

THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

62ND NATIONAL VAVS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
REPORT

APRIL 9 - 12, 2008



ORLANDO, FLORIDA

62nd ANNUAL MEETING REPORT
VAVS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NAC)

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THE VAVS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) was established by VA Circular No. 117, May 17, 1946, and became a Federally chartered advisory committee on February 5, 1975. The NAC advises the Secretary, through the Under Secretary for Health, on the coordination and promotion of volunteer activities within VA health care facilities, and on other matters relating to volunteerism. NAC membership is open to all national organizations that provide volunteers and/or donations to VA facilities, and meet or exceed minimum criteria established by the NAC. Current membership categories and criteria for the NAC are:

1. Service Member (voting) -- maintains the provision of volunteers and VA recognized participation on local VAVS committees at a minimum of thirty VA facilities;
2. Associate Service Member -- maintains the same requirements as Service Members, but at a minimum of fifteen VA facilities;
3. Donor Member -- donates significant funds or materials to assist or benefit veterans at/to a minimum of thirty VA facilities;
4. Associate Donor Member -- maintains the same requirements as Donor Members but at a minimum of fifteen VA facilities; and
5. Adjunct Member – Youth organizations may be part of the NAC when sponsored by an NAC member organization. The NAC sponsoring organization takes on the responsibility of training the Adjunct Members in the policies and procedures of the NAC. When an Adjunct Member youth organization's participation in the VAVS program reaches the minimum for Associate Service Member, they may apply for that category of membership.

The NAC Chairperson is the Chief Communications Officer, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and the Deputy Chairperson is the Director, Voluntary Service Office, VHA. Each member organization may appoint one National Representative and up to two Deputy National Representatives to serve on the NAC. Additional deputies, up to a maximum of eight, may be appointed, when justified, and approved by the Director, Voluntary Service Office. A member organization certifies individuals to represent it on local VA facility VAVS Committees where it has volunteer activity.

The NAC holds one meeting a year, and each member attends at their personal or their organizations' expense. The Executive Committee (EC) of the NAC meets prior to the VAVS NAC Annual Meeting and one time a year other than at the Annual Meeting. NAC and EC meetings are open to the public. Advance notice of the purpose, date, time, and location of each NAC and EC meeting is published in the Federal Register.

Service Member Organizations

	Present/Absent
American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc.	A
The American Legion	P
American Legion Auxiliary	P
American Red Cross	P
AMVETS	P
AMVETS Auxiliary	P
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the U.S.A.	P
Blinded Veterans Association	P
Disabled American Veterans	A
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P
Fleet Reserve Association	P
Forty and Eight	P
Help Hospitalized Veterans	P
Italian American War Veterans of the U.S.	P
Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.	P
National Ladies Auxiliary, Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., Inc.	P
Knights of Columbus	P
Korean War Veterans Association	P
Marine Corps League	P
Marine Corps League Auxiliary	P
The Masonic Service Association of North America	P
Military Order of the Cootie of the U.S.	P
Women's Auxiliary to the Military Order of the Cootie of the U.S.	P
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.	P
Ladies Auxiliary, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.	P
National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century	P
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	P
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P
Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	P
Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	P
Sons of the American Legion	P
The Salvation Army	P
United Voluntary Services	A
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P
Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	P
WAVES National	P

Associate Service Member Organizations

	Present/Absent	
American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.	P	
American War Mothers	P	
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.	P	
Catholic War Veterans	P	
Catholic War Veterans Ladies Auxiliary	P	
Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War	P	
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.	P	
I.B.P.O. Elks of the World, Inc.		A
Ladies Auxiliary to the Fleet Reserve Association	P	
Ladies Auxiliary, Italian American War Veterans of the U.S.	P	
Moose International		A
National Ladies Auxiliary, Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A., Inc.	P	
The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution	P	
The National Women's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic	P	
Sons of AMVETS	P	
United Auto Workers	P	
United Daughters of the Confederacy		A
U.S. Submarine Veterans of World War II		A
Women Marines Association	P	
Women's Army Corps Veterans Association	P	

Donor Member Organizations

Bowlers Victory League		A
Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project	P	

Associate Donor Member Organizations

The Silver Star Families of America		A
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Honorary Member Organizations

B'NAI B'rith
 JWB/Women's Organizations' Services
 National Auxiliary, United Spanish War Veterans
 National Service Star Legion
 Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A., Inc.

VAVS NAC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, April 9, 2008, 8:00a.m. - 11:30a.m.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by NAC Executive Committee Chairperson, David Rabius, The Forty and Eight.

Roll Call: Executive Committee 2008-2009

One Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2008): **Present/Absent (P/A)**

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| • The American Legion – <u>Peter Gayton</u> | P | |
| • The American Legion Auxiliary – <u>Marion Schwerman</u> | P | |
| • Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks – <u>Robert Hennings</u> | P | |
| • Disabled American Veterans – <u>Ed Hartman</u> | P | A |
| • Veterans of Foreign Wars – <u>William Bradshaw</u> | P | |
| • Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars – <u>Rosalie King</u> | P | |

First Year of Two-Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2009):

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| • National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution – <u>Barbara Latham</u> | P | |
| • Vietnam Veterans of America – <u>Judith McCombs</u> | P | A |
| • Forty and Eight – <u>Dave Rabius</u> | P | |
| • Military Order of the Cootie – <u>Terrance Lyons</u> | P | |
| • Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A. – <u>Ralph Wozniak</u> | P | |
| • American Red Cross – <u>Jerry DeWitt</u> | P | A |
| • Blue Star Mothers – <u>Helen Weaver</u> | P | |

