

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

2010-2011 National President's Theme: The Power of One
2010-2011 Department President's Theme: It is Great to be an American

Plan of Action: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee

Purpose: To initiate, sponsor and participate in programs and services that assist and enhance the lives of veterans and their families; ensuring restoration and/or transition to normally functioning lives, physically, mentally, socially and vocationally.



Department Chairman

Brenda Newell
2061 S. Pontotoc Road
Pontotoc, MS 38863
Ph. 662.489.8550
E-mail: brenda_k_new@yahoo.com

Committee Members:

Northern Area

Martha Rogers
109 Myra Avenue
Calhoun City, MS 38916
Ph. 662.628.6062

Central Area

Tommie Stroud
205 Parks Avenue
Jackson, MS 39212
Ph. 601.946.8484

Southern Area

June Crosslin
10124 Sheepshead Drive
Vanceleave, MS 39565
Ph. 228.826.4707

Dept. V.A. Representatives

Biloxi V.A. Medical Center:	Jo Tisbury	Ph. 228.497.3172
Jackson V.A. Medical Center:	Billie Burke	Ph. 601.918.1184
Memphis V.A. Medical Center:	Rosemary Merriman	Ph. 662.226.1846
Collins State Veterans Home:	Glenda Wheelis	Ph. 601.649.5463
Jackson State Veterans Home:	Chandra D'Avy	Ph. 601.983.7061
Kosciusko State Veterans Home:	Sara Davis	Ph. 662.289.1054
Oxford State Veterans Home:	Martha Rogers	Ph. 662.628.6062

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Department Objectives

1. **Objective:** To bring awareness to the plight and ever-increasing number of homeless veterans. Today it is estimated that 1 in 4 homeless are veterans and that includes approximately 6,500 female veterans.
Source: 2005 Veterans Census

Action Steps

- a. Educate Unit members about homeless veterans. Forty-five percent who have entered a treatment program have mental illness. Three out of four have a substance abuse, while 35 percent have both. **Note:** *We have two Homeless Veterans shelters both located in Jackson. Donations can be made through Department Headquarters.*
 - b. Every VAMC has a homeless coordinator. Call and make an appointment with him/her and ask what your Unit can do to help the homeless veterans. Ask if they have a stand-down at that medical center.
 - c. 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 staying there.
 - d. Contact elected officials on every level about public issues effecting homeless veterans.
 - e. Work with your The American Legion Post's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman and the Sons of The American Legion to triple your efforts.
2. **Objective:** To raise \$150,000 nationally to fulfill our obligation as a corporate sponsor of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Action Steps

- a. Promote the annual competition that recognizes the progress and recovery made through recreation therapy and raise the visibility of the creative achievements of our nation's veterans after disease, disability or life crisis. We need to increase our donations from the Department of Mississippi.
 - b. On the Unit and Department level, encourage fundraising with a goal of **18 cents per member** sent to National Headquarters to fulfill our obligation as a corporate sponsor.
 - c. Issue news releases announcing the events to be held in La Crosse, Wisconsin, October 18-24, 2010.
 - d. Publicize the Bronze (\$1,000 to \$1,999), Silver (\$2,000 to \$4,999) or Gold (\$5,000 and above) awards presented to Departments made to National Veterans Creative Arts Festival through National close of books 2011.
3. **Objective:** To increase participation in Ride to Recovery (R2R) events. To encourage fundraising and volunteer participation for all scheduled events.

Action Steps:

- a. Promote participation and in-kind donations to R2R events. Assist the VA committee when a ride is scheduled for your area by serving as site coordinators, hosting fundraising and meals for wounded warriors, and promoting community support.
- b. Support Spinning Recovery Labs and outdoor cycling programs at military and VA locations around the United States to help injured veterans overcome obstacles they face. Cycling is an important part of the veteran's recovery and rehabilitation.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

- c. Identify those local VA facilities that do not have Spinning Recovery Labs by collaborating and encouraging the adaptation of spin cycle programs and recovery labs.
 - d. Sponsor a wounded warrior for the R2R.
 - e. Join the ride as a contributor.
 - f. Develop a public relations campaign to educate the community on the benefits of cycling which promotes morale and welfare benefits by strengthening the body, reducing stress, depression and anxiety and providing a life-changing experience that can impact the lives of our wounded warriors forever.
4. **Objective:** To increase volunteer services within a VAMC or outpatient clinic by ten (10) volunteers in the Department and to increase volunteers outside a VAMC through Field Service and Home Service by ten (10) in the Department.

Action Steps

- a. Assist National Headquarters in the placement of volunteers recruited from the online national volunteer recruitment campaign. Help recruit new members! Please e-mail volunteer@legion-aux.org with questions.
- b. Educate Auxiliary members about opportunities available through VA Medical Centers/clinics, Field Service or Home Service volunteering. Host American Legion Auxiliary forums and recruitment tables at Department meetings, Post and Unit functions, conventions and community events.
- c. Work with your VA facilities to create meaningful assignments for every volunteer based on the volunteers' availability. **Note:** Contact a V.A. Representative who serves at the center that you wish to volunteer for assistance.
- d. Offer volunteer opportunities on Department and Unit websites, newsletters and other types of communication.
- e. Promote special emphasis on methods of recruiting, retaining, motivating and recognizing volunteers.
- f. Promote veteran-related outreach volunteers for members living in rural communities with no access to VA facilities. Seek out veterans living in your communities through assistance from your VAMCs, VA clinics, local nursing homes, local American Legion Posts and other veteran's organizations.
- g. Assist VAVS representatives and deputy representatives in working with VAVS chief of Voluntary Services in establishing a youth service project for student volunteers.

