



2025-2026 American Legion Auxiliary

Department of Florida VA&R Program Engagement Plan

Lisa Hoyland – Chairperson
Charlotte Bass and Carol Axelrod – Committee Members

Purpose: Promote programs, events and services that assist and enhance the lives of veterans, their families, their caregivers and their survivors, ensuring the best quality of life possible and the continuing honor of their memory.

Support the therapeutic rehabilitation and healing of veterans through arts, crafts, and hobbies. Support veteran caregivers, family members, and survivors.

- Volunteer at local VA facilities, including state VA facilities in your area.
- Collaborate with organizations that support veterans and their families, such as Wreaths Across America, Quilts of Valor, Honor Flight Inc., and the Military and Veteran Caregiver Network.
- Look in your community for opportunities to support veterans, their caregivers, their families, and their survivors.

Outside Partnerships

Wreaths Across America

- Take part in local wreath placement at a national cemetery.
- Sponsor wreaths for placement through Wreaths Across America.

Quilts of Valor

- Nominate a Service Member of Living Veteran
- Make a Quilt of Valor
- Visit www.govf.org for more information



Honor Flight Inc.

- Volunteer with local hubs.
- Utilize your unit's poppy funds to support important aspects of Honor Flight activities. For more information, please see www.honorflight.org/donations.
- Participate in welcome-home events.
- Coordinate the creation and delivery of cards and letters to Honor Flight hubs for mail call.
- Consider volunteering as a guardian for an Honor Flight. Please note — there is an associated cost.

Military and Veteran Caregiver Network

- Learn who is considered a caregiver. This will help you identify caregivers in your community and maybe even as a caregiver yourself. If you identify as a caregiver, consider joining their online peer support community.
- Recruit Auxiliary members as volunteers for the VA Center for Development and Community Engagement at VA healthcare facilities.
- If you see a need in your community that is not being addressed, contact your local VA.
- Familiarize yourself with the service of the VA caregiver support program
- Volunteer at your local VA facility for events such as Bingo, baby showers, etc.
- Don't forget to include all American Legion Family members in your VA events.
- Coordinate a supply drive for the needs of hospitalized veterans by gathering items such as socks, underwear, toiletries, etc. Please contact your local VA facility or American Legion Auxiliary representative for needed items.
- Don't forget your state VA facilities, such as state veterans homes. The veterans who reside there have needs that we may fill as well.

Service to Veterans (Outside of VA Facilities)

- Support veteran caregivers, family members, and survivors.
- Provide a spa day or caregiver day for community veteran caregivers.
- Offer to sit with a veteran while the caregiver runs errands.
- Offer to run errands for a caregiver.
- Prepare information for units concerning the needs of caregiver support.
- Transportation of veterans to appointments or running errands.
- Contact an American Legion Service Officer at your post and offer to be on the list of people to call when a veteran's family needs help.
- Buy school supplies, host a baby shower, or send care packages to veterans' children who are headed to college.
- Volunteer at shelters, food banks, or programs that support homeless veterans.



Be the One to Make a Difference

As individuals, we can make a difference. Start by launching a veterans program or project within your local American Legion Unit or District. Whether it involves organizing a fundraiser (units), creating a support group, or advocating for policy changes, every effort matters. Remember that small acts of kindness and advocacy can collectively have a positive impact on the lives of veterans. Let's honor their service by standing with them and ensuring they receive the support they deserve.

VA&R CARING HEART CHALLENGE

In celebration of America's upcoming 250th Birthday in July 2026, we invite you to participate in the 250 Care Heart Bear Challenge.

Here's how it works:

1. ****Bear Donation****: Purchase or create a bear and donate it to a veteran.
2. ****Photo Submission****: Take a picture of the bear alongside the veteran and submit it to the Department VA&R Chairperson.
3. ****Bear Tracking****: Keep track of how many bears your unit collects.

The unit that reports the most bears, along with pictures, by the reporting deadline of April 1st will receive a \$50.00 award to further support the mission of VA&R. Let's come together to celebrate and support our veterans!

Remember to track your service hours monthly.

REPORTS

End-of-Year Reports are due

Units to Districts April 1, 2026

Districts to Department April 15, 2026

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AWARDS

Deadlines and Submission Requirements

All award submissions must include a narrative (either a PDF or Microsoft Word document) explaining why the unit should receive the award.

Department VA&R Chairman Award:

- **Supporting Woman Veteran's** – to the Unit chairman who initiates and completes the most outstanding program for assisting & caring of women veterans.
- **Supporting Caregivers Citation Award:** Presented to the caregivers that report over 250 hours from June 2025 – April 1, 2026.
- **Junior VA&R Award** – To the Junior Group reporting the most outstanding service benefiting veterans.

Department

- **Dorothy Smith Award:** Revolving Trophy To be awarded annually to the Unit that reports the “Best All Around VAR Program or Project” Please follow the instructions (precisely) in the Unit Guide
- **Therea Gilleo Award** – Most creative Veteran's Event.

All Department of Florida entries must be received by the Department Chairperson no later than thirty (30) days prior to the Department Convention.

NATIONAL

National Awards Form Link: <https://www.legion-aux.org/National-Awards-Form>

Unit Award: Most Outstanding VA&R Program (per division) All unit entries must be submitted via electronic form by 5 p.m. EST on June 1. Note: You will receive confirmation when your award is submitted.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



ALAFL VA&R Facebook Page,

VA Caregiver Support – www.caregiver.va.gov

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

VA&R Month is December.

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 V.A.V.S. 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 V.A.V.S., 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 V.A.V.S. National Advisory Committee. ALWAYS: Check the Unit Guide, website and National website for specific requirements for all awards.