



UPDATE

March/April 2013

A bi-monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve Veterans. Send news items and comments to St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, 4801 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303, or via email to Barry.Venable@va.gov

Military Sexual Trauma



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Calendar of Events

Monday, March 4—**Veterans Radio Show** on KNSI, AM 1450. Program begins at 8:10.

Tuesday, March 5—**St. Cloud Area Veterans Law Clinic**, 12 to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment. Appointments will be at the St. Cloud VA in Building T-100.

Thursday, March 7—**Telehealth Fair & Open House**, 6 to 7 p.m. at the Max J. Beilke Clinic in Alexandria, 515 22nd Ave E. Join with fellow Veterans and discover how telehealth can keep you healthy and avoid excessive trips to the clinic or hospital. At the Fair you can participate in a Clinical Video Telehealth session, apply for VA health care benefits, establish a MyHealtheVet account to manage your health care online, and participate in health and hearing screenings. The event is free, open to all Veterans and families, and light refreshments will be served.

Tuesday, March 12—**Telehealth Fair & Open House**, 6 to 7 p.m. at the VA Clinic in Brainerd, 722 NW 7th St. Please refer to the Telehealth Fair & Open House information above.

Friday, March 15—**Southwestern Minnesota Veterans' Law Clinic**, Noon to 2 p.m., at the Montevideo CBOC. FREE legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer Law, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal issues will be discussed. Please call 320-430-1051 to schedule an appointment.

Quotation of the day:

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.

— Abraham Lincoln

Calendar of Events, cont.

Tuesday, March 18—**Voluntary Services Committee Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., Auditorium (Bldg. 8)

Tuesday, March 19—**St. Cloud Area Veterans Law Clinic**, 12 to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment. Appointments will be at the St. Cloud VA in Building T-100.

Wednesday, March 20— **Voices for Veterans** radio show on WJON, AM 1240. Program begins at 8:10

Wednesday, March 20—**Telehealth Fair**, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center Canteen, 4801 Veterans Drive. Join us for a demonstration and learning opportunity on the GlobalMed Primary Care Cart and peripherals, and learn how the VA plans to increase Veteran access to health care using 21st Century technologies. An exam room on wheels, the Primary Care Cart enables a provider visit with the patient and provider in different locations.

Thursday, March 21—**Telehealth Fair & Open House**, 6 to 7 p.m. at the VA Clinic in Montevideo, 1025 North 13th St. Join with fellow Veterans and discover how telehealth can keep you healthy and avoid excessive trips to the clinic or hospital. At the Fair you can participate in a Clinical Video Telehealth session, apply for VA health care benefits, establish a MyHealthVet account to manage your health care online, and participate in health and hearing screenings. The event is free, open to all Veterans and families, and light refreshments will be served.

Calendar of Events, cont.

Monday, April 1—**Veterans Radio Show** on KNSI, AM 1450. Program begins at 8:10.

Tuesday, April 2—**St. Cloud Area Veterans Law Clinic**, 12 to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment. Appointments will be at the St. Cloud VA in Building T-100.

Tuesday, April 16—**St. Cloud Area Veterans Law Clinic**, 12 to 2 p.m. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment. Appointments will be at the St. Cloud VA in Building T-100.

Wednesday, April 17— **Voices for Veterans** radio show on WJON, AM 1240. Program begins at 8:10

Friday, April 19—**Southwestern Minnesota Veterans' Law Clinic**, Noon to 2 p.m., at the Montevideo CBOC. FREE legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer Law, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal issues will be discussed. Please call 320-430-1051 to schedule an appointment.

Friday, April 26—**St. Cloud Stand Down**, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., National Guard Armory, 1710 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud. Offers on-the-spot assistance to all Veterans, with a large variety of services offered by community organizations. All Veterans welcome. For more information contact 211—United Way, or 800-543-7709.

Health Care System Updates



New Women Veteran Program Manager—

The Chief of Staff is pleased to announce the selection of Juliness Roman, MHA, RN to serve as the St. Cloud VA Health Care System's Women Veterans Program Manager. Roman is a Veteran and served in the U.S. Army Reserve from 1996-2004. Roman is a Registered Nurse and also holds a Master of Health Administration degree. Her nursing experience includes Women's health (pre and post-partum), neonatal care, adult critical care, and chronic disease case management. Roman has been employed at the St. Cloud VA since 2008 and has held Nurse Manager and Clinic Coordinator positions. Roman's diverse nursing and military experiences will now serve to develop, enhance and promote Women Veteran services.

