

# Caring for America's **HEROES**

OKLAHOMA CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER

SPRING 2008 VOL. 8 NO. 1



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David P. Wood

## Director's Corner

IN MY 18 MONTHS AS DIRECTOR OF THE OKLAHOMA CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER, I have seen many positive changes, exciting new programs, and fresh faces. Some of our newest leaders include Anne Kreutzer, Associate Director, Margie Carlton, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, and Michelle Johnson, Social Work Chief.

I also receive many heartfelt letters praising the compassion of our employees and volunteers. I would like to share with you a brief story about one of our employees who truly embraces our mission of "honoring America's veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being."

On October 19, 2007, an employee noticed a woman choking in the cafeteria. The woman was vomiting, grabbing her throat, and motioning for assistance. This employee assessed the situation and immediately ran to assist the woman. The employee successfully performed the Heimlich maneuver and stayed with the woman until a nurse responded. A fellow employee recalled this experience as sobering as well as uplifting to witness one of our own meet and surpass our mission of *Caring for America's Heroes*.

*David Wood*

David P. Wood, MHA, FACHE  
Medical Center Director

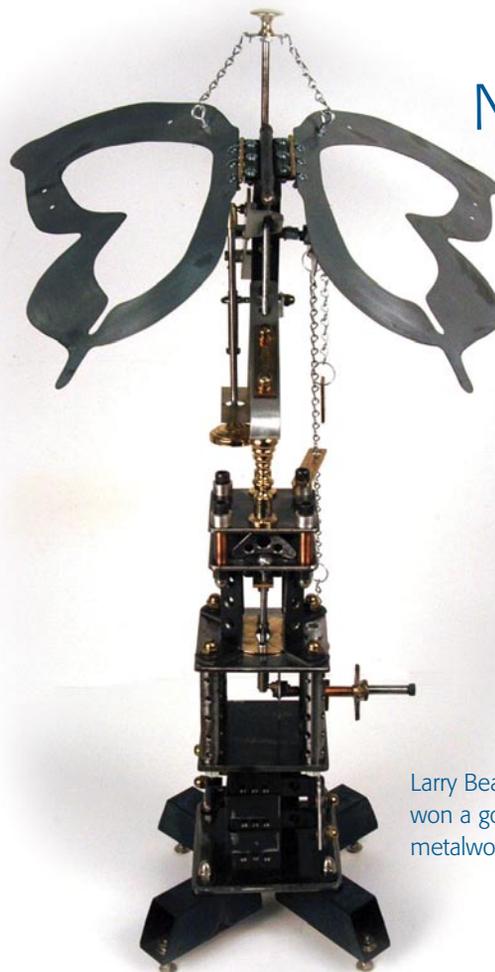
# Golden Age Games a Success Again

by April Reynolds and  
Stephanie Welch,  
Therapeutic Recreation Staff

THE 21ST NATIONAL VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES WERE HELD IN HOUSTON from August 26 to 31, 2007. Each year the Department of Veterans Affairs, along with *Help Hospitalized Veterans* and the *Veterans Canteen Service*, sponsors the National Veterans Golden Age Games. This year, more than 600 veterans converged on Houston to compete in the 21st edition of the games.

Representing the Oklahoma City VAMC was a team of eight veterans, including the Oklahoma Thunderbirds, a team consisting of Travis Bunn, Victor Curlanis, Ronald Green, Stanley Hall, Michael Krawczyk, Richard "Chico" Marmolejo, Jerome Moore, and James Sanders. The team members competed in events such as air rifle, checkers, croquet, bowling, discus, dominoes, horseshoes, nine ball, shot put, and swimming. Our Thunderbirds brought home six medals, including two gold, three silvers, and one bronze!

Along with a week's worth of sporting competitions, the veterans were treated to a host of special events honoring them and their service to our country. They also enjoyed the atmosphere of the games, the reconnection with old friends, and the opportunity to build new social networks.



Larry Beauford's "Iron Butterfly" won a gold medal in the metalworks category.

## National Veterans



Ruth Livingston won a gold medal in the transfer/engraving art kit category for "Pathway to Serenity."

