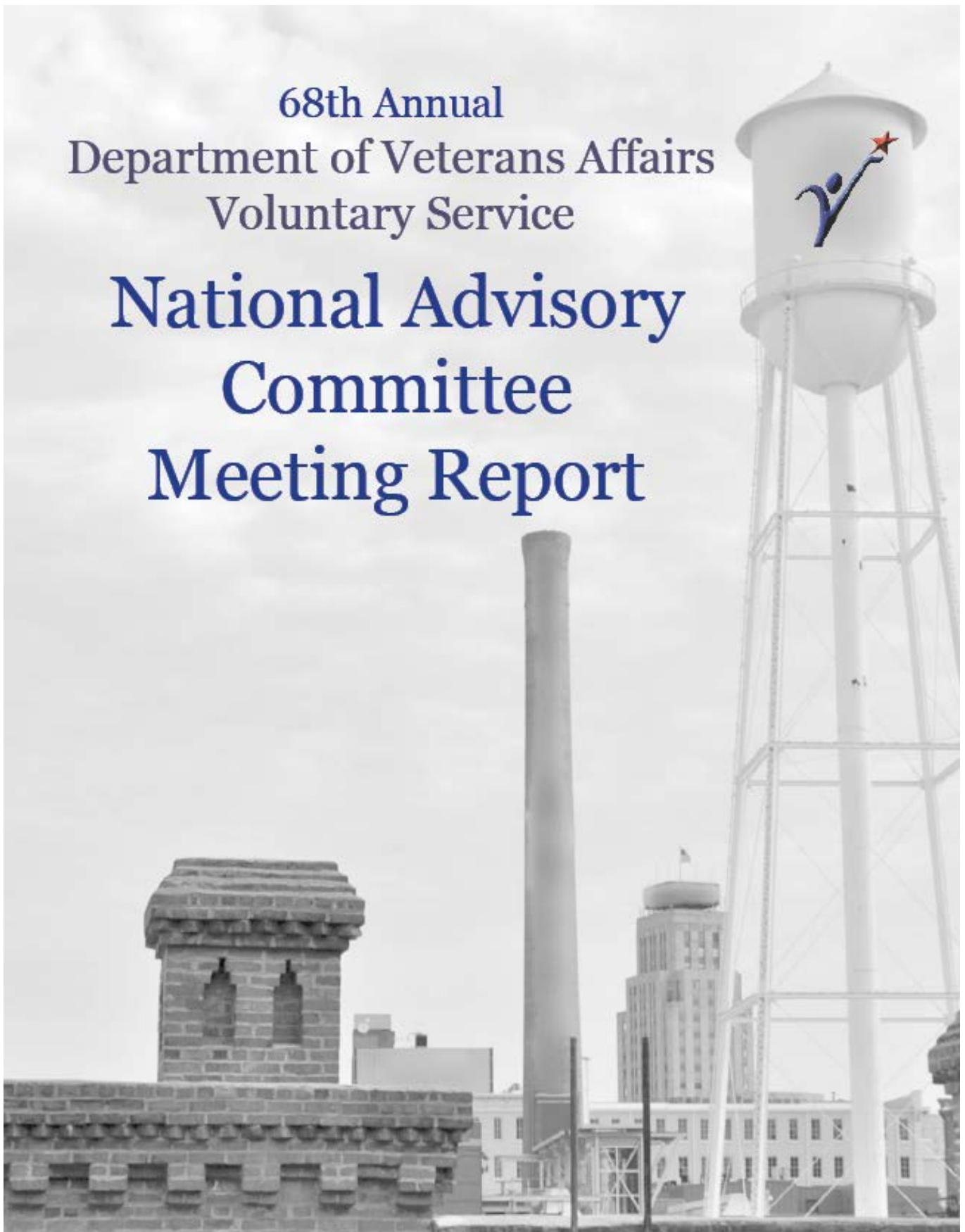


68th Annual
Department of Veterans Affairs
Voluntary Service

National Advisory Committee Meeting Report



**Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)
National Advisory Committee (NAC) Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
Wednesday, April 23, 2014 – 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**

Call to Order: Robert Hennings, Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks and National Executive Committee (NEC) Vice Chairperson, called the meeting to order.

Invocation: The invocation was delivered by Charles Gallina, Knights of Columbus.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by Del “Bulldog” Turner, Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Roll Call: NEC attendance was duly recorded as follows:

	<u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u>
American Legion (The)	P
American Legion Auxiliary	P
American Red Cross	P
AMVETS	P
AMVETS Auxiliary	P
Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks	P
Disabled American Veterans	A
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P
Forty and Eight	P
Knights of Columbus	P
Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars	P
Marine Corps League	P
Masonic Service Association of North America	P
Military Order of the Cootie	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
The Salvation Army	P
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	P

VA and Other Staff Present:

Sabrina C. Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, VA Central Office (VACO)
Lorna Hatch, Chief, Voluntary Service, VA Maine Healthcare System, Augusta, Maine
Ronni Miller, Chief, Voluntary Service, Durham VA Medical Center
Mary Jo Munnelly, Lead Staff Assistant, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Christine Feeser, Program Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Tyrone Green, Program Analyst, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Ryan Steinbach, Assistant VSO Liaison/VHA, Voluntary Service Office, VACO
Jerry Butler, Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc.
Christopher Slawinski, Treasurer, James H. Parke Memorial Fund Board

Goals and Objectives: Mr. Hennings presented the goals and objectives of the VAVS 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, **Shannon Mathew**, student volunteer at the Miami VA Healthcare System, Miami, Florida.
9. Recognize **Darlene Laughter**, Chief, Voluntary Service, at the Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville, North Carolina, as the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award for Excellence.
10. Recognize **Alyce Knafllich**, VAVS Representative, AMVETS, Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville, North Carolina, as the VAVS NAC Female Volunteer of the Year and **James Fortune**, VAVS Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dayton VA Medical Center, Dayton, Ohio, as the VAVS NAC Male Volunteer of the Year.
11. Recognize the following award recipients for the American Spirit Awards:
Fred Lesinski, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, Charleston, South Carolina, for Student Recruitment Category and **Deborah Brookshire**, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, Tucson, Arizona, for Corporate Recruitment Category.

Additions/Revisions to Minutes of EC Meeting held October 2013: Mr. Hennings asked for additions or revisions to the minutes. Mr. Turner moved to accept the minutes as written; the motion was seconded by Patty Piening, AMVETS Auxiliary. **The motion carried.**

Host's Welcome: Ronni Miller, Chief, Voluntary Service, Durham VA Medical Center, welcomed the EC and VAVS staff and expressed her gratitude for the honor of allowing Durham to host the meeting again.

68th Annual Meeting Agenda Overview: Lorna Hatch, Chief, Voluntary Service, VA Maine Healthcare System and NAC Annual Meeting Planner, provided an overview of the meeting's agenda and gave kudos to VACO staff for organizing everything.

VAVS Update: Sabrina Clark, Director, Voluntary Service Office, voiced her pleasure at being able to attend her first EC meeting in person and apologized for how quickly the meeting had to be put together, a process which she hopes to improve. After a brief overview of her 22 years of service with the VA, Mrs. Clark gave an outline of what her presentation at the NAC would consist of: key accomplishments, 2013 statistics, 2014 projects and priorities, VAVS challenges, and the way forward.

Mrs. Clark discussed the VHA Strategic Plan, whose theme is Honoring Service, Empowering Health, and ways that VAVS may be able to link themselves to it. The importance of talking about the role VAVS plays in the larger picture of the VA is critical to its success. The VHA Strategic Plan's mission for healthcare is threefold: personalized, proactive, and patient-driven. Service Organizations need to be constantly asking themselves how they are fulfilling these goals. The strategic goals of VAVS focus on enhancing leadership/management skills, collaboration, and being very intentional about how the impact of volunteers is being discussed. The end result will be a VA that values the work of volunteers and VAVS even more than it currently does.

Solving the right problems comes with asking the right questions. In the case of VAVS, the key questions are: "How does it improve the lives of Veterans?" and "How can we do more to supplement the mission and the work of the VA?" VAVS staff have expressed their desire for more collaboration with the organizations and asked that EC members seek them out and ask the strategic questions: what do you need from me?; how can I help?; and where are you going from here?

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Ron Rolfes, Jr., Forty and Eight and Chair of the Recommendations Subcommittee, discussed the one recommendation being put forward to the NAC. It addresses the streamlining of the onboarding process for new volunteers. Procedures currently used by the Durham and Washington, DC VAMCs could expedite the onboarding process and help to expand the scope of volunteering's impact. In most VAs, the length of time to bring a new volunteer on board is 6 to 9 weeks, which is unacceptable to the VA since it loses many volunteers before they even begin their

service. The Durham and Washington, DC VAMCs have shown the ability to process new volunteers in as little as 7-14 days. The recommendation is for the VA to pilot the onboarding process to provide a quicker process for other VAs and help ensure a more motivated volunteer base.

J.P. Brown, AMVETS, made a motion to accept the recommendation and to forward it on to the NAC; the motion was seconded by Roscoe Butler, The American Legion. **The motion carried.**

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Hennings reviewed the bios of the NAC Male and Female Volunteers of the Year, James Fortune and Alyce Knafllich. They were chosen from a field of 13 nominations, which was not as many as we would like to receive, but the winners were very laudable candidates. Mr. Hennings asked the Service Organizations to reach out to the Chiefs of Voluntary Service and push them to recognize their volunteers.

Mrs. Clark noted that getting more nominations is another point of collaboration and recognition is essential to enhancing recruitment. Out of 151 Medical Centers and over 79,000 active volunteers, there should have been far more than 13 nominations.

Recruitment: Colonel Gallina reported on the continuing trend of a declining number of logged hours. The decline is occurring across every age group except for 90 and above. Improving the number of occasional hours is the most realistic way of significantly improving the numbers for FY 2014.