Flu Shots are still available— Flu shots are still available at all St. Cloud VA HCS locations. Ask your provider about a flu shot today.

*One Number...One Mission
To get you help when you need it most.*

Veterans Crisis Line



1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

Veterans

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St. Cloud VA
Health Care System
Brainerd | Montevideo | Alexandria



April is Sexual Assault/MST Awareness Month



Outreach to Veterans
Who Experienced MST:
Opening Doors and Building Bridges

While you were in the military, did you ever experience unwanted sexual attention, uninvited sexual advances, or forced sex? Military Sexual Trauma refers to sexual assault or repeated, unwanted, or threatening acts of sexual harassment which occurred while a Veteran was serving on active duty or duty for training.

Sexual trauma is often associated with significant medical conditions and emotional distress. Medical symptoms or conditions include chronic pain, gastrointestinal symptoms, and gynecologic symptoms. Common psychological or emotional conditions include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression, and Substance Abuse. Feelings of emotional numbness, social withdrawal, sexual problems, anger, and thoughts of suicide are also common.

There are many reasons that individuals who have experienced sexual trauma may not report these experiences or seek help. The culture of the military may inhibit reporting the event when it occurs. The perpetrator may have been in the same unit and may have been a superior, for example, making reporting at the time of the event difficult. Further, many individuals may not realize that their symptoms are associated with sexual trauma. Many do not realize that help is available or blame themselves for their experience. As a result, a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, or shame may be experienced.

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Treatment is available: If you have experienced MST or other sexual trauma, help is available. Treatment for MST related conditions is available through VA free of charge. Treatment for medical conditions or emotional distress associated with MST may be available free of charge even if you are not otherwise eligible for services through VA.



VA has responded to MST in a variety of ways: Since 1992, the VA has been developing initiatives to improve our ability to identify MST survivors and ensure that they have access to specialized care. For example, all Veterans seen in VA healthcare settings are asked if they experienced MST. All treatment for physical and mental health conditions related to MST is free. VA engages in outreach to Veterans about services available and ensures that staff receive training on MST-related issues. As with disabilities related to other experiences during military service, Veterans can receive compensation for disabilities or injuries resulting from MST.

If you would like more information about treatment for Military Sexual Trauma, please contact Mental Health, your primary care team, or the local MST Coordinator.

The St. Cloud VA Health Care System MST Coordinator is Joy Finkelson. Contact Joy at 320-252-1670 ext. 6398.

Disposing of unwanted medications at home

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Pharmaceutical Waste: Disposing of unwanted medications

What's the problem?

Expired or unwanted prescription or over-the-counter medications from households have traditionally been disposed of by flushing them down



the toilet or a drain. Although this method of disposal prevents immediate accidental ingestion, it can cause pollution in wastewater, which has been demonstrated to cause adverse effects to fish and other aquatic wildlife. When the water is eventually reused, it can also cause unintentional human exposure to chemicals in medications.



Disposing of medications at home

Your unwanted medications may be disposed of in your trash. Follow these precautions to prevent accidental or intentional ingestion.

1. Keep the medication in its original container.



The labels may contain safety information and the caps are typically childproof. Leaving the content information clearly visible, scratch the patient's name out or cover it over with permanent marker.

2. Modify the medications to discourage consumption.



► **For solid medications, such as pills or capsules:** add a small amount of water to at least partially dissolve them.

► **For liquid medications:** add enough table salt, flour, charcoal, or nontoxic powdered spice, such as turmeric or mustard to make a pungent, unsightly mixture that discourages anyone from eating it.

► **For blister packs:** wrap the blister packages containing pills in multiple layers of duct or other opaque tape.

Cont.



- 3. Seal and conceal.** Tape the medication container lid shut with packing or duct tape, place it inside a non-transparent bag or container such as an empty yogurt or margarine tub to ensure that the contents cannot be seen.

Do not conceal medicines in food products because they could be inadvertently consumed by wildlife scavengers.



- 4.** Discard the container in your garbage can—do not place in the recycling bin.

Managing other types of pharmaceutical waste

Unused ampoules, vials, and IV bags should not be opened (other than to scratch out the patient's name). Wrap the container with tape to minimize breakage, then place in an opaque plastic container (such as an empty yogurt or margarine tub). Wrap the outside of the container or bag with additional duct or shipping tape to prevent leakage and further obscure the contents. Dispose of the container in the trash.

Chemotherapy drugs may require special handling. Work with your healthcare provider on proper disposal options for this type of medication.

