

## **NLB Talking Points**

My thanks to the members of the Communications Committee for the opportunity to speak with you for a few minutes this morning.

### **Overview of current Voluntary Service Program**

We are very proud of the accomplishments of the VAVS Program. The scope and diversity of the program has grown significantly in the past few years. In FY 2003, approximately 91,000 volunteers contributed 12.9 million hours of service and provided over \$40 million in gifts and donations in support of our veteran patients. However, we are very much aware of the need to recruit additional volunteers particularly in the 20 to 50 age groups.

We have been addressing this issue with VAVS Managers for the past several years with limited success. We have developed many tools for the field staff to address recruitment locally. We have developed new media kits, brochures, target specific posters, a recruitment strategy for local use, a VAVS Best Practice Compendium, and an award winning recruitment video, “A Million Reasons to Volunteer” (which was shown here recently). We have also developed a template for local managers to identify and measure how VAVS supports performance measures such as patient satisfaction, customer service, access to care, advocacy/outreach, and others in support of VHA goals.

### **Recruitment—Today and Tomorrow**

- Secretary Principi and Dr. Roswell have expressed their concerns about the aging of our volunteer work force and have expressed their support for an aggressive recruitment campaign directed at a younger population of volunteers.
- We are announcing today and ask your support for a Recruitment campaign which is focused on younger volunteers and will emphasize student volunteers from high schools and colleges, business/corporate participation, active duty military, reserve and national guard personnel and a renewed outreach to the VSOs.
- This campaign, which we will call “Rekindling the American Spirit”, will have three goals:
  - Increase the number of volunteers nationally to **100,000** from 91,000
  - Increase the number of student volunteers to **24,000** from 20,265
  - Increase volunteers in the 20-40 age groups to **25,000** from 20,211
- Special recognition in the form of “American Spirit Awards” will be developed to recognize outstanding recruitment initiatives and results by individuals, organizations, medical centers, and networks. We will also recognize and reward Best Practices for recruitment initiatives.
- Network Directors can support this campaign through network recruitment strategies as in VISN 18. The staff in VISN 18 has developed a VISN-wide strategy to recruit additional volunteers within their network.

- We would also welcome the inclusion of volunteer recruitment and the effective utilization of volunteer resources as a part of your network strategic plans dealing with resource management.
- I want to thank Bill Feeley, VISN Director in VISN 2 for agreeing to support a pilot program for 1 half time FTEE at Buffalo dedicated to the purpose of specific recruitment of younger volunteers. I should also thank Mike Finnegan the director at Buffalo for his willingness to support this program. We welcome this unprecedented support and we pledge to work very hard to insure the success of the initiative. Thanks Bill. We look forward to working with you.

We are committed to making the Voluntary Service Program a vital, effective and productive resource for you so that we may help you to provide the highest quality of care to our Nation's veterans. I thank you in advance for your support.