

Patient Centered Care... The Conversation Starts Here



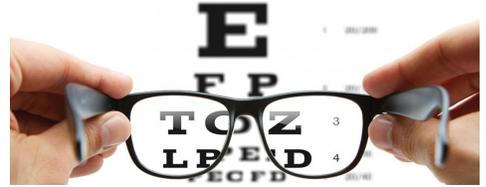
**QUALITY,
COMPASSIONATE
CARE**

**EVERY VETERAN
EVERY DAY**

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

My Life, My Story	2-3
Traveling Veteran	4-5
Veterans Serving Veterans	6-7
Medication and Pharmacy	8-9
Veteran Minority Program	10
Data Corner	11
Facility Map/ Mission Statement	12

If you have VA health care benefits, your routine eye exams as well as specialized testing/treatment for ocular diseases are covered. You can schedule directly with one of our Advanced Medical Support Assistants. You may be subject to a specialty clinic co-pay charge of \$50.00.



Appointments are not needed for eyeglass repairs, adjustments or questions. These can be done through our walk-in clinic. If you are blind or low vision there are more advanced vision care, aides and rehabilitation services available.

Eye clinic staff is available:

Monday – Friday from 7:30 am to 4:15 pm
Building 400, 3rd Floor, Room 3051 (check in).

Will the VA cover my eyeglasses?

Eligibility is based on the results of your eye examination and at least one of the following:

- Service connection greater than 10% for any condition.
- Service connection for any eye condition.
- Former POW.
- Purple Heart Recipient.
- Need regular aid and attendance.
- Vision problems caused by an illness for which you are receiving VA care such as diabetes, stroke, etc.
- Vision problems caused by an injury sustained on active duty.
- Dual sensory impairment (vision and/or hearing loss) that is severe enough to interfere in your ability to take an active role in your own health care and eyeglasses would help to reduce the impact of your impairment.

**For more information, please contact:
Advanced Medical Support Assistants**

at 1-800-872-8662, Ext. 61360

OR

Eye Clinic at 608-372-1605





I have had the unique experience of seeing this all firsthand and I feel obligated to share the story. I give the deniers of the holocaust a bad time. I was there, I smelled it and will never forget it. It's a sad part about history.

We have a volunteer Army now and it's a wonderful concept. I registered at the Hennepin County draft board and was eligible for the Army after my physical. I did take a one-year business course to work in an office to earn a little money. After that I was hired at General Mills and worked there a couple of years before I joined the Army. On my 21st birthday I received my draft notice and was classified as 1-A. I was sworn into the Army with about 8,000 others. We were put on furlough until Christmas and I was able to say goodbye to my family. I was shipped to Fort Snelling to be processed into the Army. I then went to Camp McCain, MS and was in the medical corps, although I wasn't sure exactly what that meant. It was terrible weather and culture there were terrible. The politicians praise these young men for giving their life for this great country, which is BS because these guys were willing to risk their lives, not give their lives. War is hell wherever you are! You can't buy your way into a favorable spot and you go where they need you. You go through hell to help your country.

Colonel Sandford was leading our convoy, we supported the 4th Army Division Medical Evacuation. Eisenhower, Patton and Bradley had just arrived to go through the slave labor camp that was discovered in Ohrdruf. We knew about some of the big-name camps that were in the news, but didn't know about all the sub camps. Eisenhower told the soldiers to stay and go through the camp with the high command. It was unusual to go through the camp with them and hear their comments. Eisenhower said this is the damndest thing he'd seen in all his life and Patton's comment was those dirty German sons of bitches. The SS Troops ran these camps and had orders from Hitler's headquarters that when the camps were endangered of being overrun by the Americans, kill all the prisoners and get them buried in mass graves to eliminate the evidence. They did kill everyone in this camp, about 3,000. There were two mass graves, and some hadn't been fully covered over; you could still see their legs sticking out. When the crematorium was opened, we saw the skin on bone corpses stacked up.

