

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VOLUNTARY SERVICE
NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

60TH ANNUAL MEETING REPORT



MAY 3 – 6, 2006
SPARKS, NEVADA

**60th ANNUAL MEETING REPORT
VAVS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	3
Member Organizations	4
Executive Committee Meeting	6
Open Forum	12
NAC Opening Ceremonies	14
Business Session - Thursday, May 4, 2006	14
Business Session - Friday, May 5, 2006	18
Business Session - Saturday, May 6, 2006.....	20
NAC EC Critique Meeting.....	25
Educational Workshops	26
Fisher Houses	26
Family Volunteering	26
Partnering with DOD and Family Support.....	26
VA and VAVS History.....	26
VAVS Recommendations.....	27
Cemetery Service.....	27
Mentoring Youth Volunteers	27
Recruitment Tips for Baby Boomers	27

THE VAVS NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PREFACE

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 (P/A)

American Ex-Prisoners of War, Inc.	P	
American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.	P	
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		A
Catholic War Veterans	P	
Catholic War Veterans Ladies Auxiliary	P	
Disabled American Veterans	P	
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P	
Fleet Reserve Association	P	
The 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. Inc.	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		A
Military Order of the Cootie of the U.S.	P	
Ladies 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	
The Salvation Army	P	
The Sons of the American Legion		A
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	
Women's Army Corps Veterans Association		A

Associate Service Member Organizations

	Present/Absent (P/A)
Air Force Sergeants Association	A
American Association of Retired Persons	A
American War Mothers	A
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.	P
Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War	P
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.	P
Honor Society Women Legionnaires	A
Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project	A
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	A
The National Women's Relief Corps, Auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic	P
Sons of AMVETS	P
Supreme Cootiette Club of the U.S.	A
United Daughters of the Confederacy	P
U.S. Submarine Veterans of World War II	A
Women Marines Association	A

Donor Member Organizations

Bowlers Victory League	A
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Honorary Member Organizations

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

VAVS NAC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, May 3, 2006 - 8:00am to 12:00pm

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

Roll Call: Executive Committee 2006-2007

One Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2006): **Present/Absent (P/A)**

- The American Legion – *Mark Regan* P
- The American Legion Auxiliary – *Marion Schwerman* P
- Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks – *Charles Cutshaw* P
- Disabled American Veterans – *Edward Hartman* P
- Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary – *Deborah Mazza* P
- National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution – *Barbara Latham* P
- The Salvation Army – *Lt. Col. Gillian Bosh* P
- Veterans of Foreign Wars – *George Hawley* P
- Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars – *JoAnn Ott* P

Second Year of Two-Year Appointment (Ending December 31, 2006):

- Vietnam Veterans of America – *Judith McCombs* P
- AMVETS Auxiliary – *Shirl Worsham* A
- Forty and Eight – *David Rabius* P
- Military Order of the Cootie – *F.W. “Arch” Ethun* P
- Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A. – *Ralph Wozniak* P

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

- Knights of Columbus – *Col. Charles Gallina* P
- Help Hospitalized Veterans – *Mike Lynch* P
- Paralyzed Veterans of America – *Harley Thomas* P
- Military Order of the Purple Heart – *Del Turner* P
- AMVETS – *John P. Brown, III* P

VA Voluntary Service Staff Present:

- Laura Balun, Director, VA Central Office
- Marty Naugher, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Central Office
- Diane Heffington-Mitchell, Lead Staff Assistant, VA Central Office
- Bettie Ivory, Program Assistant, VA Central Office
- Steve Moynihan, Chief, Voluntary Service, Minneapolis VAMC
- John Howard, VAVS Program Manager, VA Sierra Nevada 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 Committee:

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 NAC member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS policies and procedures.
4. Accommodate 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 an 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 recipient of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award, Andrew Layton, student volunteer at the VA Medical Center, Battle Creek, Michigan.
9. Honor the male and female VAVS NAC Volunteers of the Year: Mr. George Ridsdale, American Red Cross, Stratton VA Medical Center, Albany, New York; and Chief Harriet L. Howard, WAVES National, Alvin C. York Campus, VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.
10. Recognize Joseph (Joe) Dooley, VAVS Program Manager, Edith Nourse Rogers Veterans Hospital, as the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.

11. Recognize the following for the American Spirit Award: Margaret Trunick, VAVS Program Manager, Battle Creek VAMC, for Student Recruitment Category; Ralph Marche, VAVS Program Manager, VA Boston Healthcare System, for Corporate Recruitment Category; and Frank Cimorelli, VAVS Program Manager, Northern Arizona VA Health Care System, for Senior Recruitment Category.

Additions/Corrections to Fall 2005 EC Meeting Minutes: Ms. McCombs moved to accept the minutes; Arch Ethun seconded. ***The motion carried.***

VAVS Abbreviated Program Update: Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, stated that as previously suggested, the agenda has been revised to include an abbreviated report so as to not duplicate reports presented during the NAC meeting. A complete VAVS report will be given during the Thursday business session. Ms. McCombs inquired about the organizational reports being included in the agenda for the NAC meeting. Ms. Balun stated the organizational reports are not included this year; instead, table topic discussions are being incorporated into the agenda. Organizational reports were to be included in the minutes last year but weren't. A compilation of organizational activities might be incorporated separate from the NAC minutes this year.

Kick-off celebrations for HealthierUS Veterans are taking place this week in different cities. This is a joint project with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and VA, assisting veterans in combating obesity and diabetes. Two-thirds of the veteran population are obese and/or have diabetes. MOVE (Managing Overweight and/or Obesity for Veterans Everywhere) program coordinators work with clinical staff and dieticians to combat obesity and diabetes among veterans referred to them. Some Veterans Service Organizations (VSO's) have been challenged by the VA Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health to live healthier and maintain a healthier weight; and, to have regular weigh-ins to chart their results.