### The medals were awarded to:

- Ronald Green—Silver in Air Rifle; Silver in Croquet
- Stanley Hall—Bronze in Dominoes
- Michael Krawczyk—Gold in Swimming, Freestyle, 25 Yards; Silver in Swimming, Freestyle, 50 Yards
- Jerome Moore—Gold in Discus



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The 2008 team representing the Oklahoma City Medical Center will be the OKC Rattlers. They have begun training and fund-raising to make the trip to the 22nd Games, which will be held in Indianapolis, August 20–24. Thank you all for your continued support and encouragement!



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**For more information,** log on to the National Games Web site at [www1.va.gov/vetevent/gag/2007/index.htm](http://www1.va.gov/vetevent/gag/2007/index.htm).



## Creative Arts Contest

*Every February, the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center hosts a Veterans Creative Arts Contest, which is open to all veterans being treated at this VAMC.*

CATEGORIES INCLUDE DANCING, CREATIVE WRITING, drama, music (both instrumental and vocal), painting, carving, ceramics, kits, and many others. First place winners in each category are entered in the National Veterans Creative Arts Contest, where they compete for gold, silver, and bronze medals. Gold medal winners in the arts categories are invited to participate in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Performers are selected from gold, silver, and bronze medal winners and also invited. The festival takes place in October, and this year it will be held in Redmond, Calif., the home of *Help Hospitalized Veterans*, the wonderful group that provides craft kits to our veterans free of charge.

In October, five local veterans were invited to participate in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in St. Louis. Larry Beauford attended as a gold medal winner in the metalworks category, and Ruth Livingston won a gold medal in the transfer/engraving art kit category. Albert Grey Eagle, Leland Parker, and Nick Strom were invited

to sing in the chorus. Nick hammed it up dressed as a lady with a walker during the poem “Medicare.” Leland carried the U.S. Marine flag for the *Salute to American Service* number. A one-hour version of the two-and-a-half hour show was shown on OETA’s cable station on Veterans Day. While in St. Louis, the veterans attended a dinner at the Arch and had the rare opportunity to travel up into the Arch at night and see the city of St. Louis lit up. The artists also visited museums and took classes while the performers rehearsed for the big show.

Unfortunately, Ruth Livingston had an auto accident on her way to the festival and never made it there. She spent a few days in the hospital in Columbia, Mo., with a shattered arm and a bruised body and is now back home recuperating.

If you have any questions about the National Veterans Creative Arts Contest, call Maureen Harvey at extension 5202.



# Family Education

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE  
AT OKLAHOMA CITY VAMC

Do you have a family member or friend who struggles with mental illness? You are not alone.

In the United States, one in four families has a loved one who struggles with mental illness. Caregiving can be very demanding and stressful. The Family Mental Health Program has created the **S.A.F.E.** Program: Support And Family Education, Mental Health Facts for Families. Family members and friends are invited to a 90-minute, confidential, free workshop on the second Monday of each month. Refreshments are provided, and reservations are not needed.

Attending the **S.A.F.E.** Program provides opportunities to:

- Talk with other family members in similar situations
- Learn more about causes, treatments, and medications for mental illness
- Receive emotional support and encouragement
- Ask doctors questions about mental illness
- Improve your ability to take care of yourself as a caregiver

Each session has a specific topic (such as "What Causes Mental Illness?" "Depression and Its Impact on the Family" and "P.T.S.D. and Its Impact on the Family"). Past participants have appreciated the handouts and support provided in the sessions, both from professionals and other families.

For more information, please call Dr. Michelle Sherman, Director of the Family Mental Health Program, at **405-270-5183**.

# Spring CALENDAR

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION AND CREATIVE ARTS THERAPY



## Arts/Crafts

Monday through Friday, 8–10 a.m.  
This class offers a variety of crafts for persons wishing to develop new skills and hobbies. Crafts include ceramics, leather, model building, painting kits, wood kits, etc.



## Art Therapy

Sometimes it is difficult to express yourself verbally. Art therapy offers the opportunity to work through psychological issues using various arts media. Individual sessions are scheduled with the Art Therapist.

## Creative Writing

Mondays, 10:30 a.m.–noon. Whether it be prose or poetry, writing often can open avenues for self-expression. Students can look forward to venues for being published.

## Drumming

Mondays, 2:30–3:30 p.m., and Wednesdays, 1–2 p.m. If you have a heartbeat, you have rhythm. Join this class and learn various techniques of hand drumming using African drums. Drums are provided.

