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## **THINKING OF OTHERS ... VOLUNTEER NOW!**

When is the last time you did something that made you feel good? Quite possibly it was when you helped someone simply because that person needed a helping hand. Whether assisting in changing a flat tire, holding open the door for a stranger, listening to a coworker talk about a problem, or even simply smiling at others while walking down the street, you end up benefiting from a selfless interaction as much as the person you help.

Many Americans, just like you, are seeking ways to express their patriotic appreciation to disabled veterans. Volunteering your time and love is a great way to show veterans how much you care, and the DAV and its Auxiliary have plenty of volunteer opportunities to get you started. Think about what you enjoy or are good at doing, and then find a way to use your skills to help others. Not only will it keep your mind and body stimulated and energized, it will help those in need.

Two significant ways you can help build better lives for America's disabled veterans and their families are through the DAV Transportation Network and the VA Voluntary Service Program as a DAV or DAV Auxiliary Volunteer.

***The DAV Transportation Network*** – Because of Congressional budget cuts in 1986, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) stopped reimbursing veterans for the cost of transportation to and from VA medical facilities. Realizing that many disabled veterans are on small fixed incomes and live many miles from the nearest VA medical facility, the DAV organized the Transportation Network (TN) to provide transportation for veterans requiring medical care to and from VA hospitals. DAV Hospital Coordinators across the country administer the DAV TN through DAV State Departments at the VA's 172 medical centers, where the DAV donates vans, and provides volunteer drivers, who log millions of miles each year.

***VA Voluntary Service Program (VAVS)*** – Like all medical facilities, VA medical centers, community living centers, and clinics need volunteers. As a volunteer, you can provide an extra service to the care and treatment of disabled veterans that cannot be furnished by paid VA staff.

VAVS volunteers perform a wide range of duties. Some enjoy direct contact with patients by participating in recreational programs and other activities on the wards. Some other volunteer opportunities are: patient escort, volunteer drivers (DAV TN and parking

lot shuttle), clerical positions, information desk, ambassador program, chaplain service, pharmacy, nursing, guest relations program, outpatient assistance and patient meal assistance.

***Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program*** – The Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program is awarded annually to outstanding youth volunteers who are engaged in VAVS programs. First place prize includes a \$20,000 scholarship and an expense paid trip to DAV's National Convention with his/her parent/guardian for the award presentation. Second place prize consists of a \$15,000 scholarship. Third place prize consists of a \$10,000 scholarship. Two fourth place prizes consisting of \$7,500 scholarships each, and three fifth place scholarships at \$5,000 each.

Candidates for the scholarships must be age 21 or younger and must have volunteered a minimum of 100 hours during the previous calendar year. All volunteer hours must be credited to the Disabled American Veterans. Volunteer hours accumulated under the DAV's Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP) are also eligible for consideration. The scholarships can be used for any accredited institution of higher learning, to include universities, colleges, community colleges, or vocational schools, etc. In addition, each recipient must utilize the entire scholarship prior to reaching age 25, or within six years of receiving the scholarship, whichever is later. Employees of the DAV national organization and their families are eligible for consideration for the scholarships.

There are a multitude of volunteer activities for young people to participate in. The cheerfulness that young volunteers bring to veterans in VA medical facilities is amazing and heartwarming. Many patients have children and grandchildren who may be unable to visit them in the hospital. Young people bring a touch of home with them when they volunteer.

We are confident that more students will get involved if they are aware of the volunteer opportunities and generous scholarships available as well as the vast opportunities to help veterans. We would invite you to share this information with junior high and high school guidance counselors in your areas. Many academic programs include volunteer work as a course requirement and the students may as well volunteer in their local VA medical centers. If you should wish to make this information available to local high school and junior high school students or guidance counselors, please feel free to contact me in order to request brochures.

***Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP)*** – The Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP) allows the opportunity to recruit and engage new members and volunteers to many of the DAV programs.

Through LVAP, any volunteer activity that contributes to our mission of *fulfilling our promises to the men and women who served* is recognized – therefore, volunteering is no longer limited to VA facilities alone.

Volunteers might perform yard work, help someone run errands, set up a computer system, clean out the gutters, shovel snow from a sidewalk, assist with cooking or cleaning, paint or perform home repairs – any task that might help and brighten a veteran's

life. This is also an opportunity for people who have specialized skills to use their talents and experience to touch the lives of those who've served. Are you a former teacher, electrician, accountant, social networking guru, healthcare specialist, etc.? Is there an unmet need in your community? There is always something that you can do to enrich the lives of veterans in your community.

DAV and Auxiliary volunteers can receive credit for donating time to further the DAV's mission. Participation in sanctioned fundraising activities, outreach efforts, service officer activities and other official DAV and Auxiliary duties are all deserving of recognition through LVAP.

Youth volunteers who don't live near VA facilities can take advantage of LVAP hours which are eligible toward application for the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship so long as they meet the minimum eligibility requirements for consideration.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **1. *How do I sign up to volunteer?***

Online: Click on <https://www.dav.org/volunteers/VolunteerRegistrationForm.aspx>. This will take you to a web form page. Complete each field and then click the 'Send Email' button.

### **2. *At what age may I begin volunteering?***

The age to begin volunteering in a medical facility differs at each hospital. Some hospitals are long-term care facilities while others deal with more acute care of veterans. Also, each state has differing laws regarding youth and employment/volunteering. In other areas such as national cemeteries, there is no minimum age to volunteer.

### **3. *Do I have to work with sick people?***

The VA health care system is varied. Not all VA facilities are hospitals. Some locations are outpatient clinics and others are readjustment counseling centers. Even in a hospital you may not need to work directly with patients. You may also have an opportunity to volunteer at one of VA's Regional Offices where veterans' benefit claims are processed. Or, there may be a national cemetery near you that needs assistance. There are also opportunities for administrative assistance in offices throughout the VA system.

