

Department of Veterans Affairs
Voluntary Service

*61st Annual
National Advisory Committee Meeting
Report*



May 2 - 5, 2007
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

61st ANNUAL MEETING REPORT
VAVS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NAC)

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface.....	3
Member Organizations.....	4
Executive Committee Meeting.....	6
Open Forum.....	14
NAC Opening Ceremonies.....	14
Business Session - Thursday, May 3, 2007.....	15
Business Session - Friday, May 4, 2007.....	19
Business Session – Saturday, May 5, 2007.....	21
Executive Committee Meeting	26
Executive Committee Critique Meeting.....	27
Educational Workshops.....	29
Rekindling the American Spirit.....	29
Volunteer Assignments in the 21 st Century.....	29
Animal Assisted Therapy.....	29
Advanced Clinic Access.....	30
Thinking Outside the Box.....	30

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.		A
Blinded Veterans Association		A
Disabled American Veterans	P	
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.		A
Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.		A
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		A
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		A
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		A
The Salvation Army	P	
United Voluntary Services	P	
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.	P	
Ladies Auxiliary to the Fleet Reserve Association		A
Ladies Auxiliary, Italian American War Veterans of the U.S.	P	
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		A
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	P	
U.S. Submarine Veterans of World War II		A
Women Marines Association		A
Women's Army Corps Veterans Association	P	

Donor Member Organizations

Bowlers Victory League	P
Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project	P

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, May 2, 2007, 8:00a.m. - 11:30a.m.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by NAC Executive Committee Chairperson, Harley Thomas, Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Roll Call: Executive Committee 2007-2008

One Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2007):	Present/Absent (P/A)
• The American Legion – <u>Peter Gayton</u>	P
• The American Legion Auxiliary – <u>Judy Twete</u>	P
• Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks -- <u>Michael Manning</u>	A
• Disabled American Veterans – <u>Ed Hartman</u>	P
• Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary – <u>Donna Adams</u>	P
• The Salvation Army – <u>Lt. Colonel Sue Swanson</u>	P
• Veterans of Foreign Wars – <u>Mark Potter</u>	P
• Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars – <u>Rosetta Quartarone</u>	P

First Year of Two-Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2008):

• National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution – <u>Barbara Latham</u>	P
• Vietnam Veterans of America – <u>Judith McCombs</u>	P
• Forty and Eight – <u>Dave Rabius</u>	P
• Military Order of the Cootie -- <u>John J. Clark, III</u>	P
• Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A. – <u>Ralph Wozniak</u>	P
• American Red Cross – <u>Jerry DeWitt</u>	P

Second Year of Two-Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2007):

• Knights of Columbus – <u>Charles H. Gallina</u>	P
• Help Hospitalized Veterans – <u>Mike Lynch</u>	P
• Paralyzed Veterans of America – <u>Harley Thomas</u>	P
• Military Order of the Purple Heart – <u>Del Turner</u>	P
• AMVETS – <u>Billie Goodwin</u>	P

VA Staff Present:

- Everett Chasen, Chief Communications Officer, VHA; NAC Chairperson
- Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, VA Central Office (VACO)
- Diane Heffington-Mitchell, Lead Staff Assistant, VACO
- Marty Naugher, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO
- Joseph Brown, Voluntary Service Assistant, VACO
- Steve Moynihan, Chief, Voluntary Service, Minneapolis VA Medical Center
- David Tomayko, VAVS Program Manager, VA Pittsburgh Health Care System

Executive Committee attendance was duly recorded.

Goals and Objectives: Mr. Thomas 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 Deputy Representatives.
3. Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS policies and procedures.
4. Foster full and open communications amongst NAC member organizations, their representatives, and the Voluntary Service Central Office and field staff.
5. Provide the NAC member organizations with educational 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 and action on proposed recommendations.
8. Honor the national recipients of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award, Andrew D. Wisneski, student volunteer at the VA Medical Center, San Francisco, California; and Amanda Pendleton, student volunteer at the North Florida-South Georgia VA Health Care System, VA Outpatient Clinic, Daytona, Florida.
9. Honor the male and female VAVS NAC Volunteers of the Year: Mr. Thomas Elliott, Fleet Reserve Association, VA Medical Center, Togus, Maine; and Ms. Rita Golden, Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A., VA Medical Center, West Haven, Connecticut.
10. Recognize Ms. Beverly Leneski, VAVS Program Manager at the VA Medical Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan, as the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.
11. Recognize the following American Spirit Award recipients: Ms. Ronni Miller, VAVS Program Manager, Durham VAMC, for Student

Recruitment; Ms. Nancy Babcock, VAVS Program Manager, Battle Creek VAMC, for Corporate Recruitment; Ms. Barbara Pembamoto, VAVS volunteer, West Palm Beach VAMC, for Senior Recruitment.

Additions/Revisions to the October 2006 EC Meeting Minutes: Mr. Turner moved to accept the minutes; Ms. McCombs seconded. **Motion carried.**

61st Annual Meeting Agenda Overview: Mr. Moynihan reviewed the agenda, encouraging members to attend the open forum that afternoon. He expressed his thanks to the organizations for the donations to support coffee breaks and receptions; and, asked for volunteers to lead discussions during the Brown Bag luncheon. The following EC members volunteered to assist: Donna Adams – Volunteer Requirements; Jacob Gadd – Changing the Face of VAVS; Jerry Dewitt – Volunteer Utilization During Disasters; Billie Goodwin - Echo Taps Worldwide; Sue Swanson – Raising Funds to Support VA Activities; Del Turner – HealthierUS Veterans; and Judy Twete – VAVS Timekeeping Assignments.

VHA Update: Mr. Everett Chasen, Chief Communications Officer, VHA, announced that Dr. Michael Kussman, Acting Under Secretary for Health, will have his Senate confirmation hearing on May 16th. Mr. Chasen referenced the publicized problems at Walter Reed Army Hospital, reminding everyone that this is a Department of Defense (DoD) hospital, not a VA hospital. VA Secretary Jim Nicholson invited each member of Congress to visit a VA hospital and see how well they are operating, and to date, 177 members of Congress have visited various VA facilities.

Mr. Chasen reported on VA's newly developed screening program for traumatic brain injury (TBI), with special emphasis on the under-reported mild to moderate concussive conditions, as they can easily go undetected. Additional resources have been provided for mental health programs, including suicide prevention.

