

2012 Annual Report



Veterans Choice



VA
HEALTH
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EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century



VETERANS
VAFFAIRS
Tomah, Wisconsin Medical Center



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2012 Annual Report



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Mario V. DeSanctis
FACHE

Mario V. DeSanctis was appointed director of the Tomah VA Medical Center on Feb. 12, 2012.

As director, he is responsible for planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling medical, administrative and supporting operations of the Tomah VA and its four area outpatient clinics. This includes managing resources, 960 staff members and 400 volunteers to provide medical care and treatment to more than 25,000 patients.

He is responsible for developing and implementing an outpatient program including primary, specialty and mental health care for a rural 16-county area in Central Wisconsin and Minnesota through a combination of on-site, tele-health, purchased, and referral services.

He is responsible for the planning and operation of a 266-bed inpatient facility located on the 171-acre historical campus.

This includes operation of an acute medicine unit and serving as a network referral site for acute mental health; residential treatment for post traumatic stress disorder; substance abuse and compensated work therapy; and a comprehensive range of long-term care services including rehabilitation, hospice, dementia, and mental health.

The Medical Center of Choice *for our nation's heroes*



In February, I celebrated my one-year anniversary as the Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center Director, and I feel as if I have come home since I moved to Tomah.

As an experienced career Air Force Medical

Service Corps officer and Veteran, I feel like I have found a very special place to provide leadership and service to our Veterans.

I look forward to all of the great things we will accomplish at the Tomah VA Medical Center. My goals are to build a strong healthcare team; achieve service excellence in quality, access and resources; ensure healthcare compliance; and provide outstanding customer service.

Over the past year, our staff has done an amazing job -- taking care of our nation's heroes.

Our Veterans receive high quality healthcare as evidenced by the superb results achieved during inspections conducted in 2012 by

the Joint Commission, Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities and the Office of the Inspector General to name a few.

Please consider this annual report as an extension of our relationship with you as a member of our community: a Veteran, a patient, or family member of one of our patients.

Since 1947, we have provided quality care to Veterans of our community and surrounding areas.

From mental health to diagnostics, fitness to rehabilitation, Veterans depend on us for care focused on America's heroes - focused on YOU!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mario V. DeSanctis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mario V. DeSanctis, FACHE
Medical Center Director

Executive Leadership *Implementing the principles of excellence*



Sandra K. Gregar, was appointed as the Associate Director on Dec. 7, 2008. Gregar, until retiring in November 2012, was responsible for the administrative operations of the facility.

Prior to her appointment at Tomah VA, Ms. Gregar served as the Deputy Director of Patient Financial Services, a consolidated patient account center for Veterans Integrated Service Network 12 (VISN 12) from October 2006 to December 2008.

Ms. Gregar also has extensive experience at the Tomah VA where she served as the Administrative Assistant to the Director, Acting Performance Improvement Director, Support Service Line Manager, and the Chief of Nutrition and Food Service.

Ms. Gregar received her bachelors and masters degrees in Food Science and Nutrition from the University of Wisconsin Stout, in Menomonie Wis. She is a registered dietitian and member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.



David J. Houlihan, MD, was appointed Chief of Staff at the Tomah VA on Aug. 21, 2005.

Dr. Houlihan is responsible for all clinical operations at the medical center. He has direct line authority over the four clinical service lines, providing services for the facility's 266 inpatient beds, as well as outpatient primary and specialty services, and the four community based outpatient clinics.

Dr. Houlihan received his M.D. degree from the University of Iowa College of Medicine, Iowa City, Iowa. He completed his internship and residency at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, Pittsburgh. In October 1995, he received Board Certification from the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

Dr. Houlihan received recertification in July 2005 with qualifications in psychosomatic medication in August 2005.



Judith E. Broad, RN, BSN, MSN, PhD was appointed as the Associate Director for Patient Care Services position on Dec. 18, 2011.

She is responsible for the provision of all nursing services at the Tomah VA and four outpatient clinics. She has direct line authority for nursing, social work, respiratory therapy, and medical equipment reprocessing.