### **4. *Why do I need to have health screenings?***

The safety of veterans under VA's care is their primary duty. To ensure that they, and you as a volunteer in the VAVS program, are safe from contagions, each potential volunteer must receive certain health screenings. Volunteer opportunities and different VA facilities will require varied types of screenings. For those interested in being volunteer drivers, a full physical is required. Check with your local VAVS Program Manager for specific requirements.

### **5. *What is HIPAA and why should I care?***

*Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996*

HIPAA was enacted by the Federal government on August 21, 1996. The intent of the law is to assure health insurance portability, reduce healthcare fraud and abuse, guarantee

security and privacy of health information, and enforce standards for health information. In plain language, HIPAA works to protect veterans' information. Whether that information deals with benefits, health care, etc. it is protected under Federal law. As a volunteer you will receive training on HIPAA that will be documented for your official volunteer file.

**6. *All I want to do is push the library cart around. Do I have to have a background check?***

Depending on the volunteer assignment you may need to go through at least a minimum background check. This may be as simple as a fingerprint check or as detailed as a full background check. Your volunteer assignment will determine the extent of the process.

**7. *I've been volunteering for a while now. How do I involve my family and friends?***

DAV encourages family volunteering. Contact your local VAVS Program Manager to discuss potential projects for your family and friends.

**8. *I'm looking for a paying job. Will volunteering help me get hired by VA?***

Simply stated, no. VAVS volunteers are to supplement the work of VA paid staff. However, being a volunteer looks great on a resume. Plus, you'll get much needed, real-world experience by volunteering on a regular basis.

**9. *Can't I just show up and visit with patients? Why do I have to be registered?***

VAVS volunteers are registered in the VA's Voluntary Service System (VSS) timekeeping package. This allows each volunteer to have their time recorded for many different reasons. It also provides protection from lawsuits should something happen during the course of your assignment. Volunteers who are acting under the scope of their assignment are protected by the Federal Tort Claims Act. The same holds true if you are injured on your volunteer assignment while acting under the scope of your assignment. You are eligible to receive treatment and possibly worker's compensation claims.

**10. *I'm trying to complete my high school volunteerism requirements. Is it possible to get a certificate or letter of verification?***

If accepted as a VAVS volunteer, your hours will be recorded in the Voluntary Service System timekeeping package. At the point when you need verification of your hours or a letter of reference, just let your local VAVS office know and they will be glad to oblige.

**11. *I have a very gentle Labrador retriever. Can I bring him to visit the patients?***

Pets who visit patients in a medical setting are required to be certified by an official pet therapy certification program. Your sweet Lab may be very docile and loving, but a strange surrounding such as a hospital with all the activity and unique smells could cause him to behave erratically. Please call your local VAVS program office for further information.

## **MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL UMPIRES VISIT VA MEDICAL CENTERS**

Retired Major League Baseball Umpire Larry Barnett visited the following VA medical centers in, July, August and October: San Antonio, Kerrville, Temple, Waco, Bonham and Dallas, Texas; Memphis, Nashville, Murfreesboro and Johnson City (Mountain Home), Tennessee and Asheville, North Carolina.

Major League Baseball Umpire Jerry Layne visited the following VA medical centers in June, August, September and October: Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; San Francisco, West Los Angeles, Sepulveda and Palo Alto, California; Denver, Colorado; Boston, Massachusetts; Bronx, New York; Washington, D.C.; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Jesse Brown and Hines, Illinois and Phoenix, Arizona.

## **DAV TRANSPORTATION NETWORK**

### ***Ford Motor Company Donation***

Ford Motor Company donated \$200,000 to purchase eight new Ford E350 Super Duty Club Wagon (12-passenger) vehicles for the DAV Transportation Network (TN) for presentation at DAV's 91<sup>st</sup> National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. The VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) that received these vans were: Wichita, Kansas; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Atlanta, Georgia; Ft. Harrison, Montana; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Erie, Pennsylvania; Tampa, Florida and Huntington, West Virginia.

As in the years past, this generous gift is a demonstration of Ford Motor Company's continued commitment to veterans. From the start, they showed great interest in the DAV's mission of service and transportation to the many veterans who have no other means of getting to their VA medical appointments. Since 1996, Ford has donated more than \$3.4 million for the purchase of 164 vans for the DAV Transportation Network. Ford's participation with us is a real lift to the DAV Transportation Network program.

## **2013 DAV TN VAN GRANTS**

Information is being forwarded to all National Officers, Departments and Chapters, Supervisory National Service Officers, and Hospital Service Coordinators regarding the 2013 Van Grant Program. The DAV's Transportation Network is perhaps the largest and most important volunteer program in existence. DAV and Auxiliary volunteers and a growing number of generous citizens provided over 1.5 million hours and drove 27 million miles, providing free rides to 720,867 veterans.

Pricing information along with the minimum share amounts for Chapters and Departments will be included in the announcement. I ask that you carefully review the van grant criteria and fully and correctly complete the application forms provided with the announcement.

Completed applications must be received by December 3, 2012. However, it is extremely important to send the completed applications ahead of time to allow for adequate processing before the deadline. Failure to do so may jeopardize the chances of an application's review.

Delivery of the vans is expected late spring/early summer 2013. Please note that payments for the approved grants must be received by April 1. No vehicle(s) will be released prior to receipt of payment.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Minter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ron" and last name "Minter" clearly legible.

RON MINTER  
National Director of Voluntary Services

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*“How can we expect our children to know and experience the joy of giving unless we teach them that the greater pleasure in life lies in the art of giving rather than receiving.”  
James Cash Penney (1875-1971); Founder of J.C. Penney Corporation*