



American Legion Auxiliary Department of California

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

September 2022

I hope everyone enjoyed Labor Day weekend and that everyone is ready and waiting at the local train station for “the call”: “All Aboard the Friendship Train” Serving Veterans. Once you board, you will soon realize that this mission of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) Friendship Train is to enhance the lives of veterans, military, and their families.

Here are just a few ideas for activities to assist homeless veterans:

- Contact homeless veteran emergency shelters, transitional housing projects and permanent housing projects in your community and identify the organization’s volunteer and in-kind contribution needs, including:
 - Meal preparation and serving
 - Clothes collection and distribution
 - Assembly and delivery of hygiene kits, buddy baskets
 - Purchasing or securing household items or furniture
- Compile “blessing bags” to be given to the local police departments or other organizations that deal with the homeless veteran population.
- Create a “Tree of Warmth” by collecting scarves, mittens, hats and attaching them to a tree in a location the homeless frequent. Include a sign that says: “Please Take if Needed,” “Free if Needed,” or something similar.

If you live near a VA facility, become a regular VAVS (VA Voluntary Service) volunteer and invite others to become VAVS volunteers with you. Send notes and provide supplies to support those who volunteer at VA facilities. Enter all of your VAVS hours into the VAVS tracing system.

If there isn’t a VA hospital close by, here are a few ways to serve veterans in your area:

- Help a veteran use the Internet.
- Supply postage for local veterans in rest homes or assisted living facilities.
- Organize transportation to assist them with essential errands or medical appointments.
- Buy school supplies, throw a baby shower, or send care packages to military kids who are headed to college.

Report your Service to Veterans hours to your unit VA&R Chairman. They all count towards Hour Bar Recognition.

Don’t forget the caregivers! Caregivers are also awarded ‘Service to Veterans’ pins and hour bars for time spent providing care and assistance to veterans within their families if they do not receive compensation for doing so. If the caregiver lives with the veteran, they are awarded 10 hours a week; if they didn’t live with the veteran, they earn 5 hours a week.

In my last bulletin and at the Clovis Workshop, I spoke about Tracking Worksheets and Impact Reports. I will be reminding you (maybe too often) about keeping up with your Tracking Worksheets so that you do not forget to log your miles, hours and money you have donated working with veterans, veterans’ families, veteran oriented events and/or working at veteran facilities. This needs to be done to help you fill out the mandatory Impact Reports. Everything I addressed above should be documented on your tracking forms. I suggest using pocket calendars to keep in your purse or pocket so you can document as you are volunteering with veterans.

Mid-Year reports are still required. Unit report forms are to be sent to the District VA&R Chairman by December 1st. District reports are to be sent to the Department Chairman by December 15th. This Chairman must submit a report to the Western Division VA&R Chairman soon after.

“God Bless This Endeavor. God Speed the Train. God Speed the Peace.”

--Rev. Clarence H. Parlous of St.Mark’s Episcopoi Church regarding the Friendship Train of 1947

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