical centers, and our Facility Support and Security staff paved the way for ambulance or helicopter transfer. This took incredible communication and coordination – as dozens of staff members teamed up to make this happen.

So I would like to take this opportunity not only to congratulate all of our staff members who stand constantly “Ready to Care” in these critical situations, but to encourage staff members to use the opportunity of American Heart Month to assure your BLS (Basic Life Support) training is up to date and re-familiarize yourself with the critical steps, in case you become a first responder to a victim of cardiac arrest. Every link in the chain-of-survival must be strong.

FHCC Annual Veterans Creative Art Festival set for March 10

By Jayna Legg

Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

Participating in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival two years ago in Milwaukee, Wis. was one of the best weeks of Veteran John Pearce’s life.

“The sense of accomplishment, of putting a show together and working with all the other Veterans from across the nation, I literally was walking around 12 inches off the ground for two hours afterwards,” said Pearce, an Air Force Veteran with a booming voice.

As a finalist in the solo vocalist category in the Lovell 2014 Veterans Creative Arts Festival (CAF), Pearce was asked to help produce the National Veterans Creative Art Festival set for March 10. Pearce – a Lovell FHCC employee, volunteer and outpatient – enters the CAF every year. This year, in addition to singing, he plans to enter his hand-crafted leather knife sheaths.

The deadline for entries for the Lovell FHCC CAF is Feb. 19. Art categories include painting; sculpture; drawing; photography; wood, leather and model kits and pottery. Performance categories include dance (including wheelchair dance), drama (including comedy), solo and group vocal and instrumental acts, vocal original compositions, and special recognition. Veterans also may submit creative writing entries.

Veterans must be enrolled for health care at one of the FHCC’s facilities to be eligible to enter. Rehearsals for Veterans planning to enter a performance category are taking place from 2 to 5 p.m., Fridays in February in Building 131, in the Recreation and Activity Room on the first level, at the North Chicago facility.

Veteran John Pearce, a Lovell FHCC employee, left, performs with Veteran Courtney Pinnick at last year’s Lovell FHCC Veterans Creative Arts Festival. (File Photo)

For the first time, the Lovell FHCC CAF will be co-sponsored by the College of Lake County (CLC) and will take place from 1 to 3 p.m., March 10, in the C Wing Conference Center and Auditorium. Lower Level, at CLC, 19351 W. Washington St., Grayslake, Ill.

“FHCC is very excited to partner with College of Lake County, not only to display the talents of our Veterans to a larger audience, but to also educate the public on the issues our Veterans live with every day,” said Tricia Stewart, a Lovell FHCC recreation therapist and CAF organizer.

By hosting the festival at CLC, the hope is to get more participation from Veterans of recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, Stewart said.

Lovell FHCC Training Specialist Leticia Knight has entered artwork in the festival more than once, and plans to do it again this year. Art is a lifelong passion for the Navy Veteran. “I was planning on studying art in college but joined the Navy right out of high school,” she said. “As a federal employee at the FHCC, I heard about the Creative Arts Festival and decided to dust off my brushes and paint something that would represent the military at the current time.”

Knight’s painting, “Through the Eyes of Freedom,” won first in 2013. “The arts are a great form of therapy for some that express their hardships, strengths and experiences … Art helps some communicate with others,” Knight said.

Lovell FHCC volunteer Angela Walker, a finalist with Pearce in the national Milwaukee CAF in 2014, tries to recruit new Veterans every year to enter the competition.

“It’s the one opportunity to do your thing, and if you’re lucky, you get to meet more Veterans from around the United States who all have the same thing in common, which is the arts,” said Walker, a vocalist. “I enter because of the challenge and the great fun of introducing it to new Veterans each year. We are all winners when we face our fears and show our creative side to others.”

For information about the Creative Arts Festival, contact Elizabeth.lacombe@va.gov, or Tricia Stewart, tricia.stewart@va.gov. Entries will be taken from noon to 5 p.m., Feb. 16-19 in Building 131, Room 101, at the FHCC, 3001 Green Bay Road, North Chicago, Ill.
The most recent Daisy Award winner is RN Kirk Katalinick, himself a Veteran, who works at the Kenosha Community Based Outpatient Clinic.

“Kirk is very accommodating, friendly, informative and comforting,” was one of the many positive comments written in his nomination packet. “He’s willing to offer help when and wherever he’s needed.”

In one case, Nurse Katalinick worked hard to arrange for a Rollator Walker for a Veteran patient who frequently had to stop and rest in stores by sitting on the store shelves. The Veteran and his wife were very grateful for all the help he provided, “because Kirk took the time to listen,” wrote his nominator, Lori Stenseng, Kenosha CBOC manager.

