



*American Legion Auxiliary*  
*Department of Florida*  
*Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation*

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program promotes our mission to enhance the lives of veterans, military and their families. When we work together, we can make a difference.

Department President Jane's theme is **C.O.L.O.R.**, this year, through her theme, each of us will be encouraged to **"Continue Our Legacy of Respect"** for our veterans, military families, community, and children & youth!

The Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation theme will be **"COLOR Me There"** for our Veterans, military, and their families, for our homeless, those in need of employment, volunteering at V.A. or local facilities, transitioning military personnel, and caregivers of veterans. Please remember to keep track of all your "Service to Veteran" volunteer hours on the volunteer tracking sheet.

We are starting to have more access to the VA facilities. Our Veteran have missed this interaction and our hugs. I would like to continue doing the "Hug in a Mug." Coffee mugs are available at dollars stores, yard and tag sales. Fill them with essential items, puzzle books, playing cards, flowers etc., and include a note from the unit. This is a way you can show the veterans we care.

National President Vickie Koutz's theme is "Honor our Veterans Every Day." Her fundraising initiative is for the Caregivers of the Veterans who attend NVCAF to ensure they have the funding needed to attend the National Creative Arts Festival.

**In the Spirit of Service not Self**

**Department Chairman  
Charlotte Bass**

**3014 Diamond Lane, Saint Cloud, FL 34772**

**Cell 407-738-3356**

[veteransaffairs@alaf1.org](mailto:veteransaffairs@alaf1.org)

Committee Members:

Carol Pirone-Udell  
[Nycarol2u@aol.com](mailto:Nycarol2u@aol.com)

Tammy Zell  
[tam.z428@gmail.com](mailto:tam.z428@gmail.com)

*Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation*  
*2022-2023 Program Action Plan*

**“COLOR Me There” for our Caregivers of Veterans.**

- Familiarize yourself with the service of the VA caregiver support program.
- Familiarize yourself with the Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network.
- Become a veteran caregiver peer support trainer or volunteer.
- Volunteer as a volunteer support caregiver at a V.A. or local facility.
- Invite the V.A. Caregiver support coordinator from the V.A. healthcare system to a Unit, District or community-wide meeting.
- **A.L.A. Resources:**

V.A. Caregiver Support – [www.caregiver.va.gov/](http://www.caregiver.va.gov/)  
Elizabeth Dole Foundation – [www.elizabethdolefoundation.org](http://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org)  
Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network-  
[milvetcaregivernet.org](http://milvetcaregivernet.org)

**“COLOR Me There” for our Homeless Veterans.**

- Assist the Legion’s homeless veteran coordinator in responding to requests for assistance from homeless veterans or homeless veteran service providers.
- Crochet or sew hats, scarves, mittens, or blankets to distribute to homeless veterans.
- Participate in the VA Project CHALENG organized by the VA health care system near you. (Project CHALENG for Veterans enhances the care for homeless veterans).
- Work with your Post VA&R Chairman to offer assist through the Legion’s Family Support Network.

- For veterans at risk of losing their housing or homeless veterans transitioning utilize and raise funds for the Legion’s Family Support Network. (Make payments of overdue rent, utilities, or deposits.
- Host, volunteer or distribute in-need items at standdowns, and events where homeless veterans receive goods and services (haircuts, medical exams, etc.).
- Work closely with veteran emergency shelters, transitional and permanent houses projects in your community to identify their volunteer opportunities and in-kind needs.
  - ✚ Meal preparation and serving
  - ✚ Clothes collection and distribution.
  - ✚ Assembly and delivery of hygiene kits and buddy baskets.
  - ✚ Purchasing or pick-up of household items and furniture.
- Assemble “blessings bags” to be distributed by the local police department or other organizations that deal with the homeless population.
- Create a “Tree of Warmth” by collecting scarves, socks, hats, sun block, beach towel and attaching them to a tree in a location the homeless frequent. Include a sign that says “Take if Needed” “Free if Needed” or something similar.

