



“Rekindling the American Spirit”
A RECRUITMENT STRATEGY
for Voluntary Service

October 2002

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INTRODUCTION

*“No person was ever honored for what he received.
Honor has been the reward for what he gave.”*

Calvin Coolidge

INTRODUCTION

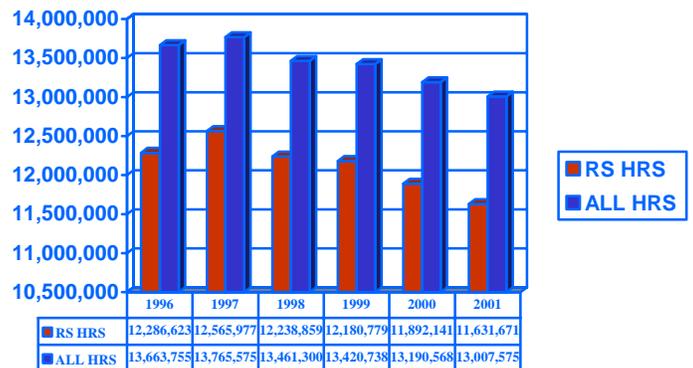
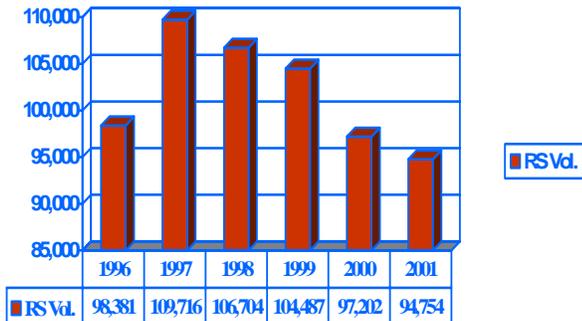
The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program, the largest centralized volunteer program in the Federal Government, has provided over 56 years of service to America's veterans (see **Appendix 1**) seeking care in VA health care facilities. Since 1946, VAVS volunteers have donated 508 million hours of service. With more than 350 national and community organizations supporting the program, VAVS also includes a National Advisory Committee, composed of 61 major veteran, civic and service organizations.

VAVS volunteers and their organizations annually contribute an estimated \$40 million in gifts and donations, which supplement VA appropriations to medical centers, clinics and nursing homes. These significant contributions allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist direct patient care programs, as well as support services and activities that may not be fiscal priorities from year to year.

In FY 2001, all VAVS volunteers contributed a total of 13,007,575 hours, of which 11,631,671 hours were from 94,754 regularly scheduled volunteers. The FY 2001 total VAVS hours equate to 6,232 full time employee equivalent (FTEE) positions. The current monetary worth of the 13,007,575 hours from all VAVS volunteers is \$209 million (Independent Sector formula estimates a calendar year 2002 volunteer hour at \$16.05).

The following charts indicate the recent trends within the VAVS Program.

**RS Volunteers and Volunteer Hours
1996-2001**



The Office of Voluntary Service monitors these trends to assess programmatic needs and set strategic goals. These figures indicate a steady decline in volunteers since 1997, but an overall ability to maintain the number of volunteer hours. It is extremely important that there be a concentrated effort to increase volunteers and volunteer hours in areas where specific volunteer needs have been identified. INDEPENDENT SECTOR'S *Giving and Volunteering in the United States 2001* reported that 44% of adults over the age of 21 volunteered with a formal organization in 2000 and averaged just over 24 hours per month of volunteering time. What this says to VA is that it will take *more* volunteers to maintain our current hours of service. The charge before the Voluntary Service Office and selected field staff is to develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy to maintain the viability of VAVS to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Recruiting volunteers requires not only a strategy, but more importantly, time. A significant recruitment initiative is necessary to address the multiple dynamics of managing a volunteer program, but there are some challenges before us. The decentralization of VA Central Office staffing functions, along with the consolidation of services and integration of medical centers have significantly reduced staff and added collateral duties to the responsibilities of VAVS personnel. In some cases, VAVS has taken on unrelated programs, has been reorganized, or has been integrated into other support services not directed by the voluntary service program manager. VAVS personnel are spending increasing amounts of time on non-volunteer-related activities, such as public relations, patient diversional activities, and liaison with veterans service organizations. The result has been less time for staff to recruit and manage volunteers, develop assignments, and track volunteer hours.

This situation is crucial. As VA has expanded its care of veteran patients into the community, volunteers have become involved. Their ability to assist veteran patients by augmenting staff in such settings as hospital wards, nursing homes, community-based volunteer programs, end-of-life care programs, foster care and veterans outreach centers, has never been more important than it is today. Along with their vital role in providing monetary and in-kind donations, their contribution to the health care team is extremely valuable.