Dr. Broad has extensive administrative experience. For the past five years, she has been the Tomah VA Performance Improvement Director and Clinical Chief for Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing at the University of Rochester Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, N.Y.

Dr. Broad received a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Capital University, Columbus, Ohio; a master of science degree in psychiatric nursing from the Frances Payne Bolton School of Nursing, Case Western Reserve University, and a philosophy of science doctoral degree from the University of Rochester, Rochester, N.Y.



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New Cafeteria Line Open

Tomah VA Nutrition and Food Service rang in the new year with an open house and grand opening of the new cafeteria line on Jan. 4 in the main dining room.

The new cafeteria line was a collaboration of efforts including the food service workers helping to choose the line colors.

The new cafeteria line features eco-friendly additions including an ice dispenser and juice dispensers.



Photo courtesy La Crosse Tribune

Welcoming A New Director

Mario DeSanctis says his highest privilege is serving Veterans by working in health care. “They put it all on the line for us, so to help them, it’s a privilege,” said DeSanctis.

A privilege he welcomes in his position as the new director at the Tomah VA Medical Center.

He started in February, replacing Jerald Molnar, who retired in June after 18 years at the VA.

As director, DeSanctis is responsible for the Tomah VA and its outpatient clinics in La Crosse, Wausau, Wisconsin Rapids, and Clark County. The facilities provide care to more than 25,000 Veterans in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

DeSanctis’ main goal as director is to make the Tomah VA the top-choice facility for Veterans.

Drive Thru Flu Clinic

In October, more than 100 Veterans took part in a drive-thru flu clinic in front of Building 400 on the Tomah VA campus. Veterans, volunteers and employees had the opportunity to protect themselves against the flu without even getting out of their cars.





Tomah Hosts Health Fair

The Tomah Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center hosted a Veterans benefits fair on February 28 on its campus.

Veterans, VA staff and members of the public visited the Tomah VA, learned about the numerous benefits available to Veterans through the VA, state and county organizations.

“(The health benefits fair) was a terrific way for Veterans to learn more about the benefits they have earned by serving our nation,” said Toby Lane, the administrative assistant to the Tomah VA associate director and Veterans Health Benefits Fair organizer.

Re-Creation Visits Tomah

The Re-Creation variety show entertained Veterans at the Tomah VA with five generations of music in the chapel on June 6 during their annual tour for hospitalized Veterans.

The theme for the 2012 Re-Creation variety show was “Everyday People.”

The show took Veterans on a trip down memory lane with renditions of music spanning from the 1930s to today, including some well-known tunes from Disney movies and patriotic favorites. The one-hour show is a fast-paced performance of medleys and songs from several genres and generations, performed to choreography and a new costume for every set that is steeped in appreciation for Veterans.



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2012 Heroes Freedom Run

The Tomah VA campus was the host to the 5th Annual Heroes Freedom Run in September.

More than 150 runners, walkers and rollers participated in the welcome celebratory run in honor of all Veterans who served in Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.



Tomah Purchases Eco-friendly Vehicles

The Tomah VA received its first of many environmentally-friendly vehicles in 2012 as the VA continues to strive to make itself not only taxpayer friendly, but environmentally friendly.

The Ford Explorer is the first of five fuel efficient vehicles to come to the Tomah campus.

The partial electric sport utility vehicle gets 33 miles per gallon on the highway and 31 miles per gallon in the city.

Nationally, the VA's vehicle fleet consists of almost 17,000 owned and leased green vehicles as a part of the Green Management Program.

La Crosse Stand Down

Hundreds of local veterans received access to benefits they may not even have known they had during the Veterans Stand Down in La Crosse, Wis.

American Legion Post 52 hosted the 15th Annual La Crosse Stand Down in October.

