

**Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)
National Advisory Committee (NAC) Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
Wednesday, May 4, 2016 – 8:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.**

Call to Order: Ron Rolfes, Jr., National Representative, Forty and Eight and NAC Executive Committee Chairperson, called the meeting to order. He recognized former VAVS Director Laura Balun who was present. Ms. Balun thanked the EC for their service.

Invocation: The invocation was delivered by Cara Day, National Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Del “Bulldog” Turner, National Representative, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.

Roll Call: NAC EC attendance was duly recorded as follows:

	<u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u>
American Legion (The)	A
American Legion Auxiliary	P
American Red Cross	P
AMVETS	P
AMVETS Auxiliary	P
Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks	P
Blinded Veterans Association	P
Disabled American Veterans	P
Forty and Eight	P
Knights of Columbus	P
Marine Corps League	A
Masonic Service Association of North America	P
Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary	P
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.	P
National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution	P
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P
Soldiers’ Angels	P
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	P

VA and Other Staff Present:

Sabrina C. Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, VACO and Deputy Chairperson,
VAVS NAC

Vivieca Wright Simpson, Chief of Staff, Veterans Health Administration, VACO

Jeff Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office, VACO

Lorna Hatch, Chief, VA Voluntary Service, VA Maine Healthcare System, Togus, ME
and NAC Meeting Planner

Christine Feeser, CGMP, Program Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO and NAC Meeting Planner
Mary Jo Munnelly, Lead Staff Assistant, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Tony Burtley, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO
Tyrone Green, Program Analyst, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, VACO
Kevin Stanford, Health Systems Specialist, VACO
John P. Brown, III, President, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board
Rebecca Strauss, Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc.
Christopher Slawinski, Treasurer, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board
Sonja Brown, Chief, Voluntary Service and Public Affairs Operations, New Mexico VA Health Care System, Albuquerque, NM
Vicki Eatmon, Voluntary Service Specialist, Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville, NC
Tabitha Ingram, Program Specialist, Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center, Indianapolis, IN

Goals and Objectives: Mr. Rolfes presented the goals and objectives of the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting as listed in the meeting booklet:

1. Provide the VAVS NAC an opportunity to conduct its business in a manner that assures achievement of all responsibilities mandated by its charter.
2. Provide NAC orientation to new local and national VAVS Representatives and Deputies and new VAVS staff.
3. Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS policies and procedures.
4. Foster full and open communications among the member organizations, their representatives, and the Voluntary Service Central Office and field staff.
5. Provide the NAC member organizations with the educational and training programs designed to share information geared towards improving volunteer programs, with special emphasis on methods to recruit, retain, motivate, and recognize volunteers.
6. Furnish the NAC member organizations the opportunity to hear from VA leadership concerning key issues within the Department of Veterans Affairs.
7. Arrange for the NAC review of, and action on, recommendations.
8. Honor the national recipient of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award, **Shane Mathew**, student volunteer at the Miami VA Healthcare System, Miami, Florida.

9. Recognize **Ruth Wheeler**, American Legion Auxiliary, VA Central Western Massachusetts Health Care System, as the recipient of the 70th Anniversary Commendation.
10. Recognize **Gus Groat, Jr.**, Knights of Columbus, Battle Creek VA Medical Center, as the VAVS NAC Male Volunteer of the Year, and **Julie Stranges**, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, as the VAVS NAC Female Volunteer of the Year.
11. Recognize **Deborah Brookshire**, Chief, Voluntary Service, at the Southern Arizona Health Care System, Tucson, Arizona, as the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.
12. Recognize the following award recipients for the American Spirit Awards: **Reginald Hardy**, Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, Temple, Texas, for Student Recruitment; and **Ronni Miller**, Durham VA Medical Center, Durham, North Carolina, for Corporate Recruitment.

Additions/Revisions to Minutes of EC Meeting held November 2015: Mr. Rolfes asked for additions or revisions to the minutes. Bill Kilgore, AMVETS, moved to accept the minutes as written; the motion was seconded by Mr. Turner. **The motion carried.**

Host's Welcome: Sonja Brown, Chief, Voluntary Service Office, Albuquerque VA Medical Center, welcomed the EC and VAVS staff back to Albuquerque. She thanked VAVS for allowing her staff to host two years in a row and encouraged the attendees to explore the area's attractions.

70th Annual Meeting Agenda Overview: Lorna Hatch, Chief, VAVS, VA Maine Healthcare System and NAC Annual Meeting Planner, provided an overview of the agenda and associated activities. She encouraged everyone present to attend as many workshops and events as they could as they are excellent learning and networking opportunities.