Operations and Management is developing a standard whereby ninety-five percent of veterans seeking care will be seen within 30 days. Wait times may be an issue at some locations, due to the large number of incoming veterans. Families of veterans are being offered the chance to get an outside consultation once a treatment plan has been created. It is imperative to keep families updated on the care of patients in VA.

Rebuilding the New Orleans VA Medical Center has stalled because VA's partner, Louisiana State University, has not raised enough money yet for the shared project. If enough money is not raised, the facility may be moved to another location, such as Baton Rouge.

Information Security is a big issue since a laptop with the personal records of 26 million veterans was stolen last May. Ms. Balun and Mr. Chasen are working on

making security measures easier for volunteers, and simplified procedures have been developed.

Mr. Chasen reminded everyone about John Elway's participation in the HealthierUS Veterans program, then accepted questions and comments from members on: the Gulfport VA; the Internet Café and Fisher House at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa, Florida; the dedication of the young veterans coming from OIF/OEF; and the slowness of the DOD medical holds' system. Mr. Chasen stated that Secretary Nicholson is aware of the extended lag time in claims' processing, and that major revisions to the system will be forthcoming.

VAVS Abbreviated Program Update: Ms. Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, announced that Jerry Reed, 2007 Chairman for the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, would be performing on-site today at 11:30 a.m. and asked that this meeting be recessed by that time so that members could join Mr. Reed, to take part in a new video he is producing, proceeds from which will be donated to VA. She also reported the following:

- As a result of the laptop stolen last May, every volunteer was required to sign a statement of commitment regardless of their assignment. Ninety-four percent of volunteers signed the statement, but others chose to leave the VAVS program.
- The Secretary and Mrs. Nicholson volunteered at the VA Medical Center in Washington, DC. During the briefing and orientation, he learned first-hand about the many requirements and regulations necessary to become a volunteer. He noted that he had been unaware of the complicated, complex process for volunteers to become a part of the VAVS program, and as a result of this experience, the Secretary established a task force to streamline the volunteer acceptance process.
- Ms. Balun introduced Mr. Jacob Gadd, AL, and Mr. Mark Potter, VFW, as new members of the Executive Committee, reflecting the changes that VAVS is experiencing.
- Healthcare delivery has changed significantly during the past decade and veterans' needs are changing as well. An example of that change is that, a few years ago, the goal was to have a telephone at every patient's bedside (PT Phone Home). Now, Internet access at every bedside is under consideration.
- Enhancements to the Volunteer Timekeeping System (VSS) have been deferred, primarily because of the Information Technology (IT) reorganization, creating a lack of funding to support VSS.

- It is against the law to accept volunteers that are on the Health and Human Services (HHS) List of Excluded Individuals and Entities (LEIE).
- VAVS has removed all volunteer Social Security numbers from the VSS database for security reasons, as part of the effort to protect personal identification information in VA. Volunteers are now assigned an identifier other than their Social Security number.
- Announced that Steve Hurd, VAVS Program Manager, Togus VAMC, is the President-elect of the American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services (ASDVS), and is the first VA employee, and first male so elected.

Host's Welcome: Dave Tomayko, VAVS Program Manager, VA Pittsburgh Health Care System, expressed his appreciation for the hard work and commitment of the VA Pittsburgh staff and volunteers who helped with the meeting preparations. He encouraged everyone to have a good time while visiting Pittsburgh.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Ms. McCombs reported that, as per IL 10-2007-005, distributed to all NAC member organizations, the VA concurred with all of the recommendations approved by the NAC in 2006. With no recommendations submitted by NAC members for consideration at this meeting, the subcommittee, in accordance with its SOP, conducted numerous research initiatives to develop the following recommendations for action, first by the Executive Committee, then by the NAC, in fulfillment of the NAC's Federal charter:

1) VA currently administers a number of services that are geared towards providing support to severely disabled or aging veterans, and the families of those veterans, who can no longer care for themselves but who do not want to be cared for in an institutional setting. These programs include, but are not limited to: adult-day care, respite care, case management and coordination, transportation services, home care services, hospice, and general caregiver support. VA accepts volunteer services as supplementary to essential personnel in providing hospital and outpatient care, other health-care services, and any health-care support or administrative services. As VA undertakes initiatives to assist veterans in maintaining independent living, as well as living and care options for those veterans facing life-limiting conditions, non-traditional services for those veteran patients may be warranted (e.g. homemaker/domestic services, shopping, etc.) Therefore, it is recommended that VA seek whatever legislative/regulatory remedy necessary to permit VAVS volunteers to serve in assignments other than as traditional health care resources.

Mr. Turner moved that the EC suggest approval; Mr. Rabiis seconded. **Motion carried.**

2) In managing the Voluntary Service System (VSS) timekeeping package for volunteer records, Voluntary Service staff are responsible for recording the data for attendance at VAVS quarterly meetings (135A), Occasional Hours (OC), and Regularly Scheduled (RS) hours for those volunteers without access to computer sign-in. These entries are to be completed by the 6th of the month immediately after the month in which those hours were accrued. Facility VAVS staff have 3 months or 90 days to make corrections; after 90 days, they must contact the VSS National Help Desk for assistance. The 90-day window of opportunity for corrections is diminished by its proximity to the close of the fiscal year, after which no entries or corrections are permitted (e.g. if an August quarterly meeting is not entered into the system on 09/06, it must be reported by 10/06, otherwise it is lost to the reporting, depriving organizations of the 135A credit). This exclusion is detrimental to NAC member organizations, denying them an accurate accounting of their reps' and deps' participation, and could have a negative impact on NAC membership. National Representatives are not aware of discrepancies until they reconcile the Cumulative Attendance Listing (CAL) attached to the quarterly minutes, with VHA 37, Part I, and due to the lag time in receipt of either, or both, it is often well past the 90 day period allotted for local correction, especially if it occurs in the last quarter of the fiscal year. Currently, VHA 37 is distributed semi-annually, although VHA Handbook 1620.1@11.c (pg. 31) states that "National Reports of Service" "...will be provided quarterly..." to VAVS National Representatives. Implementing quarterly distribution of VHA 37 would be helpful, but there is still the lag time in receipt of corresponding minutes, necessary for verification of attendance; and it would not address the issue of the inability to make necessary corrections after the close of the fiscal year. It is disheartening to have minutes attesting to representation, yet not have that reflected on VHA 37, and not be able to correct that deficiency. Therefore, it is recommended that VA modify the Voluntary Service System (VSS) timekeeping package to allow corrections after the close of the fiscal year to provide local VAVS staff sufficient time to report critical data; and to accommodate those organizations able to provide verification of quarterly meeting attendance, thereby ensuring a more accurate assessment of rep and dep participation, and to avoid potential erosion of membership criteria.

