



*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 Wanda's theme is "**Dare to Commit.**" Please take the challenge and "think outside of the box" for new ways to assist, support and enhance the lives of our veterans, military and their families. President Wanda's special project is My Warrior's Place in Ruskin and homeless veterans under Project Vet Relief.

The Department Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation theme will be *Always Remember*
Always Remember 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.

During the pandemic our access to the VA facilities and our veterans was limited. We were not able to have social contact with our veterans. They have missed this interaction and our hugs. But we can rectify this with a "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.

Our National Presidents' focus this year will be caregivers of veterans. There are 5 million spouses, parents, family members and friends caring for our ill, wounded and injured veterans. It is vital to recognize, support and empower these selfless caregivers. Heroes caring for heroes!!

**In the Spirit of Service not Self
Department Chairman
Dee Bell
326 72nd Ave
St. Pete Beach, Fl 33706
Home 727-360-1423 Cell 727-804-2385
veteransaffairs@alaf1.org**

**Janet McNamara
jmcnamara@gmail.com**

**Marlene Hammond
momquest60@hotmail.com**

Department Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

2021-2022 Program Action Plan

Always Remember 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/

Elizabeth Dole Foundation – www.elizabethdolefoundation.org

Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network – milvetcaregivernetwork.org

Always Remember 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
- "How to Sheets" can be found at www.alaforveterans.org
- VA Homeless Programs: www.va.gov/homeless/
- HUD Homeless Program Assistance Programs: https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/homeless/p rograms

- Handbook for Homeless Veterans and Service Providers www.legion.org/publications/
- The American Legion Family Network www.legion.org/familysupport

Always Remember 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 veteran's
- ✓ 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
- www.ementorprogram.org/militaryspouse-ementor/

Always Remember 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

Always Remember 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.

Always Remember 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* available online at 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.

Always Remember 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. 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.

Always Remember to the Week of February 14, 2022.

National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans

This initiative salutes America's heroes, the more than 98,000 veterans of the U.S. Armed Services who are cared for every day in the VA Medical Centers during the week of February 14 annually.

V.A. & R. Reporting

There are no Mid-Year reports. Wahoo! 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

Unit year-end report are due to the District chairman by April 1, 2022.

District year-end reports are due to the Department chairman by April 15, 2022.

Annual reports tell the program 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.

- How did your unit participate in the caregiver support program?
- Describe any exceptional efforts members made in earning their Service to Veterans hours?
- What assistance did your unit give at a standdown?
- How did your unit assist or support hospitalized or nursing home veterans?
- How did your unit assist transitioning veterans, military and their veterans in your community?
- Did your unit participate in a job fair?
- How did your unit assist or recognize caregivers of veterans.

Awards

Department Revolving Awards

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

Department Chairman's Award

An award will be given to the American Legion Post Family that best demonstrates joint involvement in homeless veteran initiatives. Your efforts should show outstanding support, raising awareness and overall activity by emphasizing volunteering, prevention, supporting housing, advocacy and fundraising. Your report can be in list or narrative form and mailed to the Department Chairman by January 1, 2022.

National Awards

Service to Veterans

- A. **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 hour. 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*
- B. **Unit Award:** Most Outstanding Unit V.A. & R. Program (per Division)
 - Deadline: June 1, 2022
 - 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.
- C. **Department Award:** Best Department VA&R Program
 - Award: Citation
 - Presented to: One Department 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.

Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)

- A. **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.
 - 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).
 - 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.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. 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.
- E. 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.

F. Department Recognition from The American Legion Award: Michael Guty Homeless Veterans Outreach

Please note this is not an ALA award, it must be submitted to The American Legion.

- Award: Plaque presented by The American Legion National Commander at The American Legion's National Convention.
- This award will be given to The American Legion department that demonstrates outstanding support for activity in any or all of these areas: volunteerism, prevention, supportive housing, advocacy and fundraising.
- The required nomination form is available at www.legion.org or by writing or calling the Veterans Employment and Education Commission, The American legion, 1608 K. Street NW, Washington, DC 20006: phone 202-861-2700 by email at VE&E@legion.org or on the VA&R program page at www.ALforveterans.org

G. 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. 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.