

LIBERTY EXPRESS

October 2025



Pinewood Derby

By Ralph Healey, Editor

The Central Nebraska Veterans' Home held its first Pinewood Derby race in September.

Twenty members spent time working in the wood shop to prepare for the race. Designing, shaping, sanding, and painting each car became several days of fun for the members as they each tried to produce the best possible design. The two days prior to the race, the cars were placed on display in the hearth room for members and staff to vote which design they liked best, found most humorous, took the most work, or was the best in show. With prizes and certificates for the winners of the various



categories, this created the opportunity for our member's creativeness to shine.

On race day the members had the opportunity to select the car they felt had the best chance at victory prior to the start. This had the members hooting and hollering as their car took to the track. The competitive side of our members came through as several races came down to a hair. During the single elimination races, cars faced one another until we had three final cars up for the championship. In the end, the Seabees car took the victory this year for the Navy.

This year's race was sponsored by the Elks and Cub Scout Pack 139. Josh, who represented both organizations,



Photo Left: Volunteer Josh proudly presented member EJ with his ribbon for being winner of the race!

Message From the Administrator



By Dorin C. Vaipan,
CNVH Administrator

September started with four important days for us all: the Labor Day holiday on September 1st followed on September 2nd by the Victory Japan Day of World War II, September 11th for Patriot Day, and September 19th for National POW/MIA Recognition Day. The Activity/Recreation department lined up a set of appropriate activities for these days, hosted by our activity staff and/or community volunteers.

I will continue in this issue with a more personal note. I was able to leave for vacation at the end of September, visiting my birth country Romania, and especially the region where I grew up – Transylvania. The good part is that I was able to visit with my mother, my mother-in-law, my brother, and his family, as well as with friends. The not so good part was that we had to make arrangements for both my mother and my mother-in-law to be admitted to a nursing home, since they were living alone and they were in need of specialized care.

On the way home to United States, we stopped for a few days in the ancient city of Rome, Italy, which was founded around the year 755 BC. As you can imagine, a city former capital of a powerful empire, like the Roman Empire, with an existence of over 2,700 years, has lots of history so, I can say that I was able only to see the most iconic attractions, like the Colosseum, Fontana di Trevi, Spanish Steps, and Vatican City with its St. Peter Basilica plus the Sistine Chapel.

Of course, after a long trip, all of us enjoy returning home and to work. However, it is not only I that wanted my return, but my direct reports as well. Enjoy the photos below with my office decorated by my team.

Dorin C. Vaipan, CNVH Administrator



Member Council: Member of the Month - John “Jack” Wheat

For September, our Member of the Month is John “Jack” Wheat. Jack has lived at CNVH since August of 2023. He was born on Welfare Island in New York, which was later named Roosevelt Island in the 1960s. He grew up in Chicago, Illinois.

He was then married to wife Jan for 54 beautiful years until her passing in 2011. Their favorite song was, “In the garden,” by Charles Austin Miles.

Jack was in high school in Chicago when he quit school to join the Air Force at 17 years old, which didn’t work out quite the way he expected because the Air Force made him go back to school to get his GED, before he was able to serve in the



John “Jack” Wheat

98th Bomber Wing at the Strategic Air Command. After the Air Force he became an employee of the State of Nebraska in Corrections, and then worked in as a national manager for insurance. Later he returned to Corrections and stayed until his retirement.

In his free time Jack enjoys reading the Stars and Stripes, karaoke, listening to music, socializing, old mov-

ies, and books. Jack’s favorite car is a 1935 Studebaker. Jack’s favorite part of the Home has been the entertainment, companionship, and friendships he has had. He feels it is a nice place to live. Congratulations to Jack Wheat for being the Member of the Month!



Member Council: Employee of the Month

Jim Goedert in Human Resources

Jim Goedert, Human Resource (HR) Specialist is this month’s Member Council Employee of the Month. Jim started with the home in June of 2023 and is a huge asset to our team. Jim is an awesome team player. Sometimes he helps with cooking eggs in Foxtrot when needed, so you might recognize his face! He does an excellent job in recruiting our new employees, conducts orientation, and onboarding for HR. As Jim’s supervisor I appreciate his willingness to help others, his attention to detail, and that he adapts to changes quickly and without complaints. Please stop by to congratulate Jim!

Veterans Home Honors 9/11 with Timeline Display

Members and staff at CNVH could stop by the Hearth Room on the anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy and take time to honor and remember the events of September 11, 2001. The display marks each key moment of that day—from the first plane striking the World Trade Center at 8:46 am to the collapse of the towers and the heroic actions of Flight 93 passengers.

For many members and staff here at CNVH, the display serves as both memorial and a place of reflection. Some recall where they were when the news broke. Throughout the day on September 11th, you would see members and staff stopping by the display and taking a moment to reflect and remember.



