5000 West

Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center

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It's Tax Season!

Let the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance at the Milwaukee VA help you.

Volunteers are available to help you file ***simple*** 2014 Federal and State tax returns.

Tuesday evenings, Feb. 3 to April 7

5 to 8 p.m.

VA Medical Center Library, 6th floor, Room 6300

Tax preperation is by ***appointment*** only.

Beginning the week of Jan. 19, call 414-389-3915. Leave a message with your name and phone number. Please speak slowly and clearly, and repeat your number twice.

A volunteer will return your call between 5 and 7 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays. It may take several days to a week, or more for the volunteers to get back to you.

Please remember, VITA sites are staffed by volunteers with IRS sponsor training, they are not IRS employees.

If you have a complicated return, you will need to take it to a paid preparer.

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. 43895.

On the Cover

West Point Cadet Sgts. Alex Velazquez (left) and Pete Ziedler surprise Peter Lovinus and other Veterans with a salute as the bus pulls away from one of the memorials. The Veterans went to Washington, D.C., with the Honor Flight Nov. 1. For more on the honor flight trip see page 6, or go online to www.milwaukee.va.gov/features. — *Photo by Benjamin Slane*

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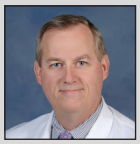

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2014 Great American Smokeout

Event gives Veterans alternative ways to quit smoking

By Antony Kamps

A cloud of smoke billows out the door of a smoke shack as someone who just finished a cigarette walks out. He coughs a couple times and walks into the medical center, right past the Matousek Auditorium where the Great American Smokeout event is taking place.

The Great American Smokeout held the third Thursday of November each year encourages smokers to use the date to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking that day. By quitting — even for one day — smokers are taking an important step toward a healthier life — one that can lead to reducing cancer risk. The event showcases the variety of different ways the Milwaukee VA can help Veterans and employees quit the habit.

Photo by Benjamin Slane

Roosevelt Hopson talks with a VA employee during the Great American Smokeout event about smoking cessation programs at the VA. "I'm hoping I can quit. I'm ready," said Hopson, a 30-year smoker. "I've smoked a long, long time. Way too long. Maybe this event is what I've been waiting for."

This is the second year the medical center took part in the nationwide event started by the American Cancer Society. Rita Mingesz, registered dietitian and coordinator of the event, said it's important for Veterans to see they have a variety of options available to them.

"Studies show that somewhere around 23 percent of Veterans smoke, whether it be because of stress or because they're around others who smoke," said Mingesz. "We want to show options besides smoking for a healthier lifestyle."

More than 10 educational booths were inside the auditorium, including information on aromatherapy, build a quilt to quit, benevolent touch, Telequit, and many more.

Telequit is a tobacco cessation program Veterans can do from their own home using a small device. It's a cost-free option offered to Veterans who cannot attend the Quit Smoking Program classes or who are enrolled and just want extra support.

"The Veteran will use the device each day and answer questions about whether they smoked, or why they smoked," said Victoria Stephan, registered nurse. "The info goes to a secure site which is then reviewed by a care coordinator or nurse."

Based on the answers, a call can be made to the Veteran to offer motivation or encouragement to keep up the goal to quit.

> ***"The things you do to smoke, looking back is pretty crazy. It may take a few tries (to quit) but it's worth it."***
> **— Melanie Schneider**

"If someone says they smoked I'll give them a call and talk to them about it, and work through with them on what caused them to smoke," said Melanie Schneider, licensed clinical social worker.

Schneider said she knows firsthand the devastating effects of smoking. Her father smoked for more than 50 years. He was diagnosed with lung cancer in August 2012, and passed away in June 2013.

"We quit together and after he died I started smoking again, because I didn't know what to do," Schneider said. "But then I said to myself, 'Why am I paying these companies to hurt not only me, but other people?'"

That anger fueled Schneider to finally put out her last cigarette in January of 2014.

