

## **News from the VA**

I get news releases from the VA in my inbox. Here are a few of the most recent. On 29 June, the VA announced a “digital COVID-19 screening tool to streamline Veteran access to medical care during the coronavirus pandemic.” It is a link to a web page where the Veteran answers six questions. The Veteran shows the results of the six questions on his/her smart phone when checking into the hospital. It is very similar to the questions I answered at my dental appointment three weeks ago.

In a phased-in approach, the VA will be adding an on-line travel reimbursement process for Veterans who get mileage from the VA. The Minneapolis VA will be one of five test sites to use the on-line option in July. The rest of the VA hospitals will be brought on-line over the following months. This process will replace the current paper process.

In a joint effort between the VA and the US Postal Service, the VA will receive \$700,000 from the sale of healing PTSD stamps. Over 7 million stamps were sold between December 2019 and May 2020. The funds will support VA research on PTSD.

The VA is working with several other Federal agencies to implement a new national three-digit emergency phone number to access crisis call centers for suicide prevention. The current Veterans Crisis Line will be included in the national call number. The Veterans Crisis Line will continue to remain available 24/7, 365 days a year, by calling 1-800-273-8255 and pressing 1. Since over 20 Veterans commit suicide each day, any suicide prevention program is greatly needed.

The VA recently received the American Telemedicine Association’s 2020 Champion Award for bringing health care access to Veterans when and where they need it. My last annual physical was done via telemedicine from a clinic in Green Valley, AZ with a doctor in Green Bay, WI. It worked well. Because of the pandemic we are in, the VA and other medical providers are making excellent use of this option.

The VA held its first virtual Women Veterans Forum in June. More than 1,500 women Veterans joined the event by phone or online. The VA is making progress in developing services and programs for women Veterans whose needs are different from men and has been largely ignored in the past. The forum was conducted by VA employees, all of whom were women.

On Saturday, 4 July, we celebrate our independence from England when the Declaration of Independence was signed. Please have a safe 4<sup>th</sup> and remember why the day is important. Moorhead Business Association will have their fireworks display at Horizon Shores, 3801 24 Ave S in Moorhead, not at MSUM. There will be no seating at the event but parking will be available at Horizon Middle School, Dorothy Dodds Elementary, Moorhead Career Academy, Vista Center of Education, Anne Carlsen Center, Triumph Lutheran Church and Moorhead American Legion. I hope to have a good view from our new deck.