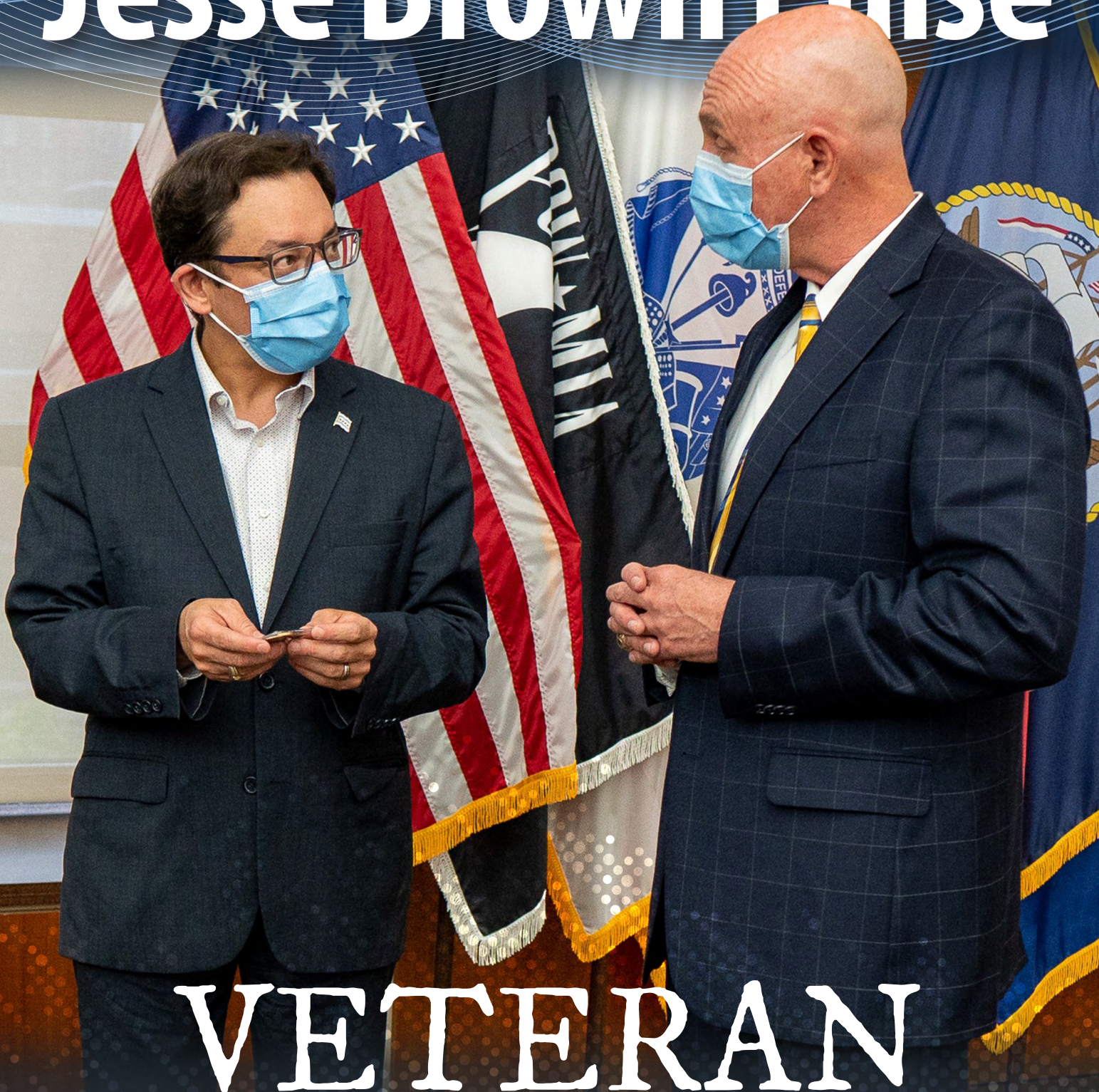


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Jesse Brown Pulse



VETERAN

INFORMATION WEEK

Discovering What VA Offers in the 21st Century

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Rick A. Ament,
MSA, FACHE
Director,
Jesse Brown
VA Medical Center

Team Jesse Brown,

Welcome to the Jesse Brown Pulse, now released monthly!

The Pulse is the Jesse Brown Monthly Employee newsletter designed to inform, celebrate, recognize, and reflect (and sometimes just have fun)!

You may have noticed Jesse Brown staff members are no longer wearing face masks. In May, the VA and Jesse Brown revised its mask guidance in response to the falling rates of COVID-19 in the community. You are no longer required to wear a mask unless you are in certain areas of the facility, which will be properly marked so you'll know. You are safe; however, as we continue to monitor community infection rates, we will adjust our policy if needed. If you are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 or other viral respiratory infection, you are required to wear a mask at all times while in the facility to prevent the spread. Those of you who still want to wear a mask out of caution may do so (and are highly encouraged as well)!

Last month Jesse Brown partnered with Alderman Raymond Lopez of the 15th Ward for Veterans Information Week, which provided local Veterans with resources for services now available through the PACT Act. The cover of this month's Pulse showcases a separate event designed to help Veterans navigate these newly available services and benefits.

The PACT Act is a top priority for the VA and Jesse Brown. Our commitment to our Veterans is to help them understand the new benefits available to them and provide them with the care they earned. We have two more PACT Act events scheduled for this month: here again at Jesse Brown and at Adam Benjamin, Jr. CBOC in Crown Point, Indiana.

Jesse Brown recently made a significant investment to ensure the comfort and safety of our Veterans by acquiring 50 new wheelchairs. Many of our Veterans face mobility challenges as a result of injuries sustained during their service and having a greater inventory of wheelchairs than what the industry calls for is just one small way, we adapt to better serve our Veterans.

We also want to highlight our commitment to our Asian-American

and Pacific Islander Veterans and staff, our LGBTQ+ community, and our African-American Veterans and staff through the support events we held honoring their proud service to our country. We were honored to host Dr. Stephen K. Curda, a retired U.S. Army brigadier general during the "Advancing Leaders Through Opportunity" AAPI conference which focused on the historical and cultural contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in health care and society. We raised a Pride Flag at the flagpole of the Ogden entrance in celebration of our LGBTQ+ Veterans and staff members and organized Jesse Brown representation during Chicago's Pride Parade. We also celebrated Juneteenth with a series of events that concluded with a rooftop festival and "Jesse Brown 4 Black Lives," which promoted African-American equity and social justice.

The Pulse is a publication that is used to highlight and recognize employees at Jesse Brown. If you have a story to share, please email the Public Affairs Team at CHSPA@va.gov

MISSION

The Jesse Brown Pulse seeks to celebrate all the amazing things our employees do, both in and out of work, as well as highlight resources across the medical center for our Veterans.



820 South Damen Ave., Chicago, IL 60612-3728
312-569-8387 • va.gov/chicago-health-care

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Publisher

Rick A. Ament, Medical Center Director

Editor-in-Chief

Catrina Francis, Public Affairs Officer

CONTACT

This newsletter is for you, so if you have a story you want to share, please reach out to CHSPA@va.gov.

