



The Volunteer Promise

Volume 60

October 2010

Mark Your Calendars!

Monday, October 11
Columbus Day,
Federal Offices Closed

Thursday, October 28
VAVS Committee Meeting,
3PM, VA Medical Center,
Room D010

**Wednesday,
November 11**
Veterans Day
Federal Offices Closed

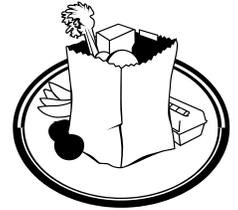
**Thursday,
November 25**
Thanksgiving Day
Federal Offices Closed

Inside this issue:

Stand Down for the Homeless	2
Student Volunteer Program 2010	2
Happy Thanksgiving Day	2
Welcome Home	3
Honor Veterans on Veterans Day	3
Organizational Spotlights "Blinded Veterans Assoc."	4
Volunteer Needs	5
Program Adoption Requests / Donations	5
Monetary and Material Need for Veteran Programs	6

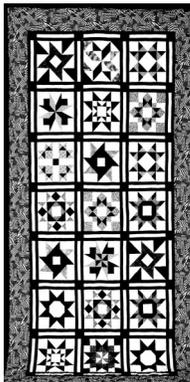
A Helping Hand for OEF/OIF Veterans

OEF/OIF Veterans returning home from duty are often finding that the current economy and, in some cases, newly acquired medical limitations are impacting their ability to meet the immediate needs of their families. You can help them regain their balance as they transition from military to civilian life by providing gift cards for basics such as groceries, diapers, formula, and gasoline. Gift cards from retailers like Wal-Mart and Kroger will enable them to make all of their purchases in one stop. This short-term hand up for Veterans who are working to find a job or waiting for that much-deserved disability payment is yet another opportunity for us to say "Thank You" for their service and a job well done.



If you are interested in supporting this program, learn more by contacting Voluntary Service at 502-287-6221.

Memorial Quilt Project



Congratulations to local quilters for winning the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) Hands Award! This award was received in recognition of our Memorial Quilt Project.

From the vision of a single VA employee the idea for this Project was born. Memorial quilts are the handiwork of a team of VA volunteers who accepted a challenge to reinforce the culture of respect and honor already ingrained in the value system at the Robley Rex VA Medical Center. Each personally designed quilt tells its own story of our sincere commitment to serving Veterans.

When one of our American Heroes dies in the medical center, a quilt is draped over the gurney used to transport the Veteran to the morgue. The culture of caring is immediately evident as those who see the gurney passing in the hallway pause in their mission to honor the Veteran one last time.

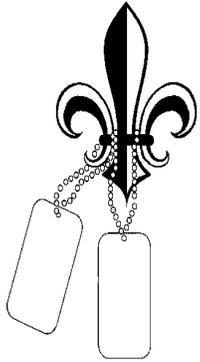
Homeless Veterans Christmas Project



We are gearing up to help spread the good will of the holiday season by participating in our very special gift-giving project to benefit homeless Veterans. Voluntary Service, in conjunction with the VA Homeless Veterans Program, will once again be sponsoring a Christmas Gift Tree for Veterans, some of whom have families, enrolled in the homeless Veterans program.

Volunteers can support this project in several ways. They can choose a tag(s) from the Gift Tree which will be located at the West Entrance and donate the item(s) listed on the tag(s), make a monetary donation or help with the wrapping of packages. If you have any questions or if you would like to help with this holiday project, please contact Voluntary Service at (502) 287-6221.

Stand Down for the Homeless



On Wednesday, September 15, 2010, the Robley Rex VA Medical Center, along with the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, Project Homeless Connect and the Greater Louisville Community hosted Kentucky's eleventh annual Stand Down for the Homeless. More than 650 homeless individuals, including approximately 207 Veterans, were served.