Other resources

- ▶ U.S. Geological Survey research on the presence of pharmaceuticals in the environment: toxics.usgs.gov/regional/emc
- ▶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency information on the potential environmental impacts of pharmaceuticals: www.epa.gov/ppcp

Changes ahead

As a national dialogue on pharmaceutical waste continues, additional options for management of expired or unwanted medications may become available. Check www.pca.state.mn.us/hhw for updates.

For more information on household hazardous wastes and collection programs, contact your county's solid waste office or www.pca.state.mn.us/hhw to find local program contact information.



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

www.pca.state.mn.us/hhw • 651-296-6300 • 800-657-3864

Veteran Transportation Services Now in Brainerd



An expanded transportation option for Veterans in the Brainerd area began Feb. 19. Initially, transportation services are available from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Transportation is available within a 20 mile radius of Brainerd for

Veterans who do not have other means of transportation due to financial or medical hardship.

To schedule a ride, Veterans can contact the Veterans Transportation Service office by calling (800) 247-1739, extension 7622. Veterans must be able to independently get in and out of a vehicle.

The Veterans Transportation Service is a collaborative effort between the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and the Voluntary Service program at the St. Cloud VA Health Care System. The DAV donated an 8 passenger van to the VA, while Voluntary Service is responsible for coordinating volunteer drivers.

Volunteers are needed to expand the program; there are two different volunteer assignments available. Drivers will be assigned to drive an eight passenger van while transportation assistants will be responsible for assisting with loading, securing, and unloading riders safely.

The driver and assistant will work as a team to safely transport Veterans to their appointments and will generally require a time commitment of approximately five to eight hours per day.

To learn more about these assignments and the registration process, contact the Voluntary Service Office at (800) 247-1739, extension 6365.

Telehealth Fairs in March

To increase Veteran and family awareness of the VA's increasing use of telehealth services, Telehealth Fairs are planned at all St. Cloud VA Health Care System locations in March.

Telehealth uses virtual care methods and systems to assist Veterans in staying healthy, and enhances access to care by adding a system of care without walls.

“Telehealth is especially important for Veterans who live in rural and semi-rural areas,” said Joann Houge, telehealth coordinator for the St. Cloud VA. “Virtual care allows the Veteran to participate in health care directly from their home, and avoid a trip to the clinic.”



Virtual care methods are becoming more common throughout the health care industry, and the VA continues to find new ways to use technology to increase access to care, Houge Said.

“We want to familiarize Veterans with the equipment and methods so they are comfortable using them to help obtain their health goals,” she added.

The events are free and open to all Veterans and their families.

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During the events, Veterans can see some of the telehealth tools in action and at the Community Based Outpatient Clinic locations in Alexandria, Brainerd, and Montevideo, Veterans can also meet clinic staff and tour the facility, participate in health and hearing screenings, and apply for enrollment in VA health care.

The Mobile Audiology Clinic will also be present at the clinics to conduct hearing screenings for Veterans concerned about hearing loss.

The schedule and location of the events include:

- **March 7, 6 to 7 p.m. at the Max J. Beilke VA Clinic, 515 22nd Ave. E., in Alexandria**
- **March 12, 6 to 7 p.m., at the Brainerd VA Clinic, 722 NW 7th St., in Brainerd**
- **March 20, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., in the Canteen at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, 4801 Veterans Dr., in St. Cloud**
- **March 21, 6 to 7 p.m., at the Montevideo VA Clinic, 1025 N. 13th St. in Montevideo.**



2013 Veterans Art Show

The St. Cloud VA hosted the 2013 Local Veterans Art show in February. The following photos are some of the first place winners of the contest. The first place winners will advance on to the national level where they will compete with entries submitted by Veterans from other VA facilities around the country.



2013 Veterans Art Show



Free Tax Preparation Information

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Tax Site Locations 2013

Catholic Charities

157 Roosevelt Road, Suite 100
St. Cloud, MN 56301
Tuesdays, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
January 29, 2013 to April 9, 2013

Saint Cloud Technical & Community College

1540 Northway Drive Door 6
FREE Parking-Lot A (along 9th Ave N.)
St. Cloud, MN 56301
Thursdays, 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
January 31, 2013 to April 11, 2013

Salvation Army

400 Highway 10 South
St. Cloud, MN 56304
Wednesdays, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
January 30, 2013 to April 13, 2013



For Other Questions
Call United Way 211

2-1-1 provides free and confidential information and referral. Dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-543-7709 for help with food, housing, employment, health care, counseling and more.

www.tricap.org

1210 23rd Ave S.
P.O. Box 683
Waite Park, MN 56387
320-251-1612; 1-888-765-5597



Minnesota Twins Target Field Facts



Have you ever looked at the floor in the Town Ball Tavern?