## Field Trips

Second Saturday of every month, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. (unless otherwise scheduled). Trips are to the Oklahoma City Elks Lodge #417 for a billiard tournament and bingo. Lunch is provided. To participate, veterans must be enrolled in an Art Therapy or Therapeutic Recreation class.

## Jewelry Making

Mondays, 10 a.m.–noon. Express your creativity by designing one-of-a-kind jewelry. Learn glass fusing, beadwork, wire wrap, bead and wirework, enameling, and making jewelry with materials such as paper, leather, and fun foam.



## Leisure Education

By appointment only. Therapy sessions deal with leisure planning, identification of community resources, barriers to participation, attitudes about leisure, and other issues related to leisure and recreation participation.

## Literacy

By appointment only. Learn to experience the joy of reading. Improve your reading ability to better manage your own medical care. One-on-one training is provided to improve reading and spelling skills and increase your understanding of what you read. Offered in conjunction with Literacy Link.

## Open Studio

Thursdays, 1–3 p.m. If you have an interest in developing your leisure skills through art, this class is for you. Materials provided.

## Photography

Fridays, 10 a.m.–noon. Introductory classes teach the use of the 35-mm camera. Learn about f-stops, lighting, film speed, and more. Field trips are included and cameras are provided.



## Pottery

Tuesdays, 1–3 p.m. Working with clay—either molding it or throwing it on a wheel—can be a satisfying and self-fulfilling experience.



### For more information:

If you are interested or want further information about creative art and/or therapeutic recreation classes, call **405-270-0501, ext. 3487 or 3488**, or contact your primary care physician for a referral.

#### T'ai Chi

Fridays, 11 a.m.–noon. This ancient art of meditation and exercise is a sure way to promote relaxation and stress management.

#### Therapeutic Exercise

Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m. Whether or not you have physical limitations, exercise is healthy for you. The therapist will provide individual instruction on the proper exercise for you.

#### Walking Stick-Making Class

Tuesdays, 8–10 a.m. and 1–3 p.m., and Fridays, 8–10 a.m. Design, paint, and craft your own walking stick. Materials are provided for \$10/stick.

#### Women Veterans Group

Thursdays, 10 a.m.–noon. Learn a new game, craft, or leisure skill and be with other women veterans. Field trips are included once a month.



## HEALTH BENEFITS OF Quitting Smoking

When you kick the cigarette habit, you don't have to wait weeks or months to reap the health benefits of your new lifestyle. Here, according to the American Cancer Society, are the changes that take place in your body when you give up smoking.

#### Within 20 minutes

- Blood pressure and pulse return to normal.
- Body temperature of hands and feet increases to normal.

#### After 8 hours

- Carbon monoxide level in blood drops to normal.
- Oxygen level in blood increases to normal.

#### After 48 hours

- Chance of heart attack decreases.
- Nerve endings start to regrow.
- Ability to smell and taste things is enhanced.

#### After 72 hours

- Bronchial tubes relax, making breathing easier.
- Lung capacity increases.

#### After 2 weeks to 3 months

- Circulation improves. Walking becomes easier.
- Lung function increases up to 30 percent.

#### After 1 to 9 months

- Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath decrease.
- Cilia regrow in lungs, increasing ability to handle mucus, clean lungs, and reduce infection.
- Body's overall energy level increases.

#### After 5 to 10 years

- Lung cancer death rate decreases to nearly that of a non-smoker.
- Precancerous cells are replaced. Risk for other cancers—such as those in the mouth, larynx, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas—decreases.

### For more information:

Stop Smoking Program  
VA Medical Center, Oklahoma City  
**405-270-0501, Ext. 3360**

# Free Educational Services for Veterans

Are you interested in continuing your education? The Veterans Upward Bound Program may be able to help.

Services are available free to all veterans with 180 days or more of active duty or separated medically with a discharge other than dishonorable and who have less than a bachelor's degree.

The only other qualification is that the veteran plans to attend college or vocational school or prepare for a GED.

