



## *Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation* *Linda Kropuenske ~ Chairman*

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program promotes our mission to enhance the lives of our veterans, military and their families. The program is one of our largest and encompasses several broad areas of potential services. It's important to remember that no Unit can work each, and every program as defined in the 2019-2020 National Plan of Action. Select the programs and projects which "fit" your Unit and your members. Any assistance you can give to veterans and their families is greatly appreciated.

If you live near a VA Facility, either a healthcare center or Minnesota Veterans Home, become a regularly scheduled VAVS Volunteer (Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service). Your hours of service are entered into the VAVS tracking system each day you volunteer. Invite others to join you in regular voluntary service to our veterans. For more information, please contact the Voluntary service deeds coordinator at the local facility or our Minnesota American Legion Auxiliary Hospital and home Representatives that President Mary Hendrickson appointed to serve for 2019-2020:

Fargo VAHCS	Lynette Andel, Moorhead Unit #21
Fergus Falls Veterans Home	Doris Lafayette, Barnesville Unit #153
Hastings Veterans Home	Darlene Wondra, Montgomery Unit #79
Luverne Veterans Home	Jeanette Mertens, Redwood Falls Unit #38
Minneapolis Veterans Home	Sandy Gibson, Rosetown Unit #542
Minneapolis VAHCS	Mary Ann Davis, Lester Tjernlund Unit #451
Silver Bay Veterans Home	Phyllis Mealey, Two Harbors Unit #109
Sioux Falls VAHCS	Diane Strassburg, Magnolia Unit #32
St. Cloud VAHCS	Jan Benson, Waite Park Unit #428/
	Carol Kottom, Buffalo Unit #270

Please thank these ladies when you see them as they put in countless hours making a difference in the lives of our veterans.

VA Benefits are available to veterans. Get to know our Post Service Officer and be sure you have their contact information. Keep at hand the contact information for your County Veterans Service Office. They can help answer questions and guide the way through the benefit process. Veterans should be encouraged to utilize the VA Healthcare System, including the hospitals, homes, and the Community Based Outreach Centers (CBOC).

Veterans homelessness is at our forefront right now. The numbers are growing at a dramatic pace. Regardless of the reason for their situation, we need to help our veterans. Connect with Minnesota's Homeless Veterans Coordinators at the Minneapolis and St. Cloud VAHCS (find them at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)) to find out where your assistance is needed.

Participate in the VA Project CHALENG for Veterans (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups) which was organized to enhance the care for homeless veterans provided by your local VA and its surrounding community service organizations.

The Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV) is a resource not only for homelessness, but they also provide assistance for those who are in jeopardy of losing their homes and can assist with temporary financial assistance for rent, utilities and such. MACV also sponsors many Stand-downs throughout Minnesota offering services for legal issues, personal hygiene, employment opportunities, food, clothing and medical exams. Volunteer at one of these events. Many hands make light work. ([www.mac-v.org](http://www.mac-v.org))

Explore the program at the Eagles Healing Nest and make referrals if needed. It is a serene place where veterans can go to heal the invisible wounds of war. They believe that by embracing our veterans, service members and their families, they can help them reintegrate back into the civilian world and their families. The Eagles Healing Nest is not a homeless shelter. Each veteran must actively participate in their program of healing and contribute to the nest family as you would contribute in a regular family situation. ([www.eagleshealingnest.org](http://www.eagleshealingnest.org))

As an individual member, the contributions you can make to our homeless veterans are many. Crocheting, knitting, sewing hats, scarves, mittens, and mats. Provide meals, blessing bags, clothing, financial support and practical, moral and social support. The needs are many. Let your creativity & imagination guide you in Service to Veterans.

Be sure your Unit is in contact with your local Post homeless veteran's coordinator, this may be your Post or County Veterans Service Officer. Offer assistance when requests come through the Legion's Family Support Network (FSN). Raise funds to help these families who may be experiencing financial issues or need emergency assistance with their homes.

Adopt a homeless veteran that you know is in your area. Provide for his/her immediate needs. Do what you can, for as long as you can.

