

Voluntary Service Office

News Central

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National VAVS Survey

The first ever, National Voluntary Service Satisfaction Survey was launched nationally on Monday, September 13th.

The survey will provide important feedback from volunteers and staff who do such important work in service to America's veterans. It will assist in understanding volunteer/staff experience; what's important to volunteers or someone who works with volunteers and how they view the service and support that local Voluntary Service offices provide in terms of placement, communication, training and education.

The survey results will enable improvements of the VAVS program. Drawing on staff and volunteer experiences, the survey will insure America's veterans continue to receive the compassionate care and assistance that VAVS has provided so well, for so long.

This comment from the survey completed by James Manser, Jr. Chief, P&SAS, at VA Roseburg Healthcare System (VARHS) sums up the impact Voluntary Service has on the care of veterans:

"Completed survey today...glad to support this outstanding program. The early success of Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service (P&SAS) was a result of a strong partnership with VAVS. To date, P&SAS has been blessed with 38 volunteers over the past 12 years. During that time span, 4 volunteers were hired by VA Roseburg Healthcare System. Through the partnership with VAVS, P&SAS has developed into a key service that supports direct patient care. Thanks so much for your continued support over the years!"

Boost Your Health by Volunteering

by *Miranda Hitti*

Want to be happier, improve your health, boost kids' test scores, and even lower crime in your neighborhood? Become a volunteer.

A British survey shows that communities with high levels of volunteerism tend to have healthier residents, better academic test scores, and lower crime rates than those that don't.

The study, funded by England's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), was conducted by Paul Whiteley, a professor of government at the University of Essex.

"It seems that when we focus on the needs of others, we may also reap benefits ourselves," says Whiteley in a news release.

Perks of Volunteering:

- More people had better health in communities with high levels of volunteerism.
- More people in communities with strong volunteerism said they're "very satisfied" with their lives.
- Communities with lots of volunteer activity had fewer burglaries.
- Students in areas with high levels of volunteerism performed better academically.

"Volunteer activity in the community is associated with better health, lower crime, improved education performance, and greater life satisfaction," says Whiteley.

The positive effects of volunteerism were open to everyone, regardless of an area's wealth.

"A relatively poor community with lots of voluntary activity can do better in relation to health, crime, and education than a relatively affluent community which lacks such activity," says Whiteley in the news release.



36th ASDVS Annual Meeting and Leadership Conference and Trade Show

By Patricia C. Fetzer, Chief, Voluntary Service, Birmingham VAMC, ASDVS Board Member

The American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services (ASDVS) annual meeting was held in Atlanta, Georgia September 9th through 12th. *Innovation meets Tradition* was the theme which sought to bring together new methodologies of volunteerism with long-time practices.

The training conference was attended by 45 VAVS staff. The Opening Keynote Address was given by Hamilton Jordan, Former White House Chief of Staff and author. Mr. Jordan spoke of his trials as a cancer survivor. After the Opening Ceremony, conference attendees joined their colleagues at a Welcome Reception in the Exhibit Hall. Over 40 vendors were present with displays, including a cyber café offering computer access during the two day Trade Show. A Silent Auction and 50-50 Raffle were also located in the Trade Show area.

VA staff participated in various roles. Frank Cimorelli, Chief Voluntary Service, Prescott VAMC, presented his *Five Star Guest Services* program to an overflow audience. Sabrina Coleman-Clark, CAVS, Program Manager, Voluntary Services, VA Maryland Healthcare System lead an educational session on *Recruitment: Sacrifice or Service* and another session titled *Prove It or Lose It: Gaining Validity for Volunteer Departments*.

Janice Kennedy, VAMC Chief, Patient Advocacy/Community Programs, was voted this year's recipient of the *Extraordinary Program Award* for the Musical Bridge's Program at the Augusta VA Medical Center.

Each year, VA staff has their own session to discuss issues pertaining to the VAVS program. Time was set aside at this session to recognize our Director, Jim Delgado. He will be retiring at the end of the calendar year after 36 years of Federal service. Mr. Delgado has been instrumental in acquiring funding for ASDVS and AVA for staff who wish to continue their education as well as bring continued professionalism to VAVS. Also during the session Steve Reid, VACO VHA Veteran Service Liaison, was recognized. Mr. Reid will be retiring from VA in November after 30 years of Federal service.