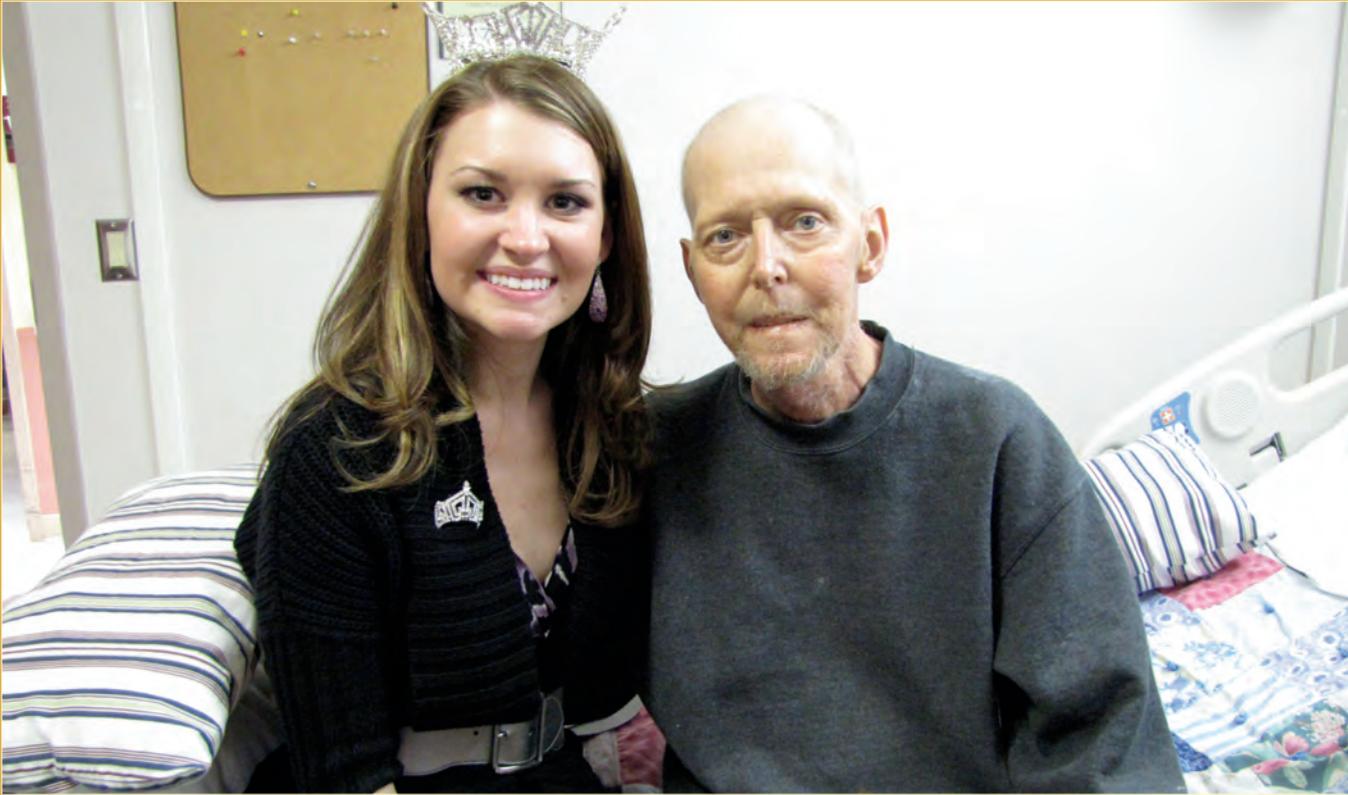
The event made all the resources Veterans are entitled to available to them in one place.

La Crosse County Veterans Service Officer Jim Gausmann said that makes Stand Down a fitting name.

"When a unit's been in combat, they come back to go to a safe area, and their commander will say, 'Alright men, stand down. Forty-eight hours before we've got to go back out in combat.' It's a safe place. It means you can relax, get some food, get some water, get cleaned up ... and then go back out and do what you've got to do," said Gausmann.

According to Health Care for Homeless Vets, there are about 700 homeless veterans in Wisconsin. More than 100 of them are in the La Crosse area.