Left to right is Lori Stenseng, RN Manager and Turina Evans, LPN Telehealth, Kenosha CBOC, FHCC Acting Associate Director Inpatient Services Capt. Deborah Kumaroo; Daisy Award winner Kirk Katalinick, LPN Kenosha CBOC; Dr. Sarah Fouque, FHCC Associate Director Nursing Practice; Capt. Cynthia Judy, FHCC Executive Officer, and Francis Faung RN. (Photo by Hospitalman James Stewart.)

Recreational therapists improve quality of life

February is National Recreational Therapy Month. Lovell FHCC has a wide-ranging and growing Recreational Therapy department, made up of 14 therapists and assistants who work throughout the facility.

“Not many folks know what our department is all about,” said Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist Amy Lefstad. “It’s grown tremendously in the past few years, and the quality of life of our GEC Veterans has definitely improved.”

The goal of recreational therapy is to increase patients’ quality of life - physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially - through recreation therapy intervention. FHCC recreation therapists work in the areas of art, music, equine-assisted and pet-assisted therapy. Other activities include physical fitness groups, chair yoga, aromatherapy, Revelation Golf, chair yoga, aromatherapy, Revelation Golf, bibliotherapy, community outings, social events, outdoor games, bingo, dances, therapeutic cooking and volunteer events. They are key to the success of the annual Veterans Creative Arts Festival, and they help patients compete in the Veterans Wheelchair Games.

- Jayna Legg

Congratulations!

- Lt. Cmdr. Amy Stone was selected for the Navy Duty Under Instruction (DUIN) program, and will pursue a graduate nursing degree.

- Lt. j.g. Nabil H. Tahan was selected as the FHCC 4th Quarter Officer of the Quarter.

- Dr. Rohit Arora, department of medicine chief, was appointed to consultant for the Circulatory System Devices Panel, to the additional panels of the Medical Devices Advisory Committee, and to the Center for Devices and Radiological Health by the Food and Drug Administration.

- Home Telehealth at FHCC was recognized for “consistently exceeding program expectations” and “leading VISN12 in growth,” during a Conditions of Participation survey in November.

- Lovell FHCC has met all Core Four Criteria and has achieved 2015 and 2016 Leader in Lesbian Gay Bissexual Transgender (LGBT) Healthcare Equality status, which signifies that the FHCC is an inclusive facility that provides the best patient-centered care to all individuals.

- FHCC Command Metrics team, led by Mike Vastano, and clinical leadership and staff in Primary Care, Fleet, Mental Health and Women’s Health, met Navy Medicine East and Navy Bureau of Medicine targets for Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) August through October, 2015. Performance was sustained or improved in all sub-categories.

- Transfer coordinators Bonnie Munkacsy, Geny DeLeon and Social Worker Helen Witt, worked diligently to quickly transfer a Vietnam Veteran patient with a complicated case to his home VA in Houston using air ambulance. The patient and his family expressed their profound gratitude and personally thanked them.

Staff members recognized for outstanding efforts

Sailors act quickly to help teen

On the left, Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Darrell Brown and Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Garret Bergstrom are presented with coins from Capt. Robert Buckley, FHCC Deputy Director Commanding Officer. The two, along with Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Aaron Potter (who received a coin at later time), assisted a high school volunteer who suffered a seizure in the tramway outside Central Supply. They caught the student before he fell, rendered first aid and stayed with him until he was transported to the Emergency Department. (Photo by Jayna Legg)

Oscar Winner

HN Remia Matias was awarded an Oscar for providing outstanding customer service after she went above and beyond to help a patient find his phone. Matias, an Inpatient Acute Care nursing assistant, took the initiative to search through soiled linens in the basement to retrieve the phone. Employees may easily nominate fellow employees for Oscars when they witness them providing outstanding patient-centered care. On SharePoint, click on “Oscar Nomination,” on the left side menu. (Photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Darren M. Moore)

- Lt. Cmdr. Amy Stone won the Oscar in Recognition of Exceptional Patient-Centered Care in 2015. (File Photo)
"At that point in time, the country wasn’t very safe, and my large military family was afraid of having the baby join."

Instead, Falotico decided to attend Marquette and enroll in the VANAP program through the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Milwaukee. “I had the motto if I couldn’t join Veterans, I could at least serve them … I love the Veteran population but thought it was too late to become one until the visit to Lovell FHCC,” she said.

Falotico and five other VANAP second-semester senior nursing students were paired with FHCC Navy Nurse Corps officers for a “cultural immersion” at the nation’s only federal health care center – where military and civilian nurses work side-by-side to care for Veterans as well as active duty patients and their family members.