"The things you do to smoke, looking back is pretty crazy," she said. "It may take a few tries but it's worth it."

Cancer.org states 80 percent of lung cancer deaths are thought to result from smoking. The website also states the benefits of quitting begin 20 minutes after your last cigarette as your heart rate and blood pressure drop back to normal.

Mingesz said the amount of attendees seemed to be down, but she saw a positive in the ones who did come.

"The people who are coming are staying for much longer and soaking up all the information we are offering," said Mingesz. "It's not about quantity, but quality."

For more information on tobacco cessation programs, contact your Primary Care team.

Physical Therapists help Veterans get back on track

By Antony Kamps

Air Force Veteran Rick Prawdzik woke up without the ability to walk more than two months ago. With hard work, determination and the help of the Physical Therapy Department he can walk again.

He is one of 70 patients seen on a daily basis by physical therapists at the Milwaukee VA. It's the therapist's job to guide them back to physical functionality.

"We often try to sit down with the Veteran and ask, 'What's important to you?'" said Lauren Elling, physical therapist.

The Physical Therapy department works with patients on an individual basis. The therapists develop a plan using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PTs work with Veterans to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness and wellness oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles.

Therapists spend 30 minutes to an hour with each patient, either individually or as a group. The PT department does their best to pair Veterans up with the same therapist every time.

"We try to do this as much as possible because it helps build continuity and trust between patient and therapist," said Katie Kalfas, supervisor of the In-Patient Physical Therapy department.

Photo by Antony Kamps

Air Force Veteran Rick Prawdzik (right) starts to complete his final exercise for the day with John Kuhn, physical therapist at the Milwaukee VA. Prawdzik said he's made great strides to be able to walk again because of the Milwaukee VA Physical Therapy department.

Prawdzik works with Physical Therapist John Kuhn on exercises for his legs. Kuhn and Prawdzik have worked together for weeks now building the strength up in his legs, moving him toward his goal to walk again.

"Every exercise is tough," said Prawdzik. "If I didn't do any of this, I'd still be upstairs lying in bed."

Therapists collaborate with the Veteran, physician, social worker and family on the course of action for rehabilitation.

> ***"Just think, two months ago my kids were told I might not make it and here I am getting ready to go home. What better care can you ask for?" — Rick Prawdzik***

Kalfas said it is not required for Veterans to participate, but crucial to their recovery.

"We talk to the Veteran about why therapy is so important to their recovery," said Kalfas.

Therapists lay out a plan to the Veteran on what they need to do to speed up their discharge from the hospital. Prawdzik, Kuhn, and his social worker had a meeting to talk about his plan of action. They determined he needed one more week of PT.

"It was the right call," Prawdzik said. "I live by myself, so once I leave, that's it. I need to be able to do it on my own."

"I tell them my goal is to get you home," Elling added.

Many Veterans' lifestyles have changed drastically based on the reasons for admission to the medical center including total joint replacements, strokes, falls, heart attack or general loss of strength.

"I try to just be mindful of what they're going through," said Kalfas.

Both Kalfas and Elling said working at the Milwaukee VA is different than in the private sector because of the Veterans.

"They are, for the most part, really positive and enthusiastic. They'll come in here and shout, 'Let's do this!'" Kalfas said. "They're always cheering each other to go further."

Elling added: "Definitely the camaraderie between the Vets is awesome."

Prawdzik said the physical therapists keep the atmosphere in the gym light, and it has helped motivate him to keep coming back.

"The jovial atmosphere makes it easy, even when the exercises are tough," said Prawdzik.

Today's exercises are on the tougher end as beads of sweat roll down Prawdzik's forehead. He's not going to stop until the exercise is done. He's determined to go home and get back to his life.

"I want to get back to my grandkids," said Prawdzik. "Being able to go home to play and hold them is what keeps me going.

"Just think, two months ago my kids were told I might not make it and here I am getting ready to go home," said Prawdzik. "What better care can you ask for?"

