

## VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION (VA&R) PROGRAM PLANS OF WORK 2007-2008

Our mission through Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee initiates, sponsors and participates in programs and services that assist and enhance the lives of our veterans and their families. President Charlie asks us to “**Believe**” while National President Jan tells us “**Forward Thinking**” **A ripple today; A wave tomorrow.** We endeavor, through our efforts, to help ensure those who need assistance can restore and/or transition to a normal functioning life, physically, mentally, socially and vocationally.

We will have a one-page report again this year. It is a combined report with VA&R and Field Service on one page. You will attach your narratives outlined in the Awards section to your Annual Report as well as any members you are submitting for a special award based on the volunteer hour awards form.

### **Volunteer Services**

**VAVS** (Veteran Affairs Voluntary Service) hours can be earned by your service at VA Medical Centers (**VAMC**) & Outpatient facilities. VA clinics, VA contracted nursing facilities (including state nursing homes.) and VA cemeteries. Whether you volunteer daily, weekly, or once a month your dedication counts along with your hours. Our slogan will be to “**Recruit Ten**” Junior or Senior volunteers. Additional sources of volunteers are through colleges, high schools and Jr. ROTC units who are required to provide community service. We still have the non-affiliated volunteer but many times these same individuals are eligible for membership in the Legion, Auxiliary, or Sons but we have to ask.

The **VAMC**'s rely on our organization and membership to help them in their financial struggles to stretch their resources with our guaranteed aid and assistance so they can concentrate on the core services they provide to our veterans. The newly revised *Guide for Volunteers* is available for download at this time and will be available later this fall and I encourage you to get a copy for your unit and yourself to make sure you are up-to-date on any new rules.

### **Field and Home Service**

Volunteers who serve in non-referral nursing homes, Veterans Homes, foster homes, halfway houses, hospices, homeless shelters for veterans, cemeteries where veterans are buried and in the communities are Field Service Volunteers. Field Service volunteers maintain their own record keeping and dollars spent. Home Service volunteers do projects and work for active duty military/veterans and/or their families from the home. Celia, our Field Service Director, will inform you on the many opportunities you will have to be of service to our veterans in our local communities.

### **Collaborative Program Efforts**

Your dollars donated to the *Creative Arts Festival* help our veterans through competition. Recognizes the progress and recovery made through recreation therapy, and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of our veterans after disease or, disability of life crisis. Volunteering your time and talents will also assist this program in a tremendous way.

Check with your local VAMC via the *VA Homeless Veterans Program (HVP)* and Service Officers in the community to learn more about Project CHALENG (Homeless Veterans Outreach). Project CHALENG promotes awareness of homeless veterans' needs and encourages planning to meet those needs. [www.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm](http://www.va.gov/homeless/page.cfm)

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***The Fisher House*** enables families to stay together, cook meals, do laundry, and relax in a “home away from home” atmosphere. We can make a difference by volunteering and making a donation. Dedicated to our greatest national treasures: our military service men and women.  
[www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org)

***Veteran History Project*** is to ensure that we are doing what we can to aggressively collect and archive the personal recollections of U.S. wartime veterans to honor their service and share their stories with current and future generations. [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets)

### ***Support American Legion Program***

Make sure members are well informed on key VA&R legislative issues and stay in cooperative contact with your local Post to ensure timely information. Provide volunteer service for the ***Heroes to Hometowns*** transition program when asked by The American Legion.  
[www.legion.org/](http://www.legion.org/)

### ***A System Worth Saving***

Initiated by The American Legion through resolution 206, the SWS Task Force visits VA Medical Center facilities; Vet Centers and other VA managed facilities recording first hand observations and responses to pre-determined evaluation criteria. This information is compiled into an annual report for congress and the administration and supports The American Legion position for a number of related topics including mandatory funding for the System.

***National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans*** program is to pay tribute and express appreciation to hospitalized veterans; increase community awareness of the role of the VA medical center; and encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and to become involved as volunteers. This is always scheduled during the week of Valentines Day. This is also a good way to get school children involved in thanking our veterans by having them make valentines cards. They can put their talents to good use on Veterans Day, Christmas, and Easter.

***National Volunteer Month is April*** of each year. What better way to thank a volunteer than providing her/him with a service hour pins and bars. A thank you card, certificate, or maybe even a meal also means a lot to volunteers.

***Christmas Gift Shops/Christmas Parties*** at the various VAMC's require your support via dollars, gifts, and volunteers. Our hospital representatives should receive a complete inventory of any planned purchased gifts for the Gift Shops your unit will be providing prior to ***November 1, 2007***. Storage space has become very rare but for her to be prepared she needs to know what is going to be brought to the gift shop so she may go and purchase additional items so we have sufficient merchandise for our veterans to choose from. Be generous and have fun with the patients and make shopping for their families at the holidays a fond memory for all of them.

***Grant the Last Wish Program*** is a program through VA Voluntary Services granting a last wish for terminally ill veterans. Contact your VAMC Representative at the hospital nearest you.

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***Cold War Certificate Program*** is a certificate recognizing service during the Cold War era (September 2, 1945-December 26, 1991). This is an approved means of recognizing members of the armed forces and qualified federal government civilian personnel who faithfully and honorably served the United States during the eligibility period. Go to [www.hre.army.mil/site/active/tagd/coldwar](http://www.hre.army.mil/site/active/tagd/coldwar) for more information call 703-325-5864.

