

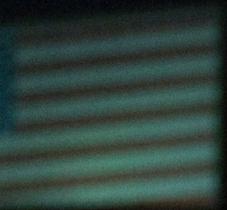
MILWAUKEE
VA
MEDICAL
CENTER

5000 West

Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center

Vol. 6, No. 3

April/May 2015



Kiana Johnson

2014 Milwaukee VA Medical Center Employee of the Year

Upcoming Events

5th Annual VA2K 2015 Walk + Roll

May 20 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Lake Wheeler Pavilion.
Open to Veterans, community and VA employees.

Russ Seager Purple Heart Ceremony

May 22 at 2 p.m. in the Matousek Auditorium.

Memorial Day Ceremony

May 25 starting at 9:30 a.m. at Wood National Cemetery.
Please use sidewalks while walking to the event.

25th Annual Vietnam Veterans Bike Blessing

June 6 at noon, beginning with a prayer service in the chapel, followed by bike blessing and picnic provided by AMVETS in the lower SCI parking lot. Open to the public.

Town Hall Meeting

June 13 from 9 to 11 a.m. in Matousek Auditorium. Features information on health and benefits.

For more info on the events, call 414-382-5363.

search: milwaukeeva



5000 West is a recurring publication produced by the Public Affairs Office and Medical Media of the Zablocki VA Medical Center, and is intended for employees, volunteers, patients, and friends. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the medical center. While 5000 West encourages submissions for future editions, we cannot guarantee publication, and reserve the right to edit all copy so it conforms to editorial policy and guidelines. To submit information, e-mail: Public Affairs at VHAMIWPublicAffairs@va.gov or call the Public Affairs Office at 414-384-2000, ext. 45363.



On the Cover

Sgt. Kiana Johnson of the Milwaukee VA police force stands watch over the medical center during another late shift. Johnson, an Air Force Veteran, is Milwaukee VA's employee of the year for 2014. Read her story on Pages 10 and 11.



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Robert Beller
Medical Center Director



Jim McLain
Deputy Director



Drew DeWitt
Assistant Director



Michael D. Erdmann, MD
Chief of Staff



Julia Roberts
Associate Director for
Patient/Nursing Services

5000 West



Gary J. Kunich
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Digital media,
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A Presidential Note

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 12, 2015

Mr. Robert H. Beller
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Robert:

One of your patients, James Maurer, wrote to tell me about the outstanding work you and your staff are doing. This is just a quick note to thank you for your dedication.

I want you to know I am grateful for your efforts to lift up the lives of our Nation's heroes. By helping our veterans receive the care and support they deserve, you are setting a positive example for all of us.

I hope you take pride in the difference you have made, and I wish you and your team the very best.

Sincerely,

Robert Beller, Milwaukee VA Medical Center director, received this personal note from President Barack Obama in response to a letter from James Maurer. Maurer told us he always receives outstanding care and responses from Jerry Peltier, a registered nurse in the Yellow Clinic, and his primary care provider, Dr. David Wagner. "The quality of care I get here is better than anything I've ever been provided in the private sector," he said. "I told the president to share my note with Congress and everyone in the Department of Veterans Affairs."

Chief of staff takes national honors

By Gary J. Kunich

Chief of Staff Dr. Michael Erdmann is winner of the national 2014 John D. Chase Award for Executive Excellence from the Veterans Health Administration.

Erdmann began his VA career here as a chief resident in 1986. He has been chief of staff for 17 years.

The Chase Award is given annually for sustained executive leadership from any health care discipline.

Erdmann has risen through the ranks and sat at the helm of health care during a period of great change in VA.

"When I started we didn't have primary care clinics," he said. "We had one general clinic, and most people who came in had to be hospitalized, sometimes unnecessarily. You could smoke openly in the hospital; patients could even smoke in their rooms.

"Things evolve and we have seen great changes. Back then, technology just did not exist yet. There was no such thing as an MRI scanner, and the idea of a CT scan was just a thought."

Erdmann ran the first HIV clinic at the hospital and helped transition the Milwaukee VA to patient-centered care and primary care clinics, among other noticeable changes.