We never dreamt we would be able to stand right behind Eisenhower; he was a tremendous man. He invited about 100 GIs to hear the instructions he was going to give to Patton and Bradley. We heard him say that as these camps are found, he wanted an infantry and a medical unit assigned to each camp. The medics are to go through all the buildings and see if anyone is still alive; if they are, get them to the hospital immediately. The infantry units were to round up all abled body civilians, men and women to form funeral gangs because he wanted cemeteries made. He wanted the mass graves dug up and if the German civilians resisted, put a gun to their back and force them to do it.

Eisenhower said anyone with a camera should take as many pictures as you can because he wanted the world to know what we were seeing. My closest friend had a camera and we started taking pictures. We had a roll of film that we weren't sure when we would be able to get it developed because the war was still on and we were moving every day. You couldn't just leave it at a drug store and pick it up the next day. We stopped in a little town east of Ohrdruf. After we were settled for the night we went to this shop because we were interested trying to get our film developed. We lucked out because there was an Army photographer from the 3rd Headquarters that volunteered to develop our roll of film. He asked me if I was interested in pictures that he had already taken at Ohrdruf, Buchenwald and several sub-camps. I was surprised that he offered me that. I have quite a set of pictures and quite a record of the war and this photographer had descriptions written on all the pictures of what everything was. The day after we left Ohrdruf we passed Buchenwald, the big monster

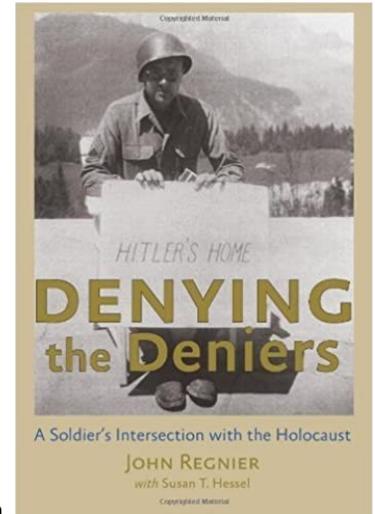
camp, but didn't go in. We were still numb from what we saw and smelled at Ohrdruf.

The last big concentration camp we found was in Ebensee with about 30,000-40,000 prisoners in a beautiful area in the foothills of the Alps. Colonel Sandford had left our unit after we went through Ohrdruf and was promoted to oversee field hospitals, the MASH type. Colonel Sandford kept track of where his old unit was. He contacted us and he said that if you think you saw anything in Ohrdruf come spend a day with me here in Ebensee because it was worse. There were 4,000 to 5,000 people still alive. In the barracks, there would be one live one and four dead ones in the bed; nude, just skin and bones. Walking through the barracks, I saw a poor man in bed with four dead bedmates and he was the only one alive. He laboriously crawled over dead bodies, he was skin and bones himself and was saying "help me, help me". I told him the medics were right behind me and would take him to the hospital. I asked him how long he had been at this camp and he said 2 1/2 years. He spoke English, but very faintly. He said he was a Jewish 34-year-old college professor from one of the Balkan countries. I was not able to check in on him, but I hope they were able to save him because he wanted so much to live. That was even worse than seeing all the dead ones because you just couldn't believe the way those people were treated. I took a picture of another man; his hip bone was showing, and all his flesh was worn off half of his butt and he was still walking with a cane. He was one of the healthy ones, some couldn't even get out of bed.

When the war officially ended, we were in Austria. We were close to Hitler's retreat area which was his Camp David. It was a tremendously big house that had been bombed by the Americans before the war ended. It was terribly interesting to spend the day there and to go through his home. There were underground passages and we were told several hundred people could live underground and they had food stocked up. Hitler had 3,000 slave laborers that worked 3-5 years building a tunnel from his big home to the Eagles Nest. Hitler, Mussolini, even the Japanese leader, some of the vilest people, would meet there. The only house that hadn't been damaged by the bombs was Hitler's staff person Goering, who oversaw their Air Force. There was still food on the table from the last meal he was eating because he left so quickly to go to Berlin to join Hitler. Goering's phone directory was in the hallway. I opened the cover and he had a lot of notes written on the first couple of pages. I tore out those two pages and made the mistake of putting it in a letter I sent back home, but it never made it. Someone must have been censoring the mail and I guess they wanted it more than I did. I wish I would have put it in my duffel bag. That was the closest I came to having a souvenir from Hitler's area. I found many pictures from one of Hitler's abandoned buildings. In some of the pictures there are kids that are at the Hitler Youth Camp training to be SS Troops. The SS Troops had their quarters and they were ordered to do as much breeding as they could to get pure Germans.