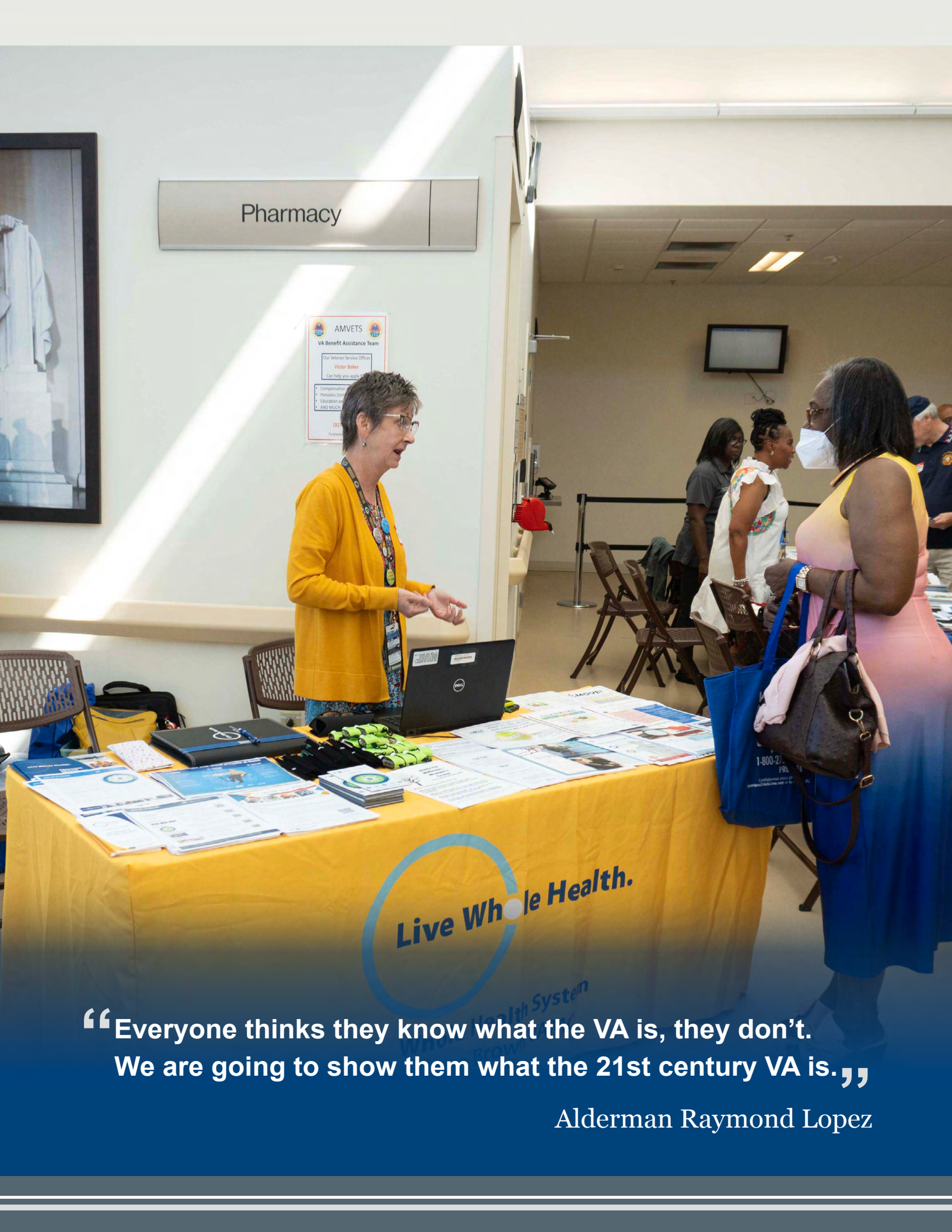
COMMUNICATIONS TASKFORCE

The Communications Taskforce is a group of your peers who volunteered to search out and tell the stories of our medical center and the Veterans we are honored to serve.

COMMUNICATIONS TASKFORCE MEMBERS

Francis Agyei
Stephanie Coleman
Jessica Gardner
Requiya Jones
Febin Mattahil
Cynthia Robertson
Elizabeth Sundin

Christina Chiu
Catrina Francis
Lacretia Henderson
Kristen Lake
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“Everyone thinks they know what the VA is, they don’t.
We are going to show them what the 21st century VA is.”

Alderman Raymond Lopez

VETERAN

INFORMATION WEEK

Discovering What VA Offers in the 21st Century

Derrick Matthews - Supervisory Public Affairs Officer

On Monday, May 8, the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago held a press conference to announce the beginning of Veterans Information Week. The event was aimed at providing Veterans with a range of resources and information surrounding the PACT Act to help them navigate the complex web of benefits and services available to them.

The weeklong event was held in partnership with the 15th Ward Alderman Raymond Lopez and featured a range of activities and events designed to educate and inform Veterans.

Lopez highlighted that Jesse Brown can provide many services to his Veteran constituents.

“Oftentimes [there isn’t any] support to bring them in,” he said. “We are going to do that together. We are going to be bringing all the best of you ... [to areas in Chicago and] expose so many to what they don’t know.”

One of the key goals of Veterans Information Week was to raise awareness about the many benefits and services available to Veterans. These include health care, education and training, employment assistance, and disability benefits, among others.

Rick Ament, the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Director, agreed with Lopez and pointed out the hospital was comfortably busy with helping 44% of the Veterans in its market who are eligible for care.