"This never was my plan to end up as chief of staff," he said. "Honestly, I didn't have a plan, but this is the perfect place to be. I'm very proud of how VA has changed and what we accomplished. We sometimes get unfairly criticized, but a lot of advancements have been made in medicine because of VA — electronic medical records, bar code technology for medication administration, research —

it's all because of VA.

"Some people complain about change, or you can get to work and be a part of the change. It's exciting because it's for the patient," Erdmann said. "VA is still the best system for the right care, at the right time, at the right place. In VA, you do the right thing for the Veteran, and not just what they can pay for. That's why I stayed."

According to the nomination package, some of Erdmann's accomplishments include:

- Transitioned the medical center's entire delivery system to a primary care-based model
- Added two additional clinic locations while expanding patient services
- Guided the complete remodeling of the ambulatory procedure center, intensive care unit, acute medical unit, acute surgical unit, a new Spinal Cord Injury center and many of the clinic areas
- Patient satisfaction numbers are among the highest in the country for VA medical centers.

But Erdmann said the credit goes to those working in the medical center day in and out.



Dr. Michael Erdmann, chief of staff for the Milwaukee VA Medical Center.

"Let's be honest, I'm surrounded by great people who have made these things happen. I hope if I've done anything, I've give them the opportunities to grow and succeed that I was given," he said.

Away from work, Erdmann has also been very proactive in his community, serving on the Village of Germantown's Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Commission, and School Board.

And as change is always a constant, he sees others doing great things after he is gone.

"I see myself continuing in this role for five or more years," he said. "Then I'll get out of the way and let someone else take over."

Veteran as just a man, and that's a huge misnomer," said Michelle Watts, a social worker in VA's homeless program, and an organizer for this year's event. "We have some agencies out there who don't know we provide services for women. We have some women Veterans who don't understand what we offer here."

Watts said the summit will also include information on non-traditional mental health services such as art, music and equestrian therapy.

"Our message is always that we are open and want people to trust us with our care," she said.

For more information or to sign up by July 1, call Sandy Rice at 414-384-2000, ext. 41673, or e-mail at: Sandy.Rice@va.gov.

2015 Mental Health Summit focuses on women Veterans

By Gary J. Kunich

Women Veterans will be the focus of the 3rd Annual Mental Health Summit, July 22 at Marquette University.

The summit is a collaboration between mental health professionals at Milwaukee VA Medical Center, Marquette and the community to better serve women who served their country.

This year's theme is "Leave No Woman Behind: Connecting Women Veterans to Resources." The free event takes place 8

a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in Marquette's Grand Ballroom and features guest speakers and breakout groups to discuss issues.

The event is open to mental health providers, community groups, Veterans and family members to learn about services VA offers and provide feedback on the medical center.

"One of the reasons this is so important is sometimes our female Veterans are not recognized or remembered. People have an image of a

Father Norm rides into sunset

Chaplain chief ends nearly 25-year VA career

By Gary J. Kunich

The first thing you see as you enter The Rev. Norman Oswald's office is the "Lombardi Avenue" magnet on one of the doors, a nod to his past as the Green Bay Packers official priest.

There's also a "Far Side" cartoon showing the acts of God — God juggling, tap dancing, playing the saxophone, and getting shot out of a cannon.

They're all part of an eclectic collection of more than 100 gifts that dot the office and sum up his personality, and they all have a story from his 43 years as a priest.

Now the Milwaukee VA chief chaplain has added one more chapter to the story — his farewell.

Oswald — better known as Father Norm to parishioners, colleagues and friends — retired April 30. He celebrated his last Masses April 25 and 26 at the VA chapel.

Father Norm said he hoped to stay a bit longer, but failing eyesight due to adult macular degeneration pushed up his timeline.

"My vision started getting blurry back in August 2014. I was diagnosed and referred to a specialist to at least slow the process. But by Thanksgiving I realized it was going to be time to retire if I couldn't work up to my own standards.

"I have very mixed emotions," he added. "I'm going to miss the Veterans and my coworkers. You can't be in one place 24 years without developing close relationships. I had hopes of staying for 25 years, but fell just a couple months short."

Robert Beller, medical center director, said the chief chaplain will be deeply missed.



Photo by Benjamin Slane
Bishop Richard Higgins (right) presents The Rev. Norman Oswald with a Medal of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, along with Robert Beller, medical center director.

