



Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation 2016-2017

This year with Department President Kelli's theme, we will have an opportunity to "Navigate for our Veterans and their Families" across the State of Florida, showing our American Legion Auxiliary Pride along the way.

So as we promote the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program and our mission to enhance the lives of veterans, military and their families, let us not forget about President Kelli's Special Project, Final Salute Inc. whose mission is to provide homeless women veterans with safe and suitable housing.

Included in this Program Action Plan you will find information on what we can do to assist our veterans and their families along with how we can do it.

I wish you a great year of fun and excitement. As always your committee members are here to assist in anyway.

For God & Country

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Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program Action Plan 2016-2017

The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation program promotes our mission to enhance the lives of veterans, military and their families.

What can we do?

1. Serve veterans and their families as volunteers at VA health care facilities through the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS).

- ✓ Become a regular VAVS volunteer.
- ✓ Invite others to become VAVS volunteers with you.
- ✓ Enter all of your VAVS hours into the VAVS tracking system.

Note: VA Healthcare facilities volunteer hour tracking system is different from the tracking utilized for ALA hour bars.

2. Serve veterans in your area. *Note: These hours will count toward your Service to Veterans pin and hour bars.*

Service to Veterans recognizes volunteers who provide service to veterans, service members and their families outside a VA Medical Center . Volunteers conduct projects and work for military/veterans and/or families from their homes and in their communities. Service to Veterans volunteers maintains 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.

- ✓ Visit with veterans, and remember them on special occasions.
- ✓ Offer to drive veterans to doctor appointments.
- ✓ Offer to stay with a veteran while his/her primary caregiver goes shopping or out for a break.
- ✓ Take a veteran for a Sunday drive, picnic, or maybe to see one of his/her friends.
- ✓ Treat veterans to tickets for sporting events or movies.
- ✓ Arrange an outing to a Legion meeting for special events such as a Veterans Day dinner.
- ✓ Furnish a room in transitional housing programs as a special project.

- ✓ Help furnish new living space for a veteran graduating from a transitional housing program. This might include the veteran and his/her family. School supplies for children or meals might be extra touches.

More information regarding service to veterans may be found in the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation: A Guide for Volunteers, available online for download at www.alaforveterans.org. To purchase a printed copy, please visit www.emblem.legion.org.

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.

- ✓ Invite the local, county or state Service Officer to be the guest speaker at a unit/department event.
- ✓ Coordinate with local American Legion posts to identify the local Service Officer or download the list at www.legion.org/serviceofficers.
- ✓ 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.

Resource:

VA Health Care Hotline for women veterans
1-855-VA-Women (1-855-829-6636); explore.va.gov/health-care

4. Assist in activities that help homeless veterans.

- ✓ Give a helping hand to the Legion's homeless veteran coordinator in your department and offer to assist that coordinator in responding to requests for assistance from homeless veterans or homeless veteran service providers.
- ✓ Crochet hats, scarves or mittens to be distributed to homeless veterans.
- ✓ Make payments of overdue rent, utility payments or deposits and security deposits.
- ✓ Host or volunteer at homeless veterans' stand down events where homeless veterans receive free goods and services such as haircuts and medical exams.
- ✓ Contact homeless veteran emergency shelters, transitional housing projects and permanent housing projects in your community and identify the organization's 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
- ✓ 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. Support rehabilitation and healing of veterans through arts, crafts and hobbies.

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) is the national, annual competition and festival that recognizes the progress and recovery made through recreation therapy and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of our nation's veterans after disease, disability or life crisis. As the national presenting sponsor, the American Legion Auxiliary should strive to increase monetary support by encouraging departments to sponsor fundraisers that will contribute to the increased awareness and support of this program.

- ✓ Help your unit and department earn recognition at National Convention through donations to support VA Creative Arts Festivals. Volunteer individually, with a fellow member, or as a unit at a local Creative Arts Festival.
- ✓ Identify arts, crafts and hobby projects targeted to veterans (such as writing, oral history recording, visual and performing arts, quilting and gardening). A unit may organize a project of its own or introduce a unit to veteran arts, crafts and hobby projects already operational in the community.
- ✓ Contribute donated supplies to help supplement visual veteran artists' needs for their projects.
- ✓ Donate, through departments, funds that help local veterans attend state and national Wheel Chair Games, Veterans Creative Arts Festivals, Paralympics, etc.

6. Help The American Legion, State Department of Veterans Affairs and Chamber of Commerce promote job fairs for veterans and their families.

- ✓ Host an informational table at a local job fair.
- ✓ Support the Legion by helping host a local job fair at your post home.
- ✓ Serve as a career e-mentor for women veterans.
- ✓ Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, specifically if a house build is supported by The American Legion.

Additional Resources

www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes

www.ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse/

- ✓ Serve as a career e-Mentor for women – Encourage Auxiliary members to serve as career mentors for female veterans via electronic communications. The e-mentoring network, operated by the Business and Professional Women's Foundation, Joining Forces and Mentoring Plus, virtually pairs female veterans with career mentors and subject matter experts for guidance and support

www.legion.org/documents/legion/pdf/habitat.pdf

- ✓ Home Building – Support home building and renovation projects for veterans and their families by volunteering for Habitat for Humanity. Locate veteran-specific projects through The American Legion.

