Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Committee Chairman's Contact Information: Anita McAllister, Department 2nd Vice/VA&R Chairman, 102 Sunhaven Dr., Ocean Springs, MS 39564; 228-875-8384; camatina@bellsouth.net

Department Representatives:

Biloxi VA Medical Center       Jo Tisbury       228-497-3172
Jackson VA Medical Center      Iris Mace         601-845-6629
Memphis VA Medical Center      
Collins State Veterans Home    Jackie Baughman   601-764-2576
Jackson State Veterans Home    Melissa Seward    601-813-9969
Kosciusko State Veterans Home  Carolyn Bermond    662-289-9198
Oxford State Veterans Home     Mary Jo Abraham   662-624-5225

Purpose: To increase the number of Auxiliary members and community members who provide regular volunteer service to veterans and their families at VA Medical Centers (VA Volunteer Service or VAVS), at Veterans State Homes and Hospitals, in community settings (Field Service), and from their homes (Home Service).

For Unit Members:

a. Work with your VA&R department chairman and your department VAVS representatives to learn how you can volunteer at VA medical centers and perform Field Service and Home Service.

b. Recruit volunteers from other community organizations.

c. Enter all of your VAVS hours into the VAVS tracking system. Keep track of your hours volunteering at State Homes and Hospitals and performing Field Service and Home service to assist veterans. Report these hours to your Department Chairman.

d. Inform your Auxiliary VAVS representative of any concerns or suggestions so she can share these with the National VAVS Advisory Committee. Working together we can make the volunteer experience more rewarding for everyone.

Things You Can Do/Objectives:

1. Raise awareness in your communities about the ever-increasing numbers of homeless veterans, especially women veterans and those with children. Units and members should work with other community partners to address this issue in their communities.

   a. Educate the public and Unit members about homeless veterans. Every Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) has a homeless coordinator. Call and make an appointment with him/her and ask what your Unit can do to help the homeless veteran.

   b. Participate in stand down events in your local communities.

   c. Work collaboratively with the VA Homeless Veterans Program, The American Legion, and the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans to encourage active participation in homeless veterans initiatives.

   d. Work with local transitional housing centers for veterans in your communities. These centers help to address the housing, vocational and personal needs of veterans. Foster a working relationship with these centers.

   e. Many states now have transitional housing or temporary housing facilities specifically for women veterans and their children. Consider "adopting" one of
these facilities and organizing fund raising events in support of these deserving women veterans. Work with your Unit and Department Children & Youth chairmen to organized events and activities.

f. Locate a homeless shelter in your area and try to find out if any veterans are there. The person in charge will not give out personal information but could give you the number of homeless veterans staying at the shelter.

g. Contact elected officials on every level about public issues affecting homeless veterans.

h. Work with your American Legion Post's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman and the Sons of The American Legion to triple your efforts.

2. 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).

Additional Programs

1. **VA Voluntary Service**
   American Legion Auxiliary members serving as volunteers at VA Medical Centers, Fisher Houses, and other VA facilities and VA State homes and hospitals fill vital roles, enabling facility and program administrators to stretch their resources with our guaranteed aid and assistance so they can concentrate on the delivery of core services.

2. **James H. Parke Scholarship**
   This scholarship is awarded annually 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 VAVS 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.

   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.

3. **Field and Home Service**
   *Field Service* volunteers provide service to veterans, service members and their families outside a VAMC. Volunteers complete a Field Service Orientation Course initiated by the American Legion Auxiliary. Field Service volunteers maintain their own recordkeeping and dollars spent. *Home Service* volunteers do projects and work for active-duty military/veterans and/or families from the home and maintain their own recordkeeping and dollars spent.
4. **National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF)**

   NVCAF is an annual competition that recognizes the progress and recovery made through the creative achievements of our nation’s veterans after disease, disability or life crisis. As a national presenting co-sponsor, the American Legion Auxiliary should strive to increase that will program.

5. **Welcome Home Celebrations**

   Provide assistance to your local VAMC in supporting returning servicemen and women and their families in the community. VA supports this initiative by providing them with information about the opportunities available to them through the VA system. Every VAMC has been mandated to sponsor Welcome Home Celebrations in their facilities and community.

6. **Support American Legion Programs**

   Promote The American Legion's VA&R and legislative efforts that support programs at the Department and Post level to increase awareness of and participation in programs and resources to assist in the rehabilitation and/or transitioning or service members from military service to civilian life, while maintaining the highest quality of life.

7. **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 VA Medical Centers during the week of February 14 annually.

8. **National Volunteer Month (April)**

   The month of April can be used to encourage the Auxiliary, at all levels, to recognize and celebrate the important work that volunteers do every day on behalf of veterans.

**Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Awards**

1. **Honoring Their Service Award**

   A citation plaque will be presented to the Unit that implements and carries out the Most Outstanding Event that brings honor and recognition to our veterans and/or service members at any VAMC or VA facility, veterans home, Fisher House, vet centers homeless veterans shelter or any facility where more than 60 percent of the residents are veterans. Units may apply directly for this award. Entry must be typewritten in narrative form not to exceed 1,000 words. Pictures and newspaper articles may be included but not to exceed six pages. Each entry must include a cover sheet that includes the Unit name, number and Department, Unit Chairman’s name, address and phone number, date and location where the event was held. Submit to Department VA&R Chairman Anita McAllister by May 1, 2014.