Ms. Balun discussed the HealthierUS Veterans Volunteer Corps program. Various volunteer opportunities have been developed such as: Health & Wellness Event Coordinator; Health Information Coordinator; Seminar & Event Scheduler; and Health & Wellness Buddies.

Many facilities are not allowing, or are discouraging volunteers from bringing food into facilities for patients. Due to health concerns and the new diabetes/obesity prevention program, facilities are developing policies on what types of food, if any, may be brought in, and to what areas of the facility.

Ms. McCombs mentioned that Veterans Canteen Service is changing its menus to assist the program. Mr. Ethun added that this program should be publicized more. Mr. Regan said that notice should be given that homemade snacks are no

longer allowed, but recommend what is permissible. Ms. Balun confirmed that the program is a clinical issue and should be coordinated by clinicians. Mr. Bowman mentioned that the staff should do what they are asking the veterans to do: lose weight, stop smoking, etc. Ms. Balun said that more emphasis should be put on exercise and mobility.

Ms. Balun reminded everyone of the health fair being held later in the day. Also, during the Open Forum, Pam Hirsch, Central Office Occupational Health, will be making a brief presentation on clearance for volunteers with driving assignments; and Ed Safdie, Director of Health Care Engineering, will discuss alternative fuel vehicles.

Ms. Balun remarked that this meeting has record attendance, and noted all the work that had been done by the various special committees. Andrew Layton, the James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship recipient served on the History Committee. Mr. Moynihan added that registration for this meeting was sure to exceed 400. He then reviewed the hotel layout and meeting rooms with the Executive Committee. The energy/resort fees will be waived for attendees. John Howard, VAVS Program Manager, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System, welcomed everyone to Reno/Sparks. Ms. Balun thanked Mr. Howard for all his work in preparing for the meeting.

Mr. Moynihan, acknowledging those NAC members serving as faculty for some of the scheduled workshops, asked that other NAC members participate by taking charge of a brown bag lunch discussion topic. The following EC members volunteered to assist: Del Turner - Youth Initiatives; Dave Rabius – Volunteer Use During Disasters; Ed Hartman - Transportation Volunteers; JoAnn Ott - VAVS Committee Revitalization; Arch Ethun - Cemetery Volunteer Assignments; J. P. Brown - Membership; Mark Regan – Recruitment; and, George Hawley - VAVS Timekeeping Assignments. These EC members will also provide brief reports on their respective topics during an NAC business session.

Ms. Balun reported that NASCAR legend Richard Petty, “the King”, agreed to serve as Chairperson for this year’s National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. Because of scheduling and logistical problems, no public service announcement (PSA) was produced for this year’s National Salute. Mr. Petty has agreed to visit a VA facility on the Thursday before race-day, as his schedule allows. Both Richard Petty and his son Kyle have demonstrated commitment to America’s veterans. Mr. Brown mentioned that NASCAR has become more involved with veterans’ issues. Ms. Balun added that such partnerships are worth pursuing. More and more organizations are attempting to raise money for veterans and veterans’ services. Blue Star Mothers has been contacted by a corporation interested in helping to serve veterans. Military Order of the Purple Heart and Soldiers Angels have donated, and will continue to donate, computers and voice activation software for patients’ use at designated polytrauma centers.

VAVS Partners, Inc.: Treasurer Jerry Butler said his complete report will not be presented until the EC Meeting in October, so he did not have exact figures. The previous balance, as of December 30, was \$21,212.00. He reported that, as of the beginning of this meeting, he had \$33,749.75, with money for registration still being received. Mr. Butler reminded everyone that this is a tentative report.

Voluntary Service System (VSS) Sign-In Procedure: Ms. Fay Wilson and Mr. John Sistrunk, part of the development team that maintains VSS, were introduced. Mr. Naugher presented an overview of VSS and led a discussion regarding the sign-in procedure.

Ms. Balun stated there is a mechanism in place which provides a pseudo-Social Security number, however some volunteers are hesitant giving out their birth dates. The birth dates are used to create the pseudo-number. Voluntary Service Office is currently exploring, with the VSS developers, how to uniquely identify volunteers without utilizing their Social Security numbers.

Ms. McCombs asked about the timeline for correcting timekeeping errors. Ms. Balun stated that perhaps committee summaries could be of assistance, but Ms. McCombs said that those reports have not been provided since the conversion of the timekeeping system. Ms. Balun said that committee summary reports will be printed and sent to all the organizations.

Volunteer Requirement Discussion: Ms. Balun reported that the PIV (Personal Identification Verification) cards will be required for all federal agencies. Background checks will be conducted on employees, volunteers, contractors, etc. At a minimum, there are seven categories that require fingerprint checks on volunteers (some facilities may insist on more stringent requirements). Background checks on minors are not recommended because their records are usually sealed.

PIV cards will affect all volunteers and any Veterans Service Officers that provide claims assistance. A suggestion has been made to set up a PIV card that is more like a visitor's card, but it seems that background checks will still be necessary. Federal agencies will be required to cover the cost of background checks.

After an extensive discussion regarding background checks, Ms. Balun commented that this is not solely a VA issue, but a government-wide issue. The process is scheduled to be implemented in October by Executive Order. It is currently being piloted at the Baltimore VA Medical Center.

EC members expressed concern that the implementation of background checks would be detrimental to the Voluntary Service program.

