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The new Grand Forks clinic, which officially will open Sept. 9 in a spacious 9,000-square-foot office at 3221 32nd Ave. S., across the parking lot from Kohl's Department Store. It will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

By: [Kevin Bonham](#), Grand Forks Herald

Robert Lofthus and Eugene Kramer toured the new Grand Forks Veterans Administration Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBO) on Monday.

"It sure is nice, and there's a lot of room," said Lofthus, a World War II veteran who grew up in McVille, N.D., and now lives in Grand Forks.

"One nice thing is there's no stairs," said Kramer, a native of Linton, N.D., who fought in the Korean War. "But there's a lot of stairs here."

Still, Kramer, who also lives in Grand Forks, gladly will sacrifice a cafeteria to save the 150-mile round trip to the VA Medical Center in Grafton.

Lofthus has been receiving his medical care at closest VA clinic, located 40 miles away in Grafton.

Both say they will transfer to the new Grand Forks clinic, which officially will open Sept. 9 in a spacious 9,000-square-foot office at 3221 32nd Ave. S., across the parking lot from Kohl's Department Store. It will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

"This clinic will provide a crucial link in the care system for veterans," Sen. Kent Conrad told a crowd of about 250 people gathered Tuesday outside the facility.

VA officials are encouraging veterans to register to receive services in Grand Forks, but to continue to see doctors at the Grafton VA Clinic where they now are receiving care. Appointments probably will not be booked in Grand Forks until about November.

The clinic will have two physicians, Patrick Moore and Fredric Black, who had been with Altru Health System in Grand Forks. Schweitzer, who is transferring from the Grafton VA Clinic. It also will have a registered nurse, two licensed practical nurses and a physical therapist. An outreach specialist also will serve the clinic.

By last month, more than 500 veterans had signed up to transfer their care to Grand Forks.

It's the ninth VA Outpatient Clinic to open in North Dakota. The 10th is expected to open in Devils Lake in 2010.

Other Fargo VA clinics are in Jamestown, Bismarck, Dickinson, Williston, Minot and Grafton, as well as in Bemidji and Grand Forks.

The Grand Forks clinic will offer primary care services, including physicals and routine procedures, plus mental health services such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

It also has a tele-medicine room, where patients can remain in Grand Forks and talk with their VA doctors in other parts of the state.

VA officials expect the clinic to have as many as 1,400 patients in the first year and grow to about 2,000 and more than 2,500 in two years, according to Peggy Wheelden, Fargo VA Medical Center public affairs officer.

The current VA Clinic in Bemidji, which opened in 2006, currently has about 2,100 patients annually. The VA Clinic in Grand Forks sees about 1,500 patients a year.

VA officials expect the new clinic to draw from throughout the region, including northwestern Minnesota. That could result in a drop in patient volume at the Bemidji clinic.

"We don't expect Bemidji will see a drop, but Grafton may," Wheelden said.

Meanwhile, the VA is continuing to develop plans to open a new clinic in Devils Lake in 2010.

"We're kind of waiting to see how Grand Forks did," he said.

The VA likely will start looking for potential locations late this year or early next year. Likely locations are in downtown Grand Forks and at the National Guard training facility south of the city.