It is nice to see Annual Joint Reviews (AJRs) in which the Chiefs and the Reps have made collaborative goals, such as adding more volunteers, but adding more definitive statements, such as “You will increase the number of volunteers by two or more,” may prove more impactful. Every volunteer should be participating in VA special events such as Homeless Stand Downs, Welcome Home events, etc. Creating new programs that invite more occasional volunteers into medical facilities will allow for more conversions to regularly scheduled volunteers.

Economic considerations will continue to be an issue across all age groups but improved policies and procedures can have an impact on volunteering and the EC needs to be making meaningful recommendations. National Representatives are the chief recruiters for their organization and they need to make a full-time commitment to retention and recruitment at all levels. The moment a volunteer is recruited, it is the Representative’s job to retain them through positive feedback, meaningful assignments, and recognition. Keeping up with quarterly reports and AJRs is absolutely necessary to changing the course of recruitment trends. VSOs need to stay on top of their own Representative and Deputy Representative training briefs and regularly update rosters. Recruitment materials need to be kept up-to-date with an intergenerational focus. Sending quarterly reports electronically will save time and money for everyone.

Volunteers contributed approximately \$243 million in service to VA in 2013, which is down from over \$300 million in 2012. Colonel Gallina believes that VA healthcare would be dramatically impacted by the absence of volunteers.

Membership: Mr. Turner, Chairperson of Membership Subcommittee, presented the categories of membership, with the one significant change being that to qualify as a voting member of the NAC an organization must now have a presence at 25 sites instead of 30. Mr. Turner thanked Central Office staff for sending out letters to faltering organizations letting them know that they will have to maintain their numbers in order to stay on the NAC. Organizations that have slipped will be given the opportunity to apply for Honorary Member status on the NAC, with the hope that they will be able to increase their presence and be full members of the NAC in the future. He discussed the qualifications for organizations wishing to join the NAC, criteria which are meant to ensure that VSOs do what they say they are going to do and help to expand the impact of the VAVS.

Mrs. Clark introduced Jeff Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office. Mr. Moragne thanked the EC for the work they do and for the opportunity to come and learn from them. The VA has 24 advisory committees and the Advisory Committee Management Office oversees their work and provides exemplary support and advice to them to ensure that the recommendations that come from the Committees get to the Secretary and are actionable. He encouraged members to seek him out and discuss ways of collaborating with his office to bring the VAVS capability into the fabric of VA operations.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

NAC SOP Revisions: Patricia “Pat” Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, thanked Mary Jo Munnelly for getting the SOP revised to reflect the approved 2013 NAC recommendation which reduced the requirement for NAC Service Member organizations from being represented at 30 facilities to 25 facilities for the purpose of voting privileges. The SOP now requires service member organizations to maintain the provision of volunteers and participation on local VAVS facility committees at a minimum of 25 facilities and Donor Member and Associate Donor Members categories to donate at least 5 percent of total revenue to assist Veterans.

VAVS Partners, Inc. Treasurer’s Report: Jerry Butler, Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc., reported that VAVS Partners, Inc. is now officially a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The balance of the Charleston meeting was \$44,304.66. After donations and registration, the subtotal was \$71,455.15. After expenses the remainder balance was \$43,920.62 as of the date of this report. This is the first year that VAVS Partners, Inc. has spent more money than they have brought in.

Mrs. Clark thought it would be useful to have VAVS Partners, Inc. talk with Mr. Moragne about their collaboration with VAVS and the VA and how their unique function with the committee has come to be.

Unfinished Business:

Future 2015 Annual Meeting Plans: Ms. Hatch discussed the accommodation options for the 2015 Annual Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico. After considering several hotels, the Marriott-Uptown seemed to be the best option for a two-year commitment. Mr. Turner made a motion to hold the next NAC meeting at the Albuquerque Marriott-Uptown, April 20-25; John “J.P.” Brown seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

New Business:

Fall 2014 Executive Committee Meeting: Mrs. Clark conveyed a request from the VAVS Chief of Staff to consider holding the next EC meeting in the Washington, DC area to facilitate the involvement of VA leadership. Colonel Gallina suggested that there is extreme merit in holding the meeting in or around Washington, DC. There has been little involvement by senior leadership over the last few years and it is critical for the VAVS to have a high visibility in Washington. The EC was adverse to the possibility of VA leadership participating via teleconference. Colonel Gallina made a motion to hold the Fall EC meeting in Washington, DC; Mr. Turner seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

Appointments:

Recommendations Subcommittee: Mr. Hennings asked Mr. Rolfes if he would commit to another two-year term as Chair of the Recommendations Subcommittee. Mr. Rolfes agreed to accept the Chairpersonship.

Good of the Order: Mr. Rolfes said that he had six key topics that the Recommendations Subcommittee would be diligently pursuing to get out future recommendations.

Mr. Turner asked that accommodations in the DC area for the Fall EC meeting be close to a Metro station so as to avoid high taxi fares and the need to walk great distances.

