Caring for America's HEROES

OKLAHOMA CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER SUMMER 2007 VOL. 7 NO. 2

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REACH Project | Reaching Out to Educate and Assist Caring, Healthy Families

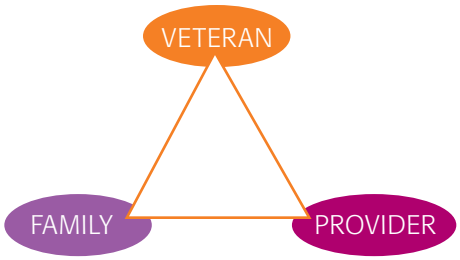
FAMILY MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM OKLAHOMA CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER
Michelle D. Sherman, Ph.D., Director

LIVING WITH EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS or post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) can affect many parts of your life — your ability to hold down a job, to have fun and to enjoy good relationships with family members and friends. But, living with emotional problems does not have to control your life.

We want YOU and your family to be "in the driver's seat." The Family Mental Health Program wants to help you feel good about yourself, have productive activities and enjoy healthy relationships.

A very important way we can help you meet these goals is to involve your family in your treatment. Just as your family members may learn about your diabetes, attend diabetes classes and help you watch your diet, family members can be very helpful with your mental health. Research has found that people living with emotional problems or PTSD do better when their family members and friends are on their "team." Also, family members do better when they have help!

The REACH Project fosters the building or rebuilding of BRIDGES from veteran to family members to the OKC VA treatment team. Veterans do best when all three sides of this triangle communicate regularly and work together.



In the REACH Project, *"family"* means people who *share our lives and care about us.* "Family" can be relatives, friends, neighbors, ministers, etc.

The REACH Project Team

What is involved in the REACH Project?

The REACH Project is tailored to each veteran/family's needs and may involve brief individual counseling with the veteran, family education, family therapy and multiple family groups. Many classes are held in the evenings to accommodate people's schedules.

How could this help our family?

Veterans and families in the REACH Project will have the chance to:

- Learn about emotional problems and PTSD (including the latest research on causes, treatment options, medications, etc.)
- Ask doctors questions in a relaxed setting
- Get and give support from other veterans and their families
- Learn how to cope with the rough times
- Figure out how to solve problems effectively as a family
- Find good ways of managing anger in the family

We hope to hear from you soon!

For more information about the REACH Project, contact Josie Freeman at **405-270-0501, ext. 2392**

Director's CORNER

David P. Wood

IN MARCH 2007, the media, both national and local, focused a lot of attention on the environment of care (EOC) issues discovered at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC). Although WRAMC is not a VA facility, the serious issues identified led to attention for both the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veteran Affairs medical centers.

During this period of time, a full review of the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center's (OKC VAMC) EOC was conducted. This included all patient care areas at the OKC VAMC, our Community-Based Outpatient Clinics and the hotel where we lodge patients overnight. I am pleased to state that no major issues were identified at any of our sites, and the minor items identified have been quickly corrected. I am committed to identifying and remedying any and all problems, and I have asked every staff member and/or patient to report any environmental concerns to one of my supervisors or directly to my office.

As many of you may have seen, the OKC VAMC welcomed local news media organizations and Congresswoman Mary Fallin to tour our medical center and see firsthand how we provide world-class health care to the men and women who have served our nation in uniform. As a medical center, we openly allowed 10 media organizations access to the facility so they could see firsthand the outstanding quality of care and customer service provided by everyone within this medical center.

I am proud to say that the medical center received many positive news articles from the *Times Record* in Wichita Falls, the *Oklahoma City News* organizations (TV and newspaper) and the *Tulsa World*. In addition, Congresswomen Fallin praised the quality of care provided to the veterans at our medical center.

I have stressed to our staff that it is vitally important we do not allow the negative stories at the national level to distract us from our mission of providing the highest level of quality care for our nation's heroes.

Please remember that the VA is committed to providing the highest quality medical, rehabilitation and support services to our veterans. The VA is fully dedicated to providing services and coordinating the lifelong care needs of individuals with long-term disabilities due to traumatic brain injury, polytrauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. VA staff and case managers are trained and prepared to facilitate access to specialized care and help veterans and their families transition back into their home communities.

Here at the OKC VAMC, we know we provide the best possible medical care to our veterans, and we will continue to exceed the high standards we have established — one day and one veteran at a time.