Remarks – VA Advisory Committee Office: Jeff Moragne, Director, National Advisory Committee Management Office, presented the cross-committee collaboration model for the EC to consider. This concept involves VA advisory committees reaching out to one another to find opportunities to enhance their mission and objectives for the benefit of Veterans and their families and survivors. Mr. Moragne recommended the EC meet with other committee chairs and DFOs to discuss their mission and find commonalities. If multiple committees are making the same recommendations to senior leadership, those issues will be reinforced and elevated. It is also essential for the NAC to link its objectives with Secretary McDonald's MyVA goals and priorities in order to remain relevant within the Department. The Committee Management Members Handbook was distributed to EC members and will also be available on the NAC website. This handbook contains outlines of all of VA's advisory committees and EC

members should familiarize themselves with the missions of other committees and begin to think about possible collaborations.

Edward Eckroth, National Representative, Blinded Veterans Association, made a motion to establish a subcommittee that will explore and develop partnerships with other VA advisory committees; the motion was seconded by Mr. Turner. **The motion carried.**

VAVS and Strategic Partnerships: Sabrina Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, continued the discussion of partnerships, emphasizing the need to better communicate the mission of VAVS and the organization's ability to dramatically impact outcomes for Veterans in VA facilities. In addition to partnerships, the EC needs to consider how the committee can grow and bring in new ideas.

Katie Bowen, PMP, Campaign Director, Home of the Brave, discussed her organization's efforts in giving back to Veterans. Since 2012, Home of the Brave has used Veterans Day as anchor in reaching out to VAMCs and staffing VA activities with volunteers. Home of the Brave works with VAMCs to find ways to meet a wide variety of the facilities' needs. They have recently begun selling Honor Packs to the general public which include a comfort kit, hat, water bottle and other items for Vets in need. As of 2015, Home of the Brave is active at 94 VA sites and is looking to increase that by at least 20% this year. Registration for VAVS Coordinators ends May 31st. Ms. Bowen shared a letter detailing the experience of a volunteer at the Community Living Center at the Denver VAMC.

Kelly Kennai Grunig, Communications Director, Government Relations and Policy, YMCA of the USA, discussed what YMCAs across the country are doing to engage Veteran communities, particularly in light of the recent MOU with VA announced last September. The YMCA's mission is to strengthen communities through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. The reach and scope of the YMCA is significant, with more than 80% of Americans living within five miles of one of their facilities. Today the organization is focused more on preventive care rather than treatment and has been developing several programs to help address the country's chronic disease crisis. The YMCA has the largest diabetes program in the country having served more than 42,000 individuals. About 250 YMCAs are currently working with Veteran communities, addressing local needs, big and small. Some YMCA facilities include a Veterans' Center and many more across the country offer Veteran-specific services.

Vivieca Wright Simpson, Chief of Staff, VHA, added that she is committed to acting quickly when partnership opportunities present themselves, bringing the right people together and getting questions or issues resolved. There is a lot of work to do to make sure more of these partnerships take place for our communities and for our Veterans.

Subcommittee Reports:

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Rolfes discussed the nomination process for the NAC Male and Female Volunteers of the Year. Nine nominations were received for each

category; five of these were disqualified for formatting issues. The NAC Male Volunteer of the Year will be awarded to Gus Groat, Jr. and the NAC Female Volunteer of the Year will be awarded to Julie Stranges. The original finalist for Female Volunteer of the Year had to be withdrawn and the runner-up became the winner. Ms. Day asked how often the criteria for this award are reviewed and if that may be why so few nominations are received each year. Ms. Clark responded that the criteria is not the issue, it is the number of timely nominations submitted in the correct format. Mr. Rolfes said that it is the responsibility of the organizations rather than that of the Chiefs to stay on top of it.

Mr. Turner made a motion to accept the subcommittee's report and to forward it on to the NAC; the motion was seconded by John Kleindienst, National Representative, Disabled American Veterans. **The motion carried.**

Recruitment: Colonel Charles Gallina, National Representative, Knights of Columbus, and Recruitment Subcommittee Chairperson reported that the decline in volunteer hours has slowed in the last year with a total drop of 693 RS volunteers compared to 2,081 during the same time the previous year. The only area where the decline was greater than the previous year was in occasional hours. There are many opportunities to increase occasional hours and every organization should be looking at unique programs they can offer to address facilities' "wish lists" and other needs. Colonel Gallina suspects that the issue of declining volunteer hours is due to occasional hours not being recorded. The occasional volunteer pool serves as a recruitment source for regularly scheduled volunteers and he urged the organizations to really focus on the occasional volunteers over the next year. The numbers demonstrate that a commitment to recruitment and retention has improved, though there is a long way to go. The better an organization's relationship is with the VAVS Chiefs at the national level and with the program managers at facilities, the better their performance and management will be. He emphasized the importance of reading quarterly reports and making them available electronically.