Honor Flight takes Korean War Veteran on memorable trip

Story by Gary J. Kunich
Photos by Benjamin Slane

Starting clockwise from the top: Peter Lovinus, far left, poses with buddies during the Korean War. "That's Miekler, that's Dennis … and I can't remember this guy's name," he says. "I don't remember his name, but he was Catholic. You can see because he's wearing the rosary." Cadet Sgt. Peter Ziedler breaks into a broad grin as he surprises his Grandpa Pete at the World War II memorial. He got special permission to make the five-hour trip from West Point to Washington, D.C. "My Grandpa Pete, he is the reason I am here today. I joined because of him," said Cadet Sgt. Peter Ziedler. Milwaukee Brewers catcher Jonathan Lucroy greets Lovinus on the airplane. Lucroy was a special Honor Flight guest. The two exchanged playful banter over baseball.

Peter Lovinus knew there was a war going on in Korea back in 1951, but figured he'd have better luck if he enlisted.

"I figured I would be drafted sooner or later, and thought if I did this, I'd get some comfortable duty."

The Army made him infantry, and by March 1952, he was headed to the "Iron Triangle" on the Korean peninsula. The area is now a part of the demilitarized zone. Soldiers found themselves 20-some miles above the 38th parallel and in some fierce fights with North Koreans and the Chinese People's Army.

Peter Lovinus's wife, Betty, helps him with his uniform and his Stars & Stripes Honor Flight jacket about 4 a.m., Nov. 1 at his home. The jacket says, "Every Day Is a Bonus."

He was part of the 40th Infantry Division, replacing the first group of soldiers initially sent to Korea for the war.

"It was really hard, but we were trained. I hate to use this phrase, but we were trained to kill. My only thought going through all of that is I did not want to turn chicken. You don't want to let anyone down."

Lovinus doesn't like to talk about the actual fighting. He just said he and the other soldiers wanted to do more.

"We didn't do the things we should have. We weren't allowed," he said. "We all thought we would kick butt and be home by Christmas. We weren't allowed by the politicians, but we wanted to."

His front-line combat was cut short after he developed hives on both hands.

"The only reason I left early is because I got really sick. I got bit by fleas from rats. The hives got so bad I couldn't hold a gun anymore. I was on the front lines and I couldn't shoot," he said.

Lovinus was taken to a mobile hospital near Seoul to recuperate.

He has some faded black and white photos of that time. The tents and mountain range in the pictures are reminiscent of the *M*A*S*H* television series. But that's not a show he likes to watch.

"I don't like it because it was not like that," he said. "There weren't people with hangovers and having parties," he said. "They were all pros. The guy on the cot next to me, he had hemorrhagic fever …"

> ***"I survived and I was home. I was just happy to be home."***
> ***— Peter Lovinus***

Lovinus pauses and his eyes well up with tears.

"He didn't make it. It's the first time I felt helpless. I remember a medic telling me, 'Don't worry. He's not feeling a thing.'"

"There are a lot of unpleasantries," he added. "You bury them, but once in a while, it creeps up.

"I went home and the hives went away. I told my doctor, 'See? I told you I was allergic to war!'"

There were no homecoming festivities. Lovinus figures the country couldn't understand why there wasn't a definitive end to the fighting, like World War II.

"I survived and I was home. I was just happy to be home."

He went on with life and tried not to think about his time in Korea. Lovinus used the G.I. Bill and became an architectural draftsman, which led to a career with WE Energies.

An old Army buddy set him up on a blind date in 1956 with a girl named Betty. They got married in 1957. Today they have six children, nine grandchildren and a great grandchild.

"The great grandchild was born on my birthday!" Lovinus said. "That's one heck of a birthday present. Best birthday present you could give me."

These days, Lovinus said there is nothing more important in his life than family. He attributes his long marriage to one simple secret.

"We trust in each other," he said. "That's important. We'll do another 57 years."

Almost everyone in the family — children and grandchildren alike — all live within a five-mile radius of each other. They get together often for family meals, camping trips and holidays.