"I always count on Father Norm to give it to me straight," Beller said. "Father Norm is a great friend who always provided wise counsel. His door was always open to everyone, and he treated everyone with the same respect, kindness and compassion. Father Norm will always be 'our' chaplain at the VA."

Father Norm wanted to serve as an Air Force chaplain after graduating seminary in 1972, but the archbishop said he was needed more in Wisconsin. He served at St. Mark's in Kenosha from 1972 to 1980, then Immaculate Conception in Bay View until 1990 before taking a sabbatical. He started working part-time at VA on July 22, 1991.

He initially worked with substance abuse patients, those on the inpatient mental health ward, and Veterans with spinal cord injuries. He took over as the chief chaplain in 1994, and served as the Catholic priest for the Green Bay Packers from 1994 to 1998 when they would play a few games a year at County Stadium.

Father Norm said he'll stay active in retirement and will volunteer at St. Therese Catholic Church on Blue Mound Road, and may spend time at the Community Resource and Referral Center.

"But I'll get out of the way here and let the next person leave his mark," he said.

The achievements he'll remember most are the annual bike blessing, which he started 25 years ago to reach out to Vietnam Veterans; and the annual clothing and toy drive.

"I thought this is the last place I would be, but it turned out to be the best," he said. "I really thought I would be in parish work, but found a real joy in working with hospitalized Veterans. God writes straight with crooked lines. God gets you to where you need to be."

Earlene Thomas, housekeeper from Palliative Care, chats with The Rev. Norm Oswald at his farewell tea last month in the Matousek Auditorium. Father Norm, as he prefers to be called, retired after nearly 25 years at the Milwaukee VA and more than 40 years as a priest. He'll still volunteer his time at St. Therese Catholic Church on Blue Mound Road.





In and Around the Milwaukee VA, Part I

There's always so much going on at the Milwaukee VA, it's impossible to contain it to just a few stories and pages. Here's a round-up of special events. The Army Field Band (top photo) plays a combination of rock, R&B and country March 25 in Recreation Hall as a special concert for volunteers and employees to kick off Volunteer Appreciation Week. Lois Anderson, Green Bay VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic volunteer (center photo) is all smiles after winning a door prize at the April 15 Northwest Ambulatory Care Volunteer Recognition Banquet at the Swan Club in DePere. The banquet was held to honor all of the

volunteers who give of their time in our Appleton, Cleveland and Green Bay Clinics.

Veterans Benefits Administration regional director Duane Honeycutt (Bottom photo, left) and Robert Beller, Milwaukee VA Medical Center director, listen to concerns from a Veteran at the March 7 Town Hall meeting in the Matousek Auditorium. More than 60 Veterans attended the event, which was held for the first time on a Saturday. The next Town Hall takes place on a Saturday as well — 9 to 11 a.m. June 13 in the same location.



In and Around the Milwaukee VA, Part II

PHOTOS (Clockwise from top): Rachel Linskens from New Berlin West High School participates in the annual Work Shadow program organized by the Able-Disabled Committee. A total of 40 students from more than 20 schools participated March 12 in the event. Just to make you appreciate spring, Dave Turner from Facilities Management keeps a campus walkway clear after our last snowfall. Contractors peer up toward the sky as they hoist a new American flag above the East Entrance. The new flag is now in place at the East Entrance. It is usually replaced about every two years because of wear and tear from the weather.



In and Around the Milwaukee VA, Part III
 PHOTOS (Clockwise from top): Lindsay Focht, part of the raptor program at the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center, shows off Valkyrie, a bald eagle during a demonstration April 9 to about 30 Operation Hope Veterans in Building 43. Focht and her team were here to talk about volunteer opportunities at the nature center, which is located in Milwaukee. Because the bird pictured isn't quite 4 years old, it doesn't yet have the telltale signs of a bald eagle. Rabbi Levi Emmer leads Jewish Veterans in prayer during the March 31 Passover Seder in Recreation Hall. A student from the Wauwatosa West High School performs a piano solo for Milwaukee VA volunteers at the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet. Barbara Gilbert, homeless outreach program manager, shows reporter Nathan Imig from Radio 88Nine around the Community Resource and Referral Center.