Mr. Kleindienst made a motion to accept the subcommittee's report; the motion was seconded by Mr. Eckroth. **The motion carried.**

Membership: Mr. Turner, Chair, Membership Subcommittee reviewed the NAC membership categories and noted the changes made to allow service organizations to continue to qualify. Proposed additional membership criteria developed four years ago are still awaiting the impact of the public-private partnership guidance. He reviewed the changes in membership status for organizations, some of which have been dropped due to lack of volunteers at VA facilities. There are potential gains and the NAC welcomes organizations that have put forth the effort to become a full-fledged member in any category. There is considerable outreach to non-NAC organizations to convince them to try to become members. Some organizations are in danger of dropping off of the NAC due to absences at three consecutive NAC meetings. Contact information is out of date for many of the members and they are not receiving information from VACO and others.

Ms. Clark commented that guidance on public-private partnerships for VA and VHA is now available and should be used when vetting potential members.

Mr. Kleindienst made a motion to accept the subcommittee's report; the motion was seconded by James Moss, National Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. **The motion carried**

Ad Hoc VAVS NAC Partnerships: Colonel Gallina, Co-Chair, Partnership Ad Hoc Subcommittee, discussed the work of the committee developing the recommendations. He asked the EC members to take a hard look at the background material that supports the proposed recommendations. One recommendation that is critical to the long term growth of VAVS concerns the classification of VAVS Supervisor and Managerial positions. This item needs to be clearly understood by the NAC.

Karen O'Neal, Chief, Voluntary Service, and VISN 4 Liaison, Erie VA Medical Center, PA, and Co-Chair, Partnership Ad Hoc Subcommittee, discussed the role of the VAVS Program Chiefs on the Ad Hoc committee. Program Chiefs bring a focus on improving volunteer satisfaction and retention as well as promoting the viability of the VAVS program in the long term. This includes succession planning which indirectly impacts the patient care services at VAMCs across the country.

Mr. Turner made a motion to accept the committee's report; the motion was seconded by Mr. Kleindienst. **The motion carried.**

Mr. Eckroth made a motion to extend the Ad Hoc VAVS NAC Partnerships Committee for another year; the motion was seconded by Mr. Kleindienst. **The motion carried.**

Recommendations: George Braatz, National Representative, Masonic Services Association of North America and Chairperson, Recommendations Subcommittee, presented six recommendations for consideration by the EC to be forwarded on to the NAC for final approval. The proposed recommendations involved changes to the PIV badging process, tracking Vet Center volunteer hours, partnering with the NCA, strategic partnerships with NGOs, revisions to the classification of VAVS Supervisory and Managerial position, and privacy training methods for volunteers.

Ms. Wright Simpson assured the EC that the Under Secretary's office is fully committed to taking up the issue of position classification and there are several possible ways to go forward on the issue. The Under Secretary's office will advocate for preventing the advertisement of vacant VAVS positions at a lower grade than that of the previous VAVS staff member.

Each of the recommendations were approved unanimously and forwarded to the NAC.

NAC SOP Revisions: Patricia "Pat" Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, reported that there were no SOP revisions. Mr. Rolfes alerted her that there will be an SOP

revision to make the Ad Hoc Committee a permanent part of the EC. The revision should be ready by the October meeting and ready for a vote at the 2017 NAC meeting.

Parke Board Update: John P. Brown, III, President, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board, provided the update. He discussed the application and nomination process and encouraged EC members to reach out to local media with information on youth volunteering at VA facilities. The Park Memorial Fund financial statement was distributed to the EC for their consideration. Ms. Clark suggested looking to YMCAs for youth volunteers.

Christopher Slawinski, Treasurer, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board, reported that the Fund's checking account has been converted to a sweep account within the mutual funds, saving hundreds of dollars a year in fees. Many of the fees that have been charged to the checking account have been reinstated to the Fund. As of March 1, the Fund had \$15,352 in cash in the bank, and an additional \$4,000 has been collected. A refund of \$16,000 in unused scholarship money will be added to that total. Without using any of the principal, the Fund was able to pay out over \$53,000 from previous awards. The \$88,000 for outstanding scholarships includes \$35,000 in scholarships to be awarded this year. Donations have increased by 46% (\$18,000 to over \$26,000 last year).

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

VAVS Partners, Inc. Treasurer's Report: Rebecca Strauss, Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc., provided an informational report to the EC.

Unfinished Business:

Future 2017 Annual Meeting Plans: Ms. Hatch reported that the top contenders for the next NAC meeting, St. Louis and Louisville, have been withdrawn as possibilities. We still are waiting for proposals from Dallas, Indianapolis, and Cary.

