

DEPARTMENT of FL
V A & R YEAR-END REPORT
2015-2016

The Department of FL District VA&R Chairmen reported the members were very busy supporting our Veterans.

There were 69 Units and 425 members participating in **Caregiver Support**. Some of the activities were visiting with the Veteran while his wife went shopping, built a wheelchair ramp to facilitate the Veteran returning from surgery, assisting with Pet Care and Pet Sitting when Veteran was away from home, Cleaning the home and did Yardwork so the caregiver could go out, Shopping and Cooking meals to give the caregiver a break, arranged for personal massages, taking the Veteran to doctor appointments when caregiver was unable. Unit 183 sponsored redecorating of living space for a Veteran to facilitate in his care giving. Unit 126 took the spouse of a Legionnaire to get haircuts, dinner and doctor visits when the Legionnaire passed. The Post Family hosted a Memorial for her when she passed.

Service to Veterans seems to be easier to report with Field and Home services being combined. 117 Units reported 1164 members participated in 51,715.5 hours. Members cooked and served dinners, did laundry, drove to doctor appointments, paid Utility Deposits and Bills for VA housing, collected prescriptions and did weekly shopping. We also participated in programs at care centers with VA Bingo, Bowling, CLC visits and host weekly Coffee Mess with doughnuts at local Veteran's Clinic for Veterans, Families and Staff. Units provided Bedding, Pillow Shams and Slippers with other comfort items, many members did sewing ditty bags and quilts, knitting and crocheting of Lap Robes and Caps, donating items to Project SUDS and Suds of Love, prepared personal care bags for Homeless Veterans and many hours and in-kind donations to several Transitional Houses.

Holidays are very popular to visit the VAMC throughout the state with many hosted Halloween and St. Patrick's Day parties, Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. Unit 65 hosted a Baby Shower and Unit 119 sponsored a Hug-A-Vet Valentines by giving Cards with candy. The 6th District Units planned and hosted a Chili Dinner with Gift Baskets at the Lk Nona Domiciliary in October. It was a HUGE success and fun was had by ALL! A Birthday Party is in the works for June. Unit 283 hosts Fishing trips for Homeless and At-Risk Vets by providing rods, reels, bait and a nice lunch. Unit 277 hosted a MASH Party raising \$925 for clothes, shoes, pantry items and Gift Cards to McDonald's. Unit 136 supported a local Women Veterans Home with a Fashion Show raising over \$2300 and they also provided a female veteran with dental care costing \$5000. Unit 392 again sponsored a USO-style Variety Show and Lunch for the local

Veterans Nursing Home. Unit 271 had a table at the local Baseball Stadium for "Veteran Appreciation Night" with information about benefits offered to Veterans. Unit 275 has a 'Cash Bash' raffle and raised \$11,000 for local Veterans Mall (a program through Abilities Guild).

Other noteworthy activities include – Unit 366 sponsored Hearts for Heroes; Unit 40 hosted a 50th Anniversary Vietnam War Commemoration; Unit 340 held a Golf Tournament raising \$2000 for Soldiers Angels; Unit 375 honored POW/MIA by posting bios of missing soldiers and assisted in their return to families; Unit 283 collected Veterans' stories and had them archived in the National Library of Congress; Unit 219 helped a Veteran and his wife move to a new home; Unit 183 donated \$300 to the VA Golden Games; Unit 120 supports Rolling Thunder and Unit 286 has an Honor Guard that serves at Memorial Services, Veteran ceremonies and participates in the National Competition. Good Luck again this year!

This year our Unit members have 'gone to the dogs', supporting Therapy and Service K-9s for our Veterans. Paws for Vets / Foster Service Dogs / Paws for Patriots / K-9 for Warriors and CAMO Dogs just to name a few of the organizations. Support came in all forms from adopting and raising a puppy, providing over \$20,000 in funds for a local prison sanctioned for training dogs, fundraising towards the training of rescue dogs to benefit veterans suffering with PTSD and covering the grooming costs for the 2 beloved mascots at the Emory Bennett Nursing Home. Unit 347 also sponsored a Service Dog for a Post Veteran at a cost of \$6,000.

The Wreaths Across America program again was reported as a GIANT success. Every District had Units reporting their financial support and participation, including gravesite preparation in advance of the day's ceremonies to honor our fallen heroes. Many Units also offered lunch and refreshments thereafter. Several Units cared for headstones at local cemeteries throughout the year. Unit 13 had members attend every Tallahassee National Cemetery burial held to honor the veteran's service.

Our Unit members also took to the skies by supporting the Honor Flight program. We sent over 300 WWII, Korean and Vietnam service men and women to Washington, DC to tour their Memorials respectively. Unit 62 made 3 quilts and 5 cross-body bags, presenting them to the veterans. Unit 183 member went as a Guardian to her father, a Korean veteran along with 4 other Vietnam veterans from the Post. The Unit members provided cash spending money and snacks for their trip. The Orlando Airport was filled with hundreds of appreciative civilians and children to Welcome them Home. Many posters and flags were given to the returning veterans as they rolled by the lined path.

We had 34 Units and 432 members participate in a **Stand Down** by assisting with the sign-in and directing Homeless Veterans to the different stations and comfort zones. Several members were 'in charge' of the 'Kitchen' making sure everyone had a cooked

meal. Fundraisers were held and proceeds were used directly to donate sleeping bags / sweat suits / hoodies / shoes and boots / blankets / back-packs / socks and undergarments / non-perishable food items / Coleman camping and cooking gear / tents / laundry supplies/ phone cards and bus passes. Several arranged for local transportation to and from the Stand Down. Units worked with Dignity Wear, an organization providing clean clothing for job interviews.

At Fall Conference we had a Buddy Basket Ball and participation totals were 175 baskets donated valued at \$8750; 31 Gift Cards valued at \$1550; Phone Cards with 2245 minutes and 11 Bus Passes valued at \$550. GREAT JOB!

Our Units/Members are also very generous with monetary donations. To date our totals are VA Medical Centers \$23,231.50 / VA Outpatient \$15,330.20 / Creative Arts \$5,779.00 and Department President's Project for Fisher House \$57,270.94.

The total number of Veterans served equals 17,159.

Respectfully Submitted For God and Country ~

TK

Treva Kay Wildrick
Department of FL
VA & R Chairman

