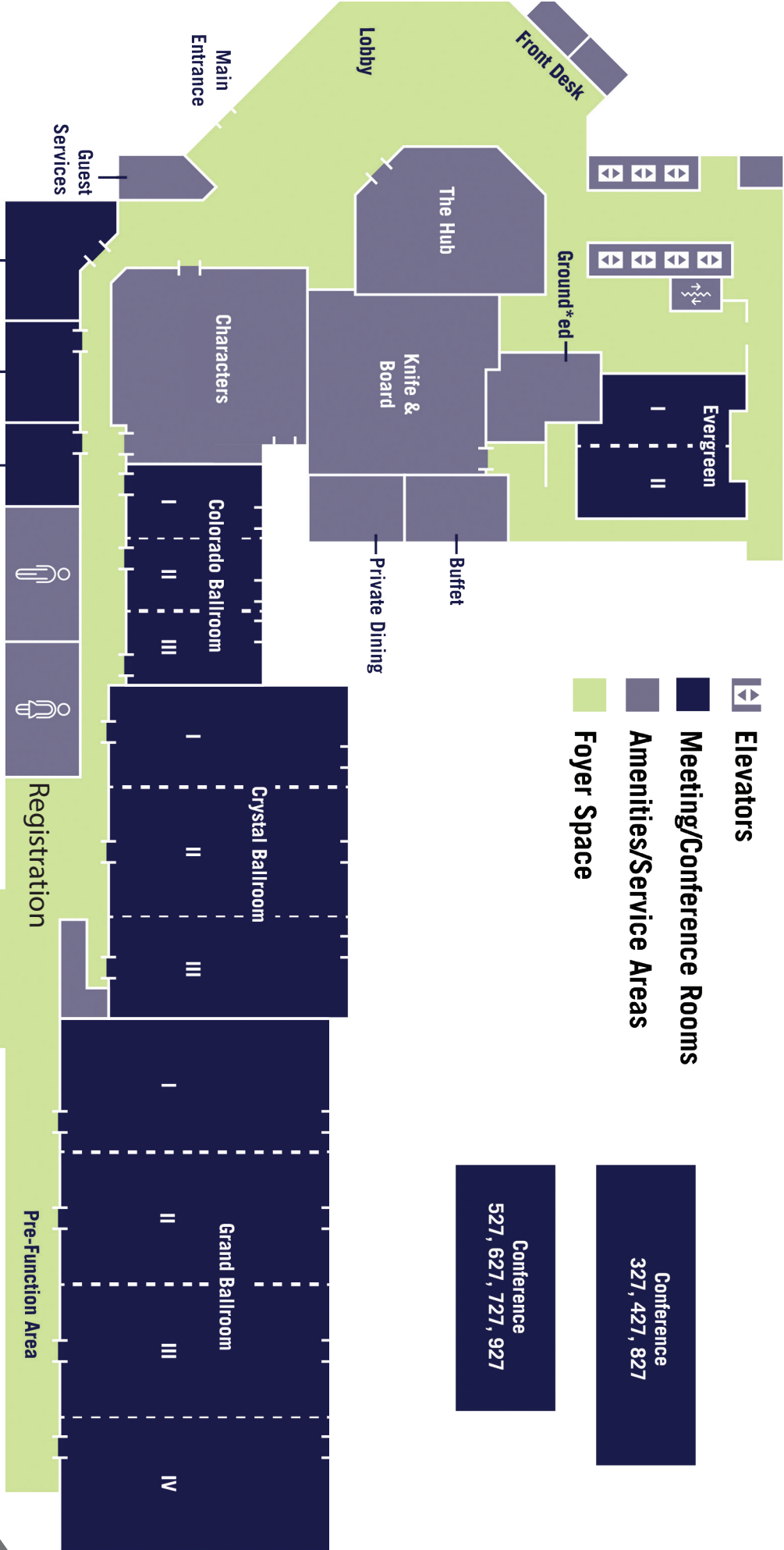


# 76th Annual VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee Meeting and Conference

April 27-29, 2022  
Denver, Colorado

# Hotel Map



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**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
VA Rocky Mountain Network (VISN 19)  
4100 East Mississippi Avenue, Suite 1100  
Glendale, CO 80246**

VAVS National Advisory Committee members & CDCE staff,

Welcome to the 76th Annual VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee meeting! VA Rocky Mountain Network (Veterans Integrated Service Network [VISN] 19) is proud to host everyone this week in "Colorful Colorado." We are honored that you, some of VA's most important mission partners, selected our state to host this prestigious event. Our leadership team here at the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System will ensure this is the safest event possible for everyone: participants, volunteers, exhibitors, sponsors, etc.

VISN 19 is thankful to have many wonderful volunteers and Veteran Service Organizations who support us as we provide quality health care for our Nation's heroes. We depend on you to help us create a comfortable health care experience for patients, family members, and caregivers. Your engagement is crucial.

I hope you will find this week to be an inspiring setting for learning, networking, and collaborating with partners from across the country. Last month, VISN 19 hosted the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and once again created "Miracles on a Mountainside." Similar to our Veterans skiing down the slopes with courage and excitement, you are poised to find new inspiration (and ideas) to take home to your local facilities.

Finally, thank you for participating and bringing your passion to our gathering!

*Ralph T. Gigliotti*

Ralph T. Gigliotti, FACHE  
Director, VA Rocky Mountain Network





**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
Eastern Colorado Health Care System

1700 N. Wheeling St.  
Aurora, CO 80045  
303-399-8020

Dear Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) members and Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) staff,

I am pleased to welcome you to Denver on behalf of the VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System. The Mile High City has so much to offer visitors, including professional sports, museums, breweries, and parks. I hope you will get a chance to enjoy not only the city but also some of the natural beauty in our backyard.

Eastern Colorado has many connections to Veterans and the military. Colorado Springs, the seat of our Pikes Peak region, was named the best large city for Veterans by Military Times in 2019. Eastern Colorado is home to Buckley Air Force Base, Peterson Space Force Base, the United States Air Force Academy, and Ft. Carson Army Base. As a community deeply committed to caring for Veterans, this is the perfect setting for this conference that will set the trajectory of VAVS for the coming years.

Our local CDCE staff have worked diligently to make this conference memorable as we return to a face-to-face format. The last two years have reinforced how important volunteers are to the work that we do. At VAs across the country, CDCE staff and volunteers have made invaluable contributions to help us through this pandemic. I hope you'll take this opportunity to learn, network, and plan – and also to reflect on the powerful impact you make in the lives of Veterans.

Volunteerism represents the very best in human nature. Thank you for helping us serve those who have served. We look forward to hosting you again in 2023!

Sincerely,

MICHAEL T.  
KILMER 120000

Digitally signed by MICHAEL  
T. KILMER 120000  
Date: 2022.03.07 16:29:59  
-07'00'

Michael T. Kilmer  
Director

# 2022 VAVS National Advisory Committee

Chair and Designated Federal Officer:  
Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D.  
Director, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement

## 2022 VAVS NAC Executive Committee

Chairperson: Mary Morgan, Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks  
Vice-Chairperson: Joseph Dooley, United Veterans Services

American Gold Star Mothers	Knights of Columbus
American Legion	Marine Corps League Auxiliary
American Legion Auxiliary	Military Women Across the Nation
AMVETS Auxiliary	National Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks	National Society Sons of the American Revolution
Corporation for National & Community Service	Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.
Disabled American Veterans	Sons of the American Legion
Fleet Reserve Association	United Veterans Services
Home of the Brave	Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Improved and Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World, Inc.	Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.

## Subcommittees

### Recommendations

Anne Parker, Chair  
Gabriel Cinquegrana  
Mona Gunn

### Recruitment

Vicki Sarracino, Chair  
Katie Bowen  
Julie Myers  
Chris Slawinski

### Volunteer of the Year

Charles Gallina, Chair  
John Kleindienst  
Ron Rolfes, Jr.

### Membership

Mary Morgan, Chair  
Ruth Walters  
Sandra Kriebel

### Partnership

Ron Rolfes, Jr., Co-Chair  
Karen O'Neal, Co-Chair  
Mary Morgan  
Charles Gallina  
Melissa Heinlein  
Nathan Witt

# 2022 NAC Meeting and Conference Host:

## VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System

### Denver, Colorado

#### 2022 NAC Meeting Planners:

Mary Barcikowski  
Administrative Officer  
VA Central Office  
Washington, DC

Nathan Witt  
Voluntary Service Specialist  
VA Central Office  
Washington, DC

Elizabeth Cazares  
Assistant Chief, Center for Development &  
Civic Engagement  
South Texas Veterans Health Care System  
San Antonio, Texas

Marcena C. Gunter  
Chief, Public Affairs & Center for Development &  
Civic Engagement  
VA St. Louis Health Care System  
St. Louis, Missouri

Joyce Kuwae  
Voluntary Service Specialist  
VA Maryland Health Care System  
Perry Point, Maryland

Eva M. Gergely  
Chief, Center for Development & Civic  
Engagement  
VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System  
Aurora, Colorado

#### Conference Photographer:

Jessica Downey  
VISN 19 Communications Service  
Creative Consolidated Unit  
Eastern Colorado Healthcare System

#### VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Staff:

Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D., Director  
Prince Taylor, Deputy Director  
Carolann Miragliuolo, Senior Advisor  
Mary Barcikowski, Administrative Officer  
Tyrone Green, Program Analyst  
Ginny Hoover, Voluntary Service Specialist  
Kevin Stanford, Health Systems Specialist  
Nathan Witt, Voluntary Service Specialist

#### Registration Staff:

Vicki Eatmon - Coordinator  
Voluntary Service Specialist  
Western North Carolina  
VA Health Care System  
Asheville, North Carolina

Tabitha Ingram  
Chief, Voluntary Service  
Center for Development & Civic Engagement  
Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Larry Kelly  
Treasurer  
VAVS Partners, Inc.



