

VA Voluntary Service

NEWSLETTER

for the volunteers of the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York

August/September/October 2004 • Volume 4, Issue 3

Why Be a VA Volunteer?

When you volunteer, you give part of yourself - your time, energy, skills and feelings. You give to your family and friends, to your neighbors, to your community. Sometimes, you are giving to people you don't even know.

Giving is one of the reasons why people volunteer. Oftentimes, it is the contributions to others and your community that bring you feelings of self-fulfillment and the knowledge that you have made a difference.

Volunteering is also a way of saying thank you. It's a way of recognizing the countless others who, in big ways and small, have made life safer, richer and better through donations of time and effort. But there is more to volunteering than giving. As a volunteer, you also reap personal benefits and enhance your personal growth.



Regional Counsel Director, Joseph Moreno presents a citation to an Eagle Scout for completing a project in WNY.

Did you know that at the VA there are other benefits available to you? These are just some of the ways we say 'thank you' to you - our VA volunteers:

- Free parking
- Credit Union (*sorry, this is not available in Buffalo or Batavia*)
 - Savings accounts
 - Share/draft checking (no minimum balance, no monthly service charge)
 - Direct deposit, ACH deposits and payments
 - Debit cards with overdraft protection
 - ATM access
 - Automated audio access line (24 hours day/7 days week)
- Investment accounts (CD, IRA, Christmas club, etc.)
- Loan for personal use (new and used car, boat, home secured mortgages)
- Visa classic credit card
- Convenient hours on VA grounds
- Computer training (*limited opportunities in some locations*)
- Inoculations/immunizations
- Tax free shopping at Canteen
- Library/Resource Center
- Employee association membership (participate in special events, discount tickets, raffles, etc.)
- Complimentary meals (*with minimum of 4 hours volunteer time per day*)
- Volunteer recognition events/activities
- Scholarship opportunities (*for student volunteers*)
- Use of the golf course (*Canandaigua*)
- Use of gym equipment (*sorry, this is not available in Bath and Syracuse*)
- Free mammography and bone density screening tests (*Albany only*)



Canandaigua/Rochester VA volunteer, Helen Weeks (center) receives the "Above and Beyond Award" at the Annual Volunteer Recognition Event from Sandy Cobo (left) and Medical Center Director, David Smith (right).



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Produced by Network 2 Communications
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The VAVS newsletter has been created for all volunteers and potential volunteers of VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York. This publication is meant to showcase the wonderful work all of our volunteers contribute to VA. Please do not hesitate to contact anyone on the Advisory or Editorial Boards with your comments, corrections or suggestions.



Visit Our Network Web Site

www.va.gov/visns/visn02

Director's Message

Secretary Announces His Decision on CARES

Throughout the past year, we have been keeping you updated on the Department of Veterans Affairs CARES (Capital Asset for Realignment for Enhanced Services) Plan.

On Friday May 7, 2004 the Secretary announced his decision on CARES - the Department of Veterans Affairs' plan to modernize its nationwide health care facilities. For the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York, which includes the Albany, Bath, Buffalo, Canandaigua and Syracuse VA Medical Centers and 29 community based outpatient clinics, the CARES initiatives includes:

- Building a new spinal cord injury center at the Syracuse VA Medical Center.
- Transferring acute inpatient psychiatric beds from Canandaigua to Syracuse and Buffalo VA facilities. Outpatient care, nursing home, and domiciliary care will remain in Canandaigua.
- Developing a master plan by the end of 2004 for the Canandaigua campus that promotes improved services to veterans that includes construction of a new multi-specialty clinic and new nursing home complex to replace the patient care facilities currently located on the Canandaigua campus. The new nursing home complex will accommodate nursing home, domiciliary, residential rehabilitation, hospice and geri-psychiatric services.
- Carefully studying the appropriate size and location of new facilities, a detailed cost-effective analysis to insure maximum effective use of VA resources, and working with stakeholders to identify alternative uses for excess property.