Services include, but are not limited to:

- Access to tutors, computer lab, and ongoing advisory
- Upgrading skills in the areas of writing, math, and/or reading
- Evaluation and testing for school readiness
- Basic computer skills (classes held each month)
- Degree/career guidance
- Information about colleges and technical schools
- Financial aid guidance
- Study skills—speed-reading, test and note taking, stress and time management
- Essay writing
- Conversational Spanish

To qualify, veterans should bring copies of their DD214 and tax forms to the Upward Bound Office located at 6232 SE 15th St., Midwest City, OK 73110, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If you qualify, you may be entitled to a \$40-per-month stipend allowance as you work on your skills. Testing is normally scheduled on Wednesdays at 1 p.m. Stop by or call Nyree Cunningham or Jennifer Carnes at **405-869-2200**.

by Lula Smith, RN-C,  
Flu Coordinator

## Oklahoma City Veterans Affairs Medical Center

# Offers Drive-Thru Flu Clinic!



ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2007, on a cool, crisp, 49-degree morning, more than 600 veterans drove through the north parking lot at the VA Medical Center to receive their annual flu vaccinations. It was the first event of its kind and was advertised via a flyer mailed to many veterans residing in a 100-mile radius of our facility. It was advertised as a one-day-only, rain-or-shine event, and people would not have to leave their cars. The hours were 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The message: Flu shots reduce the risk for illness and death from influenza. The vaccine is inactivated and does **not** cause the flu (see [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu)).

We mailed out a “Flu Passport,” which had to be completed before receiving the flu shot. It contained enrollment and allergy information, asked screening questions, and had an area for informed-consent acknowledgment.

As veterans drove up to the parking lot entrance, they received written after-care instructions, and were welcomed by our staff and the Junior ROTC from a local high school. At the second stop, a nurse verified identification and eligibility, reviewed the information and screening questions, then administered the

vaccine. At the third stop, patients who had received the flu shot for the first time were observed for several minutes for any adverse reaction to the vaccine. They exited the parking lot to a salute and the American flag. The entire process took approximately five to seven minutes.

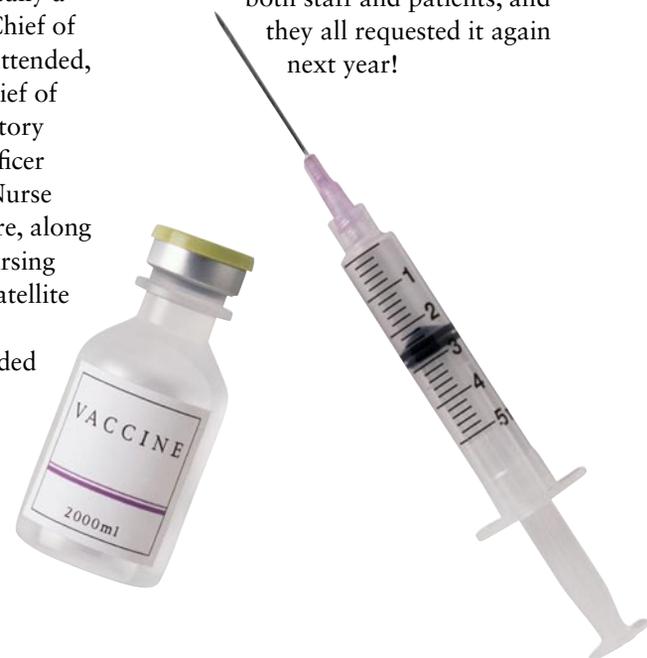
Concurrently, we had an opportunity for those not driving to walk into a flu clinic in our nearby health wing. This area housed a group of primary care nursing staff who entered the data from the walk-in clinic, which consisted of inputting data, clearing reminders, and keeping the drive-thru clinic staffed with supplies and prefilled syringes.

Lula Smith, RN-C, Flu Coordinator, reported the flu clinic was really a team effort. The Associate Chief of Staff for Ambulatory Care attended, along with the Associate Chief of Nursing Service for Ambulatory Care, the Administrative Officer for Ambulatory Care, and Nurse Managers from Primary Care, along with their nurses and the nursing staff from the North May Satellite Clinic. The Performance Measure Coordinator provided snacks and assisted with traffic directions. Also providing support was the

VA Police Department. Environmental Management Services set up the areas for the clinic, and the Pharmacy kept the vaccine amply stocked.