# NAC Member Organizations (as of April 4, 2022)

## Service Member Organizations

Organization Name	Position	Name
American Gold Star Mothers	R	Janice Chance
	D	Delores Thompson
	D	Mona T. Gunn
	D	Pam Stemple
American Legion	R	Katie Purswell
	D	Melvin J. Brown
American Legion Auxiliary	R	Donna Ray
	D	Pat Kranzow
	D	Kathy Daudistel
American Red Cross	R	Ruth Walters
	D	Betty Temple
	D	Cynthia Wilson
	D	Julie Myers
AMVETS	R	John P. Brown, III
	D	Sarah Langley
	D	Dana Dillon
	D	Alyce Knafllich
AMVETS Auxiliary	R	Marie Rorrio
	D	Joan Sirek
	D	Laura Bugaj
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks	R	Mary Morgan
	D	Dennis McAleese
	D	Hannah Graber
	D	Stewart Israel
Blinded Veterans Association	R	Tracy Ferro
	D	Kevin Jackson
	D	Elizabeth Holmes
Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.	R	Anne Parker
	D	Carol Sanchez
	D	Doreen Berggren
	D	Joyce Fabian
Disabled American Veterans	R	John H. Kleindienst
	D	Ron Minter
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	R	Patricia Davis
	D	Ann Glende
Forty and Eight	R	Ron Rolfes, Jr.
	D	Terry Sims



# NAC Member Organizations

Jewish War Veterans of the USA	R	Howard Goldstein
	D	Kenneth Ashworth
Knights of Columbus	R	Charles H. Gallina
Korean War Veterans Association	R	Arthur E. Hills
Marine Corps League	R	Michael W. Miller
	D	Jack Prosuh
	D	Rex Hopper
Marine Corps League Auxiliary	R	Deborah Krueger
	D	Evelyn B. Joppa
	D	Judith Blackmer
Masonic Service Association of North America	R	Craig Davis
	D	Darrell G. Fremont
	D	James Kendall
	D	Richard Tirocke
Military Order of the Cootie	R	Thomas Sutterfield
	D	Walter Smith
Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary	R	Sandra McKinley
	D	Rebecca Wischmeyer
Military Order of the Purple Heart Auxiliary	R	Linda Varejcka
Military Order of the Purple Heart of the U.S.A., Inc	R	Greg Lutes
	D	Sydney Staton
Military Women Across the Nation	R	Denise Duke
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	R	Pamela Schweitzer
	D	Cynthia Allen
	D	Deborah Carlson
	D	Dianne H. MacPherson-Laffey
	D	Joy Linn
	D	Marianne Hughes
	D	Rani Waddell
National Society Sons of the American Revolution	R	Scott Giltner
	D	Richard E. Friberg
Paralyzed Veterans of America	R	Christi Hillman
	D	Kelly Sanders
Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	R	Ferdinand R. Thomas, Jr.
	D	Jose Garcia
Salvation Army	R	David Davis
	D	Jacki Blanchard
	D	Janene Zielinski
	D	Jo Langham
	D	Linda Payton

# NAC Member Organizations

Soldiers' Angels	R	Vicki Sarracino
	D	Chris Chun
	D	Amy Palmer
Sons of the American Legion	R	Gabriel Cinquegrana
	D	Seth Rippe
	D	Joseph E. Roberts
	D	Robert Manzo
	D	Edgar Seegers
	D	Richard Pond
United Daughters of the Confederacy	R	Charlotte J. Clinger
	D	Janet W. Grams
	D	Sherry Davis
United Veterans Services	R	Joseph Dooley
	D	Erma Harris
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	R	Sandra Kriebel
	D	Maria Peck-Royer
	D	Vickie Rosse
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	R	James W. Moss
	D	Meggan Thomas
Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.	R	Kenneth Rose

## Associate Service Member Organizations

AmeriCorps	R	Joanne Newsome
	D	Mary Tobin
	D	Erin Dahlin
Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, (1861 – 1865)	R	MaryAnn Herbsleb
Fleet Reserve Association	R	Christopher Slawinski
	D	Noelle Freeland-Huffer
	D	Theo Lawson
Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.	R	Katherine Donovan
	D	Audrey Easterling
	D	Augustine Chapman
	D	Carolyn S. Edwards
I.B.P.O.E. of the World, Inc.	R	Shalanda Shay Weems
	D	Deborah Flemming
	D	Robert Brown
Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans, U.S.A.	R	Denise Holda
	D	Theresa Major

# NAC Member Organizations

National Society of US Daughters 1812	R	Sheila J. Beatty
	D	Davena Liepman
	D	Janisue Rigel
	D	Rita McSorley
	D	Victoria Panzer
Women's Army Corps Veterans' Association	R	Patricia Dewees

## Donor Member Organizations

The Bowlers to Veterans Link (BVL), Inc.	R	Mary Harrar
Veterans Voices Writing Project, Inc.	R	Sheryl Liddle
	D	Deann Mitchell
	D	Priscilla A. Chansky

## Strategic Engagement Members

Home of the Brave	R	Katie Bowen
Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.	R	Lawrence Kelly
	D	Amy Milne
	D	Becky Ammar
	D	Katherine Ruark
Student Veterans of America	R	Abby Kinch
	D	Ryan Rabac
Warrior Rising	R	Jason Van Camp
	D	Ken Vennera
YMCA of the USA	R	Neal Denton
	D	Kelly K. Grunig

## Honorary Members

Ladies Auxiliary of the Fleet Reserve Association	R	Gail Boltz
	D	Peggy Loa
	D	Rozena E. McVey
National Ladies Auxiliary, Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A., Inc.	R	Petra C. Kaatz
	D	Freda H. Rosenskein
Sons of AMVETS	R	William Gerry
	D	Joe Kirkpatrick
	D	Daniel Briggs
	D	Leo Lowe Jr.
The Silver Star Families of America	R	Diana Creed-Newton
	D	Kathleen Landess
Women Marines Association	R	Kay Croll
	D	Mitzi Manning

# Goals and Objectives

The following are goals and objectives for the  
76th Annual VAVS NAC Meeting and Conference:

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 CDCE staff.
3. Present to all member organization representatives an overview of current and pending VAVS/CDCE policies and procedures.
4. Foster full and open communications among the member organizations, their representatives, and the VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement staff at VA Central Office and CDCE staff in the field.
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 recipient of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award.
9. Recognize the NAC Male Volunteer of the Year & NAC Female Volunteer of the Year.
10. Recognize the recipients of the American Spirit Awards.
11. Recognize the recipients of the VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Awards.

## Opening Ceremony Reception

Wednesday, April 27th - 7:00 p.m.  
Grand Ballroom III

Entertainment by: *Damon Mulazzi, Pianist, VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System*

Refreshments Sponsored by: *National Society Daughters of the American Revolution*



Learn about some of the most innovative programs and services that support Veterans and meet the people managing these programs. This is a great opportunity for networking with your fellow NAC attendees, Veterans, colleagues, and exhibitors. The following Exhibitors are scheduled to participate.

- # Closing Reception

Refreshments Sponsored by: VAVS Partners, Inc.  
& Paralyzed Veterans of America, Mountain States Chapter

# Daily Schedule

## Tuesday, April 26, 2022 *(Pre-Meeting Activities)*

Noon - 4:00 p.m.	Registration	Crystal Foyer
3:00 - 6:00 p.m.	CDCE Staff Meeting	Grand Ballroom I, II

## Wednesday, April 27, 2022

7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.	Registration	Crystal Foyer
9:00 - 11:30 a.m.	Executive Committee Meeting	Grand Ballroom IV
9:30 - 11:30 a.m.	My Life, My Story	Grand Ballroom I
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Health and Information Exhibit Fair	Colorado Ballroom
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch on Your Own	
12:30 - 2:30 p.m.	My Life, My Story	Grand Ballroom I
1:00 - 2:15 p.m.	New Representative, Deputy Representative, and CDCE Staff Training	Crystal Ballroom I, II, III
1:00 - 2:30 p.m.	Mind-Body Workshop	Grand Ballroom II
3:00 - 4:30 p.m.	Mind-Body Workshop	Grand Ballroom II
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.	Dinner on Your Own	
6:00 - 7:00 p.m.	Welcome Remarks/VHA Update: <b>Tammy Czarnecki</b> <i>Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations</i>  Opening Speaker: <b>Centra "Cece" Mazyck</b> <i>Army Veteran, Paralympian</i>	Grand Ballroom I, II
7:00 p.m.	Opening Ceremony Reception	Grand Ballroom III

## Thursday, April 28, 2022

7:00 - 8:00 a.m.	Yoga Session	Hospitality Room 427
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Registration	Crystal Foyer
8:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Business Meeting	Grand Ballroom I, II, III, IV
10:00 - 10:15 a.m.	Break - <i>Sponsored by Soldiers' Angels</i>	Grand Foyer
Noon - 1:30 p.m.	Parke Award Luncheon - Honoring Emma Gardner <i>Music by Susie Spangler, Harpist</i>	Crystal Ballroom I, II, III