Part I of this document outlines the Recruitment and Retention initiative to be undertaken by Voluntary Service to build and enhance the program. The Administrative Strategies in Part II are intended to highlight the administrative issues that are essential for creating a strong foundation that will allow for successful implementation of these efforts. Where uncertain budgets and staffing shortages are common and at times disturbing, the commitment and dedication of VAVS volunteers is unwavering. The recruitment strategies that are proposed in the pages to follow will allow VAVS to increase volunteer productivity, enhance program design and continue to provide the added aspects of compassion and civic involvement that have been the core of the VAVS Program and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SUMMARY

History has enabled us to realize that all business entities, from Wal-Mart to street vendors, need a firm foundation in order to be successful. The suggested Administrative Strategies are intended to be the foundation for a strong administration that will become the cornerstone for an effective recruitment and retention initiative, exemplified in Part I. The strategies identified in Part I represent a suggested plan of actions and recommendations that are crucial to the recruitment and retention process.

The proposals in Part II establish challenging goals and objectives that are fundamental for a successful VAVS administrative program. The implementation of these administrative strategies will assist with the professional development of staff and volunteers, push for policy-driven management, establish program accountability, make strong partnerships, and improve volunteer-staff relations.

The administrative strategies and the recruitment and retention proposals highlighted in the preceding pages essentially are designed to serve as a “toolbox” for VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program Managers and staff. Furthermore, it is extremely important that ownership of this strategic plan be not only with VA Central Office Voluntary Service, but also with every VAVS field staff and NAC member. Without a firm grip on everyday administrative procedures recruiting and retaining new volunteers will be a difficult task. A reliable administration will facilitate the recruitment process and secure current volunteers.

The task group recognizes that in order to *develop strong programs*, we must *develop the people* who will implement them. As we enter the new Millennium, VAVS is looking towards new horizons our “Six for 2007” concept will provide a challenging objective for both the administration and our volunteers. Equally as important, our “Charge” will be our guiding force to make a salient increase in our volunteer population and retaining our current volunteers. Both parties will have to put forth a collateral effort in order to accomplish the tasks at hand.

VAVS builds on America’s natural spirit to serve our neighbors and our Nation. We are committed to VA’s first mission of providing quality and compassionate health care to America’s veterans with the support of a dynamic and diverse volunteer work force. The Recruitment Strategy Task Group foresees that Program Managers will be able to use the tools presented to build a comprehensive VAVS Program that is prepared to meet the needs of America’s veterans well into the 21st century.

Part I

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

In response to the outpouring of service and civic pride following the tragic events of September 11th, President George W. Bush has created the USA Freedom Corps. He says in the pages outlining this monumental program:

“Volunteers and community service are central to the history of our Nation. Americans have always been a decent and deeply generous people, willing to help those in need. This was true before September 11th. It is truer today.”

VA volunteers have embodied this spirit of patriotism long before September 11th and are committed to continue their lasting tradition of service to our nation’s veterans. We look for the Department of Veterans Affairs to support and encourage these recruitment strategies as we move towards expanding the VAVS Program and increasing the ranks of those who are willing to **“Serve Those Who Have Served.”**

OUR CHARGE

- To increase the number of volunteers serving within VAVS
- To diversify the volunteer population, to include Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), Active Military, Youth/Student, Corporate/Business Agencies, and other Community/Civic Organizations
- To expand the scope of VAVS beyond the traditional role and volunteer assignments
- To maintain the flexibility of the VAVS program to adapt to the changing VA culture and needs of the nation’s veteran population
- To create and maintain an environment conducive to civic involvement

OUR THEME

“Rekindling the American Spirit”

APPROACHES TO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Setting the stage for Effective Recruitment

Assess the needs and demographics

- Assess the needs of the VA facility
- Develop a clear understanding of the VHA, VISN, and facility mission (see **Appendix 2**)
- Create a local VAVS mission and vision statement that clearly ties in the mission of the medical center
- Communicate the organization and the VAVS mission routinely to volunteers and services/departments utilizing volunteers
- Collaborate with medical center personnel for needs and develop into volunteer opportunities
- Participate in customer service/patient satisfaction committees
- Assess the community demographics and volunteer trends –get involved in Volunteer Centers, determining who gives their time and why

Exploring Resources

- Identify and prioritize potential volunteers
- Develop volunteer recruitment sub-committees, e.g., VAVS and NAC Sub-Committee
- Place yourself in networking environments, i.e., professional affiliations related to volunteer management, Veteran Service Organization conventions, Chamber of Commerce, etc.
- Explore possible grant/foundation/resources for funding recruitment activities

Setting the Environment

- Highlight volunteer benefits in recruitment activities and materials
- Develop creative, comprehensive, value-added assignments, e.g., volunteers training other volunteers, job sharing, virtual volunteering, cross training, etc.
- Create a diversity of opportunity for volunteers
- Create a comfortable and flexible interview process