Mrs. Clark noted that a comment box and index cards were located at the registration desk and encouraged members to provide suggestions to VAVS staff for improving future meetings or possible recommendations.

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

VAVS REP/DEP TRAINING
Wednesday, April 23, 2014 – 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Faculty: Nathan Witt, Chief, Voluntary Service, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, Bay Pines, Florida, and Colonel Charles H. Gallina, VAVS National Representative, Knights of Columbus.

Mr. Witt welcomed participants to the training session intended to provide Representatives and Deputy Representatives with the foundational principles of VAVS, especially as they relate to local VAVS committees, the NAC and the EC. He stressed that the room is full of expertise and that Representatives/Deputy Representatives should take advantage of the opportunity. Local Policy should be kept in mind during the training and even though everyone works from the same handbooks, there are always different local interpretations that guide the volunteer programs. The manuals are the backbone of VAVS and Representatives and Deputy Representatives should know how to find the information they need in them.

Colonel Gallina discussed the circular partnership and constant interaction between VACO, VAMCs, and the organizations at the local and national level. VAVS mission is to provide a structured volunteer program under the management of VA-compensated employees in cooperation with community resources to serve America's Veterans and their families, to support VA and VHA strategic goals, to assist management in the delivery of VA health care, and to provide vital support for the provision and maintenance of care. Colonel Gallina discussed the importance of utilizing occasional volunteers and providing events for them to take part in. This is a valuable recruiting base for regularly scheduled volunteers. Student volunteer programs are crucial in developing the volunteers of the future.

Colonel Gallina reviewed the VA organization chart, the history of the NAC, and its composition and responsibilities. The primary duty of the NAC is to make recommendations to the Secretary of the VA through the Under Secretary for Health calling for improvements in VA Voluntary Service to Veteran patients on a national level. The VAVS National Executive Committee makes recommendations to the NAC on all areas of VAVS NAC business and activities and acts as a governing body between annual meetings.

National VAVS Representatives are liaisons between VHA, Service Organizations, and all aspects of the VAVS program. Representatives and Deputy Representatives are the local leadership, which is why VAVS Committee meeting attendance is essential – they keep the information flowing. Colonel Gallina discussed certification letters from the National Certifying Officials and welcome letters with enclosures, including VAVS Representative and Deputy Representative Training Guide, VHA Handbooks 1620.01-03, Service Organization mission, goals and expectations.

Mr. Witt discussed the responsibilities of local VAVS Chiefs and Program Managers and the importance of entering individuals in to the Voluntary Service System with the appropriate 135A code and other assignment code. The purpose of local VAVS

Committee is to assist with the coordination of plans and policies for community participation in the VAVS program. Mr. Witt reviewed considerations for appointments and Representative and Deputy Representative responsibilities, as well as what is considered inadequate performance of a Representative and Deputy Representative being considered for re-certification. Just because an individual is not a good fit for the VAVS Committee that does not mean that they are not a good volunteer. The most essential trait for selecting Representatives and Deputy Representatives is leadership, along with the ability to communicate and work with others, knowledge of VAVS and Service Organizations, and a sincere interest in the welfare of Veteran patients.

Multiple audience members commented on the process for electronically distributing meeting minutes, quarterly reports, and AJRs. This is an important issue and the process needs to be fine-tuned for efficiency. Mr. Witt suggested bringing it up in the Open Session for wider discussion.

Colonel Gallina said that Annual Joint Reviews are absolutely essential to National Representatives in order to understand how well the organization is performing at a particular facility. It is the Representative's responsibility to know when to schedule an AJR and to make an appointment with Voluntary Service to conduct the AJR. AJRs are an excellent opportunity to provide feedback and create goals for the next year. Recruitment initiatives need to involve short-term projects, evening and weekend opportunities, family volunteering opportunities, and community-based and virtual assignments. Being flexible is critical to increasing volunteer hours.

Mr. Witt concluded the session by discussing intergenerational recruiting and how to tailor the message to who is being asked.

BUSINESS SESSION Thursday, April 24, 2014 – 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

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

Invocation and National Anthem: Delivered by Chaplain John Oliver, Chief, Chaplain Services, Durham VA Medical Center.

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Kathryn Hare, VAVS Representative, WAVES National.

Welcome: Mr. Hennings welcomed everyone and shared Bill Kilgore's regret at being unable to attend the meeting. He thanked Federated Wholesale for sponsoring the previous evening's Recognition Event. Jeff Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office, VACO, was recognized.

DeAnne M. Seekins, Director, Durham VA Medical Center, welcomed the NAC to North Carolina and expressed what a great honor it is to host this special event. She discussed the volunteer program at Durham VAMC which, in 2013, brought in over \$600,000 in donations, provided transportation to 12,000 Veterans, operated a successful Coats for

Veterans program, and partnered with the community, Ladies Auxiliaries, and youth volunteers.