# Daily Schedule

## Educational Workshops - Session 1

1:45 - 3:00 p.m.	1. What Really Matters? 2. The Next Generation of Service 3. Innovation & Human-Centered Design 4. The Power of Stories: Maximizing Technology	Grand Ballroom I Grand Ballroom II Grand Ballroom III Grand Ballroom IV
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3:00 - 3:15 p.m.	Break - <i>Sponsored by Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks</i>	Grand Foyer
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## Educational Workshops - Session 2

3:15 - 4:30 p.m.	1. What Really Matters? 2. The Next Generation of Service 3. Innovation & Human-Centered Design 4. The Power of Stories: Maximizing Technology	Grand Ballroom I Grand Ballroom II Grand Ballroom III Grand Ballroom IV
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## Dinner on Your Own

## Friday, April 29, 2022

7:00 - 8:00 a.m.	Yoga Session	Hospitality Room 427
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8:00 a.m. - Noon	Information Desk	Crystal Foyer
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## Educational Workshops - Session 3

9:00 - 10:15 a.m.	1. What Really Matters? 2. The Next Generation of Service 3. Innovation & Human-Centered Design 4. The Power of Stories: Maximizing Technology	Grand Ballroom I Grand Ballroom II Grand Ballroom III Grand Ballroom IV
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10:15 - 10:30 a.m.	Break - <i>Sponsored by Knights of Columbus</i>	Grand Foyer
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## Educational Workshops - Session 4

10:30 - 11:45 a.m.	1. What Really Matters? 2. The Next Generation of Service 3. Innovation & Human-Centered Design 4. The Power of Stories: Maximizing Technology	Grand Ballroom I Grand Ballroom II Grand Ballroom III Grand Ballroom IV
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11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch on Your Own	
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1:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Business Meeting	Grand Ballroom I, II, III, IV
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2:30 - 2:45 p.m.	Break - <i>Sponsored by American Red Cross</i>	Grand Foyer
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4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Executive Committee Critique	Crystal Ballroom II
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6:00 - 6:30 p.m.	The Enlisted Optimist: <b>Jason Lookabaugh</b> , <i>Motivational Speaker</i>	Grand Ballroom I, II, III, IV
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6:30 - 8:30 p.m.	Closing Reception	Characters
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# NAC Business Meeting Agenda

**Thursday, April 28, 2022**

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Call to Order	Mary Morgan, <i>NAC Executive Committee Chair</i> <i>Benevolent &amp; Protective Order of Elks</i>
Presentation of Colors	Mile High Honor Guard - Buckley Air Force Base
Pledge of Allegiance	Debby Krueger, <i>National VAVS Representative</i> <i>Marine Corps League Auxiliary</i>
Invocation	Brett A. Campbell, <i>Chaplain</i> <i>VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System</i>
Welcome	Michael T. Kilmer, <i>Director</i> <i>VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System</i>
Roll Call	Mary Morgan
Opening Remarks and Meeting Objectives	Mary Morgan

## Sub-Committee Reports

Recommendations	Anne Parker, <i>Blue Star Mothers of America</i>
NAC Volunteer of the Year	Charles Gallina, <i>Knights of Columbus</i>
Recruitment	Vicki Sarracino, <i>Soldiers' Angels</i>
Membership	Mary Morgan, <i>Benevolent &amp; Protective Order of Elks</i>
Partnership Committee	Ron Rolfes, <i>Co-Chair, Forty and Eight</i> and Karen O'Neal, <i>Co-Chair, Erie VA Medical Center</i>
Standard Operating Procedures Committee	Patricia Kranzow, <i>American Legion Auxiliary</i>

**BREAK**

*Sponsored by: Soldiers' Angels*



# NAC Business Meeting Agenda

Federal Advisory  
Committee Act 101

Jeffrey Moragne  
*Director, VA Advisory Committee Management Office*

I-DEA (I-Inclusion,  
D-Diversity, E-Equity,  
A-Access): VA's Cultural  
Transformation

Harvey Johnson  
*Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Office of Resolution Management/Diversity & Inclusion*

**Friday, April 29, 2022**

1:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Call to Order

Mary Morgan

Pivot with Purpose:  
2022 CDCE Update

Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D.  
*Director, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement*

Promoting Access to  
Voting: VA's Strategy

Melissa Bryant  
*Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs*

The Future of Volunteerism  
& Civic Engagement

Nichole Cirillio  
*Executive Director  
International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE)*

Panel Discussion  
*Led by Ms. Cirillio*

Michael T. Kilmer, *Director,  
VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System*

Mark Murdock, *Director, Dayton VA Medical Center*

David L. Omura, *Director, Columbia VA Health Care System*

**BREAK**

*Sponsored by: American Red Cross*

## Award Presentations - Mary Morgan & Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D.

NAC Male and Female  
Volunteer of the Year

Stewart Israel, *Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks,  
John D. Dingell VA Medical Center*

Dortha Parson, *American Legion Auxiliary,  
Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center*

# NAC Business Meeting Agenda

American Spirit Awards	<b>Community Organization Recruitment:</b> Robert Johnson, <i>VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System, Las Vegas, NV</i>
	<b>Corporate Organization Recruitment:</b> Charles Franklin, <i>VA Boston Healthcare System, Boston, MA</i>
	<b>Faith-Based Recruitment:</b> Mark Frazee, <i>VA Connecticut Healthcare System, Newington, CT</i>
	<b>Senior Recruitment:</b> Cesar Emano, <i>Iowa City VA Health Care System, Iowa City, IA</i>
	<b>Student Recruitment:</b> Mary Golden, <i>VA Central California Health Care System, Fresno, CA</i>
	<b>Veteran Service Organization Recruitment:</b> Richard Kitson, <i>VA Northport Healthcare System, Northport, NY</i>
VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Awards	<b>CDCE Unsung Hero Award:</b> Corky Draconi, <i>VA Central California Health Care System, Fresno, CA</i>
	<b>CDCE Philanthropic Award:</b> Melissa Heinlein-Storti, Ph.D., <i>Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA</i>
	<b>CDCE Marketing &amp; Communications Award:</b> Rhonda Moore, <i>VA Dayton Healthcare System, Dayton, OH</i>
	<b>CDCE Stella Award:</b> Traci Palmer, <i>Roseburg VA Health Care System, Roseburg, OR</i>
CDCE Award for Excellence	Mark Frazee, <i>VA Connecticut Healthcare System, Newington, CT</i>
CDCE Executive Leadership Award	David L. Omura, <i>Columbia VA Health Care System, Columbia, SC</i>
77th Annual NAC Host Site Presentation	Eva Gergely <i>Chief, Center for Development &amp; Civic Engagement VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System</i>
Closing Remarks	Mary Morgan

## My Life, My Story

(2 Sessions: Wednesday, April 27, 9:30 - 11:30 am and 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.)

Faculty: Thor Ringler, Writer-Editor, William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital, Madison, WI

My Life, My Story is a VA program that interviews Veterans, writes up their stories, and places them in the medical chart where they are easily accessible by VA providers. Veterans receive printed copies of the story to share with family and/or friends. In this session attendees will learn about My Life, My Story and the role that volunteers play in the program. Attendees will also conduct practice interviews, write up stories, and reflect on the experience.



## Mind-Body Workshop

(2 Sessions: Wednesday, April 27, 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.)

Faculty: Lisa Schaewe, Art Therapist - LPC, American Red Cross

This session will teach techniques that engage both the mind and body to address common stress reactions. By building these healthy habits, participants will also increase their level of emotional intelligence or emotional quotient (EQ). Linked to higher levels of empathy and lower levels of stress, increased EQ leads to greater life satisfaction.



## New Rep/Dep & New CDCE Staff Training

(Only 1 session: Wednesday, April 27, 1:00 - 2:15 p.m.)

Faculty: Nathan Witt, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement

This session is designed to provide orientation for new VAVS NAC Representatives and Deputy Representatives, and new CDCE staff, and will also offer current information to seasoned VAVS NAC Representatives and Deputies. VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives serving on local VAVS Committees could also benefit and learn by attending this session.



## Morning Yoga

(2 sessions: Thursday, April 28, 7:00 - 8:00 a.m. & Friday, April 29 7:00 - 8:00 a.m.)

Kelly Wulf, Executive Director, Comeback Yoga

Yoga is one of the evidence-based complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches within the VHA Whole Health System of care. These sessions will provide an introduction to yoga and allow you to experience one of the components of care for our Veteran population. Used to treat conditions such as chronic low back pain, depressive disorders, anxiety, and insomnia; these classes will get you started on a practice of your own.



# Workshops

## What Really Matters?

Faculty: Melissa A. Heinlein Storti, Ph.D., CAVS, Chief, Center for Development & Civic Engagement, Corporal Michael J. Crescenzo VAMC, and Nathan Witt, Voluntary Service Specialist, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement

Metrics, evaluation, impact! Oh my! Why does this really matter? Join us for an interactive discussion that moves beyond traditional reports of total number of volunteers, hours, and donations. We will focus on current practices of data measurements, how the field of volunteer engagement needs to adapt to stronger impact standards, and pave a path forward for a more effective Annual Joint Review.



## The Next Generation of Service: Driving Youth Engagement

Faculty: Tammy M. Finney MSN, RN, CWC, Chief, Community Relations & Engagement Service, Columbia VA HCS & Mary C. Golden, CAVS, Chief, Center for Development & Civic Engagement VA Central California HCS

Unleashing the impact of youth volunteers through effective recruitment, retention and recognition. Addressing misconceptions and dispelling stereotypes; while sharing best practices in collaboration with VSOs, VA/CDCE, and current VA youth leaders. Discover effective communication, marketing, and branding techniques.