Mr. Rabiuss suggested that the recommendation on this topic that was tabled last year should be revisited and included in this year's recommendations. Mr. Wozniak asked for reconsideration of this tabled recommendation. Mr. Rabiuss seconded. ***The motion carried. The recommendation will be reconsidered.***

Ms. McCombs then read the recommendation that was tabled at the 2005 meeting:

While mindful of our national security issues, VA's plan to implement a policy regarding background checks of all VAVS volunteers will be detrimental to the VAVS program. VAVS volunteers take seriously the safety and security of veteran patients; and their loyalty, dedication, and commitment to improving the quality of life of the veteran patients is demonstrated daily by the number of volunteers signing in, and the hours they generate. Subjecting VAVS volunteers to the intrusive and time-consuming process of background checks, will have a negative impact on both the retention of the more than 120,000 Regularly Scheduled volunteers of record, and the recruitment of new volunteers. Just the daunting challenge of completing the required paperwork to initiate the background check will be a deterrent to volunteering. Another concern in these times of budgetary constraints is that the expense of executing background checks will be cost-prohibitive. The consequences of implementing this policy will decimate the VAVS program and hinder VA's ability to fulfill its mission of providing quality service, in a timely manner, to our nation's veterans (many of whom are VAVS volunteers). Therefore, VA is urged to reconsider and reevaluate the policy to require background checks of all VAVS volunteers, and devise a broader plan to meet the needs of the agency, and the needs of a viable VAVS program.

Mr. Turner moved to accept the recommendation, and it was seconded. Ms. Ott asked for clarification of the section in the last sentence that says "VA is urged", since the federal government is responsible for this issue. Ms. McCombs replied that VAVS NAC recommendations may only be addressed to VA. Mr. Thomas wanted to add the numbers for how much VA saves by using volunteers.

Ms. McCombs provided the following numbers: in fiscal year 2005, volunteers contributed a total of 13,016,548 hours, equating to about 6,264 full-time employee equivalents, with the monetary worth of all VAVS volunteers at about \$228 million. VAVS volunteers and their organizations annually contribute an estimated \$42 million in gifts and donations.

Upon further discussion, Mr. Thomas entertained a motion to amend the recommendation to include the financial costs for each category of applicable background check processes.

Mr. Turner accepted the amendment to his motion, to include the monetary impact of the background checks in the recommendation. ***The amended motion carried.***

Ms. Balun provided a website for more information on the upcoming Executive Order on PIV's: www.itl.nist.gov/fipspubs/

Past Recommendations Status: Ms. Balun introduced Diane Heffington-Mitchell who provided a status report on recommendations approved since 2000. Ms. McCombs asked for clarification on 2005 recommendation number 2, since the recommendation was for the VA to implement the program, but VA indicates that the NAC will implement the program. Ms. Balun replied that research would be done on the original recommendation. Mr. Regan inquired about the implementation of a 2004 recommendation on recruitment. Ms. Balun said that apparently, the recommendation review process had been misinterpreted.

New Business: Mr. Thomas announced that Mr. Fred Burns has resigned as President of the James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board because of his new duties at the Veterans of Foreign Wars national office. Mr. Thomas advised the EC that four positions are now open on the Parke Board.

The next EC Meeting will be held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on October 11-13. The Hilton was approved at the last meeting, but due to the lack of communication from the hotel, and no contract, the Omni (which had been the second choice) was chosen.

Mr. Brown moved for the October EC meeting to be held at the Omni. The motion was seconded. ***The motion carried.***

Motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting.

The Executive Committee meeting adjourned at 11:54am.

OPEN FORUM
Wednesday, May 3, 2006 – 3:00pm to 4:30pm

Opening Remarks: Harley Thomas, NAC Executive Committee Chairman, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to Sparks. The Open Forum provides everyone an opportunity to voice concerns, offer suggestions, comments, etc.

Introductions: VAVS field staff introduced themselves. Ms. Balun then introduced Ezra (Ed) Safdie, Director of Health Care Engineering, VA Central Office.

Alternative Fuel Vehicles (AFV): Mr. Safdie thanked all VA staff and volunteers for their work. In 1992, the Energy Policy Act (EPAAct) was passed. VA (along with all other federal agencies) is mandated to perform vehicle fleet management up to certain standards. In 2001, VA was sued by the Center for Biodiversity for failure to meet the 1992 EPAAct. Three out of four of vehicles acquired each fiscal year must be AFV. This included purchased, GSA or commercial leased, transferred, and donated vehicles. Thus far in 2006, about 90% of acquired vehicles are AFV. Mr. Safdie stressed that vehicle acquisition is a local decision. As VA Senior Transportation Official, the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management is responsible to ensure VA compliance. In 2005, another EPAAct was passed. This new law requires that alternative fuel be used for the AFVs. The program is looking into converting diesel vehicles (that can be converted) to biodiesel.

Mr. Safdie took comments from the audience about government credit cards not being accepted.

Ms. Balun then introduced Pam Hirsch, Clinical Program Manager for Occupational Health, VA Central Office.

Physical Clearance for Drivers: Ms. Hirsch thanked the volunteers for all they contribute. There are about twenty medical conditions that need to be evaluated before employees/volunteers can drive and/or transport patients. Volunteers are required to be medically evaluated and, if they are disqualified from driving, they must be told why, so they can be treated. Ms. Hirsch went over the physical abilities volunteers must have in order to drive/transport patients.

Ms. Hirsch then took questions from the audience about why physicals for driver evaluations have to be done by Occupational Health; age limits for drivers; state driver's licenses; hearing tests without hearing aids; whisper tests; volunteer physicals being more complicated than the Commercial Drivers License (CDL) process; policies regarding drivers; and if volunteers with CDL's can bring evaluations from a private physician (and who covers the cost for this).