New Business:

Fall 2016 EC Meeting: Ms. Clark called for suggestions for the next EC meeting. Mr. Moragne urged the committee to consider meeting in the Washington, D.C., area and he will do everything possible to get the Secretary to meet with the EC. Mr. Turner commented that neither the Secretary nor the Under Secretary were present at the 70th Anniversary of the NAC to pay respect to the millions of hours volunteers have donated to Veterans and suggested foregoing Washington, D.C., in favor of visiting the site of the next NAC meeting. Mr. Turner moved to hold the Fall 2016 EC meeting in the location of the next NAC Annual Meeting; Ms. Strauss seconded. **The motion did not carry.**

Mr. Eckroth said that the information and access that has been gained by holding the previous two EC meeting in Washington has been exceptionally valuable. Mr. Braatz

made a motion to schedule the Fall 2016 EC meeting in the Washington, D.C., area; Mr. Eckroth seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

Appointments:

Recommendations Subcommittee: Mr. Rolfes asked Mr. Braatz to commit to another one-year term as Chair of the Recommendations Subcommittee. Mr. Braatz agreed to accept the Chairpersonship.

Good of the Order: Mr. Eckroth will assemble the membership for the new subcommittee focused on partnering with other VA advisory committees.

Reflections on the Executive Committee: Ms. Wright Simpson said it was a pleasure to be able to participate in the NAC's 70th Anniversary meeting. Ms. Clark's advocacy and keeping the work of volunteers directly in front of the Under Secretary is very important. The VA really wants to build upon the work of the volunteer organizations. She asked EC members to provide Ms. Clark with suggestions for who they would like to have present at the Fall meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

BUSINESS SESSION Thursday, May 5, 2015 – 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Call to Order: Ron Rolfes, Jr., Forty and Eight, called the session to order.

Invocation: Delivered by Steven Gribble, Chaplain, New Mexico VA Health Care System.

National Anthem: Performed by Alfredo Bourget, Trumpeter, Korean War Veterans, New Mexico VA Health Care System.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Louise Salas, VAVS Representative, Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary, New Mexico VA Health Care System.

Welcome: Andrew M. Welch, MHA, FACHE, Medical Center Director, New Mexico VA Health Care System, welcomed the NAC back to Albuquerque. Staff and volunteers worked very hard to make the 70th Anniversary meeting a memorable one. The Albuquerque VA had 1,293 volunteers last year accounting for almost 117,000 hours of

service as well as \$440,000 in monetary and in-kind donations.. He exhorted everyone present to take advantage of this opportunity to share ideas and come up with best practices.

Roll Call: The roll call of the NAC members was duly taken as follows:

<u>Organization Name</u>	<u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u>	
<u>Service Member Organizations</u>		
American Ex-Prisoners of War		A
American Gold Star Mothers	P	
The American Legion		A
The American Legion Auxiliary	P	
American Red Cross	P	
AMVETS	P	
AMVETS Auxiliary	P	
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks	P	
Blinded Veterans Association	P	
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.	P	
Disabled American Veterans	P	
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P	
Forty and Eight	P	
Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.	P	
Knights of Columbus	P	
Korean War Veterans Association	P	
Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., Inc.	P	
Ladies Auxiliary, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.	P	
Marine Corps League		A
Marine Corps League Auxiliary	P	
Masonic Service Association of North America	P	
Military Order of the Cootie	P	
Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary	P	
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc.	P	
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	P	
National Society Sons of the American Revolution		A
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P	
Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	P	
The Salvation Army	P	
Soldiers' Angels	P	
Sons of the American Legion	P	
United Daughters of the Confederacy		A
United Veterans Services	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P	
Veteran of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P	
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	P	

Associate Service Member Organizations

Catholic War Veterans		A
Catholic War Veterans Auxiliary		A
Corporation for National and Community Service		A
Daughters of the Union Veterans of the Civil War (1861-1865)		A
Fleet Reserve Association	P	
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.	P	
I.B.P.O. Elks of the World, Inc.	P	
Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.		A
National Ladies Auxiliary, Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.		A
National Society Colonial Dames XVII Century		A
United Auto Workers		A
Women's Army Corps Veterans Association	P	

Donor Member Organizations

The Bowlers to Veterans Link (BVL), Inc.		A
Silver Star Families of America		A
Veterans Voices Writing Project, Inc.	P	

Associate Donor Member Organizations

N/A

Honorary Member

Sons of AMVETS	P
Women Marines Association	P

Opening Remarks and Meeting Objectives: Mr. Rolfes thanked Ms. Clark and her staff, the NAC Planning Committee, and the 70th Anniversary Planning Committee for preparing the meeting and lining up educational workshops on key issues and initiatives. He also recognized VAVS retirees and past reps and deps attending the meeting. He reviewed the agenda and meeting objectives, as well as the purpose of the NAC. He welcomed Jeff Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office, VACO.