How did I overcome it? It wasn't easy. Getting an education and rebuilding the middleclass was the focus of most soldiers when they came home, maybe that's why a lot of them didn't speak about it. I went to college when I came home, got married and raised a family in Bloomington, MN. I would share my background story with my family, but I didn't start publicly speaking about my experiences until after I retired. I spoke on Veterans Day in 2012 at Century Theater. This presentation was put on YouTube and goes into more detail. I have also written a book titled Denying the Deniers: A Soldiers Intersection with the Holocaust and I've gotten a lot of reaction from my book.

I went on the Freedom Honor Flight, which was a hard and tiring day, but it was wonderful. I have an album with pictures, letters I've written and newspapers clippings from the war. My pictures that I have from the Holocaust are now on DVD and copies are in my album. I donated my original pictures of Ohrdruf to the National Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C.



What's Your Story?

To participate in the My Life, My Story Program, please contact us below:

Email: vhatommystory@va.gov

Call: 608-372-3971 Ext. 64235 or

Let a member of your healthcare team know

WILL YOU BE TRAVELING?

Are you planning on traveling for more than 1-2 weeks, for the winter or an extended trip? You may need some coordination of your medical care with another VA facility.



Before you start traveling, please:

1. Let your PACT Team and/or specialty care provider (s) know you plan to travel. They are the first point of contact and will continue to be while traveling for all care needs. Give them the dates you are leaving and returning.

- Ask that your temporary address and phone number be put in your record as a “temporary address.”
- Talk about any care coordination that you will need while you are away.
- Examples of care that need to be pre-planned:
 - Regular monthly or bi-weekly injections or infusions.
 - Follow-up lab tests because of changes in medicines, new medical conditions, etc.
 - Anticoagulation monitoring.
 - Follow-up chest x-rays or other diagnostic testing.
 - How to get your blood pressure/ blood glucose logs to your PACT Team.

NOTE: Any routine screening/tests generally should be done at your home facility and not while traveling (screenings, yearly eye exams, colonoscopy screenings, other annual preventive items).

2. Make sure you have enough medicines and/or refills to last you for the entire time you are gone. Routine medicines are provided by the Tomah VA Pharmacy and can be mailed to your temporary address. Request your refills through:

- Computer: My HealtheVet.
- Telephone: Tomah Pharmacy Automated Line (refill of active prescriptions) 1-800-252-7188 (toll free) or talk with Outpatient Pharmacy, at 608-372-3971, Ext. 66400.
- If you run out or lose your medication, a VA near you can provide a temporary supply (usually 10-14 days) until your refill from Tomah arrives. You may have to travel to the closest main VA facility that has a pharmacy. Smaller VA facilities (clinics/CBOC’s) do not have pharmacies.
- The Traveling Veteran Coordinator (TVC) will give you the location and telephone number of the VA facilities near your travel location. Alternate VAs will not dispense controlled substances even with refills remaining, contact the pharmacy to have these mailed.

3. What happens next:

- Your PACT Team and/or specialty clinic provider will contact the TVC to arrange any care that needs to be pre-planned.
- The TVC at the alternate site will talk with you to set up your care at the nearest VA facility to your travel location. You do not have to be assigned to Primary Care at that facility to have care there. (Select Veterans who meet certain medical criteria may have assigned Primary Care providers at two different facilities.) The TVC will help you get registered at the VA so they can view your medical records. This helps with your care coordination.

Please keep the name and number of your TVC with you for questions.