Mr. Safdie took questions from the audience on: state laws for handicapped parking and how they apply to volunteer drivers and their passengers; Washington state ferries; future plans for corporate sponsorship/hiring of professional drivers; safety of VA vehicles; guidelines on standardizations for adjudication process; and mileage limits and stress tests for drivers. The audience was reminded that volunteers supplement, not replace, paid staff.

Ms. Balun thanked Mr. Safdie and Ms. Hirsch for their respective presentations, whereby the Open Forum concluded.

OPENING CEREMONIES
Wednesday, May 3, 2006 - 6:00pm - 7:00pm

Call to Order: The 60th Annual Meeting of the VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee was called to order by Harley Thomas, Chairman, NAC Executive Committee.

Presentation of Colors: The colors were presented by the Nevada Army National Guard.

National Anthem: Dr. Robert Whittemore, World War II veteran, US Army, 44th Tank Battalion, sang the national anthem.

Invocation: The invocation was delivered by Gerry Conway, Chief, Chaplain Service, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System.

Welcome: Mr. Thomas thanked John Howard, VAVS Program Manager, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System, for all of his work on this 60th anniversary meeting. Mr. Thomas introduced Kurt W. Schlegelmilch, M.D., CHE, Director, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System, who welcomed everyone to Sparks, and thanked them for 60 years of leadership and support for the VA volunteer community. Dr. Schlegelmilch then introduced Jonathan B. Perlin, M.D., Ph.D., MSHA, FACP, Department of Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Health.

“VA Volunteers: Our Precious Gems”, a video created by the VAVS History Committee and Andrew Layton, student volunteer, was introduced.

Awards: Dr. Perlin presented awards to each of the represented NAC member organizations, in recognition of their participation in, and commitment to, the VAVS program.

BUSINESS SESSION
Thursday, May 4, 2006 - 8:30am to 11:30am

Call to Order: The session was called to order by NAC Executive Committee Chairman Harley Thomas.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Jerry Lazarri, Military Order of the Cootie, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System.

Opening Remarks and Meeting Objectives: Mr. Thomas encouraged everyone to review the Goals and Objectives listed in their meeting books. He then introduced Frank Cimorelli, VAVS Program Manager, Northern Arizona VA Health Care System and Chairman of the Special Events Committee.

Mr. Cimorelli, along with VA staff and volunteers, presented a skit on volunteerism.

Mr. Everett A. Chasen, VHA Chief Communications Officer, and NAC Chairperson, stated that the transformation of VA health care in the past few years is unprecedented. He then introduced VA Under Secretary for Health, Jonathan B. Perlin, M.D., Ph.D., MSHA, FACP, as a true advocate of veterans' health care.

VHA Update: Dr. Perlin thanked the volunteers for the depth of their commitment. He acknowledged Robley Rex, a World War I veteran, and VAVS volunteer, turning 105 this very day.

The budget for 2007 will be the largest absolute dollar increase ever put forward in the history of VA. Dr. Perlin discussed VA's clear and compelling mission, reviewing the agency's changes and improvements, emphasizing safe, effective, efficient, compassionate health care; as well as VA's strategic vision, focusing on structural and administrative transformation, and decentralization. He presented the current report card standings of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), citing improvements in patient safety and quality assurances. In addition, he reported a large increase in the number of clinics and counseling centers, thereby improving patient access. Overall, VA patients receive better care than patients in the private sector.

Dr. Perlin showed a clip from NBC Nightly News which praised VHA's many accomplishments. Noting that in the coming years health care will change from an industrial age model to an information age model, Dr. Perlin then reviewed innovative medical technology being used in VA, such as the implementation of electronic records (CPRS), making patient records available over ninety nine percent of the time; and medication bar coding, which significantly decreases prescription errors.

Concerned about the increasing number of obese patients, and the large percentage of patients with diabetes, Dr. Perlin discussed a joint initiative with the Department of Health and Human Services to combat these conditions, encouraging the audience to become more active, using pedometers to track individual accomplishments.

Dr. Perlin spoke of VA's role in national emergencies and medical research, stating that VA will be in the vanguard of genomic medicine.

In conclusion, Dr. Perlin expressed his appreciation to the volunteers for following the mission of VA, and for giving so much to the unique partnership that is VAVS.

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 2006 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).

VAVS Report: Ms. Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, presented an update on VAVS that included the following:

- Slides depicting the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, in New Orleans, Biloxi, and Gulfport, were shown. VA staff in affected areas were transferred to other VA locations. Gulfport is not operable at this time, and may not be in the future. Volunteers contributed \$276,000 in gifts and donations to VA facilities affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. What a wonderful accomplishment!
- Highlighted the benefits of establishing a web-based e-mail account.
- Reviewed VAVS history, with special emphasis on VAVS celebrating 60 years of service to our nation's veterans. The awards' presentation by Dr. Perlin Wednesday evening was one way of VA showing thanks to the NAC organizations' service to veterans, through VAVS.
- Introduced and thanked the members of the History Committee and the Special Events Committee. The Parke Scholarship award winner was a member of the History Committee, and he developed a video to promote the celebration of VAVS (video shown).
- Discussed the Fit for Life Volunteer Corps, a Health and Human Services and VA joint program to assist veterans in leading healthier lives. Nine volunteer job descriptions have been developed to assist with the program. It was hoped all attendees were able to visit the exhibit at the Health Fair yesterday to learn more about the program, and to learn more about MOVE (Managing Overweight and/or Obesity for Veterans Everywhere).
- Provided information on a joint program with the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), VAVS and EchoTaps. Volunteers in Bath, New York, played Echo Taps over a 42 mile area, qualifying for a Guinness World Record. NCA and VAVS will be partnering in 2007 to repeat the program across the country.

