



American Legion Auxiliary Department of California

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

August/September 2022

It is my pleasure to welcome District and Unit Chairmen and all VA Representatives and Deputies to the 2022-2023 VA & R Program year. As you have heard, this year's theme is "All Aboard the Friendship Train Serving Veterans." I have been appointed as Conductor for the VA & R Program. Together, as Conductor and Assistant Conductors (District Chairmen), we will work to "promote our mission to enhance the lives of U.S. veterans, military, and their families."

Do you remember the old End of Year Reports where we documented our unit hours and the money we spent on veterans and their families? The last few years that information has been missing from the EOY reports, because we now have **Tracking Forms** and **Impact Reports** for members, units and districts to use to document that information. The **Tracking Forms** are on the Department website. You can download the form(s) to your desktop where they will always be available to document your work with veterans monthly. If you cannot access the website, let me know so that I can get you the forms.

It is recommended that you carry a pocket calendar in your purse or pocket, so it is always available to document your hours, mileage and costs while working with veterans, veterans' families, veteran oriented events, or at veteran facilities. By documenting it as it happens, it will not be forgotten before you can enter the information on the Tracking Forms. Remember: every hour you spend with veterans counts, every penny you spend on veterans counts, and every mile you drive for veterans counts.

Impact Reports will be required by all units and districts at the end of the year. Keep your Tracking Forms up to date, it will make it much easier for you to fill out the Impact Reports.

A little bit of history: On November 7, 1947, the Friendship Train departed Los Angeles, California, chugged across California, collecting 27 cars filled with donated food destined for France and Italy and other European countries after World War II. The Friendship Train continued chugging across the nation ending in New York. Donations of clothing, pharmaceutical supplies, medical supplies and cash was also received. By the time the Train reached its destination, there were 270 boxcars that had been divided between three trains! The food goal was \$10,000 but ended up with approximately \$40,000 worth of food and goods. Each package had a label that read: *"All races and creeds make up the vast melting pot of America, and in a democratic and Christian spirit of good will toward men, we, the American people, have worked together to bring this food to your doorsteps, hoping that it will tide you over until your own fields are again rich and abundant with crops."* Rev. Clarence H. Parlous of St. Mark's Episcopal Church emphasized the excitement. "God bless this endeavor. God speed the train. God speed the peace." Of course, American Legion Posts across the country played a significant part in this Friendship Train's journey. (thefriendshiptrain1947.org/index.htm)

I look forward to working with each one of you this year.

"God Bless This Endeavor. God Speed the Train. God Speed the Peace."

Linda Hayes, Conductor
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