

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

2014 – 2015 Department of North Carolina American Legion Auxiliary Plan of Action

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

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. *Each unit pay their VA&R “Fair Share” obligation of \$2 per unit member as of their June 30, 2014 membership. With your help we can meet our \$15,000 goal!*

- Make sure your obligation is paid in a timely manner. We owe those who have served our support. These monies go to our four VA Medical Centers.
- Units are challenged to donate extra funds for our VA&R Program by rounding up or paying more when possible! Remember, you can use poppy funds or general funds.
- Units are encouraged to implement special projects or Fundraisers during the year for this purpose.

2: *Volunteer at VA Medical Centers, Hospitals (VA Volunteer Service or VAVS), at Veterans’ State homes and Hospitals or Nursing Homes in community settings.*

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

- Become a regular VAVS volunteer. Invite others to become a volunteer.
- Enter all of your VAVS hours into the VAVS tracking system.
- Inform your Auxiliary hospital VAVS representative of any concerns or suggestions.

3. *Okay, so there isn’t a VA hospital close to your community; find ways to provide volunteer hours in service to veterans and their families in local communities and from their homes.*

- You can support veterans from the comfort of your community or home. Service to Veterans combines community volunteer opportunities and volunteering opportunities created in your home. Sew quilts for the Quilts of Valor Foundation. Crochet stocking hats or plastic sleep mats for the homeless, bake cupcakes for the local stand down, help a veteran use the Internet; find out what is needed, then volunteer.
- Report your Service to Veterans hours to your unit VA&R Chairman so they can report to the Department VA&R Chairman.

4. Assist veterans in accessing VA benefits including, but not limited to, health care. This should include coordinating with the local American Legion Post Service Officer.

- Coordinate with local American Legion posts to identify the local Service Officer.
- Help eligible veterans attain benefits through referrals
- Encourage eligible veterans use the VA health care system and its services, including hospitals, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Vet Centers, etc.
- Participate 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

Resources:

VA Health Care Hotline for women veterans
1-855-VA-Women (1-855-829-6636)
www.VA.gov/explorehealth-care

5. Assist in activities that help homeless veterans.

- Participate in the VA Project *CHALENG* organized by the VA health care system nearest 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 donations to local American Legion post to help veterans and their families to pay overdue rent or utility payments etc. that would keep veterans from losing their home or to help homeless veterans' transitioning to permanent housing.
- Purchase or secure household items or furniture for homeless veterans transitioning to permanent housing;
- Host or volunteer at homeless veterans' Stand Downs; events where homeless veterans receive free goods and services such as haircuts, medical exams and the plastic sleep mats.
- Contact homeless veteran emergency shelters, transitional housing projects, and permanent housing project in your community to identify the volunteer and in-kind contribution needs, including meal preparation, serving, clothes collection / distribution, and assembly and delivery of hygiene kits or buddy basket
- "Adopt" specific homeless veterans, to provide practical, social and moral support.

Helpful Resources

How to Make a Buddy Basket sheet available at ALforveterans.org
On -Call: Handbook for Homeless Veterans and Service Providers
American Legion Family Support Network: www.legion.org/familysupport
How to make sleep mats out of plastic bags for homeless veterans
information will be available at display table at Division, District and Department meetings or from the VA&R Chairman.

6. *Support the rehabilitation and healing of our veterans through arts, crafts and hobbies (Veterans Creative Arts Festival.)*

- Obtain and become familiar with the 2014 edition of *ALA Guide for Volunteers*.
- Help your unit earn one of the VA sponsored awards for donations to the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, through the ALA. 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). 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, Para Olympics, etc.

Note: In making special donations specifically to support this program. Make check payable to American Legion Aux., Department of NC and designate on your check in the memo line Veterans Creative Arts and which (VAMC) Medical Center you want your contribution to help. Contributions can also be marked for National Veterans Creative Arts .

Contact your hospital representative to see how you can assist with the Veterans Creative Arts program at their hospital. They may ask for refreshments or just your encouragement for the participants by attending their event and encouraging members of your community to attend.

7. *Help the American Legion, State Department of Veterans Affairs and Chamber of Commerce promote job fairs for veterans and their families.*

- 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 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.