In and Around the Milwaukee VA, Part IV
 PHOTOS (Clockwise from top): Ken Peterson breaks out a little accordion music during a special April 17 breakfast for volunteers. Frank Busalacchi gives directions to a Veteran at the front of the hospital. Larisa DeZayas and Claire Seefeldt of the Vision Clinic are all smiles April 9 at the annual Occupational Therapist Open House fair in Recreation Hall. Dr. John Hayes, associate chief of staff for clinical affairs and other Spinal Cord Injury Center staff, toured a delegation of Croatian visitors on a tour March 5 of Milwaukee's Spinal Cord Injury Center.



Employee of the year

Friendly smile is Sgt. Kiana Johnson's weapon of choice

By Gary Kunich

It can't be easy being Sgt. Kiana Johnson of the Milwaukee VA police force. But she makes it seem that way.

When she's not working here, she's busy baking treats for her side business, "Simple Cakes," or running one of her three boys to a music recital or basketball game. When she's not doing that, she's serving as Racine County supervisor for district 2, where she sits on committees such as public works, parks and recreation and youth and governance.

And she's always smiling. That's what everybody says, from the police chief to Veterans she chats with in the hallway. Now she has something more to smile about.



Photo by Benjamin Slane

Sgt. Kiana Johnson does a patrol of the medical center while working the night shift.

Johnson was named Milwaukee VA's 2014 employee of the year.

She received the surprise Feb. 13 at the employee of the year luncheon that honored all 12 top employees from 2014.

"I was not expecting that at all," she said. "I think I just kind of went numb and cried a little. I just always try to be nice to people. I try to treat them the way I would want to be treated. Just because I'm a cop, I'm not here to slap the cuffs on you and arrest you. I'm here to help you.

"I just show up to do my job, and I do my work. I don't think there's anything special," she added.

But her boss, Chief Tim Jantz, said that's part of her humble personality. He said her ever-ready smile and work ethic is beyond compare.

"Did you talk to her today? Enough said. She is the total package when it comes to being a law enforcement officer," said Jantz. "Her customer service cannot be beaten by any other person. Her smile is contagious. She's not only an effective officer, other officers follow her lead. Not only is she a role model as an officer, but a person of the community."

According to her nomination package, Johnson "has a special ability to de-escalate stressful situations and talk with people who are in need of help because of their crisis. She works past her shift and comes in early if needed to ensure adequate staffing levels or to help another officer. She volunteers to investigate complex criminal investigations which may take months before the case is closed. Other officers go to her if there is a question on how a situation should be handled ... since they trust and respect her."

She was recently promoted to sergeant, which means a lot more paperwork and not as much time on patrol, but Johnson doesn't mind.

"Now I get to teach and lead others," she said.

Johnson put that into action with training classes March 5 where she helped lead 11 other police officers through different techniques to work with patients who might be agitated or having a mental health crisis.

"I want to reiterate, we are not commitment experts," she told the group. "It's not our job to decide if someone needs to be hospitalized. We are mediators. Sometimes we are advocates. For instance, sometimes a Veteran comes into the (Emergency Department), gets frustrated and doesn't want to speak to the nurse. We don't want to upset them further. We can talk to them."

A couple weeks later, Johnson puts those words into action. Working a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. shift, she was only a couple hours from getting off work when a young woman came to the police window at 3:57 a.m. The woman was barefoot, her feet were muddy and her clothes were tattered, but she didn't say a word. Johnson spent the next five hours alternately trying to find out who she was, while working with nurses and talking soothingly with the woman.

Two hours past her shift, she wasn't giving up.

"I just want to help her and it's so frustrating," she sighed.

"You can tell she wants to talk. I don't know if she's afraid or if it's something else."

While running between her desk and the Emergency Department to try to help the woman, more Veterans and employees fill the medical center.

"Hi, Kiana!" says a Veteran leaning against the wall, talking to another police officer.

"Hi, Braxton, how are you?" she said.

Despite the extra hours and exhaustion on her face, Johnson managed a smile.

"You know it's my birthday in three weeks, and you know what I want?" he asks.

"Banana pudding!" she says.

The Veteran said Johnson is one of his favorite police officers.