Promoting the VAVS Program

Media Relations

- Work closely with the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) to develop media releases regarding special events, e.g., Volunteer Week Activities, National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week, Holiday Programs and periodic human-interest stories
- Coordinate with the PAO to circulate periodic Public Service Announcements (PSA's) for the purpose of volunteer recruitment and fundraising
- Enlist the support of the PAO in recognizing the contributions of partnering organizations and agencies in the media
- Develop a working relationship with Public Affairs/Public Relations/Community Relations Departments/Committees within other agencies, VSO's, community associations, etc. to expand the visibility of the VAVS Program

Program Visibility

- Find creative uses for the distribution of the professionally developed national brochures
- Include local materials with the national brochures as appropriate
- Develop local materials regarding VAVS, including volunteer brochures, volunteer newsletters, needs lists, etc. highlighting features of the program
- Maintain a bulletin board for VAVS or display ongoing VAVS “news” on facility bulletin boards
- Utilize electronic (LED) and other display boards for highlighting the VAVS Program, i.e., Volunteer of the Month, Volunteer Week, etc.
- Incorporate special VAVS features/articles in facility newsletters
- Find volunteers via the web, VAVS Web Page, Volunteer Match, Energize, local Volunteer Centers, etc.
- Develop themed recruitment programs
- VAVS participation in community service programs, e.g., volunteer fairs, walk-a-thons, etc.
- Develop a speakers bureau

Utilizing Recruitment Tools

- Develop a list of active volunteer assignments
- Develop recruitment-mailing cards, e.g., pharmacy mail outs
- Develop professional VAVS materials appropriate for recruitment and fundraising campaigns, including displays, direct mail and e-mail
- Create target strategies for specific populations
- Explore unique opportunities to present VAVS within the community, including volunteer recruitment fairs, VSO conventions, job fairs, retirement-planning seminars, etc.
- Approach friends and colleagues with a heartfelt note of invitation to volunteer
- Develop a callback list for potential volunteers
- Use testimonials for recruitment, e.g., Faces of a Grateful Nation
- Develop a recruitment incentive program for bringing in new volunteers

Target Approaches to Recruitment

Recruitment Strategies

- Establish focus groups for targeted audiences.
- Develop strategies for student recruitment. (See **Appendix 3**)
- Develop partnerships with local agencies and organizations with a potential to provide volunteers, e.g., military bases, business/corporations, schools, and youth serving organizations, etc.
- Identify volunteer needs for themed projects/activity (i.e. sponsorship of fundraising activities, “Join Hands Day”, National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, Veteran’s Day)
- Develop recruitment slogans for targeted audiences, e.g., Caring Matters, Volunteer for Veterans
- Participate in retirement seminars and newcomer orientations, e.g., corporations, military bases, colleges, government agencies, etc.
- Customize recruitment tools for target audiences (youth, corporations, military).
- Enlist persons of influence/affluence (“movers and shakers” of organizations)

VSO Involvement

- Participate in VSO conventions by providing oral presentations, recruitment materials, VAVS informational brochures, exhibits/displays
- Utilize VA events, such as the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans to enhance relationships with VSO's and build recruitment potential

Important Retention Measures

Communication

- Conduct volunteer satisfaction surveys
- Incorporate motivational techniques to help affirm the worth and bolster the self-esteem of volunteers
- Encourage and provide an avenue for ongoing feedback and communication with volunteers
- Assess the current volunteer population and identify appropriate recognition activities
- Query volunteers when planning and coordinating recognition activities to assess preferences and gather ideas
- Include motivational dynamics in volunteer supervisor training
- Incorporate recognition tips, e.g., "101 Ways To Recognize Volunteers" for user departments during volunteer supervisor training and periodically throughout the year
- Hold periodic volunteer forums to address issues and concerns
- Conduct exit interviews of volunteers that discontinue service

Recognition

- Develop a pattern of behavior to say "thank you" to volunteers routinely
- Incorporate motivational techniques for volunteers in volunteer supervisor training
- Design creative assignments or expand current ones that have opportunity for volunteer mobility, i.e. added level of responsibility, opportunity for more training/skills development, training of new volunteers
- Design and implement a mentoring program to allow seasoned volunteers to assist new volunteers in their training and orientation to the facility
- Encourage using services to include volunteers in staff meetings and other departmental functions, as appropriate
- Involve volunteers in recruitment events
- Develop methods to acknowledge the volunteer role as a "team member" within the organization, e.g., Birthday/Sympathy/Get Well Cards, recognizing outside accomplishments on bulletin boards, phone calls after extended absences, etc.
- Customize VAVS Awards System to meet the unique needs of the local facility, e.g., interim awards between the VAVS awards categories, "Volunteer of the Year," "Volunteer Supervisor of the Year," etc.
- Plan recognition activities throughout the year (include smaller activities in addition to the annual awards ceremonies) and present a budget for implementation of such a program with justification to management
- Recognize and publicize volunteers' individual accomplishments, including those outside of the VA

PART II

ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES

GOAL #1

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“He who has begun his task has half done it.”