Daniel F. Hoffman, FACHE, Network Director, Veterans Integrated Service (VISN) Network 6, Durham, North Carolina, expressed his pleasure at being able to be surrounded by volunteers. Volunteer efforts are what set VA health care apart from its civilian counterparts. It is obvious that VA's volunteers do what they do because they have a special bond with those who have borne the battle. Volunteers in VISN 6 have provided the time that would have consumed more than 500 full-time positions. Mr. Hoffman said he hopes that the time spent together would be fruitful and everyone would return home with new ideas on how to continue to enhance their roles in contributing to the health and happiness of those who have served.

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	P	
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	P	
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	P	
Paralyzed Veterans of America	P	

Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	P	
The Salvation Army	P	
Sons of the American Legion	P	
United Voluntary Services	P	
Veteran of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P	
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	P	
WAVES National	P	
<u>Associate Service Member Organizations</u>		
Catholic War Veterans		A
Catholic War Veterans Ladies' Auxiliary		A
Corporation for National and Community Service	P	
Fleet Reserve Association	P	
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.	P	
Italian War Veterans of the U.S.	P	
Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association		A
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
Soldier's Angels		A
United Auto Workers	P	
United Daughters of the Confederacy	P	
Women's Army Corps Veterans Association		A
<u>Donor Member Organizations</u>		
Air Compassion for Veterans		A
The Bowlers to Veterans Link (BVL), Inc.		A
Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project	P	
Silver Star Families of America		A
<u>Associate Donor Member Organizations</u>		
N/A		
<u>Honorary Member</u>		
Sons of AMVETS	P	
Women Marines Association	P	

Opening Remarks and Meeting Objectives: Mr. Hennings encouraged NAC attendees to submit topics of interest and suggestions for improving the Annual Meeting by utilizing the Comment Box. The presentations and training materials from the meeting will be available on the VAVS website, www.volunteer.va.gov. Representatives/Deputy Representatives can also ask local VAVS Program Managers for hard copies. Due to schedule constraints, presenters were asked to be aware of their allotted time.

Mr. Hennings introduced Sean Foertsch, Acting Executive Director, VHA Office of Communications, and NAC Acting Chair.

Veterans Health Administration Update: Mr. Foertsch decided to forego discussing VHA and instead took the opportunity to better introduce himself to the NAC. He shared how important giving back is to him and how imperative it is that the Service

Organizations trust him. He wants them to trust that he will do his best to communicate with them and about them. Mr. Foertsch discussed the significance and complexity of communication. He asked that the service organizations not forget that he works for them. The organizations have his trust because they take care of some of the people who mean the most to him.

VA Cabinet Department Status 25th Anniversary: Darlene Richardson, Historian, Office of Health Systems Communications, gave a history about how VA hospitals came about and the role that volunteers have played throughout VA's history. Before the Civil War, there were no military benefits of any kind. US Sanitary Commission was created and enlisted thousands of volunteers that contributed immensely to the war effort and caring for soldiers. Due to the unprecedented number of amputations from the war, the US Sanitary Commission created Soldier's Homes to assist disabled Veterans whose families were unable to care for them. Volunteers and VSOs remained critical to what would later become the VA. The first VA facility opened in 1886 in Togus, Maine. After several consolidations, the VA was elevated to a cabinet-level position, the highest position an agency can aspire to.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Mr. Hennings thanked Disabled American Veterans for sponsoring the food and beverages for the break, then introduced Katie Bowen, HP Veterans Program Manager, Hewlett Packard, and Danielle Zopf, Director of Corporate Responsibility, Boot Campaign.

HP Home of the Brave Celebrated Veterans Day 2014: Ms. Bowen introduced the NAC to the work done by HP Home of the Brave, a program that provides a volunteer base to VAMCs across the country from HP's nationwide employee base. She discussed some of the events and activities that they have been a part of over the last three years at 29 VAMCs. HP hopes to reach all 151 VAMCs. Medical Centers can create wish lists that HP employees purchase online as a personal donation to be sent directly to the hospital. The website, hphomeofthebrave.com, has a VAMC site survey that allows Medical Centers to request HP volunteers.

Ms. Zopf discussed the Boot Campaign, a national military 510(c)(3) non-profit. Their mission is to promote awareness, cultivate patriotism, and to provide assistance to Veterans. The campaign is a way to help bridge the gap between the civilian world and those that have served by making civilians aware of transitional difficulties faced by returning soldiers and providing an opportunity of to show support. The Boot Campaign has a goal of getting 1.4 million Americans to wear combat boots as a display of support for the military. Sales of the boots, in addition to events, corporate sponsorships and celebrity engagements raise funds to provide assistance through job support, housing support, wellness support, family support, and urgent grants for financial hardships.

Mr. Hennings thanked Ms. Bowen and Ms. Zopf and introduced Dr. Roger J. Casey, Director, Education/Dissemination, National Center on Homelessness among Veterans.