Sixty-nine ASDVS members took the Certified Administrator in Healthcare Volunteer Administration (CAVS) exam during the conference. Kudos to the staff that took time to study and take the exam.

A special thank you to the VAVS staff that took time to participate on committees, act as facilitators, and present educational sessions. Thanks also to VAVS staff on the ASDVS Board, Joe Dooley, CAVS and Ralph Marche, CAVS. Together we have and will make a difference in the quality and content of the educational offerings at this annual leadership conference. I encourage more of our VAVS staff to get involved in future committees and conferences.



ASDVS Board members who are VAVS staff at the conference.



Recruitment

Can we recruit volunteers via the Internet?

by Jayne Cravens

Yes, you can, and it offers a number of benefits:

- It's an effective, fast, no-extra-cost way to find volunteers.
- It's an excellent way to target non-traditional volunteers, and people that are under-represented on your volunteer ranks -- seniors, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, etc.
- You can reach a very targeted group, such as a particular kind of professional (a lawyer focused on the arts, a human resource professional in a particular region, an accountant with expertise in a particular kind of software, etc.)

Online marketing should not replace your offline recruitment methods. It will, however, augment those efforts, by reaching new audiences and reminding people how they can support your organization.

Before you post volunteer information in cyberspace, however, some words of caution:

- DO NOT recruit volunteers online (or offline, for that matter) until you have well-defined, written opportunity descriptions, and you have an immediate next step for people who call or email about these opportunities (a date for a face-to-face meeting or orientation, for instance). Asking for volunteers but not having a method to immediately place them into your volunteer program is like advertising a product you don't really have, and it can cause hard feelings about your agency on the part of potential supporters.
- Make sure those who answer your agency's phone know you are posting information to the Internet, in case there is an increase in phone calls regarding volunteer opportunities or people

call and reference "that e-mail you posted."

Use a combination of BOTH online databases (Action Without Borders, ServeNet, Volunteer-Match/Impact Online, etc.), your own web site, and online discussion groups (e-mail lists, USENET newsgroups, etc.).

If online volunteers -- people who help you from their home or work computers -- could be involved, then post such assignments to <http://www.onlinevolunteering.org> (formerly <http://www.netaid.org/ov>).

For a list of more volunteer-related sites and links, see <http://www.serviceleader.org/vv/vonline2.html>



Success Stories...

My 11 year-old son struggled with low self-esteem and hyperactivity, leading to a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Disorder. His grades and behavior suffered. Ritalin was prescribed.

This past summer, our family physician was supportive when my son volunteered at the local YMCA (where I am a staff member.) My son was paired with a special needs individual, to help as a job coach.

Volunteering changed my son. By the end of the summer, he stopped taking Ritalin. He no longer needs it. Now, my son brings home A's and B's.

Medicine treats affliction. Volunteering treats the spirit.
-anonymous





VAVS Calendar—October

Shmini Atzeret (J)	7-8
Simchat Torah	8
Columbus Day (Observed)	11
National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Salt Lake City, UT	9-16
Ramadan Begins (M)	15
AVA International Conference on Volunteer Administration, Portland, OR	20-23
Dusserah (H) 15	
Birth of the Bab (Ba)	20
National Boss's Day	21
Make A Difference Day	25
Daylight Savings Time Ends	31

American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services

Certification Exam Venues

- October 14 & 15, Abingdon, PA
contact: Joan Cardellino, CAVS
(215) 481-2493
- October 28, Nashua, NH
contact: Michelle Caruson, CAVS
(508) 830-2076
- November 4 & 5, Ann Arbor, MI
contact: Cindi McPherson
(616) 722-7581
- January 24, Kansas City, MO
contact: Bruce Hartley
(417) 269-4168



Fall's Beauty

Mountainous walls of rainbow delight.
Leaves burning colors from dark into light.
A crisp freshness tweaks at the nose.
Ancient woods beckon, 'come close'.
White tail deer stand hidden in plain sight.
Movement sends them off, near the speed of light.
Babbling brooks and clear mountain streams,
Add to the sounds of this wondrous new dream.
From daylight to dusk, Fall's beauty stands clear.
Then moonlight illumines the drop of a tear.

-Marty Naugher

Visit us on the web: www.va.gov/volunteer

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