"She's not just good, she's real good," he said. "Whenever I

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See Kiana

Kiana

Continued from Page 10

have a problem, she goes far beyond what she needs to do. She gives good advice. If I have to get to an appointment, she helps me get there. She always makes sure I'm taken care of."

Johnson said it's all part of building those relationships.

"I know he wants banana pudding for his birthday because that's all he talks about," she says with a laugh. "That's part of building the bond. We talk and we listen."

A few days later, while walking the halls, she stops to chat with the valets parking cars and another Veteran sitting in a wheelchair looking at posters on the wall. "Have you been fishing yet this year?"

The Veteran's face lights up as he talks about the fish he caught not too long ago.

Johnson started her career in Air Force security police for five years, worked as a corrections officer, then came to VA in 2009.

"This job is so much different than working in corrections," she said. "Here it's about building relationships with the people you meet. That's what I love about the job."

Back at home, she's a single mom to three boys: Johrei, 14; JaVaughn, 11; and Jalen, 6. Working 12-hour shifts, most of them at night, enables her to spend more time at home because of her rotating days off. That's when she devotes time to her favorite hobby — baking.

"It's my dream to open my own shop someday, but for now I'm happy to work out of my home," she said. "I'm always

baking, and I have orders through to July."

Then there are her duties as a county supervisor.

"They say it's only a couple meetings a month, but it's always so much more than that," she said with another smile. "It's a lot of work, but I like the part where I get to work and mentor other kids and teenagers in the community, to let them know they can succeed, too."

And occasionally — every so often — the pies are baked, the work day is done and all is quiet. It doesn't happen often, but she appreciates the downtime.

"I go to sleep when I go to sleep," she said with a laugh.

"I get to sleep whenever I can. But I only need four or five hours, then I'm ready to go again."

Mystery visitor underscores VA police tenacity

By Gary Kunich

It was a normal night shift for Sgt. Kiana Johnson until 3:57 a.m.

That's when a young woman in bare feet and dirty, tattered clothes wandered March 11 into the medical center and stood in front of the police window without saying a word.

Police worked the next 12 hours to piece together the mystery and help the woman with no name.

Johnson, working the night shift, was the highest ranking police officer on duty when the woman came to the medical center. It was 40 degrees outside. Her bare feet were muddy and blue from the cold weather. The bottom of her grey sweat pants were sopping wet and dirty.

"She wouldn't talk and she just started crying," Johnson said. "This happens once or twice a year, and usually the person has identification or they talk. She hasn't said a word."

Johnson quickly went around to the window and followed her back outside to a bench before asking for help from the Emergency Department. Medical staff walked her back inside and put her in one of the rooms. Police found some warm clothes and socks, got her some food and tried to make her comfortable.

The woman was about 5-feet-9 and 145 pounds with straight black hair. Johnson said it looked as if it was professionally cut and recently washed.

But still, she would not talk.

By 6 a.m., police were still trying to figure out who she was and from where she came.

"I just want to help her and it's so frustrating," Johnson sighed. "You can tell she wants to talk. I don't know if she's afraid or if it's something else."

Was she running from something? Was she reported missing? Did she walk away from a group home? Was she on drugs? Was she autistic or did she speak another language?

One by one, police went through every possible scenario. Johnson put her age between 17 and 25.

"But it's hard to tell because she looks malnourished," she said.

As more police came on duty, they started searching all the camera feeds. Johnson repeated the information again and again.

"It's good to do that, to keep everybody informed. And maybe someone comes up with something we haven't thought of yet," she said.

Police and other staff spent hours trying to communicate with the woman to no avail. She still wouldn't talk and wouldn't eat.

At the same time, police sent her fingerprints to the FBI national database, and took her photo. They searched through hours of video footage from cameras set up throughout the campus, and finally came upon a break about 10 a.m.

"She came in the direction from one of the out buildings on the campus near Flower Drive, from the center of our property, so we sent officers out to canvass the area, and see if they could find any clues," said Police Chief Tim Jantz.

That's where officers found some ripped up scraps of paper. One of the scraps had a woman's name on it, and police determined that woman was in a county jail. VA police sent over a photo to the jail and the jailed woman was able to identify the young woman in the picture. She told police the woman who showed up at the Milwaukee VA actually lived with her sister and another man near the campus.