Horace

GOAL #1: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Create a VAVS workforce that fosters a dynamic and productive VAVS Program

VAVS employees have a tremendous task before them. They are responsible for the selection, placement and training of a volunteer workforce, in addition to duties such as public affairs, marketing, communications, fundraising, etc. that require skills and abilities in areas where training may be limited or nonexistent. We do not envision that the burden of these tasks will be lifted from Volunteer Program Managers, but we do recognize the necessity of training a team of individuals that can better serve the needs of the VA and its veterans in each of these very important capacities.

Objective 1.1

Increase the professional image of the VAVS Program Manager

Strategies for Objective 1.1:

- 1.1.1 Encourage membership and participation in professional affiliations related to volunteer management (American Society of Directors of Volunteer Services), public speaking (Toastmasters International), fundraising, marketing, etc.
- 1.1.2 Encourage the VAVS Program Manager to become actively involved in local medical center committees that involve volunteers or related programs
- 1.1.3 Participate in executive management briefings, as appropriate, and provide input about the volunteer program relating to medical center, VISN and VHA goals and objectives

Objective 1.2

Foster an attitude of vision and creativity

Strategies for Objective 1.2:

- 1.2.1 Encourage the development of the Core Principles of the High Performance Development Model
- 1.2.2 Encourage VAVS Staff to stay involved in strategic planning meetings for the medical center
- 1.2.3 Actively network with other VAVS staff and volunteer program managers from other local agencies
- 1.2.4 Explore web sites and review professional magazines and journals for innovative ideas, program development and training resources
- 1.2.5 Conduct site visits to local volunteer departments, including those outside of VA and health care, to discuss management strategies, including recruitment, retention and recognition

Objective 1.3

Promote, encourage and expand training opportunities for the VAVS Program Staff

Strategies for Objective 1.3:

- 1.3.1 Encourage involvement in local training opportunities, including college/university programs, e.g., volunteer management certification, online courses, Toastmasters International, seminars/workshops
- 1.3.2 Expand technological skills, e.g., internet, e-mail, graphics in VAVS program management

Objective 1.4

Develop a network of resources to assist program managers

Strategies for Objective 1.4:

- 1.4.1 Develop a local Resource Manual of subject matter experts in the community with knowledge in program design, volunteer management, grant writing, fundraising, etc.
- 1.4.2 Locate and interact with government or private agencies whose mission is to promote and support volunteer service efforts in the state and local communities.
- 1.4.3 Solicit assistance from outside resources, including the agencies and organizations involved in the USA Freedom Corps (Citizens Corps, Americorps, Senior Corps, Peace Corps)

GOAL #2

POLICY-DRIVEN MANAGEMENT

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Mahatma Gandhi

GOAL #2: POLICY-DRIVEN MANAGEMENT

Establish a policy-driven VAVS Program structure

Attracting potential volunteers to the VAVS Program is the first step in a series to building and maintaining a successful program. A structured process must be in place and followed consistently to ensure that any recruitment strategies are supported by strong management practices.

Objective 2.1

Ensure that policies and procedure are in place governing the actions of the VAVS Program and that they are communicated to all staff and volunteers

Strategies for Objective 2.1:

- 2.1.1 Ensure that comprehensive policies and procedural manual is maintained and readily available within the department
- 2.1.2 Develop policies in conjunction with VHA Handbook 1620.1 and other directives
- 2.1.3 Consult with Human Resources, Risk Management, Legal Counsel, or other relevant departments when developing policies

Objective 2.2

Adhere to standard operating procedures

Strategies for Objective 2.2:

- 2.2.1 Set timeframes for routine procedures within the VAVS Program (i.e. conducting orientations, answering volunteer inquiries)
- 2.2.2 Establish guidelines for all VAVS functions (i.e. acceptance of donations, requesting volunteers)

Objective 2.3

Ensure compliance with legal guidelines and JCAHO standards

Strategies for Objective 2.3:

- 2.3.1 Consult with Human Resources, Risk Management, Legal Counsel regarding labor laws, fundraising, incident reporting, etc. that may have ramifications for the department, medical center and VHA
- 2.3.2 Stay up-to-date on the legalities of volunteering
- 2.3.3 Reference JCAHO Standards Clarification when developing policies
- 2.3.4 Determine record retention based on legal requirements and facility needs

Objective 2.4

Ensure that a structured process is in place for volunteer orientation, education and ongoing training

Strategies for Objective 2.4:

- 2.4.1 Develop a comprehensive volunteer orientation-consult Human Resources regarding new employee orientation if needed
- 2.4.2 Ensure that using departments and services are providing the appropriate level of training for the volunteer duties being performed, to include safety, infection control, etc.
- 2.4.3 Establish ongoing training to ensure that volunteers maintain their competence to perform the tasks assigned
- 2.4.4 Ensure that position descriptions are utilized consistently and provide the legal parameters within which the volunteer needs to function
 - 2.4.4.1 Develop a standard format for position descriptions
- 2.4.5 Maintain position descriptions in a central location, which may include an electronic file

GOAL #3

PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

“There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.”

