

# Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

## 2015 – 2016 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, 2015 membership. This includes all Junior and Senior members. Our goal for this year will be \$15,000. With your help we can meet or exceed this 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. If there isn’t a VA hospital close to your community; find ways to provide volunteer hours in service to veterans and their families within your community or from your 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.
- Members can earn Hour Bars for recognition of their service

### **Resources:**

Quilts of Valor- [www.govf.org](http://www.govf.org)

HUD Homeless Assistance Programs- [www.onecpd.info/homelessness-assistance/](http://www.onecpd.info/homelessness-assistance/)

**4. Assist veterans in accessing VA benefits including, but not limited to, health care. This should include coordinating with your 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](http://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](http://www.VA.gov/explorehealth-care)

**5. Assist in activities that help homeless veterans.**

- Contact your local post chairman and offer your assistance if requests for help come through the Legion's Family Support Network (FSN).
- 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.)
- 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.

**Resources:**

How to Make a Buddy Basket sheet available at [ALAforveterans.org](http://ALAforveterans.org)  
On -Call: Handbook for Homeless Veterans and Service Providers  
American Legion Family Support Network: [www.legion.org/familysupport](http://www.legion.org/familysupport)  
Homeless Veterans Coalition: [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org)

**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:**

[www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes)  
[www.ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse/](http://www.ementorprogram.org/p/milspouse/)  
[www.legion.org/documents/pdf/habitat/pdf](http://www.legion.org/documents/pdf/habitat/pdf)

**8. 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 closest VA healthcare system to make a presentation to your unit/district/division or community wide meeting.
- Volunteer as a VA Voluntary Service volunteer support caregiver if the VA healthcare system closest to you offers such an opportunity.
- Become a Legacy Corps AmeriCorps member if the Legacy Corps project is offered in a locality near you

**Resources:**

Legacy Corps Frequently Asked Questions

VA Caregiver Support- [www.caregiver.va.gov/](http://www.caregiver.va.gov/)

Elizabeth Dole Foundation- [www.elizabethdolefoundation.org](http://www.elizabethdolefoundation.org)

**VA & R REPORTING:**

**Mid-Year Report- Due by December 15, 2015**

**End of Year Report - Due by April 30, 2016**

**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.
- Hours worked for VA projects; Veterans served; monies spent and in-kind donations made.

## National VA & R Awards

**Member Award:** Hour Bar Recognition for Service to Veterans Volunteers

**Type of Award:** Hour Bar

**Presented to:** Member by her department via the ALA National Headquarters

**Materials and Guidelines:**

- 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 up to 20,000 hours.
- Beginning 2014-2015 Field and Home service hours were combined into an all-encompassing category called Service to Veterans.

**Unit Award:** Million Member Award

**Type of Award:** Citation Plaque

**Presented to:** One unit per division (5 awards)

**Materials and Guidelines:**

- Must demonstrate how working the mission of the VA&R committee engaged, retained and attracted members to grow membership in the unit
- The entry must be typewritten in narrative format, not to exceed 1,000 words.
- Include pictures, clippings, scrapbooks, folders, etc.
- Due to Department Chairman by email or postmarked by April 30, 2016

**Unit Award:** Unit VA&R Program Awards

**Type of award:** Citation Plaque

**Presented to:** One unit chairman per division (5 awards)

**Materials and Guidelines:**

- Awarded to the unit chairman in each division who conducted the best overall promotion of the VA&R program.
- The entry must be typewritten in narrative format, not to exceed 1,000 words.
- Include pictures, clippings, scrapbooks, folders, etc.
- Units will submit entries to the department chairman by the required date.
- Due to Department Chairman by email or postmarked by April 30, 2016

**Unit Award:** Service to Veterans Volunteer Hours Award

**Type of Award:** Citation Plaque

**Presented to:** One Junior and one senior member per division (10 awards)

**Materials and Guidelines:**

- Greatest number of hours from April 1, 2015-March 31, 2016, in each division for a Junior and a Senior member.
- Units should send their nominees to the department VA&R chairman. This is due to Department Chairman by April 30, 2016.
- The unit is required to certify hours of any nominee – the department chairman may ask for this information.

**Individual Award:** Volunteer Recruitment & Service Department Award

**Type of Award:** Citation presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs

**Presented to:** Hospital Representative

**Materials and Guidelines:**

- 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, 2015 – March 31, 2016.
- The award winner will be determined by the national VAVS representative through verification of hours and number of volunteers as recorded by VAVS.

**Other awards are available for review in the National Plan of Action**

## **Personal Awards**

A certificate to all units paying 100% or more of the VA&R Fair Share

An award will be given to the District & Division President with the highest percentage of units paying their VA & R Fair Share by Mid -Winter Conference and a Grand Prize to the overall winner at Convention in June.

We will have a drawing of all units who have paid their VA&R Fair Share prior to Fall Conference, at Mid-Winter for a prize and then again at Convention in June for a Grand Prize.