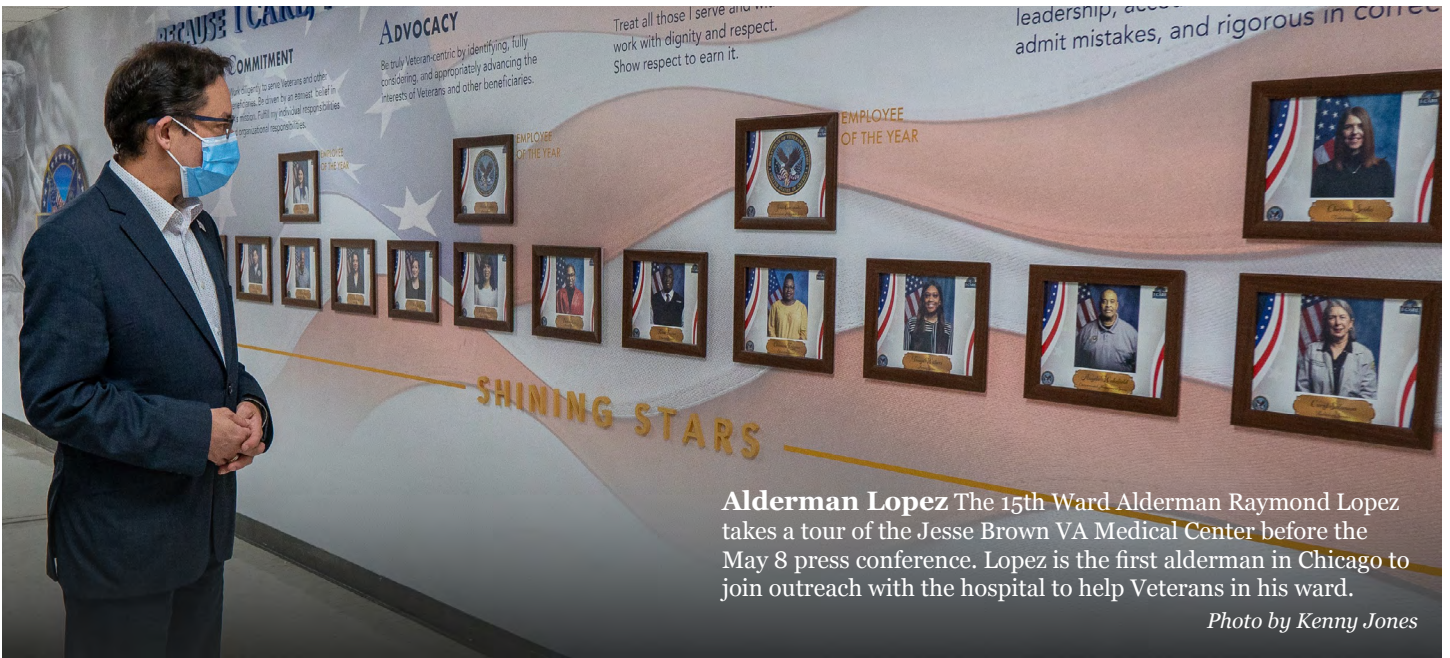
“We knew that wasn’t sufficient, we knew that wasn’t the right thing to do,” explained Ament. “It was kind of the standard model to just kind of go along. When we were driving through the communities and serving our Veterans in these various [community-based outpatient clinics], we realized they are significantly underserved.

“We have an opportunity and a mission to get these services to these Veterans. We are going to use this as a springboard. This is the first of the new Jesse Brown outreach program.”



Rick Ament Jesse Brown Director Rick Ament speaks at the press conference Monday, May 8 at the hospital in the Prescription Room while 15th Ward Alderman Raymond Lopez listens.

Photo by Kenny Jones



Alderman Lopez The 15th Ward Alderman Raymond Lopez takes a tour of the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center before the May 8 press conference. Lopez is the first alderman in Chicago to join outreach with the hospital to help Veterans in his ward.

Photo by Kenny Jones

“We owe a debt of gratitude to our Veterans, and this event is just one small way we can show our appreciation for all they have done for our country.”

Ament added that, “Veterans Information Week is a part of our comprehensive strategic initiative to be present to all the Veterans we serve throughout Chicagoland, especially those in underserved areas.”

The event provided Veterans with an opportunity to connect with representatives from a range of organizations and agencies that provide services and support. In addition to providing information and resources, Veterans Information Week also featured several events aimed at honoring and recognizing the sacrifices made by the nation’s Veterans.

Lopez stated that the event was an important opportunity to show gratitude and appreciation for the sacrifices made by Veterans.

“We owe a debt of gratitude to our Veterans, and this event is just one small way we can show our appreciation for all they have done for our country,” he said.

Overall, Veterans Information Week provided Veterans with the tools and resources they need to lead happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives after their service to the country.

Alderman Raymond Lopez



PACT ACT EVENT On June 10, Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center employees along with employees from the Veterans Benefits Administration hosted a PACT Act event at JB VAMC to educate Veterans about the Act. Veterans had an opportunity to ask questions about the PACT Act and other health-related questions. While attending the event, Veterans also had a chance to enroll in JB health benefits if they were eligible. During the event, six Veterans enrolled in health care at JB VAMC.