National Salute Week

The Tomah VA hosted a week of special activities to honor its Veterans from Feb. 12-18, during the 2012 National Salute to Veteran Patients week.

The National Salute schedule included a variety of activities for Veterans such as a Valentine's Day dance, Miss Wisconsin Raeanna Johnson visiting Veterans, the Cranberry Royalty serving cake, and Ambassadors from the Tomah Area Chamber of Commerce.

The National Salute to Veteran Patients is a national program that encourages all Americans to visit and volunteer at VA medical centers and to send letters of thanks or Valentines to those who have served.

"The National Salute to Veteran Patients gives people a

chance to remind our nation's heroes of our appreciation for their service," said David J. Houlihan, M.D., Tomah VA Chief of Staff. "We've invited the local communities to share in the celebration during this week."

Houlihan said that National Salute gives people a chance to learn up close about the roles volunteers play at the medical center during the year and discover some of the ways to make a difference for Veterans.

"Our volunteers are an important part of our team and the National Salute is a great way for people to see them in action and learn more about helping out Veterans," said Houlihan.

The pinnacle of the week was the many styles of art from Tomah Veterans displayed in the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival throughout National Salute Week.



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Joint Commission

A not-for-profit organization, the Joint Commission accredits and certifies more than 19,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. Joint Commission accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality that reflects an organization's commitment to meeting certain performance standards.

The Tomah VA received reaccreditation from the Joint Commission in 2012 for: Hospital, Behavioral Health Care, Home Care, and Long Term Care. The Joint Commission conducted an unannounced site survey in May 2012. The survey results were the most successful the Tomah VA has experienced in recent years. Reaccreditation is valid for three years and confirms the high quality of care and services provided to the Veterans at the Tomah VA.



A Year Of Compliance And Accreditation

The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General conducts cyclical reviews of Veterans Health Administration healthcare facilities to assess the care and services delivered to Veterans for consistency, safety and quality in accordance with VA policy and procedure.

In March 2012, the OIG conducted a site review of three of the Tomah VA's outpatient clinics.

The OIG surveyors returned in May 2012 for a scheduled Combined Assessment Program review at the main facility. Both site reviews afforded the opportunity to validate compliance with various directives and handbooks, as well as identify opportunities for improvement to enhance care and services for our Veterans.

The Veterans Affairs Central Office Office of Mental Health Operations recently initiated a new service providing consultative site visits to Veterans Health Administration healthcare facilities.

The purpose of these visits is to validate compliance

with VHA standards for mental health services in order to identify areas for growth as well as areas of exemplary service. An OMHO survey team visited Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center in September 2012, spending two days interviewing mental health staff and patients and reviewing policies and procedures.

OMHO was interested in learning about strengths and areas of concern in several areas; including the implementation of the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook, technology in the 21st century goals, strengths and challenges related to staffing, and care transitions.

At the conclusion of the review, the OMHO team provided suggested areas for growth and observations of strengths in Tomah's mental health care services.

The site visitors noted that the culture of the Tomah VA is one that embraces mental health in all of its aspects as evidenced by the passion and commitment of the Tomah VA line staff and volunteers, satisfaction expressed by the Veterans, and support provided by executive and mental health leadership.



Carnation Appreciation Day

Thanks to the support of employees, volunteers and Veterans, the annual Carnation Appreciation Sale flourished again in 2012.

The sale of carnations to recognize people around the Tomah VA raised more than \$1,700 for Volunteer recognition programs.

More than a dozen volunteers worked to sort over 3,600 carnations into individual bouquets and delivered them throughout the medical center, delivering joy and completing the job in four hours.



Green Bay Packers Visit

Members of the Green Bay Packers dropped in for a visit at the Medical Center during their annual Tailgate Tour in May.

Packers President and CEO Mark Murphy, wide receiver Jordy Nelson, kicker Mason Crosby and safety Charlie Peprah, along with former Packers Marco Rivera, William Henderson and Larry McCarren, arrived at the Tomah VA to a crowd of applauding Veterans and employees.

