



**Report of
Ron B. Minter
National Director of Voluntary Services
to the
DAV
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National Commander Polzin, National Officers, Distinguished Guests and delegates, it is my pleasure to report to you on the progress we've made in DAV's Voluntary Services Programs.

Each year, DAV and Auxiliary volunteers are called upon for an even greater commitment of their time and talents. Each year, they come through magnificently, not only meeting every new challenge but going well beyond everyone's expectations.

In my submitted report, you'll find statistics totaling the money spent, the hours donated and the number of people who participate in our volunteer effort. These figures can never fully represent the leadership and unselfish assistance provided by State VAVS Chairpersons, Hospital Representatives, Deputies and individual volunteers. No one can put a price on programs like transportation to medical treatment, direct patient care, entertainment and recreational and sporting activities.

No one can place a monetary value on doing for older veterans what they can no longer do for themselves. Nor could we place a dollar sign in front of the friendship one veteran extends to another or the love an Auxiliary member holds out to a family much like their own.

The statistics in this report merely measure what DAV and Auxiliary members, families and friends have done in accomplishing our organization's purpose.

DAV's Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service program is the largest of our volunteer initiatives. Through it, DAV volunteers provide a broad array of services to veterans in our nation's VA health care facilities.

Under this program, 11,897 DAV VAVS volunteers donated 1,850,476 hours in the 12 months ending September 2012.

With a group this large and the number of assignments they perform, you can imagine the extensive management effort that's carried out on a local level by 16 State Chairpersons, 140 VAVS Representatives, 144 Deputy Representatives, seven Associate Representatives and three Deputy Associate Representatives.

Our efforts are enhanced by a very active corps of 1,700 Auxiliary volunteers who donated more than 157,000 hours last year.

All told, DAV and Auxiliary volunteers provided more than 2 million hours of VAVS service over the past year – considerably more than any other service organization. This is equivalent to the VA having an additional 965 full-time employees with an estimated value of more than \$43 million in hourly wages alone.

Our transportation program continues to show tremendous growth as an indispensable resource for veterans, getting them to and from VA health care facilities.

Across the nation, DAV Hospital Service Coordinators operate 198 active programs. They've recruited more than 9,000 volunteers who drove 27 million miles last year providing more than 770,000 rides for veterans to and from VA healthcare facilities.

It's hard to wrap your mind around the contributions of our drivers. But this should give you some idea. Since 1987, they've driven more than 551 million miles providing 14 million rides for veterans.

Many of these veterans rode in vans DAV purchased and donated to VA healthcare facilities for use in the Transportation Network.

DAV Departments and Chapters, together with the National Organization, have now donated 2,714 vans to VA healthcare centers nationwide at a cost of more than \$57.5 million.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention our partners at Ford who have already been recognized. Ford Motor Company Fund has donated 164 vehicles to the Transportation Network.

It's also my honor to congratulate our 2013 George H. Seal Memorial Award recipients: Dennis Krulder of West Babylon, N.Y., and Melody Angelini of Forest Park, Ill. They are both amazing individuals who deserve our recognition.

Rehabilitative sports programs for ill and injured veterans have always been important to DAV. Working together with the VA, DAV provides profoundly disabled men and women with opportunities to participate in sports that would not be possible otherwise through the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports, which is the largest rehabilitative event of its kind.

Veterans involved in sports generally experience fewer medical problems than those who aren't, therapists say. Athletics help maintain cardiovascular conditioning, increase circulation to the extremities and avert skin breakdowns.

At this year's event, more than 300 severely disabled veterans took part in the 27th event of its kind at Snowmass Village, Colorado. With hundreds of volunteers – including ski instructors who are certified in teaching the disabled – it was one of the best winter sports clinics ever conducted.

The clinic is open to veterans and active duty service members with visual impairments, spinal-cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, orthopedic amputations or other severe disabilities.

We want to thank the sponsors of the 2013 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic for their generous support.

They are listed in my written report. I add a special note of thanks to the ever-increasing number of DAV and Auxiliary entities who are committed to this event.

