

The Volunteer Promise

Voluntary Service (603/135)
VA Medical Center
800 Zorn Avenue
Louisville, Kentucky 40206

January 2008
Volume 53

National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans

More and more individuals and groups are looking for an opportunity to make a positive difference in the life of a hospitalized veteran. Personal contributions of time and expressions of concern are the National Salute program's hallmark and the foundation of VA Voluntary Service. The week of Valentine's Day is set aside for groups and individuals to express their gratitude and concern for those veterans who are hospitalized. If you wish to schedule a visit for your group or if you have questions, you may contact the Voluntary Service Office at (502) 287-6221.

It is our hope that these expressions of gratitude and concern will continue throughout the year and not just during special observance periods.



2008 Volunteer Awards Program

On Saturday, April 5, 2008, the Louisville VA Medical Center will celebrate the achievements of our volunteers at the 62nd Annual Volunteer Awards Ceremony. This year the ceremony will once again be held at The Olmsted in Louisville. Please remember that the program will include credit for all hours worked/recorded through December 2007.

Your invitation is coming in the mail in March. Be sure to make your reservations, mark your calendar and plan to attend! **Only those volunteers who make their reservations in advance will be guaranteed admission, lunch, or entry in the door prize drawings!**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Thursday, January 24

VAVS Meeting
3:00 p.m. in Rm D010

February 10-16

National Salute to Hospitalized
Veterans Week

Monday, February 18

Presidents' Day
VA Admin Offices Closed

Wednesday, March 13

Local Veterans
Creative Arts Show

March 29-April 7

National Veterans Winter
Games, Snowmass, CO

Saturday, April 5

Volunteer Awards Program
The Olmsted

IN THE PROMISE

Homeless Christmas	2
Stand Down 2008	2
Healthier Snacks	2
Creative Arts	3
OEF/OIF	3
Volunteers Needed	4
Flu Shots	5
Construction	5
Monetary Needs	6

Christmas for Homeless Veterans



Once again, employees and volunteers of the Louisville VAMC have demonstrated their generosity and commitment in serving others. In the spirit of the holiday season, Voluntary Service hosted a Homeless Veterans Gift Tree to help make the holiday season brighter for homeless veterans in the local community. VA volunteers and staff, along with multiple corporate, veteran and community partners, supported the project by selecting a gift tag and providing pants, shirt, sweater, socks and boxers for an enrolled veteran. Thanks to the generosity of these sponsors, **nearly 80** homeless veterans received a complete set of clothing for Christmas.

Because the response to the project was overwhelmingly successful and donations exceeded our expectations, nine large boxes of assorted clothing items were packed and shared with the Homeless Veterans Program Coordinator for distribution to needy veterans throughout the winter. Donations received for this very special project were valued at **over \$7000**.

Stand Down 2008

There was a significant increase in the number of veterans seen at the 2007 event, making it the most successful Stand Down for the Homeless to date. Over 250 homeless veterans, at least 38% of the entire homeless population served at the event, visited the veterans' area at the Louisville Gardens the day of the event. As a result, we depleted our supply of sweat suits, boots, and coats.

Plans for the 2008 homeless event are already underway. To maintain the standard of service we've been able to provide each year, we plan to purchase sweat suits, coats and boots for homeless veterans. Donations totaling approximately more than \$10,000 will be needed to meet the program needs. Any assistance toward our goal will be appreciated. Please direct monetary donations to General Post Fund (GPF) 525.

This year, to defray the anticipated program costs, we are also accepting donations of **new** sweat shirts and sweat pants, **gray colored only**, in **adult sizes Large to 3XL**. All donated sweats meeting these requirements will be stored and then distributed at Stand Down 2008.

As always, your donations and volunteer support are critical to the service we provide to our military heroes.



Hand Washing

While no environment is germ-free, we can take several simple steps to prevent the spread of infection. The single most effective means of preventing the spread of infection is hand washing. This is especially true if you follow these simple steps:

How to wash your hands: Moisten hands with water and add soap; Scrub hands and wrists vigorously for **15-20** seconds, paying special attention to nails; Dry hands well, then turn off faucet with a dry paper towel.

When to wash: Before and after your work session; Before and after physical contact with patients; After using the toilet, blowing your nose, covering a sneeze; Whenever hands become obviously soiled; Before and after eating, drinking, or handling food.