The Packers visited with Veterans who had gathered in the main dining room for the occasion, which was organized by Voluntary Service Coordinator Laura Bishop and Recreation Therapy Supervisor Jenna Gilbertson.

Rivera said the experience touched him in many ways, but one experience came to mind immediately when he

thought of the Tomah VA.

He remembered that as the group was preparing to leave for another part of the VA, a Veteran asked for a picture with Rivera.

Unprompted, the Veteran took off his beret and placed it on Rivera's head, wanting him to keep it.

Rivera said he was truly touched when he learned during the day from the nurses that the Veteran never goes anywhere without that beret.

"That was very moving, because he's probably had that cap on his head since his time in the military," said Rivera. "He thought enough of me that he wanted to give me something personal and all he asked in return was that I write him a letter. That's the first thing I'm going to do when I get home."



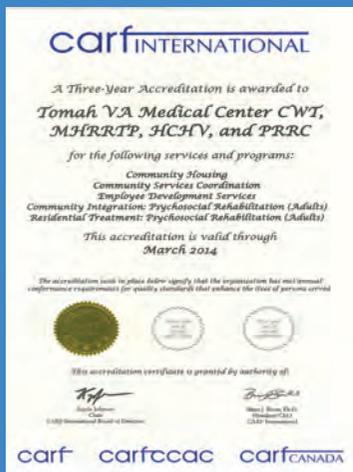
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Commission of Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities is an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services. Through accreditation, CARF assists service providers in improving the quality of their services, demonstrating value, and meeting internationally recognized organizational and program standards.

Four programs at the Tomah VA have successfully achieved CARF accreditation: Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Programs, Compensated Worker Therapy/Transitional Residence, Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center, and Healthcare for Homeless Veterans. All programs received initial accreditation with no recommendations; an achievement virtually unheard of in CARF accreditation.



Tomah Veterans Take Part In Sled Hockey Clinic

People living with disabilities face many challenges they must find ways to overcome. Through the use of adaptive sports equipment, the Tomah VA Medical Center is working to make sure sports are available and offer successful experiences to all Veterans.

The Tomah VA held its first sled hockey clinic on Nov. 1 at the Mose Lamb Hockey Rink in Tomah. It was designed to get everyone on the ice no matter what their physical ability.

Sled hockey is a sport that was designed to allow participants who have a physical disability to play

the game of ice hockey. It was invented in the early 1960s in Stockholm, Sweden, at a rehabilitation center to be very similar to hockey, only with a sled instead of skates and two sticks that are used for not only shooting, but moving across the ice.

It was a new experience for all of the Veterans at the Tomah VA Medical Center sled hockey clinic, including Vietnam Veteran John Kast, who suffers from Parkinson's disease as a result of his deployment. He said he came out to the event because his physical therapists suggested he give it a try.

"I didn't know they had something like this here," said Kast. "It's kind of fun. I was glad these people brought them out here for us to try."



Veterans Upfront For Snowflake Ski Jump

Warm weather and a bird's eye view of the ski hill gave Veterans from the Tomah VA the perfect setting for watching the 89th Annual Westby Snowflake Ski Jump on Feb. 4, in Westby, Wis.

After the opening ceremonies, the day's warm sun delayed the start of the ski jump competition but left ample opportunity for Veterans and Tomah VA staff to enjoy the day.

While Westby Ski Jump staff worked to perfect the ramp of the ski jump and entertain the large, waiting crowd, the Tomah Veterans on hand were partaking in the concessions.

25th Annual Platoon Run Car Show

Cars and motorcycles from all over Wisconsin converged on the Tomah VA in August for the 25th Annual Platoon Run and Car Show in August.

Displays included antique and classic cars, trucks and motorcycles.

The event started at Tomah Recreation Park with a parade line-up.

The parade of vehicles and motorcycles traveled to the Tomah VA campus. The parade procession traveled down Superior Avenue (downtown Tomah) making its way to the VA Medical Center grounds off East Veterans Street.