“We wanted them to get an understanding of military life, so see what Navy recruits go through, and to see how the needs of military patients change over time,” said Colleen Lawlor Eckert, VANAP Program Manager at Zablocki.

The Marquette nursing students completed their clinical work at Zablocki VAMC during their sophomore and junior years as part of the five-year VANAP program. A visit to Lovell FHCC was planned originally in 2013 but was postponed until now, Eckert explained.

FHCC Assistant Department Head of Education and Training Mark Bisbee, a Navy Veteran and nurse, said, “This preceptor experience gives nursing students significant examples of leadership roles that many of our nurses and specifically many of our nurses and specifically nurses work side-by-side to care for Veterans as well as active duty patients and their family members.

“Someone always has your back."

Lt. Cmdr. Rachel Perry recalled the time she was part of a team that gave more than 84 units of blood products to one person during an Afghanistan deployment with the British. She also cherishes her time working as a neonatal nurse. “Some of those families have kept in contact,” she said. “One of the babies is 11 and doing fine.”

In addition to visiting Primary Care, Pediatrics and other West campus FHCC clinics serving military family members, Stone and Falotico went to the FHCC’s recruit clinics on the East campus to see how FHCC clinicians medically in-process tens of thousands of Navy recruits every year and provide them medical care while they are in boot camp and attending follow-on schools at Naval Station Great Lakes.

“It was such an amazing experience, and I am so incredibly happy I got the opportunity to come along for the trip,” Falotico said. “I loved seeing the differences between the Milwaukee VA and Lovell FHCC and also how different Amy’s role was as a Navy nurse … I learned a ton of information in the day and will definitely have to keep reflecting on the experience.”

Tierra Brown, who shadowed Lt. Cmdr. Tarail Vernon, said the exchange was a great opportunity. “I’m passionate about serving the Veteran population,” she said. “I want to give back to them.”

Brown visited the ED with Vernon and then the ICU, where she watched Attending Physician Dr. Shani Smith do her rounds with medical residents. Brown and another student also got to see hospital corpsmen participate in trauma training in the FHCC’s Simulation Center.

In a thank you letter after the exchange, Eckert said the event “exceeded expectations … The six VANAP scholars who attended were giddy with the experience on the way back … this was a transformative experience for our group.”

Bisbee said the exchange was good for the FHCC as well. “Our FHCC Nurses were very proud and excited to show these nursing students what they do every day,” he said. “There is something invigorating about ‘showing off’ what a great facility, staff, and service we provide to our customers. The mission of the FHCC can be emotional in its retelling to others who may not know why we are here and what we do.

“Because we at the FHCC are unique in being part of an integration of the VA and the Department of Defense, it is important to educate students what that means and advertise to them what a great place this is to choose to work,” Bisbee continued. “These students will graduate in May, 2016, and I would like them to walk away from their experience with us with a desire to become a FHCC nurse.”

The other FHCC Navy Nurse Corps officers who participated were Capt. Chris Reddin, Cmdr. Kathleen Smith, Cmdr. Lorrie Meyer and Lt. Cmdr. Randy Tolbert. Other students were Juliann Cheng, Clara Kiesel, Alex Miller and Erica Weden. In addition to Eckert, VANAP faculty members Geri Voboril and Tabitha Eden attended. Eden has served in the Navy for 17 years. During her mobilization in 2014, she was director of nursing services at Expeditionary Medical Facility, Djibouti Africa.
Veteran helps other women with heart conditions ‘thrive’

Navy Recruit Training Command instructor Kelsey Gumm had no reason to believe she had a heart condition

By Jayna Legg
Lovell FHCC Public Affairs

D uring her 10 years serving as a firefighter in the U.S. Navy, Greenfield, Wis. resident Kelsey Gumm stayed physically fit and was on top of her game, except for one nagging problem.

“I kept passing out, when I was working out or even when I was doing other things,” Gumm said. “So from the age of 17 to 27, this would happen, and my heart would be beating 200 times a minute, and the doctors just kept saying I was dehydrated and should rest.”

Finally, one day when she was working out in Freedom Hall at Naval Station Great Lakes, it happened again but when she came to, “I couldn’t feel my arms and legs.”

Someone in the gym called 911, and Gumm – then an instructor at Recruit Training Command – was brought to the Lovell Federal Health Care Center Emergency Department. While she was again told she was dehydrated, this time she was advised to see a cardiologist within the month.

“They gave me a cardiac consultation because they said I was a little bit gray,” Gumm said. “Up until then, I had no reason to believe it was my heart … I had no history of heart disease, and I was young.”

Then came the day she’ll never forget – March 13, 2014. She credits the FHCC echocardiogram technician with finding the abnormality that FHCC Cardiologist Dr. Eric Yeung subsequently diagnosed as a rare and serious heart condition.