## Innovation & Human-Centered Design

Faculty: Crystal Woolen, Health Systems Specialist/HRO Coordinator, VA Western Colorado Health Care System

This session invites staff, volunteers, and community partners on a learning journey with Human-Centered Design (HCD). We're looking to understand how HCD can help us create volunteer programs and services to meet the changing needs of our Veterans, families and caregivers, as well as motivate individuals and organizations to continue their support and engagement in carrying out the mission of VA.



## The Power of Stories: Maximizing Technology

Faculty: Jeffrey F. Grandon MHA, Digital Programs Manager, Digital Media Office, VHA Office of Communications

Storytelling is a great way to talk about the impact of our work as volunteers, community partners, and volunteer engagement professionals. Given the expanded use of social media platforms, it's important to understand how to get your message across, what works when telling stories on social media and what do we need to avoid--- being sure that the stories we want to tell are being heard and achieving our desired goals.





## CDCE Educational Competencies

<b>Accountability</b> - Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, and timely results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.	<b>AC</b>
<b>Creativity and Innovation</b> - Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting edge programs/processes.	<b>CI</b>
<b>Customer Service</b> - Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.	<b>CS</b>
<b>Financial Management</b> - Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies and administers the program budget and General Post Funds (GPF). Understands required procurement and contracting for VAVS programs. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking for appropriated and donated and in-kind funds and services.	<b>FM</b>
<b>Honesty and Integrity</b> - Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner. Shows consistency in words and actions. Models high standards of ethics.	<b>HI</b>
<b>Human Resources Management</b> - Builds and manages a volunteer workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, volunteer supervisors, and the needs of Veterans and their families. Ensures that volunteers are appropriately recruited, selected, evaluated, and rewarded; takes action to address any concerns that may arise. Manages a multi-sector blended volunteer workforce and a variety of work settings and situations.	<b>HR</b>
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b> - Treats others with courtesy, sensitivity, and respect. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs and feelings of different people in different situations.	<b>IS</b>
<b>Partnering</b> - Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.	<b>PT</b>
<b>Political Savvy</b> - Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.	<b>PS</b>
<b>Strategic Thinking</b> - Formulates objectives and priorities, and implements plans consistent with the long-term interests and needs of the organization. Capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.	<b>ST</b>

# Speaker Biographies

## Centra “Cece” Mazyck

Army Veteran, Motivational Speaker, and Paralympian



Centra “Cece” Mazyck grew up in a military family; her mother, uncles, and brother all served in the military. She was born in Charleston, South Carolina, lived in New York City while her mother was stationed there, then moved back to St. Stephan, South Carolina, where she attended high school.

In 1994, she attended Bauder Fashion College in Atlanta, Georgia, and was passionate about the fashion industry. After her first year of college, she joined the Army Reserve and attended basic training at Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. There, she completed training as a human resource manager. She returned to Bauder Fashion College for one more year and graduated with an associate’s degree to pursue becoming a fashion stylist.

In 1997, Mazyck transitioned into active duty with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Mazyck enjoyed the camaraderie of the Army and re-enlisted. After eight years of service, she achieved the rank of sergeant first class.

While jumping out of the C-130 Hercules aircraft, she and another jumper became entangled in their parachutes at a high altitude and were unable to weave out in time. Upon landing, she burst her L1 and L2 vertebrae, becoming paralyzed from the waist down. After undergoing rehabilitation and physical therapy, she was released from the hospital in 2004.

Mazyck moved back to Columbia and returned to school. She graduated in 2010 with a sociology degree from the University of South Carolina.

Mazyck is a Paralympian. In 2005, she competed in the first National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Later, after intense training, she competed in the javelin competition at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. In 2013, she earned a bronze medal at the IPC Athletics World Championships in France.

Mazyck shares her inspiring story around the world as a motivational speaker. She is also an ambassador for the Disabled American Veterans and earned the DAV Freedom Award.

*Content from VAntage Point #VeteranoftheDay  
contributing writer, Hannah Nelson*

## Jason Lookabaugh

### Motivational Speaker - The Enlisted Optimist



As a rising Keynote Speaker and authority on positivity, perspective, and the power of mindset—Jason Lookabaugh energizes people to meet the challenges of the world around them. He skillfully weaves his compelling life story into the fabric of our daily lives. Jason Lookabaugh never tires of using his energies to consistently provide a fresh perspective to the minds of the future leaders and world changers of tomorrow. He also acts as an advisor to many organizations striving to improve. Thousands are watching and interacting with him regularly on Facebook.

Over 12 years ago, he entered into the United States Air Force, and during his time serving he has developed himself as a leader and an expert on resiliency through even the toughest of challenges. Jason Lookabaugh has spent years of his career directly educating the future leaders of the

United States military at all levels. It was there that he realized just how much the military, and the world, needed more light and more positive mindsets to show what can truly be possible with taking the time to see things a little differently.

His charisma, warmth, and humor have transformed ordinary people into extraordinary achievers by using his own life, and his in-depth study of others' challenges, to build an understanding of what works, what doesn't work, and why. He challenges the status quo of thinking and often is characterized as having an unpopular opinion. He refuses to accept things for the way they are if there is even a chance that it could be better. His drive to begin sharing his thoughts and message with the world was inspired by a quote from Simon Sinek about optimism.

"Optimism is different from positivity. And optimism is not naive either. Optimism accepts the truth of reality and looks forward to a brighter future. Optimism is the foundation of hope. And hope keeps us moving forward. There is a light at the end of this tunnel and we will get there...together."

Life has been anything but easy, but through it all, he used determination, persistence, and belief in his ability to go beyond what anyone told him was possible. He has received multiple degrees, including a Master's degree in Human Resource Management. Jason has also received numerous certifications and taught over two thousand hours of leadership and personal development in his time as a leadership instructor. Jason Lookabaugh is committed to motivating and training today's generation to be achievers and leaders as he introduces new audiences every day to the idea that they can Be Better People, that make People Better.



# Speaker Biographies

## Tammy Czarnecki

Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations  
Veterans Health Administration



Ms. Tammy Czarnecki is currently the Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations. She serves as the principal advisor to the Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations, directing the day-to-day operations of the 18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), Member Services, Office of Access to Care and Office of Emergency Management.

She previously served as the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) for Administrative Operations. As the ADUSH for Administrative Operations, Ms. Czarnecki was directly responsible for managing 10 major health care support programs. She also served as the Deputy to the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health/Clinical Operations in Central Office of the Veterans Health Administration.

She has also served as the Director of Performance Management for the Office of Quality and Performance and as an Educator at the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System throughout her twenty-six year career at VHA. She has worked with Joint Commission and served on faculty

at the University of Phoenix. Ms. Czarnecki has three major publications and she is also a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

## Harvey Johnson

Deputy Assistant Secretary

Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion



In his role as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Harvey Johnson serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration / Operations, Security and Preparedness for the Veterans Affairs. He provides executive leadership to the Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion, the associated field offices and employees.

Mr. Johnson is a seasoned executive leader in promoting race and gender equity, resolving conflict, building diverse and inclusive organizations, driving large scale organizational change, strategic planning and business transformation.

A native of Philadelphia PA, Mr. Johnson's career encompasses 33 years of service with the United States Army in the Infantry and

Adjutant General Corps and as an executive with the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs.

## Melissa Bryant

### Deputy Assistant Secretary Office of Public Affairs



Melissa A. Bryant was appointed on March 15, 2021, as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA), at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Prior to that, she was Senior Advisor for OPIA and most recently the National Legislative Director for The American Legion.

A former Army Captain and Operation Iraqi Freedom combat veteran, her extensive record of public service includes critical roles in both military and civil service as a senior intelligence officer. Ms. Bryant is widely recognized for championing causes impacting women and minority Service members and Veterans, highlighting the distinct challenges this growing population faces while advocating smart policy and legislative solutions.

A native of Philadelphia, PA, Ms. Bryant is a third generation combat Veteran, an ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate with a BA in Political Science cum laude from Hampton University, is an alumna of Howard University School of Law, and holds an MA in Policy Management from the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

## Nichole Cirillo

### Executive Director International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE)



Nichole joined IAVE as Executive Director in October 2019. She has significant executive experience across environmental and social justice sectors and has led the engagement of a large network of global volunteers. Her roles have included Mission Director/Head of PR at Stonyfield Organics, International Director of Learning at Earthwatch, Senior Manager, Outreach and Mobilization at Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) and Executive Director at Friends of the Public Garden and Boston Common.

Nichole has extensive leadership, management, fundraising and communications experience, gained working with teams of staff and volunteers in different parts of the world. Importantly Nichole herself has been a volunteer for much of her life and partnerships building has been a common theme throughout her career.

Nichole holds a Bachelor of Arts (Political Science) from Rutgers University and a Master of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy from Tufts University.



