



"Serving Those Who Served"
Knights of Columbus Fourth Degree Veteran's Hospital Program

MEMORANDUM

TO: SUPREME MASTER
VICE SUPREME MASTERS
MASTERS

FROM: CHARLES H. GALLINA *CHG*
Colonel, USMC/Retired
VAVS National Representative

RE: 2007 VAVS NAC ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

DATE: JUNE 6, 2007

During the period of 2-6 May, accompanied by Ms. Debbie Morrone, Assistant to the National VAVS Rep, and J.P. McCusker, National VAVS Deputy Rep, Eastern Region, I represented the Order at the 61st Annual VAVS National Advisory Committee Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA. The following report summarizes key information from the meeting for your information and to forward to your District Masters for their information and action.

BACKGROUND: To bring everyone back up to speed on the VAVS and the NAC, the following pertains:

- 1. VAVS Mission:** Provide a structured volunteer program under the management of the VA in cooperation with community resources to serve America's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion. VAVS supports VA and VHA strategic goals by recruiting, supporting, and retaining a knowledgeable, diverse, and engaged supplemental workforce of Volunteers. The volunteer programs throughout the country assist management in the delivery of VA healthcare by improving access to care, assisting with long-term care, and improving patient satisfaction.
- 2. National Advisory Committee (NAC):** The NAC advises the Under Secretary on matters pertaining to the participation of volunteers in VA medical facilities, assists in recruiting and orientation of volunteers, and keeps officers and members of participating organizations informed of volunteer needs and accomplishments. In that the Knights of Columbus is represented at over 30 VA facilities, the Order is recognized as a Service Member Organization and therefore has voting rights on the NAC. Participation on the local VAMC VAVS committee is defined as having a VA recognized representative on that committee. Any organization whose VA recognized representation, either the VAVS Representative or the Deputy Representative(s) misses three (3) consecutive local VAVS facility quarterly meetings, will be considered for removal from the committee, requiring the organization to be re-certified. A representative or deputy representative who misses (3) consecutive meetings likewise will be subject to termination.

Currently, as of 4/13/07, the Order has certified representation at 116 out of 156 VAMCs, approximately 75% of VA medical facilities. However, KofC attendance at VAVS local facility quarterly meetings is about 50-60% Order-wide. Per the policy stated above, VAVS Representatives and/or Deputy Representatives that miss three (3) consecutive meetings will be removed. This has adverse consequences not only to our VAVS local program but to the Order's participation overall. It presents a major burden to re-certify new representation at affected facilities as well as contributing to a continuous flux in the number of VAMCs where we are active.

3. National VAVS Executive Committee (NEC): The NEC is a working group selected from Service Member Organizations. The NEC makes recommendations to the NAC on all areas of NAC business and activities. It serves as the governing body between annual meetings of the NAC and is entrusted with the responsibility of fulfilling the NEC Charter. The committee is also charged with selecting the site for the annual meeting of the NAC. During the year the NEC will be available to the Director, Voluntary Services Office, for discussion, consultation, planning, and coordination of VAVS NAC programs and activities. The Knights of Columbus is a member of the NEC and I serve as the Chairman of the NEC Recruitment Committee.

4. Local VAVS Committee: Assists with coordination of plans and policies for community participation in the VAVS program. It is chaired by the Associate Facility Director, co-chaired by the Chief, Voluntary Services Program. Each participating organization has one Representative and up to three Deputy Representatives.

● **Local VAVS Representative Duties and Responsibilities**

- assist with improving VAVS program
- recruit volunteers
- promote donation of financial and material goods
- advise and inform sponsoring organization of VA issues and concerns
- attend and participate in VAVS quarterly meetings
- serve on subcommittees and task groups
- maintain organization's records (hours, donations)
- coordinate facility activities and projects
- conduct annual joint review
- register as a Regularly Scheduled (RS) volunteer

● **VAVS Representative Qualifications**

- Sincere interest in the welfare of hospitalized veterans, Veteran patients and a desire to help them
- Ability to work with others
- Leadership
- Knowledge of the organizations (KofC, VA)
- MOST IMPORTANT: ability and commitment to attend regularly scheduled VAVS quarterly meetings

● **Appointment of VAVS Representatives**

- nominated by the State level unit of the organization;
for KofC this is the District Master
- certified by National certifying Official

● **Annual Joint Review (AJR) Process**

- Conducted annually at each VA medical facility to assess an organization's participation in VAVS during the preceding year and to develop goals and plans for the next year
- The review is conducted jointly with the organization's representatives by the Voluntary Services Program Manager
- A copy is sent to the organization's National Rep for acknowledgment and review. [I have reviewed in detail each review I have received to date, and have sent written notes on each acknowledgment form to VAVS representatives with my thanks, recognition of their accomplishments, and recommendations to help with goal. My note is short and to the point.

Key Issues and Information

1. During FY2006 there were 136,411 volunteers on the roles with 88,860 active VAVS volunteers contributing 12,457,422 hours. This equates to 5,969 fulltime VA employees at cost of \$225 million. VAVS volunteers and their organizations annually contribute an estimated \$54 million in gifts and donations. Total volunteer hours contributions and donations amount to \$279 million. Total cost to administer the VAVS program to the VA is \$45 million, accounting for a "profit" in service to our Veterans of \$234 million.