7. Assist and support caregivers of veterans.

- ✓ Invite the VA caregiver support coordinator in the VA healthcare system closest to you to make a presentation to your unit, district or community-wide meeting.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network.
- ✓ Become a veteran caregiver peer support trainer or volunteer
- ✓ Become a Legacy Corps AmeriCorps member if the Legacy Corps project is offered in a state or locality near you.
- ✓ Volunteer as a VA Voluntary Service volunteer support caregiver if the VA health care system closest to you offers such volunteer opportunity.

Additional Resources

VA Caregiver Support – www.caregiver.va.gov/

Elizabeth Dole Foundation- <http://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org/>

Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network- <http://www.taps.org/MVCN/>





VA&R Awards 2016-2017

Chairman's Award:

Stand Up Award:

This award is for one Unit in each membership grouping for "Best All Around Program Supporting Homeless Veterans". A donation must be made to President Kelli's project Final Salute Inc. Narrative not to exceed 1,000 words and may include pictures, news articles, news releases, etc. **All entries must be submitted to the Department VA&R Chairman no later than May 1, 2016**

*****A Stand-Up Certificate will be presented to ALL Units that submit an entry*****

Department Award:

Dorothy Smith Award: Revolving Trophy

To be awarded annually to the Unit that reports the "Best All Around VA&R Program or Project" that includes the following:

- ✓ Cover page with Name of award, Unit name and number Unit location, name of the Unit President and name of Unit VA&R Chairman.
- ✓ Cash contributions must be made through Department to at least one VA hospital and at least one Fisher House and to The National Creative Arts Festival.
- ✓ Unit must participate in and/or donate to a homeless Veterans Program or project.

Entry must be in narrative form, double spaced, 8½" x 11" paper, not to exceed 1,000 words and include a cover page and placed in a report cover.

Each entry must be received by the Department Chairman no later than thirty (30) days prior to Department Convention.

National Award:

Service to Veterans

Member Award: Hour Bar Recognition for Service to Veterans Volunteers

Type of Award: Hour Bar

Presented to: Member by her department via the ALA National Headquarters

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ Volunteers are recognized when specific hour milestones are reached: 50, 100, 300, 500 and 1,000.
- ✓ After the first 1,000-hour bar is awarded, the next bar earned will be in 1,000 hour increments up to 20,000 hours. Hour bars are also offered in increments of 25,000 and 30,000 hours.

Unit Award: Outstanding Unit VA&R Program Award

Type of award: Citation

Presented to: One Unit Chairman per division (5 awards)

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ Entries must include the award cover sheet located in this Program Action Plan.
- ✓ Awarded to the unit chairman in each division who conducted the best overall promotion of the VA&R program.
- ✓ The entry must be typewritten in narrative format, not to exceed 1,000 words. Include pictures, clippings, scrapbooks, folders, etc.
- ✓ Units will submit entries to the Department Chairman by the required date.
- ✓ Attach an award cover sheet, including the name of the award, as well as the name and contact information for the Department and Unit VA&R Chairman

NVCAF Award:

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) support recognition

Type of Award: Verbal announcement during VA&R chairman's remarks at the 2017 ALA National Convention.

Presented to: Departments, Units and/or Members who qualify for stated contribution level to NVCAF. Donations are made through the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation.

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ NVCAF will recognize Departments/Units/Members that contribute in this way
 - ❖ Bronze: \$1,000-\$2,400 to the NVCAF from Aug. 1, 2016-July 31, 2017
 - ❖ Silver: \$2,500-\$4,999 to the NVCAF from Aug. 1, 2016-July 31, 2017
 - ❖ Gold: \$5,000-\$14,999 to the NVCAF from Aug. 1, 2016-July 31, 2017

- ✓ To be considered, donations to the ALAF must be received in the national office from August 1, 2016, through July 31, 2017.
- ✓ ALA National Headquarters will submit qualifying donations to NVCAF staff in July.

Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Awards

National Award: VAVS Volunteer of the Year Award/ALA NAC Nominee

Type of Award: Citation + \$500 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of her choice presented by the American Legion Auxiliary.

Presented to: Member

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ Candidates for VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) Volunteer of the Year 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 American Legion Auxiliary selects the ALA Volunteer of the Year. The name of the ALA Volunteer of the Year is forwarded for consideration as the NAC Volunteer of the Year.

Member Award: 10,000 Hour Volunteer Service Award

Type of Award: Citation + \$100 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of her choice presented by The American Legion Auxiliary.

Presented to: Member

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ 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.

Member Award: 20,000 Hour Volunteer Service Award

Type of Award: Citation + \$200 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of her choice presented by the American Legion Auxiliary

Presented to: Member

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ 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.

Individual Recognition Award: Volunteer Recruitment & Service Department Award

Type of Award: Citation presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs

Presented to: Hospital Representative

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ 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 as recorded by VAVS.

Individual Recognition

Award: 100 Percent VAVS Meeting Attendance Award

Type of Award: Attendance Card presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs

Presented to: Hospital Representative and Deputy

Materials and Guidelines:

- ✓ 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 VA records.

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 submission of the nomination form to the president of the fund by November 1 of each calendar year. Nominations received after that date will not be considered. The nomination form should be completed to reflect the volunteer service and background of the candidate and include: age, years of volunteering, number of volunteer hours, areas of service and affiliated/supporting organizations, if any. See www.va.gov for information on VAVS, James H. Parke Scholarship. The national winner receives a plaque and a letter of commitment. This presentation is usually made at the Annual Meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee.