

VA New England Healthcare System

WINTER 2013

VETERANS'

healthy living

**Anything
is Possible**

**Veteran
Volunteers
Transform
Healthcare**



**VA
HEALTH
CARE**

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century



Dear Veterans

A Message from the Network Director

Michael F. Mayo-Smith, M.D., M.P.H.
Network Director



This holiday season there are many things to be thankful for. We here at the VA are thankful for all of you!

On page 3, you will find the article “Veteran Volunteers Transform Healthcare.” It explains how the VA is changing the face of healthcare with a fascinating genetic research study called Million Veteran Program. Enrollment in the program takes a mere 20 minutes and, when compared to the far-reaching potential benefits of the findings, 20 minutes is well worth it! To all the Veterans who have stepped forward or plan to step forward and take part in this program: thanks a million.

On Pages 4 and 5, you will find Natalie Dell’s inspirational story about her road to Olympic glory. She said being part of a team and working with others taught her “Anything is Possible.” She said, “You cannot achieve anything great without the help of others, whether it’s an Olympic medal or serving Veterans. You can’t do it alone.” Congratulations, Natalie! We are proud that you are part of the VA team!

“VA Brings Traveling Benefits to the Big E” on page 6 reiterates the VA’s quest of providing quality healthcare to all qualifying Veterans. Veterans who served and sacrificed for our country are entitled to and deserve VA services. Many of you, who at one time bravely stood shoulder to shoulder, know there is strength in numbers, and as more Veterans enroll for services, the VA grows stronger, too. If you know someone eligible for VA healthcare, encourage him or her to once again stand shoulder to shoulder with fellow Veterans and access what they have rightfully earned.

This year, Boston had the honor of hosting the 2012 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. The article “Healing Arts” on page 7 tells how Veterans participating in a variety of visual and performing arts competitions had the opportunity to showcase their talents as a form of creative arts therapy—a winning combination for all involved. Also on page 7 is the article “Close to Home.” Is there a CBOC right around the corner from you? Take a look; a VA clinic may be closer than you think!

Thank you for your service. Now let us serve you!

Michael F. Mayo-Smith, M.D., M.P.H.
Network Director

On the Cover: Natalie Dell, U.S. Rowing Bronze medalist and Bedford VA teammate.

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Veteran Volunteers Transform Healthcare

Not unlike their already selfless service to the nation, Veterans are stepping forward to help others in a new way — an exciting new VA research program to study how genes affect health. The Million Veteran Program (MVP) launched in January 2011, and the goal is for one million Veterans in the VA Healthcare System to volunteer to take part in this pioneering program, reaching a million participants over the next five to seven years.

VA strives to be a leader in research to provide the best healthcare available, and this new initiative aims to transform healthcare for Veterans as well as all Americans. To achieve this lofty goal, MVP is creating an enormous medical database of genetic, military experience, lifestyle, and health information for research on diseases and military-related illnesses (such as post-traumatic stress disorder). In the long run, researchers hope to find new ways of preventing and treating illnesses in Veterans.

The research may help doctors understand why some people get diseases and others do not, and according to Dr. J. Michael Gaziano, MVP Principal Investigator, genes

research can even provide future insight on prescribing medications. “It may help us pick a particular drug for a patient,” said Dr. Gaziano. “Some patients respond to certain drugs and others don’t, and understanding about how the genetics influences that will help us tailor therapies for a given individual.”

In general, gaining a better understanding of how genes work may help to prevent and improve treatment of common illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. By collecting genetic samples and health information from large groups of people, researchers can compare which genes are linked to certain health traits. And that’s why VA is calling for one million Veterans, as people from all walks of life are important to making the database an invaluable resource.

So what does involvement in MVP include? Participants will fill out surveys about health and health-related behaviors;

provide a blood sample that will be stored for future research; complete an optional health assessment; allow secure access to VA and VA-linked medical and health information; and allow future contact.

The samples and data will be available to VA researchers, other federal health agencies, and academic institutions for research projects approved by VA oversight committees. However, the name, address, date of birth, or social security number of every participating Veteran will not be included in the VA Central Research Database. In fact, VA is going to great lengths to protect privacy of volunteers, as security and patient confidentiality are top priorities for MVP.

Knowledge about the effects of certain genes has already aided in the screening, diagnosis, and treatment for illnesses. Together, MVP researchers and participating Veterans can help transform healthcare for future generations.

For more information about MVP, visit www.research.va.gov/mvp, call toll-free at (866) 441-6075, or visit an MVP enrolling site.



Fernando Malonado Garcia, Veteran, Natalie Dell, Bedford VA Employee and Olympic Bronze Medalist, and Michael "Mikey" Masse, Veteran

Anything is Possible

Obtaining goals is never easy, but people like Natalie Dell, who have unwavering determination and the ability to endure any obstacle, prove that any goal, no matter how difficult it may be, is achievable.