“Dr. Yeung came out and said, ‘I don’t know how to tell you this, but your Navy career is over,’” she said.

The full name of Gumm’s condition is left ventricular non-compaction cardiomyopathy with ventricular tachycardia. “He said .5 percent of the population has it,” she said. “It means the left ventricle of my heart is essentially a sponge, and it can cause my heart to speed up from 60 to 200 beats a minute at any time.”

“There’s no cure, except a heart transplant. But heart medication and an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) inserted in her heart at Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center in Milwaukee help control the condition. The way Gumm explains it, the ICD acts as “my own personal AED (automatic external defibrillator)” and shocks her heart back into rhythm whenever it goes above 155 beats per minute for more than 15 seconds.

So the active lifestyle she previously enjoyed is drastically curtailed, and she did have to get out of the Navy and start a new civilian career. All during these major life changes, Gumm couldn’t help but feel she was alone in her struggle. At 28, she felt like she was handed a “death sentence. “I thought, ‘Well, let me start my bucket list,’ my life is over” she said.

The “awesome” treatment she received from Yeung, a Navy Lt. Cmdr., was key to her recovery and a change in thinking, Gumm said. Yeung, who has since deployed with the Navy, recommended she apply to attend the 2015 WomenHeart Science & Leadership Symposium at Mayo clinic to become a WomenHeart Champion.

She was warned that she would be one of only a handful of young women at the symposium. But she attended with an open mind, befriended the four other women under 50, and was at the same time inspired by the older women who have “thrived” for decades with heart disease.

At the symposium, she learned how to educate and support other women facing the challenges associated with heart disease and heart conditions. As one of two WomenHeart Champions from Lovell FHCC, Gumm will co-lead a monthly support group beginning in March at the North Chicago hospital.

Specifically, Gumm wants to “be there” for military women diagnosed with heart disease and heart conditions. “I didn’t have someone to tell me how to get through the Medical Board process and answer the question of ‘How do you change your lifestyle?’ I want to be that person for someone else,” she said.

Today, Gumm is medically retired from the Navy. She regularly goes on mission trips to Africa to work with her parents’ nonprofit organization benefitting widows and orphans. And she volunteers with WomenHeart, which means naming information tables at Lovell FHCC and in the community, and educating women through social media, as well as participating in support groups.

Gumm said she “cried a lot” the first six months after her diagnosis and would have benefited from a support group like the one she will lead for WomenHeart.

“I want to encourage other women, empower them, and help them thrive while they have heart disease – not just survive it,” Gumm said. “When I say, ‘I understand what you’re going through,’ I really do understand.”

Lovell FHCC cardiologist urged Gumm to attend symposium (cont.)

Continued from page 4

“If you ask black women what is the leading cause of death for women, they say breast cancer,” she said. “They don’t know the facts about heart disease, that it’s the number one killer of women.”

Lear already has started visiting churches, community organizations and shopping malls to set up information tables and talk to women about heart health. She even plans to distribute red scarves, knitted by volunteers, to women and hand out red scarves, knitted by volunteers, to women.

For Gumm, being a WomenHeart Champion is her way to connect with women serving in the military, and women Veterans, who find themselves facing a difficult diagnosis of a heart-related disease and/or condition – like what happened to her at the age of 28.

““As a young woman, I always felt like no one knew what I was going through.” Gumm said. The Greenfield, Wis. resident was diagnosed with a rare heart condition while she was serving on active duty. She ultimately had to have an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) implanted in her heart and leave the Navy.

“I learned it’s not a death sentence. Now I want to give back to the community that gave me so much and be that person for someone else.”

Kelsey Gumm
Lovell FHCC WomenHeart Champion

Gumm said her “phenomenal” Lovell FHCC cardiologist at the time, Dr. Eric Yeung, is the one who recommended she apply to attend the symposium and become a WomenHeart Champion.

“At Mayo, I did meet young women like me,” Gumm said. “And the older women there, like the 85-year-old who has lived with heart disease for 20 years and is doing fine, also gave me such an excellent outlook.

“I learned it’s not a death sentence,” Gumm said. “Now I want to give back to the community that gave me so much and be that person for someone else.”

For more information, email WH-lovell@womenheart.org or go to www.facebook.com/groups/WomenHeartLovell/. You also may contact Janice Muhammad at 224-610-1123 or email janice.muhammad@va.gov.

Pictured left to right is Navy Operations Specialist 2nd Class Krysta Stint, an instructor at Navy Recruit Training Command, and Lovell FHCC WomenHeart Champions Kelsey Gumm and Denise Lear manned a “Go Red” for Women’s Heart Health table at the FHCC Feb. 5. (Photo by Hospitalman James Stewart)