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 preparation 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.
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 is what I've been waiting for. " — Rick Prawdzik

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 is my chance."

"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. It may take a few tries (to quit) but it's worth it." — Melanie Schneider

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."
Honor Flight takes Korean War Veteran on memorable trip

Peter Lovinus knew there was a was 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 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.

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 don'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 the Chinese People's Army. "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.'"

"I don't like it because it was not like that," he said. "There weren't people with hangovers and having parties," he said. "There weren't people with that," he said. "There weren't people with any comfort."

"I couldn't understand why there wasn't a funeral, or later, and thought if I did this, I'd get some comfortable duty."

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

"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."

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

"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 GI Bill and became an architectural draftsman, which led to a career with WE Energies.

"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.
**PHOTO FEATURE**

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.

**HEALTHY LIVING**

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**

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, to talk with Veterans and wish them a Happy Thanksgiving.

*Recipe of the Month*
Prosthetist creates new way of life for Veterans

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 that go 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 straightforward.

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 on 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.”

On this day Dezek meets with Rod Lough, Navy and Coast Guard Veteran. He receives his care at the Green Bay VA, but Dezek said he looks at it in a different way.

“I get to serve Veterans, and that’s my number one priority.”

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

“They are a rarity, really.”

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.

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 said 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.”

Photo by Antony Kamps

In Service

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

40 Years

December 2014

Pamela Gerstner
Bruce Kosab

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 Macklern
Venita Wade-Gardiner

30 Years

December 2014

Piero Antuono
Christian Barnes
Theresa Lasota
Suzanne Piscitello

January 2015

Reynaldo Garcia
Jacqueline Haupt
Dora Bankhead
Ernest Marchel
Margo Niznik

25 Years

December 2014

Linda Bay
Robin Casper
Katherine Johnson
Chris Krueger
Bruce Somers

January 2015

Kay Hegg
Teresa Ramsey
Stachel Swazyzer
Colleen Sieker
Eva Gennara
James Swinghamer
Barbara Smith
Ike Lusk, Jr
Janice Curnes

February 2015

Nadie Corder
Steven Lilley
April Zamzsy

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 Harick
Paul Bachmann
Jeremy Wiza
Sara Jones
Tamina Rondone

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

10 Years

December 2014

Amylee Gofarty
Bradlee Gietzel
Calandra Hensley
Lee Jones
Scott Katzka
Jill Meraz
Sherry Simcox
Nancy Vasquez

January 2015

Rodger Paul
Deborah Mcliqumah
Chad Turner
Benjamin Dangello
James Appazeller
Kathleen Collins
Gregory Grueenberg
Alice Ismailieh
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

5 Years

December 2014

Patricia Brenner
Bryan Bussiere
Sandra Capello
Doro Bankhead
Jacqueline Haupt

January and February 2015:

45 Years

December 2014

William McDevitt

40 Years

December 2014

Pamela Gerstner
Bruce Kosab

40 Years

February 2015

Elizabeth Carlson
James Lenoach
Tim Von Asten

25 Years

February 2015

Douglas Aanes
Helen Jovasevic
Linda Masih
Stephanie Newsome
Nancy Rydzewski

15 Years

February 2015

Michelle Mezaros
LaQuita Pickett
Tiffany Stark

10 Years

December 2014

Amylee Gofarty
Bradlee Gietzel
Calandra Hensley
Lee Jones
Scott Katzka
Jill Meraz
Sherry Simcox
Nancy Vasquez

January 2015

Rodger Paul
Deborah Mcliqumah
Chad Turner
Benjamin Dangello
James Appazeller
Kathleen Collins
Gregory Grueenberg
Alice Ismailieh
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
PEOPLE

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.”

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.”

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.”