A.L.A Resources:

- ✚ Homeless Veterans Coalition: [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org)
- ✚ “How to Sheets” can be found at [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org)
- ✚ VA Homeless Programs: [www.va.gov/homeless/](http://www.va.gov/homeless/)
- ✚ HUD Homeless Program Assistance Programs:  
[https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/homeless/programs](https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/homeless/programs)
- ✚ Handbook for Homeless Veterans and Service Providers  
[www.legion.org/publications/](http://www.legion.org/publications/)
- ✚ The American Legion Family Network  
[www.legion.org/familysupport](http://www.legion.org/familysupport)

**“COLOR Me There” for our Unemployed Veterans.**

- Volunteer at a veteran job fair by organizing or working at the information table.
  - ✚ Legion sponsored job fair.
  - ✚ Legion Family event.
  - ✚ Local Chamber of Commerce.

- Serve as a career e-mentor for women veterans.
- Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, especially if the house is supported by the American Legion.

**A.L.A. Resources:**

- ✚ How to Organize a Job Fair for Volunteers and or Military and Veteran Spouses.
- ✚ [www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes)
- ✚ [www.ementorprogram.org/militaryspouse-ementor](http://www.ementorprogram.org/militaryspouse-ementor)

“#C.O.L.O.R Me There” for our Transitioning Veterans Transitioning back to civilian life is one the biggest challenges veterans face today.

- Work together with your Post Service Officer.
- Help eligible veterans attain benefits through referrals.
- Encourage eligible veterans to use the VA Healthcare system (Hospitals, Outpatient Clinics, Veteran Centers, etc.
- Participate in and encourage veterans and their families to attend town-hall meetings.
- Invite your Post Service Officer to attend a District or Unit meeting.

**A.L.A. Resources:**

- ✚ VA Health Care Hotline for Women 1-8558-VA-Women  
explore.va.gov/health-care.

**“COLOR Me There” for our Hospitalized Veterans.**

- Become a volunteer with VAVS (VA Voluntary Service) and invite other to volunteer with you.
- Collect supplies for those who volunteer at VA facilities.
- Enter all of your VAVS hours into the VAVS tacking system.
- ✚ The VA Healthcare facilities volunteer hour tracking system is different from the tracking utilized for ALA hour bars.

**“COLOR Me There” for our Local Community and those not in a VA Hospital.**

Service to Veterans recognizes volunteers who provide service to veterans, servicemembers and their families outside of a VAMC. Volunteers plan projects and work for military/families and/or families from their homes and in their

community. Volunteers keep track of their own “Service to Veteran” hours and dollars spent. The Service to Veteran pin has been designed to reflect the work of those who volunteer in their communities and at home for veterans. More information is available in the *Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation : A Guide for Volunteers* is available online at [www.alaforveterans.org](http://www.alaforveterans.org) or at emblem sales.

- Sew quilts for or nominate a veteran to receive a Quilt of Valor.
- Help a veteran use the internet.
- Supply postage for local veterans in rest homes or assisted living facilities.
- Organize transportation for veterans to assist them with essential errands or medical appointments; many live far from a VA facility and shouldn't be driving if they don't feel well.
- Contact the legion Service Officer at your post and offer to be on the list of people to call when a military family needs help.
- Buy school supplies, throw a baby shower or send packages to military kids who are going to college.
- Report your Service to Veterans hours to your Unit VA&R chairman.
- Contact members, including those who rarely participate or attend meetings and invite them for a specific limited duration project to help veterans.
- Keep your P.R. chairman aware of your activities so that the community can be informed.

**“COLOR Me There” to Recognize our Returning Military.**

### **Welcome Home Celebrations**

Provide assistance to your local VA health care system in supporting returning servicemembers and their families in your community. The 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.

**“COLOR Me There”, for National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans**, during the **Week of February 14, 2023**. This initiative pays tribute to just under 100,000 patients a day that receive medical treatment in VA medical facilities as well as the nine million U.S. veterans who get care every year.