The 2010 Stand Down was an ambitious one-day community outreach project where representatives from the VA and multiple community service organizations came together in one location to address the collective needs of the homeless during a single visit. Resources available at the event included food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment.

Thanks to your generous donations, we were able to provide each homeless Veteran a complete set of new clothing and a hygiene kit.

Plans for the 2011 Stand Down are already underway. Your continued donations will allow us to maintain the tradition of honoring and recognizing Veterans for their service to this country and of offering assistance to Veterans in need. Monetary donations to support the ongoing Stand Down effort should be directed to GPF 525.

Student Volunteer Program 2010

Thank You Student Volunteers!

During the summer of 2010, more than 40 student volunteers between the ages of 14 and 18 contributed over 2,500 hours of service to Veterans at Robley Rex VA Medical Center. These future leaders, dressed in their smart blue polo shirts, were assigned in areas throughout the medical center and provided a variety of services that enhanced the care provided to our Veterans. At the conclusion of the summer each student received a letter appreciation that reflected our heartfelt thanks and included the number of hours served as well as gift certificates from McDonalds, courtesy of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks. Each student also received information about and was encouraged to compete for scholarships available from VAVS, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars and other sources.



Our special congratulations go out to student volunteer Neal Schickinger! Earlier this year, Neal was awarded the DAV Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship worth \$5,000. Neal has spent the past four summers volunteering at our VA and is a shining example of a future leader!

Giving Thanks



The annual harvest celebration known as Thanksgiving traces its roots back to the traditional "First Thanksgiving" that occurred at the site of Plymouth Plantation in 1621. Many years later in 1863, President Lincoln formally proclaimed the celebration and it has been an annual tradition ever since. Thanksgiving, observed on the fourth Thursday each November, did not become a federal holiday until 1941, just a short span of days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor drew the United States solidly into World War II.

This year on November 25th our nation will join in a celebration of and give thanks for all that is good in our lives. We recognize, despite personal conflicts and struggles, the freedoms we share in our great country are cause to celebrate. As we pause to count our blessings every day, and most especially on Thanksgiving, let us recall the unequalled rights we enjoy in this country; and that we owe a huge debt of gratitude to those Veterans and service members who have fought and are fighting to preserve them.

Welcome Home 2010

The Robley Rex VA Medical Center holds an annual Welcome Home event to honor Veterans who have actively served our country in the armed forces. This year's event was held Saturday, July 17, 2010, and honored members of the 123rd Airlift Wing of the Kentucky Air National Guard and their families.



Members of the 123rd have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and many of them have served multiple tours. In addition, they have assisted with relief efforts in New Orleans and Haiti, and have served our local community during crises such as the 2008 Ice Storm. They readily serve, usually behind the scenes, without fanfare or recognition. This Welcome Home was an excellent opportunity for the VA and our community partners to honor and celebrate these deserving men and women.

Approximately 1600 people attended the event and they enjoyed a day filled with activities. The day began with a short ceremony where a plaque was presented to the Wing Commander by the Medical Center Director to express our appreciation for their service. The ceremony was followed by a lunch catered by the VA Canteen Service and a variety of activities and entertainment.

The event was more than just a "thank-you" for the troops, though. It was also an opportunity to educate service members and their families about the benefits and resources available to them. Representatives from 22 VA and community agencies were on hand to provide information related to benefits such as employment assistance, family advocacy and health care. More than 200 service members took advantage of the opportunity to enroll for VA healthcare benefits while on site.

The Robley Rex VA Medical Center worked closely with staff from the 123rd Air Lift Wing to plan the event and its overwhelming success would not have been possible without the support of our volunteers and community partners. Volunteers worked hard at the event to provide information, serve food, coordinate activities, and distribute door prizes. Funding for the meals, tents and children's activities was provided through donated funds and more than 100 door prizes were distributed to excited attendees.

Planning has already begun for the 2011 event that will honor another group of deserving Veterans. Your assistance is needed once again to assure a successful event. Any donations to support the Welcome Home event should be directed to GPF 532.