- Encouraged partnerships between veterans' service organizations, community organizations, and businesses, citing the recent inquiry from the Cartoonists Society in New York as an example.
- NASCAR legend Richard Petty, "the King", is the chairman of the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. The public service announcement (PSA) on family volunteering that "the King" and his son, Kyle Petty, helped produce was shown.
- Identified the four polytrauma centers within VA: Palo Alto, CA; Richmond, VA; Minneapolis, MN; and Tampa, FL. Military Order of the Purple Heart coordinated a donation of computers to the centers through a partnership with Soldier's Angels.
- Discussed each of the Voluntary Service priorities for 2006:
 - Recruitment and Retention:
 - Increase Baby Boomer volunteers by 5%;
 - Develop products to celebrate the 60th Anniversary for VAVS;
 - Develop products to promote Family Volunteering;
 - Develop training products for new VAVS staff;
 - Provide support through VAVS to the OIF/OEF patients and their families;
 - Expand partnership with National Cemetery Service;
 - Succession Planning for staff and volunteers;
 - Develop a partnership with Points of Light Foundation to present the President's Lifetime Award to VAVS volunteers.

American Spirit Awards: Ms. Balun presented the awards to: Ms. Margaret Trunick, VAVS Program Manager, Battle Creek VAMC, for Student Recruitment; Mr. Ralph Marche, VAVS Program Manager, VA Boston Healthcare System, for Corporate Recruitment; and Mr. Frank Cimorelli, VAVS Program Manager, Northern Arizona VA Health Care System, for Senior Recruitment.

VA Voluntary Service Award for Excellence: Ms. Balun presented the award to this year's distinguished recipient: Mr. Joseph (Joe) Dooley, VAVS Program Manager, Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital, Bedford, Massachusetts.

Mr. Thomas presented the following NAC Awards:

Female Volunteer of the Year: Chief Harriett L. Howard, VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System, Alvin C. York Campus, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Male Volunteer of the Year: Mr. George Ridsdale, American Red Cross, Stratton VA Medical Center, Albany, New York.

Mr. Thomas and Ms. Balun made a special presentation to Ms. Carol A. Williams, VAVS National Representative, American Red Cross, who will soon be retiring from her position.

The Business Session was recessed at 11:59am.

BUSINESS SESSION
Friday, May 5, 2006 - 8:30am to 10:15am

Call to Order: The session was called to order by NAC Executive Committee Chairman Harley Thomas.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Lucille Lazzari, VFW Auxiliary, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System.

National Cemetery Initiatives: Mr. Thomas introduced Richard Wannemacher, Jr., Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs. Mr. Wannemacher provided an overview of current initiatives, stating that the first mission of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is to provide burial space for veterans and their families, and to maintain those cemeteries as national shrines. The estimated number of deaths of veterans this year will be over 687,000, an all-time high. To put that in perspective, the average age of a World War II veteran is 82, and the average age of a Korean War veteran is 74. To meet the agency's need, construction has been funded for 63 state veterans' cemeteries.

Volunteer opportunities within the NCA are abundant. Mr. Wannemacher discussed the Bugles Across America initiative: Echo Taps.

Veterans Canteen Service: Mr. Thomas introduced James B. Donahoe, Director, Veterans Canteen Service. The Canteen Service and VAVS are both celebrating their 60th anniversary this year. Mr. Donahoe stated that Canteen Service is promoting a new initiative called "Wise Up to Healthy Eating", citing its correlation with VA's HealthierUS Veterans program. His presentation highlighted the changes that are coming with this new program. Mr. Donahoe also reported that all over-the-counter medications with pseudo-ephedrine in them have been pulled from Canteen Service stores because of their link to the manufacture of illegal drugs. He then discussed how Canteen Service is able to provide merchandise at low prices; and, the effects of the hurricanes on Canteen Service.

Subcommittee Reports:

Membership Subcommittee: J. P. Brown, AMVETS, reported on organizations that are not eligible for membership at this time, but can be

supported and mentored by NAC member organizations until the potential members strengthen their VAVS program to meet NAC eligibility criteria.

Recruitment Subcommittee: Mark Regan, American Legion, reported that the committee is looking for tools to promote recruitment that can be utilized by NAC organizations. He noted that there are useful materials available from VA that would help promote the VAVS program. Also, it is important that local representatives and deputy representatives share what they learn at their quarterly VAVS committee meetings with the membership in their affiliated units.

Recommendations Subcommittee: Judith McCombs, Vietnam Veterans of America, acknowledged the assistance of subcommittee members, Carol Williams, American Red Cross; and Michael Manning, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. Ms. McCombs presented an abbreviated history of VAVS recommendations, providing an overview of the past fifteen years; reiterated the duty of the NAC as stipulated in its Federal Charter: "The Committee serves in an advisory capacity by making recommendations to the Under Secretary for Health for the improvement of voluntary services to veteran-patients by means of coordination on a national level of the established plans and policies for community volunteer participation."; reviewed the process as per the SOP; and urged everyone to attend the workshop on this topic so as to maintain the vitality, viability, and relevance of the VAVS program. Ms McCombs discussed the format change in VA's response to the 2005 recommendations, and cited the Secretary's cover letter. VA concurred with those recommendations as to: the notification of termination of a volunteer, especially if that volunteer is a VAVS Representative; recognition of non-NAC member organizations that have had a positive impact on the VAVS program; adding a discussion page to the VAVS website so that volunteers can share their experiences, generate ideas, and recruit new volunteers; and, to encourage local VA facilities to coordinate annual programs or events (e.g. homeless fairs, stand downs, etc.), in partnership with community organizations, on **Make a Difference Day**. The VA did not concur with the recommendation to send thank you letters from the facility director to new volunteers after 90 days, stating it was unnecessary to mandate such action.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Committee: Ms. McCombs advised the NAC members that the submission date for nominations for the Volunteer of the Year Award has been changed to February 15th; and, that there is now a category for Adjunct Member for youth organizations. These changes have been incorporated in the newly revised SOP, dated 10/25/05, and distributed at this meeting.