Second Year of Two-Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2009):

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| • Knights of Columbus – <u>Charles H. Gallina</u> | P | |
| • Help Hospitalized Veterans – <u>Mike Lynch</u> | P | |
| • Paralyzed Veterans of America – <u>Maurice Jordan</u> | P | |
| • Military Order of the Purple Heart – <u>Del Turner</u> | P | |
| • AMVETS – <u>Billie Goodwin</u> | P | |
| • Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary – <u>Frances Costa</u> | P | |
| • The Salvation Army – <u>Barbara Jeffrey</u> | P | |

VA Staff Present:

- Everett Chasen, Chief Communications Officer, VHA; NAC Chairperson
- Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, VA Central Office (VACO)
- Christine Feeser, Program Analyst, VACO
- Marty Naugher, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO
- Jeffrey Lofton, Voluntary Service Intern, VACO
- Steve Moynihan, Chief, Voluntary Service, Minneapolis VA Medical Center
- Sandra Boza, Chief, Voluntary Service, Orlando VA Medical Center

Executive Committee attendance was duly recorded.

Goals and Objectives: Mr. Rabius asked the members to review the goals and objectives of the VAVS NAC Annual Meeting:

1. Provide the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) an opportunity to conduct its business in a manner that assures achievement of all responsibilities mandated by its charter.
2. Provide NAC orientation to local and national VAVS Representatives and Deputies.
3. Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS policies and procedures.
4. Foster full and open communications among the member organizations, their representatives, and the Voluntary Service Central Office and field staff.
5. Provide the NAC member organizations with the educational and training programs designed to share information geared towards improving volunteer programs with special emphasis on methods to recruit, retain, motivate, and recognize volunteers.
6. Furnish the NAC member organizations the opportunity to hear from VA leadership concerning key issues within the Department.
7. Arrange for NAC review of, and action on, recommendations.
8. Honor the national recipients of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award, **Megan Smith**, student volunteer at the Miami VA Healthcare System, Miami, Florida; and **Dani Marie Clark**, student volunteer at the VA Puget Sound Healthcare System, American Lake, Washington.
9. Honor the female and male VAVS NAC Volunteers of the Year: **Ms. Lois Vaughan**, Paralyzed Veterans of America, VA Medical Center, Richmond, VA; and **Mr. Joseph C. Kelley**, Veterans of Foreign Wars, VA Medical Center, Brockton, MA.
10. Recognize **Mr. Steven Hurd**, VA Voluntary Service Program Manager at the VA Medical Center, Togus, Maine, as recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.
11. Recognize the following award recipients for the American Spirit Awards; Ms. **Sadie Stewart**, Assistant VAVS Program Manager, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, for Student Recruitment Category; **Mr. Cary Curd**, VAVS Program Manager, Memphis VAMC, for Corporate Recruitment Category; **Mr. Richard Maxey**, VAVS Program Manager, Oklahoma City VAMC, for Military Recruitment Category; **Ms. Ronni Miller**, VAVS Program Manager, Durham VAMC, for Senior Recruitment Category.

Additions/Revisions to the October 2007 EC Meeting Minutes: Mr. Turner moved to accept the minutes; Ms. McCombs seconded. **Motion carried.**

62nd Annual Meeting Agenda Overview: Steve Moynihan provided a brief overview of the preparations and plans for the NAC meeting. He expressed his thanks and appreciation to the organizations for the donations to support coffee

breaks and the reception. He briefly spoke about the evening's program, which would be followed by a Welcome Home Celebration reception to be attended by some troops recently returned from Afghanistan and Iraq, whom we will be honoring at that time. Laura Balun encouraged EC involvement in the reception.

VAVS Abbreviated Program Update: Ms. Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, expressed thanks to all members for sponsoring the various events. The VAVS abbreviated program update including the following:

- Ms. Balun briefly discussed the Vanguard magazine and encouraged EC members to take a look at the many positive programs and initiatives VA volunteers across the country are involved in to serve veterans and their families.
- She discussed the challenge of volunteer recruitment and mentioned that the number of VA volunteers and hours nationwide continues to decline. The price of gas is having an effect on our volunteers and recruitment. She challenged members to look at ways within their organizations to provide recognition for volunteers coming into VA Medical Centers and elsewhere who are providing assistance to veterans.
- Ms. Balun discussed the many new staff members in VAVS, and welcomed them along with the new younger type of volunteers coming in to provide service to veterans and their families.
- A brochure on VA Guidelines for Gifts and Donations was developed to outline the procedures for making gifts and donations to VA. Special mention was given to the fact that checks are never to be made payable to cash. Last year, more than \$59 million was received by VA in gifts and donations nationwide. She requested everyone's help in getting the word out within their organizations that 100 percent of all donations to VA go directly for services and programs to benefit veterans. She emphasized that each organization needs to keep accurate records of their donations, so that the VA can make an accurate report. Ms. Balun also stated that the \$59 million was probably not an accurate figure, as some organizations haven't kept records of donations, so VA was not able to capture all the information.
- Another new initiative regarding gifts and donations has been implemented. VAVS has established a team comprised of 12 VAVS Chiefs, who be trained to serve as members of the General Post Fund (GPF) Assessment Team. The team members will go into VA facilities to provide guidance and assistance to VAVS staff to ensure GPFs are properly established, and all processes regarding gifts and donations are working properly to comply with VA policy. Ms. Leslie Buchman, Chief, Voluntary Service, San Francisco VA Medical Center, and Mr. Steve Hurd,

Chief, Voluntary Service, Togus VA Medical Center, have agreed to lead this initiative and will train the team members.