## 2022 James H. Parke Memorial Scholarships

\$20,000	Emma Gardner	Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks Fayetteville, Arkansas
\$5,000	Kay Manzano	VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System Los Angeles, California
\$2,000	Rosadry Rios	Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital Chicago, Illinois
\$2,000	Ayva Kacir	Northern Arizona VA Health Care System Prescott, Arizona
\$2,000	Daniel Kamenker	VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System Los Angeles, California
\$2,000	Diego Viramontes	San Francisco VA Health Care System San Francisco, California
\$2,000	Nabila Sultan	Central Texas Veterans Health Care System Temple, Texas
\$2,000	Seo Yeon Cho (Vivian)	Marion VA Medical Center Marion, Illinois
\$2,000	William Chen	Iowa City VA Health Care System Iowa City, Iowa

## James H. Parke Summer Scholarships

\$500	Mahitha Anumola	Washington DC VA Medical Center Washington, District of Columbia
\$500	Anna Avery	Hampton VA Medical Center Hampton, Virginia



# James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship

## \$20,000 Scholarship Recipient



Emma Gardner  
Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks  
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Emma Gardner has been an official VA Youth Volunteer since age 14, but she actually began volunteering for Veterans when she was four years old. Her volunteer work history includes the Fayetteville National Cemetery, Fayetteville Veterans Home, and the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks. Emma also assists with Bo's Blessings, a local non-profit, dedicated to taking care of Veterans.

Emma has assisted with Wreaths Across America and Memorial Day activities at the Fayetteville National Cemetery for twelve years. Not only does she help place the wreaths and flags on the headstones; she also returns when it is time to remove them. Emma now serves as a board member on the Fayetteville National Cemetery Advisory Committee where she assisted with organizing the Roll Call of Honor.

At Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks, Emma has actively participated in National Salute to Veterans and the Valentines for Veterans event for ten years. Through the years, Emma has collected thousands of hand-made cards to be distributed to Veterans for Valentine's Day, Military Appreciation Day, and Veteran birthdays.

Evidence of Emma's dedication to Veterans is far reaching. She has spearheaded a canned food donation drive at the county fair resulting in a donation of over 13,000 canned food items to the HUD-VASH program. She has helped prepare and serve meals for six years to over 1,200 volunteers who have come to our National Cemetery to help decorate for Memorial Day. At the Fayetteville Veterans Home, she assists with annual holiday parties and Military Appreciation Month activities. She has been performing, singing, and dancing at the Veterans Home since she was four years old.

Outside her devotion to Veterans, Emma is just as dedicated to her schoolwork and extra curricular activities. She maintains a high grade point average landing her in the top 10% of her graduating class, receiving multiple awards and holding several leadership positions to include class officer, National Honor Society, Elected Senator at Arkansas Girls State, and even presenting as an anchor/reporter/producer for her school's television news. Emma has also been a delegate to 5 national and 8 state conventions for 4-H; where she also has numerous honors and currently serves as President of the County 4-H Council.

Emma's smile and caring attitude that she shares with Veterans, staff, and visitors is often the highlight of their day. Consequently, she makes a difference in the lives of many. A Veteran who is in pain, needs his medication or directions, or is having a bad day and then meets Emma suddenly realizes all is not so bad and that Emma, a kind teen volunteer, is someone who truly cares. Emma continually strives to increase her peers' awareness of our Veteran community's needs because she understands this is an important way to help them understand the freedoms they enjoy should never be taken for granted. She has successfully motivated and inspired 300 volunteers and peers to join her in bringing honor to Veterans.

# National Advisory Committee

## Male Volunteer of the Year

### Stewart Israel

Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks  
John D. Dingell VA Medical Center  
Detroit, Michigan



Stewart Israel has been volunteering to serve Veterans in his community for more than 45 years, while working as a high school teacher and raising a family. In that time, he has excelled in roles both local and national. Today, he is the National Adopt-a-Veteran Chair for the Elks, a longtime NAC Deputy Representative, the Elks Representative at the Detroit VAMC, and a fill-in Representative at the Ann Arbor VAMC. When the VA Ann Arbor Elks Representative and Deputy Representative both passed away in 2020, Stewart took it upon himself to take over their duties. He quickly raised funds from the community to cover the Veterans' needs. He has since provided more than \$8,000 in monetary and in-kind donations to that facility.

In addition to his official responsibilities, Stewart pulls off several large events for local Veterans annually. Every April and November, he plans a steak dinner for 140 Veterans from local VA facilities and shelters. Veterans look forward to the event all year, which includes a live band and a party following the dinner.

He also coordinates a Christmas gift program every year, soliciting gifts and donations to fill 850 gift bags. Ninety community members help distribute these to Veterans at multiple VA facilities and shelters. Planning for this event is year-round; in August when no one else is thinking of Christmas, Stewart is calling local dentists to ensure they can donate toothbrushes and toothpaste for Christmas gift bags.

Many volunteers found it hard to pivot when Covid restrictions limited usual events, but he adjusted quickly. In fact, since the beginning of April 2021 Stewart has led his Lodge's Veterans Committee to serve more than 4,800 Veterans, purchased and donated over \$13,000 worth of goods, and driven 2,500 miles.

Through it all he remains humble, stating that he's only serving God and country. "Stew is not a Veteran but has taken it up upon himself to put the care for these Veterans and the quality of that care at the forefront of his volunteer experience," says Bill Browning, Chief of Volunteer and Community Relations at the John Dingell VAMC. It's that level of dedication that makes Stewart Israel an excellent choice for NAC Volunteer of the Year.

The support for Stewart's nomination was an outpouring of love and respect. Ruth Hall, Past National Veteran Service, State Director, Michigan says, "the military community has long benefitted from Stewart's expertise and dedication in helping their transition, recovery and care for a better, more rewarding life."

# National Advisory Committee Female Volunteer of the Year

## Dortha Parson

American Legion Auxiliary  
Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center  
Clarksburg, West Virginia



Dortha Parsons has been an exemplary volunteer at the Louis A. Johnson VA Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia since 1977. She has served over 33,000 hours and is currently the volunteer with the most hours served with the second longest active tenure at her facility. She can be found five days a week in the Diagnostic Service providing customer service support to lab/x-ray check-in. The Veterans lovingly refer to her as the “Sheriff” and when she is infrequently absent and during COVID, Veterans would say, “We need to get the Sheriff back in her post as the process to check in is much smoother when she is here to control us.”

In addition to being a model volunteer, Dortha serves as the VAVS Representative for the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA). She is active in the ALA, VFW Auxiliary, and Rebekah’s organizations. Her love for the Veteran community is further substantiated by her devotion to ensuring all needs, such as care kits and clothing, are met for hospitalized, homeless and female Veterans. Dortha worked to ensure the medical center was able to continue the annual ALA Gift Shop during the pandemic and reaches out to local media outlets, providing photos and write-ups that not only encourage others to donate but raise awareness of supporting local VAs.

During the pandemic, Ms. Parsons remained active in supporting Veterans by shopping for needed items and making phone calls. She was one of the first Volunteers to return to her assignment after vaccinations began in early 2021. Although she was not authorized to do her normal assignment, she came in and volunteered in the Voluntary Service office to do other administrative tasks. During a recent visit from Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Denis McDonough, Mrs. Parsons was presented a challenge coin from the Secretary for her tenure as a volunteer.

In her 45 years of service, Mrs. Parsons has volunteered in recreation therapy, IT, Chaplain Service, Diagnostic, and Voluntary Service. She embodies the VA I CARE values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. During VAVS Committee meetings, she is the first to ask questions and looks for ways to provide better service to all Veterans. She is considered a member of the family and is an integral member of each area of the hospital where she has been assigned.

All volunteers are truly the lifeblood of the medical center and provide services to ensure the care provided to Veterans is second to none. Mrs. Parsons is the premier volunteer. Her dedication is unwavering and has not changed in over four decades.



## 2022 American Spirit Awards

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VAVS American Spirit Award  
Community Organization Recruitment

Robert Johnson  
VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System  
Las Vegas, Nevada

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VAVS American Spirit Award  
Corporate Recruitment

Charles Franklin  
VA Boston Healthcare System  
Boston, Massachusetts

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VAVS American Spirit Award  
Faith-Based Recruitment

Mark Frazee  
VA Connecticut Healthcare System  
Newington, Connecticut

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VAVS American Spirit Award  
Senior Recruitment

Cesar Emanó  
Iowa City VA Health Care System  
Iowa City, Iowa

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VAVS American Spirit Award  
Student Recruitment

Mary Golden  
VA Central California Health Care System  
Fresno, California

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VAVS American Spirit Award  
Veteran Service Organization  
Recruitment

Richard Kitson  
VA Northport Healthcare System  
Northport, New York

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# VA Voluntary Service American Spirit Award

## Community Organization Recruitment



**Robert Johnson**

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System  
Las Vegas, Nevada

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) has a mutually beneficial relationship with Southern Nevada Freemasons (SNF) that has contributed greatly to caring for the Veterans of Southern Nevada. Through this strategic partnership, VASNHS receives several thousands of dollars in monetary donations to support the needs of indigent Veteran patients each year, inpatient visitations, regularly scheduled and occasional volunteers, and support of annual (pre-COVID) large-scale events.

SNF remains active and engaged in facility operations and needs for the best possible service for Veterans. Some of those events include inpatient visits throughout the year providing comfort items to hospitalized Veterans, delivering and setting up several holiday trees throughout the medical center and subsequently conducting a well-received tree lighting ceremony with VA staff and Veteran patients during the holiday season. The volunteers for SNF serve in numerous VASNHS assignments including Red Coat Ambassadors, Information Desk, Fisher House, Associate Chief of Staff for Education administrative support, Shuttle Cart Drivers, and serve on VASNHS committees promoting the "Voice of the Veteran" podcast.

To raise funding in support of Veteran needs, SNF members conduct numerous, innovative, non-profit activities within their organization and local community including silent auctions, participation in NASCAR events, concert concessions, firework sales, and ongoing member support. As a direct result, SNF has provided all food (as well as volunteers to cook and serve) for past VASNHS annual events such as the BBQs and Car Shows that have over 2,500 participants annually.