Mr. Thomas thanked all the committee chairs for their reports.

The Business Session was recessed at 10:30am.

BUSINESS SESSION

Saturday, May 6, 2006 – 8:30am to 11:30am

Call to Order: The session was called to order by NAC Executive Committee Chairman Harley Thomas. He thanked all of the organizations responsible for sponsoring refreshment breaks, continental breakfasts, the brown bag lunch, and the reception. These generous donors are listed in the meeting book.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Terry Mason, VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System 2005 Volunteer of the Year.

Echo Taps: Mr. Thomas introduced Mr. Les Hampton and Mr. Gerry McDonald. Mr. Hampton provided background and objectives on the Echo Taps program, in honoring and remembering the men and women of the armed forces. Mr. McDonald discussed how the first Echo Taps program was created, and how it helped bring national attention to veterans' issues. A video demonstrating this initiative was shown.

It is planned for this program to be conducted at all national cemeteries worldwide. A documentary on this program is currently in production.

Recommendations: Ms. Judith McCombs presented the five 2006 recommendations for action by the NAC (with the sponsoring organizations in parenthetical notation).

Recommendation No. 1: (American Red Cross and Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.): It is recommended that VA undertake a pilot program to assess the efficacy of distributing VAVS quarterly meeting minutes electronically. National and local representatives and deputy representatives without computer access could opt out of the e-mail program, and would continue to receive the minutes by standard mail delivery. If implemented, an electronic minutes distribution system could effectively reduce the costs to VA of postage, paper, photocopying, man hours, etc., and could increase compliance for distribution of minutes "within 30 days of the meeting date". (References: VHA Handbook 1620.1.6.b(8)(b)1;2;3, page 8; VHA Directive 2001-043.4.j,(1);(2);(3), page 2.)

The Executive Committee suggests approval.

Ms. Gillian Bosh, The Salvation Army, moved to approve this recommendation, and Barbara Latham, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, seconded. **The motion carried.**

Recommendation No. 2: (Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks): At the National Advisory Committee (NAC) Annual Meetings, there are four workshops presented to those in attendance. These workshops are really cutting edge

presentations that provide the participants at these sessions with much needed information to help them fulfill their responsibilities as volunteers. It is recommended that a synopsis of each workshop be presented at each VA medical center quarterly VAVS meeting. This way we can keep all representatives and deputy representatives abreast of what is taking place at the national level. (VHA Handbook 1620.1.6.b(7)(a)&(b), page 7.)

The Executive Committee suggests approval.

A motion was made to approve this recommendation, and LaVerne Wozniak, Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A., seconded. **The motion carried.**

Recommendation No. 3: (Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A and Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.): “Recommends excused absence for hazardous weather. Representatives and Deputy Representatives ... may find occasion when a storm or its aftermath makes for hazardous driving. The city or area near the VA medical center may be clear, but the outlying area may still have ice or snow, ‘or flooding’, making it dangerous to drive to the VA medical center. If there is a quorum present for the VAVS meeting, it should go on as planned; but those who couldn’t attend because of the driving conditions should be excused.” In disapproving this recommendation in 2004, VA stated: “Inclement weather occurs throughout the country and VAVS Program Managers are best suited to know the conditions in the area and make decisions regarding canceling/rescheduling of the quarterly meeting.” (IL 10-2004-015). VA’s language suggests it did not fully grasp the intent of this recommendation. This recommendation does not impugn the judgment of program managers in assessing the broader ramifications of bad weather and its impact on scheduled meetings. Rather, this recommendation pertains to more localized weather problems. It does not apply to situations where a vast majority of representatives and deputy representatives (reps and deps) would not be able to attend the quarterly meeting; rather, it applies to situations whereby a few reps and deps may not be able to attend the quarterly meeting. A VA facility in an urban setting may have reps and deps in urban, suburban, and even rural environs (e.g. Albany, NY). Weather conditions could make for hazardous driving in rural areas, without impacting suburban and urban areas. Or certain city neighborhoods could experience localized flooding during rainstorms, making streets impassible, therefore, travel impossible. The program manager may be unaware of these occurrences at the time of the quarterly meeting, and, with a majority of reps and deps in attendance, the meeting should proceed as planned. Yet, at the same time, those reps and deps adversely affected by the weather should not be penalized with an “absence” (i.e. “-”) on the Cumulative Attendance Listing (CAL); they should be granted an “excused absence” (i.e. “E”) on the CAL. This distinction is especially significant for small organizations without the available resources to appoint the full complement of representation (i.e. 1 rep and 3 deps). Therefore, it is recommended that this recommendation, with its

clarifications, in total, be reconsidered by VA. (VHA Handbook 1620.1.6.b(9)(c), page 9; VHA Directive 2001-043.4.h, lines 6-8, page 2.)

The Executive Committee suggests disapproval.

A motion was made and seconded to open discussion. Comments for and against this recommendation were made; actual attendance versus excused absence was discussed; and, guidance on the voting process was requested.

