



## HOW TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE EVER-INCREASING NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETERANS

### Committee:

### Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

### Contact Information for Questions:

VA&R@ALAforVeterans.org

Raise awareness in your communities about the ever-increasing number of homeless veterans, especially women veterans and those with children.

### Background information:

- The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans states that homeless veterans are mostly males, but about 8% are females. Most are single and many may suffer from mental illness, alcohol and/or substance abuse. About 12,700 veterans of the recent conflicts were homeless in 2014 and the number of younger homeless veterans is increasing. 77% of homeless female veterans are unemployed. Your unit can get involved in several ways. We hope to supply you with ideas that will help you participate in the fight against homelessness and its impact on veterans.

### Step-by-Step Instructions:

- First, learn about the homeless veterans in your area. Identify the needs of the homeless veteran population in your area by contacting community organizations like shelters, food banks, and if available, a Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC).
- If you have a VAMC in your area, work with the VAMC homeless coordinator to see what kinds of programs they already have in place and identify how your unit can help.
- Use funds collected through the Poppy program to support the needs of homeless veterans.
- Advertise the Department of Veterans Affairs help line for homeless veterans in homeless shelters, community centers, VAMC's, CBOCs, local hospitals, mental health service facilities and other community centers in your area. The hotline, 1-800-4AID-VET or 1-877-424-3838 is a free, confidential hotline that pairs homeless veterans and their families with trained counselors who are able to refer veterans to services in their area. Posters are available at no cost on [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org). Also visit [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx).
- Get the word out! As a unit or member, contact your local and state representatives in person, by mail, phone or email. Ask them to keep veteran legislation on their agendas.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs also has founded a national suicide prevention hotline to ensure veterans in emotional crisis have free 24/7 access to trained counselors. Ask the local homeless shelter, hospital, schools, community centers, mental health services facilities and other public places to post the free flyer or hand out free brochures. Visit [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx).

### Three projects your unit might consider:



- Host a stand down or Homeless Veterans' health fair. Contact your local VAMC homeless outreach coordinator or visit the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans website [www.nchm.com](http://www.nchm.com). They have a simple guide to follow called, *Stand Down Guide*.
- Assemble Buddy Baskets for homeless veterans transitioning into housing. Visit [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org) for a How To Sheet that further details the Buddy Basket process.
- Work with your Legion Family to develop a fundraising plan. These funds can be used for emergency housing, supporting local shelters, and supplying veterans with basic needs. Contact local businesses, churches, and civic groups, for item and monetary donations. Ask to receive a portion of the proceeds raised at a community event. For example ask an organization to sponsor a 5k run/walk on behalf of homeless veterans. Involve media to ensure donors are recognized for their support of America's veterans.



## HOW TO INCREASE DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

### Committee:

### Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

#### Contact Information for Questions:

va&r@alaforveterans.org

#### Objective:

#3 Support rehabilitation of veterans through art therapy by fulfilling the Auxiliary's annual financial obligation as a presenting co-sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

#### (NVCAF). **Step-by-Step Instructions:**

- Check with your department VA&R chairman to see what your unit goal is, and develop a plan to meet that goal.
- Once you have your goal, share it with your unit and keep them informed about your fundraising progress.
- Here are some ideas to help you develop your plan and achieve your goals. Brainstorm with your unit to come up with ideas that will work for your members:
  - Order your donation cans from National Headquarters today! This year, we are introducing donation cans to help your unit raise funds for NVCAF. A limited number of cans will be available, so check with your department VA&R chairman about details on how to order. Decorative wraps for cans will be available from National Headquarters or online for free at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org). The cans will be decorated with information about NVCAF and pictures from the event. You can place one or more cans in your Post home and make them available at each meeting. Ask banks, local retailers and many more places for spots to display our NVCAF contribution cans. Just use your imagination. It will be a great way for your Unit to reach your fundraising goal for NVCAF. More information will follow; watch for content posted in bulletins and on the website.
  - At each of your unit meetings, have a penny parade. Set an overall goal of how much you want to raise at each meeting that will help you make that overall goal.
  - A no-bake sale is an easy way to help reach your unit's fundraising goal. Assign a committee to select a date for your no-bake sale. Your invitation should include information about NVCAF. Have the committee send an invitation to the members of your unit and post. After your sale, be sure to let your unit and post know how much money was raised for NVCAF.
- Assign a small committee to ask local businesses for in-kind donations for a special NVCAF raffle. With the items collected, you can create special baskets to raffle. Don't forget to ask your friends and family to purchase raffle tickets. Take the February 2013 issue of the *Auxiliary* magazine. Take the attached fact sheet with you to help explain the festival. When you visit local businesses, be sure your committee is well informed. For additional information visit [www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov/](http://www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov/).



