

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

2019-2021

“Florida ALA Strong” is President Ann’s theme this year. We are strong, and together we CAN make a difference! If we do not look out for our veterans, who will?

This time in America is unprecedented. Due to Covid, we are extending the 2019-2020 year. We understand that you are staying indoors just waiting for the time we can get out in to our communities and help our veterans! There will come a time when we will need you even more. We know you will be up to the challenge!

The actual Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation program has not changed. Please take a fresh look at the Program Action Plan and start planning. This way your Unit will be ready when our veterans and their families are able to accept our help!

Honor Flight of Florida is our President’s project this year. In this Program Action Plan, there will be different ways that we can all help the nine Honor Flight Hubs of Florida. Together, we will make a difference in the lives of our veterans!

Your Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee has chosen the slogan, **“Land of the Free Because of the Brave.”** We are here to assist you in any way so do not be afraid to reach out. Together, we are strong!

For God and Country

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Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program Action Plan 2019 - 2021

The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program promotes our mission to enhance the lives of U.S. veterans, military, and their families. As you will learn, we can help in several ways.

What can we do?

1. Assist in activities that help homeless veterans

- ✓ Give a helping hand to the Legion's homeless veteran coordinator in our department and offer assistance in responding to requests for assistance from homeless veterans or homeless veteran service providers.
- ✓ Host or volunteer at homeless veterans stand downs, 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.
 - ❖ Prepare and serve meals
 - ❖ Collect and distribute clothes
 - ❖ Donate sheets, dishes, furniture, and other household items
 - ❖ Deliver hygiene kits
- ✓ Crochet hats, scarves, or mittens for distribution to homeless veterans.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Contact your post chairman and offer your assistance if requests for help come through.
 - ❖ Make payments of overdue rent, utility payments, or security deposits.

Resources:

Homeless Veterans Coalition: www.nchv.org

VA Homeless Programs: www.va.gov/homeless/

VA Project CHALLENG (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and networking Groups) for Veterans, which enhances the care for homeless veterans, provided by the local VA and its surrounding community service agencies: www.va.gov/homeless/challeng.asp

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

- ✓ Become a regular VAVS volunteer and invite others to become volunteers.
- ✓ Provide supplies to support those who volunteer. (Coffee, sanitizer etc.)
- ✓ 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.

3. 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, servicemembers, and their families outside a VA Medical Center (VAMC). Volunteers conduct projects and work for military/veterans and/or families from their homes and in their communities. Service to Veterans volunteers maintain their own recordkeeping and dollars spent. The Service to Veterans 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.

- ✓ Volunteer and/or donate to **Florida Honor Flight** (President's Special Project).
 - ❖ For WWII, Korean War, or Vietnam veterans to fly to Washington D.C., to see their monuments. www.honorflight.org
 - 1. Nine (9) Hubs in Florida (See list on Department website www.alafl.org.)
 - 2. Donate to your local hub.
 - 3. Volunteer to be an escort.
 - 4. Volunteer to send them off at airport and/or welcome them home.
 - 5. Volunteer your office skills to the local hub.
- ✓ Offer to drive veterans to doctor appointments or errands.
- ✓ Contact your Post Service Officer and offer to be on the list of people to call when a military family needs help.
- ✓ Visit with veterans, and remember them on special occasions.
- ✓ Sew quilts for the Quilts of Valor Foundation. For more information, please visit www.qovf.org/.
- ✓ Treat veterans to tickets for sporting events or movies.
- ✓ Buy school supplies, throw a baby shower, or send care packages to military kids who are headed to college.

More information may be 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.

4. Assist veterans with accessing all their VA benefits, not just healthcare. 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 unit 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 Healthcare Hotline for women veterans

1-855-VA-Women (1-855-829-6636); explore.va.gov/health-care

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 operating 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.

Resources:

American Legion Auxiliary Veterans Creative Activities Action Guide:

www.ALForveterans.org

National Creative Arts Festival: www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov

6. Assist and support caregivers of veterans.

- ✓ Sit with a veteran to give their caregiver well-deserved time off.
- ✓ Invite caregivers to a luncheon held in their honor.
- ✓ Find out the needs and concerns these caregivers may have.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation for caregivers.

Resources:

Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network:

www.milvetcaregivernetwork.org

Elizabeth Dole Foundation: www.elizabethdolefoundation.org.

7. 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.
 - ❖ Encourage Auxiliary members to serve as career mentors for female veterans via electronic communications. The e-mentoring network virtually pairs female veterans with career mentors and subject matter experts for guidance and support.
- ✓ Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, specifically if a house build is supported by The American Legion.

Resources:

www.ementorprogram.org

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



VA&R Awards

2019-2021

Chairman's Award: (** This Award has already been given for 2019-2021)

ALA Strong

An ALA Strong certificate awarded to every Unit who joins forces with The Legion Family to help bring supplies for homeless female veterans at Fall Conference. Pictures, news articles, etc. are welcome!

Department Award:

Dorothy Smith Award

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 locations, name of the Unit President, and name of Unit VA&R Chairman.
- ✓ Cash contributions must be made through Department Headquarters 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, 8 ½” x 11” paper, not to exceed 1,000 words and include a cover page and placed in a report cover.

The Department Chairman must receive each entry no later than thirty (30) days prior to Department Convention.

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 1,000.
 - ❖ After the first 1,000-hour bar is awarded, the next bar will be earned in 1,000 increments up to 20,000 hours. Hour bars are also offered in increments on 25,000 and 30,000 hours. After achieving 35,000 hours, ALA National Headquarters will issue a separate Lifetime Service to Veterans pin.
 - ❖ Hour 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 the department's expense. See *Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation: A Guide for Volunteers*.

Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit VA&R Program

- ✓ **Award:** Citation Plaque
- ✓ **Presented to:** One unit in each division (5) announced by the national VA&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.

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) support recognition:

Type of Award: Verbal announcement during VA&R chairman's remarks at the 2021 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:

- ✓ To be considered, donations to the ALAF must be received the ALA Foundation from August 1, 2020 – July 31, 2021.
- ✓ ALA National Headquarters will submit qualifying donations to NVCAF in August. NVCAF will recognize departments/units/members that contribute:
 - ❖ Bronze: \$1,000 - \$2,499 from August 1 – July 31.
 - ❖ Silver: \$2,500 - \$4,999 from August 1 – July 31.
 - ❖ Gold: \$5,000 - \$14,999 from August 1 – July 31.
 - ❖ ALA National Headquarters will submit qualifying donations to NVCAF staff in August.

Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS):

National Award: VAVS Volunteer of the Year Award/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 National's VA&R 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.
 - ❖ 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

- ✓ **Award:** Citation plus \$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 from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

- ❖ 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 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 from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.
 - ❖ Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the First Friday in June.

Individual Recognition Award: Volunteer Recruitment & Services 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, 2020 to March 31, 2021.
 - ❖ 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.
 - ❖ 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 fund. To be eligible, the 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 not have reached their 19th birthday. The Medical Center director nominates a candidate for this award by submission to the nomination form to the president of the fund by November 1 of each calendar year. Nominations received after this 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.

American Legion Auxiliary Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation 2019 – 2021

Mid-Year Reports

Each Unit VA&R Chairman is required to submit a narrative report by **December 1, 2020**, to the District VA&R Chairman.

Each District VA&R Chairman is required to submit a narrative report by **December 15, 2020**, to the Department VA&R Chairman's home address listed in the Unit Guide.

Year-End Reports

Each Unit VA&R Chairman is required to submit a narrative report in addition to the Year-End reporting sheet by **April 1, 2021**.

Each District VA&R Chairman is required to submit a narrative report in addition to the Year-End reporting sheet by **April 15, 2021**, to the Department VA&R Chairman's home address listed in the Unit Guide.

As part of your narrative report, please include answers to the following questions:

- ✓ How did you participate in the caregiver support program?
- ✓ Describe how members earned their Service to Veterans hours.
- ✓ What assistance did the unit give at a stand down? What did the unit learn about hosting a stand down? What went well; what would you do differently?