

2020-2021
PROGRAM ACTION PLAN
VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION

What is this program and why do we have it?

The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Program promotes our mission to enhance the lives of veterans, military and their families

What can you do to execute and ensure the success of the VA & R Program?

1. Assist in activities that help homeless veterans.

Ideas for Members and Units

- Give a helping hand to the Legion's homeless veteran coordinator in your department and offer to assist that coordinator in responding to requests for assistance from homeless veterans or homeless veteran service providers.
- Crochet hats, scarves or mittens to be distributed to homeless veterans. Use information provided by your department chairman to contact the homeless veteran coordinator at the VA health care system nearest you to explore what the unit or you can do to help homeless veterans in your community.
- Participate in the VA Project CHALENG organized by the VA health care system nearest to you. (Project CHALENG for Veterans enhances the care for homeless veterans provided by your local VA and its surrounding community service agencies.)
- Contact your local post chairman and offer your assistance if requests for help come through the Legion's Family Support Network (FSN).
- Raise funds for local American Legion posts to help veterans and their families through the Family Support Network for veterans at risk of losing their housing or homeless veterans transitioning to permanent housing. Make payments of overdue rent, utility payments or deposits and security deposits.
- 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 and identify the organization's volunteer and in-kind contribution needs, including: Meal preparation and serving, clothes collection and distribution, assembly and delivery of hygiene kits, buddy baskets, purchasing or securing household items or furniture.
- Reach out to specific homeless veterans, such as residents of projects mentioned above to provide her/him practical, social and moral support.

2. Support Rehabilitation and healing of Veterans through arts, crafts and hobbies.

(National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, NCCAF).
National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF)

What is NVCAF?

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.

Ideas for Members and Units

- Obtain and become familiar with the *ALA Guide for Volunteers*.
- 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 operational in the community.
- Contribute donated supplies to help supplement visual veteran artists' needs for their projects. Contact your department chairman or your local VA hospital coordinator for a list of items.
- Donate, through departments, funds that help local veterans attend state and national Wheel Chair Games, Veterans Creative Arts Festivals, Paralympics, etc.

3. Help The American Legion, State Department of Veterans Affairs and Chamber of Commerce promote job fairs for Veterans and their families.

Ideas for Members

- Take part in a veteran job fair by organizing or working at an informational table.
- Other opportunities include helping implement a Legion-sponsored job fair and/or co-hosting a Legion Family information table at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation-sponsored job fair. Additionally, Auxiliary members may initiate and host a job fair for veterans in their community.
- Serve as a career e-mentor for women veterans.
 - Volunteer for Habitat for Humanity, specifically if a house build is supported by The American Legion.

Ideas for Units

- Host an informational table at a local job fair.

- Support the Legion by helping host a local job fair at your post home.

4. Enroll Auxiliary members as VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) volunteers at VA Health care facilities.

Ideas for Members

- If you live near a VA facility, become a regular VAVS volunteer and invite others to become VAVS volunteers with you.
- Send notes and provide supplies to support those who volunteer at VA facilities.
- 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. Please consult your department.

Department (and ALA VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives)

- Work with VAVS directors to create meaningful assignments for every volunteer.
- Work with VAVS directors to identify service projects suitable for Junior members and their friends and adults with time for occasional service only.
- Educate units and community partners about volunteer opportunities available at VA medical centers, state veterans homes, Fisher Houses, and other VA health care locations. Sponsor informational programs and recruitment tables at department meetings, post and unit functions and at community events. Utilize department websites, newsletters and other media.
- Contribute to the VAVS National Advisory Committee by enabling the American Legion Auxiliary national representative to best represent the interest of and exert influence on behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary. Develop a deeper connection with the VAVS national representative and deputy representative.
- Attend the annual VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee Meeting and Conference. All VA facility representatives, deputies and volunteers are eligible to attend at their own expense.
- Share member volunteer concerns and suggestions with ALA National VAVS Representative (name and contact information can be found in supplement).
- Inform your Auxiliary hospital VAVS representative of any concerns or suggestions.

(Note: Volunteers in veterans' state homes that have a Memorandum of Understanding with a VA health care system are eligible to be considered VAVS volunteers.)

5. If there isn't a VA hospital close to your proximity, find opportunities for Auxiliary members to serve Veterans in your area. These hours will count toward your Service to Veterans pin and hour bars.

Service to Veterans recognizes volunteers who provide service to veterans, service members and their families outside a 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. 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.

Ideas for Members

- Read the *Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation: A Guide for Volunteers*
- Sew quilts for the Quilts of Valor Foundation. For more information, please visit www.govf.org.
- 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 care packages to military kids who are headed to college.
- Report your Service to Veterans hours to your unit VA&R chairman.
- See Awards section of this plan for information on Hour Bar Recognition.

Ideas for Units

- Become the catalyst to find needs and encourage members to help veterans in their community.
- Provide hospitality for a job fair for veterans.
- Coordinate with local quilt shops to help your unit sponsor a quilting event in support of Quilts of Valor.
- Contact members, including those who never or only occasionally attend meetings and events and invite them to participate for specific limited duration projects that would help area veterans.
- Compile and record hours provided by your members.
- Coordinate with your PR chairman to tell the community what work your unit members are doing for veterans.

6. Transitioning back to civilian life is one of the biggest challenges Veterans face today. Educate yourself about resources so you can help Veterans access all their VA benefits, not just health care.