The TVC's can be reached at 608-372-3971 Ext. 61270 or Ext. 67740

Veteran's Foreign Medical Program Benefits program for U.S. Veterans who are residing or traveling abroad and have VA-rated, service-connected disabilities. For assistance regarding foreign health care services contact:

VHA Office of Community Care
Foreign Medical Program
PO Box 469061
Denver, CO 80246-9061
(303)-331-7590

While you are traveling:

- New or acute medical problems: Contact your home site PACT team for all medical updates. Your PACT team or TVC can provide direction for the closest VA facility for care. Your home site TVC will contact the other VA facility to help with getting you seen.
- Flare-ups of chronic problems: Contact your PACT Team or specialty clinic provider. Based on their knowledge of your care, they may change your medicines or tell you to go to the nearest VA facility or emergency department.
- If you have an emergency or life-threatening medical problem, call 911 for immediate advice.
- After-hours, weekends, and holidays please call 888-598-7793, the After-Hours Call Center to speak with a nurse about your medical concerns.

Have a safe trip and we look forward to your return!

Veterans Serving Veterans



I am a Sparta native and graduated high school in 2000. After a semester of playing college soccer and being a broke I came home for winter break and enlisted in the Army National Guard. I had no idea what I was getting myself into at just 18 years old. My father was at home blind, his health was not well, and funds were lacking. In March of 2001 I left for basic training to Fort Leonard Wood, MO. After that I was shipped to Ft. Lee, VA where I started my journey as a 92G Food Service Specialist/Culinary Specialist. I never knew how early cooks woke up in the morning. I was at my first summer camp the following summer cooking out of mobile kitchen trailers and sleeping in tents.

In 2003, I was deployed to Fort McCoy, WI for two years supporting the mobilization station with the 107th Maintenance Company. I was able to excel in my food service skills and made an additional duty as clerk. This deployment paved my experience to become a Non-Commissioned Officer at the young age of 23. During my early service in the Army National Guard as a citizen/soldier, I worked many years as a nursing assistant at Rolling Hills Nursing Home and then a couple years as a federal employee serving at MATES at fort McCoy, WI as a secretary. I was promoted to Platoon Sergeant of a headquarters section in the 732nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in 2008. We deployed to Tallil, Iraq in April of 2009, where I served as a Contracting Officer Representative over KBR at Heroes dining facility. Our unit saw combat while overseas and it was a life changing experience all around.

After serving overseas I lived in Green Bay for almost five years and went to college. I was lucky to score an intern/volunteer position at the Veteran's Service Office and Brown Country Veteran's treatment court team where I learned how much mental health support was available to Veteran's who have ran into the law. Shortly after graduating from NWTC, I took an assignment as an active duty soldier serving as a Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) for the 426 Regiment in Fort McCoy, WI. After some more years of life and poor coping skills, by the grace of God and a lot of shame and guilt, I found myself in recovery from substance abuse and mental health struggles. I haven't had a drink since July 26, 2014 and I have a new life I love to be alive in.

In 2016 I was Honorably discharged from the Army National Guard and I was hired back to serve as a civilian contractor traveling all over the nation and to some territories, like Guam to teach Soldiers positive psychology skills and cognitive behavioral therapy. The training changed my life by helping change my unproductive thinking of not being enough for anything to thinking positive or realistically, which is such a better place to live.



After some time in recovery, I heard about peer support services and what a beacon of hope they can be to those struggling/living with mental health concerns. I had to try out peer support as I felt the need to help my fellow Vets. I became certified in 2015. It took some time, but I was able to transition to the Tomah VA and have been serving in the HUD-VASH (Homeless) Department since January of 2018. I work with a great team that is dedicated to serve Veteran's and help fight homelessness. I try to be the light of hope to the Veterans we serve by providing support and connection to Veterans for their recovery management and wellness goals. It's not an easy job, but it's so rewarding to hear thank you from a Veteran that you helped feel better just by believing in your own recovery.