2. **Field Service Volunteer Hours Award**

   A citation plaque will be presented to a Field Service volunteer serving the greatest number of hours from April 1, 2013—March 31, 2014, in each Division for Junior and senior members. Units should send their nominees to the Department Chairman, by May 1, 2014. Unit is required to certify hours of any nominee - the Department Chairman may ask for this information.
3. **Home Service Volunteer Hours Award**
   A citation plaque will be presented to a home service volunteer serving the greatest number of hours from April 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014, in each Division for Junior or senior members. Units should send their nominees to the Department Chairman by May 1, 2014. Unit is required to certify hours of any nominee - the Department Chairman may ask for this information.

4. **Unit VA&R Program Awards**
   A citation plaque will be presented to a Unit Chairman in each Division reporting the Most Outstanding Overall VA&R program as per the goals stated in this Plan of Action. Entry must be typewritten in narrative form not to exceed 1,000 words and may include pictures and articles. Each entry must include a cover sheet that includes the Unit name, number and Department, Unit Chairman's name, address and phone number. Units will submit entries to the Department Chairman by May 1, 2014.

**VAVS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD/ALA NAC NOMINEE**
The Department VA&R Chairman or ALA Department director of hospital volunteers will make nominations for consideration. A Department nomination must be prepared in a narrative format not to exceed 500 words and may include up to two letters of recommendation. This nomination is due to the national VAVS deputy by Nov. 1, 2013.

This award will be made to the nominee who has given extraordinary service to our nation's veterans through the ALA VA&R program and the VAVS program. Specifically 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 one of the following areas: outpatient clinics; nursing homes; homeless veteran programs; hosted veteran-related functions outside the VA; or visiting veterans confined to their homes (as assigned by VAVS). The national winner will receive $500 to be donated to the VAVS facility of her choice or to Veterans Creative Arts Festival and in recipient's name, and she will be profiled in the national Auxiliary magazine. In addition, the ALA will forward her name as our candidate for the VAVS National Advisory Committee Volunteer of the Year.

**100 Percent VAVS Meeting Attendance**
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.

**10,000—Hour Volunteer Service Award**
A special volunteer citation will be awarded to the eligible volunteer and a $100 donation will be sent in the eligible volunteers' name, to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Fund. Volunteer must have accrued 10,000 hours of volunteer service in a VA facility. Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the first Friday in June.

**20,000 - Hour Volunteer Service Award**
A special volunteer citation will be awarded to the eligible volunteer and a $200 donation will be sent, in the eligible volunteers' name, to the National Creative Arts Festival Fund. Volunteer must have accrued 20,000 hours of volunteer service in a VA facility. Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the first Friday in June.
Hour Bar Recognition for Field, Home and Hospital Volunteers
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 hour increments. 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. For further information, see Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation: A Guide for Volunteers.

PASS IT ON Membership Mission Award
Units that demonstrate how working the mission of the VA&R Committee, engaged, retained and attracted members to grow membership will receive a National President’s Citation. A special citation will be given to the best unit in each division. Entries are due at Department Headquarters by May 16, 2014.
VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION
Mid-Year and Year-End Annual Report Form

Due to the Department Chairman by December 1, 2013, for Mid-Year Report and by May 1, 2014, for year-end report. Make a copy and use this form both times!

Send both to: Anita McAllister, Department, 2nd Vice/VA&R Chairman, 102 Sunhaven Dr., Ocean Springs, MS 39564; camatina@bellsouth.net

Unit Name, Number & Location:___________________________________________

Chairman: _____________________ Phone No. __________________________

Unit Participation:
1. No. of Homeless Veterans activities participated in: _____: Stand Downs _____
   Veterans Served:
   Cash donations $________
   Value of other donations $________
2. Welcome Home celebrations held by VA facility: ______
   No. of military and/or military families served ______
   Volunteer hours served helping w/activity ______
   Number of volunteers ______
   Donations $________
3. Veterans Creative Arts Festival: Amount of donation sent to Department$_____
   (We are asking again that you contribute 25 cents or more per member). Did your Unit participate in a local Creative Arts Activity? ____Yes ____No
   If yes, number of volunteer hours ______ Donations made to local event ______
4. No. of Wounded Warriors sponsored_______ Amount $________
5. Does your Unit support Fisher Houses: ______ Yes _____No. Unit donation $________ Did your Unit volunteer at a Fisher House? ______
   If yes, number of volunteers_______ Volunteer hours_________________

VA Facilities:
- No of Registered Volunteers (those who have had orientation, TB Test, wear a badge supplied by the VA) ______
- No. of New Registered Volunteers (May 1, 2013 through May 1, 2014) ______
- No. of regularly scheduled volunteers:___________
- No. of occasional volunteers_______ (those who do not volunteer on a regular basis)
- No. of New Occasional Volunteers:_______
- No. of Field Service Volunteers ______(those who give service at a State VA Home or serve veterans in the community outside of the volunteer's own home)
- No. of Home Service Volunteers ______ (work done in the volunteer's own home, i.e., baking, sewing, etc.)
- No. of New Home Service Volunteers:_______
- Does your Unit promote special activities for women veterans? ______
   If yes, number of women served:_______ Cost to Unit:$________

Total Number of Volunteers in All Areas:_________
Total Number of Veterans Served in All Areas:_________
Total Amount of Cash and Goods Donated in Service to our Veterans:$________
If your Unit held an outstanding and/or unique program for Veterans this year, please on separate page in narrative format.