Programs

1. VA Medical Center (VAMC) & Outpatient Facilities
The American Legion Auxiliary fills a vital role at VA facilities (VAMCs and outpatient clinics) across the country—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. Field and Home Service
Field service volunteers provide service to veterans 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

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

active-duty military/veterans and/or families from the home and also maintain their own recordkeeping and dollars spent.

3. National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF)
Promote the annual competition 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 a national 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.
4. Homeless Veterans Initiatives
Work collaboratively with the VA Homeless Veterans Program, The American Legion and National Coalition of Homeless Veterans to encourage active participation in homeless veterans initiatives.
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. Fisher House
Provide volunteer resources and annual donations to Fisher House.
7. Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services National Advisory Committee
Actively engage in the activity of the VAVS Committee enabling the American Legion Auxiliary national representative to better represent the interest of and exert influence on behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary on a national level. Develop a deeper connection between the national representative and deputy with the representatives and deputies in each Department.
8. Support American Legion Programs
Promote The American Legion's legislative efforts that support programs at the Department and Post level to increase awareness of and participation in programs and resources to assist transitioning service members from military service to civilian life while maintaining the highest quality of life.
9. National Recognition Programs
To annually salute America's heroes: 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.
10. National Volunteer Month (April)
Encourage the organization, at all levels, to recognize and celebrate the important work that volunteers do every day on behalf of veterans.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Awards

1. The Power of One 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. 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. Entry cannot be in bound book or hard cover. Cover sheet must include Unit name and number, address, Unit Chairman's name, address and phone number, date and location where the event was held. **Submit to Department Chairman by May 1, 2011. Use Award Form Cover #2.**

2. Department VA&R Program Awards

A citation plaque will be presented to the Department Chairman in each Division who reports 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. All entries must be postmarked by June 1, 2011, and sent by the Department Chairman to the National Division Chairman.

3. 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, 2010 – March 31, 2011, in each Division for Junior and Senior members. **Units should send their nominees to the Department Chairman by May 1, 2011.** Unit is required to certify hours of any nominee – the Department Chairman requires this information. The Department Chairman will then send the top hour Junior volunteer and Senior volunteer to the National Division Chairman by June 1, 2011.

4. 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, 2010 - March 31, 2011, in each National Division for Junior or Senior members. **Units should send their nominees to the Department Chairman by May 1, 2011.** The Unit is required to certify hours of any nominee – the Department Chairman requires this information. The Department Chairman will then send the top hour Junior volunteer and Senior volunteer to the National Division Chairman by June 1, 2011.

5. National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) Contribution Recognition

The NVCAF will recognize Departments that contribute at the Bronze, Silver and Gold level. This recognition will be made at the 2011 festival. ALA National Headquarters will submit qualifying donations to NVCAF staff in July. Donations considered are those received in the national office September 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011.

6. Unit VA&R Program Awards

The Most Outstanding Unit VA & R program in the Department, based on year-end reports, will be submitted to the National Southern Division VA & R Chairman by June 1, 2011, for consideration for the Most Outstanding Overall VA & R program in the Southern Division. The Department's entry will be typewritten in narrative format, not to exceed 1,000 words and written by the selected unit, and should include pictures and newspaper articles, also provided by the selected Unit. A citation plaque

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

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.

On the Department level, a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place award will be presented to deserving units, based on year-end reporting. Certificates of participation/appreciation will be given to each reporting Unit.

1. **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 Department Chairman by May 1, 2011**, and to the National VAVS deputy by June 1, 2011. 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 in 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 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.
2. **Volunteer Recruitment & Service Department Award**
A citation plaque will be presented to the Department in each Division with the largest increase of regularly scheduled volunteers and regularly scheduled volunteer hours at a VA Medical Center from **April 1, 2010 – March 31, 2011**. The award winner will be determined by the national VAVS representative through verification of Department hours and number of volunteers as recorded by VAVS.
3. **100 PERCENT VAVS MEETING ATTENDANCE**
An "Attendance Card" will be awarded to each representative and deputy who has 100 percent attendance at VAVS committee meetings at her assigned facility. The national VAVS representative will verify the winners from VA records.
4. **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 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 June 1, 2011.
5. **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 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 June 1, 2011.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

6. Homeless Veterans Outreach Award

The ALA, TAL and SAL come together annually to select a Department that has done an outstanding job in the area of homeless veterans outreach. Award nominations are solicited each fall and the winners are recognized at National Convention and the National NCHV Conference held each June in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit www.legion-aux.org.

Resources

1. www.ride2recovery.us.com
2. VA&R Guide (formerly Guide for Volunteers): provided through the Auxiliary. Contains the field service orientation course.
3. A System Worth Saving: guide provided through The American Legion.
4. Gulf War Benefits and Programs, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Vietnam Veterans - Guide to Agent Orange Benefits, What to do Before a Veteran Dies, Women Veterans - Identifying Risk, Services and Prevention: brochures available through The American Legion.
5. National Veterans Creative Arts Festival: www.creativeartsfestival.va.gov.
- 6.

See program page on www.legion-aux.org for additional resources.

Mid-Year Report

A short narrative of what you have accomplished this year up to due date is required.

Due to Department Chairman by December 31, 2010.

Year-End Report

Fill in the Department's report form as much as possible. Anything not covered in the form may be included on a separate sheet of paper. **Due to Department Chairman by May 1, 2011**