



# LIBERTY EXPRESS



February 2026

## Doggy Daycare Outing

The members enjoyed a morning outing to “The Retreat at Cottonwood,” which is a local doggy daycare! This is a fun outing for the members to participate with because they get to see the dogs. This outing gets the members involved in some fun and petting time as the members play with them.

The first dog the members got to meet was Murphy and let me tell you this dog had a great personality. Murphy enjoyed getting all the pets that he could from the members. Once Murphy’s turn was over and he returned to the play area, he sat at the window and watched the other dogs come out for a turn. Murphy looked so sad through the window the members asked if Murphy could come back out again, so at the end Murphy got to make another appearance with the members to give him more pets!

The next new friend the members got to meet was Rex, a toy poodle. The members enjoyed petting Rex and loving on him. Rex enjoyed all the attention as well and loved getting his picture taken. After Rex, the next friend the members got to meet was Milo, a mini dachshund. Milo enjoyed meeting all the members.



The last new dog the members got to meet was a labradoodle named Coonan. His coat was so soft, and the members loved petting him. The members enjoyed their time at the doggy daycare and can’t wait to return. The members also enjoyed reminiscing about dogs and pets that they have owned over the years.

## Message From the Administrator



By Dorin C. Vaipan,  
CNVH Administrator

And here we are in 2026! Overall, we had a good and successful 2025 year in which we didn't need to use agency staffing to cover the Nursing Schedule, we had a good number of new staff applications each month and we also had a very successful USVA Annual Survey.

But now we need to focus on the new year! We want to continue with the prior year's good trend in hiring staff, especially nursing staff, which will allow us to utilize additional beds that are not currently in use. In other words, we plan to serve more veterans should we continue to hire more caregivers.

As we continue to review 2025, we can share some data with you. Last year, the Admission Team conducted 48 admissions, but we also had 5 discharges and 38 deaths. Also, 109 admission screenings were conducted. Unfortunately, in 2025 we had veterans who applied to be admitted to Central Nebraska Veterans' Home (CNVH) but declined to admit. More exactly, 11 declined being offered the admission after the screening was conducted and another 43 chose to decline the screening prior the admission offer. This is a combined total of 54 potential additional members to our census. Of course, these applicants have the right to refuse the admission or the screening, meaning that they accepted to be removed from the waiting list. However they have to option to apply again, anytime at their convenience.

We have exciting news about an employee, who is part of our Admission Team. Megan Gomez, RN (photo right) has been selected as our Teammate of the Quarter! Since joining CNVH in April 2022 as MDS Coordinator, Megan has consistently demonstrated excellence, dependability, and a genuine commitment to our members and staff. She has willingly stepped into expanded roles—including Admissions Coordinator and Delta unit leadership—quickly mastering responsibilities, building strong relationships across departments, and creating practical tools that improved communication, accountability, and care delivery.

Megan leads with kindness, inclusivity, and a true "can-do" attitude. Her organizational and problem-solving skills, and the ability to bring teams together have transformed workflows, strengthened trust, and empowered staff at every level. She ensures everyone feels valued, heard, and part of the process—always keeping member care at the center of her work. Megan's leadership has made a meaningful difference, and we are incredibly fortunate to have her on our team. Congratulations, Megan! Well deserved!



If you have questions, feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience. Thank you!

Dorin C. Vaipan, CNVH Administrator

## Member Council: Member of the Month - PORTER REIMAN

This month Porter Reiman is our Member of the Month. Porter has been at Central Nebraska Veterans' Home since March of 2025. He was born in Colorado but moved back and forth between Southern Nebraska and Eastern Colorado throughout his life.

Porter never finished high school as his working years started young, when he found a job as a grain truck driver at only twelve years old. He then went on to be a grocery store clerk, then became an auto parts delivery driver before too many speeding tickets took him out of that line of work and put him into a construction driver job.

He joined the Army and trained at Fort Leonard



Wood, Missouri before being shipped out to Korea for a year. Once he returned to the states he got out of the service. This led him into trucking which he started in the service. Porter is proud of the fact that he was a truck driver for over forty years and drove over a million miles in that time!

Porter has liked his time in the home.

Amongst other things, In his down time, Porter enjoys bingo, TV, concerts, and driving truck. He is active in his church, the Assembly of God.

Congratulations to Porter for being member of the month!

## Member Council: Employee of the Month

### APRIL ONDRAK in Nursing



April Ondrak is a Registered Nurse on the Echo Neighborhood. April has been with CNVH for 3.5 years now and has really become a wonderful mentor. Whenever we have new Nurses or Nurse Aides, she is eager to work with them and share her expertise. She is encouraging and always has a smile for our new staff. Recently April passed her National Certification on Foot Care. She is now able to hold a clinic to assess our members' feet/toenails (Vets and non-Vets). April providing this service in our home will help us reduce the number of our members who would need to leave the home to receive these services. She clearly has a passion for serving our Veterans and for making CNVH a great place to live and work! Congratulations on being Member Council's Staff of the Month!

## Merrymaker Concert – Mark Irvin

In January, the members enjoyed an afternoon concert presented by Merrymakers performer Mark Irvin. This activity was sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary. Mark Irvin is a music educator, singer/songwriter, recording artist, and freelance musician from Omaha, Nebraska.

During Mark's performance he talked about how he was a self-taught musician out of high school and spent most of the 1980's working as a musician. Mark grew up in a house of music, and this made music a very vital part of his family. His mom and father deeply loved music and shared that with Mark throughout his childhood developing his deep love of the art.



*Mark Irvin performs in Freedom Hall.*

Mark enjoyed taking the members on a journey through the years with his performance this month. There were a lot of toes tapping and fingers tapping on the tables throughout the performance. The members look forward to having our monthly Merrymakers Concert and enjoying the time listening to the performances.



**In Memoriam**

***Charles Mefferd***

***Bernard Griffing***

***Wayne Deterding***

***Louvaughn Allen***

***Elmer Heeren***

***Raymond Andersen***

***Jimmy Thayer***

***Edgar Young***

***Donna Williams***



## Meet the Leadership - Lance McKenney

By Ralph Healey, Editor

As most people know this master of comedy always has a joke to share and a giggle to be had. This month we will be learning more about Lance McKenney, our Business Office Manager.

Lance was born and raised in Broken Bow Nebraska. He moved to Kearney but then briefly spent a few years down in Corpus Christi, Texas before moving back to Kearney.

Lance moved to Kearney to attend the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He ended up earning a Master's degree while there trying to be a CPA but never ended up in that job.

He spent ten years at the Cabela's call center and worked for the Kearney Area Animal Shelter part time as an accountant. That led him to working for



Lance McKenney  
Business Office Manager

Mid-Plains Behavioral Health Services as their Chief Financial Officer for three years. Lance then moved over to CNVH and has been with us for eight years.

In his down time Lance enjoys reading, video games, the Car Show, orange, time at the Cornerstone Berean Church, and has been an Elks' member since 2003.

Lance considers one of his favorite accomplishments to have earned an Admiralship in the Nebraska Navy. Lance enjoys working at the CNVH because every interaction with the members is different. Even when things become tough between him and others, he finds earning mutual respect, even when hard fought, is worth it.

## Waffle Feed Social

The members enjoyed an afternoon breakfast snack and social of waffles, sausage, and juice! As the members entered Freedom Hall, there was a lot of comments about the amazing smelling food and they were hungry. The members and staff even said that they could smell the waffles down the hallways as they were coming to the Social.

The waffles were made in the shape of the continental United States and they said USA across them. This is an activity that the members look forward to and enjoy each year. While they enjoyed their waffles, they enjoyed time visiting with friends and listening to music. This activity was sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary.



## County Fair and U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs Art Contest

It is that time a year again when the Craft Department starts preparing for the County Fair and the Veteran's Affairs Art Contests. Detailed here are the ways you can enter each contest.

### County Fair

The county fair preparation starts now. This can be entered by any member in the home including veterans and spouses. If you stop by the craft department the staff can help you prepare an entry either in the Ceramics division, or the Wood Craft division of the contest depending on what you are interested in. The staff can help you pick out a project and get you started so you have time to enter the best possible representation of your artistic capabilities.

If you are new to art and have never done something like this, we can still help you give this a try, it is a lot of fun and not nearly as hard as you might think. If you place first in the County fair your art piece automatically gets to go on to the State Fair for a second contest and opportunity to earn further prestige.



### U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Art Contest

This contest is hosted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This does require you to be a veteran to enter this contest. If you stop by the Craft department the staff can help you prepare an entry either in the Ceramics division, or the Wood Craft division of the contest depending on what you are interested in.

Our nearest contest entry point is the Grand Island Veterans Affairs Community Based Outpatient Clinic and when you enter that contest the piece is displayed in the hospital for some time before being moved to the display case in front of the Craft Department here in the home. Should you place best in show in this contest, your art piece will be sent onto the national contest which is hosted in a different city every year. If you are a veteran, you can enter a piece in both contests. They happen at the same time so you will have to make a separate project for each contest.

You do not have to be a regular in Crafts to make an entry. Check your activity schedules for your homes assigned craft times. Hope to see you soon!



## Happy Hour and Appetizers

The members enjoyed an afternoon with their friends in Freedom Hall enjoying our monthly Happy Hour and Appetizer activity. This month the members enjoyed tater-tots and french-fries, they had their choice of dipping sauce of ranch or ketchup for their items as well. Along with their appetizers, they pick something to drink from the menu that was provided to them. Each month we have different types of appetizers for the members to enjoy. The members also enjoyed classic country music this month during the Happy Hour as well as socializing with one another. This activity was sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary.



## Blind Date with a Book

Check out the “Blind Date with a Book” display in our Library. To enjoy this new event come to the library and read the description on the wrapped books to see which one grabs your interest.

Take the book back to your neighborhood, unwrap it, show it your favorite place to read, read the book and see what you think!

When you return the book to the library, be sure to see Charlene and she will give you a “Rate Your Book” card. Simply fill out the card and turn it back into Charlene. Anyone that fills out the “Rate Your Book” card and turns it in, will be entered to win a prize.

Happy reading everyone one!





Special Points of Interest Next Month:

- Valentine Celebrations
- Merrymakers Concert

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	<b>GOVERNOR JIM PILLEN</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS DIRECTOR JOHN HILGERT</b>	<b>CENTRAL NEBRASKA VETERANS' HOME ADMINISTRATOR DORIN C. VAIPAN</b>
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