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The Eagle

Voluntary Service Central Office Newsletter
Leaders in Volunteer Management

From the Director

Greetings!

This year, I had the distinct pleasure of participating in the VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System, Northampton Campus, awards program, where there was much celebration, not only in the volunteer awards, but in recognizing Ruth Wheeler who has donated over 60 years of service to VA. What a tremendous accomplishment! The President, the VA Secretary, and Senators also sent her well wishes, how great is that!

I also had the distinct pleasure of spending part of my National Volunteer Week in the Northwest. Although it was chilly and rainy outside, it was a warm day in the room where the volunteers received their awards.

I would like to share the wonderful invocation that was offered that day by Rev. Dr. James V. Asparro, Chaplain, Portland VA Medical Center, which pretty much sums up what we all believe. It is always nice though when others realize the impact our volunteers have on the service to Veterans. Many thanks to Chaplain Asparro for graciously sharing the invocation.

“Creator, sustainer, redeemer, higher power, Holy God: We gather today to recognize the backbone of the VA--VOLUNTEERS. Be with us as we contemplate what it means to care for one another. We could just let Veterans get basic services with no special perks like lovingly knitted blankets and popcorn. We could allow disabled Veterans to get to the VA on public transportation, not get care at all, or provide them with first class volunteer transportation. We could allow them to be cared for in a sterile hospital, or provide seasonal decorations, books, televisions, DVDs, and so on. We could let our Veterans lie in a hospital bed alone only to speak to medical personnel, or we can be there with a smile and a compassionate listening ear as old friends who have been with them in harms way. Volunteers have gone beyond selfish concerns and have done something to help our Veterans feel special. Caring for others does not come naturally. But volunteers have made the sometimes lonely and tough world of Veterans a better place in which to live. In the community of the United States armed forces we take care of one another. This is what we always do. We fight together, we celebrate together, we defend our country together, we live together, and we die together. We pray that together volunteers will continue to provide hope, healing and recognition for a job well done. Be with us today and thank you for the food we are about to eat. To the higher power, spirit, lord, God to which we all aspire—Amen.”

I hope everyone had a very successful National Volunteer Week. Thanks for all you do in support of the VAVS program and in service to Veterans!



Laura B. Belen



I've Been Published...

By Jerry D. Brown, President, Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project

Laura Balun, National Advisory Committee (NAC) Deputy Chairperson and Veteran Affairs Voluntary Services (VAVS) Director, receives the first "I've Been Published" lapel pin from Jerry D. Brown, President of Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project (HVWP). This pin launches a new recognition for Veterans and guest editorial authors, who have been and will be published in Veterans' Voices magazine.

This year, Veterans' Voices is celebrating 60 years of continuous publication of the therapeutic writings of Veterans served by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health facilities. Veterans' Voices is the only national publication serving the writing of Veterans.

HVWP offers the writing program, in VA Medical Centers and other VA approved facilities, with writing aide volunteers who assist Veterans with the work and its submission to HVWP for consideration of publication.

Founder Elizabeth Fontaine and others saw the rewards in the philosophy "writing is good medicine." They assisted Veterans with writing and others saw the value and launched Veterans' Voices, which was followed by small monetary awards for being published as well as sponsored prizes. Now, with the addition of the lapel pin, the authors will be more easily recognized by their peers and be able to share directly with their buddies the value of writing.

The pinning took place at this years' VAVS NAC Meeting, held in March, in Charleston, SC.



First ever "I've Been Published" lapel pin presented to Laura Balun





Happy Trails... Until We Meet Again

By Rick Gillette, VHA/VSO Liaison, VAVS Central Office



Through my career, I've watched many friends head into retirement and wondered what it would be like, and now I find myself at those very crossroads. Many thoughts go through my mind... the ups and downs and the challenges we faced over those years. Upon reflection, I truly believe what made it bearable and even fun in some cases, was that we were all going through it together.

You see we are unique in Voluntary Service; we actually care about our colleagues, volunteers and their problems. Some of you that are new to the service may not understand why we say the "VAVS family," and that is because we are not in competition, we will bend over backwards to assist another VAVS program and their staff and volunteers because we all care about the program nationally. We care that volunteers at one or two other facilities are having problems with training or other barriers. You need

only to attend another training or conference from another service to understand that. Only at VAVS conferences and trainings will you see staff come up and hug each other and talk about how much they have looked forward to seeing each other and share their work experiences and problem areas.

Those are the memories I will take with me. The friendships that I have made over the years I will also take with me as they will not end just because I have ceased to be a federal employee, you see we are VAVS for life and so "Until we meet again"... I hope life takes you down many "Happy Trails."

Rick Gillette

Riding for a Good Cause!

By Michael C. Dougherty, Voluntary Service Specialist, Broward County VA Outpatient Clinic



Motorcycle enthusiasts and VA Volunteers gathered over Easter weekend at the Broward County VA Outpatient Clinic to kick off their first ever two-wheeled fundraising event. Riders of all ages and backgrounds took to the streets to benefit patient programs, while enjoying the South Florida sunshine and spring breezes.

To begin the event, a "Poker Run," riders first registered at the VA clinic and received one standard playing card. From there they visited three additional checkpoints in and around Fort Lauderdale, and were given another card at each. When they reached their fifth and final destination, they were given their last card, and the best poker hands won cash prizes. Riders' registration fees and other proceeds were contributed to the VA.





May

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|---|---------|-----------|---|--------|---|
| | | 1 | 2 |  Rick Gillette's Last Official Day! | 3 | 4 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |  |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 |  | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

National Salute Week to Veteran Patients Orlando Style!

By Sandra A. Placencia , Voluntary Service, Chief,
Orlando VAMC



National Salute Week to Veteran Patients began with a bang in Orlando, FL.



VSOs and Due Wop Singers distributed candies, bears, cards, and great tunes!

Did You Hear!!!

The Eagle Newsletter is going even greener! That’s right, starting in July the Eagle Newsletter will no longer be mailed out in a hardcopy format. This is being done, in an effort, to reduce even more cost and waste.

So, the June edition of the Eagle will be the very last hardcopy to be mailed out. After that, the Eagle will only be available by email and our website:

www.volunteer.va.gov



Voluntary Service—Central Office Staff

Laura B. Balun, *Director*
Mary Jo Munnely, *Lead Staff Assistant*
Tony Burtley, *Voluntary Service Specialist*
Rick Gillette, *Program Specialist*
Tyrone Green, *Program Analyst*



Marty Naugher, *Voluntary Service Specialist*
Kregg Parenti, *Voluntary Service Specialist*
Christine Feeser, *Staff Assistant (Detailed)*
Ashley Bigelow, *Student Clerk*

Telephone: (202) 461-7300
Fax: (202) 495-5323
www.volunteer.va.gov