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Volunteer Recognized

Charles Roth, the Tomah VA Medical Center Voluntary Service Representative for the American Veterans received the VAVS National Advisory Committee's 2012 Male Volunteer of the Year award during a ceremony in Charleston, S.C.

Roth was nominated for the award by members of the AMVETS.

Tomah VA Voluntary Services Coordinator Laura Bishop said Roth has served 524 hours of volunteer service since August 2006, with many more behind-the-scenes hours logged in preparation for events and activities.

"He's very dedicated to the Veterans and very involved with the Veterans organizations that he's a part of," said Bishop.

Roth is involved in various capacities at the VA.



Tomah Facebook Page Surpasses 700 "Likes"

The Tomah VA recognizes the importance of information reaching Veterans where they are through person to person communication and popular social media platforms.

In 2010, the medical center established a Facebook page to promote Tomah VA services, programs and events being held at the medical center.

At the end of 2012, Tomah VA Facebook page had 701 "Likes" becoming the fastest growing page in Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 12) and nearly doubling its reach to Veterans and the community since the previous year.

Annual Memorial Services

The 2012 annual memorial services were held in May, September and November.

More than 300 Veterans, employees, volunteers, and Soldiers attended ceremonies to honor America's heroes on Memorial Day, Veterans Day and POW/MIA Day.

In May, over 200 gathered on the front steps of Building 400 for the Memorial Day observance in which Fort McCoy Garrison Deputy Commander Col. Robert Humphrey delivered the keynote speech.

In September, Servicemembers who are still missing in action were remembered in a candle lighting ceremony during the annual POW/MIA Day ceremony.

In November, a standing-room only crowd gathered in the chapel as Lt. Col. Michael Murphy talked about his experiences as a Veteran and helped induct the newest members into the Hall of Heroes.



Tomah VAMC Breaks Ground On Green Houses

The Tomah VA broke ground in November on the \$1.4 million Green House project that will provide a new and innovative approach for Veterans needing to live in a skilled-care setting.

The Green Houses will provide the full range of personal care and clinical services expected in a nursing home with private rooms and bathrooms for all of the patients that will be housed in each building.

The ceremony was followed by a reception that included an information session about the Green House Project and the innovative concepts in long term care.

The Green House concept provides a full range of personal care and clinical services expected in high quality nursing homes.

At the same time, this model gives priority to the resident's quality of life, providing an atmosphere of

security, privacy, dignity and companionship in a real home setting.

"The patients who are there will live there for the rest of their lives," said Nancy Delzer, project lead and Tomah VA associate chief nurse of extended care.

The two new 1,607-square-foot homes will be located on the North side of Building 400.

Because of the long-term nature of the care, the Veteran's hospital wanted to give the patients a facility that would feel like home, instead of one that felt like a hospital.

"The addition of the two Green Houses ... will help transform the institutional setting for our community living centers into neighborhoods that provide a home setting for all of our veterans requiring long-term care," said Dr. Judith E. Broad, associate director of patient care services at the Tomah VA.



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Wisconsin Indian Boarding Schools

Reservation boarding schools were also established in Wisconsin, the most important of which was the Tomah Indian Industrial School that later became the Tomah VA.

The federal government began building the school in 1891 on a 200 acre tract. The school opened in 1893 with a total of six students, all of them Ho-Chunk.

Other Wisconsin tribes had students enrolled there as well, but the Ho-Chunk always provided the most students because of the school's proximity to their settlements.

Like most boarding schools, the curriculum stressed industrial training for boys and household skills for girls. Later the Tomah Indian Industrial School initiated an experimental farming operation to teach agricultural skills. The school also taught reading, mathematics, music, athletics, and military training. Religious training in Christianity was also required.



Lemonweir Veterans Day Parade Walk

Students from Lemonweir Elementary School, led by their principal, teachers and chaperones, took part in a parade walk around the Tomah VA grounds on Nov. 13, in honor of Veterans Day.