Support rehabilitation and healing of veterans through arts, crafts and hobbies. The Veterans Creative Arts Festival is a wonderful way to contribute financially and by volunteering. *The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival recognizes progress and recovery through recreation therapy and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of our nation's veterans after disease, disability or life crisis.* The local Minnesota Veterans Creative Arts Festival offers many opportunities for Auxiliary members to volunteer. Contact your local facility Recreational Therapist for more information and the dates of their festival. Your donations to the Minnesota Veterans Creative Arts supports local veterans as they can apply for funds for a special need, whether it be funds to purchase an artistic kit that they need, tools such as paint, pens or pencils,

performing arts costuming or music. Veterans who participate in the Creative Arts Festival at their local facility and are afforded an opportunity to qualify for the National Festival and your donations help with their needs for that as well.

If you have the desire to work with veterans, please familiarize yourself with the *ALA Guide for Volunteers* this can be downloaded directly from our National website: [www.alaforveterans.org/Programs/Veterans-Affairs---Rehabilitation](http://www.alaforveterans.org/Programs/Veterans-Affairs---Rehabilitation) To purchase a printed copy, visit [www.emblem.legion.org](http://www.emblem.legion.org)

The American Legion Auxiliary can help coordinate or host job fairs for veterans. Partner with the State Department of Veterans Affairs, your local Chamber of Commerce or your Legion Post. For more information on how to Organize a Job Fair for Veterans and/or Military and Veteran Spouses: [www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes)

You can also serve as a career e-mentor for women veterans.  
[www.ementorprogram.org/militaryspouse-ementor](http://www.ementorprogram.org/militaryspouse-ementor)

Job Fairs and having a mentor are most helpful when veterans are transitioning back into civilian life. It is one of the biggest challenges veterans face today. Learn how you can help make the journey a little easier.

Participate in and encourage veterans and their family members to participate in, town-hall meetings organized by The American Legion in advance of the Legion's *System Worth Saving* site visits to VA health care systems. This is important to have your voices heard relating to the services and care being provided inside our VA facilities.

Become a veteran peer support trainer or volunteer. Caregiving is one of the most important services provided to veterans and sometimes the most difficult to handle. Familiarize yourself with the VA Caregiver Support program – [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov) and the Military and Veteran Caregiver Peer Support Network – [www.milvetcaregivernet.org](http://www.milvetcaregivernet.org). Use these resources and recommend them when caregivers you know are in times of need.

Monetary donations are always welcome, and the following programs have been approved for solicitation of funds:

American Legion Auxiliary Hospital Program-money received allows the hospital & home representatives to provide clothing, personal care items, special outings or events, treats, cards, etc...for all veterans utilizing their facility

\$5 Dollar Bill Shower- Provide a \$5 bill to all veterans in the 9 VA facilities for personal use.

Fisher House- A home away from home for spouses or families with a loved one receiving care in a major VA medical facility. Donations cover support supplies, food, personal hygiene items and other special needs for the families.

Overall Support of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program-Supports ALL activities we do in the VA & R Program.

Minnesota Veterans Creative Arts Festival- At the Minneapolis & St. Cloud VAHCS. Provides artistic kits, clothing and funds for other expenses to compete in the Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Veterans must apply for this assistance.

The Legacy Scholarship Fund- Scholarships are awarded to the children of active military killed in the line of duty, or 50% or more disabled, since 9/11.

Eagles Healing Nest- Provides a safe, home environment. Healing Veterans, Soldiers and Families from the invisible wounds of war from the inside out.

Gift Shop- Provides gifts to hospitalized veterans and their families during the holiday season.

Department President Mary Hendrickson has chosen two used golf carts for Veterans on the Lake near Ely, MN. (\$15,000), a large portable screen and TV projection device for the great room at Silver Bay Veterans Home (\$3,000) with an excess funds to go for PTSD programs in Minnesota as her project this year of “Remember, Honor, Serve. Please send contributions, if you are able.

Our National President, Nicole Clapp, has chosen as a special emphasis is The Health and Well-Being of our Veterans, Military, and Their Families with the theme of “Celebrating a Century of Service”. Which is very fitting for our Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program goals. Please find your niche and volunteer. It’s who we are, it’s what we do and it is why we matter.

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