

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Program Action Plan – 2016-2017

Sharon Regnier, Chairman

What is the VA & R Program and Why Do We Have It?

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program promotes the ALA mission to enhance the lives of veterans, military and their families.

What Can You Do?

- 1. Provide opportunities for Auxiliary members to serve veterans and their families as volunteers at VA Medical Centers through the VA Voluntary Services (VAVS).**

Ideas: Member

- Become a regular VAVS volunteer.
 - Invite others to become VAVS volunteers with you.
 - Enter all volunteer hours in the VAVS tracking utilized for ALA hour bars.
- 2. There isn't a VA hospital close to your community? Find opportunities for ALA members to serve veterans in the area. These hours will count toward the Service to Veterans pin and hour bars.**
 - Service to Veterans recognizes volunteers who provide service to veterans, service members and their families outside a VAMC.
 - Volunteers conduct projects and work for military and/or veterans and/or their families from their homes and in their communities.
 - Service to Veterans volunteers maintain their own recordkeeping and dollars spent. A new pin has been designed to reflect the work of those who volunteer in their communities and at home for veterans. Hour bars, which attach to the pin are also available to earn.
 - More information is available in the VA&R: A Guide for Volunteers available at www.emblem.legion.org.
 - Also refer to the Service to Veterans Program Action Plan – Yvonne Lent, Department Chairman as the Department of Indiana names a separate chairman for this volunteer work.

Ideas: Member

- Help a veteran use the Internet.
- Supply postage for local veterans in nursing homes or assisted living facilities.
- Organize a clothing drive.
- Organize transportation for veterans to assist them with essential errands.
- Find out what is needed and volunteer.
- Report Service to Veterans hours to the Service to Veterans Department Chairman (Yvonne Lent)
- Become the catalyst to find needs and encourage members to help veterans in their communities.
- Provide hospitality for a job fair for veterans.
- Compile and record hours provided by Unit members.

3. Assist veterans in accessing VA benefits including, but not limited to, health care. This should include coordinating with the local American Legion Post Service Officer.

Ideas: Member

- Coordinate with local American Legion Post to identify the local Service Officer or see list at www.legion.org/serviceofficer.
- Help eligible veterans attain benefits through referrals.
- Encourage eligible veterans to use the VA health care system and its services, including hospitals, Community based Outpatient Clinics, Vet Centers, etc.
- Participate in and encourage veterans and their family members to participate in town hall meetings organized by the American Legion in advance of the Legion's System Worth Saving site visits to VA health care systems:
www.legion.org/systemworthsaving.
- Invite the local, county or state Service Officer to be the guest speaker at a Unit event.

4. Assist in activities that help homeless veterans.

Ideas: Member

- Give a helping hand to the Legion's homeless veteran coordination in the Department of Indiana and offer to assist that coordinator in responding to the request for assistance from homeless veterans' service providers.
- Contact the Post Chairman and Service Officer to offer your assistance if request for help comes through the Legion's Family Support Network (FSN).
- Raise funds for local American Legion Posts to help veterans and their families through the FSN for veterans at risk of losing their housing or Homeless Veterans transitioning to permanent housing.
- Make payments of overdue rent, utility payments or security deposits.
- Host or volunteer at homeless veterans' stand downs, events where homeless veterans receive free goods and services such as haircuts and medical exams.
- Contact homeless veteran emergency shelters, transitioning housing projects and permanent housing in your community to identify the organizations' volunteer and in-kind contribution needs including:
 - Meal preparation and serving.
 - Clothes collection and distribution.
 - Assembly and delivery of hygiene kits, buddy baskets.
 - Purchasing or securing household items or furniture.
 - Compile "Blessing Bags" to be given to the local police department or other organizations that deal with the homeless veteran population.
 - Create a "Tree of Warmth" by collecting scarves, mittens, hats and attaching them to a tree in a location the homeless frequent. Include a sign that says, "Please Take if Needed", "Free if Needed" or something similar.

5. Help the American Legion, State Department of Veteran Affairs and Chamber of Commerce promote job fairs for veterans and their families.

Ideas: Member

- Take part in a veteran job fair by organizing or working at an informational table. Other opportunities include helping implement Legion-sponsored job fair and/or co-hosting a Legion Family information table at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation-sponsored job fair. Additionally, ALA members may initiate and host a job fair for veterans in their community.
- Serve as a career e-mentor for women veterans.
- Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, specifically if the house build is supported by the American Legion.

6. Assist and support caregivers of veterans.

Ideas: Member

- Familiarize yourself with the service of the VA caregiver support program.
- Familiarize yourself with Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network.
- Become a veteran caregiver peer support training or volunteer.
- Become a Legacy Corps AmeriCorps member.
- Volunteer as a VA Voluntary Service volunteer support caregiver.
- Invite the VA caregiver support coordinator in the VA healthcare system to make a presentation at a Unit or District meeting.