- Ms. Balun discussed the newly established pilot sites for the Volunteer Caregiver Support Network in support of the Home Respite program. A proposal was approved to initially establish 12 VA pilot sites, which would include recruitment of a full time Voluntary Service Specialist at each of the 12 sites. The Voluntary Service Specialist will recruit and train volunteers to go into the homes of home-based primary care veterans to provide relief for their caregivers. The Caregiver Resource Guide and Recruitment Brochure were distributed nationwide as tools to support this program.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Ms. Judy Twete reported that there are no formal recommendations this year. They have taken the recommendations from the EC meeting in October 2007, and reassigned them to the various appropriate subcommittees. There are some things that need to be considered, but nothing as far as formal resolutions.

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Dave Rabius reported that a lot of great applications were received, and that the recipients this year are two very deserving people.

Recruitment: Col. Charles H. Gallina reported on volunteer recruitment strategy and tactics. The number of volunteers and hours are continuing to go down, and that trend must be turned around. He also reported on the development of a sample organizational structure that each organization can implement into and adapt to their organizational structure. He discussed a set of volunteer recruitment tactics that each organization can work from and use. Each organization has to be innovative in adapting strategies for recruiting more volunteers, and several examples were provided.

The goal is still a 10 percent increase across the board from every organization at every VAMC of volunteer hours, and to recruit younger volunteers to help bring the average median age down into the mid-50-60 age range.

He also discussed one-on-one, face-to-face invitations to join organizations; targeted recruiting; family and youth and teen volunteering; OEF/OIF vets volunteering; and networking with businesses, community groups and leaders.

Ideas to retain volunteers were discussed and included: providing meaningful volunteer work with positive feedback; allowing for personal growth and flexibility in assignments; showing respect and appreciation for the volunteers; eliminating

barriers to the use of volunteers; establishing incentive programs for the volunteers; and recognizing volunteers.

Partnership and constant coordination between all NAC organizations and with VAVS at all levels is absolutely essential to enhance recruitment efforts. It is necessary to be knowledgeable about VAVS history, culture, value to the veteran, value to the VHA, and to the nation. We must identify the volunteer needs and develop, update, and maintain current volunteer position descriptions; develop a coherent, flexible recruiting plan at every level and follow it; and provide meaningful recognition and feedback to our volunteers.

Membership: Mr. Del Turner reported on a letter that went out to the Boy Scouts of America to join the NAC, and stated that they should be set up not just on an individual basis or a troop basis, but as an organization as a whole. He also reported on relationships with other organizations like Soldiers' Angels and Healing Waters.

VHA Report: Mr. Everett Chasen, Chief Communications Officer, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provided the VHA Report. He began by thanking Laura Balun for her efforts. He also recognized Mr. J.P. Brown III, National Commander of AMVETS.

Mr. Chasen reported that 5.5 million veterans were cared for last year, which is significantly more than ever before; approximately 300,000 of them were OEF/OIF veterans. Congress has offered new OEF/OIF veterans five years of eligibility for anything that they think might have happened to them in combat.

VA has developed and started to do screenings for traumatic brain injury of veterans. If they pass the first screen, a more comprehensive examination is done to see if, in fact, they have a traumatic brain injury, which used to be called a concussion. In most cases, the effects of this injury go away after about 18 months. There is still some controversy about this.

VA has hired 100 Patient Outreach Coordinators to reach out to veterans, and bring them into VA facilities or programs; most of these are veterans of the new war. We also hired 100 Transition Patient Advocates who will help with the transfer of veterans from the military medical facilities to VA. Former Senator Robert Dole and former Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, in their report last summer, recommended that VA provide one single Care Coordinator assigned to a veteran all the way through the transition process. Ten people were hired to start doing this on a trial basis.

Suicide prevention has become a big concern for the VA and for Congress. VHA has teamed up with SAMHSA, which is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. There is a center in Canandaigua, New York with 23 mental health professionals who have access to the veterans' electronic health

record, and know where they live and what's going on, and can get them help immediately. So far 300 lives have been saved since August. A pilot program is being discussed to do a test by advertising the number in metro trains and busses and metro stations in Washington, D.C., where there is obviously a high percentage of service members and veterans.

Half a billion dollars has been spent on new mental health resources, and up to \$3 billion a year is spent specifically on mental health and mental health salaries.

The platform that the electronic health records are created on is old and outdated. Work is being done with DOD to transition to the next stage for electronic health records, and to create a system on a 21st Century platform that will be web accessible and has all the privacy protections that a veteran would expect.

The latest census of homeless veterans indicates a decline of 21 percent over the last two years; any numbers you see about homeless veterans are to be taken with a significant grain of salt. The estimate is that there are about 145,000 veterans on any given night who don't have shelter; two years ago it was 195,000.

The VA Medical Center in Marion, Illinois had some very significant problems in surgeries between October 2006 and July 2007. They were trying to be accommodating to veterans in their area, and not have to send them two hours away to St. Louis, so they were doing complicated surgeries without the appropriate recovery rooms or ICU staff, and as a result, nine veterans died who should not have died. Marion's surgical unit is closed now, and they have been told they can begin to do some outpatient surgeries on low risk patients. There is a program called the National Surgery Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP), which gives general indicators about patient mortality. NSQIP data was what alerted us to the problems at Marion.

Every family that may have been harmed as a result of surgery at Marion has been spoken to by VA and their case discussed. By statute a veteran who is not otherwise service-connected, and who is harmed in a VA facility, can receive a service connection for that disability, and paperwork has been expedited for that.

Parke Board Update: Mr. J.P. Brown, III, President of the James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board, gave the update.

Due to some prudent investments over the last few years, the amount available for scholarships has increased. A Parke scholarship for \$20,000 and a \$10,000 scholarship were given away again this year. There were about two dozen applicants this year. Everyone was encouraged to submit their nominations early to make sure they make it in by the November 1st deadline each year.

There are two openings on the Parke Board, and those eligible to vote were encouraged to do so.

VAVS NAC Membership Report: Ms. Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, advised that everyone would be receiving the mid-year reports in the mail.

National Salute Report: Ms. Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, reported that Mr. Mike Vogel, National Salute Chairperson, has already visited veterans at four different VA facilities. Mr. Vogel is currently in Pittsburgh is hoping to visit the VA Medical Center in Pittsburgh where he is filming a movie.

As always Salute was during the week of February 14. The numbers were down just slightly this year. Mr. Frank Cimorelli, Chief, Voluntary Service, Prescott VA Medical Center is on the agenda to talk about the New Twist for Salute that he and his volunteers initiated at Prescott. The concept is that with outpatient care being provided, it is time that the National Salute program advances and adapts to the type of treatment that is being provided to veterans. This will be done by reaching out to veterans in the communities, and by developing innovative salute programs within the communities where veterans live and greater potential exists for volunteer recruitment.

VAVS Partners, Inc. Treasurer Report & Meeting: Mr. Dave Rabius advised that the VAVS Partners, Inc. meeting will not be recorded.

New Business:

Future 2009 Annual Meeting Plans: Mr. Steve Moynihan reported that there have been suggestions that the NAC meeting be consolidated to fewer days. With that in mind, we are planning to try a shorter meeting format next year to see how it works. The Opening Ceremony will be on Wednesday of that week; and the meeting will end Friday evening with the Closing Celebration Dinner. During the course of the meeting, the usual three business sessions will be consolidated into two main business sessions. The EC critique meeting would be on Saturday morning, so EC members may not depart until Saturday afternoon.

The 2009 NAC meeting dates are May 20-22, 2009. The Opening Ceremony will be Wednesday, May 20th, and the Closing Celebration will be held on Friday evening, May 22nd. The location is the Marriott Houston West Chase in Houston, Texas, with a room rate at \$99.00. A tentative room block has been established.

Dates for the fall 2008 EC meeting are not set yet, but will be selected after the contract is signed with the Marriott Houston West Chase.

Web Portal: Mr. Dave Rabius introduced Mr. Jeff Grandon, Field Manager, VHA Web Communications, VAMC, Albany, New York.

Mr. Grandon presented on web communications and the training being given internally to show the importance of the internet to our veterans. There is now a focus more on the quality over quantity to better serve the needs of veterans. Questions and comments were taken concerning the prototype program that has been developed and is being used in select VA facilities.

Also discussed was Web 2.0, the One VA portal, and the DOD and VA eBenefits portal. The VA eBenefits portal is a custom website that has information specific telling how veterans and their families can sign up for VA benefits and services.

The portal that is functioning today is MyHealthVet, the health application which ties into a database and stores information. It's been a great benefit to veterans who are signed up for it; they can go in and get prescription refills now through MyHealthVet, and they can look at their health records and find the charts from their doctors. Appointment scheduling and cancellation are upcoming features.

Two days ago the VA launched its first blog; the Director of the VA in Pittsburgh, Ms. Gerigk-Wolfe, has started a Director's blog, which is only available to employees on the internal intranet for the VA website. The blog gives employees the opportunity to voice their opinions or concerns, and it is being evaluated as to whether it should also be available outside VA. Also discussed was a program called Second Life.

Appointments:

Recommendations Subcommittee: Will be presented on Saturday.

Good of the Order: Laura Balun briefly discussed a Welcome Home booklet and video put out by Sesame Street and Walmart for children whose parent(s) are being deployed to Iraq. In June they will be doing one for VA, for veterans who are receiving care. She stated that VAVS would be happy to come to any of the national conventions to talk with your organizations further about this.

The EC meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

OPEN FORUM

Wednesday, April 9, 2008 - 3:00p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Opening Remarks: Laura Balun opened the meeting. The Open Forum gives everyone an opportunity to come forward and voice concerns, suggestions, etc.

Ms. Balun encouraged everyone to take note of new faces, introduce yourselves, welcome them, and stay connected with them and maintain relationships with them.

Mr. David Rabiun opened the floor for questions and comments, and discussion occurred regarding the following topics: why state veteran's home volunteers are not being included with VA volunteers and receiving credit for hours; Fisher Houses; fingerprinting and the seven categories of volunteers that need to be fingerprinted, which are listed in VHA Handbook 1620.1; patient privacy issues; and VA Canteen issues.

Mr. Rabiun adjourned the Open Forum at 4:00 p.m.

NAC OPENING CEREMONIES
Wednesday, April 9, 2008 - 6:00p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Call to Order: The 62nd Annual Meeting of the VA Voluntary Services (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) was called to order by Mr. David Rabiun, Chairman, National Executive Committee.

Presentation of Colors: The colors were presented by 143rd Sustainment Command - Expeditionary.

National Anthem: Mr. Charles Haugabrooks sang the National Anthem and "God Bless the USA."

Invocation: Mr. Doug Weadick, Chief, Chaplain Service, Orlando VA Medical Center, delivered the invocation.