Moriah Smith—Certified Peer Support Specialist

I grew up in Richland Center, WI. Growing up, none of my immediate family members had served. I knew my Great Grandfather had served in WWI, but he passed away before I was born. I loved jets and helicopters, so I always thought about becoming a pilot in the Air Force or Navy. I was a senior in High School when 9/11 happened and I joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard 5 weeks later. I chose the National Guard because I loved the fact that I could serve my country and my community. I also wanted to attend college, which I could do while serving. I served in the Wisconsin Army National Guard for 12 years.



My first Drill Weekend was November 2001 and the Colonel from State HQ notified my unit they were going to deploy as a result of the 9/11 attacks. I was still in High School and had not attended Basic Training yet, so I did not go; but my unit was one of the first units activated to national service in the Global War on Terror. Three months after I returned home from Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training my unit was again activated to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from February 2003 to January 2004. After my first deployment I attended college, got a job as a Respiratory Therapist, got married and had our oldest daughter.

In 2009 my unit got activated to deploy with the 32nd Infantry Brigade. As it turns out, my Great Grandfather served in the 32nd Infantry in WWI. So, we both deployed in the same unit, just 90 years apart. I worked in a detention facility in Baghdad Iraq facilitating detainee operations directly with Iraqi detainees for 12 hours a day, 6 days a week for 9 months. After my second deployment I took a promotion and changed units as an E6 Staff Sergeant, which had always been my goal. However, they were getting ready to deploy, my wife was pregnant with our second daughter and my enlistment was about to end. I chose to get out of the military because I did not want to miss another year of my kids' childhood.

After getting out of the military and working as a Respiratory Therapist, I wanted to do more for the Veteran community. I take Veterans mental health and suicide prevention personally, so I went back to school and got a bachelor's degree in psychology and military resiliency. When I graduated in 2019, a position opened up in Whole Health and I completely changed career paths. I gladly came to work at the Tomah VA and have loved it and the people since day one.



My wife and I now have three girls and we love to spend time hiking, camping, going for bike rides and going to baseball games.

Andy Wagoner- Whole Health Coach

MEDICATION & PHARMACY

**Outpatient Pharmacy is located in Building 407, 1st, Room 1767
Hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00AM-4:30PM
It is closed on weekends, and all Federal holidays**

NEW - Curbside Delivery

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the Tomah VA Outpatient Pharmacy has started curbside delivery for Veterans who need to pick up their prescriptions. This service is intended to continue to support urgent medications, while keeping our Veterans safe. Curbside delivery is utilized by parking at the blue curb outside of building 407 (next to Urgent Care), and calling 608-372-3971, ext. 66400.

Pharmacy will begin to process your medication, and will deliver it right to your vehicle. No signatures are required, but a VA, State, or Federal photo ID is required to confirm your identity.



Urgent Prescriptions

Urgent prescriptions can be picked up at the Tomah VA Outpatient Pharmacy via curbside pickup, or at the InstyMeds dispenser in Urgent Care, La Crosse and Wisconsin Rapids Outpatient Clinics.

If you are in need of an urgent refill, please call the Outpatient Pharmacy at 608-372-3971.

Refills

Refills are filled and mailed to you through the mail order pharmacy. Please request your refill at least two weeks before you run out of medication to allow time for delivery. Refills are not automatic; you must initiate refill each time. Refill or renew your medications by one of the following ways:



1. Automated Call Center:

- Call at least 14 days before your medication runs out.
- Dial 1-800-252-7188, press 2 right away.
- Enter your social security number followed by #.
- Have your prescription number ready (from the bottle) and when prompted enter the number (ignore letters) and press #.
- Press 1 to refill or renew additional prescriptions.

2. MyHealthVet:

- Log into www.myhealth.va.gov Click the Pharmacy Tab
- Click the Rx refill tab. If it says “hold” in “refill status”, you are out of refills and must call the Automated Call Center.
- If available for online refill, select Refill Prescriptions.

3. Mail in paper request:

Write the last four of your social security number, your first name, your last name, and the prescription number on a piece of paper. Mail to:

Tomah VA Medical Center
Attn: Outpatient Pharmacy
500 E. Veterans Street
Tomah, WI 54660



4. Rx Refill App:

With Rx Refill, you can request, monitor, and track the delivery status of eligible VA prescription refills. For more information, visit <https://www.mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill>.