Photo by Kenny Jones



Raising the Pride Flag Jesse Brown employees participated in the raising of the Pride Flag at the flag pole in front of the Ogden entrance.

Photo by Kenny Jones

Jesse Brown VAMC | Raises Pride Flag

Catrina Francis - Public Affairs Officer

Recently, individuals from the Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center raised a Pride Flag to celebrate Pride Month. This year's theme is "We all have a seat at the table," which underscores the necessity of including all employees, including LGBTQ+ employees in every facet of the VA.

Pride Month is an annual celebration of the many contributions made by the LGBTQ+ community to history, society, and cultures worldwide, according to history.com. In most places, Pride is celebrated throughout the month of June each year in commemoration of its establishment in the Stonewall Riots of June 1969.

Prior to the flag being raised, Ryan Landi, Jesse Brown's Acting Associate Medical Center Director spoke to the event attendees.

"Here at Jesse Brown, we celebrate the contributions of LGBTQ+ Veterans and our LGBTQ+ employees," said Landi.

"Throughout June, we recognize the contributions of the more than 1 million LGBTQ+ Veterans in this nation. We thank each one of them — and every person who has donned the uniform — for their service and sacrifices."

Pride Month is a time for all to openly and proudly recognize all the amazing contributions of individuals with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and related identities throughout the country's history.

Landi added that Pride month also recognizes the 8% of VA employees who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and the thousands of employees who identify as transgender.

Landi pointed out that Jesse Brown continues to focus on removing obstacles and reducing the health inequities that LGBTQ+ Veterans have faced for far too long. VA serves all who have served.

"We have worked to make our culture the most inclusive that it can be," Landi said. "This involves, of course, welcoming Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors of all sexual orientations and genders."

"Creating and maintaining a safe and sensitive environment is something we continue to emphasize. Let me be clear: LGBTQ+ individuals are welcome here at Jesse Brown."

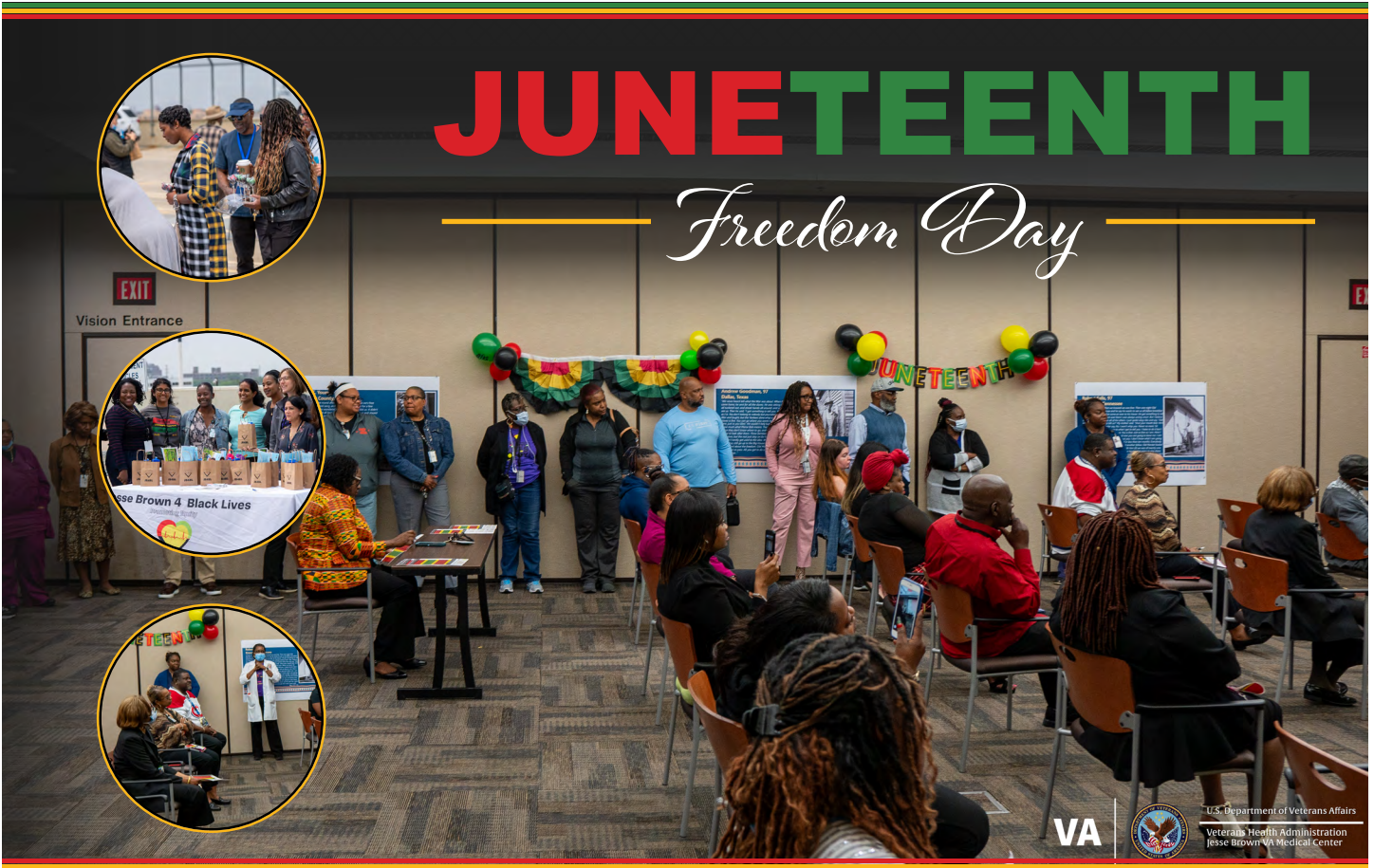


Ryan J. Landi, the Acting Associate Medical Center Director, watches as the Pride Flag is raised during the flag raising ceremony.

Photo by Kenny Jones

JUNETEENTH

Freedom Day



Rome Frazier, a Jesse Brown training specialist, answers questions during the Jesse Brown Juneteenth event. During the week of June 12, JB celebrated several Juneteenth events.

Photo by Kenny Jones

Jesse Brown Highlights | Juneteenth

Catrina Francis - Public Affairs Officer

During the week of June 12, Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center celebrated Juneteenth (June 13-15), which ended with a rooftop event and membership drive for JB4BL.

On June 19, 1865, nearly two years after President Abraham Lincoln emancipated enslaved Africans in America, Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas, with news of freedom, according to nmaahc.si.edu.

More than 250,000 African Americans embraced freedom by executive decree in what became known as Juneteenth or Freedom Day.

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be un-lived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

Maya Angelou

Juneteenth is also known as the second Independence Day that’s celebrated in the U.S., and is fairly new to some in the country.

However, for many in the African-American community Juneteenth is not new and was being celebrated before it officially became a federal holiday.



Then Brig. Gen. Stephen Curda. Curda was a keynote speaker during the May 31 Jesse Brown Asian American Pacific Islander AAPI conference.

Courtesy photo

Jesse Brown celebrates Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage

Catrina Francis - Public Affairs Officer

On May 31, the Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center celebrated Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month with an AAPI conference with keynote speaker Dr. Stephen Curda, a retired Army brigadier general.

Curda, who formerly served in the governor’s cabinet as the director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs and is currently an associate professor at the National College of Education and special assistant to the president for Veterans education at National Louis University.

According to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army Manpower and Reserve Affairs, nearly 65,000 soldiers have identified as Asian American or Pacific Islander serving in the Army and the Department of Defense, who reports that roughly 6% of service members are Asian Americans and Pacific Islander.

“It’s really important to note that AAPIs are the fastest growing racial group in the United States,” said Curda, “and their service has been a significant part of our communities’ history.”

“We must work to eliminate discrimination and prejudice, promote diversity and inclusion.”

Dr. Stephen Curda, retired Army brigadier general

He added that even though the conference was about celebrating AAPI Heritage Month, it’s important to note the contributions of AAPIs.

“[The] AAPI community has a rich history of service to our country in times of war and in peace, and our contributions have been invaluable

to our national securing from World War II,” he said. “Today AAPIs have served in every conflict making significant contributions to our nation’s defense and their service and sacrifice played a critical role in shaping our nation’s history.”

Curda pointed out that AAPI Veterans have not always been received or recognized for their service, and many have faced discrimination and prejudice in and out of the military. This often hinders their ability to fully integrate into society and access the benefits and resources they have earned, he explained.

“We must work to eliminate discrimination and prejudice, promote diversity and inclusion, and ensure that AAPI Veterans receive the care and resources we need to transition successfully into civilian life,” explained Curda. “I commend that VA is doing a great job, but we must continue supporting, educating, and informing our AAPI Veterans.”



Jesse Brown’s Healthy Teaching Kitchen takes place on the second Thursday of every month at 10 a.m. Each class is livestreamed on the VA Chicago Medical Center Facebook page and then saved to the Facebook page for those who want to watch it later. Any interested Veterans can watch via the Facebook livestream, or they can join via VA Video Connect. Each month’s class has a different theme and is led by registered dietitians Allison Hyzy and Stephen Lovell.

In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Month, Jesse Brown’s Healthy Teaching Kitchen turned up the flavor by highlighting a few cultural recipes that pack a nutritious and flavorful punch. The May Healthy Teaching Kitchen class featured fermented soybean stew, (which is called doenjang jjigae), fresh spring rolls with tofu, and five spice orange chicken and broccoli.



To view the recorded HTK class and find the recipes, scan this QR code.



ORANGE CHICKEN

Photo by Allison Hyzy



SOYBEAN STEW

Courtesy photo



SPRING ROLLS

Photo by Allison Hyzy

Seeking to Improve Patient Experience

New Wheelchairs Arrive to Jesse Brown VAMC

Derrick Matthews - Supervisory Public Affairs Officer

Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Chicago recently made a significant investment in the comfort and safety of their Veteran patients by acquiring new wheelchairs. These new wheelchairs are designed to better meet the needs of Veterans with mobility issues and will have a positive impact on their overall medical care experience.

The decision to purchase new wheelchairs came after careful consideration of the needs of the Veteran patient population at Jesse Brown VAMC. Many Veterans who receive care at the medical center have mobility issues due to injuries sustained during their service and require the use of a wheelchair to navigate the hospital's facilities.

The new wheelchairs are designed to provide greater comfort and support for these patients, which in turn will improve their overall health outcomes.

“We continue to strive to provide quality care to our mobility challenged Veterans,” said Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Transportation supervisor Kevin Jones. “These new wheelchairs will provide those with mobility issues with an advantage instead of a disadvantage.”

One of the key features of the new wheelchairs is its adjustability. The chairs can be customized to fit each individual patient's needs, providing a more comfortable and supportive seating experience. This is

particularly important for patients who may spend extended periods of time in a wheelchair, as it can help prevent pressure sores and other discomforts associated with sitting for long periods of time.

In addition to being more comfortable, the new wheelchairs are also designed with safety in mind. They feature improved braking and stability, which will reduce the risk of falls and other accidents that can occur. This is especially important for older Veterans, who may be more susceptible to falls and other injuries.

“We continue to strive to provide quality care to our mobility challenged Veterans.”

Kevin Jones

A sanitation program has been established to maintain the cleanliness and upkeep of the new chairs. “We have established a program internally

to ensure the chairs are cleaned and sanitized for the Veterans after usage,” said Rayvon Bufkin, Jesse Brown VA Medical Center veteran experience officer.

The purchase of these new wheelchairs is just one example of the commitment that Jesse Brown VAMC has made to providing high-quality care to their Veteran patients. An additional 50 wheelchairs will be delivered to Jesse Brown VAMC by the end of the year. By investing in the latest technology and equipment, the medical center can provide the best possible care to those who have served the country.

Overall, the purchase of new wheelchairs at Jesse Brown VAMC



Jesse Brown recently purchased 50 wheelchairs that will be instrumental in assisting veterans when they are the medical center.

Photo by Kenny Jones



The new wheelchairs are designed to better meet the needs of Veterans with mobility issues.

Photo by Kenny Jones

is a positive development that will have a tangible impact on the lives of Veterans who receive care at the medical center. By prioritizing the comfort and safety of their patients, Jesse Brown VAMC is setting a high standard for other healthcare facilities to follow and demonstrating their commitment to providing exceptional care to our nation's Veterans.

Have a great story to tell? Want to contribute to the Jesse Brown Pulse? We're always looking for more storytellers! Reach out at CHSPAO@va.gov.

Cancer Research | Treatment at JBVAMC

Francis Agyei - Medical Instrument Technician



Dr. Hidayatullah Munshi

Staff physician at Jesse Brown VAMC and Professor of Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine

Cancer remains the second most common cause of death in the nation, according to the American Journal of Cancer Research. Improving cancer screening, diagnosis and clinical care has become a priority as the U.S. population ages and as Congress and insurers attempt to control health care costs.

In a report released by the Institute of Population Health Improvement,

cancer patients using Veterans Affairs are said to experience several superior outcomes compared to those using other care providers and health insurance.