A Historical Perspective of Voluntary Service to Veterans: Darlene Richardson, VHA Historian, presented a history of the relationship between volunteers and Veterans in America. Moving chronologically from the United States Sanitary Commission's efforts during the Civil War, the federal authorization of asylums for volunteer service members (which would later become VHA), through the massive growth of Veterans organizations following WWI and President Truman's initiative to enhance the VA. Under James Parke, the first Director of Voluntary Service at the VA, VAVS became a professional entity.. Ms. Richardson charted the development of VAVS, including their taking responsibility for the National Salute. Volunteers are the heart and soul of the VA and they are part of a proud heritage.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Mr. Rolfes thanked the Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc., and Blinded Veterans Association for sponsoring the break and acknowledged Angela Ware, Director of Organizational Development, Military Outreach Services, Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Youth Leadership through Service: Katie Combs, Southwest Region Military Youth of the Year, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, discussed her experiences growing up in a military family and the importance of the Boys & Girls Club in her adolescent development. The Boys & Girls Club Youth of the Year Program supported her future goals by awarding her \$46,000 in scholarships towards medical school along with the opportunities to enhance her professionalism and develop networking skills. She discussed ways of getting youth involved in VA volunteering and leadership including the Boys & Girls Club's Keystone and Torch Clubs. Military youth in particular are a great source of VA volunteers. Keeping current with the latest social media trends is important for reaching a wide variety of youth and providing opportunities for younger volunteers to participate in an organization's social media presence is a great way to engage them.

Homeless Veterans Program Update: Lisa Pape, Executive Director, Homeless Veterans Program, VHA, provided an update on the progress made by VA in addressing Veteran homelessness, where gaps remain, and where NAC organizations can help. In 2010, the VA determined to end Veteran homelessness and partnerships have brought that closer to reality. The HUD VASH Veteran voucher program has been one successful example. Homelessness has decreased by 36% in the last six years, with a 50% decrease in Veterans sleeping on streets. 360,000 Veterans and their families have come into their programs and more than 36,000 Vets and their families have been prevented from becoming homeless. There are still about 48,000 homeless Veterans in America. The VA has adopted the Housing First philosophy, providing housing for the Vets and then wrapping them in services. Preventing homelessness has become the major focus for social services, rather than managing homelessness. To date, 23 cities and two states have ended Veteran homelessness. The 25 Cities Initiative and the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness have been very helpful in getting cities to identify their homeless and how to house them. Congress has awarded HUD 78,000 Section 8 vouchers for Veterans. Supportive Services for Veteran Families grant program has been a game changer for VA, funding community-based non-profits that provide security deposits, rental subsidies, and case management for Veterans in 300 cities across the country. The program also helps with rapid rehousing and has saved more than 60,000 Vets from eviction. America's Veteran homeless population is an aging group which means there are additional barriers. Public and private partnerships have been critical but food security gaps remain.

VAVS Award Presentations:

Mr. Rolfes presented the 70th Anniversary Commendation Award to Ruth Wheeler, American Legion Auxiliary, VA Central Western Massachusetts Health Care System, in honor of 65 years of voluntary service. Mr. Rolfes also presented the VAVS NAC

Female Volunteer of the Year to Julie Stranges, National Daughters of the American Revolution, VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System, and the VAVS NAC Male Volunteer of the Year to Gus Groat, Jr., Knights of Columbus, Battle Creek VA Medical Center.

Ms. Clark presented the American Spirit Award for Student Recruitment to Reginald Hardy, Central Texas Veterans Health Care System, Temple, Texas, and for Corporate Recruitment to Ronni Miller, Durham VA Medical Center, Durham, North Carolina.

Ms. Clark and Steve Moynihan, presented the Voluntary Service Award of Excellence to Deborah Brookshire, Chief, Voluntary Service, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, Tucson, Arizona.

Mr. Rolfes adjourned the business session at 11:20 a.m.

BUSINESS SESSION Friday, May 6, 2016 – 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Call to Order: Mr. Rolfes called the session to order.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Victoria Salazar, VAVS Representative, American Gold Star Mothers, New Mexico VA Health Care System

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Mr. Braatz, Chair of the Recommendations Subcommittee presented the proposed recommendations previously approved by the EC.

1. A) Extend the life span of a volunteer flash ID badge (with no computer access or access to a restricted area) from one to three years.
B) Standardize volunteer ID badges as flash badges at all VA Medical Centers (unless the volunteer requires the badge for computer access or access to a restricted area).

Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc. moved to adopt the recommendation; Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks seconded the motion.

The motion carried

2. A) Develop and implement procedures to ensure that volunteers, volunteer hours, and donations provided for Vet Centers are accurately documented.
B) Acknowledge and recognize these dedicated volunteers and community partners who serve at Vet Centers nationwide.
C) Expand the Voluntary Service System to include service code for Vet Center volunteers.