National Awards:

VAVS Volunteer of the Year Award – Citation and \$500 donation to the VAVS facility or VCAP of her choice.

- Candidates will be submitted by the chiefs of voluntary service and Department Chairman by November 1, 2016, and to the National VAVS deputy (Sharon Nevel, 107 Bradford Circle, Clayton, NC 27527-6679 or snevillebelieve@gmail.com).
- Awarded to the nominee who has given extraordinary service to our nation's veterans through the ALA VA&R program and the VAVS program.
- Nominee must serve in an established VA assignment and be defined as a regularly scheduled volunteer.
- Should be actively involved in working with veterans in any one of the following areas: outpatient clinics, nursing homes, homeless veteran programs, hosted veteran related functions outside the VA, or visited veterans confined to their homes (as assigned by VAVS).
- The ALA Volunteer of the Year is forwarded for consideration as the NAC Volunteer of the Year.

10,000 Hour Volunteer Service Award – Citation and \$100 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of her choice,

- Given to volunteers who have reached 10,000 hours of service in a VA facility during this year (April 1, 2016-March 31, 2017).
- Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the first Friday in June.

20,000 Hour Volunteer Service Award - Citation and \$200 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of her choice.

- Given to volunteers who have reached more than 20,000 hours of service in a VA facility during this year (April 1, 2016-March 31, 2017).
- Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the first Friday in June.

Volunteer Recruitment & Service Department Award - Citation presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs

- No entry form required
- Awarded to the hospital rep at every facility that shows an increase in both volunteers and volunteer hours at a VA Medical Center from April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017.
- The award winner will be determined by the National VAVS Representative through verification of hours and number of volunteers recorded by VAVS.

100 Percent VAVS Meeting Attendance Award

- Presented to Hospital Representative and Deputy
- No entry form required
- An “Attendance Card” will be awarded to each Representative and Deputy who has 100 percent attendance to VAVS committee meetings at her assigned facility.
- The National VAVS Representative will verify the winners from the VA records.

Department Awards:

- **Louise Hyde Monetary Award:** For the best narrative report from a unit based on work accomplished in the hospital.
- **Nancy Gunning Monetary Award:** To the District reporting the best hands-on activities held at a VA or State Hospital facility.

Department Chairman Personal Awards

- Will be based on what the District’s report at year-end.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Reporting

Mid-Year Reports

- Each Unit Chairman is to submit their Mid-Year Report to their District Chairman by December 1st, 2016.
- Each District Chairman should submit a Mid-Year Report to the Department Chairman by December 15th, 2016.

Year-End Reports

- Each Unit Chairman is to submit a Year-End Report to your District Chairman by April 15th, 2017.
- Each District Chairman is to submit a Year-End Report to the Department Chairman by May 1st, 2017.

Additional Information

James H. Parke Scholarship

This substantial scholarship is awarded annually by Veterans Affairs to a student volunteer. The American Legion Auxiliary contributes \$2,000 annually to this scholarship fund.

- To be eligible, candidates must have completed 100 hours of regularly scheduled VAVS volunteer service during the calendar year prior to September 1.
- Be a student in the 10th grade or above

- And have not reached their 19th birthday.
- The Medical Center Director nominates a candidate for the award by November 1st.
- The national winner receives a plaque and a letter of commitment.

Welcome Home Celebrations

Provide assistance to your local VA health care system in supporting returning servicemembers and their families in the community. VA supports this initiative by providing information about the opportunities available to them through the VA. Every VA health care system sponsors welcome home celebrations in their facilities and community.

National Salute to Veterans

This initiative salutes America's heroes, the more than 98,000 veterans of the U.S. Armed Services who are cared for every day in VA Medical Centers during the week of February 14 annually.

Additional Resources You Can Use:

- Homeless Veterans Coalition – www.nchv.org
- Quilts of Valor – www.govf.org
- VA Homeless Assistance Programs – www.onecpd.info/homelessness-assistance/
- HUD Homeless Assistance Programs – www.onecpd.info/homelessness-assistance/
- On-Call: Handbook for Homeless Veterans and Service Providers – www.legion.org/homeless_veterans/handbook
- The American Legion Family Support Network – www.legion.org/familysupport
- National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Facebook Page
- American Legion Auxiliary Veterans Creative Activities Action Guide www.ALforVeterans.org
- National Veterans Creative Arts Festival – www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov
- How to Sheets
 - May be found at www.ALforVeterans.org
 - How to Raise Awareness in your communities about the Evet-Increasing Number of Homeless Veterans
 - How to Increase Donations to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

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