What was Natalie's goal? To achieve the status of a world-class athlete by securing a position on the elite women's rowing national team. Her aspirations didn't stop there—she was actually looking past the national team at a spot on the Olympic team. It seemed like an unattainable dream, but Natalie decided to give it her all. The odds seemed stacked against her even before she got into a boat

because in the sport of rowing, most female competitors stand well over six foot, but Natalie was a mere 5' 8" tall. It didn't slow her down, though—she just trained harder.

Not once, but three times Natalie tried out for the national team and was shut out. At the tryouts, she said, "I got destroyed by the other women." After each attempt, she returned home and continued training on her own. It was difficult as she juggled training time before and after work at the Bedford VA, but she never gave up. On her fourth attempt, the coaches finally noticed Natalie and invited her to the training center—one of

"Sharing the message that we all have dreams to realize and obstacles to overcome, even Olympians, proved to be inspirational to Veterans and staff."

- Christine Croteau

only 40 women who recruited from across the country for the team. She said, "From the day I entered the training center as full-time athlete, I had exactly two years to train for the Olympics."

The strenuous seven-day-a-week training took place in Princeton, New Jersey, in the summer and San Diego, California, in the winter. In the

“Oftentimes, the obstacles I faced in making the Olympic team seemed insurmountable. But the strength I received from the VA set me apart from my competition and eventually enabled me to step onto the podium with my teammates. The VA provided the financial stability of part-time employment and unparalleled support from my coworkers. Because of the VA, I was a force to be reckoned with. So this may be my Olympic medal, but it is also yours. Thank you for being a part of this journey.”

- Natalie Dell

midst of the training, Natalie still miraculously continued teleworking for the Bedford VA. “I had a huge network of people, a hospital director, and a public affairs officer at the VA that stood behind me no matter what,” she said. “I knew everything would work out for me if the Olympics didn’t.” She added that having the VA on her side gave her a huge advantage over many of the other women who only had rowing because for them, it was all or nothing.

On the line, getting ready to race for a spot on the Olympic team, Natalie didn’t think she had a chance. She said, “After two years of training, I was ranked at the bottom of those 40 women. I was a long shot.” She might have been a long shot, but she made the team. Natalie and her quadruple sculls rowing team went on to win bronze at the 2012 Olympic games in London. Reflecting on her Olympic win, she said, “It’s a deep honor to win a medal for the United States, but I felt like I was winning a medal for the VA, too, especially Bedford VA, so I had a lot of pride in that.”

Now that Natalie is back to work full-time at the Bedford VA, she said she is still experiencing what it feels like to be part of a team. “You cannot achieve anything great without the help of others,” she said, “whether it’s an Olympic medal or serving Veterans. You can’t do it alone. Working within the rowing sphere taught me anything is possible if you are willing to collaborate with others. It does inspire me to work for this incredible cause—for Veterans. It’s a big responsibility, but its possible because of teamwork.”

Giving her all to the Veterans she works with, she said, “I am

very excited to put my career first. I have a master’s degree, and I’ve always been passionate about public health. It’s the first time I can put all my energy into my career.”

Currently, Natalie is managing a mental health research study at the VA facilities in Boston, Bedford, and Providence. The study investigates the health behaviors of Veterans in primary care and tracks what happens to them after they have had a positive screen for depression. “We are speaking with providers for primary care screening processes of mental health and looking for any opportunities to better serve our Veterans.”

What goals has Natalie set for her VA career? Only time will tell. But, one thing is certain: great things are in store for the Veterans she works with in VISN 1 because of her drive, determination, and ability to overcome any obstacle.



From left to right: Natalie Dell, Kara Kohler, Megan Kalmoe and Adrienne Martelli

VA Brings Traveling Benefits to The Big E



Katy Americo talks VA healthcare with a Veteran

In September, well over one million New Englanders flocked to West Springfield, MA, to take part in “The Big E,” the largest fair in the Northeast. Although many came to the extravaganza for the entertainment, attractions, and parades, the VA New England Healthcare System was there for a very important cause—to educate and get Veterans enrolled into VA healthcare.

Mike McNamara, Outreach Program Manager for the VA New England Healthcare System, reported that 106 Veterans were enrolled during The Big E, while more mail-in enrollments will continue to come in. But the VA did much more than that. “This year we had over 60 healthcare professionals from across VISN 1 working, plus on-site mobile Vet Centers from Springfield,

MA, and White River Junction, VT,” he said. “There were representatives from every facility and all facets of VA to include OEF/OIF, Women Vets, Minority Vets, and Homeless Vets coordinators.” Employees were available to assist Veterans with enrolling in My HealthVet, and the VA even provided flu shots to enrolled Veterans—right on the spot.

“We’ve increased our participation each year, and we are now the official sponsor of The Big E’s Military Appreciation Day [opening day],” said McNamara. The Veterans parade was even lead by the VA New England Healthcare System.

