

HOSPITAL AMBASSADOR

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*Caring for our veterans like the ocean
caring for the waves*

The Hospital Program is one of the oldest Programs in the VFW Auxiliary. There is so much we can do to show our support for our veterans through the Hospital Program. From fundraising to volunteering our time, we can help in many ways. The ultimate goal is to put a smile on their faces.

As a daughter of an Army veteran who served in the Vietnam War, granddaughter to an Army veteran who served in World War II, wife of an Army veteran, who served stateside and daughter-in-law of a Navy veteran who served in the Vietnam War, I have seen how important it is to have the availability and resources needed through the VA and/or hospitals for our veterans.

As we continue to support our veterans, we want to keep bringing the bright smiles of sunshine to our veterans' faces, as they are the stars of this great nation.

No matter their branch of service, they will see the light from the beacon of a lighthouse from afar or at home showing we are there for them.

The Hospital Program was set up to bring smiles to the faces of our veterans in hospitals. It has grown to include VA facilities and nursing homes. But what about the families? Think about our members who are in nursing homes. Visit them, bring them news of the Auxiliary, print the magazine for them, perhaps even read it to them if they are having vision issues.

Many Auxiliary members in nursing homes can still knit or crochet. I'm sure they'd love to still be active in our organization even though they can no longer travel to meetings or events. Maybe volunteer to do a monthly knitting circle, host a movie night or other projects/events at a nursing home. Veterans, Auxiliary members and others in the home can participate. Remember to think outside the box when volunteering at a VA, nursing home or hospital.

Some other ideas include:

- Making cards for our veterans, i.e. for Veterans Day, Christmas, Valentine's Day, even cards that just say hello. This may be a project that possibly can be done in conjunction with a youth group.
- Volunteer at a VA or Veterans Home, maybe help with an event or just visit with a veteran as sometimes they just want to talk to someone. The facility may have a rule that a patient or resident cannot be outside by themselves; someone must sit with them and the staff doesn't have time. You could be that someone. Check to see if there is a local hospital that has a program of any sort that helps with veterans. Some of this may help as a veteran may not be able to get out. Always remember to follow the rules of the facility that you are volunteering at.
- What about a sock hop? Buy little scarves or something to indicate the era. Play music of the times. Work with the facility on possible snacks.
- Coordinate with a local grammar school and the facility to do a trick-or-treat event. The Auxiliary can purchase the candy for the residents to give to the children. Your members and the veterans will love it.

No matter what we do we want to help bring a smile of sunshine to them.

Remember you can recruit members, non-members, youth and families. Make it exciting when asking them as they may be a little reluctant at first to want to volunteer. So, let's get out in our communities and volunteer and get to know our veterans.

I am looking forward to seeing what each state Auxiliaries are doing for our veterans in this Program. Get creative. And remember to let your Department know what you do.





HOSPITAL PROGRAM

Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support

Valentines for Veterans • Women Veterans Health Care • Honors Escort

VFW Auxiliary members have been volunteering in hospitals and medical facilities since the organization's inception in 1914. The Hospital Program was one of the first nationally adopted Programs for the organization. This Program plays an important role to provide care and compassion to veterans while helping them feel included and appreciated.

Who Can Volunteer?

Members, non-members, youth and families can volunteer in many different types of facilities under this Program. They include local hospitals, veterans' homes, nursing homes, both VA and non-VA medical facilities and clinics.

Who Can Serve?

Members, non-members, youth and families.

What Can We Do?

Volunteer opportunities are based on the facility where you are volunteering. Some facilities will have a volunteer program in place with specific jobs, events and needs. Many facilities will have a variety of opportunities to suit different ages and abilities. Be sure you follow all the guidelines given by that facility and regularly ask how you can assist them.

Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support

New volunteers are needed every day across the country. Volunteers offset millions of dollars in expenses in health care. They help create a friendly and caring atmosphere no matter where they volunteer. Here are tips for recruiting and keeping volunteers:

- Provide a monthly sign-up sheet for regular events.
- Email and phone call volunteers for special events.
- Offer public recognition of current volunteers.
- Be specific about what volunteers will be doing, including the time commitment.
- Find out how each person communicates best, whether by phone, email, Facebook or texting.
- If someone says "no" to the first invitation, be sure to ask again!

Volunteer Recognition

For volunteer hours, VFW Auxiliary Hospital Volunteer Service Pins and Bars, sponsored hospital Volunteer Pins and Hospital Recruiter Charms are available from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters. A Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Representative or VFW Auxiliary Hospital Chairman must complete the official application form in MALTA Member Resources. For this year's current initiatives and awards, please see the Hospital Programs Awards page.

Additional ideas for volunteering including **Honors Escort, Valentines for Veterans** and **Women Veterans Health Care** can be found in MALTA Member Resources.

VA Voluntary Service:

<https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>

Find your local VA Voluntary Service office at:

<https://www.volunteer.va.gov/directory/index.asp>

HOSPITAL AND VAVS PROGRAMS

The VFW Auxiliary provides volunteers and resources to VA facilities across the country and saves the Department of Veterans Affairs millions of dollars a year.

The table below illustrates how the VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program supports the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program.

HOSPITAL PROGRAM

VFW Auxiliary establishes relationships with:

- Hospitals
- Nursing homes
- Veterans homes
- VA facilities
- Other medical facilities where veterans are served

PROVIDES NEEDS

How VFW Auxiliary members participate:

- Participate in projects voted on and accepted by the Auxiliary.
- Make items such as lap robes, hats, quilts, cards, etc.
- Fundraise for the Department's Hospital fund.
- Encourage volunteers in ALL medical facilities.
- Promote projects and volunteer opportunities to all members and the community.
- Present Hospital Volunteer Appreciation certificates.
- Order VFW Auxiliary Hospital Pins for total hours earned from all facilities.
- Hours are earned in ALL VA and non-VA facilities.

HOURS earn VFW Auxiliary Awards!

VAVS PROGRAM

The Department of Veterans Affairs created the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program for organizations to serve in VA medical facilities:

- Members participate in this VA partnership with Veterans Service Organizations.
- In addition to Auxiliary recognition, the VA National Advisory Council awards a Volunteer of the Year award. For more information, contact either the Voluntary Services personnel or the VAVS National Representative or Deputy Representatives.

COMMUNICATES NEEDS

How VFW Auxiliary members participate:

- Be a Regularly Scheduled (RS) or Occasional volunteer.
- Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteers:
 - Comply with VAVS Guidelines.
 - Participate on a regularly scheduled basis.
 - Are supervised by a VA employee.
 - Are appointed by the Department President as VAVS Representative or Deputy Representative.
- Occasional volunteers:
 - Do not meet the requirements of RS volunteers.
 - Volunteer with a group or organization occasionally.

HOURS earn VAVS AND VFW Auxiliary Awards!

**TOTAL HOURS FROM BOTH PROGRAMS
EQUAL OUR REPORTED HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER HOURS.**

For more information on the VFW Auxiliary's participation in Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, please see the VAVS Participation Guide or contact the Department Hospital Chairman.

The VAVS Participation Guide is available behind MALTA login in MALTA Member Resources.

HOSPITAL PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Members:

1. Citation to one VFW Auxiliary member in each of the 10 Program Divisions who recruits the most Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities) volunteers from July 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners from National Headquarters after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.
2. "Hospital Volunteer Recruiter of the Year" plaque awarded to one VFW Auxiliary member in the nation who recruits the most Hospital (VA and non-VA facilities) volunteers from July 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Plaque to be mailed directly to winner from National Headquarters after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.
3. Citation to the Outstanding Hospital Volunteer of the Year in each of the 10 Program Divisions. Entry form required available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners from National Headquarters after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. Most creative/unique activity and/or event to interact with and provide happiness to veterans in hospitals (VA and non-VA facilities)
 - Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most creative/unique activity and/or event to interact with and provide happiness to veterans in hospitals (VA and non-VA facilities).

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Hospital Chairman by March 31, 2026 for judging.

The Department Hospital Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department winning entry form to the National Hospital Ambassador by April 30, 2026 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:

1. \$25 VFW Store gift certificate to one Department Hospital Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding promotion of creative/unique activity and/or event to interact with and to provide happiness to veterans in hospitals (VA and non-VA facilities).

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria on page 5 and for the promotion of the Program goals listed at the top of page 36.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2026 VFW Auxiliary National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.