Mr. Wozniak moved that the EC suggest approval; Ms. Latham seconded.

Motion carried.

3) In providing minimum guidelines for minutes, VHA Handbook 1620.1@6.b(8)(a)8 (pg. 9) states, for inclusion: "A treasury report or a VAVS committee financial report, if it is presented during the VAVS committee meetings." When referencing policies and procedures governing General Post Funds (GPF), VHA Handbook 1620.1@10.b(1), lines 6-8 (pg. 29) states: "A Treasury Report and VAVS Committee Financial Report of those VHA GPF accounts controlled by VAVS Committee and/or Executive Committee is to be provided at the quarterly VAVS committee meetings." The seemingly

contradictory language creates confusion as to implementation and/or adherence to policy. Therefore, it is recommended that for conformity, consistency, and continuity, VA clarify the applicable language to ensure compliance with VA's stated policies and procedures.

Mr. Dewitt moved that the EC suggest approval; Mr. Rabius seconded. **Motion carried.**

4) VHA Handbook 1620.1@6.b(6) (pg. 8), Termination of Membership, states: "Organizations will be removed from the VAVS Committee when none of the certified members is in attendance at three consecutive meetings. Membership can be renewed with a letter of certification to the facility Director indicating the attendance requirement will be met. Representatives-at-large and the nonaffiliated Representative will be removed from the membership listing when they miss three consecutive meetings." By not including reference to those individuals representing the stated organizations, it has allowed sufficient ambiguity in applicable attendance requirements to warrant VA to include language specific to individuals in VHA Directive 2001-043, which has since expired. To ensure clarity, consistency, and continuity, it is recommended that VA adopt the following statement for inclusion in VHA Handbook 1620.1, after the first sentence in the cited reference: "Individual representatives will likewise be removed from the listing after being absent for three consecutive meetings." (VHA Directive 2001-043@4.h(1), lines 2-3, pg. 2.), and to include, if necessary "deputy representative".

Lt. Col. Swanson moved that the EC suggest approval; Mr. Goodwin seconded. **Motion carried.**

Deferred from 2006:

5) **(Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.):** VHA Handbook 1620.1@7(4)(b) (pg. 11) states: "Members on the facility VAVS Committee must be certified in writing by the National Certifying Official, or other designated person, as selected by the highest elected or appointed official of each member organization." It is recommended that after the words "...certified in writing..." the following language be added: "...or e-mail followed by a letter if needed..."

A similar submission in the 2003 recommendations' cycle was disapproved stating: "Current policy ...does not prohibit the use of e-mail as a form of communication from the certifying official to local facilities appointing local VAVS Representatives. The communication is to be addressed to the Facility Director, ATTN: Voluntary Service Program Manager. It should be noted that standard business letter is preferred." (Executive Committee Minutes, 10/14-15/02, page 9; NAC Annual Meeting Minutes, 04/30-05/03/03, page 16.) Although VHA Handbook 1620.1 does not preclude the use of e-mail certifications, and the proposed recommendation contains its own remedy, for consistency, clarity, and conformity, the Recommendations Subcommittee

suggests approval of the electronic certification option.” (It should be noted that in the interim, VA has approved undertaking a pilot program “...to assess the efficacy of distributing VAVS quarterly meeting minutes electronically.”)

Mr. Turner moved that the EC suggest approval; Col. Gallina seconded. **Motion carried.**

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Thomas reported that many excellent nominations were submitted for both categories, citing this year’s recipients: Mr. Thomas Elliott and Ms. Rita Golden.

Recruitment: Col. Gallina presented a recruitment strategy developed by the subcommittee, entitled “An Invitation to Service”, citing one example: conduct monthly targeted volunteer campaigns. The goal is to appeal to younger generations to become involved. It is up to each group to adapt the strategy to their individual organization’s needs and available resources.

Membership: Mr. Brown said that letters were dispatched to five organizations that may be eligible for a VAVS mentorship-membership program (e.g. Boy Scouts of America); there have been no replies to date.

VAVS Partners, Inc. Treasurer’s Report: Mr. Jerry Butler distributed his printed report, and discussed various increased meeting costs that warranted attention, as well as operational equipment needs. Questions ensued regarding the report’s content, methodology, format, etc.; therefore, this report was deferred for consideration by the corporation.

NAC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP): Ms. McCombs stated that the only change to the SOP at this time is the inclusion of the newly revised charter for the NAC (2007-2009). She also reported that the version of the SOP currently on the VAVS website is out-dated, and, as there have been significant changes to the SOP in recent years, she requested that VA take the appropriate steps to upload the most current SOP to the VAVS website, and was assured it would be accomplished post-haste.

Parke Board Update: Mr. Brown, Parke Board President, distributed the Treasurer’s report, as of April 1, 2007.

VAVS NAC Membership Report: Mr. Naugher provided an overview of organizational participation and historical perspective; and encouraged members to increase Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers and RS hours by five percent.

Ms. Balun introduced Mr. Joseph Brown, Voluntary Service Assistant, who will be focusing on recruitment of OIF/OEF veterans and their families.

21st Century Communications: Mr. Naugher discussed the benefits of web-based e-mail accounts, and mail-groups.

The meeting recessed at 11:49 a.m., with the remaining business items to be considered and concluded immediately prior to the NAC EC Critique Meeting, on Saturday, May 5, 2007 (Page 26).

OPEN FORUM
Wednesday, May 2, 2007, 3:00p.m. - 4:00p.m.

Opening Remarks: Ms. Balun opened the meeting, stating that the open forum provides everyone an opportunity to come forward and voice concerns, suggestions, or ideas for the benefit of the VAVS program. She identified the recent changes in volunteer requirements, including the Personal Identity Verification (PIV) process which will be necessary over the next few years. Some volunteer assignments will continue to require background checks.

Questions and comments on various issues included: installation and maintenance requirements for donated televisions in hospital rooms; card games, etc., using gambling chips; donation and maintenance of microwave ovens; the necessity for security checks for honor guards who do not come into the hospitals; development of a national pet therapy and visitation policy; and, the need for a definitive and consistent policy regarding homemade and/or catered food for hospital activities, including individually wrapped food items. Ms. Balun suggested that Nutrition and Food Service be extended an invitation to speak at the 2008 NAC meeting.