A motion was made and seconded to disapprove this recommendation. **The motion carried.**

Recommendation No. 4: (WAVES National): VAVS governance documents mandate minimum guidelines for quarterly meeting minutes as to format, cumulative attendance, distribution, etc., to wit: “One copy . . . will be mailed within 30 days of the meeting date . . .” (VHA Handbook 1620.1.6.b(8)(b), page 8); and: “Within 30 workdays, one copy of the minutes must be mailed . . .” (VHA Directive 2001-043.4.j., page 2). Yet minutes are received up to four months after the month of the meetings, making it difficult to track attendance, especially in determining those representatives and deputy representatives who may have missed three consecutive meetings in the reporting period, resulting in termination, of an individual, or organization, when applicable (VHA Directive 2001-043.4.h(1), page 2; VHA Handbook 1620.1.6.b(6), page 7). “For uniformity of reporting, the format and symbols as shown in Cumulative Attendance Listing (see App. A) must be followed.” (VHA Handbook 1620.1.6.b(9)(a)3, page 9; VHA Directive 2001-043, Attachment A). The recording of attendance by the specified symbols is not followed: facilities use “A” instead of “-” for absent; “EX” instead of “E” for excused, etc. “Members will be excused when the VAVS Committee meeting conflicts with their presence at their affiliated organization’s state or national conventions.” (VHA Handbook 1620.1.6.b(9)(c), page 9; VHA Directive 2001-043.4.h., lines 6-8, page 2). Many program managers are reluctant to mark committee members absent, recording excused absences for two or more meetings. Most organizations hold their conventions in the spring and summer months, yet many of the recorded “E”s are in the winter months. Since an excused absence is counted as attending a meeting (VHA Directive 2001-043.4.h, lines 5-6, page 2), an over-utilization of unauthorized excused absences inflates attendance, and distorts the “FY to Date Organizational Representation Percentage” (which in many cases is calculated incorrectly). Therefore, it is recommended that in preparing minutes of the quarterly VAVS committee meetings, Voluntary Service Program Managers adhere to the guidelines as set forth in VHA Handbook 1620.1 and VHA Directive 2001-043.

The Executive Committee suggests disapproval. Compliance with, and enforcement of, mandated guidelines published in VAVS governance documents has long been a recurring theme in recommendations’ cycles, Executive Committee and National Advisory Committee meetings, and other venues. While

sympathetic to the concerns expressed in the recommendation, the guidelines have already been codified by VA. It is suggested that VA devise/design a process to ensure compliance, and/or a methodology of enforcement of its VAVS policies, procedures and practices.

Patrick Cody, Marine Corps League, moved to disapprove this recommendation, and Ed Hartman, Disabled American Veterans, seconded. **The motion carried.**

Recommendation No. 5: (Recommendations Subcommittee): While mindful of our national security issues, VA's plan to implement a policy requiring background checks of all VAVS volunteers will be detrimental to the VAVS program. VAVS volunteers take seriously the safety and security of veteran patients; and their loyalty, dedication, and commitment to improving the quality of life of the veteran patients, is demonstrated daily by the number of volunteers signing in, and the hours they generate. Subjecting VAVS volunteers to the intrusive and time-consuming process of background checks will have a negative impact on both the retention of the more than 120,000 Regularly Scheduled volunteers of record, and the recruitment of new volunteers. Just the daunting challenge of completing the required paperwork to initiate the background check will be a deterrent to volunteering. Another concern in these times of budgetary constraints is that the expense of executing background checks will be cost-prohibitive (e.g.: Special Agreement Check [SAC] Electronic Fingerprint Only is \$2,831,997; Finger Print Only Not Electronic, \$3,101,711; National Agreement Check [NAC], \$10,249,132; National Agreement Check Inquiry [NACI], \$12,406,844). The consequences of implementing this policy will decimate the VAVS program and hinder VA's ability to fulfill its mission of providing quality service, in a timely manner, to our nation's veterans (many of whom are VAVS volunteers). Therefore, VA is urged to reconsider and reevaluate the policy to require background checks of all VAVS volunteers, and devise a broader plan to meet the needs of the agency, and the needs of a viable VAVS program.

The Executive Committee suggests approval.

Del Turner, Military Order of the Purple Heart, moved to approve the recommendation, and Ralph Wozniak, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A., seconded. **The motion carried.**

Table Topic Reports: Mr. Turner – *Youth Initiatives*, commented that there was a lack of facilitators at the tables. Mr. Rabius – *Volunteer Use During Disasters* said that participants at his table suggested setting up a cascade callback system; VAVS staff would contact key people on the committee; there would be a communication plan in place with specific assignments and locations for key organizational representatives and deputies; and, when a hospital has practice drills, key VAVS volunteers should be involved in the practices. Mr. Hartman – *Transportation Volunteers* focused primarily on required physicals for drivers and what to do with ineligible drivers who don't pass physicals. Ms. Ott - VAVS

Committee Revitalization discussed more support for state officials at organizational meetings; program managers should ensure that the room used for the VAVS meeting promotes open exchange of ideas; meetings should have thorough agendas; explain why things can or cannot be done; take meetings to outlying areas; have a potluck dinner meeting; move meetings to nights or weekends; work on getting organizations to work together better; convey special needs at quarterly meetings; have chiefs mentor committee members; unclear expectations are confusing; minutes should be sent to national reps only; need younger volunteers interested in becoming representatives; certification process is too slow; explore utilization of subcommittees; and, energize participants. Mr. Ethun – *Cemetery Volunteer Assignments* covered the communication between cemeteries; and potential assignments, such as lawn care, providing directions, computer work, and chapel service. A report system needs to be coordinated between the national cemeteries and the VAVS office to make sure that credit is given to the proper groups and individuals. Mr. Brown - *Membership* suggested getting teens involved; corporate team events; union groups; more national corporations getting involved; mentoring new volunteer groups; getting military wives' organizations involved; and family member involvement. Mr. Regan - *Recruitment* discussed developing a peer program for new volunteers; transportation needs; requirements for volunteers; innovative and creative volunteer assignments; handouts to encourage recruitment; press releases promoting VAVS participation; and cultivating community partnerships. George Hawley – *VAVS Timekeeping Assignments* discussed the slowness of the system in processing data, and correcting errors; proper credit for cemetery volunteers; and, the need to pay attention to detail to ensure accuracy.