Each year, the DAV Freedom Award for Outstanding Courage and Achievement is given to a participant who embodies the meaning of the clinic.

Just months before the event, on July 18, 2012, our 2013 Freedom Award recipient was at death's door. Already a veteran of the war in Iraq, he was on patrol in Afghanistan when he took a direct strike by an improvised explosive device.

Several days later, he awoke to discover a laundry list of injuries: he lost his right leg below the knee; suffered muscle and artery loss in his left thigh; broke his hands and six fingers; broke his nose; dislocated his jaw; shattered several teeth; and severely damaged his left eye.

When he showed up at the event, he wasn't a particularly happy camper. In fact, he wanted to go home. But that changed as he participated.

<Video: Cendeno>

After just one day of coaching, the soldier was not only back on his feet, but was surpassing everyone's expectations.

He became the first Freedom Award recipient to date who was still on active duty.

Sergeant Kristian “Deno” Cedeno embodied the spirit of the event and has since volunteered to support DAV in a variety of ways.

Continuing to provide a morale boost to disabled veterans, the DAV Celebrity Entertainment Program had another great year.

Celebrity Volunteers and Major League Baseball Umpires Larry Barnett and Jerry Layne made more than 80 hospital visits last year alone.

In October 2007, we announced the creation of the Local Veterans Assistance Program, or L-VAP to assist veterans and their dependents in their local communities through a variety of initiatives.

Opportunities abound for individuals to empower veterans and their families to live high-quality lives with respect and dignity.

Not all volunteers live in close proximity to a VA medical center or other VA facility and others have special skills or prefer nontraditional volunteerism.

L-VAP allows people to provide needed services to veterans and their families as DAV volunteers. It honors our organization and encourages and recognizes volunteerism.

We still need our Transportation Network and VAVS program volunteers on the road and in the hospitals.

But we recognize that there are other ways to address unmet needs for veterans and their family members.

More than 4,000 volunteers from 34 states have donated over 1.2 million hours of service through L-VAP. We invite all Departments and Chapters to get involved and make a difference.

Volunteer incentives apply to all our programs. L-VAP volunteers are eligible for the same benefits and recognition as others. Youth volunteers who serve through L-VAP will also be eligible to apply for consideration to the DAV Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program.

L-VAP activities may include Chapter and Department Service Officer work; DAV outreach efforts such as Harley's Heroes; National Guard mobilizations and homecomings; and approved fundraisers. Volunteers can use their time to provide direct assistance to veterans, widows, or families by doing yard maintenance, home repairs, or grocery shopping.

They can also use special skills to assist veterans or DAV by managing social networking efforts for Chapters, providing classes to enhance the lives of veterans or any other initiative that provides a direct service.

The LVAP Division winners are:

Division I – The Department of Virginia, Past
Department Commander, Allan L.
McCroskey, with 144,842 hours.

Division II – The Department of Tennessee, Past
Department Commander,
Doug Shepherd, with 15,056 hours.

Division III – The Department of Alabama, Past
Department Commander, Charles B.
Fisher, with 25,129 hours.

Division IV – The Department of Connecticut, Past
Department Commander, Wilfred
Wheeler, with 9,560 hours.

Division V – The Department of North Dakota, Past
Department Commander, Richard
Krajewski, with 2,051 hours.

Many deserve our thanks for the great year
DAV's volunteer programs have had. If it were not
for their support, the many programs mentioned in
this report would not have been realized.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank
recently-retired Laura Balun, who until recently led
the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary
Service Program. Her staff, and the VAVS
leadership team across the nation are owed a debt
of gratitude from our organization.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention our national leaders and a few other key supporters including The Columbia Trust, National Service Foundation, DAV Auxiliary and Charitable Service Trust. We've experienced outstanding support from DAV's corps of National Service Officers and Hospital Service Coordinators who have played a vital role in support of the Voluntary Services Programs.

I thank everyone here for your support and for recognizing the sacrifices of our nation's heroes through your continued service.

Thank you. This concludes my report.