Additional comments were made on: the various security cards; background checks for youth volunteers; and policy on volunteers handling patients' money.

The open forum concluded at 4:00 p.m.

OPENING CEREMONIES
Wednesday, May 2, 2007, 6:00p.m. - 7:00p.m.

Call to Order: The 61st Annual Meeting of the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) was called to order by Mr. Harley Thomas, Chairman, NAC Executive Committee (EC).

Presentation of Colors: The colors were presented by the Knights of Columbus, Color Corps, Fourth Degree Fort Pitt Assembly #0912.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Code Gomberg and Jake Notovitz, Jewish War Veterans of America.

Invocation: The invocation was delivered by Chaplain Lonnie Long, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.

Welcome: Ms. Terry Gerigk-Wolf, Director, VA Pittsburgh Health Care System spoke of VA volunteers as a priceless asset, a sentiment echoed by Ms. Ira Richmond, BSN, MSN, Associate Director, Patient Care Services, who also remarked on VA volunteers' dedication and their many contributions.

Thanking Dave Tomayko for all of the work he, his staff, and volunteers did in preparation for the meeting, Mr. Thomas then introduced Pittsburgh's Mayor, Luke Ravenstahl, who extolled the many benefits of living in and around the greater Pittsburgh area; he also thanked all of the volunteers for their service to this nation's veterans.

Keynote: Mr. Everett Chasen, Chief Communications Officer, VHA, and NAC Chairperson, told the NAC members that this year's meeting is about change – change in VA, change in health care delivery, and change in veterans' needs. He noted that the one thing that has not changed is the dedication and support of VAVS volunteers, and the commitment of VA employees. In recognition of that commitment, he then presented an award to Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, commemorating her 25 years of VA service.

Mr. Thomas remembered the two NAC members who have passed away since we met last year: Mark Regan, Deputy National Representative, American Legion; and Mary Schiralli, National Representative, Catholic War Veterans Ladies Auxiliary. A moment of silence was observed in their memory.

The DVD, "Our Reasons for Being," created by Marty Naugher, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO, concluded the opening ceremony.

BUSINESS SESSION

Thursday, May 3, 2007, 8:30a.m. - 11:30a.m.

Call to Order: Mr. Thomas called the session to order.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Ms. Trudi Kuenzi, General Federation of Women's Clubs and Ms. Ethyl Parham, American Legion Auxiliary.

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. Thomas called the roll for the 2007 Veterans

Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) Annual Meeting: Service Members; Associate Service Members; Donor Members; Associate Donor Members; and Honorary Members (recorded on pages 4-5).

Opening Remarks and Meeting Objectives: Mr. Thomas encouraged everyone to review the Goals and Objectives listed in their meeting books. The video, "Our Reasons for Being", was shown again for the benefit of those who were not able to attend the opening ceremony.

Mr. Thomas introduced Michael Moreland, VISN 4 Network Director, who welcomed everyone to Pittsburgh, and thanked the VA staff and volunteers for all they do for America's veterans.

VHA Update: Mr. Chasen introduced Dr. Michael Kussman, Acting Under Secretary for Health, VHA.

Dr. Kussman thanked the volunteers and the organizations for their continued service to veterans, saying they do make a difference, every day, as evidenced by the award recipients at this meeting. He spoke of the origins of the VAVS program, and cited the FY2006 accomplishments; and noted the impact the new security requirements are having on volunteers, and that they were streamlined in February, to decrease the unfair burden placed on VAVS volunteers.

Media outlets continue to acknowledge that VA hospitals offer the best care anywhere. A presidential task force has released an action plan recommending ways to improve delivery of Federal services to returning service men and women. Dr. Kussman spoke of the increase in polytrauma sites and services; 23 new Vet Centers; and, the creation of 100 new positions to provide advocacy assistance for Global War on Terror (GWOT) veterans and their families. The future of VHA will be determined by how it approaches the complex health care system requirements, and aspirations of the newly injured GWOT men and women.

When asked if VA was prepared for the influx of GWOT PTSD patients, Dr. Kussman reported that of 610,000 GWOT military members discharged, 200,000 have presented to VA in three major categories: 1) musculo-skeletal; 2) mental health; and, 3) gastro-intestinal. He said that readjustment problems in war are normal, noting that PTSD is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. He believes that VA's infrastructure is ready to absorb the additional patients, but that additional resources would be needed, especially in those locations experiencing difficulty hiring staff.

Additional questions and comments included: language problems with some doctors in VA hospitals; prevalence of Parkinson's disease in Vietnam veterans; clinic access being made available evenings and weekends; closure of some mental health facilities; the CARES project; etc.

American Spirit Award Presentation: Dr. Kussman and Ms. Balun presented the American Spirit Awards to: Ms. Ronni Miller, VAVS Program Manager, Durham VAMC, for Student Recruitment; Ms. Nancy Babcock, VAVS Program Manager, Battle Creek VAMC, for Corporate Recruitment; Ms. Barbara Pembamoto, VAVS Volunteer, West Palm Beach VAMC, for Senior Recruitment.

VA Voluntary Service Award for Excellence: Dr. Kussman and Ms. Balun presented the award to this year's distinguished recipient, Ms. Beverly Leneski, VAVS Program Manager at the VA Medical Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Dr. Kussman, Ms. Balun and Mr. Thomas presented the following NAC awards:

Female Volunteer of the Year: Ms. Rita Golden, Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A., VA Medical Center, West Haven, Connecticut.

Male Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Thomas Elliott, Fleet Reserve Association, VA Medical Center, Togus, Maine.

VAVS Update: Ms. Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, discussed:

- The March/April 2007 edition of Vanguard magazine, distributed at the NAC meeting, featured a staff member on the cover, Maria Fasano. Ms. Fasano is an employee at the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System, and is one of many employees who started out as a volunteer; she was also a Parke Scholarship Award recipient.
- Miriam Jaffee, VAVS National Representative, Jewish War Veterans, is retiring from VAVS after being a volunteer and National Representative for fifty-seven years. She was acknowledged by the VA Secretary and the Acting Under Secretary for Health, for her fifty-seven years of dedicated service to veterans and VAVS.
- Echo Taps Worldwide will be held May 19, 2007, with more than 2,600 volunteers enrolled thus far to participate in the program.
- Each federal agency has to deal with stronger security measures, and the VA is no exception. Volunteer requirements have increased during recent years. However, the Secretary asked us to streamline volunteer requirements, which have been accomplished. The types of requirements volunteers must meet are now based on their volunteer assignment.
- Raising funds in support of VAVS. We have the authority to let the public know of the needs of the patients. Ms. Balun shared an example of the Richmond VA Medical Center (VAMC) needing funds to provide lodging for family members to stay with loved ones receiving care at their Polytrauma Center. She sent an e-mail to two NAC organizations

explaining this need. By the end of that week, the Richmond VAMC had funding for at least one month's worth of lodging needs, and a pledge of additional funds for this project.

