



Youth Volunteer Krystal Shirrell (far left) receives her Girl Scout Gold Award and is honored at the White House by President Obama. Krystal's project "VET Support" is contributing to the White House initiative to support our military and Secretary Shinseki's initiative to end homelessness among Veterans.

# 2012 VAVS Annual Report



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# Letter from the Director



**Laura B. Balun, Director  
Voluntary Service Office**

As we begin another exciting year, the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) is humbled and astounded by the generosity of the volunteers, service organizations, and community partners we have had the pleasure to serve with this past year. Every day brings another story of the great work being done by VAVS to support and comfort those who have sacrificed for our Nation. It is truly a pleasure to be a part of an organization with such a profound impact on every life it touches. Not only does our work bring joy to the lives of Veterans nationwide, it enhances the lives of every volunteer, donor, and VA staff member involved.

This report highlights the accomplishments and program statistics of the past year and looks ahead to the goals we have set for the coming year. The Veterans we serve, and the times in which we live, are constantly evolving and so too must VAVS. As needs change for both Veterans and volunteers we strive to meet those needs by working together to find creative and effective solutions to every challenge we face. We will continue to take advantage of every opportunity to improve our program and remain at the forefront in the field of Voluntary Service.

We are eternally grateful to the dedicated volunteers, organizations, and all those in the community who give of their time and their means to honor Veterans and their families. Your continued support and commitment enables us to realize our goals each year and makes a difference in the lives of America's heroes. Thank you for all you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura B. Balun". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

## What is VAVS?

The VAVS Program, one of the largest volunteer programs in the Federal government, has provided 66 years of service to America's Veterans seeking care in VA health care facilities. Since 1946, VAVS volunteers have donated nearly 750 million hours of service. With more than 7,400 national and community organizations supporting the program, VAVS is also advised by a National Advisory Committee (NAC), composed of 55 major Veteran, civic, and service organizations.

VAVS volunteers and their organizations contribute in-kind gifts and donations, which supplement VA appropriations to medical centers, clinics, and community living centers. 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. In 2012, the combined total of volunteer time and donations exceeded \$353 million.

As VA has expanded its care of Veteran patients into the community, volunteer roles have also expanded. They assist Veteran patients by augmenting staff in medical care foster homes and respite programs, as well as hospital units, community living centers, outpatient clinics, community-based activities, and palliative care programs. Volunteers are also providing assistance at our VA national cemeteries, Veterans outreach centers, and VA regional offices.

## Our Mission

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

## VAVS National Advisory Committee

The NAC was established by VA Circular No. 117, May 17, 1947, and became a Federally chartered advisory committee on February 5, 1975.

The NAC provides advice to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, through the Undersecretary of Health, on the coordination and promotion of volunteer activities within VA health care facilities, along with other matters relating to volunteerism. It also 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 monitor and perform oversight of the NAC membership policies and procedures. Members of the Executive Committee are appointed by the Chairperson of the NAC.

# Ending Veteran Homelessness

Support the Secretary's initiative of eliminating Veteran homelessness.



On a single night in January 2011, 67,495 homeless Veterans spent the night on the streets of America. President Obama and Secretary Shinseki have committed to bringing this number to zero by 2015 and VAVS plays an important role in this mission. From participating in the annual VA2K, and supporting numerous Homeless Stand Down events, to working with community partners to provide assistance to Veterans transitioning from homelessness, VAVS programs nationwide are making great strides toward making sure those who served are not forgotten.

## Veteran Voter Registration

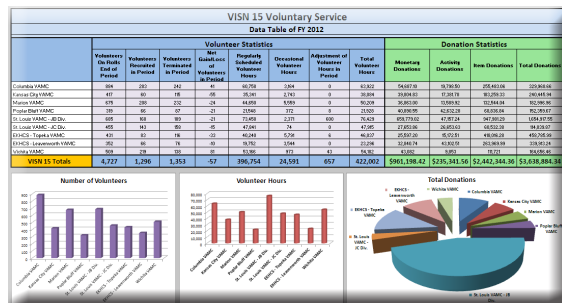
Assist with voter registration for Veteran patients.

VA Voluntary Service strives to meet the needs of America's Veterans in many different ways. To continue our mission of serving America's Veterans and their families, VA Hospitals have put forth a great effort to assist Veterans who wish to exercise their right to vote during local, state, and national elections. To date, more than 10,000 posters have been placed at VA facilities, and more than 250,000 flyers were provided at outpatient clinics and to new inpatients through their welcome packets, and comfort kits. As a result of the information provided by VA Voluntary Service Central Office, added emphasis on the topic, and local implementation, more than 7,000 outpatients and more than 7,500 inpatients were given assistance in registering to vote this past year. Additionally, over 1,200 volunteers have been recruited specifically for this assignment.

## VISN Volunteer Statistics

Standardize and promote VISN volunteer statistics.

VAVS program managers have been working in cooperation with VISN liaisons to improve how statistics about their programs are reported both locally and nationally. Using a standardized dashboard for reporting data on volunteer and donation trends makes it easy for program managers to clearly display their program's impact to leadership at their facilities and for the VAVS program office to compile data for all facilities at the national level.



## VAVS Staff Training

Focus on VSS training for VAVS staff.

In FY 2012, due to budget restrictions, faculty from VAVS 101: Basic Volunteer Management and VAVS 102: Ethics and General Post Funds brought the hot topics from each staff training together in an intense, two day training. The 23 attendees received lecture and simulated scenarios on volunteer requirements, screening, and assessment as well as managing donated funds and working with VA's Fiscal Service. Many graduates of the VAVS Academy go on to become program managers and VISN Liaisons. VACO staff continue to negotiate an update to the VSS system and hope that future VAVS Academy sessions will include detailed training on this platform.

# Veterans Concerts

## Veterans Appreciation and Welcome Home Celebration

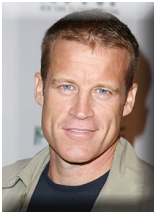
In 2012, 16 concerts were held across the nation as part of National Salute to Veteran Patients, an annual recognition by the Department of Veterans Affairs to honor men and women who served this country.



These Valentines for Veterans Concerts featured performances by 11 different performers. They were Aaron Tippin, The Dramatics, The Platters, The Chi-Lites, The Spinners, B. J. Thomas, The Grass Roots, Dennis Edwards & the Temptations Review, Gary Lewis & The Playboys, Lorrie Morgan, and Lee Greenwood.

These concerts served not only as a celebration of these brave men and women, but also as a means to reach those in the community who have not accessed the services offered to Veterans at the medical center and encourage volunteerism. In 2013 a major emphasis will be placed on reaching out to Veterans and educating them about resources available to help them train for and find employment in their community.

West Point graduate and Operation Desert Storm Veteran Mark Valley served as the 2012 Chairman for the National Salute to Veteran Patients. Mark has starred on TV shows like *Fringe*, *Boston Legal*, and *Harry's Law*.



Front Cover:

- Indianapolis VAMC Youth Volunteer Krystal Shirrell during a visit to the White House with other Girl Scouts.
- National Guard Volunteer PFC Brandy Shupe with Virginia (from Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU) during Kids Day at the 32nd National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Richmond, Virginia. PFC Shupe was one of nearly 200 volunteers at the NVWG this year.
- Steven Fausett, SSG, in his Operation Warfighter assignment at the Rex Robley VAMC in Louisville, Kentucky.
- Participant in the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic. Over 250 volunteers worked together with VA staff to make this exciting opportunity available to our Nation's Veterans.

- **Recruit Drivers for the Volunteer Transportation Network**
  - Develop a video with *The American Veteran*
- **Develop a Consistent Template for Volunteer Folders**
- **Develop a Consistent On-Boarding Process for Volunteers**
- **Develop the Ability to Accept Credit Card Donations**

### VACO Priority

- **Enhance VSS to Keep Up with Increasing Demands for Data**



VAVS Staff from VA Central Office and hospitals around the country came together for a special Veteran's Day Celebration and concert in Washington, DC.



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