Implementation of the Secretary's decision will take three to five years to implement and be done in such a way as to have minimal impact on patients and their continuity of care. Please be assured that you will be kept apprised at each step in the process.

VA Central Office will be providing guidelines to all VA Networks on the process their teams should follow during the implementation of the Secretary's decision on CARES.

Throughout the CARES implementation process Network 2 will continue to provide quality health care and excellent customer service. Our veterans deserve nothing less.

The Secretary's CARES report can be viewed in its entirety on VA's Web site at www.va.gov/CARES.

Sincerely,

William F. Feeley

Director, VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York



William F. Feeley
Network Director





Volunteer Opportunities

Job descriptions are often available for review in Voluntary Service. Orientation and training is provided.

Albany

- Good Neighbor Program: Visit homebound veterans for one to two hours each week to provide the caregiver with a much-needed break. Volunteers needed in Albany, Colonie, Delmar, Loudenville, Schenectady, and Voorheesville.
- Volunteer drivers for volunteer transportation program and for shuttle parking lot. Weekday and on-call positions available.
- Office Assistance
 - Education office (photocopying, assembling binders)
 - Home Care/Geriatrics and Extended Care
 - Patient Financial Services
 - Accounts Receivable
 - Performance Management
 - Nutrition and Food Service
- Craft Kit Volunteer: Distribute arts and craft kits to veterans on medical wards. Keep records of patient's name and craft kit taken. Provide general assistance with opening package and getting kit started (if needed).
- Bio-Med (2 positions available): 1. Computer entry (access program) to input data from manuals 2. Locating equipment throughout medical center.
- Safety Office: Assist Safety Officer in inputting information into Access database. Must of knowledge of Access computer program.

Bath

- Satisfaction Surveys (hospital and Long Term Care Units)
- *Drivers for Volunteer Transportation Network (Bath/Elmira/Wellsville)
- Birthday Program
- Nursing Home (escorts, small group arts and crafts, one-on-one visitations, feeding assistance and off-station trips)
- Women Veteran Mentoring Program
- ** Community Visiting/Respite Program
- Clerical
- Information Desk (Tuesdays)
- Computer Lab
- Historical Museum (seasonal)
- Veterans History Project: Document military stories for submission to the Library of Congress
- * *Requires unrestricted license and physical exam*
- ** *Subject to reference/background check*

Canandaigua/ROPC

- Companion Therapy
- Special care companion therapy for Palliative Care Ward
- Reminder phone calls to patients for appointments at Rochester VA Outpatient Clinic and Canandaigua
- Clerical Assistance
- Assist with Recreational Activities
- Volunteers needed to provide interaction with dementia clients.

- DAV/Volunteer Transportation Network Drivers
- Performance Groups (musical, hobby, etc. to perform for patients)
- Laundry Assistance
- Day Treatment Center Wood Shop at 1867 Mt. Hope Ave., Rochester

Syracuse

- DAV Drivers
- Pharmacy Greeter
- File Room

Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

- Activity Buddy Program (Nursing Home Care Unit) - Batavia
- Clerical - Both sites
- DAV Volunteer Transportation Program Drivers - Both sites
- Greeters: Welcome veterans and visitors, help them get to appointments, etc.
- Guest Parking Lot Shuttle - Buffalo
- Patient/Ward Visitation(s): Assist with patient care activities and visit with patients - Buffalo
- Patient Escort/Transport Service: Assist veterans to and from scheduled appointments, etc. - Both sites
- Partial Hospitalization Program (Main & Hertel Site): volunteers with woodworking experience for Wood Shop - Buffalo
- Pharmacy Service: Clerical duties, as well as assist in transporting various items





News from...

Albany

The Albany Volunteer Program has received community recognition for our volunteers, valuable services, and customer service.

On April 7, **Charles (Charlie) Drew** was honored as a medalist at the Capital District Jefferson Awards for Public Service ceremony. He



was one of nine finalists for this prestigious community service award. Charlie was a Volunteer Transportation Program volunteer and in February, was selected as Coordinator of the program. As a driver, he recognized the need for transportation on weekends for emergency room and ward discharges. His assistance has saved the Medical Center considerable transportation contract costs.