- Progressive volunteer assignments are part of the changing face of VAVS and the changing needs of the veterans. Volunteers are assisting in more diverse roles than ever before.
- Use of volunteers during disasters. VAVS members responded extremely well to calls made post-Katrina. Volunteers are needed in all locations to be available to assist in the event of a disaster.
- The changing face of VAVS: meeting expectations of today's veteran patients, while preparing for tomorrow's.
- HealthierUS Veterans is a joint project with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to mobilize volunteers and members of the community to assist veterans in combating obesity and diabetes by adopting a healthier lifestyle. John Elway, former Denver Broncos quarterback, has been enlisted to serve as spokesman in promoting HealthierUS Veterans.
- The Fit for Life Volunteer Corps is also a joint effort with HHS designed to assist veterans in leading healthier lives. Nine volunteer job descriptions have been developed for this initiative.
- Mr. Jerry Reed, the 2007 National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Chairman, visited VA Medical Centers in Nashville, Tennessee, and Biloxi, Mississippi, during National Salute Week in February. Mr. Reed is making a new music video, donating the proceeds to VAVS GPF.
- Reviewed the seventeen network care sites where patients are treated after leaving the four polytrauma rehabilitation centers (Palo Alto, CA; Richmond, VA; Minneapolis, MN; and Tampa, FL).
- Plans to build Fisher Houses in Boston, Seattle, Dallas, and Richmond in 2007. A second Fisher House is scheduled for Minneapolis.
- Review of statistical data. More than \$50.4 million in donations, and volunteer hours with a value of \$234.8 million were given to VA in FY-2006. That makes the total contribution from volunteers more than \$285.2 million in FY-2006.
- The VSS tracking system shows that Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteer numbers are decreasing. A number of volunteers ceased participating in

VAVS after the “statements of commitment” to safeguard patient information were required.

- To address the generational mix of veteran patients currently being treated at VA facilities, some VA medical centers are trying to provide individual TV’s at each patient’s bedside to accommodate the different needs of veterans of varying ages/interests who may be in the same room.
- Priorities for FY2007 include: design, coordinate and implement Voluntary Service Program Managers’ training conference; develop tracking mechanism for volunteer training requirements; support Echo Taps Worldwide; continue to provide support to GWOT (formerly OIF/OEF) veterans through VAVS; develop materials for caregivers’ volunteer program; develop materials and promote volunteer support for Advanced Clinic Access; develop recruitment and retention initiatives to increase virtual volunteer assignments, decrease turnover rate to twenty-five percent or less, and increase Baby Boomer volunteers by 5%. Each NAC member organization should choose a priority on which to focus.

Ms. Balun showed a video that was produced by Rachael Martin that highlights the VAVS mission. She encouraged members to identify the needs of their local VA centers, adapt to the changing needs and changing methods, and asked them to inform other organizations to get involved.

Ms. Balun thanked the VAVS Chiefs/Program Managers for their continued hard work, and asked each to stand and be recognized.

The Business Session was recessed at 11:27 a.m.

BUSINESS SESSION **Friday, May 4, 2007, 8:30a.m. - 10:15a.m.**

Call to Order: Mr. Thomas called the session to order.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Mr. Bob Abbott, Sharing and Caring, Inc. and Mr. Joe Serenka, Marine Corps League.

Culture of Change: Mr. Alan Bernstein, Associate Chief, Nursing Service, Nursing Program Leader, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, discussed cultural transformation: a paradigm shift in the delivery of nursing home care. This would include offering services that treat the response to illness, and also addresses the mental, physical, and social needs of patients in a long term care environment.

Cultural transformation is an environment of care that fosters comfort and decreases agitation, loneliness, boredom and isolation. Mr. Bernstein compared the traditional model of care to the transformational model: a movement from institutional to individualized care. *For care to be effective, it must be individualized.* Mr. Bernstein showed slides with examples of cultural transformation in VA facilities.

Veterans History Project: Mr. Jeffrey Lofton, Public Affairs and Program Officer, Library of Congress, Veterans History Project (VHP) thanked Ms. Balun; Ms. Darlene Richardson, VHA Historian; Ms. Susan Kern, VAVS Program Manager, VA Maryland Health Care System, and her staff, for all of their help with the project.

Mr. Lofton shared a Veterans History Project video. The project collects audio and video interviews, as well as memoirs, photographs, letters, diaries, maps, and any historical document that brings the stories to life. These items are then sent to the Library of Congress, where they are preserved and catalogued. About 4,000 collections have been digitized.

Ms. Richardson said that VHA has been collecting staff oral histories for “VHA: War and Medicine” about soldier/veteran treatment/care; medical advancements; etc. which will be archived at VHA and the Library of Congress.

Ms. Kern discussed the recommended process for interviewing: equipment needs; availability of subject; location (i.e. quiet, comfortable, etc.). Staff and volunteers will be available throughout the day to record histories, and to teach others how to conduct interviews. Members and volunteers were encouraged to participate in the project.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Ms. McCombs reported that, as per IL 10-2007-005, VA concurred with those recommendations approved by the NAC at its 60th Anniversary Annual Meeting in 2006. Ms. McCombs stated that, alas, NAC members had not submitted recommendations for consideration this year. Undaunted by this deficiency, the subcommittee conducted numerous research initiatives, as per its SOP, and produced five recommendations for consideration by the NAC in compliance with its Federal charter. The recommendations, with EC action statements, were read into the record. The members were asked to review the material in preparation for the vote during Saturday’s business session.

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Thomas remarked on the impressive list of nominees this year, as evidenced by the recipients honored during Thursday’s

business session; and, challenged each NAC member organization to submit at least one nomination for a national award.

Recruitment: Colonel Charles Gallina presented this report. He discussed the national recruitment strategy: a move towards additional volunteers. There should be a recruitment subcommittee at each VAMC. The power is in the “ask” when it comes to recruiting new volunteers.

