

HOSPITAL AMBASSADOR



DEBBIE STURGIS

Hospital is one of the oldest Programs in our organization. Some of our veterans have been medical patients for many years. Hospital volunteers have a special knack of putting a smile on a veteran's face. We have been doing this for over 100 years. We get busy in our lives and sometimes we forget about our hospitalized veterans. If you could just take a few hours a week to devote to your local veterans who are hospitalized, it would make the biggest difference in their lives. It is just as rewarding for us as it is for the veterans.

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

The mission of the Veterans Health Administration is to "Honor America's veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and wellbeing." In support of this mission VA hospitals, nursing homes and clinics need volunteers to perform a wide range of duties. Some work directly with patients, participating in recreational programs and other activities on the wards. Others assist the VA's professional staff or escort patients, serve coffee or simply provide companionship to veteran patients.

We want to remember to honor and celebrate veterans on traditional holidays as well as non-traditional ones. There are activities to plan that fit every holiday.

Traditional Holidays

Valentines Day – make homemade cards and visit VA facilities

National Salute to Veterans Day - make cards saluting veterans' service

Easter – make baskets or treats

Memorial Day – plan an activity such as a barbecue

Flag Day – onsite Flag-raising ceremony (hand out small handheld Flags)

4th of July – have a picnic with patriotic decorations

Patriot Day – hold a remembrance ceremony

Thanksgiving – send cards of thanks and holiday treats

Christmas – plan an event with Santa and give gifts the veterans may need

Non-Traditional Holidays

Some lesser-known holidays still provide the perfect opportunity to connect with veterans or simply remind them you are thinking of them.

National Popcorn Day - January 19

National Hug a G.I. Day - March 4

National Donut Day - June 2

World Chocolate Day – July 7

Left Handers Day – August 7

Final Salute

A Final Salute or Final Escort for a veteran refers to one of two things:

- A dignified procession within a hospital or nursing home where staff and veterans line the halls and stand at attention as a deceased veteran's body is moved, or
- A ceremonial funeral provided by organizations like Last Salute. These ceremonies include traditions like a Flag presentation and the playing of Taps.

Women Veterans

Ensuring women veterans receive veterans' benefits and services that honor their brave military service is important. Currently, women comprise 15% of the active-duty military and 18% of the Guard and Reserve. With the steady increase of women wearing our nation's uniform and their increased role in military operations, it has never been more important that we ensure women veterans have a VA that is ready and able to care for them when they transition back to civilian life.

Women veterans may be eligible for a wide variety of benefits available to all U.S. military veterans. VA benefits include disability compensation, pension, education and training, health care, home loans, insurance, vocational rehabilitation and employment and burial. More information is available on the Women Veterans Benefits website: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-women.asp>

Did You Know. . .

...that Abraham Lincoln is represented in the Department of Veterans Affairs, including plaques at the Washington, D.C. Headquarters? One plaque is adorned with Lincoln's quote, "To Care For Him Who Shall Have Borne The Battle and For His Widow and His Orphan." This quote from President Lincoln would form the basis of the VA's mission to care for those who have served.

...that all our voices were instrumental in establishing Programs that would fight for our veterans' rights and benefits throughout our nation?

...volunteering and our voices are particularly important? Have an Auxiliary Hospital Volunteer Recruitment Month. This is not only for membership, but to get into the senior centers, libraries, high schools, churches, YMCAs and businesses. You can ask a representative from your local VA to attend.

...more than 100 years ago, we, as an organization committed ourselves to caring for veterans' health by supporting the VFW in lobbying for military and veterans' benefits and aid and the creation of the Veterans Bureau in 1921 and later the VA in 1930. While the Hospital Program started in 1928, our members had already been volunteering in

hospitals for a number of years. Some Auxiliaries would "adopt" a hospital unit, wing, ward or even the entire hospital and bring all veteran patients homecooked meals, host holiday parties or have fundraisers to donate for emergency needs in poorly funded/equipped hospitals. The Auxiliary has always supported VAVS (Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service, now known as CDCE - VA Center for Development and Civic Engagement.) Founded in 1946 by the federal government, VAVS/CDCE assists veteran patients through volunteer work in community-based volunteer programs, hospital wards, nursing homes, VA medical centers and veteran outreach centers. It is the largest centralized volunteer program of the federal government.

For details about the Hospital Program awards, see page 30.





HOSPITAL PROGRAM

Volunteer Recruitment and Recognition • VAVS (CDCE) • Women Veterans Health Care • Honors Escort

VFW Auxiliary members have been volunteering in hospitals and medical facilities to meet the needs of hospitalized veterans since the organization's inception in 1914. During World War I they rolled bandages, served meals and assisted in any way possible. The VFW Auxiliary Hospital Program continues to serve a very important role as we can provide care and compassion for our veterans helping them feel included, 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.

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 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.
- Fund raise 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.

* VAVS is now known as Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE).

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, 2026, to March 31, 2027. Required entry form is available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters after the 2027 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, 2026, to March 31, 2027. Required entry form is available on MALTA Member Resources. Plaque may be mailed directly to winner from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.
3. Citation to the "Outstanding Hospital Volunteer of the Year" in each of the 10 Program Divisions. Required entry form is available on MALTA Member Resources. Citations to be mailed directly to winners from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. 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 VFW Auxiliary Department Hospital Chairman by April 15, 2027 for judging.

The VFW Auxiliary Department Hospital Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the VFW Auxiliary National Hospital Ambassador by April 30, 2027 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:

1. Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary 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 citations will be presented at the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention. Money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary Department account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention for disbursement to the winning VFW Auxiliary Department Chairman.

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 listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Ambassador's Program goals.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention. Money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary Department account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.