The Customer Service Committee chose Voluntary Service as the Customer Service Group of the Month for April 2004. Congratulations to all our volunteers who set an example of what customer service is all about!

Thomas Lindsay was featured in the "Caring Community" section of the (Albany) *Times Union* on April 27 for his service as a Welcome Buddy (visiting newly admitted veterans).

On May 12, the Volunteer Administrators Association of the Capital Region presented a **Philanthropic Contribution Award** to the Stratton VA Medical Center Voluntary Service for the "Because We Care" program that provides clothing, sneakers and toiletries to men and women veterans. Last year, 613 veterans were provided over 2,600 items because of the generous donations to this program.

On May 19, volunteers traveled to pick up our four new DAV vans (a seven passenger van and three, 12 passenger vans) for our **Volunteer Transportation Program**. These vans provide transportation to medical appointments for veterans in Albany, Malone and Schenectady. Thank you to all who donated funds to make this acquisition possible.

Bath

As part of our ongoing efforts to outreach to service connected and low income veterans, Voluntary Service (VS) hosted a "lunch and learn" program on April 8. Approximately 100 VAVS committee members, county and state veteran service officers, commanders and presidents learned about outreaching to veterans who need it most. Members were asked to identify eligible veterans and (as stakeholders) "shepherd" them through the VA Health Care System. The REST (ReEntry Support Team) philosophy, which embraces returning

soldiers and their family members to facilitate their integration into the VA Health Care system, was discussed. The REST team is responsible for providing a seamless transition for active duty service people and new veterans. A picnic for returning veterans and their family members will be held in the near future. Handouts and posters were made available for placement in the community.



The REST team presented a check to support the returning servicemember picnic. Pictured (left to right) elks representative, Dennis Oliver; Medical VA Care Line Manager, Ken Corey; Behavioral Health VA Care Line Manager, Freida Wheeler; James Voorhees, Lou Withiam, and Tony Specchio.

Canandaigua/ROPC

Over 180 people attended the annual Volunteer Awards Banquet to say thank you to the dedicated volunteers who support Canandaigua VA Medical Center and Rochester Outpatient Clinic. In addition to the hourly awards, "Above and Beyond" awards were presented to: **Greg and Jackie Seaborn, Carl Wagner** (Rochester Outpatient Clinic),





News from...

Marjory Gebo, Helen Weeks (Rochester Outpatient Clinic), and **Warren Jordans**. These awards are given to volunteers who go above and beyond their volunteer assignments.

VA employees are also recognized for their assistance and support.

Recipients were: **Kim Inman, Barb Gannon and Cindy Galens**.

Other incredible awards:

20,000 Hours: **Grace Ziemba**

26,875 Hours: **Annaleta Rutner**

23,440 Hours: **Frances Zimmerman**

30,000 Hours: **Romona Muscato**

45,000 Hours: **Terry Muscato**

Our patients LOVE the pontoon boat. This unique activity brings joy to the patients. However, the pontoon boat can be quite expensive. We are collecting funds to store the boat and to replace the carpet. If you or your organization would like to donate, simply send your check to Voluntary Service and denote that it is for the pontoon boat.



Craig Reeves with the lake trout he caught while on board the pontoon boat on Canandaigua Lake, May 12.

Syracuse

The Recreation Therapy Department and the Transitional Care Unit (TCU) nominated **Carol Walter** of the American Legion Auxiliary for



Carol Walter

“Volunteer of the Year” award.

Staff say, “the VA has so many wonderful and hard working volunteers, it is difficult to single out one as our volunteer of the year. However Carol has initiated and done so many things in order to make the quality of our veteran’s lives here as uplifting as possible. She always goes above and beyond.”

