



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON

Annie's Mailbox  
c/o Creators Syndicate  
5777 West Century Blvd., Suite 700  
Los Angeles, CA 90045

Dear Annie:

Over the last 150 years, our Nation has worked tirelessly to care for those who, as President Abraham Lincoln so eloquently stated, "shall have borne the battle." Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) operates 151 hospitals, 134 community living centers, and 825 community-based outpatient clinics, as well as many other rehabilitation and support activities, to deliver care to over 6 million Veterans. Coupled with our regional benefits offices and national cemeteries, VA employees and volunteers commit themselves daily across this country and overseas to assist and care for those who have given of themselves to this great country.

VA does not carry on this all important mission on our own. We work hand-in-hand with Veterans Service Organizations, civic and community partners, and caring individuals from across the country. For all of us, there is no higher calling.

Many of your readers join us each February in the "National Salute to Veteran Patients." This VA program encourages Americans to visit and volunteer at the local VA medical centers and to send letters of thanks or valentines to those who have protected our Nation. This year's National Salute is February 9-15, 2014.

Last year, more than 310,424 valentines were received at VA medical centers and 18,770 members of the public visited more than 72,000 Veteran patients. Thank you and your readers for your work in bringing attention to this worthy cause.

As the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, I encourage your thoughtful readers again to take some time this February to honor our Veterans. As always, Annie, thank you for your support of this outstanding program.

For more information regarding the National Salute and volunteer opportunities at a local VA medical center, please visit VA's Voluntary Service Web page at [www.volunteer.va.gov](http://www.volunteer.va.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric K. Shinseki".

Eric K. Shinseki