It's a hardwood floor, but not any ordinary hardwood floor. The hardwood is the same hardwood that was in the Minneapolis Armory where the Minneapolis Lakers played before they skipped town for Los Angeles.

It's obvious that the left-field scoreboard is huge, but how huge is it?

It's so big it's said to be easily seen when landing at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

By the numbers, it's the fourth-biggest scoreboard in the majors, it's nine times larger than the board at the Dome, it's as big as 1,042 42-inch TVs, and it has 4.8 miles of wiring inside.

The Grass

The grass is surely beautiful and a whole lot more appreciated once reminded of the turf Twins fans and players had to deal with at the Dome, but the grass is actually world-class.

The 2.5 acres of grass come from Fort Morgan, Colorado—the same place where Wrigley Field and Notre Dame Stadium gets its green.

A Recipe for Health

California Vegetable Soup

Ingredients

2 (16-oz.) bags California Blend vegetables
2 cans low-sodium chicken broth
8 oz. light Velveeta cheese
1 can Ro-Tel tomatoes

Directions

Cook veggies in broth until tender. Add 8 ounces light Velveeta. Melt cheese in broth and vegetables. Add one can Ro-Tel tomatoes. Serves 8

Nutritional Information: 120 calories, 1.2g fat, 6.2g protein, 534mg sodium, 23.2g carbohydrates.

Beneficiary Travel Update

Beneficiary Travel Benefits—the Basics

The VA administers a Travel Beneficiary Program to help reimburse incurred costs of travel to medical appointments for eligible Veterans.

You may qualify if:

1. you have a service connected (SC) rating of 30% or more, or
2. if less than 30% SC, you are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
3. you receive a VA pension, or
4. your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
5. you are traveling for a scheduled compensation and pension examination

VA currently reimburses at 41.5 cents per mile for all Veteran travel. In some cases, deductibles apply. Waivers of deductible are available in certain cases of financial hardship. Veterans can apply for waivers at the Travel Office service window in Bldg. 5.

Veterans can choose to go to any VA facility, however, travel can only be reimbursed from place of residence to the nearest VA facility, including CBOCs, that can provide the needed care.

Beneficiary travel claims must be made at the time of or within 30 calendar days of an eligible appointment, including claims for weekend clinics and authorized Non-VA care appointments.

Claims for travel reimbursement can be submitted in person at the Travel Office service window in Bldg. 5, or via phone by calling (320) 255-6442.

Veterans receiving care or services at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center are reimbursed in cash.

Veterans receiving care at CBOCs can file claims with the clerk at the conclusion of an appointment or by calling (320) 255-6442. Reimbursement for CBOC travel is paid by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT, or direct deposit) only.

Important Changes to Beneficiary Travel

New Mileage Reimbursement Calculation Software

The VA provides mileage reimbursement to eligible Veterans to the nearest VA facility, including CBOCs, where the care or services can be provided. Starting March 1, 2013, BING™ maps are used to determine shortest travel distances. The more accurate mileage calculations may result in slight differences in beneficiary travel reimbursement .

Discontinuance of Reimbursement by Check

Starting March 1, 2013, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) will be used for all travel reimbursement to St. Cloud VA affiliated CBOCs, and paper checks will no longer be issued. EFT automatically deposits funds into a bank account. In most cases, this transition requires no action by the Veteran, and payments will be automatically linked to bank accounts. NOTE: Veterans must still file a beneficiary travel claim to receive any reimbursement.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Is it possible to deposit my beneficiary travel reimbursement into a different account?

Currently, the only bank account that can be utilized for EFT is the account that was automatically linked to by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). We anticipate that Veterans will be able to designate payments to other accounts in the near future.

Will I be notified when my beneficiary travel reimbursement is deposited into my account? Notification of funds deposited varies from bank to bank. Please consult your financial institution.

If I receive my beneficiary travel reimbursement at the St. Cloud VA will I continue to receive cash? Those Veterans who receive care at the St. Cloud VA and present to the beneficiary travel office will continue to receive cash reimbursement at this time.

If I don't want to utilize EFT can I obtain cash payment for CBOC travel reimbursement by driving to St. Cloud? No. All Beneficiary travel reimbursement requests for services provided at a CBOC will be processed utilizing EFT. Additionally, Veterans cannot be reimbursed for travel to St. Cloud for the purpose of obtaining cash for CBOC travel reimbursement.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Beneficiary Travel Office at 320-255-6442.