Resources

[How to Organize a Job Fair for Veterans and/or Military and Veteran Spouses](#)

- 8. Assist and support veterans pursuing post-secondary and vocational education. Engage student veterans' organizations on college campuses.**
- Contact veterans' coordinator to offer your help and see what you can do to support them.
 - Inform them of benefits The American Legion has to offer.
 - Collaborate with a Student Veterans of America chapter or other campus student veterans group at colleges and universities in your community or region.
 - Arrange for your post home to be available for off-campus events/ chapter meetings.
 - Organize and deliver presentations on career and life skills topics to student veterans.
 - Honor student veterans and their family for serving at veterans' holiday activities or at other times during the year.
- 9. Assist and support caregivers of veterans.**
- Familiarize yourself 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.
 - Volunteer as a VA Voluntary Service volunteer support caregiver if the VA health care system closest to you offers such volunteer opportunity.
 - Become a veteran caregiver peer support trainer or volunteer.

Resources

VA Caregiver Support – www.caregiver.va.gov/

Elizabeth Dole Foundation – www.elizabethdolefoundation.org

Mid-Year Reports due December 10, 2014

End of Year Reports due April 15, 2015

As part of your report please include answers to following questions.

- ***How many members earned the new Service to Veterans pins***
- ***How many quilts were made and donated to Quilts of Valor.***
- ***Did your unit participate in the caregiver support with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation? If so explain your activity.***
- ***How many sleep mats for homeless did your unit make?***
- ***Hours worked for VA projects; Veterans served; monies spent and in-kind donations made.***

National VA&R Awards

Service to Veterans Volunteer Hours Award

A citation plaque presented to one junior and one senior member who has the greatest number of hours from April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015. The unit is required to certify hours of any nominee. Due to VA&R Department Chairman by April 15, 2015

National VA&R Unit Program Awards

A citation plaque will be presented to a unit chairman in Southern 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 need to submit entries to the department by email or postmarked by April 15, 2015.

Lifetime Volunteer Service Award

A citation + \$200 Donation to VAVS Facility or VCAF of her choice for member that has volunteers more than 20,000 hours of service in a VA facility during this year (April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015). Verification of hours must be received at National Headquarters by the first Friday in June.

Personal Awards

A Certificate will be given to units paying 100% or more of their VA&R Fair Share.

A Certificate will be given to a volunteer in each of the four VAMC that works the most hours for the year (April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015).

Other personal awards will be given during the year one of which will be awards to those that send in their midyear and end of the year reports.

Brenda Toppin, VA&R Chairman
116 Roberts Rd.
Edenton, N.C. 27932

Any questions please call (home) 252-482-7706 or (cell) 252-333-9724

Mid-year report must be postmarked or emailed by December 10, 2014

Year-end report must be postmarked or emailed by April 15, 2015

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Unit End of the Year Report
2014 – 2015

Brenda Toppin
116 Roberts Rd
Edenton, N.C. 27932

Deadline April 15, 2015

Unit # _____ Division _____ District _____

Name of Unit Chairman: _____

Phone # _____ e-mail _____

Our service for veterans (examples include hours volunteering at the VA, helping wounded warriors and elderly veterans at home, providing transportation, distributing poppies, recording veterans histories, raising money for the Veterans Creative Arts Festival, fundraising events at your unit or post, assisting with veteran job fairs, helping homeless veterans and their families, advocating for The American Legion legislative agenda that supports veterans, organizing a Walk, Run & Roll, etc.)

1. How many total hours did your unit members volunteer in helping our veterans and their families? _____ Number of Veterans assisted. _____
2. How many dollars did your unit spend on veterans and their families? _____
3. What is the value of in-kind donations your unit received to give to our veterans or their families? (in kind donations are non-cash donations of goods or services that offset your expense) _____
4. Total amount of contributions made to other organizations on behalf of our veterans?(except Child Welfare Foundation) _____
5. Number of Veterans in the Classroom presentations facilitated. _____
6. Number of new Service to Veterans (previously known as Home Service and Field Service, now combined into one category "Service to Veterans") volunteers recruited. _____
7. Number of Sleep Mat s that were made by your unit. _____ Number of hours worked on this project. _____
8. Did anyone in your unit earn a Service to Veteran pin? ____ if yes who and how many hours _____
9. Did your unit participate in the caregiver support of a veteran through the Elizabeth Dole Foundation or any other means? ____ if yes explain.
_____.
10. Did anyone in your unit make quilts? ____ if so how many _____ were quilts given to Quilts of Valor? _____

Thank You for serving our veterans, military and their families!