Update: Homeless Initiative: Dr. Casey shared several personal experiences helping homeless Veterans in the Tampa area. Those efforts increased in 2009 when the Secretary of Veterans Affairs made a bold goal to eliminate Veteran homelessness. Last year, Veteran homelessness was reduced by 24%. Now, the most difficult to engage Veterans are the ones that are left on the street, creating an environment where the VA has to work extra hard and possibly to create new programs to reach chronically homeless Veterans. The HUD-VASH program has been very successful at providing housing to homeless Veterans through Section 8 vouchers that come with a case manager. These vouchers allow Veterans to live independently with no time limits and provide a VAMC-coordinated support team whenever it is needed. The transitional housing program provides 15,000 beds across the country.

A major initiative has been to establish a national call center providing support. The call center links with a local homeless coordinator, who then intervenes. About 80,000 calls were received last year. Safe Havens have been established where Veterans can stay without engaging in services, though services are available when requested. These are meant to target long-term chronically homeless Veterans. One stop shops have been set up in several highly populated areas where Veterans can get everything from health care to a cheese sandwich. These drop-in centers offer a robust service provider network for job, housing, and counseling services.

In 2013, 230 Stand Downs were held to engage homeless Veterans. The more services that are available at these events, the more attractive they become. It is important to recognize that homeless Veterans differ greatly from one area to another, and needs must be met at a local level.

VAVS Award Presentations: Mr. Hennings announced the VAVS NAC Female Volunteer of the Year, Alyce Knafllich, VAVS Representative, AMVETS, Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville, North Carolina, and the VAVS NAC Male Volunteer of the Year, James Fortune, VAVS Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dayton VA Medical Center, Dayton, Ohio.

Mrs. Clark announced the recipients of the American Spirit Award for Student Recruitment, Fred Lesinski, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center, Charleston, South Carolina, and for Corporate Recruitment, Deborah Brookshire, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, Tucson, Arizona.

Mrs. Clark announced the recipient of the Voluntary Service Award of Excellence, Darlene Laughter, Chief, Voluntary Service, Charles George VA Medical Center, Asheville, North Carolina.

Each of the awardees related their own personal experiences and value of volunteering.

Mr. Hennings adjourned the business session at 11:30 a.m.

BUSINESS SESSION Friday, April 25, 2014 – 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

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

Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Tom Dupree, VAVS Representative, Knights of Columbus, Durham VAMC.

Subcommittee Reports:

Recommendations: Report given by Mr. Rolfes, Jr.

The proposed recommendation is meant to expedite the on-boarding process for new volunteers by using procedures used by the Durham and Washington, DC VAMCs. Piloting the in-processing operation could significantly reduce the length of time it takes to get new volunteers started. The Executive Committee suggested approval. A motion to accept the recommendation was made by the Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc., and seconded by the United Voluntary Services. **The motion carried.**

NAC Volunteer of the Year: Report given by Mr. Hennings, member of the NAC Volunteer of the Year Subcommittee. Only 12 nominations were considered, due to many being received after the due date, incomplete, or in unintelligible handwriting. The most glaring error was that submissions were coming from Chiefs without an accompanying letter from the Certifying Official of that volunteer's organization. Samples of a proper submittal may be distributed for next year's award. Mr. Hennings encouraged Service Organizations to push Chiefs to recognize volunteers. Mr. Hennings congratulated this year's award recipients, Alyce Knaflich and James Fortune.

Recruitment: Report given by Charles Gallina, Chair of the Recruitment Subcommittee. Downward trends in the number of volunteers and total hours have continued due to several factors, including policies, procedures, economic considerations, and a lack of commitment to retention and recruitment at all levels. He provided recruitment tips and insisted that training briefs, materials, and records be kept up to date. Staying on top of AJRs and Quarterly Reports is essential to being able to follow trends and knowing when to it is time to replace nonperforming Representatives and Deputy Representatives. Intergenerational recruitment strategies are needed to reverse the decline in volunteers. Meaningful work and positive feedback from Representatives/Deputy Representatives are critical; recognition is key to personal satisfaction and retention. Representatives/Deputy Representatives need to establish incentive programs and eliminate barriers to utilizing volunteers within the hospital. Colonel Gallina discussed some of the VA programs that offer regularly scheduled and occasional volunteer and donation opportunities.

Joseph Dooley, Chief, VAVS, Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital, Bedford, Massachusetts, added that he believes that at least 25% of volunteer hours are not being logged and added to the total number. It is incumbent on Representatives to make sure the information is entered and on VAVS staff to ensure the numbers are recorded. The network speaks in a language of metrics and data and that is how the government is going to assess the value of volunteers. Mr. Dooley also suggested a recommendation that a Recruitment subcommittee be part of every VAVS committee.

Membership: Report given by Mr. Turner. The five categories that comprise the NAC membership: Service Member, Associate Service Member, Donor Member, Associate Donor Member, and Adjunct Member. It is important for large service organizations to support the auxiliaries and small organizations, especially by partnering with them. The VA has concurred with the 2013 NAC Recommendation to reduce the requirement from being present at 30 facilities to only 25. Proposed additional NAC membership criteria are currently under consideration by the VA. Qualified applicant organizations will need to demonstrate the following:

1. Organization must have existed for at least three years.
2. Articles of Incorporation and bylaws cannot contradict the mission of the VA or be in a conflict of interest with the VA.
3. Must be in good standing with the IRS.
4. Must have received a positive rating from a watchdog organization.
5. Narrative cannot demonstrate a conflict of interest with the VA.