March is Social Worker Month



Social Work is the profession of hope—fueled by resilience and advocacy. Social Workers matter because they help millions of struggling people every day dream differently.

In the United States, more than 650,000 of these highly trained professionals know how daunting and immobilizing life’s tragedies and obstacles can be. But they also witness the sheer determination of countless individuals and families to achieve different lives. Sometimes, all it takes to help people get on the right path is guidance toward what is possible. Other times, social workers are an immediate lifeline in crisis—providing access to resources and new life options.

Those served by social workers possess many strengths that keep them fighting for a better future despite personal and systemic barriers to success. They climb toward what is possible rather than simply accepting what the current situation may be. Professional social workers help combine these client strengths with effective personal and public advocacy.

It is with these concepts in mind that NASW has announced the theme for Social Work Month 2013 as:

***“Weaving Threads of Resilience and Advocacy:
The Power of Social Work.”***

March is Social Worker Month

Cont.

A Nation's Fabric

Our national fabric is comprised of many diverse lives. It is vibrant and strong because it has been woven from the stories of people from every continent into a compelling narrative of struggle, renewal, and success. Each thread helps make a brilliant tapestry that continues to be the envy of the world.

Stronger Safety Nets

Resilience and determination alone cannot overcome all crises, but weaving those strengths with targeted advocacy often can. The Social Work profession has a distinguished history of not only providing social safety nets to the most vulnerable, but also challenging systems that impede social mobility.

Positive Futures

Stories of hope in the face of tragedy share a common theme: better times are ahead. Illness, loss, abuse, and poverty shape our lives in profound ways, but how we learn to deal with each circumstance can determine how much those experiences define our limitations—or our opportunities.



Construction Update

Pharmacy



This project will improve our Pharmacy services by adding 2,000 square feet to Building 5. this first phase is now essentially complete. The second phase includes renovation of approximately 5,500 square feet of existing Building 5 Pharmacy space.

Audiology



The Audiology expansion project will add a 2,800 square foot, single-story addition to the existing Audiology Department in Building 29 as well as remodel approximately 1,800 square feet of existing Audiology Department space. The new addition is almost complete and exams are already being conducted there. Please excuse the mess in the corridor as we work to remodel the existing clinic space.



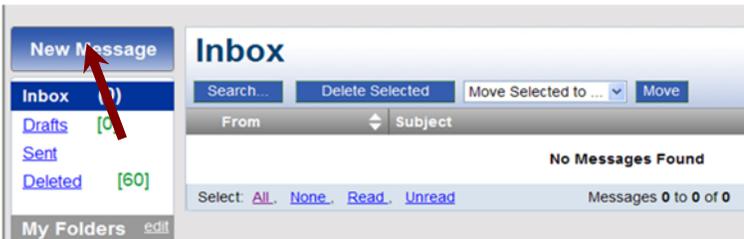
Just think - no more phone tag!

With Secure Messaging thru My Health^eVet, you can contact your VA Healthcare team without waiting on hold or playing phone tag. Secure Messaging is as easy to use as email, but completely safe and secure. It's great for non-urgent communication and general healthcare-related questions.

No Waiting on Hold!
No Waiting for a Call Back!
Don't Delay, Opt-in Today!

How to use Secure Messaging:

- 1) Log into your My Health^eVet account at: www.myhealth.va.gov
(Forgot your User ID or Password? Simply click on the 'Forgot User ID' or 'Forgot Password' link directly below the sign in box. Note, you only need to answer one of the two security questions that will appear.)
- 2) Select "Secure Messaging" on the top navigation bar, then click on the orange "Open Secure Messaging" tab in the middle of the screen.
- 3) If it's the first time you're accessing your Secure Messaging inbox, you will need to read the terms and conditions and select 'Opt In'.



- 4) Click 'New Message' and your provider's name will automatically be in the 'To' line of the message.

We hope you take advantage of Secure Messaging. If you have any questions about Secure Messaging or My Health^eVet, please contact me via phone or email. I'll be happy to explain this time-saving tool.

You can also stop by my office during your next visit to the St. Cloud VA and I'll help you get on-track with Secure Messaging and many of the other great tools and features of My Health^eVet.



Brian Vetter
My Health^eVet Coordinator
St. Cloud VA Healthcare System
Phone: 320-252-1670, dial 9 then ext: 7335





Take care of your buddy!

Help a fellow Veteran enroll
for VA healthcare.
Contact your County Veteran
Service Officer, call the St.
Cloud VA at 320-255-6340,
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