***Department VA&R Fund*** donations are still desperately needed to maintain our volunteer program at the VA medical facilities. It can be in the form of Gift of the Month, general fund, bedload, or gift shop, etc. there continues to be an increased need to provide aid and support to our veterans. You can designate your donations to a particular facility or send it as a general donation to one of the funds. ***All Monetary Donations*** are to be sent to the ***American Legion Auxiliary Department of Texas, P.O. Box 140407, Austin, TX 78714-0407***. It will then be disbursed, as needed, at one of our Texas facilities.

***James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship*** is awarded annually to a deserving student at the annual VAVS Spring meeting with the ALA contributing \$2000 annually to help preserve the scholarship that has been as much as \$15,000 in the past. Eligibility and application information can be found at [www.va.gov/visn18/VAVS/Parke\\_scholarship.htm](http://www.va.gov/visn18/VAVS/Parke_scholarship.htm)

***VA Nationally Sponsored Events***

2008 National Creative Arts Festival: Loma Linda, CA October 20-27

2008 Annual Golden Age Games: Indianapolis, IN August 20-25

2008 Annual Winter Sport Clinic: Snowmass, CO March 29-April 5

2008 Annual Wheelchair Games: Omaha, NE July 25-29

***Additional Resource Websites:***

Military Family Network: [www.eMilitary.org](http://www.eMilitary.org) 866-205-2850

National Coalition of Child Care Resources & Referral Services: [www.naccrra.org](http://www.naccrra.org) 703-341-4153

National Military Family Association: [www.nmfa.org](http://www.nmfa.org) 800-260-0218

[www.military.com](http://www.military.com)

Women Veterans Health Program: [www.va.gov/wvhp](http://www.va.gov/wvhp)

Center for Women Veterans: [www.va.gov/womenvet](http://www.va.gov/womenvet)

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**Awards and Scholarships**

**National President's Award for Excellence**

A certificate will be awarded to the Unit with the best overall VA&R program. The program must meet all required elements including demonstrated efforts in VAVS recruitment, participation in the Veterans History project and in initiatives assisting Homeless veterans; development and opportunities for Junior volunteers, including the Field Service and Home Service programs and volunteer recognition initiatives. Entries must be typed, narrative form not to exceed 1,500 words and must include the name of the Department, name and number of the Unit and the name and address of the Unit Chairman. The winning entry for the Department of Texas will be submitted to National for competition.

**Department VA&R Program**

A certificate will be presented to the Unit VA&R Chairman in each Division with the best overall program in VA&R. Entry must be in typed, narrative form not to exceed 1,000 words and must include the name and address of the Unit, Unit Chairman and the Department and include a completed annual report form. The Best Overall VA&R Program narrative for the Department of Texas will be forwarded to National for competition. Do not include pictures, clippings, etc.

**Field Service Volunteer Hours Award:**

A certificate will be presented to the Field Service volunteer serving the greatest number of volunteer hours from April 1, 2007-March 31, 2008 in each Division for both Senior and Junior members. The winning entry for the Department of Texas will be submitted to National for competition. *See Award Entry Form #2*

**Home Service Volunteer Hours Award:**

A certificate will be presented to a Home Service volunteer serving the greatest number of volunteer hours from April 1, 2007- March 31, 2008 in each Division for both Senior and Junior members. The winning entry for the Department of Texas will be submitted to National for competition. *See Award Entry Form #2*

**Volunteer Recruitment & Service Award:**

A certificate will be presented to the Unit in each Division with the largest increase of regularly scheduled volunteers and volunteer hours from April 1, 2007- March 31, 2008. The winning entry for the Department of Texas will be submitted to National for competition. *See Award Entry Form #1 and be sure to get the proper signatures.*

**Creative Arts Festival Donor Award:**

A certificate will be presented to the top five (5) units in the Department with the highest contribution to the Creative Arts Program. Donations must be received in Department Headquarters by April 15, 2008.

**Junior Volunteer Scholarship Award:**

The best overall entry will be presented a certificate and her nomination will be forwarded to National for competition to receive a \$1,000 scholarship. This service will be based on the greatest number of volunteer hours for veterans and the hours can be VAVS hours, Field Service and /or Home Service Hours. The winning entry for the Department of Texas will be submitted to National for competition. *See Awards Entry Form #3*

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**Hospital Volunteer Awards will be provided to the hospital Voluntary Chief of Services and /or ALA Representative as required.**

This award will be made to the nominee who has given extraordinary service to our nations veterans through the ALA VA&R program and the VAVS program. This nominee must serve in an established VA assignment and be defined as a regularly scheduled volunteer. In addition, we are looking for an individual who is actively involved working with veterans in any of the following areas:

Outpatient Clinics

Nursing Homes

Homeless Veteran Program

Again, be sure to check the rules and Award Entry forms to make sure you have all the proper signatures needed.

Deadline for all narratives is April 15, 2008 and submitted with your Annual Report form.

***Your VA&R Committee for 2007-2008 is here to help you because WE BELIEVE in the volunteers. Just call us:***

***Janelle Allen, Member Div. I***

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***Barbara Kundert, Chairman Div. II***

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