## Awards

### I. Department Honorary Awards

- ✚ **Dorothy Smith Award**-awarded annually to the Unit that reports the “Best All Around VA&R Program or Project”
- ✚ **Theresa Gilleo Award**-Awarded to the Unit with the most creative Veteran’s event. This should be an actual event which requires involves veterans in the community.

The requirements for the Dorothy Smith Award and the Theresa Gilleo Award are in the Unit guide under V.A. & R.

### II. National Awards

#### Service to Veterans

- ✚ **Member Award:** Hour Bar Recognition for Service to Veterans Volunteers
  - Award: Hour Bar
  - Presented to” Member by her department via ALA National Headquarters

#### Materials and guidelines

- Volunteers are recognized when specific hour milestones are reached: 50, 100, 300, 500, and 1000.
- After the first 1000-hour bar is awarded, the next hour bar will be earned in 1,000-hour increments up to 20,000 hours. Hour bars are also offered in increments of 25,000 and 30,000 hours. After achieving 35,000 hours ALA National Headquarters will issue a separate Lifetime Service to Veterans pin.
- Hours bars are provided at no cost to departments; however, the appropriate pin (from which the hour bar is affixed) can be obtained from Emblem Sales at departments expense. See *Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation: A Guide for Volunteer*

- ✚ **Unit Award:** Most Outstanding Unit V.A. & R. Program (per Division).
  - **Deadline: June 1, 2023.**
  - Award: Citation Plaque • Presented to: One unit in each division (5), announced by the National V.A. & R. Committee at the pre-convention meeting.
  - Materials and guidelines

- ✚ The entry must be typewritten in narrative format, not to exceed 1,000 words.
- ✚ Include pictures, clippings, scrapbooks, folders, etc.

### III. Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)

- ✚ **National Award:** VAVS Volunteer of the Year Awards/ALA NAC Nominee
  - 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 to the national VAVS deputy (Please see supplement for deadline and contact information)
    - Awarded to the nominee who has given extraordinary service to our nation's veterans through the ALA VA & R program and the VAVS program.
      - o 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 veterans' programs, hosted veteran-related functions outside the VA, or visited veterans confined to their homes (as assigned by VAVS). O
    - 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
  - Award: Citation plus \$100 donation to VAVS facility or VCAF of his or 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 from April 1 to March 31 of the following year.

- Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the first Friday in June.

**✚ Member Award: 20,000 Hour Volunteer Service**

- Award: Citation plus \$200 donation to local VAVS facility of VCAF of his or 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 V.A. facility from **April 1 to March 31** of the following year.
- Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the first Friday in June.

**✚ Individual Recognition Award: Volunteer Recruitment & Service Department • 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 to March 31** of the following year.
  - The award winners 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: Attendance Card presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs

Presented to: Hospital Representative and Deputy

- Materials and Guidelines:
  - No entry form required.
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**IV. 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.
- 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.
  - Not have 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, late nominations will not be accepted.
- 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. [www.va.gov](http://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.

➤ **There are no Mid-Year reports again this year. But...**

Please take the time to share a favorite story or AHA moment about the positive impact you or someone in your unit has while working the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. This will help us tell the world who we are, what we do, and why we matter.

### Year-end Reports Due Dates

Unit Year-End report are due to the District Chairman **no later than April 1, 2023**. Units, please include your Impact Forms along with your narrative.

District year-end reports are due to the Department Chairman **no later than April 15, 2023**. District Chairman, please send the unit reports along with your narrative and impact form to me.

Annual reports tell the story of the unit and could result in a National Award for your unit if requirements have been met. Please use the National cover awards sheet for all narratives.

As Department Chairman, I am required to submit a narrative report to the Division VA & R Chairman on what the units have done. Please make your year-end report as detailed as possible for me. As part of your narrative report, please include answers to the following questions. Please also send pictures. **Pictures need to be sent JPEG and not imbedded in the report.** Also, a brief description of the event.