John F. Kennedy

GOAL #3: PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

Create a culture of accountability for the VAVS Program

Accountability is the key to success in any organization. Although the overall responsibility of the VAVS Program lies with the Program Manager, the value of the program is measured in terms of its ability to serve using services and ultimately the needs of our Nation's veterans. VAVS is a vital component in many services, clinical centers and departments within VA health care facilities. These using services, along with VA executives must be involved in making resources available, tracking progress and making recommendations if the goals of the program are to be realized.

Objective 3.1

Ensure continuous assessment of the VAVS Program

Strategies for Objective 3.1:

- 3.1.1 Set performance standards for the VAVS Program in such areas as number of volunteers, number of volunteer hours, amount of donations, timeliness in response to volunteer inquiries and other program support activities
- 3.1.2 Conduct periodic program reviews
 - 3.1.2.1 Develop a comprehensive annual narrative using the guidelines of VHA Handbook 1620.1, Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Procedures
 - 3.1.2.2 Maintain the Annual Joint Review process to determine how service organizations are performing in regards to program standards and goals
 - 3.1.2.3 Conduct surveys of using services within the facility
 - 3.1.2.4 Conduct facility-wide surveys to determine employees' perceptions of the VAVS Program
 - 3.1.2.5 Encourage VAVS Staff to solicit outside agency review of the VAVS Program, e.g., the Points of Light

Objective 3.2

Maintain open lines of communication with volunteers and service organizations

Strategies for Object 3.2:

- 3.2.1 Maintain the structure of the VAVS Committee meetings and ensure that quarterly meetings are held as outlined in VHA Handbook 1620.1, Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Procedures, providing opportunity for comments about the VAVS Program in general
- 3.2.2 Involve volunteers and service organizations in program reviews

- 3.2.3 Make copies of the annual narrative, National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans reports or any other summaries of the VAVS Program available to volunteers, service organizations and the members of the VAVS Committee for the purpose of comprehensive program review
- 3.2.4 Develop a consistent method whereby information is communicated to volunteers, and service organizations, e.g., volunteer newsletter

Objective 3.3

Establish a procedure for local management accountability for the VAVS Program

Strategies for Objective 3.3:

- 3.3.1 Include periodic reports for the VAVS Program in management briefings
- 3.3.2 Maintain management involvement in VAVS Committee meetings

GOAL #4

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

GOAL #4: STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Identify, develop, expand, and nurture partnering organizations

VAVS is keenly aware of the need to be part of strong networks and the crucial need to expand the number and diversity of our partners to meet the varying and diverse needs of our patients. These networks include Veterans Service Organizations (VSO's), community and civic organizations, business/corporate entities, media, Congressional Officials, other VA departments, and committees and programs that currently operate within VHA. In some cases, these partnerships have been ongoing and are in need of revitalization and in others, there is need for further development.

Objective 4.1

Strengthen the participation and involvement of the Veterans Service Organizations in the VAVS Program

Strategies for Objective 4.1:

- 4.1.1 Assist in the planning and implementation of recruitment activities to increase membership within VSO's
- 4.1.2 Coordinate regular and comprehensive training for Representatives and Deputy Representatives
- 4.1.3 Provide periodic updates about the VAVS Program, including volunteer and donation needs, at post/chapter/lodge/unit meetings
- 4.1.4 Participate in VSO conventions by providing oral presentations, recruitment materials, VAVS informational brochures, exhibits/displays
- 4.1.5 Assist in the coordination of Congressional open houses within the facility or health care system and ensure the involvement of VSO's
- 4.1.6 Utilize VA events, such as the National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans to enhance relationships with VSO's and build recruitment potential

Objective 4.2

Identify potential volunteer/financial resources within community/civic agencies

Strategies for Objective 4.2:

- 4.2.1 Network with professional affiliations, including those in the fields of volunteer management, fundraising, non-profits, to identify potential partnering organizations
 - 4.2.1.1 Explore Internet sites for organizations that assist in the placement of volunteers
- 4.2.2 Review and evaluate existing memoranda of understanding (MOU's) for their continued value to the facility

- 4.2.3 Encourage the development of new MOU's for the purpose of enhancing patient programs and activities
- 4.2.4 Customize assignments and recruitment strategies for diverse groups (i.e., youth, families, religious, job-training organizations, etc.)
- 4.2.5 Review local newspapers and publications to identify the mission and activities of potential partnering organizations

Objective 4.3

Explore avenues to involve the business/corporate community

Strategies for Objective 4.3:

- 4.3.1 Become involved in the Chamber of Commerce or other business groups as representative for the facility or health care system (under guidance and direction of the CEO/Medical Center Director)
- 4.3.2 Participate in retirement seminars with various corporations
- 4.3.3 Develop creative projects and events that would allow for single or episodic encounters, e.g., sponsorship of a fundraising activity, "Join Hands Day"
- 4.3.4 Maintain a clear understanding of the business/corporate mission and be prepared to tie in the VA mission, as well as find ways to recognize their contributions publicly

Objective 4.4

Explore avenues to involve the military active duty personnel

Strategies for Objective 4.4:

- 4.4.1 Develop creative projects and events that would allow for single or episodic encounters, e.g., National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans, "Join Hands Day", and national rehabilitation events
- 4.4.2 Become involved in retirement planning seminars (TAPS Program)

Objective 4.5

Foster relationships with other VA departments, state veterans homes, special committees

Strategies for Objective 4.5:

- 4.5.1 Collaborate with the Director, National Cemetery Administration to develop assignments within the agency
 - 4.5.1.1 Partner with other local cemeteries for the purpose of sharing resources and developing appropriate volunteer assignments

- 4.5.1.2 Consider utilizing groups that are currently involved with the cemetery assisting with burials, e.g., Boy Scouts, or service organizations that are not active within the VAVS program
- 4.5.2 Follow the guidance outlined in VHA Handbook 1620.3, VAVS Recognition for State Veterans Home Volunteers) in setting up recognition for state veterans home volunteers
 - 4.5.2.1 Present the VAVS Program to appropriate officials within the state veterans home to encourage dual appointments
- 4.5.3 Become involved on committees planning for the national rehabilitation events to foster ongoing relationships following the event and developing relationships with local businesses.

GOAL #5

VOLUNTEER-STAFF RELATIONS

“When you cease to make a contribution you begin to die.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

GOAL #5: VOLUNTEER-STAFF RELATIONSHIPS

Develop a relationship of trust and respect between VAVS and using services/departments

The recruitment process can only be successful with a positive and mutually supportive working relationship between staff and volunteers. Staff should feel a sense of partnership with VAVS in the design of meaningful services for their department. This creates a sense of “ownership” for the service and those staffing the service. By serving as a catalyst behind this effort, the Program Manager helps to create an environment of trust and respect for volunteers throughout the organization. This partnership will be fostered through staff education and ongoing communication.

Objective 5.1

Establish guidelines and expectations for staff who supervise volunteers

Strategies for Objective 5.1:

- 5.1.1 Develop supervisor handbook outlining the mission of the VAVS program, appropriate uses of volunteers and relevant policies
- 5.1.2 Include introduction of VAVS in new employee orientation sessions

Objective 5.2

Develop comprehensive training materials for staff utilizing volunteers

Strategies for Objective 5.2:

- 5.2.1 Develop a volunteer supervisor training course regarding the “How To’s” of managing and motivating a volunteer work force
- 5.2.2 Customize training to meet individual department needs, including development of a web-based training or having available on CD-rom
 - 5.2.1.1 Work with Employee Education Service to assist in publicizing the training and obtaining Continuing Education Units (CEU’s)
 - 5.2.1.2 Recognize staff who complete the training process and have a pattern of success in volunteer utilization

Objective 5.3

Ensure ongoing communication to foster effective staff-volunteer relationships

Strategies for Objective 5.3:

- 5.3.1 Involve staff in VAVS Committee meetings
- 5.3.2 Maintain a mechanism for staff input, e.g., VAVS Staff Advisory Committees, establishing a volunteer supervisor e-mail group

5.3.3 Involve staff in recognition activities and other events for volunteers

5.3.4 Develop volunteer assignments for staff, fostering their greater understanding and appreciation of volunteers and to enhance the staff-volunteer relationship

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Task	Responsibility
Expand the Professional Development Training to become more accessible to staff, including self-paced web-based training and satellite broadcasts	VA Central Office Voluntary Service
Re-establish the Preceptor Training Program	VA Central Office Voluntary Service
Develop a formal VAVS Mentoring Program, whereby new program managers or those needing to be re-focused or re-energized can work with peers within the VA system in a non-threatening coach/mentor relationship	VA Central Office Voluntary Service
Compile a comprehensive Resource Manual (available via internet and hard copy) for the VAVS staff of subject matter experts related to program design, volunteer management, grant writing, fundraising, etc. consisting of VAVS field staff	VA Central Office Voluntary Service
Institute a Voluntary Service Peer Review System, where field staff can conduct program reviews of other VAVS Programs.	VA Central Office Voluntary Service
Develop a comprehensive VAVS Representative and Deputy Representative Training Program, to be implemented by field staff consistently throughout VHA	VA Central Office Voluntary Service
Develop a VAVS Committee comprised of field staff to collaborate with the VHA Communications Advisory Board in effort to improve and foster relationships with various partners and targeted audiences of VAVS	VA Central Office Voluntary Service
Organize a subcommittee comprised of NAC member organizations to develop a strategic plan to address recruitment and membership	National Advisory Committee (NAC)