David Wood

David P. Wood, MHA, FACHE
Medical Center Director

We're on the MOVE! at OKC VAMC

HAROLD H. FAIN, M.D., M.P.H.

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD THE EXPRESSION, "It only takes a little bit to be above average!" With our health, a little bit above average can mean great improvements, especially when it comes to lifestyle issues such as weight, poor diet and physical inactivity.

Unfortunately, the average lifestyle for most Americans is anything but healthy. About two out of every three Americans are overweight or obese, with overweight defined as being 20 percent overweight and obese as 30 percent or more overweight. Another definition is the body mass index (BMI). A BMI level greater than 25 means you are overweight, and a BMI greater than 30 means you are obese. Ask your primary care physician or registered dietitian for more information about your BMI level.

Currently, more than 70 percent of veterans enrolled in the VA medical system are overweight or obese. Fortunately, the VA now has a program to help veterans reach an above-average level — it's called MOVE!, or Managing Overweight/Obesity in Veterans Everywhere.

It's hazardous to your health

Being overweight or obese is hazardous. Obesity increases the chance for death from all causes by 50 to 100 percent — that's one-and-a-half to two times the rate for those who are not obese. In addition to the fact that obesity can lead to death, a great deal of suffering can result from carrying excess weight. Heart disease and diseases of the blood vessels worsen in the overweight and obese, especially if it's associated with a waist size of 35 inches or greater for most women and 40 inches or greater for most men.

The added risks from other overweight- and obesity-related conditions — such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, high insulin levels and increased blood-clotting tendencies — can increase the chance of developing health problems. Other conditions directly attributable to overweight and obesity include sleep apnea, certain cancers, degenerative arthritis, gallstones and an increase in female reproductive problems. Thus, being overweight or obese is certainly hazardous to your health and is not far behind smoking as the number one cause of preventable death and disease in America.

Physical inactivity is another major factor in the development of overweight- and obesity-related "lifestyle diseases." With 25 percent of Americans sedentary and nearly 60 percent not getting enough physical activity, it's no wonder our overweight and obesity epidemic is growing. Physical activity helps prevent chronic diseases, largely by helping to control weight. The usual course for most people as they age is to decrease their activity, while their food intake remains the same or increases. The result is excess weight and the many problems associated with it.

Change is difficult

Changing behavior is very difficult, especially making lifestyle changes. Like an intricately woven tapestry, the things we do on a regular basis become interwoven into our lives, and we become comfortable with our habits. The way we eat and our activities are reinforced by the strands of our lives that support the bad habits we know are unhealthy. That's why just changing your diet or activity level alone is often unsuccessful.

Without also changing those aspects of our lifestyles that interfere with developing healthy behavior changes, our good intentions are doomed to failure. The way we eat, how we shop, the way we think, how we exercise, whom we associate with, how we handle stress — these and many other lifestyle issues contribute to the success or failure of making healthy behavior changes.

As mentioned earlier, when it comes to health, it only takes a little

effort to reach an above-average level. Many veterans who are overweight or obese would like to lose that extra 20 to 30 percent or more of excess weight. But, it's not realistic to think this much weight can be lost quickly. Studies show that people reap great health benefits by losing as little as 5 to10 percent of excess weight. Just becoming more active and cutting back on calories a bit begin to improve health immediately — even if you do not lose a single pound at first.

And, being active does not always mean 30 to 60 minutes of vigorous exercise every day. Breaking up the exercise time into short segments throughout the day is just as beneficial as doing one long segment. So, count those small bouts of exercise toward reaching the goal of 30 minutes of activity five days a week or more.

Being more active and modestly reducing daily calories will begin to help control weight, cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and other chronic problems. And, regular physical activity improves mood and increases energy levels.