Next, local police visited the home and found the name of the woman as well as her parents. The woman, who has a history of mental illness, disappeared from her parent's home several months before, and family had been looking for her.

It took about 12 hours to confirm her identity.

The unknown woman, 25 years old, was kept overnight at the medical center. Officials were able to determine which medicines she was prescribed after speaking to the parents. By the next day she was speaking and interacting with staff, and eventually left with her parents.

"I'm really proud of all of our guys, who never gave up on this," Jantz said. "It was a phenomenal effort by all involved."

Curling gives Vets traction

By Benjamin Slane

A gentlemen's game. That's what they say curling is. Quiet. Quieter than golf. But don't tell that to this group of spinal-cord injury Veterans from the Milwaukee VA who took part in curling in early February at Wauwatosa Curling Club in Hart Park.

Instead of subtly congratulating each other with, "Good curl," the traditional response, it's more like, "Nice stones!" followed by a lot of loud laughter.

Curling consists of sliding 38- to 44-pound granite rocks across a 120-foot span of ice called a sheet. If one of the team's eight rocks, through curling the stone on the ice, stops in the house, it is scored. A game generally consists of eight to 10 iterations or ends.

The world of adaptive sports is fast growing in the Veteran world. Sports like curling are adapted to accompany various types of physical injuries. For instance, the curling stone is generally pushed across the ice with a hand, but there are adapted sticks designed to fit the stone. Then, the Veteran may remain seated or stand.

"This is a lot of fun," said Marine Veteran Harry Ibis. "This is just like bocce ball and I like it."



Photo by Benjamin Slane
Harry Ibis, launches a stone at the Wauwatosa Curling Club at Hart Park.



Photo by Benjamin Slane
Jim Sharkey rides up the ski lift at Wilmot Mountain with members of Adaptive Adventures. Sharkey, a Veteran, last used upright skis in 2010.

other Vets who understand." And that is where the laughter comes in.

Although rules require quiet, for this group of Vets, tradition is all but thrown away. The idea of participating in a sport long thought to be only for the able-bodied makes it more exciting.

It doesn't always go as planned. One VA nurse who was participating with the Veterans launched the rock from his hip onto the ice. It looked like he was throwing a bowling ball instead of using finesse. The rock landed with a thud and ice chunks flew.

The Veterans looked at each other and burst into laughter once again.

A member of the Wauwatosa Curling club, Allen Miller, volunteers his time and reserves the ice for the Veterans every couple of weeks. He smiles at the group of Veterans lauding each other after a few perfectly landed shots.

"Very nice Terrence, you are a natural," said Miller.

"I do this out of respect for those who served," Miller said. "For the physical limitations these Vets have, it is rewarding. Not only rewarding to share with everyone, but especially to share with Veterans."

Interested in recreational therapy programs? Talk with your primary care provider or social worker.

On the edge of happiness

By Benjamin Slane

For 81-year-old Jim Sharkey, it was like remembering how to ride a bicycle. He used a seated-ski on the slopes of Wilmot Mountain after a five-year gap since last skiing upright.

"Beautiful," said Sharkey, "just beautiful."

A handful of Veterans ascended the slopes at Wilmot in southeast Wisconsin as part of a recreational outing for Veterans with spinal cord injuries. The trip was preparation for the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in March. The clinic is held in Snow Mass, Colo., every year.

Sharkey, an Army National Guard Veteran, suffered debilitating back injuries that prevented upright skiing at the ski hill where he once instructed. On

Continued on Page 13
See Ski

Community resource fair

Event offers one-stop-shop for Veterans

By Benjamin Slane

More than 500 veterans, community members and VA staff visited the 3rd Annual Veterans Resource Fair at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center in April.

The fair, organized by social work students from local colleges, provided information on programs to the community and Veterans. It was a one-stop-shop on topics ranging from homeless initiatives to job skills.

The purpose was to connect Veterans with community agencies who are Veteran-friendly and inform VA staff and other community members of existing organizations.

"This seems very comprehensive," said Dan Gomez. "There are programs here that I never even knew existed."

Gomez is an Air Force Veteran who came across the fair through an online Milwaukee VA listing.

He didn't leave empty handed from the fair. "I found some really good info on (the University of Wisconsin's) flexible program based on competencies. This is something that will work for me."