Appendix 1
VAVS HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*“To give without any reward, or any notice,
has a special quality of its own.”*

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

APPENDIX 1

VAVS HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

At the invitation of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs Omar Bradley, representatives of interested veterans and welfare organizations, who had for many years loyally participated on a volunteer basis in activities for the veteran patients in VA hospitals and domiciliaries, met in Washington, DC. on April 17, 1946, to discuss with Veterans Administration Central Office staff the establishment of a coordinated and integrated plan for volunteer assistance by the members of the groups in VA hospitals and domiciliary programs.

Present at the initial meeting were representatives of the following national organizations: The American Legion and Auxiliary; the American National Red Cross; the Disabled American Veterans and Auxiliary; the United Service Organizations, Inc., (USO, i.e., National Catholic Community Service; National Jewish Welfare Board, National Traveler's Aid Association; The Salvation Army; Young Men's Christian Associations; and Young Women's Christian Associations), and, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and Auxiliary. The Veterans Administration was represented at the meeting by the Director, Special Services, members of his staff, and representatives of the Department of Medicine and Surgery.

On April 18, 1946, the same group reconvened as the Veterans Administration Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee and recommended approval of the Veterans Administration plan for community volunteer participation in activities for the hospitalized veterans and members in Veterans Administration domiciliary homes.

At the outset, the plan, which came to be known as Veterans Administration Voluntary Service, provided an opportunity for the members of the veterans, welfare, and service groups, as well as individuals who were not members of organizations, to take part in appropriate phases of the Veterans Administration Special Services' activities. The volunteer workers assisted the hospital staff by supplementing the individualized and personalized services for Canteen Services. At the national level, the plan provided for an advisory committee, comprised of national representatives of the participating voluntary organizations, to advise the VA Central Office staff on the volunteer program and on the participation of the members of their organizations in the program. At the hospital level the plan included the establishment of VA Voluntary Service Committees similar to the National Advisory Committee.

In February 1947, the scope of VA Voluntary Service was extended to include volunteer participation in Medical Services as well as in Special Services. The new policy established the procedure for the coordination and integration of community volunteer resources in such Medical Services as Nursing, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Social Service, as well as in Special Services. Special Services was reorganized in 1960, and Voluntary Service became a separate function under the Director, Voluntary Service Office.

The initial group of three national veterans organizations and their auxiliaries, and two national welfare organizations, which served as the member agencies of the Veterans Administration Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee at the inception of the program in April 1946, has grown to more than sixty-one national groups.

At that time, there were approximately 123 community groups (some local in nature, and some with national affiliation), whose members were serving in various phases of Voluntary Service at VA field facilities. Not all of these groups were, of course, serving at any one single VAMC or domiciliary. Now there are more than 350 such groups participating in the program at the various medical centers, domiciliaries and outpatient clinics.

There has been a steady increase in the number of staff members making use of volunteer assistance in their programs for patients, as well as in the variety of opportunities for volunteer participation. Today, volunteers are at work in a vast array of hospital program areas, ranging from the Laboratory to the Library, and from Nursing and Pharmacy to Medical Media. As the VA mission evolves with reorganization, and the integration of services, volunteers will continue to be a vital, integral component of the VA health care delivery system, and as such, volunteer opportunities will know no bounds.

Appendix 2
“SIX FOR 2007”
AND
VAVS

“All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

APPENDIX 2

“SIX FOR 2007” AND VAVS

The VAVS Program makes a significant contribution to ensure the success of VHA. VHA has outlined six strategic goals to be accomplished by 2007. The mission of VAVS, along with goals and objectives set forth in the VAVS Recruitment Strategies Plan are closely aligned with these strategic goals. The value-added services that VAVS contributes to the Department of Veterans Affairs has and will continue to have a tremendous impact on the health care team and its ability to care for our veteran patients. To the extent that we are able to implement this plan, we will aid VHA in accomplishing its goals.

1. Put Quality First Until First in Quality

VAVS is committed to quality and excellence. As the VAVS Program continually increases its level of productivity, we will be able to expand the support services offered to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Many additional services and amenities have been added to enhance the quality of care veterans receive within VA medical facilities. These services include guest services to provide inpatients with information regarding amenities and personal services, in-room movies, pagers for the convenience of outpatients waiting for appointments or family members waiting for veterans following surgery or other medical procedures.

Our ability to tap into resources, such as corporations and community agencies, brings valuable knowledge, skills and abilities that enhance our existing programs and services and aid in the development of others.