Welcome: Mr. Rabiun introduced Mr. Timothy W. Liezert, Director, Orlando VA Medical Center, who welcomed everyone to Orlando.

Mr. Rabiun then recognized Laura Balun and the NAC planning committee, including Ms. Sandra Boza, Chief, Voluntary Service, Orlando VA Medical Center. He expressed the NAC's gratitude and appreciation to Ms. Boza, her staff and volunteers for their planning efforts for the 62nd Annual NAC Meeting.

Mr. Rabiun advised that Buddy Dyer, Mayor of Orlando, would not be able to attend the ceremony this evening due to unforeseen circumstances, but that he sends his best wishes for a successful conference.

Mr. Rabiun recognized, welcomed home, and expressed sincere gratitude to the servicemen and women from the 143rd Sustainment Command - Expeditionary Reservists; the 307th Training Support National Reservists; the National Guard,

Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 124th Infantry; and 478th CA Battalion, Special Operations, Airborne Reservists who are present at tonight's festivities.

Keynote Address: The keynote address was delivered by Ms. Kathleen Passanisi, PT, CSP, CPAE, who spoke on the subject of "Humor: A Powerful Tool for Coping with Stress and Change".

BUSINESS SESSION
Thursday, April 10, 2008 - 8:30a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Call to Order: The session was called to order by Dave Rabijs, Chairman of the National Executive Committee.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Mr. Norman Cass, Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars, District 18.

Mr. Rabijs recognized four NAC representatives who have passed away since the last meeting: Ms. Charlotte McClune, past National President, and National VAVS Deputy Representative of the Italian American War Veterans; Ms. Marie Dunlap, National VAVS Representative of United Voluntary Services; Mr. Harley Thomas, National Executive Committee Chairman and National VAVS Representative of the Paralyzed Veterans of America; and Mr. Mike Manning, National VAVS Representative, Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks. A moment of silence was observed.

Roll Call: The formal roll call of the National Representatives and Deputy National Representatives of the NAC member organizations ensures that VAVS is in compliance with the attendance policy, as contained in the NAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Mr. Rabijs called the roll for the 2008 VAVS NAC Annual Meeting.

The roll call of the NAC and the member organizations was duly taken (recorded on pages 4-5 of this report).

Opening Remarks and Meeting Objectives: Mr. Rabijs read the Goals and Objectives for the meeting.

Mr. Rabijs introduced Everett A. Chasen, Chief Communications Officer, VHA, to deliver the VHA update.

VHA Update: Mr. Chasen reported that more than 5.5 million American veterans were treated last year, which is more than ever before, and that VHA trains more than half of all of America's healthcare providers. Three new mobile disaster units have been acquired, which will get to disaster sites with pharmaceuticals

and examination rooms very quickly. They are staged in three different locations around the country so they can get to the scene of disasters faster.

Two years ago, approximately a quarter of a million American veterans were homeless on any given night. An aggressive effort has been made to get them off the streets and the homeless treatment programs have been revised. They are now taken through the whole spectrum of recovery, from detoxification to learning to live on their own again. The number of homeless veterans is now down to about 145,000.

Mr. Chasen discussed the VA Electronic Health Records and the process of transitioning the records from an older platform, to move them to create a system on a 21st Century platform that will be web accessible and has all the privacy protections a veteran would expect.

He mentioned that 5 percent of the patients are women; that number is expected to double in the next 10 years because 14 percent of the military are women. The VA is starting to deal with women's special health care concerns. There are 153 hospitals, 172 outpatient clinics, and 209 vet centers. By the end of this year there will be 232 vet centers as part of our outreach to OEF/OIF and other combat veterans.

According to the Department of Defense (DOD), 800,000 OEF/OIF veterans have separated since the beginning of the war, and VA has seen about 300,000 of them, almost all of whom are outpatients. VA will be calling all of the 500,000 veterans that have not been seen. Phone calls will begin in about a month to remind them of their eligibility for benefits, thank them for their service, and to let them know that they have five years from their date of discharge to come in to VA.

There are three major injuries of the war: Polytrauma (a name that VA coined); traumatic brain injury and mild traumatic brain injury, which used to be called concussion; and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, known as PTSD. The issue of suicide was discussed, as well as the VA's cooperation with SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association.

VA has seen a total of 469 seriously injured OEF/OIF veteran patients transferred directly from a DOD military treatment facility to VA for rehabilitation. The total number of veterans seen in VA Polytrauma Centers is over 1,000. Forty percent of the 300,000 veterans seen received a preliminary diagnosis of some kind of mental health condition, and 20 percent of the 300,000 have preliminary diagnoses of PTSD.

VAVS Update: Ms. Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, presented the VAVS report and discussed the following:

- There were \$233 million worth of volunteer hours, and \$58.5 million in cash and item donations in FY-2007. The volunteers were recognized for their passion, devotion and dedication for what they do.
- There are still challenges regarding the data breach in 2006 and for VAVS to develop a tracking mechanism in the Voluntary Service Timekeeping System (VSS).
- VAVS continues to provide support to OEF/OIF veterans through Welcome Home Celebrations.
- The Volunteer Caregiver Program was discussed and VAVS is distributing the Caregiver guide and recruitment brochure. These new resource tools will assist VAVS in recruiting and training volunteers to support veterans who are home-bound and their caregivers. The guide and brochure was put together by input from NAC members, VAVS staff, and staff from other disciplines such as Patient Care Services. Twelve VA pilot sites have been established to implement the program and a full time Voluntary Service Specialist position will be established at each of these 12 sites to recruit and train volunteers to support the caregiver program.
- The 12 VA pilot sites identified for the caregiver program are VA facilities in Richmond, Minneapolis, Baltimore, Tucson, Los Angeles, Syracuse, San Francisco, Augusta, Lexington, St. Louis, Temple, and Seattle.
- The FY-2007 National VAVS priorities, goals, and accomplishments were reviewed and discussed. Ms. Balun noted that regarding our support for Echo Taps Worldwide, there were 3,000 volunteers that supported Echo Taps Worldwide program on May 19, 2007 across the world.
- National VAVS priorities and goals for FY-2008 were presented and include: development of a tracking system for volunteer training requirements; support for Welcome Home Celebrations; development of resource materials for a patient feeding volunteer program; and improvement of volunteer recruitment and retention.
- Volunteer recruitment and retention efforts continue to be a challenge, and new focus is being given to increasing the number of VAVS volunteers. More volunteers are needed to serve those individuals that are seeking care in the VA hospitals. After the VA data breach in 2006, there was a huge drop, from fiscal year 2005 to fiscal year 2006, in the number of volunteers and hours.
- Supporting Welcome Home Celebrations. Every VA is mandated to have a Welcome Home Celebration, and our volunteers' involvement and support is necessary for the success of these programs.

- Concern for the changing dynamics, changing roles, changing veterans. The ages are different and incorporate not only World War II veterans, but OEF/OIF veterans.
- New volunteer assignments are effectively working in support of veterans involved in new recreational activities such as kayaking, bicycling, and geocaching. More will be presented on these activities during the Friday business session.
- Mike Vogel is serving as the 2008 National Salute Chairperson. He has already visited VA facilities in Los Angeles, Baltimore, San Diego, and Washington, D.C., and he also has plans to visit the VA facility in Pittsburgh
- A new initiative to better educate and inform VAVS staff and volunteers about donations and General Post Funds (GPF) in beginning in 2008. A team comprised of VAVS Chiefs will be trained to go into VA facilities and provide guidance and assistance to VAVS staff in appropriate GPF procedures, and ensure they know how to accept and track donations, and have facility GPFs set up according to VA policy. A new brochure on Gifts and Donations has been developed and distributed nationwide in support of this initiative.
- Ms. Leslie Buchman, Chief, Voluntary Service, San Francisco VA medical Center, discussed the donations acceptance process, and provided some important tips for donors. She emphasized that checks are never to be made payable to cash, or to an individual, or to a GPF. Donations need to be made payable to the VA medical center or outpatient clinic. In-kind donations should be donated directly through to the VAVS department at your local facility.

New Twist on National Salute: Mr. Frank Cimorelli, Chief, Voluntary Service, Prescott VA Medical Center, spoke about his facility's new twist on the National Salute. The three goals of the National Salute are to pay tribute and express appreciation to America's veterans, to promote awareness in the community of the local VA medical facility and all the good that it does, and to encourage citizens to visit hospitalized veterans and to become involved as VA volunteers. Mr. Cimorelli discussed the importance of moving the Salute program out into the communities to reach more veterans since most of our veterans are seen on an outpatient basis. This approach would also involve the people in the community more actively, and offer more potential to recruit additional volunteers. He discussed the successful concert that he and his facility coordinated in the local community

It's been proposed that a similar concert event will take place next year in Tampa, Florida. The Florida State Fair Authority, doing something that's never been done in the history of the Florida State Fair, is going to declare that February 12, 2009 will be National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Day at the fair, offering something unprecedented, which is free parking and admission to all veterans. The Florida State Fair Authority also said they want to partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs for years to come in supporting veterans and their families.

Vet Centers: Mr. John Walker, Acting Regional Director of Bay Pines Vet Center, and Mr. William Sautner, Team Leader, Orlando Vet Center, delivered a report on the vet centers.

Mr. Walker discussed the Vet Center Outreach Center, which is a branch of the Department of Veterans Affairs that initially specialized in readjustment counseling for veterans of combat hostilities in Vietnam and Vietnam Era veterans.

In the southeast region there were 46,956 vet visits to the vet centers; 3,464 telephone visits conducted; 1,045.6 veteran outreach hours conducted; and 1,894 new veterans seen. The largest number of veterans is from the Global War on Terrorism, at 774, and Vietnam veterans at 762.

Mr. Sautner spoke and gave a brief history about the local vet center in Orlando, and reported on the many services and programs they provide to the veterans. OEF/OIF veterans represent the largest number of veterans coming to the center, surpassing the Vietnam veterans, whom originally were their main focus.

Electronic Age: Mr. Jeff Grandon, Associate Manager, VHA Web Communications, reported on the internet and various websites being used in VA, discussed the new generation of end users, and how future navigation will be improved and simplified. The goal is to try to bring the VA and its services closer to the people who use them and save their time, energy and money, and prevent pitfalls. Over the last 6 months, websites have been launched in every VA Medical Center in the country, and that information is now available to veterans nationwide.

Several websites were discussed: MyHealthVet, One VA Portal, and the eBenefits Portal, which will help the transition between DOD Armed Services and VA.

Closing Remarks: Mr. Rabius reminded everyone of the workshops that begin later this afternoon, and about a showing of the film documentary called "The War" on Thursday evening.

The business session was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

BUSINESS SESSION
Friday, April 11, 2008 - 8:30a.m. - 10:15a.m.

Call to Order: The session was called to order by National Executive Committee Chairman, Mr. David Rabiuss.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Mr. Fred Holmes, American Red Cross, VAVS Representative at Orlando VA Medical Center.