McNamara and the team are reaching out to all Veterans to make them aware of the great healthcare benefits available

through the VA. Many Veterans use other health insurance and don’t use the VA because they believe that they are allowing others who are more needy or injured are more “deserving” of benefits to get assistance. Yet when more Veterans use the system, more money is given to VA for additional programs to assist additional Veterans. Through outreach events like The Big E, the VA is encouraging all Veterans to use the benefits they have rightfully earned. McNamara said, “On September 14 alone, we spoke to more than 600 Veterans and their families. We distributed dozens of 10-10EZ enrollment forms, which will be mailed into our facilities over the next couple of months.”

To find out if you’re eligible for VA healthcare, visit your local VA medical facility or call 1-866-825-1465.



Dr. Glen Gechlik, VISN 1, passes out American Flags during the parade

VA MEDICAL CENTERS

CONNECTICUT

VA Connecticut Healthcare System

Newington Campus
555 Willard Avenue
Newington, CT 06111
(860) 666-6951

West Haven Campus
950 Campbell Avenue
West Haven, CT 06516
(203) 932-5711

MAINE

VA Maine Healthcare System

1 VA Center
Augusta, ME 04330
(207) 623-8411
(877) 421-8263

MASSACHUSETTS

Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hosp.

200 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730
(781) 687-2000

VA Boston Healthcare System

Brockton Campus
940 Belmont Street
Brockton, MA 02301
(508) 583-4500

Jamaica Plain Campus
150 S. Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02130
(617) 232-9500

West Roxbury Campus
1400 VFW Parkway
West Roxbury, MA 02132
(617) 323-7700

VA Central Western MA Healthcare System

421 North Main Street
Leeds, MA 01053
(413) 584-4040

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Manchester VAMC
718 Smyth Road
Manchester, NH 03104
(603) 624-4366
(800) 892-8384

RHODE ISLAND

Providence VAMC
830 Chalkstone Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 273-7100
(866) 590-2976

VERMONT

White River Junction VAMC
215 North Main Street
White River Junction,
VT 05009
(802) 295-9363

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Danbury CBOC
7 Germantown Road
Danbury, CT 06810
(203) 798-8422

New London CBOC
4 Shaw's Cove, Suite 101
New London, CT 06320
(860) 437-3611

Stamford CBOC
Stamford Health System
1275 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06905
(203) 325-0649

Waterbury CBOC
95 Scovill Street
Waterbury, CT 06706
(203) 465-5292

Willimantic CBOC
1320 Main Street
Tyler Square (next to
Social Security Office)
Willimantic, CT 06226
(860) 450-7583

Winsted CBOC
115 Spencer Street
Winsted, CT 06098
(860) 738-6985

MAINE

Bangor CBOC
35 State Hospital Street
Bangor, ME 04401
(207) 561-3600

Lincoln Outreach Clinic (Bangor Satellite Clinic)
99 River Road
Lincoln, ME 04457
(207) 403-2000

Calais CBOC
50 Union Street
Calais, ME 04619
(207) 904-3700

Caribou CBOC
163 Van Buren Road, Ste. 6
Caribou, ME 04736
(207) 493-3800

Fort Kent CBOC
Medical Office Building
197 East Main St.
Fort Kent, ME 04743
(207) 834-1572

Houlton Outreach Clinic
Houlton Regional Hospital
20 Hartford Street
Houlton, ME 04730
(877) 421-8263, ext. 2000

Lewiston/Auburn CBOC
15 Challenger Drive
Lewiston, ME 04240
(207) 623-8411 Ext. 4601
(877) 421-8263 Ext. 4601

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Bingham, ME 04920
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Portland, ME 04101
(207) 771-3500

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431 Franklin Street
Rumford, ME 04276
(207) 369-3200

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New Bedford, MA 02740
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Pittsfield, MA 01201
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Plymouth, MA 02360
(800) 865-3384

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114 Whitwell Street
Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 376-2010

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25 Bond Street
Springfield, MA 01104
(413) 731-6000

Worcester CBOC
605 Lincoln Street
Worcester, MA 01605
(508) 856-0104

NEW HAMPSHIRE

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71 Hobbs Street
Conway, NH 03818
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

Keene Outpatient Clinic
640 Marlboro Street
Keene, NH 03431
(603) 358-4900

Littleton CBOC
658 Meadow Street, Ste. 4
Littleton, NH 03561
(603) 444-1323

Portsmouth CBOC
302 Newmarket Street
Portsmouth, NH 03803
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

Somersworth CBOC
200 Route 108
Somersworth, NH 03878
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

Tilton CBOC
630 Main Street, Ste. 400
Tilton, NH 03276
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
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RHODE ISLAND

Middletown CBOC
One Corporate Place
Middletown, RI 02842
(401) 847-6239

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Bennington CBOC
186 North Street
Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 447-6913

Brattleboro CBOC
71 GSP Drive
Brattleboro, VT 05301
(802) 251-2200

Colchester CBOC
162 Hegeman Ave., Unit 100
Colchester, VT 05446
(802) 655-1356

Newport Outpatient Clinic
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Newport, VT 05855
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