

April 2012



NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

Volunteers are people who give and receive. If you are one of those people who would like to give more but can't quite figure out how to do it, then the DAV Voluntary Services Program is for you. April is national volunteer month, and the people, places, and events all around you will eagerly accept your interest, abilities, time, and talent.

But it all starts with you and what you'd like to do. Are you passionate about working with people? The contributions DAV volunteers make are more than generous. Last year, our volunteers donated 2,116,026 hours of service to veterans at VA hospitals, clinics and nursing homes through the VA Voluntary Service Program. Meanwhile, a corps of 9,249 DAV Transportation Network volunteers contributed 1,892,416 hours and drove 26,787,422 miles providing transportation to over 711,000 sick or disabled veterans to and from their VA medical appointments.

It is vitally important that everyone knows that the DAV is there to provide even more opportunities for people to serve. If you know someone who is interested in contributing to the DAV's mission, please put them in contact with our Voluntary Services Department.

Prospective volunteers who may not be near a VA hospital and want to provide "freelance" assistance in their communities or who have specialized skills and training can help the DAV by keeping track of their hours through the Local Veterans Assistance Program. Contact your local chapter or department to find areas where assistance is needed or for assistance in keeping track of your time.

The generous souls who selflessly give of themselves and go above and beyond the call of duty to honor our disabled veterans and their families deserve our utmost respect, and this month, we're honored to recognize all they do on behalf of our nation and our organization.

With the rising needs and challenging financial times, the opportunities to help have never been greater. When we open our minds and our hearts to the possibilities of what we can do for others, we're amazed by how easy it is to make great things happen. Happy giving and receiving!

CELEBRITY ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAM

Major League Baseball Umpire Visits VA Medical Centers

Major League Baseball Umpire Jerry Layne will visit the following VA medical centers in April: Phoenix, Arizona; Palo Alto, San Francisco and San Diego, California; Dallas and Bonham, Texas.

26th NATIONAL DISABLED VETERANS WINTER SPORTS CLINIC

We want to thank the sponsors of the 2012 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic for their generous support. A special note of thanks to the DAV Department of Missouri and DAV Missouri Chapter 2; DAV Department of Illinois, DAV California Rehabilitation Foundation; DAV Chapter 1, Portland, Oregon; DAV Auxiliary; DAV Department of Colorado; DAV Department of Florida; DAV Department of New Jersey; DAV Department of Tennessee; DAV Department of Virginia; and the DAV State Commanders and Adjutants Association.

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DAV Freedom Award

In 1992 we instituted the DAV Freedom Award at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. This award is given to the veteran whose outstanding courage and achievement are examples to all disabled veteran athletes. The award recognizes the veteran who excels while taking a giant step forward in the rehabilitation process.

The award's inscription reads: "Your accomplishments during the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic have proved to the world that physical disability does not bar the doors to freedom. We salute your desire to excel so that others may follow."

The 2012 DAV Freedom Award was presented to Army Staff Sgt. Jarod Behee.

On a rooftop during his second deployment to Iraq, while Behee was volunteering for a security mission, an enemy sniper did his utmost to end his life. Fortunately, the bullet that pierced his Kevlar helmet met a stronger force when it struck his skull. It traced around the inside of his helmet, blowing out the other side.

No one there that day imagined he would survive, but his heart kept beating. He was taken to a rooftop and medically evacuated from the battlefield. Though his time in Iraq was over, a new fight had just begun. For months he lived in a coma, with his daughter and loved ones unsure if he'd live.

Still, his heart kept beating, and the spirit within him drove him out of the darkness. He woke up to some catastrophic limitations. He went from being a leader of men, a staff sergeant, to being completely dependent on others to meet his simplest needs. He never gave up. He fought on – learning all over again how to walk and talk and to live as independently as possible.

In 2007, he attended his first National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. In addition to the amazing rehabilitative opportunities he embraced, he found a community of veterans who shared similar experiences and values – as well as the desire to reach their fullest personal potential.

In spite of his brain injury, he took up snowboarding once again. He also connected with the networks of support the event offers that keep him and his caregivers in touch with his fellow warriors throughout the year. As soon as he was able, he became a volunteer to give back to his veterans at his VA medical center.

In the last five years, he's gone from being a survivor to becoming a true champion. This year in particular, he showed a tremendous leap in his cognitive abilities and his ability to communicate – which only enhances the inspiration he provides all who are connected with the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

Many know him best by his nickname, Superman, which appropriately describes his heroic journey to this point. Congratulations to the 2012 DAV Freedom Award winner, Jarod "Superman" Behee.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you should have any questions about the information in this bulletin.



RON MINTER

National Director of Voluntary Services

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