Ideas for Members

- Coordinate with local American Legion posts to identify the local Service Officer or see 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 in advance of the Legion's System Worth Saving site visits to VA health care systems: www.legion.org/systemworthsaving.
- Resource: VA Health Care Hotline for women veterans 1-855-VA-Women (1-855-829-6636); explore.va.gov/health-care

Idea for Unit/Department

- Invite the local, county or state Service Officer to be the guest speaker at a unit/department event.

7. Assist and support caregivers of Veterans.

Ideas for Members

- 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.
- Become a Legacy Corps AmeriCorps member if the Legacy Corps project is offered in a state or locality near you.
- Volunteer as a VA Voluntary Service volunteer support caregiver if the VA health care system closest to you offers such volunteer opportunity.

Ideas for Units

- Familiarize your unit and community with the services of the VA caregiver support program.
- Invite the VA caregiver support coordinator in the VA healthcare system closest to you to make a presentation to your unit, district or community-wide meeting.

For a more detailed list of ideas and information, along with the many below resources, go to: <https://www.alaforveterans.org/Programs/Veterans-Affairs---Rehabilitation/>

VA&R Programs Action Plan

2017-2022 VA&R Individual Programs Action Plan

2017-2022 Award Cover Sheet

How to Raise Awareness for Homeless Veterans

How to Support the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

Member Resources - VA&R

How to Facilitate a Local Veterans Creative Arts Festival (pdf)

How to Plan a Stand Down (pdf)

How to Recruit for the VA&R VAVS (pdf)

How to Volunteer with VAVS (pdf)

What a VAVS Volunteer Should Expect (pdf)

VA&R Facebook Group

2019 VAVS Pre-Convention Presentation

Women Veterans on Point Presentation

Support Tools - VA&R

Handbook for Homeless Veterans and Service Providers (pdf)

VAVS 101 Presentation

VAVS Associate Representative/Associate Deputy Certification Form

VAVS Representative/Deputy Representative Certification Form

Hour Bar Order Form

How to Make a Buddy Basket (pdf)

VCAF Grant Application

VCAF Grant Report Form

Service Hours Examples

How to Support Hiring Events for Veterans and Military & Veteran Spouses

How to eMentor Women Veterans and Military Spouses

REPORTING

Mid-Year Reports

Mid-Year reports reflect the program work of units in the department and are intended as an opportunity for mid-year correction. Units should prepare and send their reports to the VA & R Department Chairperson and the Unit's Division Committeeperson by **December 15, 2020**.

Year-End Reports

Year-end/Annual reports reflect the program work of units in the department, and may result in a national award for participants if award requirements are met. Units should prepare and send their reports to the VA & R Department Chairperson and the Unit's Division Committeeperson by **April 15, 2021**.

Department of Texas VA&R Awards Deadlines and Submission Requirements

All units participating in the *Christmas Assessment Challenge*, by paying the unit's Christmas Assessment by **November 11, 2020**, (Veterans Day) will receive a certificate and be entered into a drawing. The winning unit will receive \$50 and another \$50 will be donated in the unit's name to President Brenda's program of choice.

The Division and District President with at least 80% percentage of units in their Division/District, that have paid their Christmas Assessment by the *Christmas Assessment Challenge* date, **November 11, 2020**, will also receive a certificate.

All units submitting narratives to the Department VA&R Chairperson by Year-End reporting date, **April 15, 2021**, will receive a certificate. Entries must be typewritten in narrative format, Pictures, clippings, scrapbooks, etc. may be and are encouraged to be attached.

An award will be presented to the Unit selected by the Department VA&R Committee as the Most Outstanding Overall VA&R Program. Department's winning Most Outstanding Overall VA&R Program will be forwarded to National for Best Department VA&R Program consideration.

All Units contributing to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival will receive a certificate. Please earmark your check "NVCAF". ***Note: Texas's annual commitment to this worthwhile event is \$5,000.**

Unit's sponsoring NVCAF at the *Bronze level* (12 months @ \$5 or \$60), *Silver level* (12 months @ \$10 or \$120), *Gold level* (12 months @ \$20 or \$240) or *Platinum level* (12 months @ \$50 or \$600). This will be a year-long campaign. All units must pay the full 12 months by **June 30, 2021**. All units contributing will receive a certificate and a ribbon for their Unit banner.

The Platinum level sponsors will receive an award but must be paid by Flag Day, **June 14, 2021**.

And we cannot forget donations to the **VA&R General Fund**. All units donating a minimum of \$25 will receive a certificate and will be included in a drawing for \$50 to be awarded to your unit.

Again, please refer to the VA&R National website to learn more of National awards being presented to eligible ALA Representative, Deputies, volunteer working Service Veterans and for Award Submission Coversheets.



Your Texas VA&R 2020-2021 Team Members Are:

Division 1

Holly Heatly

214-263-9442

heatly453@gmail.com

Division 2

Janice McAda

214-356-9164

Janice_mcada@yahoo.com

Division 3 – Chairman

Candy Zavala

210-559-6786

czavala@gvec.net

Division 3

Jean Bennett

432-254-3668

jeaniebgood@yahoo.com

Your VA&R Team is here to assist and we look forward to working with you. This program is wide spread and worked every day within our organization. Take a few minutes to review new ideas and your opportunities to execute the program in your communities and report your worthwhile deeds for possible awards and recognition.

Steamed Up to Ready to Serve Our Veterans and Pouring our Hearts into this program.

Candy D. Zavala

VA&R Chairperson

ALA Department of Texas