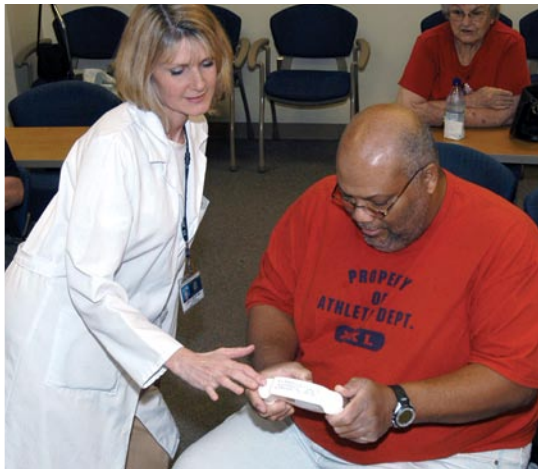
The VA's MOVE! program can help

The VA's MOVE! program is designed to work with the individual veteran's motivations and circumstances. After the veteran completes the initial enrollment and basic instruction, he or she can then chose to participate in MOVE! individually through Level 1 (self-management), Level 2 (group activities) or both. Each level has pros and cons; however, veterans tend to have more opportunities for success with the extra support, motivation and instruction a group can offer. Groups provide the expertise of nutritionists, recreational therapists, psychologists and physician specialists to help veterans be more successful in changing their lifestyles and improving their health.

The OKC VAMC, in addition to the clinics in Lawton and the Oklahoma City North May location, have active MOVE! programs at both levels. Ask your primary care provider about MOVE!

Body Fat Analyzer

Visit the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at *www.nchpdp.med.va.gov* or *www.move.med.va.gov* for more information. Contact your primary care provider for information on how to enroll in MOVE! There are available locations at the OKC VAMC, the VA clinic in Lawton and the Oklahoma City North May clinic location.



Dr. Beck assessing percent body fat

2006 NATIONAL VETERANS

Creative Arts Festival

THREE OKLAHOMA CITY VETERANS attended the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival from Oct. 16–27, 2006, hosted by the VA Black Hills Health Care System in Rapid City, S.D.

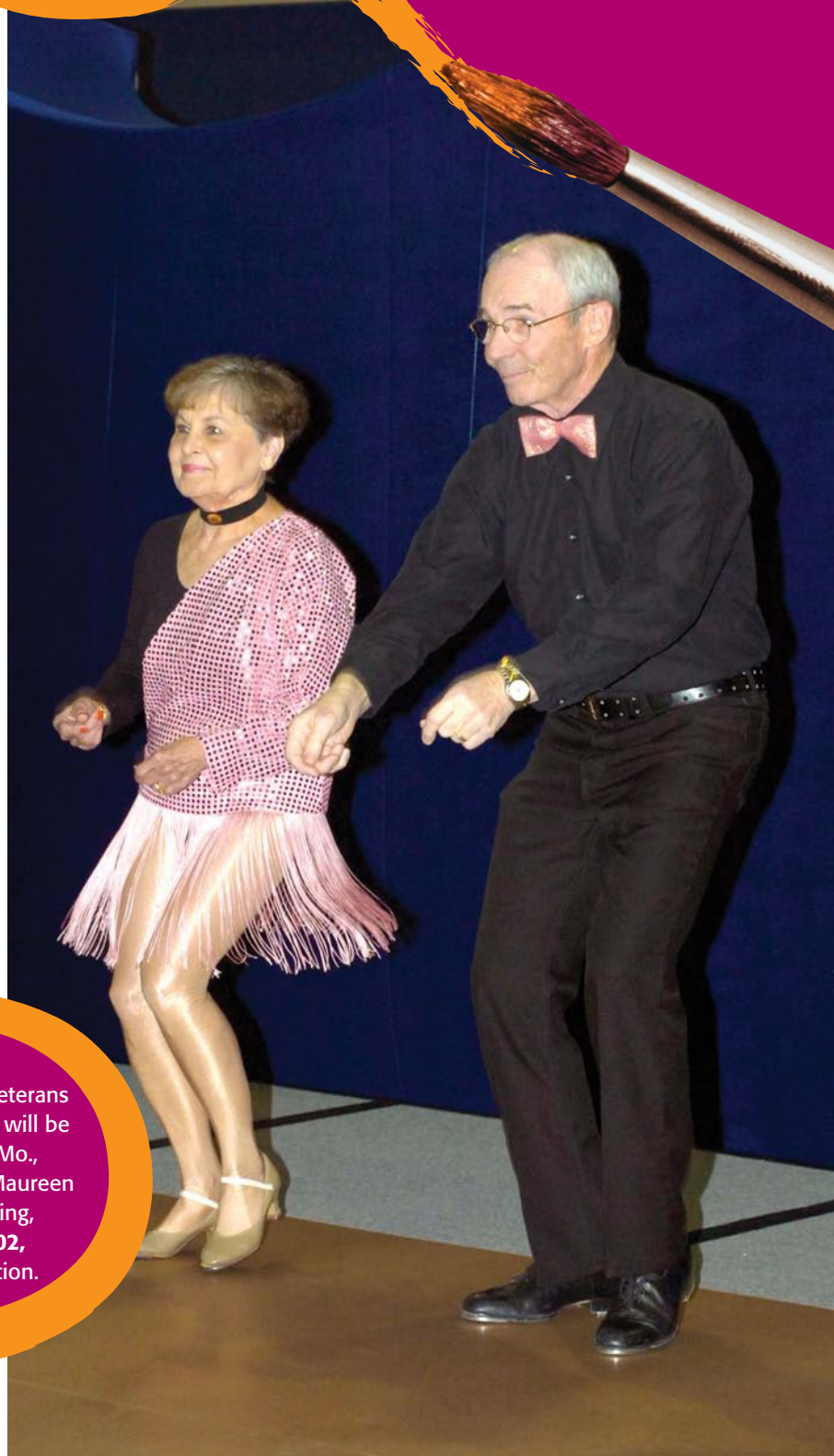
Our own Albert Grayeagle opened the show walking up the aisle playing his flute as the prelude to *Sioux Valley,* a song written by Frank Scout of the Lakota Sioux tribe from Hot Springs, S.D. Mr. Scout has had a stroke and cannot talk, but he was able to compose the song with help and was seen on stage during the number signing to three children. Paul Boruff of Salt Lake City performed the song. It was a fabulous opening to a fabulous show.