### Outcomes

- With zero instances of any adverse reactions, the drive-thru Flu Clinic was an overwhelming success, yielding twice the number of injections (600) given on any other day inside the hospital (typically 200–350 flu injections).
- Many veterans reported this was the fastest service they had ever received from the VA and questioned why we had never done it before.
- Smiles were seen everywhere, from both staff and patients, and they all requested it again next year!





# Understanding Pathological Gambling

by Sean W. Ferrell, Ph.D.,  
Staff Psychologist

**PROBLEM OR "PATHOLOGICAL" GAMBLING** includes all gambling behavior patterns that compromise, disrupt, or damage personal, family, or vocational pursuits. The essential features are increasing preoccupation with gambling, a need to bet more money more frequently, restlessness or irritability when attempting to stop, "chasing" losses, and loss of control manifested by continuation of the gambling behavior in spite of mounting, serious, negative consequences. In extreme cases, problem gambling can result in financial ruin, legal problems, loss of career and family, or even suicide.

The frequency of a person's gambling or the amount of money lost or won does not determine whether or not the person has a gambling problem. Gambling becomes a problem when it causes a negative impact on any area of the individual's life.

Although no substance is ingested, the problem gambler gets the same effect from gambling as someone else might get from taking a tranquilizer or having a drink. Gambling alters a person's mood, and the gambler keeps repeating the behavior attempting to achieve that same effect. This

creates an increased craving for the activity, and the gambler has less and less ability to resist as the craving grows in intensity and frequency. People with one addiction are more at risk of developing another. Some problem gamblers also find they have a problem with alcohol or drugs. There also appears to be evidence of family patterns regarding dependency, as many problem gamblers report one or both parents had a drinking and/or gambling problem.

## Ten Questions to Ask Yourself About Gambling Behavior

1. Have I often gambled longer than I had planned?
2. Have I often gambled until my last dollar was gone?
3. Have thoughts of gambling caused me to lose sleep?
4. Have I used my income or savings to gamble while letting bills go unpaid?
5. Have I made repeated, unsuccessful attempts to stop gambling?
6. Have I broken the law or considered breaking the law to finance my gambling?
7. Have I borrowed money to finance my gambling?
8. Have I felt depressed or suicidal because of my gambling losses?
9. Have I been remorseful after gambling?
10. Have I gambled to get money to meet my financial obligations?

If you or someone you know answers "yes" to any of these questions, consider seeking assistance from a professional regarding gambling behavior through one of the following resources:

- The Oklahoma City VAMC is available to consult with individuals with addictive behavior, including gambling. Call VA staff psychologist Sean W. Ferrell, Ph.D. at 405-270-0501, extension 3218, for a consultation about treatment options.
- Call the confidential National Problem Gambling Help Line Network toll-free at 1-800-522-4700 throughout the U.S.
- Veterans also may call the inpatient Gambling Treatment Program at the Brecksville, Ohio, VAMC at 440-526-3030, extension 6847, 7225, or 6962.
- Gambler's Anonymous has local meetings and their National Hotline can be reached toll-free at 1-888-GA-HELPS (1-888-424-3577).

# IMPORTANT Telephone Numbers

## Primary Care

To schedule or cancel an appointment with your Primary Care Provider, call **405-290-1890** or toll-free **1-866-835-5273** Monday–Friday (except holidays), 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m.

## All Other Clinics, Including Specialty Clinics

To schedule or cancel an appointment in one of the specialty clinics, call **405-270-0501** and enter the extension (see list below), Monday–Friday (except holidays), 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m.