"It's great," Lovinus said. "It really is a wonderful life."

See more photos and complete story of Lovinus and the Honor Flight at www.milwaukee.va.gov/features.

The last welcome home moment is the sweetest. Betty Lovinus, his bride of 57 years, kisses her husband and welcomes him home.

In and Around the Milwaukee VA

Starting from the top: Tony Hernandez, military Veteran, is a first time participant in the weekly Guitars for Vets classes held at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. Hernandez uses music as therapy on his road to recovery. Alethea Sment (left) from our Intensive Care Unit is all smiles at her Daisy Award recognition ceremony. Her nomination letter in part read: "Her dedication to the Veterans we serve is an inspiration to many. The time and devotion she applies to her practice, certification and advancing her education reinforces the premise she is dedicated to her profession. It is her dedication and professionalism which inspires me to view our changing environment in a different light." Maj. Gen. Donald Dunbar (left), Air National Guard and Wisconsin's adjutant general, talks football with Veteran Keith Matuels during breakfast Nov. 26 at Milwaukee VA Medical Center. General Dunbar toured the Spinal Cord Injury Center and medical center the day before the Thanksgiving holiday, along with Command Chief Master Sgt. Greg Cullen and Command Sgt. Maj. Brad Shields, to talk with Veterans and wish them a Happy Thanksgiving.

Kayleen's Kitchen

By Kayleen Wichlinski
Registered Dietitian

The holidays have come to a close, so now let's focus less on turkey dinners and more on improving our health. February is American Heart Month, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention calls it, "A time to show yourself the love."

Show yourself a little love by learning more about risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Risk factors include diet, physical activity, tobacco use, obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and diabetes. There are steps you can take to stay heart healthy including: eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, and exercising regularly among others.

Your dietitian encourages at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, but eating healthy does not only include fruits and vegetables. A heart-healthy diet also sets limits on salt, saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol. Always look for food labels that are high in fiber.

February celebrates both physical heart health and the emotional health of the heart. This Valentine's Day, rather than buy your significant other chocolates or caramels, try making these decadent homemade cookies instead. These treats are chockfull of heart-healthy oats, dried fruits, nuts, and wheat germ, offering some nutrients over the usual box of chocolates.

The wheat germ in this cookie is packed with B vitamins and vitamin E. Oats from the granola are high in soluble fiber, which helps lower bad cholesterol and control blood pressure. Oats also contain a significant amount of beta-glucan, which is the soluble fiber that makes oats heart healthy. Also, the antioxidants in oats, called avenanthramides, have shown to keep blood vessels healthy. While plain oats are always the best option, granola can be a great way to get whole grains into your diet.

Be mindful, however, of portion size as some varieties are higher in fat.

This year, instead of a heart-shaped box of sugar, send your sweethearts something with a little nutrition that may make their hearts smile in more ways than one.

Recipe of the Month

Courtesy photo

Granola Cookies

Makes: Two dozen cookies

Ingredients

3 cups low-fat granola without fruit
¾ cup raisins
½ cup sliced almonds
½ cup unsalted peanuts, chopped
½ cup unsweetened coconut
1/3 cup wheat germ
7 ounces unsalted butter
¾ cup brown sugar
¼ cup granulated sugar
1 egg
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup flour

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 375° F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, mix granola, raisins, almonds, peanuts, coconut, and wheat germ.
3. In a separate bowl, combine butter and sugars. Beat with an electric mixer.
4. Add the egg and salt to butter mixture. Add flour just until combined.
5. Stir in granola mixture.
6. Roll dough into two inch balls. Place on cookie sheet and flatten slightly with your palm.
7. Bake 10-12 minutes or until cookies are golden brown.

Prosthetist creates new way of life for Veterans

HONORING SERVICE EMPOWERING HEALTH

By Antony Kamps

Boxes of artificial feet, legs and arms are stacked high inside the prosthetics workshop. The department just completed a move to a bigger area to make room for some high-tech machines.

Josh Dezek, prosthetist at the Milwaukee VA, uses the limbs and machines to create prosthetics for Veterans.

Prosthetists are members of the Prosthetics department. They fit, design and create all the artificial limbs given to patients. Dezek's work as a prosthetist helps Veterans regain the ability to do everything they used to do prior to their injury.

If you meet a prosthetist, it's like finding a four-leaf clover. Only nine colleges in the country offer a degree in the field.

"There are not a lot of colleges, maybe eight or nine, that offer the degree," said Dezek. "It's a rarity, really."

Dezek's job is not limited to the Milwaukee VA. He serves as the prosthetist for the Madison, Tomah, and Iron Mountain VA. He also works at all the Milwaukee VA Outpatient Clinics. It can be hard at times, but Dezek said he looks at it in a different way.

"I get to serve Veterans, and that's my number one priority."

Dezek is a member of the Amputee Care Team at the Milwaukee VA, along with two other members, Sue Novak and Dr. Judith Kosasih. The group meets twice a month to review cases of Veterans who are receiving a new artificial limb, or getting a replacement limb.

"If it's appropriate and can improve their lives, they get it."

Dezek said the team is not limited financially in what they can provide Veterans.

"The freedom to get (Veterans) what they need is great. Private sector can be limiting, because you have to see what the insurance covers and if it's not enough they don't get it. We don't have those limitations here."

The process is pretty straight forward.

Dezek meets with the Veteran, and determines their functional level. He listens to the patient on what their wants and needs are for their new limb. He takes a cast of the limb, either digitally or with plaster and creates a test socket, which is where the artificial limb and the Veteran meet.

The Veteran tries the limb out and Dezek makes adjustments to make it comfortable for the Veteran. The Milwaukee VA also requires something the private sector does not: prosthetic training.

"Once adjustments are made the Veteran takes the test socket home and tries it out, and then they go to prosthetic training to learn how to use their new artificial limb," said Dezek. "And that is a huge part of the process."

Photo by Antony Kamps

Josh Dezek makes a few adjustments to Rod Lough's prosthetic limb. Below: Lough tests out the adjustments in front of Dezek to ensure the limb is suited to his needs.

On this day Dezek meets with Rod Lough, Navy and Coast Guard Veteran. He receives his care at the Green Bay clinic but came down to Milwaukee to get his artificial limb adjusted. Lough had his entire right leg amputated in October 2013 due to a bone infection.

"I was in so much pain I just told them to take it off," said Lough.

Lough said he was determined to walk again.

"Do you want to get better or sit in a wheelchair the rest of your life?" he asked.

Lough's wife, Lucinda, echoed his thoughts.

"You always just need to have that one thing. Find out what that one thing is and work towards it," she said.

Lough's one thing is to take his wife away one day on their sailboat "where it's warm all the time."

Dezek said it's uncommon for people with as high of an amputation as Lough's to be able walk again.

He said with the help of the Milwaukee VA and Dezek he's moving closer to that goal.

"Josh is a very uplifting individual. He makes me feel like I am the only one that matters. If something ever comes up he gets right on it."

After adjustments are made Dezek straps the limb onto Lough, and minutes later he is walking. Smiles on the faces of Dezek, Lough, and Lucinda show today is a good day.

Dezek sees more and more Veterans like Lough come through the Prosthetics department.

"Whether it's an Iraqi or Afghanistan Veteran, or an older Veteran, the population of Veterans in need of artificial limbs is growing. We needed this new space and equipment to serve them, the Veterans."