Membership: Mr. Brown said that letters had been sent to five of eight eligible organizations, with no responses to date.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP): Ms. McCombs reported that the only change to the SOP at this time is the inclusion of the new Federal charter (2007-2009). Assurances have been received from VA that the most current version of the SOP will be posted on the VAVS website post-haste.

Mr. Thomas thanked the committee chairs for their reports.

The Business Session was recessed at 10:14 a.m.

BUSINESS SESSION **Saturday, May 5, 2007, 8:30a.m. - 11:30a.m.**

Call to Order: Mr. Thomas called the session to order.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Patrick Hodge and Sean Pitrisko, Knights of Columbus.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Update: Mr. Richard Wannemacher, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary, NCA, showed a video on Echo Taps, and encouraged members to promote participation in this initiative. He recounted his personal history with VAVS, and said when he retires he plans on being a volunteer at the Buffalo VA facility.

Meet the New VCS Director: Ms. Marilyn Iverson, the new Director, Veterans Canteen Service, reported that VCS’ priorities remain steadfast: 1) do what’s best for veterans; 2) do what’s best for VA; 3) do what’s best for VCS. Any doubt? Go back to No. 1! Since 1991, \$170 million has been given back to the system for renovations, promotional campaigns, and sustaining unprofitable canteens. VCS has provided \$3 million to the Hospital Directors’ Fund; and distributed \$100,000 worth of coupon books to polytrauma units for OIF/OEF veterans and their families. VCS has conducted sales’ promotions in support of Fisher Houses; and provided funding for VA’s four national events. Ms. Iverson reviewed the in-house product line (Exchange Select); over-the-counter (OTC)

drugs; and the availability of more than 17,000 products for special order. Another initiative, in conjunction with HealthierUS Veterans, "Wise Up to Healthy Eating" provides food products with decreased fat and sodium. She also explained the VAVS Promotional Fund: VAVS and VSO bulk purchases receive a 10% discount; and she encouraged those groups to utilize this program.

Recommendations: Ms. McCombs presented the five 2007 recommendations for action by the NAC.

1) VA currently administers a number of services that are geared towards providing support to severely disabled or aging veterans, and the families of those veterans, who can no longer care for themselves but who do not want to be cared for in an institutional setting. These programs include, but are not limited to: adult day-care, respite care, case management and coordination, transportation services, home care services, hospice, and general caregiver support. VA accepts volunteer services as supplementary to essential personnel in providing hospital and outpatient care, other health-care services, and any health-care support or administrative services. As VA undertakes initiatives to assist veterans in maintaining independent living, as well as living and care options for those veterans facing life-limiting conditions, non-traditional services for those veteran patients may be warranted (e.g. homemaker/domestic services, shopping, etc.). Therefore, it is recommended that VA seek whatever legislative/regulatory remedy necessary to permit VAVS volunteers to serve in assignments other than as traditional health care resources.

The Executive Committee suggests approval.

Mr. Bryce moved to approve; Mr. Turner seconded. **Motion carried.**

2) In managing the Voluntary Service System (VSS) timekeeping package for volunteer records, Voluntary Service staff are responsible for recording the data for attendance at VAVS quarterly meetings (135A), Occasional Hours (OC), and Regularly Scheduled (RS) hours for those volunteers without access to computer sign-in. These entries are to be completed by the 6th of each month immediately after the month in which those hours were accrued. Facility VAVS staff have 3 months or 90 days to make corrections; after 90 days, they must contact the VSS National Help Desk for assistance. The 90-day window of opportunity for corrections is diminished by its proximity to the close of the fiscal year, after which no entries or corrections are permitted (e.g. if an August quarterly meeting is not entered into the system on 09/06, it must be reported by 10/06, otherwise it is lost to the reporting, depriving organizations of the 135A credit). This exclusion is detrimental to NAC member organizations, denying them an accurate accounting of their reps' and depts' participation, and could have a negative impact on NAC membership. National Representatives are not aware of discrepancies until they reconcile the Cumulative Attendance Listing (CAL) attached to the quarterly minutes with VHA 37, Part I, and due to the lag time in

receipt of either, or both, it is often well past the 90 day period allotted for local correction, especially if it occurs in the last quarter of the fiscal year. Currently, VHA 37 is distributed semi-annually, although VHA handbook 1620.1@11.c (pg. 31) states that “National Reports of Service” “. . . will be provided quarterly . . .” to VAVS National Representatives. Implementing quarterly distribution of VHA 37 would be helpful, but there is still the lag time in receipt of corresponding minutes, necessary for verification of attendance; and it would not address the issue of the inability to make necessary corrections after the close of the fiscal year. It is disheartening to have minutes attesting to representation, yet not have that reflected on VHA 37, and not be able to correct that deficiency. Therefore, it is recommended that VA modify the Voluntary Service System (VSS) timekeeping package to allow corrections after the close of the fiscal year to provide local VAVS staff sufficient time to report critical data; and to accommodate those organizations able to provide verification of quarterly meeting attendance, thereby ensuring a more accurate assessment of rep and dep participation, and to avoid potential erosion of membership criteria.

The Executive Committee suggests approval.

John Peters, United Voluntary Services, moved to approve; Mr. Wozniak seconded. **Motion carried.**

3) In providing minimum guidelines for minutes, VHA Handbook 1620.1@6.b(8)(a)8 (pg. 9) states for inclusion: “A treasury report or a VAVS committee financial report, if it is presented during the VAVS committee meetings.” When referencing policies and procedures governing General Post Funds (GPF), VHA Handbook 1620.1@10.b(1), lines 6-8 (pg. 29) states: “A Treasury Report and VAVS Committee and/or Executive Committee is to be provided at the quarterly VAVS committee meetings.” The seemingly contradictory language creates confusion as to implementation and/or adherence to policy. Therefore, it is recommended that for conformity, consistency, and continuity, VA clarify the applicable language to ensure compliance with VA’s stated policies and procedures.

The Executive Committee suggests approval.