To further halt the spread of infection, volunteers will wear gloves when handling blood and body fluids or serving food. In addition, anyone serving food will refrain from eating while serving the food. When removing gloves, pull them back so that they are turned wrong side out. The gloves should then be thrown immediately in the trash.

Isolation Procedures: If you are preparing to enter a patient's room, be sure to watch for isolation signs. Rooms with these signs have restricted admittance. Please ask nursing staff for assistance.



Support for OEF/OIF Veterans

The National Veterans Creative Arts Program is designed to showcase the talent of veterans and provide recognition for their creative accomplishments. The 2008 National Creative Arts Program will include divisions in Creative Writing, Dance, Drama, and Music.

A reception will be held on March 13, 2008, at Louisville VA Medical Center to showcase local entries. The reception will be from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Employee/Volunteer Canteen Dining Room.

Funds are needed to support this program.

Please direct donations to GPF #509. Your donations would be used for transportation costs for patients who are invited to participate in the national festival.

If you are interested in entering the competition or would like additional information, please contact Tim Neidiffer, Occupational Therapist (OTR/L), at (502) 287-5190.

Veterans who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan face a variety of adjustment issues and hardships upon their return to civilian life. Many of those who seek assistance through our OEF/OIF Program have immediate financial needs, such as groceries and gas.

In addition to the annual "Welcome Home" event for which we received donations, we would like to be able to assist these veterans with their immediate needs through the provision of grocery and/or gas gift cards. We accept the donation of gift cards for groceries or gas or you may direct your monetary donation to GPF #532. We plan to set up two separate funds in the near future. In the meantime, please specify either "GPF 532 OEF/OIF Welcome Home" or "GPF 532 OEF/OIF Veterans Assistance Fund."

Healthier Snacks



As part of the Healthier US Veterans Campaign, a dietitian has been working with our wards and some of our volunteer groups to encourage healthier eating. One of the goals is to have healthier snacks available. The following suggestions are made for those who have already adopted a ward or those who are interested in adopting a ward:

Peanut butter crackers (round)
Graham crackers
Quaker oat bars
Nutri-grain bars

Animal crackers
Cracker Jacks
Pretzels
Air Popcorn

Fresh fruit assorted
Fruit cups
Raisins or Craisins
Diet drinks or water

All snacks should be individually wrapped portions.

Volunteer Help Needed

Volunteers provide a unique brand of support for the Louisville VA Medical Center, assisting staff with a variety of activities that support the care and treatment of veterans. Volunteers may provide clerical support, direct or indirect patient care, mechanical support, transportation support or grounds maintenance support. Assignments are available throughout the medical center and interested individuals may contact Voluntary Service to discuss their personal interests. Some of the more critical needs at this time include:

Clerical Support Activities: Social Work Service, Occupational Health, Geriatrics & Extended Care Service, Newburg Primary Care Clinic and the Vet Center are among the areas needing assistance. There are a variety of assignments in this category.

Clerical Support with Computer Skills: A volunteer is needed in the medical records file room on weekdays for scanning documents and for computer data entry.

Telephone Skills Needed – An assignment is available to support the clinics in making appointment reminder calls to patients. This could be an evening or Saturday assignment. The Patient Advocate for Inpatients is also seeking volunteers to make follow-up telephone calls to veterans following an inpatient stay. Training and materials will be provided.

Transportation Services - Drivers and Transportation Coordinators are needed for the Volunteer Transportation Program, a special service staffed by volunteers who are dedicated to assuring that veterans have the transportation they need to come to the medical center and to community-based outpatient clinics.

Shuttle Transportation Drivers – Drivers are needed to operate the VA Medical Center's Grounds Shuttle. The drivers in this program remain on the VA property and offer transportation assistance to veterans moving to and from their automobiles and the medical center entrances.

Leap Year 2008



Leap Year Fun Facts: 2008 is a leap year, with 29 days in February. February 2008 has five Fridays - it starts and ends on a Friday. Between 1904 and 2096, leap years with same day of week for each date repeat every 28 years which means that the last time February had 5 Fridays was in 1980 and next time will be in 2036.

The Gregorian calendar, which is the calendar used by most modern countries, the following rules decide which years are leap years:

1. Every year divisible by 4 is a leap year.
2. But every year divisible by 100 is NOT a leap year
3. Unless the year is also divisible by 400, then it is still a leap year.