Presentation of Next Year's Meeting: David Tomayko, VAVS Program Manager, Pittsburgh, acknowledged volunteers from the Pittsburgh area and thanked all of them for assisting in this endeavor. He presented a video highlighting the Pittsburgh area. Next year's meeting will be May 2-5, 2007. Room rates will be \$91 per day, plus 14 percent tax = \$103.70.

Closing Remarks: Mr. Chasen commended Ms. Balun for her work, and thanked everyone who helped put the 60th anniversary meeting together. He said he hoped everyone would enjoy the evening's closing celebration dinner; and, wished everyone a safe trip home.

Mr. Thomas reminded everyone to complete the evaluation forms, as the information they provide helps plan for subsequent meetings.

Benediction: Ms. Gillian Bosh, National Representative, The Salvation Army, closed the meeting with prayer.

The VAVS NAC 60th Annual Meeting was adjourned at 10:00am.

NAC EC Critique Meeting
Saturday, May 6, 2006 – 10:22am to 11:36am

Call to Order: Mr. Thomas convened the meeting.

Critique of 2006 National Advisory Committee Annual Meeting:

Executive Committee members made the following comments:

- Expressed appreciation to AMVETS for sponsoring the brown bag lunch.
- Were pleased with the hotel accommodations.
- Facilitators should be assigned for the table topics.
- Many did not feel the Seamless Transition workshop was beneficial, as presented.
- In general, the expansion in the number of workshops this year, from 4 to 8, was acceptable, although this format change did make it difficult to attend all of the workshops. Some suggested shortening the length of the workshops to accommodate the larger number of them on the agenda. Course descriptions were not published, creating confusion about some of the topics offered. Also, attendees would like to have the opportunity to select their workshops. Perhaps a mechanism could be developed and incorporated in the registration process to facilitate this?
- The entertainment was excellent.
- Signage used by the hotel to direct NAC attendees to locations for activities, workshops, etc., was not clear and/or visible.
- Mr. Steve Hurd gave an overview of the meeting and workshop evaluations.
- Attendees felt the overall meeting objectives were accomplished; the speakers were well received; and they thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Perlin's presentation.
- Mr. Brown moved that Judith McCombs remain as the chair of the Recommendations Subcommittee. It was seconded. **Motion carried.**
- The EC commended Fred Burns' tenure as President of the James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board.

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:36am.

Educational Workshops

Fisher Houses

Faculty: Jan Dunham, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR); Barbara Latham, National Representative, DAR; Donna Moss, External Affairs Executive, Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (VAMC), Houston, TX.

Topics included: the history of the Fisher Houses; how to set one up; fundraising initiatives; and, how to publicize the project. The community is required to raise half of the funds needed to establish a Fisher House, and the Fisher Foundation will then match them. VA cannot raise any money for this project. There are 8 Fisher Houses associated with VA, and the Houston Fisher House was the first in Texas. The floor plan for a Fisher House was also reviewed.

Family Volunteering

Faculty: Sharon Croteau, Chief, Voluntary Service, Dayton, OH, VAMC.

This workshop presented ideas on how to get more families volunteering together. Objectives: be able to identify the role of the family volunteer unit in a VAVS program; understand the unique needs of a home-school volunteer program; and identify mechanisms for recruiting family volunteers.

Partnering with DOD and Family Support

Faculty: Marianne Mathewson-Chapman, National Guard/Reserve Coordinator.

This presentation included: the mission and purpose of the new Office of Seamless Transition; issues related to returning combat veterans; and the three categories of war wounded: the severely disabled; those that need further rehabilitation; and, the “hidden” war wounded. Currently, only 30% of the Guard and Reserve who have been separated from service are utilizing VA services.

VA and VAVS History

Faculty: Everett A. Chasen, Chief Communications Officer, VHA; NAC Chairperson.

Mr. Chasen covered the history of Voluntary Service within the VA; and, discussed the history and societal impact of U.S. legislation affecting veterans,

noting that the Romans were the first to provide veterans' benefits. Helping veterans has been a priority in this country since before the Revolutionary War.

VAVS Recommendations

Faculty: Judith McCombs, National Representative, Vietnam Veterans of America; Phil Riggan, VA Advisory Committee Management Officer; and Nikki Verbeck, Voluntary Service Specialist, Michael E. DeBakey VAMC, Houston, TX.

To maintain the vitality, viability, and relevance of the VAVS program, the faculty provided guidelines, instruction, and insight, on writing effective VAVS policy recommendations for the Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), through the Under Secretary for Health, as per the NAC charter and SOP. Topics included concept; format; justification; research; and, history.

Cemetery Service

Faculty: David Schettler, Director, Communications Management, NCA

Mr. Schettler discussed the various responsibilities of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and its many volunteer opportunities. Organizations and individuals are involved in funerals; cemetery maintenance; holiday decoration; etc.

Mentoring Youth Volunteers

Faculty: Nancy Babcock, Voluntary Service Specialist Intern, Battle Creek, MI, VAMC; Margaret Trunick, Voluntary Service Program Manager, Battle Creek, MI, VAMC; Del Turner, National Representative, Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Topics included were: opportunities for student volunteers in a medical setting; and, how adults and organizations may play a major role. Tips were provided on motivating youth; designing challenging volunteer assignments; and the involvement of organizations in the student volunteer program.

Recruitment Tips for Baby Boomers

Sabrina Clark, VALU Program Manager, DVA.

Provided an overview of the traits of baby boomers; the trends they gravitate toward; and barriers that keep them from volunteering. Also discussed were tips on how to work with baby boomers; and how to maximize opportunities to promote volunteer options.