More than 300 students gathered in front of the main administration building at the Tomah VA to release red, white and blue balloons in the air before parading the grounds.

The students and faculty then followed the Tomah VA fire truck in front of the patient buildings to show awaiting Veterans appreciation for their service.

The first to fifth grade students carried patriotic signs and flags during the parade. The students also carried hand-made cards that were given to Veterans as they were stopping to shake hands and say thanks.

"The Veterans thought it was awesome," said Debbie Lindley, a voluntary service specialist.

Top Enlisted Military Member Visits Tomah

Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Bryan Battaglia, senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited the Tomah VA, July 25.

Battaglia met many Veterans during his visit, including Jonathan Gauge, a fellow Marine Corps Veteran. After talking with Gauge, Battaglia was able to watch his progress in physical therapy.

"Our Veterans are as much a part of the family as our active-duty, reserve and guard members," said Battaglia. "A Veteran's recovery is important to us and that's the connection we have in the Armed Forces as one big family."

Battaglia is the chief advisor to the CJCS and the Secretary of Defense on all joint and combined total force matters. As the top enlisted person in the entire U.S. military, Battaglia has spent much of his tenure visiting bases and combat zones, meeting and listening to Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen, but he also makes visits to the nearby VAs during these visits.





Chuck Oness' Ponies Come To Town

Chuck Oness, a Navy Veteran at the Tomah VA Medical Center, was visited by his brother and sister-in-law Chad and Beth Oness in October.

The crisp Sunday was an opportune day for Chuck to visit with family and his Welsh ponies, which Chad and Beth raise. Chuck's own pony, Trixie, made the trip.

Chuck also had the opportunity to meet the newest ponies in the stable.

Veteran Lee Decker and Recreation Therapist Jen Conzemius and her daughter were also in the parking lot behind the Tomah VA to scratch some pony ears and take in the cool fall day.

Oness had another opportunity to see his pony when his family invited Veterans to a Welsh Pony Show in June in Black River Falls, Wis., which was attended by Veterans from Home Sweet Home 406a and Stepping Stones 408n.



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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Medical Center
Tomah, Wisconsin

Hospital History

The Tomah VA Medical Center is a 266-bed facility nestled in the heart of Wisconsin's cranberry country in Tomah, Wis. It is situated 40 miles east of La Crosse, Wis., and the Mississippi River.

The Tomah VA operates four outpatient clinics located in La Crosse, Clark County, Wausau, and Wisconsin Rapids, which serve 16 counties in West Central Wisconsin and one county in Minnesota.

In fiscal year 2009, nearly 900 employees and more than 400 volunteers served approximately 28,000 enrolled Veterans.

Resting on 171 acres in the heart of Wisconsin, the Tomah VA plays host to a campus of historical buildings and landmarks, a volunteer-run nine-hole golf course built in the late 1940s and a fishing pond built from a donation by District 7 of the Department of Wisconsin American Legion in 1959.

The history is as rich as the land it sits on and dates back to the 19th century.

In 1891, the U. S. Government built and established an Indian School operated by the Department of the Interior from 1891-1933 and located on land donated by the town of Tomah.

The oldest building, still standing on campus, Building 23, was completed in 1892 as the boy's dormitory.

During World War II, the grounds were transferred to the Department of War and operated as a radio training school for the Army Air Force from 1943-1944.



Historical photos of the Tomah VA provide the inspiration for this depiction of the Tomah Veteran Affairs Medical Center that features the cupola on building 400. For more than 50 years, this symbol of the Tomah VA has been a part of the landscape on the historic campus.

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Tomah Veterans Affairs Medical Center

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Scott P. Farley
Public Affairs Officer/Editor and Publisher

John Renda
Visual Information Specialist

Mario V. DeSanctis, FACHE
Medical Center Director



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VETERANS AFFAIRS
Tomah, Wisconsin Medical Center

500 East Veterans Street . Tomah, Wisconsin 54660 . Phone: (608) 372-3971 . Toll Free: (800) 872-8662 . www.tomah.va.gov