The Southern Nevada Freemasons do not fail to support the VA mission, as their labors are always for the goodwill and improvement of the local community and their neighbors. They are always the first to volunteer based on facility needs. The temporary suspension of all volunteer programs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic did not halt the SNF volunteers' ambitions to serve their Veterans as they were among the first to participate in volunteer reorientation and return to service at VASNHS's information desks followed by Red Coat Ambassadors. SNF is humble in recognizing its members for giving back; providing proclamations and plaques for supporting volunteer activities. SNF performs outreach efforts to a diverse group of many ages in support of VASNHS and Veteran needs.



**Mike Clark**

# VA Voluntary Service American Spirit Award

## Corporate Organization Recruitment



**Charles Franklin**  
VA Boston Healthcare System  
Boston, Massachusetts

Charles Franklin, the Project Manager for the VHA Rideshare Program, has worked with Architecture Solutions since January 2019 on the construction of the program. The New England Center for Innovative Excellence (NECIE) is part of VHA, and focuses on sourcing and implementing technology solutions for chronic illnesses and injuries, improving accessibility for rural Veterans, and providing innovative healthcare solutions for VA's aging population. In just seven months, NECIE has served as a conduit to launching life-altering innovations that are increasing care and quality of life for the nation's Veterans.

In the past year Architecture Solutions has facilitated over 30,000 Rides for Veterans within the Homeless program; they provide transportation to over 8,000 medical Appointments, immediate transportation to shelters—taking over 300 Veterans off the streets, 1,000 rides that assist Veterans obtain permanent housing, and provided aid to over 70 Veterans obtain employment providing transportation up to the first 4 weeks.

Architecture Solutions has gone above and beyond in helping facilitate delivery of over 40,000 meals to Veterans in the VHA Homeless Programs. Through their 24/7 Customer Service support line they have been able to facilitate immediate transportation to support Veterans during the VEText Rideshare Covid project providing transportation to all Veterans for vaccinations and boosters. Architecture Solutions answered hundreds of calls from and ensured they had accurate information to provide the Veterans.

Additionally, this dedicated program leveraged the VHA Innovation Ecosystem to identify an SDVOSB VA partner that had similar interests in solving and addressing VA-specific challenges. The outreach was a collaborative effort between the VA Innovation Ecosystem and the NECIE to look for and identify a corporate entity that would be a good fit.

This innovation, the NECIE and Architecture Solutions, was featured in the VHA State of Innovation Report 2021, VHA Innovation Experience 2021 and VHA Innovation Ecosystem Demo Day conference to a large audience that would assist the SDVOSB's efforts in highlighting the company and its capabilities. The project proposal was drafted for Congress in order to receive expanded authority for the Homeless Program Office to fund the National expansion. It resulted in a \$4.5M congressional appropriated budget and signed into law in January of 2021. Through a partnership with the contractor, the process includes a cost comparison tool that analyzes real-time cost between rideshare platforms maximizing cost savings to the VAs of now, the Rideshare Innovation has been deployed all 18 VISNs and over 135 VA locations.

This program was able to leverage the assistance of the VA Office of Public Affairs to publish blogs about their innovation project and how it is directly supporting our Veterans. Their formulated solution is elegant, removes barriers and complications to provide rideshare transportation to the community's vulnerable Veterans.



# VA Voluntary Service American Spirit Award

## Faith-Based Recruitment



Mark Frazee

VA Connecticut Healthcare System  
Newington, Connecticut

The Vertical Church, lead by Mr. Wayne Hammond, is integral to the success of the VA Connecticut's (VACT) Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE). Vertical Church volunteers, easily recognizable by their bright red "Serve Team" t-shirts, have given over 975 hours in the last 5 and a half years.

Mr. Hammond assists with developing assignments and coordinates scheduling based on volunteer availability and ability to meet the needs of the Veteran community. He has assisted with key assignments to include Ambassador Escorts, COVID Vaccine Clinic Assistants and Weekend Special Assignments. Roles are assigned Monday through Saturday and cover varying shifts.

The Vertical Church is the stand alone volunteer organization supporting Saturday operations at the VACT facility. Mr. Hammond coordinates the volunteers from the church and assigns shifts and duties. The Saturday assignments are the backbone of the Vertical Church volunteer effort and paramount to the VACT CDCE. Additionally, Mr. Hammond must maintain communication with the volunteers as their outside commitments consistently change.

Mr. Hammond collaborates with the Chief of VACT CDCE for Weekend Special Assignments. Recently, Mr. Hammond coordinated a large team of volunteers from the Vertical Church to prepare, wrap and label over 400 gifts in less than 6 hours for the Giving Tree Wrapping Party. Without the Mr. Hammond and Vertical Church, this task would not have been completed.

As a coordinator for the Ambassador Escort program, Mr. Hammond is registered and volunteers nearly 5 days a week. He oversees a varying volunteer staff of 4-25 people depending on the shift or task. The remaining volunteers assist as they are able, especially Saturdays providing a minimum of 4 each weekend for escort duties.

Although Mr. Hammond is the coordinator for the Vertical Church, he has become a true pillar of his community and a benchmark volunteer who continues to go above and beyond the call of duty for any volunteer task. Mr. Hammond is VACT's CDCE "Go-To" volunteer who meets every Veteran with a smile and every task with a "can do" attitude. He leads other volunteers and answers any questions that come up. The Vertical Church and Mr. Hammond are the epitome of volunteerism.

# VA Voluntary Service American Spirit Award

## Senior Recruitment



**Cesar Emano**

Iowa City VA Health Care System  
Iowa City, Iowa

Brian Bauer has been an invaluable volunteer at the Iowa City VA Hospital. He is truly a jack of all trades - serving as a desk manager, patient escort, letter folder, workroom helper, and a shuttle driver who runs many different routes. Especially during these trying pandemic times, his reliability and dedication to his volunteerism is unparalleled. He routinely works 8 hour shifts at least 3 days a week and is always willing to come in early or stay late if necessary. His empathy and kindness also ensure he does his work with a friendly demeanor and "can do" mindset.

The Voluntary Service team was quick to capitalize on Brian's skillset when it came to volunteer recruitment and onboarding.

When new volunteers join the team, Brian is there to educate them and show them how things are done. His positive attitude and expertise make him an excellent mentor. He would attend meetings and other community-based gatherings to recruit people for their participation as well. Bauer developed an innovative form of outreach by emphasizing the word of mouth for participation to many of the Veterans in Iowa City.

Brian also demonstrates great creativity and innovation as well as attention to detail. His dedication to the work and an eye for detail has him constantly thinking of ways to improve processes. When he noticed that wheelchairs weren't being used efficiently, he recommended a solution to the Chief of Voluntary Service. His outstanding support and genuine compassion for the mission is noticed by everyone that he works with and causes the service line to continually improve.

Brian demonstrates a willingness and ability to fill in wherever he is needed that has been instrumental to the smooth operations of the VAVS program in Iowa City. There have been many times that a volunteer wasn't able to come in and Brian is happy to fill in for them without complaint. His vast knowledge, combined with his mentorship and likeable personality, make him a key asset to this organization. He has a genuine, honorable commitment to supporting our Veterans and deserves recognition for his service and the way that he inspires others to walk in his footsteps.



**Brian Bauer**

# VA Voluntary Service American Spirit Award

## Student Organization Recruitment



**Mary Golden**  
VA Central California Health Care System  
Fresno, California

The Student Leadership Council, known as the SLC, has proven to be an honorable program within its inaugural year. The Student Ambassadors involved with the SLC came from VA medical centers from around the nation. These student ambassadors were already enrolled as volunteer in the VA Voluntary Service program. As such, they already possessed a strong desire to improve the lives and experiences of Veterans. Of the 48 students that entered this prestigious program, 30 completed all elements. Each Student Ambassador was assigned an individual service project with specific parameters for which they independently selected the specific Veteran population/VA Program. These projects impacted numerous Veterans across the country. Student Projects included; blankets for Veterans, suicide prevention awareness presentations, food drives for VA/CDCE food pantries, woven mats for homeless Veterans, and much more. They illustrate the immense impact to our nation's heroes.

The student ambassadors demonstrated passion for this program and as such, served as a magnet for others within their sphere of influence. Their altruistic dedication to improve volunteerism was visible during their individual projects as they recruited their friends and families to assist as activity volunteers. Students engaged their communities to further support their efforts; raising awareness of Veterans needs and volunteer opportunities. Two students used their individual projects to promote to Veterans the VA for healthcare and to promote volunteerism at VA Medical Centers.

On a national level, Student Ambassadors (Regional Leads/Deputy Leads) were invited to present the SLC program at the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC), consisting of over 300 VSO leaders. They raised awareness of student VA opportunities for student leadership and volunteerism. The SLC has since been accepted as an official member of the NAC. The Student Leadership Council participation in the NAC will continue to build bridges to raise awareness of youth volunteerism and Veteran service opportunities.

The Student Ambassadors who completed the program received recognition for their service, accomplishments and leadership. The student leadership program evolved to establish recognized leaders within each region. These leaders worked within their respective regions to encourage their peers, provide peer mentorship and select "Ambassadors of the Month."

