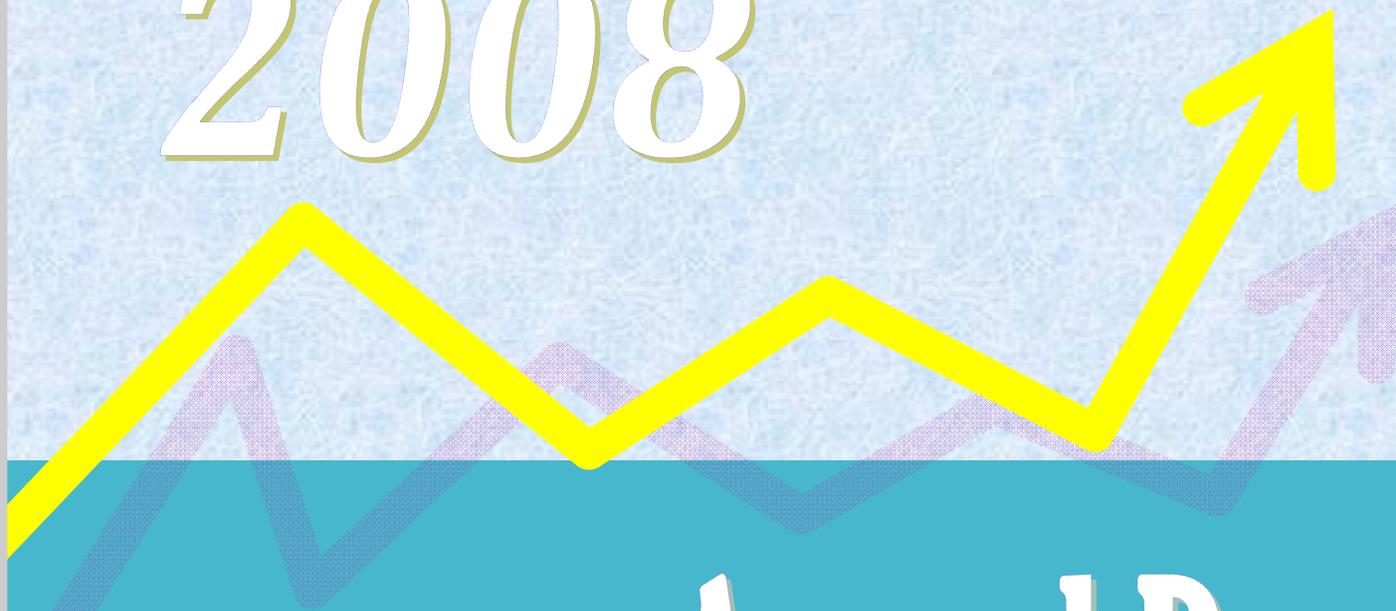


2008



Annual Report



Laura B. Balun, Director
Voluntary Service Office

Letter From The Director

VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) celebrated many successes and accomplishments, as well as faced new challenges together during the past year. We continue to be inspired and encouraged by the dedication of our volunteers, the innovative and creative spirit of our VAVS staff, and the responsiveness of our community partners.

This report includes highlights from the past year, program statistics, as well as our current and future priorities. This year's program data is once again most commendable, however statistics alone cannot fully describe or measure the total impact of volunteerism in the VA. Our volunteers and community partner organizations are helping VA to meet critical missions, improve veteran satisfaction, improve health care services and access to care, provide new services, and expand community outreach and advocacy.

I extend my sincere thanks to all of our VAVS staff, volunteers, organizations, and community partners for your remarkable service and generosity throughout the year. Thanks for all you do in service to America's heroes.

Laura B. Balun
Director, Voluntary Service Office

What is VAVS?

The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, the largest volunteer program in the Federal government, has provided 62 years of service to America's veterans seeking care in VA health care facilities. Since 1946, VAVS volunteers have donated 700.8 million hours of service. With more than 350 national and community organizations supporting the program, VAVS also is advised by a National Advisory Committee (NAC), composed of 65 major veteran, civic and service organizations.

VAVS volunteers and their organizations this past year contributed an estimated \$82 million in gifts and donations, which supplement VA appropriations to medical centers, clinics and nursing homes. These significant contributions allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist direct patient care programs, as well as support services and activities that may not be fiscal priorities from year to year.

As VA has expanded its care of veteran patients into the community, volunteers have become involved. They assist veteran patients by augmenting staff in such settings as hospital wards, nursing homes, outpatient clinics, community-based volunteer programs, end-of-life programs, respite care, national cemeteries, veteran outreach centers and benefits offices.

Our Mission:

To provide a structured Volunteer Program under the management of VA compensated employees in cooperation with community resources to serve America's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion.

VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC)

The National Advisory Committee (NAC) of the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) was established by VA Circular No. 117, May 17, 1947, and became a federally chartered advisory committee on February 5, 1975.

The Committee provides advice to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, 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. It keeps the officers and members of participating organizations informed of volunteer needs and accomplishments.

The NAC Executive Committee is made up of 19 member organizations that monitors and performs oversight of the NAC membership policies and procedures. Members of the Executive Committee are appointed by the Chairman of the NAC.

FY 2008 Priorities and Accomplishments

Enhance Voluntary Service Timekeeping System (VSS)

This priority is on hold due to lack of funding. VAVS Central Office continues to investigate various options for enhancement. Suggestions for enhancement may be emailed to: VHAVSAIS@va.gov.

Support Welcome Home Celebrations

Many facilities held Welcome Home Celebrations. These events provide an opportunity for newly discharged veterans and their families to meet VA staff and discover the benefits available to them.

Volunteers assisted by staffing informational booths, serving refreshments or escorting veterans around the activity. Each facility was provided \$1,000 from the national General Post Fund to assist with the celebrations.



Volunteers Hours : 11,479,008

RS Volunteers: 126,991

Monetary—\$26,232,658

Gifts & Donations :

Material—\$55,988,917

Total Donations—\$82,221,575

Develop Materials for Patient Feeding Volunteer Program

VAVS developed recruitment and training tools to promote and support volunteers to assist with **Patient Feeding Programs** in VA facilities. We have contacted the VAVS field staff to ask for examples of best practices and materials currently in use. We received many samples of materials on patient feeding programs, and we have reviewed these to identify “best practices” that were incorporated into our resource kit. The resource kit will include a recruitment brochure, training guide, and other resources that can be used for recruiting and training volunteers to assist staff with feeding patients.

Improve Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

VAVS field staff along with VAVS Representatives and Deputies have worked all year to reduce the volunteer turnover rate. In FY2007 VAVS' turnover rate was 29%. For FY2008 that has been reduced to 26%.

2008 Veterans Wheelchair Games
Team Lead-in



Atlanta, Georgia



Road to Recovery



Team River Runners



Surf Camp
2008



Little Anthony & the Imperials
National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans
Prescott, Arizona



VA Voluntary Service FY 2009 Priorities

- Develop Volunteer Training materials for Adaptive Activities
- Expand National Salute Program to Include Community-Based Events for Veterans And Their Families, such as Concerts
- Develop Orientation & Training Materials for National Cemetery (NCA) Volunteers
- Coordinate Training Materials to be Posted on the Web