Alzheimer's .....	<b>Ext. 5797</b>
Arthritis .....	<b>Ext. 3944</b>
Audiology.....	<b>Ext. 5490</b>
Bone Density.....	<b>Ext. 5159</b>
Cardiology.....	<b>Ext. 3268</b>
CAT Scan .....	<b>Ext. 4135</b>
Chaplain Service.....	<b>Ext. 5138</b>
Dean McGee Eye Institute.....	<b>Ext. 5831</b>
Dental Clinic.....	<b>405-270-5139</b>
Dental Clinic Lawton.....	<b>580-357-6981</b>
Dermatology.....	<b>Ext. 3944</b>
Diabetes Education.....	<b>Ext. 3284</b>
Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT) .....	<b>Ext. 2368</b>
Eye.....	<b>Ext. 5280</b>
Geriatrics & Home-Based Care.....	<b>Ext. 5198</b>
GI Clinic.....	<b>Ext. 3944</b>
Hematology.....	<b>Ext. 3944</b>
Infectious Disease.....	<b>Ext. 3284</b>
Infusion Clinic.....	<b>Ext. 5497</b>
Mental Health.....	<b>Ext. 5183</b>
MRI.....	<b>Ext. 5706</b>
Nephrology (Renal) .....	<b>Ext. 3284</b>
Neurology/Rehab .....	<b>Ext. 3365</b>
North May Avenue Eye Clinic....	<b>Ext. 4716</b>
Nuclear Medicine .....	<b>Ext. 4284</b>
Oncology.....	<b>Ext. 3944</b>
Outpatient Surgery.....	<b>Ext. 5855</b>
Prosthetics/Orthotics.....	<b>Ext. 5612</b>
Radiology.....	<b>Ext. 4135</b>
Smoking/Tobacco Cessation....	<b>Ext. 3360</b>
Social Work.....	<b>Ext. 5574</b>
Speech Pathology.....	<b>Ext. 3887</b>
Surgery Clinics .....	<b>Ext. 3379</b>
Ultrasound .....	<b>Ext. 4135</b>
Urology.....	<b>Ext. 3018</b>
Vascular Interventional .....	<b>Ext. 3979</b>
Women's Clinic.....	<b>Ext. 3379</b>

## Automated Prescription Refill System

To request a prescription refill, check on your prescription status, or get your account balance 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call **405-290-1610** or toll-free **1-800-694-8387**. Please have your Social Security and prescription numbers ready when calling.

## Check Upcoming Appointments

To check upcoming appointments, call **1-800-694-8387**. If you believe you have an appointment that is not listed, call the clinic directly. Call **405-270-0501** and the appropriate extension.

## After-Hours Care and Emergencies

After normal business hours, holidays, and/or weekends, staff is available to assess your symptoms and medical concerns. Call **405-290-1890** or toll-free at **1-866-835-5273**. Please note that staff is unable to schedule or cancel appointments.

## Compensation and Pension Claims

Veterans who have questions about compensation and pension claims may contact:

### VA Regional Office

125 S. Main Street  
Muskogee, OK 74401  
**1-800-827-1000**

## National Cemetery Administration

Veterans and their spouses can get the latest information on VA burial benefits, including detailed eligibility criteria, by calling Fort Sill National Cemetery at **580-492-3200**.

Editor: **Barbara L. Curry,**  
Education Coordinator

Editorial Board  
Patient Health Education  
Committee

Special Thanks  
Pictures—**Tony Caballero**

## Vet Center

The Oklahoma City Vet Center provides core services of outreach, readjustment counseling for combat stress and military sexual trauma/harassment, and follow-up, which are supplemented by numerous ancillary services such as individual, marital, family, group counseling, and employment and veterans' benefits counseling. The Vet Center is located at 3033 N. Walnut, Suite 101W, Oklahoma City, OK 73105, or call **405-270-5185**.

## Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Lawton Outpatient Clinic  
Building 4303, Pitman & Thomas  
Fort Sill, OK 73503  
**580-353-1131**

Veteran's Clinic of South Central OK  
527 W. Third Street  
Konawa, OK 74849  
**580-925-3286**

Internal Medicine Associates  
215 N. Third  
Ponca City, OK 74601  
**580-762-1777**

Veterans Clinic of North Texas  
1800 Seventh Street  
Wichita Falls, TX 76301-4388  
**940-723-2373**

## Satellite Clinic

North May Avenue Outpatient Clinic  
2915 Pine Ridge Road  
Oklahoma City, OK 73120  
**405-290-1890, option 8**

The Oklahoma City VAMC staff strives to provide you with exceptional health care. It is our goal to help you improve your overall health and well-being. If you have concerns about your care and/or safety in the hospital and you feel they have not been addressed, please contact the Patient Advocate (room GF-216) or the Director's Office (room 1A-105).

If your concern is not resolved by the Patient Advocate or Director's Office, you may contact The Joint Commission by either calling **1-800-994-6610** or e-mailing **complaint@jointcommission.org**.