AMVETS moved to adopt the recommendation; AMVETS Auxiliary seconded the motion. **The motion carried**

3. Recommend that the Department of Veterans Affairs ensure that volunteers and volunteer hours (both regular and occasional) are appropriately recorded when volunteering at national cemeteries. VAVS staff will serve as the subject matter

expert on guiding NCA to develop appropriate assignment guides, establish parameters for effectively tracking NCA volunteers and their hours, as well as encourage recognition events. In addition, there are resources (templates for application, assignment guide, training, etc.) available.

Blinded Veterans Association moved to adopt the recommendation; Daughters of the American Revolution seconded the motion. **The motion carried**

4. To expand the VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee's categories of membership to include post-9/11 Veterans' Groups and other non-governmental organizations whose Mission Statement and/or Charter include provisions to serve Veterans. Exempt current Certified VAVS NAC organizations from public-private partnership regulation as identified in VA Directive 0008 and VHA Directive 1098. It is recommended that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs fully support active coordination, wherever feasible, with post-9/11 Veterans' Groups/NGOs including, but not limited to Team Rubicon; Team Red, White and Blue; and the Mission Continues. The NAC membership further recommends that the VA take action to authorize additional non-governmental organizations and representatives from the Office of Community Engagement as part of the VAVS National Advisory Committee. It is also recommended that the Secretary, through the VAVS Director, explore the expansion of the VAVS National Advisory Committee's membership categories, beginning Associate Service Member category, to include such groups.

Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. moved to adopt the recommendation;

Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks seconded the motion. **The motion carried**

5. Approve VAVS to proceed with publishing an updated Position Classification Guide for VAVS Officers/Program Managers in concert with the HR Classification Workgroup, signed by the Under Secretary for Health or designated official, of determine if VA or VHA should implement policy to allow VAVS Officers/Program Managers to be classified in a job series, such as Health Systems Specialist – 0671 series or similar, that would allow growth to GS-14, or at a minimum, allow the most prevalent and numerous factors of the job rule the classification.

AMVETS moved to adopt the recommendation; Red Cross seconded the motion.

The motion carried

6. Revise or amend VA Directive 0004 to reflect that volunteers be permitted to complete privacy training (and all other mandatory training) via other methods outside of TMS. Revise or amend VA Directive 0004 to reflect that training documentation be recorded in the official Volunteer Personnel File in lieu of TMS.

United Veterans Service moved to adopt the recommendation; Gold Star Mothers seconded the motion. **The motion carried**

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Report given by Ron Rolfes, Jr., Chair of the NAC Volunteer of the Year Subcommittee. Gus Groat, Jr., Knights of Columbus, Battle Creek VA Medical Center, was selected as the VAVS NAC Male Volunteer of the Year and Julie Stranges, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, VA Greater Los

Angeles Healthcare System, was selected as the VAVS NAC Female Volunteer of the Year. Mr. Rolfes urged the organizations to ensure that they have followed the formatting guidelines completely. Every year good candidates are disqualified due to formatting issues, particularly letters not being submitted on organization letterhead. Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc., made a motion to accept the report; AMVETS seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

Recruitment: Report given by Colonel Gallina, Chair of the Recruitment Subcommittee. The downward trend in the number of RS volunteers logging hours has continued in first six months of FY 2016 but has been cut by about 50%. The decline is across all age groups. RS hours are down 42,429 from last year and OCC hours are down 76,196. These numbers continue to be impacted by policies, procedures, and economic considerations, though the commitment to retention and recruitment at all levels appears to have increased. Organizations should look to improve occasional hours by participating in every medical center event and looking at how their organization can address local facilities' "wish lists." The national Reps and Deps are the chief recruiters for each organization; developing and maintaining organization Rep/Dep training is essential. Quarterly reports need to be reviewed for Reps/Deps attendance and any nonperformers should be replaced. Also, AJRs should be read and analyzed for trends in hours. Strategic partnerships are helping to recruit younger volunteers but recruitment should be taking place across all age groups. Be aware of the different recruiting strategies for different age groups and find new ways to tap into them. Following recruitment, retention starts immediately. Continually motivate volunteers with meaningful assignments and recognition. Gold Star Mothers moved to accept the report; Polish Legion seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

Membership: Report given by Mr. Turner, Chair of the Membership Subcommittee. Mr. Turner discussed the five categories that comprise the EC membership. Service Members are now required to be participating at 25 sites instead of 30, this has helped several organizations remain on the EC. Failure to attend three consecutive NAC meetings will disqualify an organization from membership. Associate Service Member organizations have seen a big drop in NAC attendance. If an organization is not present, they cannot convey to their national leadership the information presented at the meeting. The recently formed Strategic Partnership subcommittee is going to look into VA guidance on vetting potential partners to see if it is comprehensive enough for organizations applying for NAC membership. New organizations that are granted membership into the NAC will serve a probationary term of two years. The NAC has an additional non-voting membership category known as Honorary Member meant to recognize past VAVS NAC service and smaller organizations. Mr. Turner reviewed some potential gains and partnerships. He encouraged parent organizations to reach out to auxiliaries to help them grow. He asked that organizations be sure that their email addresses are up to date so that their leadership will receive important information from VACO. Sons of American Legion moved to accept the report; the Red Cross seconded the motion. **The motion carried**

Standard Operating Procedures Ad Hoc Committee: There were no changes to the SOP.