Mr. Dewitt moved to approve; Mr. Rabius seconded. **Motion carried.**

4) VHA Handbook 1620.1@6.b(6) (pg. 8), Termination of Membership, states: “Organization will be removed from the VAVS Committee when none of the certified members is in attendance at three consecutive meetings. Membership can be renewed with a letter of certification to the facility Director indicating the attendance requirements will be met. Representatives-at-large and the nonaffiliated Representative will be removed from the membership listing when they miss three consecutive meetings.” By not including reference to those individuals representing the stated organizations, it has allowed sufficient

ambiguity in applicable attendance requirements to warrant VA to include language specific to individuals in VHA Directive 2001-043, which has since expired. To ensure clarity, consistency, and continuity, it is recommended that VA adopt the following statement for inclusion in VHA Handbook 1620.1, after the first sentence in the cited reference: "Individual representatives will likewise be removed from the listing after being absent for three consecutive meetings." (VHA Directive 2001-043@4.h(1), lines 2-3, pg. 2), and to include, if necessary, "deputy representatives."

The Executive Committee suggests approval.

Lt. Col. Swanson moved to approve; Mr. Goodwin seconded. **Motion carried.**

5) **(Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.):** VHA Handbook 1620.1@7(4)(b) (pg. 11) states: "Members on the facility VAVS Committee must be certified in writing by the National Certifying Official, or other designated person, as selected by the highest elected or appointed official of each member organization." It is recommended that after the words ". . . certified in writing. . ." the following language be added: ". . . or e-mail followed by a letter if needed. . .".

A similar submission in the 2003 recommendations' cycle was disapproved stating: "Current policy . . . does not prohibit the use of e-mail as a form of communication from the certifying official to local facilities appointing local VAVS Representatives. The communication is to be addressed to the Facility Director, ATTN: Voluntary Service Program Manager. It should be noted that standard business letter is preferred." (Executive Committee Minutes, 10/14-15/02, page 9; NAC Annual Meeting Minutes, 04/30-05/03/03, page 16.) Although VHA Handbook 1620.1 does not preclude the use of e-mail certifications, and the proposed recommendation contains its own remedy, for consistency, clarity, and conformity, the Executive Committee suggests approval of the electronic certification option. (It should be noted that in the interim, VA has approved undertaking a pilot program ". . . to assess the efficacy of distributing VAVS quarterly meeting minutes electronically.")

LaVerne Wozniak, Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A. moved to approve; Col. Gallina seconded. **Motion carried.**

Table Topic Reports: Ms. Adams - *Volunteer Requirements*, reported that flexibility was discussed, as well as guest badges. Mr. Gadd - *Changing the Face of VAVS*, discussed VSO's coordinating and collaborating to increase communications; youth and college outreach for volunteers; and the feasibility of inviting corporation managers to VAVS meetings. Personal video games, jukeboxes, and other handheld games should be promoted for patient entertainment, and inclusion in facility wish lists. VA might partner in the community with other volunteer programs, such as the YMCA. Mr. Dewitt - *Volunteer Utilization During Disasters*, noted the need for advanced training for

VSO's in order to ascertain and assess what needs to be done in response to disasters. VA should coordinate disaster training with outside services for those organizations that may want to participate. It's important to establish a chain of command. Mr. Goodwin - *Echo Taps Worldwide*, commented on a need for more support from VSO's and better publicity for the event. Lt. Col. Swanson - *Raising Funds to Support VA Activities*, reported that members should make sure that a relationship is set up with Canteen directors and to be acquainted with rules and regulations before seeking donated funds. Local fundraising ideas were discussed (e.g. bake sales, Chinese auctions, etc.). Mr. Turner - *HealthierUS Veterans*, stressed an emphasis on walking and exercise; having exercise partners; getting rid of soda machines on site; increasing availability of fruit juices; getting involved with the MOVE program; having healthier foods available at the Canteens; visiting with a dietitian; making brochures with health tips available; and the need for access to indoor exercise machines for use in inclement weather. Ms. Twete - *VAVS Timekeeping Assignments*, stressed the need for uniformity in data capture to ensure accurate accounting (this is especially critical for those activities where volunteers do not have access to computer sign-in); and that attendance records should be sent with minutes in a timely manner.

Homecoming: Helping to Reintegrate After Deployment: Major Cindy Rasmussen, a member of the Combat Stress Team mobilized by General Beasley, thanked all of the veterans in the audience for their service to the country, and all of the volunteers for their service to veterans. She explained the history of Army Reserve activations, and the unique needs of citizen soldiers. She addressed combat/operational stress reactions, citing the differences between "war zone skills" and "home skills". These soldiers have honed safety and trust and response tactics specific to their combat environment, as typified by hypervigilance and/or an adrenaline rush; these characteristics don't translate well to civilian life.

There are specific emerging issues for readjustment, i.e. the "reinvestment period", which is that time when a soldier comes home and tries to reengage in family life. The Combat Stress Team provides counseling and accessible coping skills; also, suicide education and intervention. Some suggestions to help out include, but are not limited to: increase in support and use of military, civilian and VA health resources; fighting the stigma of mental health issues; collaboration and ingenuity in program development; education; treating the whole system (family unit and community); and user-friendly, customer-oriented services.

Other Business: Mr. Brown, Parke Board President, announced the election results: Chris Slawinski was re-elected; and Jacob Gadd was elected to his first term. The Board is hoping to award two scholarships again next year.

Presentation on Next Year's Meeting: Ms. Sandra Boza, VAVS Program Manager, Orlando VA Medical Center, presented a video and discussed the

attributes of Orlando, Florida. Next year's meeting is scheduled for April 9-12, 2008, at the Rosen Centre Hotel.

Closing Remarks: Mr. Thomas thanked everyone who worked on the meeting. Ms. Balun presented an award to Mr. Thomas for his leadership as Chairman of the Executive Committee during the past two years.

A video comprised of photos from this year's meeting was shown.

Benediction: Lt. Col. Swanson offered a prayer of thanksgiving for a successful meeting.

Retirement of Colors was conducted by the Knights of Columbus, Color Corps, Fourth Degree Fort Pitt Assembly #0912.

The VAVS NAC 61st Annual Meeting was adjourned by motion at 10:40 a.m.

VAVS NAC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Saturday, May 5, 2007, 10:30a.m. – 10:47a.m.
(Continued from May 2, 2007)

Call to Order: Mr. Thomas reconvened the EC meeting.

National Salute Report: Ms. Balun distributed the report for review.

Future Annual Meeting Plans: Ms. Balun and Mr. Moynihan stated that a number of VAVS Program Managers have expressed an interest in hosting future annual meetings. Some of these cities would be excellent sites, and would have strong local VA management and staff support that is so critical in hosting a successful NAC annual meeting. However, this may pose a direct conflict with an existing NAC motion requiring that meetings be rotated in geographical sequence by quadrant (i.e. NE, SE, SW, NW), so as to make meetings accessible to local VAVS participants in those regions, who might otherwise not be able to attend an annual meeting. The meeting planners stated that every effort would be made to ensure that meetings would be rotated in accordance with that NAC mandate, as often as possible.