- While these numbers remain impressive, it does represent a drop in total number of volunteers and hours. A number of factors contribute to this loss, with changing and more complicated requirements for volunteers chief among them, as well as our aging volunteer force, the average age between 76-80. This down trend must be reversed for the VAVS to provide the same high level of care it has since 1946.

2. During FY 2006, the Knights of Columbus had 749 regularly scheduled volunteers contributing 83,451 hours (an increase of 41 FS volunteers and 932 hours), with another 15,767 "occasional" volunteer hours (a drop of 5914 hours), for a total of 99,218 volunteer hours (a delta of 4,982 hours). This is a significant decrease in total volunteer hours from 2005. Recruitment of Regularly Scheduled volunteers is a primary function for the VAVS Reps/Dep Reps. District Masters and District Deputies must play a critical role in supporting this effort by the certified Reps.

3. To reverse this trend of reduction in total hours VAVS-wide, the Recruitment Committee developed a comprehensive recruitment strategy approved by NAC for implementation at the NAC level, at each VAMC, and by each NAC member organization within their organizational structure and within organizational policies. The title for this Strategy is: "An Invitation to Service: Serving Those Who Served". The theme is: **Changing the Face of the VAVS: an Appeal to the Younger Generation**" (The National Strategy is attached for review). Key actions are:

- Each VAMC and NAC member organization should develop and implement its own unique recruitment strategy derived from and that incorporates the tenets of the "Invitation to Service" National strategy

- VAVS Staff and VAVS volunteers "invite" potential new volunteers to "Serve those who Served"
- Each VAVS NAC member organization develop and implement recognition and incentive programs consistent with organizational policy and guidelines
- **"The Power is in the Ask"**

I will develop a comprehensive KofC unique VAVS recruitment strategy for approval by Supreme Master and implementation down to the local council and assembly level.

4. **The VAVS NAC Female Volunteer of the Year is Rita Golden, the Ladies Auxiliary, Polish Legion of American Veterans who volunteers at the Connecticut Health Care System, Newington Campus. The VAVS Male Volunteer of the Year is Thomas Elliott, a Fleet Reserve Association and Maine Elks Association volunteer at the VA Medical Facility, Toqus, Maine. Mr. Elliott is also a Brother Knight of Columbus.**

- During the fall, all VAVS National Representatives will be notified that nominations for the next VAVS NAC meeting are due, with a February 15th deadline. Format for submission is in letter style, 300-500 words. Specific details for nomination are available from the Voluntary Services Program Manager at each facility.

- KofC VAVS representatives should be encouraged by District Masters to identify deserving candidates for this award. Now is the time to be alert to particularly exemplary service by our Volunteers. For FY 2006, we had a total of 4 male and 2 female nominations submitted from 4 Provinces to the Supreme Master for selection as KofC Male and Female of the Year. **The KofC Male Volunteer of the Year is Brother Arthur W. Slack, Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC, Richmond, VA, Calvert Province. The KofC Female Volunteer of the Year is Ms. Carlotta Miller, James Haley VAMC, Tampa, FL, Desoto Province.**

5. **Potential Requirements for VAVS Volunteers.** To address the discontent relative to the increased complexity in acceptance and processing of volunteers, a major contributor to loss of volunteers numbers and hours, a standardized process for the acceptance and processing of volunteers has been put in place to reduce barriers to volunteering at VA facilities while complying with current laws and regulations. For the purpose of accepting new volunteers and determining the level of cyber security and privacy training required, four specific groups have been established with requirements correlated to the level of cyber security risk involved in their volunteer assignment. See attached

6. **Fund Raising in Support of VAVS**

- Needs are changing dramatically with influx of OIF/OEF patients; support required includes families
- Each VAMC has unique "Needs List" available for fund raising guidelines
- Consider coordination with Canteen Directors for certain fund raising activities

7. Programs

- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)/Polytrauma Centers.** Heavy concentration on TBI at Polytrauma Centers. VA attempting to track all veterans who have had concussions and head injuries in past as well as recent injuries
 - TBI screening for all OIF/OEF veterans
 - 4 Regional Polytrauma Centers; 17 Network Polytrauma Centers (1 per VISN)
- **Fisher House:**
 - "Home away from Home" for families of active duty military or veterans receiving medical care at a military or VA Medical Center. Similar to "Ronald McDonald House", primary purpose is to offer support and provide lodging for families while visiting the hospital for extended periods of time due to patients receiving care
 - Fisher Houses located throughout the country (see www.fisherhouse.org for details and locations)
 - Proffers made for 2007 construction of Fisher Houses at Boston, Seattle, Dallas, and Richmond VAMCs
 - Once constructed, turned over to VA for operation and upkeep
 - Exceptional program for Assemblies and Councils to provide support, e.g. donations of paper goods, linens, food, books/videos, etc.; assist in fundraising efforts to support existing houses and to promote development of new Fisher Houses

Summary

KofC participation in the VAVS is critical to support our nation's veterans. With the influx of seriously wounded OIF/OEF active duty military into the VA healthcare system for long term rehabilitation before discharge and then after discharge, and the operation of the four regional Poly Trauma Centers and the additional 17 Network Poly Trauma Centers, the need for volunteers is growing dramatically across the system. VSMs and Masters, as well as State and District Deputies must get behind this important program if we are to continue our support of our Nation's veterans and their families. I will continue to forward important information about the VAVS program, and will recommend new initiatives.

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan..." Abraham Lincoln, 2nd Inaugural -- the motto of the VA

Cc: Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight