

Spirit of the Games

Local Vet, Phil Rosenberg, takes top honors at Wheelchair event

BY JAMES THERES
G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
VA Public Affairs Officer

As a young boy growing up in rural Wisconsin, Phillip Rosenberg, 62, was surrounded by heroes.

Now it's his turn to play hero — again — as he won the coveted Spirit of the Games award at the 2012 Wheelchair Games, June 25 to 30 in Richmond, Va.

The Games are the largest, annually occurring event for paralyzed Veteran athletes in the world, and attract hundreds of participants from around the U.S., Puerto Rico and Great Britain. The Spirit of the Games winner is the one Veteran who most exemplifies a hard-charging, competitive spirit and never-give-up attitude.

Serving in the military has been a Rosenberg tradition. His father and three uncles served in World War II. One uncle was shot down over the English Channel. His father fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

"It seemed like every adult male had served," said Rosenberg, a native of Pulaski, Wis., a town of 5,000 people best



Photos by Joyce Casey

Milwaukee Veteran Phil Rosenberg gets congratulations from other former winners of the "Spirit of the Games," the most coveted award at the annual event that features wheelchair athletes from the U.S., Great Britain and Puerto Rico. At right, Rosenberg competes in one of his signature events, and one of the most physical of the Games —quad wheelchair rugby.



known for "Pulaski Polka Days," one of the largest festivals dedicated to the Polish in the United States. "When I came of age, it was just my turn, so I enlisted."

Serving in the 1960s almost certainly meant an all-expenses paid trip to Vietnam. Arriving in 1969, Rosenberg served with the famed 82nd Airborne Division located at Phu Loi and the 9th Infantry Division located at Dong Tam. Midway through the tour, he was wounded in an explosion.

"I got knocked over by a blast wall," remembered Rosenberg. "Somehow, three of my fingers got severed. I picked 'em up, put 'em in my pocket and hustled over to the medic. Later, they re-attached my fingers."

Injured, Rosenberg returned home in 1970 to a country that was eager to get out of Vietnam.

"It was not a very receptive society," he said.

He enrolled at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and played for the baseball team.

Then in 1974, his life changed forever. "October 2," said Rosenberg. "A car accident. I spent 18 months in rehab at the Milwaukee VA."

After physical therapy, Rosenberg gradually learned to re-adjust to his altered life. Bit by bit, a new sense of purpose arose. Then, a mission redefined.

"I was a three-sport athlete, served my country and I was just sitting around," he said. "I deserved better for myself, we deserved better from our country."

Rosenberg got involved with the Paralyzed Veterans of America and started advocating for wheelchair accessibility and parking. He got back into school. He started making things happen. In the

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See Spirit**

In Briefs

Four-day music festival begins Sunday at pavilion

The public is invited to four days of outdoor concerts, Sunday through Wednesday on the Milwaukee VA campus.

All performances are free and take place at the Lake Wheeler pavilion.

Each night features a different style of music from performers who are also military veterans. The festival kicks off 5:30 to 7 p.m. Sunday with the VA Jam Band, which features classic rock and blues.

Performances take place 6:30 to 8 p.m. the other three nights and features R&B and jazz by the Jeff Claire Project on Monday; folk and folk rock by One Land Bridge Tuesday; and a variety show Wednesday featuring singers, instrumentalists and poets.

Attendees can bring lawn chairs, food and beverages, but no alcohol is allowed.

“Some of these performers started out in different recovery programs here, and some are just veterans who like socializing and performing with one another,” said music therapist Shep Crumrine. “This is always a great way for veterans to come together, and for the public to see how much talent we have here.”

For more information on the concerts, call Crumrine at 414-384-2000, ext. 42433, or Sandy Rice at ext. 41673.

Release of info moves

Veterans who need a copy of their medical records can now pick them up in the Release of Information office located on the 10th floor in Room 10645.

“We wanted to do this so it was easier for our Veterans and make it more convenient so they didn’t have to go to another building. They can get their information and get answers to any of their questions right here,” said Shanon Cousland, records control supervisor.

The office is open Monday through



Photo by Gary Kunich

Dolls for dollars

The Doll Scholars of Southeast Wisconsin pose with members of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and employees from the Spinal Cord Injury Center Aug. 2 at the Milwaukee VA. The Doll Scholars raised \$20,000 for the PVA, with the stipulation that it be spent at the VA’s Spinal Cord Injury Center. The group of doll enthusiasts raised the money during their annual auction and sale of collectible doll items.

Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Veterans must fill out a Form 10-5345 before getting records. They are available at the Release of Information counter, or from your primary care provider or social worker.

For more information, call 414-384-2000, ext. 44507.

Million Veteran Program seeks participants for study

The Milwaukee VA is continuing to accept participants in the Million Veteran Program, which will allow researchers to make gene-health connections and could advance disease screening, diagnosis and treatment into numerous illnesses for decades to come.

All Veterans enrolled for healthcare at the VA are invited to participate by giving a blood sample and filling out a health

survey. Participants agree to possible further contact by the MVP staff.

Veterans can make an appointment to donate blood at the VA by calling 866-441-6075. Walk-ins are also welcome from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Room 5410, on the fifth floor of the medical center. It takes about 15 minutes for the entire process.

All blood and medical information is kept in a secure database that will only be used by authorized researchers in the VA, other federal health agencies, and academic institutions within the United States.

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5000 West



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: Gary.Kunich@va.gov, or call the Public Affairs Office at 414-384-2000, ext. 45363.

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Photo by Brian Walker

Many of the completed bottles represent the artist's own personality, but each one is special.

Hope in a bottle

Artistry provides healing and therapy for artist and recipient

BY BRIAN WALKER
5000 West staff writer

Sometimes the things we do in life have rewards we can't see when we first start our journey. In the case of Bottles for Hope, an art therapy project in the Veterans Recovery Center, the process has led to many positive outcomes.

The primary goal of the program is to decorate a small bottle, typically using paints and Sculpey Clay, fill it with positive messages, then present it to a person in need. Not only does it help someone else, but it's therapy for those doing the work.

"The program initially started with breast cancer survivors and they used the bottles to give words of encouragement to current battlers of the disease," said Kris Kulas, art therapist with Veterans Recovery Center. "We adapted the program to our Veteran needs. We attempt

to give the bottles to Veterans, sometimes through other VAMC staffs, who are working with the Veterans Crisis Line."

Veteran Gerald Pankau added, "These Veterans are dealing with the same stressors that I have. I use my bottle all the time, it makes me feel better and I hope it has the same effect on them."

The design of the bottle is where the Veteran's creativity and themes come through. The messages they choose to put in the bottle are sometimes quotes and sometimes long-standing positive messages like a proverb. Some sample messages include:

"A painting gets done one day at a time (Marvin)."

"We tend to forget that happiness doesn't come as a result of something we don't have, but rather of recognizing and appreciating what we do have (Frederick Koenig)."

"Remember your friends are all around

you ... neighbors, family."

"The bend in the road is not the end of the road ... unless you fail to make the turn".

While the messages are aimed at the Veteran in crisis, there are positive outcomes for those designing the bottles.

"This is a way to concentrate on something other than my problems. I help myself cope while creating the bottle," said Veteran Lawrence Peters. "We talk about issues as we work. We also talk about the Veterans Crisis Line and those people in need. This shows people we are not alone and the bottle fills a connection between two people."

One of the Veterans Recovery Center's goals is to focus some of their efforts on reconnecting Veterans with the community. This can be difficult for some Veterans, and this helps give them the push they might need.

"I would not have done this on my own," Peters said. "VRC helped me to learn to give back. This has also helped me to reach out to others, people like my neighbor who I encouraged to seek treatment at the VAMC for his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder."

It starts with an empty plastic bottle and it finishes with Veterans connecting and helping each other. It is a gift that keeps on giving.



Photo by Joyce Casey

Phil Rosenberg winds up to hurl the discus 3.86 meters for his third gold medal at the Games. He took three golds and two silvers, and was honored with the coveted Spirit of the Games Award.

Spirit

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fall of 1979, he, along with three other Veterans, founded the Wisconsin Chapter of the PVA, a chapter in which he serves as president today.

“Disabled Veterans had a lot of needs,” said Rosenberg. “So we got to work.”

Graduating Magna Cum Laude from UWM in 1982, he launched a career in teaching in what he thought would be his life’s work, but his mission was redefined again.

“1982 was also the first year I attended the Wheelchair Games,” said Rosenberg. “They were in Milwaukee and with the

encouragement of Dr. Atzla Gahatit, chief of Spinal Cord Surgery, and Don Schmitt from PVA, I decided to go. They were really pushing us guys to go. I’m glad they did because a whole new world opened up.”

A year later, Rosenberg left teaching and became a vocational rehabilitation counselor for the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. It was a career that lasted 26 years, almost as long as his attendance streak at the Wheelchair Games.

“I’ve gone to 31 consecutive Games missing only the first one here in Richmond in ’81,” said Rosenberg. “It’s amazing to think back on all of the lives these Games have helped. I am so honored to have been a part of it.”

Over the years, he has participated

“If you think your life is over, it will be. The Games are a teaching mechanism, not only with sports, but with life.”

**— Phil Rosenberg
Spirit of the Games
winner**

in nearly every event the Games have offered.

Softball? It was one of his favorites in the early years.

Trap shooting? He was afraid he would go head over heels the first time, yet to this day he still travels the PVA trap shooting circuit.

Quad Rugby? It’s built for his competitiveness.

“I tell the young guys, if me, at 62, and Bull, at 65, can still do it, so can you,” said Rosenberg referring to last year’s Spirit of the Games recipient, Jerry “Bull” Baylor. “I wish they had the event when I was younger though.”

Baylor first met Rosenberg at the ’82 Games in Milwaukee. He added, “Like Phil, I’m a fierce competitor and we’re two of the oldest around playing Quad Rugby. I think it’s a testament to the healing power of these Games that we’re still so competitive after 30 years.”

These are some of the very attributes to live a full and happy life, reminds Rosenberg. It’s a message he wants to share with his brothers and sisters returning from overseas or those Veterans who have suffered a catastrophic injury.

“If you think your life is over, it will be,” said Rosenberg, with his jaw set firm. “The Games are a teaching mechanism, not only with sports, but with life. You’ve got to build that first level of independence. Set goals for the future. Gain confidence and you will do anything you want to do.”

After 31 years coming to the Games and now three years into retirement, you might think that Rosenberg is going to slow down a bit.

Well, think again.

“There’s too much I still want to do,” he exclaimed. “I’m getting ready to hit the road, travel to Europe. I want to see all 50 states, all the parks and monuments this country has to offer. I don’t know if I’m gonna have time to pack it all in, but I’m gonna try!”



PHOTOS (Clockwise from top) Harold Hack (Center), pushes himself toward a silver medal in the 100-meter open event with a time of 29.86 seconds. Mike Thomas comes on strong in the slalom, one of the most challenging of the Games. He took a gold medal with a final time of 4:04, beating all other competitors. Al Lewis takes a shot during the medal round of basketball, helping earn himself and his team a gold medal.



Mike Larson (left) and Ken Matthews (center) both took gold in hand cycling. Larson won in the open division with a time of 31:52. Matthews won gold in the 1A masters division with a time of 42:31.

Wisconsin wheelchair athletes bring home hardware

BY GARY J. KUNICH
5000 West editor

Forget the London dramatics.

Wisconsin's spinal cord-injured athletes representing the Milwaukee VA took home more medals this year at their own Olympics -- the annual VA Wheelchair Games, put on by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

This year's contingent was smaller than years past, but they brought home more gold and silver medals than the 2011 event in Pittsburgh.

All told, 14 athletes returned with 43 medals — 23 gold, 19 silver and three bronze. Last year, a larger group of athletes brought home 17 gold, 16 silver and seven bronze.

Nearly 600 Veterans from the U.S., Great Britain and Puerto Rico competed July 25 to 30 in Richmond, Va., in events as diverse as swimming, cycling, basketball, rugby, weightlifting and slalom.

Mike Larson and Phil Rosenberg led the Milwaukee pack with five medals overall.

"We did really great, and I think it's because of all the extra practice sessions," said Joyce Casey, a recreation therapist who traveled with the team. "We have a good team because the guys all support each other, and are cheering them on, even when they aren't competing. We have a nice blend of older and younger Vets, and they're just there for each other."



Photos by Joyce Casey and Paul Knox

Reputation key to a good name



L.C. Satterfield

“I’ve witnessed an enormous shift in the perception of housekeepers. People are saying the name in a nice voice now! And that can only mean our reputation is improving. People don’t frown as much when they refer to us. One reason is because we have been working toward establishing and maintaining good relations with the hospital staff as well as our Veterans and visitors.”

Have Your Say

OK, let me begin by introducing myself. My name is Lemon Clayton Satterfield Jr. I grew up with that handle. My father passed it down to me.

Way to stick it to me Dad! I had to survive grade school by absorbing every “Lemon” pun you can imagine. I hated my name growing up. I preferred the initials, “L.C.,” but in school, I always had to use my real name. Kids teased me early on, but after awhile it was few and far between.

I did very well in school, and gained the respect of my peers through my loyalty and other principles. Even now, if you ask any of my classmates in my hometown of Clarksdale, Miss., about me, one of the first things they’d say would be, “Lemon? Yeah, he was one of the smartest kids in the school.” Or, “He was always good people. All the Satterfields were good people.” I guess you could say we had a pretty good reputation there in Clarksdale.

So now, fast forward a generation or two, to a new time, a new place. We’re at the VA Medical Center, one year earlier. I’ve got myself a new title, and a new uniform to boot. It’s tan and brown, and my title is “Housekeeping Aide” or “Housekeeper.”

When I first got the job, and people would ask me what I did for a living, I would reluctantly tell them, “I work in Housekeeping. I’m a housekeeper.”

I sort of felt like I did on my first day of school when I had to stand up in front of the class and tell them, “My name is Lemon Satterfield.”

I didn’t feel as though it was something I could be proud of. The title seemed

to conjure up images of the definitions I read in the dictionary:

Housekeeper: Synonyms: Biddy, char [British], Charwoman, handmaiden (also handmaid), housemaid, maidservant, skivvy [British], wench ...

Gosh, I don’t reckon I’d take kindly to being called any of them there names. There was also a time when I didn’t really care to wear the title “Housekeeper,” either.

But what’s in a name? Better yet, what the heck is a name?

Webster offers the following references:

1: A word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing *b*: a word or symbol used in logic to designate an entity

2: A descriptive often disparaging epithet <called him *names*>

3: Reputation

I’d even go so far as to suggest a name can be an indication of how we feel about someone or something. I’m sure we all have nice pet names we affectionately exchange with those who matter greatly in our lives. On the other hand, we can relate to the titles we inflict upon those who violate our well being.

A wise man once told me, “I don’t care what you call me, as long as you say it in a nice voice.”

Actually he wasn’t a wise man. He was inebriated, but it sounded good, and it made sense.

Usually, when a person has made a positive impact on your life, you will see them in a positive light, and your perception of them will transfer innocently to those with whom you come into contact.

So you therefore establish a good reputation, or a good

name by the impression you leave upon others.

The housekeeping staff here has experienced the spectrum of epithets, but I’ve gotta tell ya, we’re getting better. Much better! I’ve witnessed an enormous shift in the perception of housekeepers. People are saying the name in a nice voice now! And that can only mean our reputation is improving. People don’t frown as much when they refer to us. One reason is because we have been working toward establishing and maintaining good relations with the hospital staff as well as our Veterans and visitors.

And by the way, you may have noticed the facility looking a little cleaner and brighter lately. By gosh, we aim to keep it that way.

We had a not-so-sparkling reputation not very long ago, and I must admit we earned it by things we did or didn’t do.

But that is past.

We are moving forward with a renewed purpose, attitude and a regenerated sense of pride that had been sorely lacking for quite some time prior.

I’ve seen the attitude in our department transform into a spirit of enthusiasm in our approach to our varied tasks. Our role is vital, and it is important not only that we recognize it, but also we demonstrate it by striving to provide the best possible service.

Let us know if we’re doing something right or if we’re doing something wrong. Believe me, we’d rather you call us nice names.

I’m Lemon Satterfield, housekeeper.

On behalf of all our housekeeping staff, thank you for your indulgence.

Dossier

Michael DiMarco Jr.
Emergency Department
psychologist



Photo by Gary Kunich

Dr. Michael DiMarco Jr. joined the VA staff a few months ago, and sees patients in the urgent care clinic located within the Emergency Department.

Division: Mental Health.

Hometown: Jamaica Queens, New York.

Years of government service (plus any military time): Five years with the state of Wisconsin, and three months for the federal government since joining the VA.

Family: In a long-term relationship.
What is your ideal job?: The VA, of course!

If you could pick your own theme music, what would it be?: "Gonna Fly Now," from Rocky.

Any pets?: Peacocks.

What is your favorite TV show?: "True Blood."

What are your favorite movies?: "Living out Loud," "Spiderman," "Precious," and "Batman Returns."

What are you most likely to be searching for when you raid the fridge after midnight?: Cheesecake.

If you were sent to the moon with nothing but a book and a book light, what book would you choose?: Any book by Bill Maher.

If you were on a reality television show, which would you want it to be and why?: "Dancing with the Stars." Always wanted to learn the tango and love the costumes. Plus it's a great way to stay in shape.

Favorite sports and teams?: I am not from Wisconsin, so I'd rather not say.

What are your hobbies?: Gardening, and rearranging my furniture often.

What's your favorite ethnic food?: Italian.

What is one thing most people don't know about you?: If I tell you, then there would be no mystery.

What is the best advice you have received?: Delay initial reactions; plan your response.

Do you believe in ghosts?: Sure.

If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?: Cheesecake.

What is your biggest pet peeve?: People who don't return e-mails.

What is your worst habit?: Forgetting to return e-mails. That's a joke. I write too many e-mails.

Three things that can always be found in your refrigerator?: Baking soda, romaine lettuce, and A-1 steak sauce.

Waffles or pancakes?: Pancakes.

Favorite type of exercise?: Elliptical.

What book are you reading right now?: "Crucial Conversations," by Kerry Patterson and Joseph Grenny.

What song do you sing on karaoke night?: Any Barry White song.

What is the meaning of life?: Life is a series of decisions; neither good or bad.

Favorite pair of shoes: The ones that don't have holes in them.

If you were an animal, what would you be: Eagle.

Bratwurst and beer, or filet mignon and Merlot?: Filet mignon and Merlot.

If you won \$20 million, what would do with it? Pay off all debts and invest the rest in my early retirement fund.

Favorite Elvis song? "You Ain't Nothing But a Hound Dog."

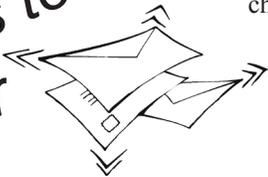
A little bit country, or a little bit rock n' roll? Yes both!

If you were stranded on a deserted island with just a boom box and three CDs, what would they be? Anything from Madonna; any kind of jazz or blues music; and an exercise CD.

Motto you live by: Draw upon others to help you build a solid foundation, but never let them decide the height of your ceiling.

If you were ever on an episode of "Cops" what role would you have in it? The cameraman. I don't think I want to be seen on "Cops."

Letters to the Editor



To the VA Family and my new friends:

Four months ago, my family's lives changed forever. My husband, Patrick Gillespie was tragically killed in a car

accident. His passing has been felt not just by my children and I, but by everyone that knew him. Especially his friends and co-workers at the VA. It is for this reason I wanted to say a

big thank you to everyone that not only attended his funeral and following memorial, but rallied round my children and I. Without the help and support of these wonderful people, I don't know if I would've

coped as well.

I want to say a special thank you to Pat's former co-workers in IRM, but the biggest thanks has to go to Rob Huelsman, for helping me navigate the VA red tape. Rob took time out of his very busy schedule to help me with paperwork!

Byron Kluewer was not only Pat's co-worker but also a very close friend and he and his wife have kept me sane these past few months. Thank you!

And I can't forget Margaret

Dowd, who kept things positive even in my darkest hours with her late night phone calls. There are many more people I would like to thank but that would take FOREVER! Please just know that if I haven't mentioned you, you are not forgotten.

Thank you to everyone for helping to make the loss of Patrick a little less unbearable. God bless you.

Marlene, Callum and Hadleigh Gillespie

In Service

Congratulations to the following Zablocki employees who will reach career milestones in July and August:

35 YEARS

Mary Carlson
Richard Oettinger
Richard Ognenoff

Kathleen Ojeda

30 YEARS

Carolyn Cass
Margaret Durkin
Peggy Gronowski
Cynthia Hamilton
Dennis Kotowicz
Susanne Novak
Jeffrey Tueting

25 YEARS

Tina Gasper
Marianne Geib
Cheryl Hobbs
Lana Maestas

Mark Makowski
Terilynn Nitschke
Roberta Schwelitz
William See
Robert Tuler
Jerome Van Ruiswyk
Byron Watson
Susan Wedell
Donna Westog

20 YEARS

Sherwin Bendzka
Robert Donnell
Joseph Eisenhauer
Mia Golden
McArthur Ormond
Scott Mccray
Edward Pelikan

Jay Shipman
Richard Zuelke

15 YEARS

Wayne Ashley
Susan Bequest
Kristen Charlson
Leona Fonk
Lori Gosz
Marilyn Karolewicz
Susan Kraft
Laura Lange
Kenneth Lee
Joseph Malchow
James Robinson
Derek Smith

10 YEARS

Valerie Arsiniega
Kellie Brown
Karl Burg
Tamekio Davis
Susan Debrabant
Raymond Grisby
Leon Hudson
Gregory Kassin
Amy Kuba
Shekar Kurpad
Kalli Nedeadu
Kelly Pearce
Tonette Roseborough
Richard Roszak
Guadalupe Sotelo
Marcia Weber
Erin Williams

Reporting Aboard

Lourdes "Lulu" Alcaraz

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Playing Wii with the children during family time.

Why did you choose the VA?: I enjoy working as a certified nursing assistant, so what better than to serve the people who have served our country.

First impressions: Wow! Not anything like I was told. It is really nice and the smiles make a difference.

Amy Babcock

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Muskego, Wis.

Hobbies: Exercising and taking day trips with my family.

Why did you choose the VA?: I wanted to care for those who served our country.

First impressions: Everyone has been very welcoming.

Shonquena "Shon" Brower

Food service worker

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Singing, reading and socializing.

Why did you choose the VA?: Great opportunity and great benefits.

First impressions: Clean place and friendly people.

Louis "Lou" Bufford Jr.

Food service worker

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Basketball and weightlifting.

Why did you choose the VA?: I always wanted to work here. My uncle and sister are Veterans.

First impressions: Looking forward to serving my Vets.

Kathy Cereceres

Medical support assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Prior military service: Air Force Reserves, 20 years.

Hobbies: Fishing and hunting.

Why did you choose the VA?: Great people and benefits.

First impressions: I see a lot of good changes and positive attitudes toward Veterans. Excited about all the remodeling. Looks great!

Cheryl Clifford

Registered nurse

Hometown: Waukesha, Wis.

Hobbies: Gardening, shopping and being with family and friends.

Why did you choose the VA?: The present employees love it here.

First impressions: Friendly people.

Daniel Davis

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Green Bay, Wis.

Prior military service: Air Force, 20 years.

Hobbies: Flying, motorcycling and fishing.

Why did you choose the VA?: I missed serving and now I am glad to be back.

I want to serve my fellow Veteran population.

First impressions: I am very impressed.

Everyone is nice and everyone is very helpful. Very large.

David Deau

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Prior military service: Air Force, four years.

Hobbies: Guitar, fitness and organic farming.

Why did you choose the VA?: To give back service to my fellow Veterans.

First impressions: Very professional, respectful and caring staff.

Michael DiMarco Jr.

Psychologist

Hometown: Jamaica Queens, N.Y.

Hobbies: Gardening.

Why did you choose the VA?: To serve Veterans.

First impressions: Busy.

David Dragotta

Program support assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Prior military service: Navy, 20 years.

Melissa Gayton

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Houston, Texas.

Hobbies: Taking care of my four-month-old, playing volleyball and enjoying the warm weather.

Why did you choose the VA?: Love the staff environment and the population!

First impressions: Very exciting! This is going to be fun!

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Reporting Aboard

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Andrea Gleason

Physical therapist trainee

Hometown: Kenosha, Wis.

Hobbies: Bicycling, reading and drawing.

Why did you choose the VA?: I decided upon the VA for my physical therapy internship because I enjoy being around the Veteran population and I look forward to showing my appreciation for their service.

First impressions: Everyone I have met in this building has been very friendly and helpful.

Jonathan Hoerl

Licensed practical nurse

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Prior military service: Marine Corps, three years.

Hobbies: Beach body coach.

Why did you choose the VA?: It's what I always wanted to do since getting out of the Marine Corps. I owe it to my fellow Veterans.

First impressions: I love it. Very impressed.

Dustin "Jax" Jackson

Health technician

Hometown: Woodstock, Ill.

Prior military service: Navy, six years.

Hobbies: Crossfit trainer, mud runs and fitness competitions.

Why did you choose the VA?: I am an Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran and very proud to be one. I can think of no better environment to continue to cultivate my medical career than working with and caring for my fellow Vets.

First impressions: Professional, compassionate people working toward and for an honorable cause. I am proud to be a part of this medical family.

Tycora "Ty" James

Radiology technologist

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Volleyball.

Why did you choose the VA?: I believe providing healthcare services to the Veterans who have sacrificed their lives for me, will prove to be very rewarding. It's my way of saying, "Thank you."

First impressions: A very nice, friendly and rewarding place to work.

Nathan Jandrin

Claims assistant

Hometown: Two Rivers, Wis.

Hobbies: Hanging out, watching movies and watching sports.

Why did you choose the VA?: Seemed like a nice work environment.

First impressions: Huge place. I might be able to hear a Brewers game by opening a window.

Anthony "Tony" Johnson

Supply technician

Hometown: Cheverly, Md.

Hobbies: Reading, walking and watching sports.

Why did you choose the VA?: I wanted a new challenge.

First impressions: I like the facility.

David Jones

Housekeeping supervisor

Hometown: Detroit, Mich.

Prior military service: Six years.

Hobbies: Baseball.

First impressions: Very nice place.

Joan Jones

Readjustment counseling therapist

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Traveling and working out.

Why did you choose the VA?: To work with the Vets.

Verrita Jordan

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Cooking and family.

Why did you choose the VA?: I believe in the mission of the VA and I heard it's a great place to work!

First impressions: There's a lot of activity going on, and getting lost was bound to happen.

Emily Kaltenbach

Nursing assistant

Hometown: New Berlin, Wis.

Hobbies: Spending time with family and friends.

Why did you choose the VA?: Loved volunteering here when I was younger, and a lot of my family works here as well.

First impressions: Very friendly. Everyone greets you and is so welcoming.

Mark Kisse

Contract specialist

Hometown: Kenosha, Wis.

Prior military service: Marine Corps, four years; and Army Reserves, eight years.

Hobbies: Running and tennis.

Why did you choose the VA?:

Opportunity and variety of work.

First impressions: Still developing.

Michael Korwin

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Tennis, basketball, soccer and working out.

Why did you choose the VA?: The camaraderie and the ability to give back to America's heroes.

First impressions: Eventful and restless.

Kai Loberg

Health aid

Hometown: Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

Hobbies: Bicycling, running and music.

Why did you choose the VA?: I was looking for a way to continue serving and I was very fortunate to be offered an opportunity. I'm going to enjoy serving fellow Veterans.

First impressions: "One team, one fight!" The people here are family. I'm in great company.

Emily Logterman

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Darien, Wis.

Hobbies: Sports and scrapbooking.

Why did you choose the VA?: To get hospital experience in the nursing profession.

First impressions: Very friendly staff, and they gave great directions to find the building and room I was supposed to go to.

Jessica "Jessie" Louis

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Sycamore, Ill.

Hobbies: Biking, reading, scrapbooking and reading.

Why did you choose the VA?: To gain experience and learn more about healthcare and hospitals.

First impressions: Very big hospital that does a lot for our Veterans.

Briana Lyjak

Registered nurse

Hometown: Gurnee, Ill.

Hobbies: Running, traveling and reading.

Why did you choose the VA?: I chose the VA so I can serve those who willingly served me. I believe in the VA's mission and feel privileged to care for our country's heroes.

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First impressions: Welcoming facility, committed staff and important core values.

Jason MacKnight

Medical support assistant

Hometown: Racine, Wis.

Prior military service: Navy, seven and a half years.

Hobbies: Family, music, helping people, working out, and focusing on Vets.

Why did you choose the VA?: Great place to work and I have a passion to give back to my fellow Vets.

First impressions: Welcoming, clean and friendly.

Nicole Majinski

Social worker

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Listening to music, going to movies and sports.

Why did you choose the VA?: I heard it was a great place to work and it's an opportunity to serve our nation's Veterans.

First impressions: It is a warm and friendly environment. You can tell there is a passion for serving Veterans and I can't wait to be a part of this team.

Lynn May

Medical instrument technician

Hometown: Manitowoc, Wis.

Prior military service: Navy, 16 years.

Why did you choose the VA?: Because of my personal experience with the military and because I'm still an active reservist. I would like to give back in the medical arena to the Veterans who have served our country.

First impressions: Very caring, understanding and welcoming.

Christopher "Nelly" Nelson

Physical therapist trainee

Hometown: Racine, Wis.

Hobbies: Listening to music, reading and beach volleyball.

Why did you choose the VA?: It's a unique environment and will be a great experience for me as a student clinician.

First impressions: It's an honor to be here and to serve those who served all of us.

TJ Nereng

Physical therapist trainee

Hometown: Blair, Wis.

Hobbies: Sports, hunting and fishing.

Why did you choose the VA?: I chose the VA to do my part to help the Veterans while also continuing my education in physical therapy.

First impressions: I was amazed at how nice everyone is who works at the VA. As I walk down the hall, it seems like everyone has a "hello" for me.

Meghan Nothem

Medical technician

Hometown: Franklin, Wis.

Why did you choose the VA?: Whole family has worked at the VA. They talked highly of the VA as a workplace.

First impressions: Warm, welcoming environment. Great place to be.

Jaqueline Meixl

Physical therapist trainee

Hometown: DePere, Wis.

Prior military service: Air Force, eight years.

Hobbies: Reading, biking and camping.

Why did you choose the VA?: A great place to work! A great chance to serve those who have served.

First impressions: Organized and

friendly.

Tara Myers

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Escanaba, Mich.

Hobbies: When I'm not studying, I enjoy camping, swimming and crafting.

Why did you choose the VA?: I wanted to serve those who serve our country.

First impressions: The facility was much larger than I expected and everyone is very friendly and welcoming.

Justin Olsson

Biomed student trainee

Hometown: Menomonee Falls, Wis.

Hobbies: Music, hunting, fishing, travel, camping and hiking.

Why did you choose the VA?: To help provide quality care for our nation's Veterans.

First impressions: Impressive

Daniel Smars

Claims assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Playing guitar, writing songs,

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Photo by Gary Kunich

Hooping it up

John Lopez (center), chairman of the diversity committee, and Roslynde Thompson, a program support assistant in surgical care, join hands with others for a teamwork demonstration with a hula hoop at the Diversity Fair, held Aug. 8 in the Matousek. Employees and Veterans got to learn at the event about different cultures and how to work together through games and hands-on learning experiences at the event.

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and writing fiction.

Why did you choose the VA?: My dad is a Veteran and since I was not able to serve due to a hereditary eye disease, this is one way for me to serve those who served.

First impressions: Everyone I've met is extremely helpful and friendly. I have landed in exactly the right place for my career.

Shrenka Patton

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Reading and exercising.

Why did you choose the VA?: This is a great hospital to work.

First impressions: Family environment.

The Rev. John Perez

Catholic chaplain

Hometown: New York City, N.Y.

Prior military service: Navy and Army, 17 and a half years.

Why did you choose the VA?: Ministry.

Mary "Mary Cate" Raynor

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Omaha, Neb.

Hobbies: Swimming, reading, and spending time with family and friends.

Why did you choose the VA?: Great chance to give back to those who have served our country and a wonderful and inclusive learning environment.

First impressions: Extremely friendly, welcoming and huge!

Jeanna "Jeans" Riesner

Medical technologist

Hometown: Waukesha, Wis.

Hobbies: Motorcycle riding and tennis.

Why did you choose the VA?: I was a student in the lab, and I enjoy the patient population. Those who work in the lab are welcoming and very nice.

First impressions: Everyone is nice and helpful. So many smiling faces and people saying, "Hi" and "Good morning."

Robert "Queso" Rivera

Medical technologist

Hometown: Rensenville, Ill.

Hobbies: Basketball, Xbox live and running.

Why did you choose the VA?: I had

my clinical here and I was amazed at the excellent patient care provided at this hospital. I am extremely excited to be a part of the VA now.

First impressions: The lab is impeccable. The VA strives for excellence and they accept nothing less.

Dennis Rodefer

Lead supply technician

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Prior military service: Navy, 20 years.

Hobbies: Home brewing.

Why did you choose the VA?: I would like to say, "It is closer to my home," but in reality, it is like coming home. I was raised in this area. Truth is, I am looking forward to the change."

First impressions: Very impressive, from the greeter at the door to the 15 people who greeted me with a smile as I made my way to orientation."

Thomas Rooney Jr.

Human resources assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Prior military service: Army, 11 years.

Hobbies: Reading, walking, bike riding, music and computers.

Why did you choose the VA?: I have worked at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Europe District, and Stars and Stripes newspaper in Darmstadt, Germany.

First impressions: This is not my first time at the VA.

Christopher Sargent

Respiratory therapist

Hometown: Watertown, Wis.

Hobbies: Electronics, tube amps, woodworking, metalworking and personal computers.

Why did you choose the VA?: For the Vets.

First impressions: Friendly and impressive. Serious about the mission.

Sheila M. Scott

Registered nurse

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis., via eastern Europe.

Hobbies: Walking, hiking and reading.

Why did you choose the VA?: I have 11 years of prior VA service at the Amarillo VA healthcare center. Loved working there!

First impressions: Great facility.

Katelynn Seefeldt

Health aid

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Shopping.

Why did you choose the VA?: I chose

to work at the VA to join the friendly atmosphere, and to give back to the individuals who served our country.

First impressions: The VA is a very welcoming facility, with a friendly staff.

Megan Skorburg

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Loves Park, Ill.

Hobbies: Reading, baking, spending time with family and friends.

Why did you choose the VA?: To serve those who serve our country.

First impressions: Incredibly welcoming. Everyone is very friendly.

Tiffany Staples

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Traveling, reading and I love family time.

Why did you choose the VA?: My first clinical experience. Very impressive.

The staff was very nurturing, caring and seemed to enjoy their jobs. The Vets were just as impressive. I knew after my clinical experience that this would be a great place to work with great benefits and a positive environment.

First impressions: Pleasant, nice and clean.

Jeffrey Steinhorst

Medical support assistant

Hometown: Green Bay, Wis.

Prior military service: Army National Guard, nine years.

Hobbies: Fishing, hunting, coaching and football.

Why did you choose the VA?: To help Vets and move closer to home.

First impressions: Large system.

Robert Strickler

Supply systems analyst

Hometown: Beloit, Wis.

Prior military service: Army, four years.

Hobbies: Weightlifting.

Why did you choose the VA?: I enjoyed my experience working with the VA after separating from active-duty.

First impressions: Friendly, helpful and caring.

David Takkinen

Human Resources assistant

Hometown: Born in Brazil, but I live in West Allis.

Prior military service: Army, eight years, and still serving.

Hobbies: Baseball, cars and hunting.

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Why did you choose the VA?: After graduation from college, I tried to get a job here but ended up getting deployed to Iraq. Upon returning home and going through all the struggles, I really had a passion to work with Veterans in whatever way possible. It is a joy knowing that I can help.

First impressions: It's a big hospital with many different roles, working really hard at providing the best care possible to all Veterans and patients.

Maia Thelen

Nursing assistant

Hometown: Rostov, Russia.

Hobbies: Home improvements.

Why did you choose the VA?: I love taking care of the Veterans. They are so appreciative and I can see I am making a difference.

First impressions: Before I even got to the "C"bank elevators, seven people said, "Hi," or smiled at me. I knew right there and then I wanted to be a part of this experience and the workplace.

Jane Unterberger

Student nurse technician

Hometown: Portland, Ore.

Hobbies: Playing with my dog, reading, swimming and cooking.

Why did you choose the VA?: The opportunity to make a difference.

First impressions: Incredibly welcoming.

Amanda VanHeel

Physical therapist trainee

Hometown: St. Michael, Minn.

Hobbies: Running, swimming and biking.

Why did you choose the VA?: I chose the VA for a clinical placement because of the great opportunity to serve those who have served our country.

Sandra "Sandy" Westphal

Social worker

Hometown: Bonduel, Wis.

Prior military service: Marine Corps, eight years.

Hobbies: Running, reading, gardening and motorcycles.

Why did you choose the VA?: After my discharge from the Marines, I decided to get my master's degree and work specifically with Veterans in this field.

First impressions: I'm familiar with the VA due to my previous position as a social work student.

Linsi Whitman

Medical technologist

Hometown: Hortonville, Wis.

Hobbies: Dogs, camping, reading and video games.

Why did you choose the VA?: I did my clinical here and enjoyed the environment. I want to give back to those who served the country.

First impressions: Patient-centered community. The lab is full of hard-working people who are dedicated to what they do.

Julia Williams

Medical records administrative specialist

Hometown: Chicago, Ill.

Hobbies: Reading, watching sports and enjoying family.

Why did you choose the VA?: Growth and service to Veterans.

First impressions: A different culture.

Sheng Yang

HR student trainee

Hometown: Milwaukee, Wis.

Hobbies: Traveling, make-up and shopping.

Why did you choose the VA?: I chose to work at the VA for the great benefits, and to gain greater experience in my field of study.

First impressions: I thought it was great! It's nice knowing there are people to help disabled Veterans. The rooms are very comfortable.

Steven Zanotti

Inventory management specialist intern

Hometown: Fillmore, Calif.

Prior military service: Marine Corps, four years.

Hobbies: Camping, spending time with the family and biking.

Why did you choose the VA?: Sense of belonging.

First impressions: Vets first, and well-taken-care-of employees.

VA Voices

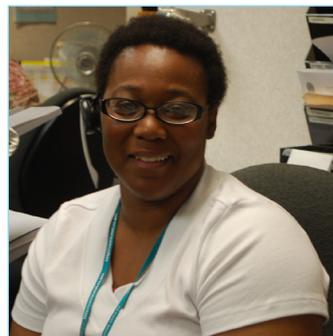
Question: It's 2 a.m. and you're at the drive-thru. What are you ordering?



Holly Collins, Release of information clerk: "Tacos from Taco Bell. They do one now with fish or shrimp I saw on TV. I'm thinking it's the only place that's going to be open at 2 in the morning."



Tim Stauder, Safety officer: "Coffee, black with sugar, because if I'm up that late, I need something to keep me awake."



Gloria Richardson, Medical support assistant: "Nothing, because I'm home asleep, getting ready for work the next morning."



Chrystal Hickling, Secretary: "French fries at McDonalds, because that's what you do after a long night out. With a Diet Coke."