A new \$4.5 million grant from the VA's Office of Research and Development has been awarded to the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. The comprehensive, collaborative five-year grant enables multidisciplinary research teams from the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University and the University of Illinois Cancer Center to address life-threatening, unmet medical needs of Illinois Veterans. This will be a hub site of the VA's National Lung Precision Oncology Program.

Dr. Lawrence Feldman, MD, professor of Clinical Medicine in the Division of Hematology and Oncology at the University of Illinois College of Medicine is the main investigator and driver of this new LPOP-IV effort supported by Hidayatullah Munshi, MD, professor of Medicine in the Division of Hematology and Oncology at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Mushi is also leader of the tumor environment and metastasis program at the Lurie Cancer Center and staff physician at the JBVAMC. In addition, the LPOP-IV multidisciplinary team includes Nisha Mohindra, M.D (Lurie Cancer Center), Israel Rubinstein, M.D (University of Illinois College of Medicine), and Mukta Pant-Purohit, MD (LFHCC).



Not only does Jesse Brown Veterans Affairs Medical Center consist of a 200-bed acute care facility and provides primary and specialty care services to approximately 62,000 Veterans across the greater Chicago, and Northwest Indiana area, but it also houses a robust research department.

The Jesse Brown research service consists of 51 VA salaried employees, 121 affiliated academic employees, and 84 contracted employees who work in the Taylor pavilion on floors five, six, and seven.

Research service currently supports 246 human and animal research projects exploring a wide range

of subject matter experts, such as lung cancer, hypertension, patient communication, prosthetics for walking performance, epigenetics for ovarian cancer research, traumatic brain injury, alcoholism, rheumatoid arthritis, depression, COVID-19, and more.

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center research enterprise also influences and contributes to the larger scientific community by publishing editorials and scientific articles in various medical journals. In fact, in 2022 and 2023 (so far), researchers affiliated with Jesse Brown VA Medical Center have published 290 articles. While research at the facility focuses on advancing VA health care for Veterans, it also

fosters a collaborative environment with several prominent local academic institutions, including University of Illinois Chicago and Northwestern University, and supports career growth and opportunities for recent graduates, medical students, and residents. Investigators also collaborate within the VA working with different VA medical centers across the country to address and advance the health and wellness of Veterans.

It takes a lot of effort to conduct research within the VA and it could not be done without the administrative staff, institutional review board staff, researchers, research assistant, and Veterans.

Union Update



AFGE

The American Federation of Government Employees, which represents professional employees, has come to a tentative agreement on a new contract with Veterans Affairs. AFGE members at Jesse Brown and across the nation are voting on whether to ratify.

For more information about the contract or how to join, contact AFGE Local 789 at (262) 358-9992, afge0789@gmail.com or room 6412 in the Damen building.

National Nurses United

National Nurses United signed a new contract May 25, 2023, after a long seven years. Congratulations to Jesse Brown VA Medical Center RNs.

June DAISY Award

Nurse Receives June DAISY Award

Lacretia Henderson - Transportation Assistant

In February, Shelly-Ann Sabu, a registered nurse at the Jesse Brown Veterans Medical Center, was awarded the prestigious DAISY award., which stands for Diseases Attacking the Immune System, was created by Bonnie and Mark Barnes in November 1999.

Patients, families, and colleagues can nominate nurses for this award, and a committee at JBVAMC selects the recipient.

Sabu received this award after being nominated by two Veterans who sent heartfelt messages in support of her. “Dear Jesse Brown VA, there are days I don’t want to get up. I had a hip replacement Nov. 23, 2022. I have stayed longer than most. Nurse Shelly has been my nurse a few times. She has encouraged me to walk around the hospital ward. My legs were so weak and hard to stand. Her cheerful way and encouragement for me to get up and walk have done great for getting my legs stronger. To me, this is above and beyond her duties. I must get up so she can make my bed. I must get up so she can clean up. I must get up to sit in the chair and not lay in bed. This is what Shelly does to me and has been helpful in my recovery. Thank you!”



Shelly-Ann Sabu, RN

Photo courtesy of Shelly-Ann Sabu

“Dear Daisy Award, Shelly is a nurse who has learned to give you proper instruction while working with you. As a patient that’s very important when you are in pain. She is specific when she explains to you what is going on with you, which makes the pain more comfortable. Thank you!”

The JBVAMC community greatly appreciates Sabu for her hard work and dedication. When you see her in the halls, please show gratitude by offering a warm smile and saying thank you. Let’s honor Sabu for all that she does.