All 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. While some organizations have had to drop in category due to slipping numbers of Reps, many have been contacted about potential gains and enhancing their ability to become more active in the NAC.

Standard Operating Procedures Ad Hoc Committee: Report given by Patricia “Pat” Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary. The SOP has been revised to reflect the approved 2013 recommendations that Service Member Organizations now participate at a minimum of 25 VA facilities and NAC SOP Revisions from the 67th Annual VAVS NAC stating that the EC may vote and hold discussions by electronic means between meetings and that Donor Member and Associate Donor Member Organizations donate at least five percent of total revenue to assist or benefit Veterans at 30 VA facilities (or 15 for Associate Donor Members).

Mr. Hennings thanked the Subcommittee Chairpersons for their reports and introduced Chaplain Clyde Angel, Chief, Chaplain Service, and James L. Todd, Chief, Voluntary Service, Richard Roudebush VAMC, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Warrior to Soul Mate (W2SM) Program: Chaplain Angel introduced the NAC to the W2SM program and the Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS)

training module. The program is meant to renew and reconnect Veterans' relationships, particularly when trust has been lost. The healing begins with the reconnecting of a Veteran's heart with their mind, only then are they able to reconnect to loved ones and their community. The sustainability for this program is going to have to occur at the VISN level. VISN 11 is currently serving as the national model. A video was played demonstrating the effectiveness of the program through testimonials.

Mr. Todd discussed volunteer opportunities at the events and conferences and challenged everyone present to attend a PAIRS training course even if they do not intend to become facilitators, but just so that they are able to speak to community partners about what is needed at each event.

(Recess.)

(Whereupon, the meeting was resumed.)

Mr. Hennings thanked the Knights of Columbus for sponsoring the morning's break and introduced Chaplain Michael J. Pollitt, National Director, VA National Chaplain Center.

VA Chaplains and Our Vets: Chaplain Pollitt discussed how the GI Bill has changed the face of America and why; with its 70th anniversary approaching, the VA should be touting it loudly. He shared experiences of from his personal life, attending lodge events as a child, and from his career working as Chaplain in various VAMCs, including a touching story about officiating a dying Veteran's vow renewal with his wife. Chaplain Pollitt shared his thoughts on the Veterans that have given the ultimate sacrifice in the wars of the last 12 years. His presentation included numerous thoughtful passages from poetry, presidential addresses, and prayers.

Mr. Hennings thanked Chaplain Pollitt and introduced Mrs. Clark, Director, VA Voluntary Service Office, VACO.

VA Voluntary Service Presentation: Mrs. Clark thanked everyone present for their tireless work, especially the VACO VAVS staff. She gave an overview of her 22 years of service with the VHA and VAVS. With each of the presentations that have been given during the meeting, there has been a call to action and she hopes that everyone captured that and will apply the tools presented in figuring out where to go from here and how to tell the VA story. Mrs. Clark reviewed VAVS' key accomplishments from 2013, including the Student Volunteer Program, Volunteer Transportation and Caregiver recruitment efforts, e-donating, succession planning, and ongoing collaborations. In reviewing the VAVS key projects, initiatives, and programs for 2013, Mrs. Clark focused on the National Service Project Team, which is VA's effort to support President Obama's charge to all government agencies to increase volunteering in their organizations. Being one of the largest volunteer operations in the federal government, this is a charge VAVS must answer. Rigid national guidance is not going to be the key to solving problems at VAMCs. Policies and procedures need to be flexible for each medical center to be able to optimally serve its Veterans. Declining grade levels are a problem within the VA and

it is critical that job classifications not diminish to the point where the VA is unable to attract the talent it needs to keep its programs growing.

The VA Public-Private Partnerships Office is working on identifying the criteria for any organization that wants to work with VA in any way and Mrs. Clark hopes they will be able to attend the next EC meeting and perhaps give a presentation to the full NAC.

Mrs. Clark discussed setting priorities and the importance of sorting out urgent and important issues to be tackled first. Leadership on the NAC and among VAVS staff is essential. One of the VAVS Strategic Goals is to identify the leadership and management competency gaps and facilitate continuous training and improvement. Growth will not happen within VAVS without personal growth through trainings. Mrs. Clark encouraged everyone to find what it is that gives them the courage to take the next step in bettering themselves, so that VAVS can take the next step with them.

Mr. Hennings thanked Mrs. Clark and introduced JoAnne Chavez, Voluntary Service Specialist, Albuquerque VAMC, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

69th Annual NAC Meeting and Conference Presentation: Ms. Chavez presented a video on some of New Mexico's attractions and hopes to see everyone at the next Annual Meeting.

Closing Remarks: Mr. Hennings delivered closing remarks, thanking everyone for their participation. J.P. Brown thanked everyone that attended the Parke Luncheon and for all of the donations received.

