



# Well Deserved

A VA Newsletter for Women Veterans

Sioux Falls VA Health Care System Summer 2011 • Issue No. 5

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE



*You served, you deserve*

★ *the best care anywhere.*

Recently, there has been some e-mail traffic about women in the military, women Veterans being separate from male Veterans, and a feeling of discomfort being seen as a woman Veteran. “Are you a *woman* or a *soldier* first?” (You can replace the word “soldier” with a number of terms, such as sailor, officer, etc.) The discussion caused me to think about my role as an advocate for women Veterans. Even more, it has had me thinking about your role as a woman Veteran. In the military, you perhaps had to answer the question above about being a woman. The military has been and still is a predominantly male environment. It has been said that women must work to “fit in”, “prove oneself”, “display toughness”, and be “willing to adjust to conditions that are less than ideal.” Perhaps, women in the military have had to be warriors first and females second.

As a woman Veteran, I challenge you not to choose one over the other, but to be both a woman and a Veteran at the same time. VA has been working hard over the past several years so that women Veterans don’t have to “fit in” at facilities built for men or be “willing to adjust to conditions that are less than ideal”. It may have been your experience in the military to do this, but as a Veteran, it isn’t acceptable to VA and shouldn’t be acceptable to you either. This is why VA mandated every hospital to have a Women Veterans Program Manager. My role as your advocate is to speak up for your needs at every opportunity. Just like in the military, women Veterans are in the minority at VA. But, unlike the military, you have choices and a voice with VA. You also have a responsibility. Your responsibility is to tell your story, share your ideas, and let your voices be heard. If you, as a woman Veteran, are shy or uncomfortable or “too busy” or willing to “put up with”, your opinions will not be heard.

Deborah Samson of Massachusetts enlisted in the Revolutionary War dressed like a man as “Robert Shirtliff” and blazed a trail for women in the military. Will you help blaze a trail for women Veterans? Your voice is needed to provide positive feedback, solutions to issues, and ideas for improvements. Accompanying this newsletter is a satisfaction survey. If you use VA for health care, please take the time to thoughtfully complete and return it. You served and you deserve the best care anywhere. Together, we can make that a reality.

*Charlotte McGrath is the Women Veterans Program Manager for the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System. She serves on multiple committees, representing the needs of women Veterans. She is also responsible for developing and implementing policies that impact the care of women Veterans.*



My Health eVet is a free, online personal health record. It is available 24/7, where ever there is Internet access. There is a basic version that you can register for today at: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

There also is an upgraded account which allows Veterans enrolled for VA care to:

- get their **VA Wellness Reminders**
- view their **VA Appointments**
- participate in **Secure Messaging** with their health care team\*
- View **Allergy** and **Adverse Reaction** information from their health record
- fully participate in future My Health eVet features

\***Secure Messaging** is now available through some VA clinics and expanding to others throughout 2011

An upgraded account requires you to be authenticated “in person” to keep your information safe. To get your upgraded account: view the My Health eVet Video and read and sign the VA release form. The video and form are available at: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>. Bring the completed form to the Release of Information office at your nearest VA medical facility and show your Veterans Identification Card or any other government-issued photo identification. Veterans can also complete the in-person authentication process at the My Health eVet booth at the Women Veterans Conference in October. Watch the video and bring your signed VA Release Form to the event.

For questions about My Health eVet, contact Dan DeBlock, the My Health eVet Coordinator at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System at (605) 336-3230, Ext. 6440 or at [daniel.deblock@va.gov](mailto:daniel.deblock@va.gov).

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Women Veterans Support Group, every Thursday at 2:00 p.m., Building 1, Room 205 of the Medical Center  
Questions? Call Anna Bourne (605) 333-6890
- Sioux Falls Women Veterans Meet and Greet, 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of every month, 5:30 p.m., VFW, Questions? Contact [p.johnson@sio.midco.net](mailto:p.johnson@sio.midco.net)
- Yankton area Women Veterans Gathering, 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of every month, 5:30 p.m., VFW, Questions? Contact [bodenstedtd@gmail.com](mailto:bodenstedtd@gmail.com)
- Annual Women Veterans Conference, October 14  
brochures to be mailed late summer
- Throughout the summer, VA staff will be at various outreach events for Veterans, including pow-wows, Veteran appreciation days, and benefit fairs