



AMVETS Department of Ohio

VAVS / VETERANS WELFARE



VAVS PROGRAM

The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program offers Post members an opportunity to provide direct service to our veterans by volunteering their time and talents to our hospitalized veteran, the Forgotten Veteran.

All posts shall conduct at least two (2) Veterans Service programs and one community service program per year and said year shall coincide with the fiscal year (July 1-June 30) for the Department of Ohio. Each post shall report directly to the District Commander the activities of the Post's Veterans and Community Service Programs. Failure to comply with the programs or reporting shall be considered cause for suspension, revocation, or placement of trusteeship of the post charter. (*SOURCE: Ohio AMVETS Constitution, Article IX, Section 5*)

Our VAVS Program is very important to each of us on the Post, State, and National Levels, because today we are the ones able bodied, but someday as we each grow a little older, we may become the "Forgotten Veteran". By starting today, we will task ourselves with the job of never letting each other and the world forget what veterans have done for America. It is time for us, as veterans, to do our part by working together and let the public know that we care and we will always remember our fellow veterans.

Each VA Medical Center and Outpatient Clinic has a person in charge of volunteers. The title of this individual is usually Chief of Voluntary Service. You can contact that office through our VAVS Representatives or Deputies to help you get ideas of what is needed at these facilities. You should find out who your VAVS Representative is in your county. The names and addresses are available in this Guide Book.

Nursing Homes in your own area are a good source for your post VAVS and Veterans Welfare Committee. You can see the Administrator/Director and ask if there are veterans housed in their facility. You can also ask if they are able to have visitors. This gives you a chance to introduce yourself as a Representative of your post and AMVETS.

The following is a list of examples:

- Go in and talk to the veteran. You may want to take a small gift or care kit just set aside some time for a visit. Get to know a little about the veteran; his/her likes, dislikes and needs, etc.
- Many times a shut-in veteran just enjoys one on one conversation. Send cards on birthdays and holidays, or just "Thinking of You". You may even write a letter to a child, grandchild or spouse, if the family is not nearby. You may decide to offer to read a story or book to the veteran.

- If your post has a budget to allow for special items, you should check with the Director to see if the veteran has any special needs. You may wish to hold a fundraiser at your post to obtain funds for these items. Many veterans in nursing homes not only wish for companionship, but they also need to know that they are not forgotten!
- Moving into a nursing home or convalescent center is not always easy. If you are working with a local home, you could ask the home to notify you when they have a veteran arrive, and in the first few days go to visit this veteran. You could make up a "Care Kit" (also available from Department Headquarters), which may include a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, comb, paper, pens, envelopes, stamps, etc. This will give you the opportunity to get to know one another.
- Remember, not all veterans are men; there are many women veterans as well. Always be prepared if you are presenting gender items.
- You might purchase a packet of greeting cards and stamps so the veterans may stay in touch with their loved ones. You may even offer to address the envelope and put on the stamp, so all they have to do choose the card and mail it.
- If the veteran is in need, you may direct the veteran to the County Veteran Service Commission. Once again, you should keep the name, address, and phone number handy at all times. Numbers for the Veterans Service Commission are located in your phone book under the county in which you reside. There is an AMVETS VSC in every county where AMVETS Posts are located.
- On the post level, you may check your shut-in list. This veteran may need transportation to the doctor or someone to pick up a prescription. They may need transportation for other errands such as grocery shopping. Sometimes a spouse may need a ride to the hospital for a short visit with the confined veteran. Here again, companionship may be all that is needed. Ask for volunteers from your post. Check with nursing home administration to make sure their insurance will cover a veteran that you may take off the premises. This is important – you and your Post do not need to take on the additional liability.
- A post could set up a fund for stranded travelers whose car may have broken down or in need of gas or food and even shelter for an evening. You have to be careful here, always ask for identification and/or a membership card. There are many people that will scam you or take advantage of your generosity. If food is needed, try to provide meals in your post or at a local restaurant. Fill their gas tank if they need gas, but NEVER HAND THEM CASH, unless you know them well.
- On a larger scale, ask the Ohio Veterans Home or VA Medical Center for a "Wish List". Make no promises until you have checked with your post about the money to acquire such items through a possible fund raiser. Be certain to check the cost of the item and the feasibility of raising the money. Also, be sure to communicate with the facility that the need is still there and has not already been taken care of. Make them aware of your plans.
- Right now, here in Ohio, the VA is opening Community Based Outpatient Clinics in many counties (list enclosed). You may wish to check there for a "Wish List". This is a new program and I am sure their lists will be long. It could give you many options. As it stands now, many volunteers provide coffee service for the veterans. This may be the type of service that would interest you.
- If you place a large item in any facility, ask if you can put a small notice on the item: *"Donated by AMVETS Post ____"*. Many users can appreciate these items, especially if they are members of the AMVET family. Use an AMVET logo (decals are available through Department Headquarters).

- Within the VA Facilities, you may check to see if there is a need for a subscription for the Ohio AMVET and/or the National AMVET to be placed in the waiting area.
- A Post may wish to check with the VA and Ohio Veterans Home about craft projects for the residents. Puzzles are usually a good idea, especially for those with limited mobility and cross word puzzles help with keeping the mind alert. You can provide reading material, as well as refreshments. Again, contact your AMVETS Service Officers or the County Veterans Service Commission to get information on Veterans Benefits for veterans in private nursing homes.

Another part of the VAVS/Veterans Welfare Committee that is important is our active duty personnel. You could send them cards on special days, send them your post newsletter, have your post members write a short message to the active duty personnel. Encourage them to write to your post and share with you and your members what is taking place where they are. These return letters could be published in your post newsletter.

- Telephone cards can be purchased from the National Service Foundation and handed out at the Ohio Veterans Homes or VA Medical Centers. This will give the veteran a few minutes to get in touch with family or friends. This could brighten anyone's day.

AMVETS, remember that some of these projects you choose to do for the VAVS and your community may be subject for help from your State and National Service Foundations. Check in your Guidebook for more information about which projects are available and for the applications and instructions for applying. Also keep in mind our "Thank-A-Vet" Program: fundraising efforts for the Thank-A-Vet Program would qualify for one of your Post Veterans Service Programs.

Annual VAVS Programs

- ◆ *The Department of Ohio will initiate a training program for VAVS Representatives and Deputies.*
- ◆ *At least once a year, the posts will have a one-on-one visit at a VA Facility or Nursing Home in their community, instead of a party.*

If your post would like to suggest any other VAVS Programs, please let Department Headquarters know. Thank you!

The Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Program awards tuition assistance to the children of deceased or severely disabled Ohio veterans who served in the armed forces during a period of declared war or conflict. To receive War Orphans Scholarship benefits, a student must be enrolled for full-time undergraduate study at an eligible Ohio college or university. Ohio residency is required. Applicants must be under the age of 25. Scholarship benefits cover all instructional and general fee charges at two- and four-year public colleges and universities and a portion (\$5,100) of these charges at eligible private colleges and universities. Application is made to the Ohio Board of Regents/State Grants and Scholarships Department. Applications are available from the Ohio Board of Regents/State Grants and Scholarships Department thru the mail or, online at http://regents.ohio.gov/sqs/war_orphans/, and also at high school guidance offices, veteran's service offices, and college financial aid offices. The application deadline is July 1 of each year.

VA FACILITIES

VOLUNTARY SERVICES CONTACTS

CHILLICOTHE

Chillicothe VA Medical Center
Gayle Irvin-Clary, Chief of Voluntary Services
17273 State Route 104
Chillicothe, OH 45601
(740) 773-1141, ext. 7420

COLUMBUS

Chalmers P. Wylie Ambulatory Care Center
Traci L. Washington, Chief Voluntary Svs.
420 N. James Road
Columbus, OH 43219-1834
(614) 257-5469

CINCINNATI

Cincinnati VA Medical Center
Tracy Butts, Chief of Voluntary Services
3200 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
(513) 475-4957

DAYTON

Dayton VA Medical Center
Mark Frazee, Chief of Voluntary Services
4100 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45428
(937) 262-2162

CLEVELAND / WADE PARK

Louis Stokes VAMC
Calvin M. Curry, Sr., Chief Voluntary Svs.
10701 East Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44106
(216) 791-3800, ext. 5090