Closing Video: Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Central Office, presented a video that captured some of the activities of the week.

The meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Ruth Williams, Franklin Covey Associate, was introduced by Aldean Swan, Chief, Voluntary Service, Carl Vinson VAMC, Dublin, Georgia. Ms. Williams presented an approach to leadership that emphasizes that excellence and effectiveness is a habit. As an individual moves through his or her own personal maturity continuum, from dependence on others to independence to interdependence (the ability to work well with others), a series of habits should be applied:

1. Be proactive - focus on the areas where you can make a difference.
2. Begin with the end in mind - develop a personal mission statement.
3. Put first things first - make a weekly and daily time management plan.

4. Think win-win – have courage and consideration; guidelines, resources, accountability, and consequences are what are needed to achieve desired results.
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood – practice empathetic listening.
6. Synergize – collaborations that result in a sum greater than its parts.
7. Sharpen the saw – set aside time for the four dimensions of personal renewal: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Accompanying these habits is the See, Do, Get model which starts with how an individual views the world and his or her place in it. When the right approaches fail to deliver results, it may mean that a person's paradigm needs to be reevaluated.

Innovative Volunteer Assignments: Joseph Dooley, Chief, VAVS, Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital, Bedford, Massachusetts, identified some of the innovative volunteer assignments in VAVS and how they help to address the VA's FY 2014-2015 priority goals of improving Veteran access to benefits and services, eliminating the disability claims backlog, and eliminating Veteran homelessness. Assignments included the Adapted Sports Program, Farmers Markets, hippotherapy, and the 'Vettes to Vets' program, where 450 Corvettes visit the Bedford VAMC. Mr. Dooley discussed the hospice volunteer program, No Veteran Dies Alone, which provides the reassuring presence of a volunteer companion to dying patients who may otherwise be alone. He concluded his presentation by sharing a variety of examples of volunteers supporting Veterans and VAMCs in non-traditional ways.

David James, RN, Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital, Bedford, Massachusetts, discussed the Hospice and Palliative Care operations at the Bedford VAMC. Over 468,000 volunteers work in hospices in the US, providing support to patients and helping to "de-institutionalize" dying. The VA will pay for hospice care at a VA facility or at a Home Hospice Agency for any enrolled Veteran who has a life expectancy of less than six months. Volunteer support groups provide valuable assessments that the treatment team may not otherwise see. Mr. James provided guidance on how to approach a hospice setting and discussed some of the benefits and difficulties of having Veterans as hospice volunteers.

Paula Torti, RN, VAVS Volunteer, Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital, Bedford, Massachusetts, shared her experiences volunteering in the hospice unit after having retired from the Bedford VAMC. Volunteering in a hospice setting is very difficult work but it is extremely rewarding to provide companionship or find simple activities that are especially meaningful to Veterans in their last days. The Voluntary Support Group is a key part of the hospice care-coordination team.

Engaging Students, Volunteers, and Congress with the Veterans History Project: Monica Mohindra, Section Head, Program Coordination and Communication, Veterans History Project, Library of Congress, discussed the bipartisan Congressional initiative to collect first person narratives and 2-dimensional objects (photos, letters, diaries, etc.) for

the purposes of research and preservation. The collection currently contains over 90,000 items, over 14,000 of which have been digitized and are available online at the Library of Congress' Experiencing War website. VHP only accepts original items and items must be shipped via commercial carrier. A major component of VHP is to collect video recordings of Veteran interviews conducted by volunteers, generally friends, family members, or students. The recordings need to be at least 30 minutes long and Ms. Mohindra provided some tips on how interviewers can elicit information from the Veterans. The Library of Congress website contains further information on how to participate in the program. Additionally she shared tips for VAVS staff to collaborate with VSOs and local students to engage in VHP as a volunteer recruitment and retention program as well as an opportunity to recognize veterans and highlight the efforts of volunteers to the larger public through media attention.

Successful Community Engagement: Ryan Steinbach, Assistant VSO Liaison/VHA, discussed the keys to successful community engagement beginning with defining the VAVS mission for oneself before reaching out to the community. How a Representative and Deputy Representative envision the VA is how they will represent it to their communities. The community is a Medical Center's primary resource for volunteers and a community invested in VA is a beautiful thing. When problems arise at a medical center, the public response will be much better if the community is invested in the hospital and is aware of the positive work being done there than if bad press is all they have heard about it. Representatives and Deputy Representatives have to be engaged if they hope to engage the community and this requires constant communication and face time. Representatives and Deputy Representatives should recognize the resources all around them - every community event is an opportunity for recruitment and every volunteer is an ambassador for their program. Find ways to reward volunteers by knowing what motivates your volunteers. It is essential that VAVS Chiefs attend VAMC Director's morning meetings not only to keep up with what is happening in the hospital, but also to report on what volunteers are contributing and identify new volunteer opportunities. Mr. Steinbach provided additional guidance on community engagement and how to work with volunteers and earn their trust.