Hold

- You or your provider may request your medicines to be placed on HOLD.
- You will NOT be able to fill this medicine until you or your provider call Outpatient Pharmacy and request it.
- The automated phone system and MyHealthVet will not be able to create a refill.

Prescription Co-Pays

- Priority Group 1: No co-payment.
- Priority Group 2-8: copayments listed below:
- Tier 1 (preferred generics): \$5 for 30-day supply.
- Tier 2 (non-preferred generics & some over-the-counters): \$8 for 30-day supply.
- Tier 3 (brand name): \$11 for 30-day supply.
- \$700 medication co-payment cap.
- Co-pay Websites:
 - https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/cost/copay_rates.asp
 - https://spsites.cdw.va.gov/sites/PBM_Analytics/Pages/TierCopay.aspx

Avoid Interruptions in Medicine Supply

- Order your next refill as soon as your new supply arrives.
- Notify the VA of any changes in address or phone number.
- Notify the pharmacy if you will have a temporary address.

Medicine Take Back

If you have a medicine, you no longer need and wish to dispose of:

- The Tomah VA has a MedSafe bin located within Outpatient Pharmacy.
- Take away bags available at all clinics or can be mailed to your home.
- Local authorities, like the Police Department, usually have a process for safe medication disposal.



Tomah VA Medical Center Fiscal Year 2020 - Quarter 3 April 1 - June 30, 2020

Patient Experience is the sum of all **interactions**, shaped by the organization's **culture**, that influence the Veterans' and their families' **perceptions** along their health care **journey**.

The Tomah VA Medical Center gathers data from various sources such as surveys, comment cards, calls and even text messages to assist in improving the overall patient experience.



V-Signals is a customer experience tool used to analyze real-time feedback from Veterans who have a valid email address.

Through V-Signals, the Tomah VA Medical Center can see what we are doing well in and where we have opportunities for improvement. Surveys are sent for the following outpatient services:

- ⇒ Scheduling an Appointment
- ⇒ Healthcare Visit
- ⇒ Pharmacy (In-Person)
- ⇒ Pharmacy (Mail)
- ⇒ Labs/Imaging



Ease/Simplicity	92.3
Efficiency/Speed	93.2
Quality	96.2
Employee Helpfulness	96.0
Equity/Transparency	94.7
Satisfaction	96.2
Confidence/Trust	91.7

Tomah VA Medical Center

500 E. Veterans St.
Tomah, WI 54660
Phone: 1-800-872-8662
608-372-3971
<https://www.tomah.va.gov/>

**VA River Valley
Medical Clinic**

2600 State Road
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: 608-784-3886 /
608-784-0345 /
608-787-5006
Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm

**VA River Valley
Integrated Health Center**

1525 Losey Blvd. South
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: 608-787-6411
Clinic Hours: Mon-Thurs.
7:30am-6:30pm
Friday 7:30am-4:30pm

Clark County Clinic

8 Johnson Street
Owen, WI 54660
Phone: 715-229-4701
Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm

Wisconsin Rapids Clinic

700 Hale Street
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Phone: 715-424-4682
Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm

Wausau Clinic

515 South 32nd Ave.
Wausau, WI 54401
Phone: 715-842-2834
Clinic Hours: Monday-Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm



Choose VA

The Tomah VA welcomes your feedback. If you have suggestions for future newsletter articles please send to:

Amanda Meinke
Patient Centered Care
Coordinator



Amanda.meinke@va.gov
608-372-3971, ext. 64235

Tomah VAMC Campus Map



Tomah VA Medical Center Vision:

Tomah VAMC will excel in patient-centered Primary, Mental Health, Rehabilitative and Long-term healthcare, partnering with other Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and community organizations providing a fully integrated continuum of care.

As a servant led institution we will develop a culture of excellence which is responsive to the changing needs of Veterans. Initiatives will be shaped by technology, research and evidenced based practices.

Care will be delivered by engaged collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, continuous and sustained improvement.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Tomah VA Medical Center