VA Voluntary Service Award for Excellence: Ms. Balun presented this award to this year's distinguished recipient: Mr. Steven K. Hurd, VA Medical Center, Togus, Maine.

American Spirit Award Presentation: Ms. Balun presented this award to: Ms. Sadie Stewart, Assistant Chief VAVS, Greater Los Angeles VA HCS, for Student Recruitment; Mr. Cary Curd, VAVS Program Manager, Memphis VAMC, for Corporate Recruitment; Ms. Ronni Miller, VAVS Program Manager, Durham VAMC, for Senior Recruitment; and Mr. Richard Maxey, VAVS Program Manager, Oklahoma City VAMC, for Military Recruitment.

Mr. Rabiuss and Ms. Balun presented the following NAC awards:

Female Volunteer of the Year: Ms. Lois Vaughan, VA Medical Center, Richmond, Virginia.

Male Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Joseph C. Kelley, VA Boston Healthcare System, Brockton, MA.

Caregiving: Ms. Heather Tompkins, Management Analyst, VHA Office of Geriatrics & Extended Care presented on Caregiving with a focus on family caregivers. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, currently about 1 in 5 adults provide caregiving services for another adult in the home. Caregiver burnout is a problem and support of caregivers is essential. The VA assists caregivers by offering caregiver respite, an important intervention to avoid burnout.

The Support in Home initiative uses volunteers to provide supportive service to caregivers and includes the medical foster home program. The medical foster home program is being developed in 30 new sites.

Therapeutic Benefits of Recreation Activities: Ms. Carla Carmichael, VHA Deputy Director Recreation Therapy, spoke of the different proponents of the recreation therapy services. The mission of the program is to include state-of-the-art clinical care, education, technology, and research within the scope of the recreation and creative arts therapy service. She talked about recent initiatives within the program and introduced the following presenters:

Kayaking: Mr. Ralph Marche, Chief, Voluntary Service, VA Boston HCS, and Mr. Joe Mornini talked about Team River Runner, a whitewater paddling and kayaking program that is offered to active duty and veteran service members. The importance of adaptive sports was discussed.

Bicycling: Mr. Gil Ramirez, Readjustment Counselor, Palo Alto VA Medical Center, and Mr. John Wortin discussed the VA's involvement in two riding programs: indoor spinning and cycling and the Road2Recovery fundraiser for the VA's cycling rehabilitation program.

Geocaching: Ms. Shannan Anderson, Recreation Therapist, Minneapolis VA Medical Center presented on Geocaching, which is popular among VA Polytrauma patients. It is a high-tech version of treasure hunting, which requires the use of a computer and GPS.

The Business Session was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

BUSINESS SESSION
Saturday, April 12, 2008 - 8:30a.m. - 11:30a.m.

Call to Order: The session was called to order by National Executive Committee Chairman, Mr. David Rabiuis.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Mr. Dan Propp, Commander, Italian American War Veterans Post #4.

The Electronic Age: Mr. Beryl Love, AMVETS National VAVS Representative talked about the electronic age in terms of program reporting, and using online resources to track data and successes.

Digital Television Transition: Ms. Kimberly Silva, Compliance Specialist, Federal Communications Commission, Tampa Office, talked about the upcoming 2009 conversion from analog television to digital, and how people should prepare for the transition. This is something that will also affect our veterans and the television systems in VA facilities.

VCS - "Volunteers in VCS": Ms. Marilyn Iverson, Director Veterans Canteen Service, talked about how NAC member organizations, VA Voluntary Services, and VA Canteen Service can all partner and collaborate together to benefit veterans. Canteen Service Chiefs will be going through a catering class, so that catering services can be offered more often and improved upon. She

encouraged everyone to call the toll-free number any time they need VA Canteen services.

NCA – Update on Echo Taps Worldwide: Mr. Richard Wannemacher, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary, National Cemetery Administration (NCA) expressed his appreciation for the inclusion of NCA in the National VAVS Annual Report. New national cemeteries are being built at an unprecedented rate. Mr. Wannemacher talked about the Echo Taps Worldwide program with more than 3,000 volunteers recruited to support the program worldwide.

Subcommittee Reports:

Membership: Mr. Del Turner, Chairman, stressed the importance of reaching out to new organizations for new NAC members, as many of our traditional organizations have an aging membership population. He thanked Mr. Ralph Wozniak for joining the membership committee.

Standard Operating Procedures Ad Hoc Committee: Mr. David Rabiuss reported that this committee is status quo. He thanked Judith McCombs, Chair, for serving.

Recruitment: Colonel Charles Gallina, Chair, stated that the number of VA volunteers and hours continue to go down. Col. Gallina presented various recruitment strategies, tactics, and goals that we should focus on to improve our recruitment efforts. Mr. Jacob Gadd discussed OEF/OIF outreach opportunities to recruit from this veteran population as well.

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. David Rabiuss asked people to turn in their nominations earlier to ensure that nominations for these awards are received by the deadline.

Recommendations: Ms. Judy Twete reported that no recommendations were turned in before the NAC meeting. She asked that Ms. Balun send out a reminder to NAC members about submitting recommendations.

Presentation on 2009 NAC Meeting: Ms. Nikki Verbeck, Voluntary Service Specialist, Houston VA Medical Center showed a video: “A Day in Houston”, and invited everyone to come to Houston for next year’s NAC meeting. The meeting will be held May 20-22, 2009, at the Marriott Houston West Chase.

Closing Remarks: Mr. Rabiuss remembered Mr. Mike Manning, Mr. Harley Thomas, and other VAVS members who have passed on by reading Linda Ellis’ poem, “The Dash.” He thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

A video made up of photos from this year’s meeting was shown.