Veteran Nick Strom and his dance partner Gloria Tatum, both from Oklahoma City, tap danced to *Cabaret,* sung by Willis Sautbine of Staples, Minn.

Local veteran Douglas Heatherly won a gold medal in the "String Art Kit" category with his dream catcher within a dream catcher entitled "Red Bird."

One of the highlights of the week was a dinner at Mt. Rushmore, where the veterans dined on Buffalo Prime Rib with a view of the lit monument and a talk from a World War II veteran, Nick Clifford, who actually helped carve Mt. Rushmore.

This year our Art Show and Stage Show were held on Friday, Feb. 23, from 1–4 p.m. in the Health Wing. Our local first-place winners will be entered in the national contest. All the gold medal artists and many of the gold medal performers are invited to attend the festival.



The 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival will be held in St. Louis, Mo., in October. Contact Maureen Harvey, Health Wing, GR-111, **ext. 5202,** for more information.

Compliment CORNER

MANY TIMES, our patients share compliments regarding their health care experiences at the OKC VAMC. Here are excerpts from recently received letters.

"All of your staff treated us in a pleasant and friendly manner. Anything my husband asked about you explained to us in terms we could understand. You made us feel right at home!"

"Thank you for your compassion shown to me before, during and after my visit. The professionalism, knowledge and skill displayed by each of you should be acknowledged and commended."

"I would like to comment on the excellent service I receive from the Oklahoma City VA. The doctors and staff have been very dedicated to providing me with the highest quality of care possible. Thank you!"

"I appreciate you for taking the time to go the extra mile to help me out. With so many people like you, the VA Hospital is a great place to visit."

Please leave your compliments or suggestions in the "Tell It to the Director" boxes located throughout the medical center.

My HealtheVet NEWS

My HealtheVet *(www.myhealth.va.gov)* has taken the first step toward providing access to your health information. You must first become In Person Authenticated (IPA) to access any electronic record. To do that you must:

1. Register yourself on MyHealtheVet (be sure to check that you are a VA patient).
2. Find the IPA section; scroll down.
3. Watch the video (you may either watch the video on your computer or come to the library to watch it).
4. Print and complete the Department of Veterans Affairs Form: Individuals' Request for a copy of your own Health Information.
5. Then bring your Veterans Identification Card and completed Request form to the Release of Information Office.

The Release of Information Office will complete your IPA.

At this time, the only electronic information available from your personal health record is the names of your prescriptions. Having both the names and the prescription numbers will make refilling your prescriptions online much easier.

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

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**.

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, **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

Editor: Kenneth Wrighter, M.Ed.

Editorial Board
Patient Health Education Committee

Special Thanks
Pictures — Tony Caballero

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.***

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