The devotion of movement toward servant volunteers to lead others has given the opportunity for the SLC Leadership to use VSO resources to nominate student leaders for scholarships and national awards. SLC ambassadors are currently being considered for over \$150,000 in scholarships to be awarded towards their college education. Students were provided an opportunity to meet specific VA Medical Center Directors to include; Fresno, Greater Los Angeles, Columbia MO and Columbia SC. Students also received recognition from Miss Teen America and Miss USA.



# VA Voluntary Service American Spirit Award

## Veteran Service Organization Recruitment



**Richard Kitson**  
Northport VA Medical Center  
Northport, New York

Ms. Patricia "Pat" O'Brien of the Manhasset American Legion Auxiliary serves as a volunteer at the Northport VA Medical Center. She has performed countless, extraordinary acts of kindness and generosity toward Veterans and their families, especially those struggling to achieve wellness, financial and housing stability, and a renewed sense of belonging.

For over a decade, Pat and the American Legion Auxiliary have actively participated in all the traditional and treasured VA volunteer roles (e.g. hosting parties on inpatient or residential units), but they have also sought to partner with VA on new ways of healing and recognition.

Since learning about Northport VA Medical Center's Hero Hunger Help Project (HHHP), which involves VA social workers screening Veterans for food insecurity and temporarily providing them with donated grocery store gift cards (among other resources), Pat has become the program's staunchest advocate. Each year, she helps raise the community's awareness of Veteran food insecurity and invites others to donate to CDCE to help end it. Thanks to Pat and others like her, Northport's HHHP has remained funded and effective for years.

Pat's support of Northport VA Medical Center's Secret Soldier Santa Program (SSSP), which involves the community providing gifts to the children of Veterans under VA's care, has never been more important than during the pandemic.

When the pandemic struck and traditional shopping methods and gift giving – not to mention volunteer networking - were greatly impacted, Pat came to the rescue! Using the Zoom video connections, she rallied auxiliary members, civic and religious groups, family and friends to donate department store gift cards that would be given to Veterans participating in the SSSP to make online purchases for their children at the holidays. Pat's efforts resulted in 135 children (more than half of the SSSP children "adopted" in 2020) receiving over \$150 each in gift cards. Not only did Pat reduce stress and sadness for the Veterans and their children, she helped remind the former service members of their Santa-like roles in our lives.

There are numerous other examples of Pat O'Brien's contributions to VA patients (and staff) and her positive influence at Northport VA Medical Center. She is involved in hosting baby showers for Veterans in Northport's Women's Wellness Center, coordinating drives to provide new housewares and linens to Veterans in the HUD-VASH program, and routine visits to Northport's Community Living Center... It's her ability to rally others to a cause that really shines through.

Despite the roadblocks created by the COVID 19 pandemic, Ms. O'Brien found a way around all of them to continue making a positive and lasting difference in the lives of Long Island's Veterans and families.



**Pat O'Brien**



## 2022 VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Awards

CDCE Unsung Hero Award	Corky Draconi VA Central California Health Care System, Fresno, California
CDCE Philanthropic Award	Melissa Heinlein-Storti, Ph.D. Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
CDCE Marketing & Communications Award	Rhonda Moore VA Dayton Healthcare System Dayton, Ohio
CDCE Stella Award	Traci Palmer Roseburg VA Health Care System Roseburg, Oregon
CDCE Award for Excellence	Mark Frazee VA Connecticut Healthcare System Newington, Connecticut
CDCE Executive Leadership Award	David L. Omura Columbia VA Health Care System Columbia, South Carolina

# VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Unsung Hero Award



**Corky Draconi**

VA Central California Health Care System  
Fresno, California

Corky Draconi exemplifies and personifies the spirit of Voluntary Service as well as the VA I CARE Values and continuously works to find innovative ways to complete their duties. While a genius in the technical and administrative aspects of the position, Corky's heart shines through when doing the boots on ground work to meet the needs of Veterans. Draconi leaves no Veteran unaided, believing in owning the moment and does so daily, preserving the esteem of the Veterans and guests. By actively listening and relating to someone, Corky can put others at ease and remove their embarrassment and reservations. There's no such thing as "it's time for me to go home" if there is a Veteran waiting with any need - Draconi will remain until the work is done and the Veteran's needs are met. Corky has

demonstrated altruism and selflessness in support of their team and partners.

Locally, Corky has developed many tools on our intranet share-point page to enable VA staff to request CDCE resources for the Veterans they serve to include transportation, items, or other unique needs. Corky serves as an instructor for these processes and programs - attending staff meetings for Social Work Service, Veteran Transportation Service and Administrative Officers of the Day to provide instruction on accessing and completing requests forms. Draconi instructs in a way that keeps the learner's esteem intact, patient, and uses the appropriate questioning techniques. They also explain the why of the program or process to ensure the instruction carries meaning to the learner and provides alternative ways they may use these tools.

Corky provides show and tell learning in morning CDCE Huddles to demonstrate new processes and is relied upon highly as the subject matter expert for all things technical. When the Assistant Service Chief requested ideas from Corky on how to better track Customer Service/Red Coat Ambassador attendance, reports of contact, violations to policy, and more, they assisted by developing various SharePoint tools to enable the team to run reports and easily access information in real-time; assisting with data analysis to identify gaps in service and trends.

Corky took on the Walk of Honor program, traditionally a 3-person job, knowing the facility was very short-handed. Corky recruited family to assist and free up other staff to complete their daily duties. Draconi performed this task admirably, speaking to each applicant, verifying all information against the Veteran's DD214, and keeping all parties informed of changes due to COVID-19 restrictions, submission deadlines, and ceremonial video production and release. Due to the nature of this project Veterans and their loved ones become very overwhelmed and emotional. Corky's clear and compassionate communication comforted applicants and aided them through the process.

Corky is not only an engaged civil servant they are also the co-founder of *Breaking The Silence* (BTS) a non-profit located in Fresno, California dedicated to raising public awareness of child abuse realities and prevention techniques through survivor empowerment and community education.



# VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Philanthropic Award



Melissa Heinlein-Storti, Ph.D.  
Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Since 2012 the Center for Development & Civic Engagement team (formerly Voluntary Service) at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center has worked in partnership with Bristol-Myers Squibb on the Adopt-A-Veteran Holiday Program. CDCE staff worked closely with Social Work who identified Veterans in dire need during the holidays and perhaps could use support such as gifts, gift cards, and even a dream item that the family would want. Bristol-Myers created the fillable form that Social Work used to refer a Veteran. In 2012, eight Veterans and their families were supported during the holiday season. Over the last nine years, the Adopt-A-Veteran Holiday Program has grown in leaps and bounds. Bristol-Myers continues to be the lead donor - supporting 187 Veterans and their families with

donations over \$200,000 since 2012. On average, Bristol-Myers has supported 15-20 Veterans and their families each year thereafter. In addition to Veterans with families, the program has expanded to support Veterans in grant per diem facilities, older Veterans, and more.

In addition to Bristol-Myers Squibb, the local VA employees are also aware of the program. As a result, departments such as Logistics, Nursing, CBOCs, Radiation Therapy, Education, Research, and Quality Management, among others, came together to support Veterans in need. This initiative truly became a wonderful employee engagement event within these departments around the holidays. Local businesses and individuals in the surrounding community also looked to support Veterans in this very unique way around the holidays. Some are repeat donors who decided not to exchange gifts with their own family members, but instead came together to create an exceptional holiday for a Veteran in need. In the years leading up to 2020, Bristol-Myers would bring a parade of cars to the medical center with gifts filling up every inch of each car. Social Workers were ready to intercept gifts for those Veterans supported by Bristol-Myers in order to deliver to Veterans' homes while children were still at school. All the other donors followed the same process and it was truly a Hallmark moment each time an exchange was made for a delivery.

During the early months of the pandemic in 2020, Dr. Heinlein-Storti worked with Bristol-Myers in order to creatively plan for the Adopt-A-Veteran Holiday Program to ensure it would continue. With strategic vision, planning, and quick pivots, Bristol-Myers refused to let a year go by without supporting Veterans during the holidays. In turn, they created Amazon wish lists for every family referred that they committed to supporting. Instead of social workers picking up the gifts from Bristol-Myers, packages were shipped instead. This partnership set the precedence for other donors expressing a desire to give back to Veterans during the global pandemic. In 2020, 32 Veterans and their families were supported (15 by Bristol-Myers and 17 by individual and local business partners). Bristol-Myers' donation was estimated around \$30,000 while the other 17 Veteran families were estimated to \$35,000 in total donations.

Since 2012, the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia has supported 326 Veterans and their families through this program that started with a single partnership.

# VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Marketing & Communications Award



Rhonda Moore  
VA Dayton Healthcare System  
Dayton, Ohio

The Dayton VA Medical Center (VAMC) is known for their selfless contributions to their neighbors and Veterans. With a priority of ensuring that no Veteran goes hungry, they provide over 300 boxes of food each month at their Drive-Thru Pantry.

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, the Voluntary Service department had been forced to change how they operated the pantry. They decided to conduct it as a drive-thru event to be held on the 3rd Thursdays of the month. Provisions were even made for those using public transit, with individual boxes prepared and placed at the bus stop for pick-up. For those driving to the campus, a map was posted identifying the appropriate gate to enter and the route

to the distribution point. Once there, Veterans did not even have to leave their cars. Ensuring the safety of everyone involved, volunteers and employees put the box of food in the Veteran's trunk or on the back seat to maintain physical distancing.