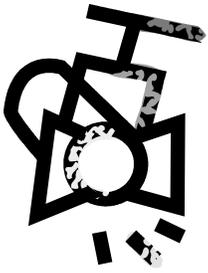
Honor Veterans on Veterans Day!

Veteran's Day was established to honor those who served in the United States military, the men and women who defended and preserved the freedoms we enjoy every day. Our Veterans served and sacrificed, expecting nothing in return. They fought to protect our freedoms and allow us choices and opportunities not available to many citizens throughout the world. Because of their service and sacrifice, we are able to exercise our fundamental rights such as to vote, practice the faith of our choice, assemble peacefully and speak our minds as well as enjoy conveniences including television, cell phones, safe food and clean water. We are forever indebted to all Veterans, both those who have completed their service and those who are still actively serving.



President Woodrow Wilson, in proclaiming Veteran's Day (then called Armistice Day) a holiday on November 11, 1919, said "To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations."

On this Veteran's Day, please remember and honor our Veterans. Take the time to approach a Veteran and say "Thank you for your service." Or, better yet, spend some time with a Veteran. You will find that taking just a few minutes with a Veteran can make a significant difference in his/her day and may even impact their life.



Organizational Spotlight!!

Blinded Veterans Association

Our Mission...

"To promote the welfare of blinded veterans so that, notwithstanding their disabilities, they may take their rightful place in the community and work with their fellow citizens toward the creation of a peaceful world."

"To preserve and strengthen a spirit of fellowship among blinded Veterans so that they may give mutual aid and assistance to one another."

"To maintain and extend the institution of American freedom and encourage loyalty to the Constitution and laws of the United States and the states in which they reside."

History

BVA traces its roots back to the end of World War II. The organization's founders consisted of some 100 young men, mostly in their early 20s. Members of this unique group had recently lost their sight in the war and were recovering from their injuries at Avon Old Farms Army Convalescent Hospital near Avon, Connecticut.

On March 28, 1945, the group held a meeting at the facility with the express purpose of forming an organization to help their fellow blinded Veterans. Thirteen years later, BVA was chartered by the U.S. Congress to speak and write on behalf of blinded Veterans in national legislative affairs. Ever since, BVA officers and staff have worked tirelessly to fulfill the Association's mission and uphold the ideals expressed in its Congressional charter.

Throughout BVA's history, congress and the now Department of Veterans Affairs (formerly the Veterans Administration) have recognized BVA as the exclusive voice for blinded Veterans nationwide.

Description of BVA Emblem

The five-pointed star represents the five branches of the Armed Forces. The hands emerging from the background of clouds represent blindness. The clasped hands, one white and the other brown, symbolize the unity of races. The broken bayonet stands for blindness resulting from a war injury. The Star of David and the Christian Cross represent the unity of creeds. The initials represent the name Blinded Veterans Association. The name Blinded Veteran's Association goes around the top portion outside of the outer circle.



Support BVA

BVA is the only Veterans' service organization exclusively dedicated to helping blind and visually impaired Veterans rebuild their lives. Together we can give them that chance.

If you are blind or visually impaired Veteran, or if you are a relative or a friend of one, or if you just wish to become involved or assist in some way, please write, call or send us an email message. The Blinded Veterans Association was established specifically to help Veterans and their families meet and overcome the challenges of blindness. The organization welcomes those who can offer their ideas, thoughts, and service in achievement of this worthy objective. Contact Bill Simpson, President (502) 222-5301 or (502) 287-4355 or email krbva@insightbb.com

To share what YOUR group is doing for Veterans at Robley Rex VA Medical Center, contact Voluntary Service at 502-287-6221 or email vhalouvavs@va.gov.

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. **Contact Voluntary Service to discuss your personal interests.** Some of the more critical needs at this time include:

Clerical Support Activities: There are a variety of assignments in this category. Additionally, volunteers (age 18 years or older) with computer skills are needed in multiple administrative areas. Additional details are available in the Voluntary Service office.