This means that year 1800, 1900, 2100, 2200, 2300 and 2500 are NOT leap years, while year 2000 and 2400 are leap years.

This actually means year 2000 is kind of special, as it is the first time the third rule is used in many parts of the world. (<http://www.timeanddate.com/date/leapyear.html>)

Have You Had Your Flu Shot This Year?

Occupational Health staff will continue to offer flu shots through March 2008 to protect you for the duration of the current flu season.

Why you should get a flu shot:

1. It prevents severe illness and influenza-related death.
2. It protects other people from the flu.
3. It keeps us well and able to help veterans.

All VA volunteers wishing to participate in this program must report to the Occupational Health Office, Room A104K, and complete the Influenza Vaccine Consent Form during the following times:

Monday	8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday	8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Wednesday	8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

If these times are not convenient, or if you have any questions regarding the flu vaccine, contact Nyoka Emily, Occupational Health Nurse at 895-3401 extension 4413.



Wet Paint!

Construction/Improvement Update:

4N, Surgical Ward – Construction is complete, including the installation of the patient lifts. The open house was held on January 16, 2008 with move-in on January 17, 2008. The patient lifts for this ward were made possible by generous donations from our volunteer partners. These lifts will greatly improve the safety of patients and staff. Thank you for your donations!

Fitness Center – The fitness center got a facelift during the holidays. In addition to the removal/relocation of walls, the center has new lighting and new flooring.

Halls and Walls Phase III – Watch for wet paint! Work has begun to freshen up our halls and walls. Work began in the Voluntary Service hallway and continues throughout the hospital.

First Floor Clinic Reception Areas (PODs) – Some of the PODs are being reconfigured. Work began in early January and will continue through February.

Radiology – Some areas of Radiology are being remodeled to accommodate new X-ray equipment that has been ordered. This work should be completed by mid-February.

62nd National Advisory Committee Meeting

The 2008 Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting will be held April 9-12, 2008, at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando Florida. The NAC advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (through the Under Secretary for Health) on the coordination and promotion of volunteer activities within VA health care facilities, and on other matters relating to volunteerism.

NAC members and other interested parties are invited to attend at their personal or their organization's expense. Registration forms and hotel information is available in the Voluntary Service office at Louisville VA Medical Center.

MONETARY AND MATERIAL NEEDS FOR VETERAN PROGRAMS

Stand Down for the Homeless: Funds are needed to support Stand Down 2008. Proceeds will be used to purchase clothing and personal items for homeless veterans who need our support. Donations to this program should be directed to General Post Fund (GPF) 525,

OEF/OIF Veterans Fund: Louisville VA Medical Center Voluntary Service has set up a new General Post Fund (GPF) Account to support events and special needs of our newest veterans. Donations for this purpose should be made to General Post Fund (GPF) 532, OEF/OIF Veterans Program.

National Veterans Creative Arts Program: Donations to this account are used to support the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and the local competition. Funds are used for transportation costs for patients who are invited to participate in the national festival. Funds may also be used to pay for one attendant accompanying a veteran artist invited to the out-of-state event if deemed necessary and ordered by that veteran's attending physician. Donations for this program should be directed to GPF #509.

National Veterans Sporting Events: Funds are needed to support patients wishing to participate in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the National Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. Both programs combine the thrill of competition and therapeutic support to veterans who would otherwise not be able to compete. While the Winter Sports Clinic is routinely held in Snowmass, Colorado, the Wheelchair Games are hosted by different VA Medical Centers annually. Contributions to support local veteran participation in either of these events should be directed to GPF #508.

Social Work Service Emergency Fund: Donations to this account support patient emergency needs in situations not covered by medical center resources. These include certain travel expenses and clothing needs for patients upon discharge from the medical center. Donations for this purpose should be directed to GPF #502.

Patient Comfort Items: Donations to this account will be used to support the Comfort Cart, a program in which volunteers provide personal hygiene items to hospitalized veterans. Donations for this purpose should be directed to GPF #515.

For a complete list of General Post Funds Accounts and their definitions, refer to the *General Post Funds and Material Donations* booklet published by Voluntary Service.

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You may also view our newsletter on line at <http://www.louisville.va.gov/>. Scroll down and click on "Volunteer or Give," then click on Volunteer Promise Newsletter.

We welcome your thoughts about this newsletter and your ideas for articles. Contact Voluntary Service to share your suggestions.

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