In Service

Congratulations to the following Clement J. Zablocki VA employees who reached career milestones in December, January and February 2015:

45 Years

December 2014
William McDevitt

40 Years

December 2014
Pamela Gerstner
Bruce Kosbab

35 Years

December 2014
Samuel Blumenthal
Claudia Hermes
Katharine Wallace

January 2015
Susan Feeley
Amy Sherman
Joyce Kwiatkowski
Diane Sack

February 2015
Thomas Hammeke
Jeanne Macklem
Venita Wade-Gardner

30 Years

December 2014
Piero Antuono
Christian Barnes
Theresa Lasota
Suzanne Piscitello

January 2015
Reynaldo Garcia
Jacqueline Haupt
Dora Bankhead
Ernest Marchel
Margo Niznik

February 2015
Douglas Aanes
Helen Jovasevic
Linda Masih
Stephanie Newsome
Nancy Rydzewski

25 Years

December 2014
Linda Bay
Robin Casper
Katherine Johnson
Chris Krueger
Bruce Somers

January 2015
Kay Hegg
Teresa Ramsey
Stachel Swayzer
Colleen Siekert
Eva Gennara
James Swinghamer
Barbara Smith
Ike Lusk, Jr
Janice Curnes

February 2015
Nadie Corder
Steven Lilley
April Zarnsy

20 Years

December 2014
Alexander Patterson
John Schmidt

January 2015
Mark Beilke
Donna Babineau
Nadra Botros

February 2015
Elizabeth Carlson
James Lenoach
Tim Von Asten

15 Years

December 2014
Katherine Fischer
Theresa Keaton
Michelle Mezaros
Laquita Pickett
Tiffany Stark

January 2015
Babette Stamm
Michael Unthank
Carol L Von Asten
Robert Maddox
Debra Graff
Louis Kern
Brian De Muri
Georgette Gore
Theresa Hadick
Paul Bachmann
Jeremy Wiza
Sarita Jones
Tamra Rondone

February 2015
Johnnie Hills
Jodi Kressin
Paul Morgano
Eric Rush
Barbara Wilson

10 Years

December 2014
Amy Doyle
Joseph Fogarty
Bradlee Gietzel
Calandra Hensley
Lee Jones
Scott Katzka
Jill Meraz
Sherry Simcox
Nancy Vasquez

January 2015
Rodger Paul Deborah Mcilquham
Chad Turner
Benjamin Dangelo
James Appazeller
Kathleen Collins
Gregory Grueneberg
Akef Abu-Rmaileh
Judith Hemauer

February 2015
Krista Everson
Dominique Hester
Julie Jensen
Robert Luna
Kimberly Mason
Michele Mchenry
John Perez
James Ridley
Elena Roukhadze
Chad Running
Joyce Simonsen
Robert Strickler
Justin Valois

Photo by Amanda Urrea

November 2014

Tiffany Stark
Medical Support Assistant
What does this award mean to you?:
"I feel I am just doing the job I was hired to do, which is serving Veterans and their families as they have served us. This is the least I can do for all of the sacrifices our veterans and their families have given providing the freedom we have every day."

Photo by Amanda Urrea

December 2014

Elizabeth Stempkowski
Nursing Supervisor
What does this award mean to you?:
"I was very surprised! To be recognized in this way is both rewarding and humbling. I am glad I can make a small difference in the lives of our veterans."

Photo by Benjamin Slane

January 2015

Cha Xiong
Program Support Assistant
Nominated by Joseph Minich
"He has excellent problem solving skills and is considered the go to person on Rehabilitation, Extended and Community Care Department for a variety of Veteran's claims issues.There is not a day that goes by that he does not display a positive attitude," Minich said.

VA VOICES

What do you think is the toughest New Year's resolution to keep, and why?

Chanise Adams, clerk: "Exercising. People make too many excuses why they can't make time to do it."

Larry Burt, volunteer: "Quitting tobacco. It's so addictive, but I'm working my way down and will quit."

Stef Haima, physical therapist: "It's not a hard one for me, but it's my goal to excel as a new team member here at the VA."

Joseph Arnao, program support assistant: "I don't make resolutions. I don't wait until the end of the year, I make them when they need to be done."

Dominick Rosario, canteen services: "Losing weight. Self-motivation is the hardest part."