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. 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.

Helping Hands: An assignment is available for a volunteer to sit with a Veteran who may be a risk to fall. They would try to keep the Veteran in bed or get the nurse if the Veteran had to get up. They may also read or write letters for the Veteran, set up meal trays, record food and fluid intake.

Evening/Weekend Assignments: A few assignments are available during evenings and weekends. There are assignments in SPD, Helping Hands, Telephones, or the Emergency Department.

Program Adoption Requests/Donation Needs

Medical Procedures Unit—Patients are admitted to this treatment area when they come to the medical center for any of a variety of medical procedures that do not require full hospitalization. Veterans typically are instructed not to eat or drink prior to their procedure and would benefit from your donation of snack crackers and fruit juice for that time when the dietary restriction is lifted after their procedure is completed.

Hospice Family Room— Located on ward 5 North, this room is reserved for the family members of hospice patients. The families often will not leave their veteran even long enough to take care of personal needs. Our goal is to make them as comfortable as possible during a very difficult time. Your assistance in providing refreshments for this area is appreciated.

Heroes to Hometowns—Our youngest population of veterans are in need of items to help them support their families. Items especially needed include gift cards for groceries/gasoline, diapers in all sizes—especially needed are diapers in size 4 or 5 and pull-ups in all sizes..

Community Residential Care Program—Veterans enrolled in this program are living in reduced circumstances in the community. They often find it difficult to purchase the little things most of us take for granted—an occasional snack, toiletries, and similar items.

Ward Adoptions—As the patients are generally unable to leave their bedsides to seek companionship and entertainment, the Adopt-A-Ward Program offers the opportunity to customize their participation in the Voluntary Service Program by concentrating their activities on a single ward or patient area. All donations provided by the organization or individual are used specifically to meet the special patient needs that are not funded through the medical center's budget for program operations. Especially needed for several inpatient wards are individually wrapped snack foods.

Contact Voluntary Service at (502) 287-6221 to discuss your ability to provide assistance.

MONETARY AND MATERIAL NEEDS FOR VETERAN PROGRAMS

Monetary Donations:

Television Fund: (GPF 505) Donations are needed to purchase televisions for ASU. Five televisions are needed at a cost of approximately \$970 each.

Social Work Service Emergency Fund: (GPF 502) 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.

OEF/OIF Veterans Fund: (GPF 532) Funds Donated to GPF 532 (OIF/OEF Welcome Home) will be used to support our annual Welcome Home event, which honors returning combat Veterans.

Patient Comfort Items: (GPF 515) Donations to this account will be used to support the Comfort Cart, a program in which volunteers provide personal hygiene items to hospitalized Veterans.

Stand Down for the Homeless: (GPF 525) Funds are needed to support Stand Down 2011. Proceeds will be used to purchase clothing and personal items for homeless Veterans who need our support.

Material Donations: Program Adoptions (additional information can be found on page 5)

Community Residential Care: snacks, juice, toiletries and similar items.

Hospice Family Room: assorted snack foods, including microwave popcorn, and drinks.

Medical Procedures Unit: crackers and fruit juice.

OEF/OIF Veterans: gift cards for groceries/gasoline, diapers, and pull ups.

Ward Adoptions: Multiple wards have requested assorted snacks and drinks for distribution to the veterans. Wards in particular need for new or additional donors include 6 South and 7 North.

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.

The Volunteer Promise

VA Medical Center (603/135)
800 Zorn Avenue
Louisville, KY 40206-1499
Phone: (502) 287-6221

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

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.

EDITOR IN CHIEF
MaryJane Crowder, Chief, VAVS
WRITER/EDITOR
Joan Norman, VAVS TCF Intern
CONTRIBUTORS
Don Pfannenstiel, Program Analyst
Rhonda Smith, VAVS Specialist