Benediction: Ms. Barbara Wilson, National VAVS Deputy Representative, The Salvation Army, closed the meeting with the benediction.

The 62nd Annual VAVS NAC Meeting was adjourned at 10:58 a.m.

**EC Critique of NAC Meeting
Saturday, April 12, 2008, 10:45a.m. - 11:45a.m.**

Critique of 2008 VAVS NAC Annual Meeting:

Executive Committee members provided the following comments:

- Overall comments were generally positive.
- Ms. Balun shared her sincere thanks and appreciation to the VACO staff, Orlando VAVS staff, and their volunteers for their hard work on the NAC meeting. She also thanked the Executive Committee for their support of the meeting, as well as to Mr. Rabius for his outstanding job as emcee for the meeting and as EC Chairman.
- Mr. Steve Hurd, VAVS Chief at Togus VAMC, provided a brief overview of the meeting evaluations, which were very positive in general of the overall NAC meeting.
- Speakers were well received; workshops were rated as good to excellent in general; and meeting was informative and meeting objectives were met.
- Suggestions were made to tell speakers and workshop presenters to avoid using jargon and acronyms that not everyone may understand.
- Many positive comments about the excellent presentations by Col. Gallina on recruitment and from Mr. Frank Cimorelli on the Salute program.
- Several comments were made in regards to not understanding what the FCC presentation had to do with serving veterans; however, Ms. Balun reminded the group that the NAC is not only for enhancing our initiatives such as volunteer recruitment, etc., but to inform participants as well. The FCC information presented will affect volunteers and veterans, as well as VA facility television broadcast systems.
- A suggestion was made to perhaps provide an introduction for a presentation such as the FCC, so that attendees will better understand the connection to volunteers and veterans.
- Several comments were made regarding the absence of organization placards for the Thursday morning business session, which created some confusion; however it was noted that this issue was resolved for the remainder of the meeting.
- Several comments were made regarding the handouts and some attendees did not have all of the handouts they needed for various

presentations; however it was noted that there are plans to rethink the way handouts are distributed at future meetings.

- It was suggested that more time be allotted for the subcommittee reports, as the schedule seemed fairly tight this year.
- It was discussed that the presentation on Vet Centers was good information, but could have been presented in a more interesting and lively format.
- General comments were received that the hotel provided great customer service and tried to resolve issues when they arose.
- The Parke Board did a good job.
- Registration went well.
- More time for questions and answers should be allowed after speakers present; and power point presentations should be available by speakers for all attendees.
- Many comments were made that the meeting was very informative, well planned, and the VAVS staff and Mr. Rabius did a great job.
- A question was asked if dates for the 2008 Fall EC meeting were set, and those dates will be determined after the contract is signed with the hotel. A request was made to avoid having the EC during the same time as the Creative Arts Festival, and the request was noted.
- Suggestion was made to include a tour of the Fisher House at Houston during next year's NAC meeting.

Motion was made and seconded to adjourn. **Motion carried.**

The EC Critique Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Educational Workshops

VAVS Representative and Deputy Representative Training: Past, Present, and Future

Faculty: Joe Dooley, Chief, Voluntary Service, Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial VA Medical Center, Bedford, MA.

Mr. Dooley presented this training session covered the basics of VAVS: volunteer types; VAVS structure and mission; NAC purpose and membership categories; and VAVS representatives' and deputy representatives' duties and responsibilities. FY-2008 priorities were reviewed and discussed and volunteer recruitment was emphasized. The latest trends, statistics, and recommendations in VAVS volunteering were presented and discussed.

The Professional

Faculty: Marianne Davis, Chief Voluntary Service, Greater Los Angeles VA Healthcare System

Ms. Davis talked about getting new people involved in leadership roles on VAVS Executive committees; partnering current volunteers with new volunteers; active volunteers populating key spots on committees; youth programs and offering scholarships for youth volunteers; and training for VAVS executive committee members. She encouraged volunteers to get involved in network councils, advisory committees, and focus groups.

Veterans Affairs Wants You!

Faculty: Sharon H. Croteau, MHS, CAVS, Chief, Voluntary Service, VA CT Healthcare System

Ms. Croteau discussed volunteer recruitment; the different kinds of volunteers are needed; potential new volunteer positions; importance of using different types of recruitment strategies to attract different types of volunteers needed for a variety of volunteer assignments. She encouraged facilities to develop recruitment plans and suggested some possible recruitment events.

Selling Ice to Eskimos

Faculty: Mark Frazee, Chief Voluntary Service, Dayton VA Medical Center

Mr. Frazee offered tips for persuading others to generate the positive results you want. This workshop covered the power of persuasion and the skills necessary for doing it well; learning ways to “sell” your ideas to others; learning methods to identify your leadership style, the various leadership styles of others, and different ways of thinking.

Customer Service

Faculty: Members of the 2006 Class of VAVS Technical Career Field (TCF) Interns: Camilla Thompson; Cassandra Apodaca; Donna Fischer; and Ulani Levy. Danielle Hester is also a VAVS TCF Intern, however she could not be at the NAC Meeting this year.

This workshop covered the many ways volunteers can best serve VA patients through a variety of services. The presenters discussed the veteran’s point of view and various aspects of good customer service. An overview of VA customer service programs was provided, and participants learned ways in which staff, volunteers, and VAVS Committee members can play a vital role in helping to meet the changing needs of veterans and their families, and how we can work together to exceed their expectations.



Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

