



AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

DEPARTMENT OF IOWA



SERVING VETERANS, THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Auxiliary Communique - Winter 2017-2018

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VA & R: Service to Veterans

Kathy Wilkerson

Iowa City VA tour, October 27, 2017

Representatives of the American Legion, SAL and American Legion Auxiliary met with Judith Johnson-Mekota, FACHE Director of the Iowa City VA and other staff members. Discussion participants: Mary Littrell, ALA Representative; Mary Bollinger, 1st District ALA President; Mike Etzel, Department Commander; Bob Waugh, 1st District Commander; Gary Bonesteel, SAL Detachment Commander; Gary Golson, Iowa City VAMC Claims Representative; and Kathy Wilkerson VA&R Service to Veterans Chair.

Everyone introduced themselves by name and position.

Director Judith shared that suicide prevention is priority 1. 14 of the 20 per day suicide victims are not "touched" by the VHA.

Chief of Staff has been on the job for approximately 5 weeks after almost a year long vacancy in this position. He has previous service in the Las Vegas VAMC and in Tennessee. The staff spoke of following I CARE, Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence.

Commander Etzel provided me a list of 3 questions from President Vicki.

1. Female Veterans needs met?
 - a. The Iowa City team is very proactive on meeting the female Veterans needs. There is a clinic specifically for women. Current plans are the women's clinic will occupy the entire 4th floor of the Specialty Clinic that is currently under Phase I construction.
 - b. There are currently 8 Veterans undergoing IVF and that service is only available at the Iowa City VAMC
2. Building concerns?
 - a. Space - as they are landlocked on 9 acres. They have a 15-year facility master plan.
 - b. Dental and robotics will be moving to where the Iowa City Post Office used to be located once the building is remodeled. This will free up space on the main campus for other opportunities.
3. Updated wants list?
 - a. Mary Littrell has the current needs list on the Department Auxiliary web page.
 - b. More drivers are needed. This need is expected to increase once the Dental clinic is relocated to the old Post Office building.
 - i. Requirements to be a driver
 1. Valid drivers license with no prior DUI
 2. Training provided by VA
 - c. More volunteers as a whole

- d. Trac phones
- e. Calling cards

After the discussion, TAL Commander Etzel, SAL Commander Bonesteel, 1st District Commander Waugh, Gary Golson and myself toured the facility. We were able to visit the new Specialty Clinic under construction. Due to monetary constraints, the clinic is being built in 3 phases. Phase I is the lower level mechanical and first floor clinic. Phase II will be the second and third floors and Phase III will be the fourth floor. We next visited where the ER will be relocating to once the MRI relocation to the floor above the ER is complete. Plans include building a new ambulance barn where the ambulances will be able to pull through instead of pulling, dropping off and then having to back out. One of the engineers shared they have reorganizations planned out to 22 moves in advance. After the VA staff ended the tour of the new facilities, Gary provided additional exploration of the various medical services provided.

The Iowa City VAMC offers a holistic approach to medical care that includes chiropractic care and acupuncture. They utilize care teams for the Veterans. They have a great partnership with the University of Iowa as many of the doctors are 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 year residents. We visited the in-patient rooms and learned they are all private rooms with rails. The rails cover the entire room and extend into the bathroom to use the toilet or the shower. Having the rails in all the in-patient rooms is easier on both the patient that needs this type of assistance and the staff. Chemotherapy is available for oncology patients. Dialysis is offered in the renal department. Cardiology and mental health are 2 other specialties offered.

After the tour, we returned to Gary's office where he shared some additional information about the Iowa City VAMC. I learned there is a research building. Some of the research is around therapy dogs as such there are several Veterans that can have a therapy dog as part of the research taking place at the Iowa City VAMC. Research and advancement of prosthetics is another accomplishment of the facility.

Gary offered that anyone wanting to tour the Iowa City VA can contact him and he will make the necessary arrangements.

Chaplain's Corner

Doris Jackson,
Department Auxiliary Chaplain
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Winter is here! The temperature is quickly dropping and snowflakes are gently falling. I love this time of year and the beauty God creates!

The Meaning of the Snowflake
Every new snowflake comes to the earth as a picture of our Saviour's birth, because they are sent from up above and remind us of God's care and love. Each one is so intricate and small because Christ sees the details of us all, and just as two are never the same He knows and calls us each by name. Snowflakes gently cover the world in white and hide what's unlovely from our sight, showing us how He covers our sin and gives us His grace when we come to Him. So may every snowflake bring Christ to mind and in every bit of white may you find a reason to celebrate anew and a reminder of His love for you.

Holley Gerth

During this Holiday season, please remember our troops overseas, their families and our soldiers stateside. May we pray for their safe return to their families.

Wishing everyone a Blessed New Year!

American Legion Auxiliary Department of Iowa

DISTRICT	GOAL	PAID	%	STANDING
1	2511	1785	71.09%	2
2	2836	1898	68.37%	6
3	3779	2545	68.43%	3
4	3373	2430	71.14%	1
5	1754	1042	60.06%	9
6	2515	1637	65.09%	7
7	2124	1357	63.89%	8
8	2511	1736	70%	4
9	3405	2290	67.25%	5
10	100	144		
TOTAL	24908	16864	68.36%	