2. Provide Easy Access to Medical Knowledge, Expertise and Care

VAVS has assisted the Department of Veterans Affairs to bring health care services closer to where our veterans live and work, with the development of community-based outpatient clinics and programs, such as Vet Centers. Not only have the VSOs been strong lobbyists for these programs, they have supported the VA by expanding their volunteer and financial support to these community health centers. Volunteer-based programs, such as the Volunteer Transportation Network, have been established in clinics across the country that make access to VA health care possible for thousands of veterans every day.

3. Enhance, Preserve and Restore Patient Function

VAVS provides a sound structure for the delivery of volunteer services in VA health care. These supplemental services provide the necessary manpower that allow health care professionals added time and relief from certain tasks that can be accomplished by volunteers, while their care and attention can be focused on the patient. In addition to the human resources provided by volunteers, VAVS has financially supported specific programs, such as the national rehabilitation events, and provided donations of equipment, vehicles and other supplies and materials for the benefit of patient activities and services. The ability for the VA to continue these programs and services is directly related to the involvement of VAVS volunteers.

4. Exceed Patients' Expectations

When an individual becomes ill and has the need for medical care, often the first concern is with the quality of that medical care and the expertise of the medical personnel responsible for delivering it. VA health care is better today than it has ever been. Beyond the VA's commitment to quality service, there is the underlying support of community groups and individuals that are equally committed to the mission of the VA. This level of commitment brings with it volunteer transportation programs, courtesy visits by active military personnel, personalized gift programs, hospital ward parties, and other services and activities that are nonexistent in other medical facilities. This level of care not only allows VA to exceed patients' expectations, but anticipate their needs. In addition, VAVS allows for a very special human connection – "veterans serving veterans." The compassionate service afforded to veterans in VA facilities can only be accomplished through the VAVS Program.

5. Save More Dollars to Better Serve More Veterans

In FY 2001 alone, volunteers contributed over 13 million hours of service to our nation's veterans. The time donated by these volunteers is comparable to 6,233 full-time employee positions, with the monetary value of volunteer hours being more than \$200 million annually. In addition, VAVS volunteers and their organizations annually contribute an estimated \$40 million in gifts and donations. With these extraordinary figures, it would be difficult for anyone to dispute the value of the VAVS Program. Of the many services that volunteers provide, -including escorts, patient feeders, drivers, personal shoppers, etc. – which would VA medical centers be willing to eliminate? Of the monetary and in-kind donations provided by contributors-including veterans service organizations, civic organizations and corporations, - how much would VA be willing to turn away? The VA's ability to serve veterans lies in part with the strength of the VAVS Program.

6. Build Healthy Communities

VAVS is committed to serving the health care needs of America's veterans in VA facilities. This is accomplished by providing dedicated volunteers to supplement the health care services, including preventative medicine, afforded to those veteran members of our community. Through these human resources and the donation of cash and in-kind services, VAVS ensures the well being of our veteran patients. VAVS also serves the needs of America's communities. It is the avenue by which citizens, community organizations, small businesses and corporations, can exercise their civic responsibility and answer the call to service.

Appendix 3
**STUDENT VOLUNTEER
RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES**

“So high as a tree aspires to grow, so high will it find an atmosphere suited to it.”

Henry David Thoreau

APPENDIX 3

STUDENT RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

1. Getting Started with Recruitment

Focus the message

Focus on smaller groups, e.g., Key Club, National Honor Society

Capitalize on the resurgence of patriotism

Identify the needs of the veteran

Identify the needs of the students

Perform local presentations to professional societies

2. Program Development/Initiatives

Each VA should establish a student volunteer committee-to develop local strategies to recruit and retain volunteers within VAWS

Recommend the committee meets regularly

Identify local volunteer trends and needs

Establish local recruitment collaterals to be distributed to local student volunteers

Serve as role models for potential volunteers

Develop assignments that attract high achievers, e.g., assignments in operating room, morgue, laboratory, engineering, leadership/internship opportunities etc.

Develop group assignments to attract fraternities, e.g., casino nights, wheelchair wash, bingo nights, homeless activities, etc.

Establish a student volunteer assignment for recruitment at schools (college campus—student unions)

Capitalize on student government activities

Capitalize on the requirements of community service

Promote scholarship potential and advertise the scholarships available, e.g., Parke, DAV and general scholarships

Treat the volunteer well...a part of the team, staff relationships—staffs need to treat the volunteer as an equal

Promote the benefits, i.e. lunch tickets, career opportunities, community service opportunities, development of relationships, etc.

Develop a database of student volunteer assignments and place on the web page for potential volunteers/staff to review

Develop a school club/organization that is sanctioned by the school

Revise web page to make it more attractive to student volunteers

Recruit student volunteers after spring break...timing is everything

Send promotional materials with volunteers as they leave to keep the program viable for the future

3. Promote a Positive Image of VA

Develop letters to the editor

Establish a “career day at VA”

Enhance the visibility of Voluntary Service--internally

Promote the need for volunteers

Tell the story—word of mouth—invite others to VA to clear up the negative image of VA

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