This year, more than 40 organizations were on hand, double the number from 2014.

"This is a huge benefit for Veterans. All these community and VA resources under one roof in a user friendly environment," said Katie Gustin, a UW-Milwaukee social work student who works at the VA.

"As a social worker, it is my job to link Veterans with these resources. I really think Veterans deserve the best we can possibly provide."



Photo by Benjamin Slane
Jim Sharkey rides up the ski lift at Wilmot Mountain with members of Adaptive Adventures.

Ski

Continued from Page 12

this run, he used a seat-ski with specially designed poles with mini-skis to assist in turning. Without the use of the lower body, the ski poles are imperative.

I do not even need to relearn skiing," Sharkey said.

"That is the beauty of adaptive sports," said Linda Tomsevic, program manager at Adaptive Adventures, a non-profit charity that provides adaptive sports to people with debilitating injuries. "It is just great they can get out here and participate in these sports."

This group of Veterans from the Milwaukee VA participated from the time they arrived at 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. They hit the runs hard, run after run.

Erinn Kulba, a recreation therapy student at the Spinal Cord Injury Center, helped Veterans mount the skis at Wilmot and said the experience was very positive.

"The Veterans are making connections with community resources and participating in adaptive sports," said Kulba. "It is a great opportunity to connect with others in the community. They make friends with volunteers, staff and other Veterans all while enjoying a winter sport."

For at least an hour after Sharkey was assisted in removing the skis, he had nothing short of a golden smile.

"You cannot believe how happy it makes me," he said. "This is closer to real skiing than I even imagined. I recommend this to everyone."



Photo by Benjamin Slane
Dan Gomez, Air Force Veteran, talks with a University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee benefits officer during a Veterans Resource Fair held at Milwaukee VA.

Support group for combat medics

Milwaukee VA, Rm. 3430 --
First Wednesday
Noon - 1:30 p.m. monthly

Vet Center, 7910 N. 76th --
Third Saturday
9 - 10:30 a.m.

Contact

Adam Stoll 414-384-2000, 41851 adam.stoll@va.gov	Ozzie Brodhead 414-434-0157 azael.brodhead@va.gov
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Kayleen's Kitchen



By Kayleen Wichlinski
Registered Dietitian

A dietitian will always tell you to “taste the rainbow” when it comes to fruits and vegetables (No, Skittles do not count). Mottos to live by might also include, “Everything in moderation,” “Small steps equal big changes,” and, vastly growing in popularity, “Meatless Mondays.”

While staples like macaroni and cheese, tuna noodle casserole and cheese pizza may suffice, they are sometimes unhealthy options. Fish or tofu can be a great substitution, but few consumers think to look toward the beloved mushroom as a meat alternative. Mushrooms are extremely versatile and can be finely chopped and used as a ground beef alternative in spaghetti sauce. Or try roasting button or Bella mushrooms in the oven with a little olive oil, sea salt, and pepper for a quick and healthy appetizer. Among many uses, mushrooms can also be made into burgers.

Now, I know what you are thinking: “Where’s the meat?”

Consider the health benefits of eating meatless one day a week (or more, if willing). If prepared well, meatless meals may be lower in sodium, fat, saturated fat and cholesterol. As a meat alternative, mushrooms are low in calories and sodium, rich in potassium, fat-free, and naturally contain Vitamin D. They provide B vitamins that provide you energy to break down fat, protein and carbohydrates. Mushrooms also contain antioxidants that aid in supporting your immune system.

Whether you grill, bake, or sauté, consider cooking mushrooms in bulk. They may be frozen and will keep for up to one month. Then, add mushrooms to any recipe as a substitute for ground beef. Regardless of your health-conscious motives, challenge yourself to try a meatless Monday, and try Portobello mushroom burgers as your endeavor to bring a little healthy into your week.

You can do it! As a matter of fact, this recipe came to us from a meat-loving Veteran.

Check out Kayleen's Kitchen on our Facebook page for short recipe videos— facebook.com/milwaukeeva.