The communications campaign was robust, both internally and externally. Internally, flyers were posted on all floors of the medical center and information posted on the electronic bulletin boards installed in all campus buildings. Externally, they utilized their social media platforms to publicize the program, often including videos and pictures of the food, with the goal to show Veterans what was available and encourage them to visit the pantry. They also were intentional about noting that the pantry was open to all Veterans in the community and not just for those enrolled at the Dayton VAMC.

The operation ran smoothly each month, with never a long wait for those Veterans who attended. During the holidays, the Dayton VAMC makes an even greater effort to ensure that they are as pleasant as possible for those Veterans in need. In 2020, one week before Thanksgiving they partnered with The Foodbank to provide 400 free turkeys, along with the side items, giving those Veterans an opportunity to have a complete Thanksgiving Day meal. The Christmas holiday was equally pleasant, with the Dayton VAMC giving away hams, again with all the sides, to 377 Veterans and their families.

Videos and pictures flooded their social media with expressions of gratitude from Veterans, families, and the local community.

"Thank you to all that made this happen."

"Wonderful!"

"Thank you for all that you do."

# VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Stella Award



Traci Palmer  
Roseburg VA Health Care System  
Roseburg, Oregon

The American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) in Roseburg, Oregon is an amazing organization that has provided much to the Veterans at their local community in hours volunteered, monetary, and items donated. Annually, ALA collaborates with CDCE to sponsor the Christmas Gift Shop, benefitting in-patient Veterans at the Roseburg VA Health Care System (RVAHCS). This event provides our in-patient Veterans the opportunity to shop and choose Christmas presents for themselves or their loved ones. However, the past two years have proven to be difficult with the onset of COVID-19 and the subsequent precautions. With restrictions in place such as social distancing, the group could no longer gather to plan for the annual event. Instead, the ALA had to get creative and think outside of the box to overcome these hurdles.

The event was designed as a remote activity, where every inpatient could create a wish list from a printed shopping catalog and have their selected gifts festively wrapped by the ALA. The gifts were then hand-delivered by CDCE staff or mailed to family members outside the local area on behalf of the Veteran courtesy of the ALA.

Prior to the execution of this event, the local ALA recognized the limitations they had been facing over the past few years, noting a substantial decline in the quality and variety of options of items for selection from the Gift Shop. They reached out to their State, local and national representatives and proposed partnering with other community organizations to support the program. The proposal was rejected, with the representatives choosing to maintain the program as a signature event solely sponsored by the ALA. Undeterred, the local ALA attempted a second option, creating a wish list of their own based on the expressed needs and wants of the patients, and proposing that their members purchase those specific items. Unfortunately, while the list was made available, many members chose to not use it and purchased the traditional items, which left the Veteran's wishes unmet.

With the local ALA's support, CDCE assumed responsibility for this annual event and redesigned the program with the best interest of the patient in mind, using the group's initial idea of a community-wide Christmas gift shop. All local VSO's and organizations were invited to participate and enthusiastically agreed to be involved. Not only were they thrilled to be included, but it allowed a spirit of collaboration to exist during the holiday season that had never existed before. With more organizations involved, there were more resources and with more resources, the Veterans were able to identify the very items they wished to provide to their families and loved ones.

The lesson learned was that sometimes tough and not-so-popular decisions must be made to move a program forward. To address the ever-changing needs of Veterans requires a willingness to be flexible and make the changes necessary when they are required to meet the mission. The ALA and CDCE are both stronger organizations for having made this change and are now seen as ones who know when and how to pivot when required. As the ALA says, "Don't be afraid to step out of the box!"



# VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Award for Excellence



Mark Frazee

VA Connecticut Healthcare System  
Newington, Connecticut

Mark Frazee serves as the Chief, Center for Development & Civic Engagement for the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, supporting Veterans, visitors and staff. He is currently serving his third year as the VISN 1 Liaison on the CDCE Board of Directors, a role that is primarily a one-year commitment. Due to his success in the role and unforeseen staff turnover and attrition, Frazee was requested, by name, by the Deputy Network Director to continue in that capacity to maintain continuity and provide the best customer service possible to those he supports.

Mr. Frazee has coordinated with several donors to provide meals, cookies, and snack items to staff throughout the pandemic. Additionally, he was able to arrange for snacks, bottled water and some meals during Covid Vaccine clinics for volunteers and staff. He is routinely involved with several committees for staff events with the mission of boosting morale and unit cohesion. Mark strives to be inclusive in his planned events, such as the Christmas Tree Lighting and lobby decorations, while also coordinating supplies and support for the Menorah lighting and Kwanza.

Mark has worked on several new programs to increase the availability of virtual assignments including the Compassionate Contact Corps, virtual volunteer visits and the remote Christmas Gift Shop among others. He coordinated and collaborated with several donors to acquire new laptops, iPads and other devices for virtual Veteran medical appointments, Virtual Contact Corps and virtual patient visits with family members. He has participated in and led several programs and initiatives to assist the Medical Center in its service to Veterans in a cost-effective manner including, but not limited to, landscaping projects, acquiring donations to support and promote Breast Cancer Screenings, obtaining iPads for communication during the pandemic emergency, donations of emergency bags for police service and more.

Mr. Frazee was active in the Associate for Healthcare Volunteer Resource Professionals (AHVRP) until the organization disbanded. He was a contributing author and editor for the "In a Nutshell" book which is a guide for Hospital Volunteer Managers. It was also used by AHVRP as one of the study guides for the Certified Administrator of Voluntary Service (CAVS) Exam; a credential he also held. He also recently joined the regional Volunteer Manager Organization.

In his role as the CDCE Chief, Mark continues to mentor new service chiefs, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and in addition to staffing shortages and turnover within his own program. Additionally, he provided volunteer staffing for COVID Vaccine clinics, acquired equipment to maintain connectivity for veteran patients and staff and is the first to jump in to any new task. His proactive approach throughout the pandemic has been paramount in maintaining appointments and care as well as being a steadfast person in a very dynamic arena. The acquisition of the iPads for communication and appointments have become a best practice and will continue moving forward. Mark strives to keep the best interest of those served by the Department of Veterans Affairs in mind, building on the trust and camaraderie of his staff and peers.

# VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Executive Leadership Award



**David L. Omura**  
Columbia VA Health Care System  
Columbia, South Carolina

Dr. David L. Omura inspires everyone through his support, servant leadership, and willingness to lead by example. During leadership rounds in the medical center, it's clear that he not only knows his staff by name, but he knows them personally and their roles. He further demonstrates his support by rearranging his schedule to attend events weekdays, weekends, and evenings. It is heartwarming for the VA facility to have a leader who routinely calls to say, "Just checking in. How are you doing? Is there anything you need from me?" He provides consistent encouragement of his CDCE team's efforts, noting accomplishments during morning report, providing highlights in his monthly newsletter, or sending notifications about special events.

There has never been a request to meet with community supporters, volunteers, or staff where Dr. Omura has not made the time. He has made himself available during early mornings to personally hand out items and

say thank you to volunteers, Veterans, and staff. He is so committed to showcasing the success of the Voluntary Service programs that he often attends with his family. From Summer Student orientation and graduation to community events, he always avails himself to show support and learn more about CDCE programs in the process. When walking through the halls, he stops to recognize and thank volunteers for their service. He attends CDCE staff meetings to provide updates and offer congratulations to the staff for their teamwork. Dr. Omura believes in the importance of having volunteers to help fulfill the mission of VA. He eagerly embraced the Chief's volunteer reintegration strategy, supporting their safe return in certain key assignments during the COVID-19 pandemic. He understood that the volunteers played a key role in enhancing the lives of the Veterans and their experience in the facility.

Dr. Omura always advocates for CDCE involvement in the planning process for key programs and activities. From the mass vaccination clinics in partnership with the University of South Carolina to the establishment of COVID-19 screening areas within the facility, CDCE was engaged. He consistently promotes the utilization of partnerships, which led to donations of PPE, meals for frontline staff, and put CDCE out front when local media told stories of these activities. His support of these partnerships is why the Columbia VA Health Care System (VAHCS) was prepared to address, what the American Red Cross called, 'the greatest blood shortage in a decade. Dr. Omura immediately brought a team together, dedicated an area where physical distancing could be observed, and approved a total of eight blood drives to be held at the Columbia VAHCS campus.

During Dr. Omura's tenure, he has witnessed firsthand the positive impact of CDCE within the medical center, lives of the Veterans, and future healthcare professional students and proactively looks to continue their success and effectiveness. He approved the hiring of a Voluntary Service Specialist for their new Orangeburg Outpatient Clinic and supported step increases for the entire CDCE team. He is passionate about recognizing and retaining staff who are dedicated to serving the Veterans. As a visionary, Dr. Omura has approved several CDCE pilot programs at the facility, to include, the Good Listening Project (a listener-poet-facilitated storytelling program), the Telehealth Support Team (college students assisting with VA Video Connect test calls) and currently, the VHA Health Care Talent Academy (a legislatively mandated program to diversify VHA's talent pipeline.) His executive level support has been a value not only at his facility, but within the program at a national level. He served as a judge for CDCE's Shark Tank event during the 75th National Advisory Committee Meeting, a guest speaker for the Student Leadership Council's Executive Panel and closing ceremony. It is little doubt as to why volunteers of all ages thrive at Columbia VA Health Care System. The facility's volunteers have been recipients of several national awards, including the James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship, the DAV Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship, and the DAV George H. Seal Memorial Trophy.

# NAC Community Blood Drive



Wednesday, April 27th  
10 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Doubletree by Hilton  
3203 Quebec Street  
Denver, CO 80207

To schedule a donation appointment, please visit  
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