Bill Bryce, Military Order of the Cootie, moved that the meeting planners be granted the authority and flexibility to select future meeting sites that best serve the needs of the NAC, while making every effort to accommodate the existing NAC mandate to rotate by geographical quadrants; Ms. Adams seconded.

Motion carried.

New Business: The fall 2007 EC meeting will be at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida; dates are not available at this time.

The 2008 Recommendations Subcommittee appointments are: Ms. Marion Schwerman, Chair, with Ms. McCombs and Mr. Potter.

As this meeting concludes his term of office, Ms. Balun thanked Mr. Thomas for his two years of service as EC Chairman. The succeeding Chairman is Mr. Michael Manning, with Mr. Davis Rabius as Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Gadd made a motion that all subcommittees meet formally, and have the meetings on the agenda for regularly scheduled NAC and EC meetings; Col. Gallina seconded. It was noted that subcommittee chairs already have the authority to convene meetings, and that subcommittee meetings are an automatic agenda item at stand-alone EC meetings, and informally prior to NAC meetings, along with conference calls, as needed, between EC meetings, making the motion redundant. **Motion carried.**

The EC concluded its formal agenda at 10:47a.m.

**EC Critique of NAC Meeting
Saturday, May 5, 2007, 10:47a.m. - 11:45a.m.**

Critique of 2007 National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting:

Executive Committee members provided the following comments:

- Overall comments were generally positive.
- Speakers were well received; workshops were excellent; the theme of change was carried throughout; and meeting objectives were met.
- Course descriptions were again not published, creating confusion about some of the topics offered.
- Except for having sessions on so many different floors, the hotel was good; it was suggested that in future, functions should be scheduled on the same floor whenever possible; some noted it was difficult for disabled individuals to get around, although the hotel did meet minimal ADA code requirements.
- Signage to direct NAC attendees to locations for meetings, workshops, etc. was not clear and/or visible.
- Parke Luncheon food received highly unfavorable comments.
- Registration was well positioned; and the staff and volunteers were exceedingly helpful.
- Compliments to David Tomayko, the VAVS staff, facility staff, and volunteers of the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System, on coordinating the

local plans for the meeting. Mr. Tomayko was also commended for combining the VISN 4 VAVS Training Conference with the NAC.

- The VA meeting planners and VA Central Office staff were commended for their work on another successful NAC meeting.
- Audio-visual systems for presentations need to be improved; this is a recurring problem and distracts the audience.
- The meeting schedule could be tightened up, with less time between workshops, etc. (although it was noted that additional time was needed to get to different locations on different floors); and, to make every effort to have meetings start on time.
- Having both of the Parke Scholarship Award recipients attend the NAC and the Parke Luncheon this year was very much appreciated.
- The Parke Scholarship Award and Luncheon should be better promoted.
- Consideration should be given to rethinking the table topics program, or explore how it could be restructured; the session was too noisy to hear and participate in any meaningful conversation; it may not be effective for generating new ideas or implementing them; written instructions should be available at the tables if this program is continued; and facilitators should be assigned to assist in the flow of communications.
- Steve Hurd gave an overview of the meeting evaluations which confirm many of the EC comments: workshops were all rated excellent; the overall meeting - very good to excellent; and attendees felt the meeting objectives were met.
- It was asked if it would be appropriate to have company/corporate sponsorships and to possibly invite them to the meeting next year.

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

The EC adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Rekindling the American Spirit VAVS Representative and Deputy Representative Training

Faculty: Joe Dooley, VAVS Program Manager, Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial VA Medical Center (VAMC), Bedford, MA; Ralph Marche, VAVS Program Manager, VA Boston Healthcare System, Boston, MA; Billie Goodwin, VAVS National Representative, AMVETS; Beryl Love, Deputy National Representative, AMVETS.

This training session covered the basics of VAVS: volunteer types; VAVS structure and mission; NAC purpose and membership categories; and representatives' and deputy representatives' duties and responsibilities. The FY2007 priorities were reviewed and discussed; volunteer recruitment was emphasized.

Volunteer Assignments in the 21st Century

Faculty: Ronni Miller, VAVS Program Manager, Durham, NC VAMC.

The workshop explored how an idea becomes a volunteer assignment, and volunteer position requests. The key to a happy volunteer is to match the volunteer's interest, skills, and schedule to a needed assignment. Examples of various programs with unique volunteer assignments were discussed (e.g. LA-COWS has a volunteer teach veterans how to use the internet).

Animal Assisted Therapy

Faculty: Sharon Croteau, MHS, CAVS, VAVS Program Manager, VA CT Healthcare System.

The workshop explored animal assisted therapy (i.e. pet therapy); pet visitation; and what category of patients would benefit from these programs. It was learned that studies have demonstrated just how beneficial these therapies are for patients. A successful program is certified; has ongoing training; and practical experience.

Advanced Clinic Access

Faculty: Michael Adelman, MD, Director, Erie, PA VAMC; Peter Woodbridge, MD, MBA, Associate Chief of Staff for Quality and Clinical Informatics, Indianapolis, IN VAMC; Robert Monte, RPh, MBA, Business Manager Medical Specialty Service Line, Advanced Clinic Access (ACA) Coordinator, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System; Nancy Jamison, RN, Program Leader Primary Care, ACA Coordinator, Erie, PA VAMC; Darlene Laughter, CAVS, VAVS Program Manager, Asheville, NC VAMC.

The goal of Advanced Clinic Access (ACA) is to improve quality and service by eliminating unnecessary waste and delays through continuous improvements in VHA processes. ACA Systems Redesign offers new volunteer opportunities which include: making reminder telephone calls to veterans; serving in the Ambassador program; mailing appointment reminder letters to patients; driving vans transporting patients; data collection; and participating in telemedicine. An overview of the telehealth network program was provided.

Thinking Outside the Box

Faculty: Mark Frazee, VAVS Program Manager, Iron Mountain, MI VAMC.

The workshop addressed the need for change in common practices. Non-productive practices were discussed, as were suggested alternative methods (e.g. ask questions; analyze problems closely; etc.). Examples of corporations who have been successful thinking outside the box were reviewed; as well as examples of how one person at one VA can change one small thing, and the resulting positive impact on veteran patients.