Recipe of the Month



Portobello Mushroom Burgers

Yield: 4

Ingredients:

4 Portobello mushroom caps,
stems removed
¼ cup olive oil
1/8 cup balsamic vinegar
2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
Salt & pepper, to taste

Directions:

1. Preheat grill or oven to 400°F.
2. Combine olive oil, balsamic vinegar, Italian seasoning, and garlic in a small bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste.
3. Marinate mushroom caps in olive oil mixture for 15-20 minutes or overnight.
4. Place mushrooms on a pre-heated grill for 8 minutes. Flip, and grill an additional 8 minutes. (If baking, place mushrooms on a baking sheet prepared with non-stick cooking spray. Bake for 10 minutes on each side.)
5. Serve on a whole-grain bun (or white, if preferred) with provolone cheese, lettuce, and tomato.

*For a twist on the traditional burger, try adding a small spread of pesto to each burger with a handful of arugula.

25th Annual Vietnam Veteran Motorcycle Club Bike Blessing

Sponsored by VA Chaplain Service

Milwaukee VA Medical Center
2015
Noon-2 p.m. June 6
Prayer service
HELD IN VA CHAPEL
Join us after for lunch
and music in the SCI lot

Sponsored by AMVETS and AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. BRING A MOPED, SCOOTER, ROCKET, TOURING BIKE.
ANY BIKE WELCOME!



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs
Milwaukee VA Medical Center

Call 414-382-5175 to register a group or find out more

5000 W. National Ave Milwaukee

PEOPLE

Employee of the month



March 2015

Holly Clanton

Registered Nurse

"She is considered an expert in the Palliative Care/Hospice field and is used as a mentor and resource for many nursing staff on Heroes' Corner. Veterans, families and staff often complimented her for all of her care, concern, consideration, expertise and follow up."

Employee of the month



April 2015

Josh Boticki

Medical Management Specialist

According to Boticki's nomination package, "Without Josh, many of us would have extra work or less time, which could then impact the services we provide to Veterans. His actions and work help to make the Milwaukee VA a more efficient and effective workplace."

In Service

Congratulations to the following Clement J. Zablocki VA employees who reached career milestones in April and May 2015:

35 Years

James Dembowiak
Kaye Evans
Deborah Kornblum
Charles Johnson
Kristine Stephens
Sara Voss
Susan Wimmer

30 Years

Floyd Combs
Ana Fierro
Joe Hughes
William Schmeling

25 Years

Sheila Adameak
Robyn Dearey
Tanzy Falck
Brad Incrocci

Robert Lapp
Larry Lipson
Eric Meissner
Oralia Ortiz
Irene O'Shaughnessy
Marisa Straub

20 Years

Essie Barnes
William Berger
Kulwinder Dua
Eva Manchester
Mary Moat
Lori Radliff
Mary Regozzi
Sharon Russ
Cheryl Thomas

15 Years

Kevin Bostick
Lynette Boyd
Jerome Brzycki
Sherell Burrage
Marcy Glisczinski
Scot Godager
Toby Green
Kimberly Grimmer
Mary Beth Krause
Gary Linson
Laura Penkert
Michael Potter
Julie Putman
Bernd Remler
Tom Schroeder
Susan Stabo

10 Years

Margaret Brumley
Kathleen Cereceres
James Champagne
Diane Davis
Evalynne Espejo
Jerry Jackson
Ellis Hargrove
Hannah Heath
Rhiannon Jahr
Mindy Mingerink
Jeremy Patrick-Crane
Jeannette Putnam
Jason Rzepka
Catherine Thomas
Shirley Walker
Matthew Walsh

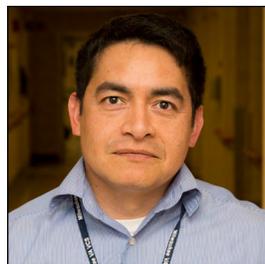


VA VOICES

Which artist do you wish to see at Summerfest?



Jean Qualler, Voluntary Service:
"The Doobie Brothers!"



Enrique Aguilera, PSA for RECC:
"Definitely would like to see Shinedown."



Benie Kalongo, CNA, Heroes' Corner:
"Michael Smith, because he is just so good!"



Millie Suarez, CNA in Heroes' Corner:
"Prince because he is old school!"



Steve Dominguez, nurse, Heroes' Corner:
"Would love to see Jimi Hendrix, he rocks the old school."