- Hold your raffle at a special fundraising dinner for NVCAF. Invite the local business leaders who contributed and community leaders to the event (mayor, police and fire chief, Chamber of Commerce plus the others who are important in your community).
- If you have a veterans hospital or veterans home in your area, check with your hospital or home representative to see if they have local Creative Arts program. Check to see if they have any medal winners (gold, silver and bronze). If they do, invite the participants to your fundraiser and ask them to bring their art and talent. You might ask if they are willing to donate a piece of art for your fundraiser. Perhaps the performing arts medal winners would provide entertainment. If you don't have access to a Creative Arts artist, you can access a list of artists to see if any are in your area:  
<http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/caf/2010/participant-info.asp>.
- Don't forget to include your Legion Family in your event. The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion are a great help, and getting them involved helps build a strong Family relationship.
- Remember to promote your event. Send information to your local newspaper, write a letter to the editor, and invite local reporters and news stations to your event.
- A great and simple way to raise funds for NVCAF is to incorporate it into your poppy program. Check with your department VA&R chairman or Poppy chairman for your department's approved dates to distribute poppies (i.e., Memorial Day, Veterans Day, etc.). Select a small group of volunteers who are willing to distribute poppies one day just for the NVCAF. Select a good spot—Target, Walmart, local market, liquor store or anywhere in your community that has lots of traffic. Be sure to get approval from the location before you go so your hard work will be successful. Bring materials with you that reference NVCAF and what it does for participants.
- Does your local veterans hospital or veterans home have a Creative Arts Festival? If not, it's a great opportunity for your unit members to work with your local VA hospital or home to get one started. Attached instructions *How to Facilitate a Local Veterans Creative Arts Festival* will help you get started. Work with your hospital representative to see how you can get this project started. If you don't know who your representative is, check with your department VA&R chairman. This year, a grant fund has been set up to help your local VA hospital or VA home with its Creative Arts Festival and/or workshop. The fund is also available for hospitals that want to start a new local Creative Arts Festival or Creative Arts Workshop. You can find the application for the mini-grant [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org).
- Once you get your local Creative Arts Festival started, or if you have one in your area, why not host a mini Creative Arts Festival at your post home or at a facility at your hospital/home? Your Unit can supply art supplies, volunteers and refreshments. Be sure to work with the recreational therapist at your local hospital/home, and don't forget that you can use poppy funds for this event.
- Don't forget to promote your local Creative Arts Festival to all veterans in your area (i.e., letter to the editor, flyers in local posts, your VA hospital/home—just to name a few).



- Did you know that awards are presented to departments, Units and individuals that donate money to NVCAF? Awards are presented for Bronze (\$1,000 to \$1,999), Silver (\$2,000 to \$4,999), and Gold (\$5,000 and above) by close of books 2012. Wouldn't it be exciting for your unit to receive this amazing award that will be presented during the 2017 National Convention in Reno?
- As unit chairman, you can create a special awards program for your members' participation in the Creative Arts program. Your awards program might include awards for different levels of contributions or the most creative fundraiser.
- The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival is a week of learning, exploring fellowship and celebration of the healing power of the arts. Each dollar you raise helps a veteran in his or her quest for healing. Be creative in your fundraising and please pass on your success and struggles to your department VA&R chairman with a cc to your division chairman.



## American Legion Auxiliary 2016-2017 National Award Cover Sheet

This cover sheet should be attached to each narrative submitted for a national award. Please fill out the information as completely and accurately as possible.

Award certificates will be completed using the information given on this sheet, so please write carefully. All awards will be mailed to the department office after national convention. Department presidents may wish to recognize award recipients by presenting them at a department function.

National committee sponsoring award: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Award:       Department       Unit       Member

Name of the award you are applying for: \_\_\_\_\_

**Complete the following if you are applying for a department award:**

Name of department: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of department chairman: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman's phone number: (\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_ ALA member ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman's email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete the following if you are applying for a unit award.** Be sure to give the complete name of your unit. The award certificate will be prepared using the information you include below.

Unit #: \_\_\_\_\_ Full official unit name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of department: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit president/chairman (circle one) name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: (\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_ ALA member ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete the following if you are applying for a member award.** Be sure to give the complete name of the member. The award certificate will be prepared using the information you include below.

Unit #: \_\_\_\_\_ Full official unit name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of department: \_\_\_\_\_

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ALA member ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominating Member (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Phone number: (\_\_\_\_)\_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Email address: \_\_\_\_\_