Partnership Ad Hoc Committee: Karen O’Neal, Co-Chair of the Partnership Ad Hoc Subcommittee, discussed the role of the committee in providing advice to the EC and collaborating with the Recommendations subcommittee. The ad hoc committee researched and prepared background material for the six recommendations presented to the NAC and held an open forum to answer any questions NAC members may have had. Ms. O’Neal provided an update on where the NAC’s recommendations from last year. In October, the NAC’s recommendation received approval from the Secretary and an action plan with dates and responsible parties. The VSS Enhancement Project was approved also and planning is well underway.

Colonel Gallina, Co-Chair of the Partnership Ad Hoc Subcommittee, commented on the ad hoc committee process and which recommendations the group will be focused on leading up to the Fall EC meeting. The committee’s role is at the strategic level. PIV badging, training issues, and job descriptions for VAVS staff have a dramatic impact through the system down to the local level and affect recruitment and retention. He encouraged Chiefs and local Reps and Deps to generate recommendations that could improve the operational efficiency. The recommendations that come out of the NAC must be worthy of going to the Secretary, not issues that could be adjudicated at the local level or within VAVS.

Mr. Rolfes commented that the Partnership Ad Hoc Committee has put a spark into the EC and looks forward to further recommendations. He opened the floor for new or unfinished business and there was none. A short video followed commemorating the 70th Anniversary of VA Voluntary Service. Ms. Clark recognized Sadie Stuart for her work in putting together the video.

VA Voluntary Service Report: Ms. Clark reported on some of the activities of the VAVS and how they address VHA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Shulkin's five priorities: access, employee engagement, high performance network, best practices, and restoring trust. Last year, VAVS brought in \$105,822,061 in donations and five million hours of voluntary service, adding \$356 million in value to the agency. 309,000 citizens were engaged during the 2015 Summer of Service. Dr. Shulkin posed several questions to the EC and Ms. Clark discussed how VAVS has been responsive:

- How can General Post Funds be used to support the VA’s priorities? VAVS is training its staff to be accountable for the donations it receives and in the process training Service Chiefs at medical centers. VAVS staff are the subject matter experts in their facilities on utilizing General Post Funds. The VAVS Academy is providing training on GPF utilization to new Program Managers and staff.
- How can VA reform its policies and procedures to assist in serving Veterans better? VAVS and the NAC have made recommendations for updating policies and streamlining onboarding including the just-approved six recommendations to be sent up to the Secretary.

- How can we recruit and retain additional volunteers at VA to help us address VA priorities? VAVS recommends youth outreach, providing assignments that matter, strategic partnerships, and providing youth training in the STEM fields and encouraging them to return to serve at the VA.
- How can we communicate better with our volunteers to enlist their help in these priorities? We can tell them about the opportunities and become better storytellers about the wonderful work being done.

Ms. Clark posed her own questions for the NAC to consider: What skills or talents do you currently have that you are not utilizing to their fullest? What organizations (internal or external) could you be forming relationships with? Is your “Why” important enough to tell someone about? She concluded by urging attendees to find and use their own voice and gifts both for recruitment and in serving Veterans.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Mr. Rolfes thanked the Knights of Columbus for sponsoring the morning’s break.

National Advisory Committee Chair Report: Michael Odle, Executive Director, VHA Office of Communications, presented the Chair’s report. Last year, nearly 75,000 active VA volunteers contributed close to 10 million hours of service. Combined with occasional hours, our Veterans benefited from over 11 million hours of service time, equal to the work of about 6,000 full-time employees. This time served combined with the donations received amounts to over \$356 million in total value for volunteer giving. He discussed the tremendous contribution that Fisher Houses provide Veterans and their families and expressed his gratitude for the support that the volunteer organizations provide at these facilities. Volunteers are crucial to improving the Veteran experience and that is why he wants to expand their role. The VA needs to create environments, toolkits, processes, and other roles that are easily replicated from one facility to another. The Volunteer Transportation Network is one area that needs to build capacity and efficiency. Mr. Odle understands the importance of the structure and processes that go into making the volunteer program run smoothly and he is committed to addressing the continuing challenges. He hopes NAC attendees gain three things from their time at the Annual Meeting: networking with counterparts at other Veteran, civic and service organizations and building relationships that will lead to better services for our Veterans; learning and exchanging best practices that can spread across the VA system; and gaining insight into where the VA health care system is going and where the volunteer program is headed in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Human Hug Project: Ian Michael, Hug Ambassador (Sponsored by Dr. Neil McClymont, OSF St. Anthony Medical Center, Rockford, Illinois, and A Creative Touch, Inc.) discussed how the Human Hug Project originated from his own experiences in coping with post-traumatic stress disorder upon returning from Iraq. The self-funded

project emphasizes the healing power of human touch and it has made an amazing impact at 34 VA facilities across the country over the last year.