POW & MIA Remembrance Table

On September 19th a POW & MIA Table was on display in the Hearth Room for members and staff to stop and take a moment to reflect on the meaning of sacrifice. The POW & MIA Remembrance Table is also known as the, “Missing Man Table,” set to honor those who were prisoners of war and those still missing in action. Every item on the table holds deep symbolic meaning:

A **small table** represents the frailty of one prisoner, alone against their oppressors.

A **white tablecloth** symbolizes the purity of their intentions in serving their country.

A **single red rose** in a vase stands for the blood they may have shed and the families and loved ones awaiting their return.

A **yellow ribbon** tied around the vase reminds us of those who still hope.

A **slice of lemon** on the plate reflects their bitter fate, and a **pinch of salt** symbolizes the tears shed by families.

An **inverted glass** shows they cannot partake in the meal.

An **empty chair** is a silent reminder—they are missing but not forgotten.



This table reminds us that freedom comes at a great cost. For the veterans who walk by the table each day, it's more than a display it's a promise that their brothers and sisters in arms will always be remembered.

Paws for Joy: Members visit Local Doggy Daycare

By Carlie Skiles, Activity Specialist

The laughter of members mixed with the happy barks of playful pups during a recent outing to Cottonwood Doggy Daycare. Members spent the morning surrounded by wagging tails, wet noses, and furry cuddles- all part of a special pet therapy visit.

For many members, time with animals brings back fond memories of beloved family pets. The smiles on faces told the story: a simple interaction with animals can spark joy, ease stress, and even encourage social connections.

Pet therapy has been shown to reduce loneliness and promote relaxation, and this outing was no exception. The daycare staff warmly welcomed our group making sure everyone had a chance to experience the unconditional love only dogs can give.

By the time the visit wrapped up both members and pups looked equally happy and maybe a little tuckered out. After such a successful visit, plans are already in the works to make trips like this a regular tradition. Sometimes the best therapy doesn't come in the form of medicine, it comes with four paws, a wagging tail, and unconditional love.



Sometimes the best therapy comes with four paws, a wagging tail and unconditional love.



Meet the Leadership - Lois Dael

By Ralph Healey, Editor

This month we will be learning more about Lois Dael our in-house APRN, more commonly referred to as a Nurse Practitioner. Lois has been here at Central Nebraska Veterans' Home (CNVH) for 2.5 years now.

Prior to working here, she was working mostly in cancer treatment, primarily with the geriatric population. One of her favorite changes from her previous career is the continuity of care here at the home. Previously she would get to know patients during the window they would be treated and then it was over.

Switching to long term care as a general practitioner has been a big change for her. She gets to know the members and fellow staff better, and she gets to meet the family and spend time long term learning more about those she is helping.

Lois was born and raised in Glenvil, NE. As an adult she has spent most of her life in Kearney,

NE. Lois has three children, and four grandchildren. She reports she has not really enjoyed her years in academia, but the amount of education she has seems to contradict that. Lois earned a two-year degree in secretarial work, then went onto a bachelor's in business. She then decided to change careers and picked up a bachelor's, then a master's, and now post-master's degrees all in nursing.

In her spare time, she likes to crochet which she uses to give back to her friends and coworkers. Lois really loves working here and the kindness shown by her members and staff have really made working at CNVH a place to remember.



Lois Dael, Nurse Practitioner

Oktoberfest!

Members gathered in Freedom Hall for an afternoon at the Oktoberfest party, complete with a Polka Band, drinks and kolaches. The Ken Shuda Band was present to celebrate Oktoberfest and play polka music for the members to enjoy. There was a lot of hand clapping and toe tapping happening in Freedom Hall during the party. The Band took song requests if there was a song that the members wanted to hear. The live band brought Freedom Hall to life! Freedom Hall was also decorated for Oktoberfest to

help get the members in the spirit of the celebration. During the party, the members enjoyed kolaches with different flavors. The Oktoberfest party was sponsored by the Kearney Elks Lodge. Seeing the members light up with the music, the food, and the shared laughter is what it's all about.





Check us out on the web!

<https://veterans.nebraska.gov/cnvh>

Special Points of Interest Next Month:

- Merrymakers Concert with Tom Strohmyer
- Halloween Events

*The Liberty Express is published monthly
by Central Nebraska Veterans' Home.*

Administrator: Dorin C. Vaipan

Editor: Ralph Healey



GOVERNOR
JIM PILLEN

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
JOHN HILGERT

CENTRAL NEBRASKA VETERANS' HOME ADMINISTRATOR
DORIN C. VAIPAN

Central Nebraska Veterans' Home

4510 E. 56th Street
Kearney, NE 68847
Phone: 308-865-6000