Carol’s dedication began in 1995 and includes 1,200 hours of service to veterans at the Syracuse VA Medical Center. Her achievements include:

- Organizing Wednesday bingo on the TCU
- Planning and implementing special monthly TCU luncheons
- Advocating to bring on other organizations to help develop the TCU Palliative Care rooms
- Providing seasonal decorations
- Develop the quarterly memorial service to honor those we have lost on the TCU
- Member of the VA Voluntary Service (VS) Committee, VAVS Executive Committee and many of the fundraising activities

She is a woman of insight who always takes the little things into consideration. She is always just a phone call away. She is certainly worthy enough to be called “Volunteer of the Year.”

Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

The Sons of the American Legion (SAL) Squadron #880 from Eden, New York, held an event to benefit the VA Western New York Healthcare System (VAWNYHS). On Saturday, March 20, a blues dance was held at their American Legion Hall, featuring well-known Billy McEwen and the Soul Invaders.

More than 200 people attended the dance, which included drawings, food, and fun. Committee Chairman, **Jerry Walters** and the SAL partnered with the Public Affairs and Volunteer Program Offices to promote the event. In all, the event raised \$1,000 to support day-to-day veteran needs.

Kudos and special thanks to three WNY volunteers for their more than 50 years of dedicated volunteer service. They were recognized at two Volunteer Recognition Ceremonies this past spring.

(see News From Western New York page 8)





Wish Lists

Before purchasing any item, please contact Voluntary Service to make sure that the item has not already been purchased/donated. Monetary donations are always accepted.

Albany

- ❖ Canteen books (for haircuts)
- ❖ Decaf coffee
- ❖ Afghans
- ❖ Shower shoes (flip flops)
- ❖ Search-a-word activity books
- ❖ Sneakers (mens - all sizes, new only)
- ❖ Denture adhesive
- ❖ Postage stamps
- ❖ CDTA bus tokens
- ❖ Funds for: purchase of replacement vans for volunteer transportation program, sending patients to rehabilitative games, fish tank maintenance

Bath

- ❖ Phone cards
- ❖ Canteen books (50 cents and \$1.00 denominations)
- ❖ Stationary and stamps
- ❖ Board games
- ❖ New socks
- ❖ Craft kits
- ❖ CDs/radios
- ❖ Relaxation tapes
- ❖ Coffee
- ❖ Bowling sponsors
- ❖ Duffle bags
- ❖ Sponsors/monetary donations for: Jump Start, birthday program, emergency travel, vocational programs (tuition support, uniforms, exam fees), gift cards for groceries, National Golden Age Games, Health Fitness Trail

Canandaigua/ROPC

- ❖ Sponsored luncheons, pizza parties, trips
- ❖ Tickets to sporting events and outings
- ❖ Styrofoam plates, bowls, cups, napkins and plastic dinnerware
- ❖ Personal care items (shampoo, shaving cream, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, lotion, new socks and underwear, etc.)
- ❖ Funds for: palliative care rooms, recreation services, storage and maintenance of pontoon boat, waterfall for Rochester Outpatient Clinic
- ❖ Craft items
- ❖ Gift Certificates (Wal-Mart, Wegmans, pizza places, McDonalds, Wendys, movies, etc.)
- ❖ Postage stamps
- ❖ Pool table
- ❖ Sweatpants (L and XL)
- ❖ Canned goods
- ❖ Games (checkers, dominos, chess)
- ❖ Memorabilia and monetary donations for the Veteran Heritage Museum
- ❖ Watercolor paints and brushes
- ❖ Black ballpoint pens
- ❖ Restaurant type, stainless steel oven/stove
- ❖ Electric scooters #4

- ❖ Garden needs: shed or materials to build 8' x 8' shed, 2 wheelbarrows, assorted garden tools, 2 each: flowering shrubs with final growth of 4' high, 12 Sky Rocket Junipers, assorted plants, 24 climbing vines, garden benches, 200 ft. hose reels and hose, money for maintenance

Syracuse

- ❖ Various items for new palliative care rooms (reading lamps, clocks, chairs that convert into beds)
- ❖ Resurfacing pool table
- ❖ Pool sticks
- ❖ Daily newspaper
- ❖ Haircuts
- ❖ Luncheons
- ❖ Bingo
- ❖ Personal care items

Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

- ❖ Funding for:
 - Patient activities - Both sites
 - Travel for patients in need - Buffalo
- ❖ Stair Climber - Batavia
- ❖ Treadmill(s) - Both sites
- ❖ DAV/Volunteer Transportation Program - Both sites
- ❖ Coffee Cart Program - Both sites
- ❖ 9" Color Television Replacement Project - Both sites
- ❖ Patient comfort items - Both sites
- ❖ Welcome Kits for new admissions - Buffalo





Calendar of Events

Albany

- September 14 1:00 p.m.
VAVS Committee Meeting
Auditorium
- September 17 11:00 a.m.
POW/MIA Remembrance Day
Chapel
- October 2 7:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Capital Region Veterans Stand Down
Elks Lodge, Rt. 155, Latham, NY
- October 17 9:00 a.m.
Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk
Gather at VA Medical Center parking lot

Bath

- August Dates date/time TBA
VAVS Picnic
Keuka Maid Boat Trip
- September 17 2:00 p.m.
POW/MIA Recognition Program
Medical Center Grounds
- October
VAVS Meeting date/time TBA

Canandaigua

- August 4 10:00 a.m.
VAVS Executive Committee Meeting
Bldg. 7, Conference Room
- August 19 5:30 p.m.
Annual Volunteer Picnic and Youth Award
Presentations
Courtyard 1, Pavilion

September 1 10:00 a.m.
VAVS Executive Committee Meeting
Bldg. 7, Conference Room

September 22 7:00 p.m.
VAVS Meeting
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

October 6 10:00 a.m.
VAVS Executive Committee Meeting
Bldg. 7, Conference Room

October 14 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
American Red Cross Blood Drive
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

Western New York (Buffalo and Batavia)

August 15 1:00 p.m. Parade
Veterans Day at the Erie County Fair
Erie County Fairgrounds, Hamburg, NY

September 8 1:30 p.m.
VAVS Committee Meeting
Batavia - Bldg. 4, Recreation Hall

September 17 9:00 a.m.
POW/MIA Recognition Ceremony
Hearthstone Manor, Depew, NY

October 5 9:00 a.m.
Commanders Day
Buffalo - Room 301

October 13 6:30 p.m.
VAVS Annual Service Organization Awards
Dinner
Hearthstone Manor, Depew, NY

October 23 1:00 p.m.
Chinese Auction
Batavia - Bldg. 4, Auditorium

Important Information for Returning Troops

Do you know of a service-member recently discharged from service in a theater of combat operations? If so, they may be entitled to valuable VA health care benefits right now.

The VA can provide them with free medical care for two years from his/her date of discharge from active duty for conditions possibly related to service, regardless of income status. Help us spread the word about the valuable benefits available to our returning soldiers. For more information have them contact the Veterans Service Center Manager at the nearest VA Medical Center.

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News From Western New York (continued from page 5)

Barbara Hall, affiliated with the B’Nai B’rith Womens Supreme Council, started volunteering in 1952 when the Buffalo facility was first activated. Over the years, she has volunteered in various offices, spending the past 12 years with Adult Day Health Care. With her infectious smile and compassionate dedication, Barbara has contributed more than 12,000 hours.

Eleonora (Ellie) Herrman was a mainstay at the VA for 50 years. Her affiliation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary and the Ladies of Charities kept this 92 years young individual very busy. Although her volunteering has placed her all over the Medical Center, most notably we remember her at the Information Desk on Friday afternoons. Due to health reasons, Ellie has stopped volunteering but continues to “stay in touch” as much as possible.

Vida Martaus has been a VA volunteer since 1954. She has served as a VAVS Representative for the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, as well as working in escort service and many special events. On Vida’s application (from 1954) she stated she would “not be available during canning season and that she wanted an assignment as a disc jockey!” 15,000 hours later, we’re not sure if she’s still doing either.



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