Gino and Erin Greganti also shared their experiences with PTSD and how they became involved with the Human Hug Project. The group showed videos documenting their efforts spreading awareness about PTSD and countering some of the negativity directed at Veterans returning home. The response has been overwhelming, especially from people who were initially hesitant about the idea. The fear that can keep a soldier alive in war becomes their worst enemy once they return home and creates isolation within the Veteran. Using love to combat that fear can change the face of PTSD. Mr. Michael challenged everyone in the voluntary services department to open their arms to Vets and embrace them to let them know they are safe when they enter a VA facility.

Closing Remarks: Mr. Rolfes delivered closing remarks, thanking everyone for their participation and especially to Sonja Brown and her staff for hosting the NAC.

Sonja Brown, Chief, Voluntary Service and Public Affairs Operations, New Mexico VA Health Care System, Albuquerque, NM, announced the winner of the Good News Story, “Longest Serving VA Volunteer: Ruth Wheeler.”

The business meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

New Representative and Deputy Representative & New VAVS Staff Training Session (One session was held on Wednesday, May 4, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM): *Faculty: Nathan Witt, Chief, VAVS, Bay Pines VA HCS, Bay Pines, Florida and Colonel Charles H. Gallina, VAVS National Representative, Knights of Columbus.* This session provided an orientation for new VAVS NAC Representatives and Deputy Representatives, and new VAVS staff, and offered current information to seasoned VAVS NAC Representatives and Deputies. The latest trends, statistics, and recommendations in VAVS volunteering were presented and discussed. VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives serving on local VAVS Committees were encouraged to attend this session.

Open Table Forum: Attendees participated in discussions on the following topics: Social Media Engagement, Youth Leadership and Engagement, Youth Leadership and Service, Outreach, Volunteer Onboarding, Vet Center Volunteers, NAC Recommendations, NCA Volunteers, VSS, Free Tax Service, and Open Discussion.

Opening Keynote Address: Timothy E. Eernisse, Director of Development & Marketing, WGVU Public Media Sponsored by: Fleet Reserve Association, provided the opening Keynote address, entitled, “What’s Your Why?” His presentation revealed how understanding your “WHY” would reveal the core factors that motivate you.

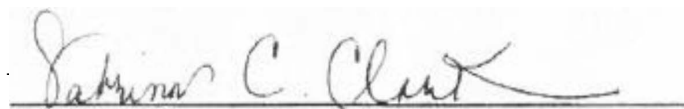
The following Workshops were offered to all attendees during the conference:

Workshop 1. Maximizing Collaborations - Faculty: *Lelia Jackson, Director, VHA Office of Community Engagement.* This session provided strategies for enhancing and developing partnerships with Nongovernmental Organizations. It provided best practice tips and tools to build and sustain partnerships and increase awareness about current partnership initiatives.

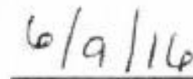
Workshop 2. It's About Time: Burnout and Volunteer Resource Managers - Faculty: *Melissa Heinlein, PhD, MA, MS, CAVS - Chief, VAVS, Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA:* Attendees learned that burnout is studied more often among volunteers than volunteer resource managers. In this interactive workshop, participants heard about recent research on burnout and volunteer resource managers and learned how VAVS compares with others in the field of volunteer management. This workshop provided an opportunity for volunteers to hear how they can support Voluntary Service in their VA Medical Center.

Workshop 3. Don't Leave Them Hanging: Reducing Volunteer Wait Times - Faculty: *Deborah Brookshire, M.Ed., CAVS- Chief, VAVS and Mandy Martell, MHA, Voluntary Service Specialist, Southern Arizona VA HCS, Tucson, AZ.* Attendees learned how to take more control of the process and reduce the time it takes to on-board volunteers. This interactive session provided new tools to identify barriers, improve procedures, and implement strategies for process sustainability. The tools presented can be applied to any improvement project.

Workshop 4. The Social Media Dance: Where Do You Find Yourself - Wallflower or Emergent? - Faculty: *James Todd, Chief VAVS, Richard L. Roudebush VAMC, Indianapolis, IN and Daniel Morgan, Director of Communications, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing.* This session discussed how local VAVS program offices and partnering organizations could develop a collaborative proactive approach to overcome the challenges of utilizing social media.



Sabrina C. Clark
Director, Voluntary Service Office
Acting Chairperson, National Advisory Committee



Date