In the Garden
Veterans, Volunteers Get Their Hands Dirty this Summer


“The earth laughs in flowers.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson
Message from the Interim Network Director

Volunteers play such an important role in improving the quality of life for Veterans. Your time and monetary donations and the relationships you develop with Veterans are invaluable in improving their health care outcomes.

As VA has expanded its care of Veteran patients in the community, VA volunteers have contributed by assisting staff in respite programs, outpatient clinics, community living centers, home based primary care and outreach centers. Volunteers have also become an integral part of our Welcome Home and Stand Down events. I personally thank you for all that you do and continue to do to support our Veterans.

As Volunteers, you also play an important role in encouraging Veterans to enroll in VA health care. I want you to know, that our medical center staff are diligent in providing timely medical appointments both in primary and specialty care to meet the health care needs of Veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs executed an Access Audit Review nationally that included 2 phases to review all VA Medical Centers and their Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), at which time data was collected via site visits, questionnaires and interviews. VISN 2’s data showed that 96.4% of all appointments are scheduled within 30 days. As part of our continuous process improvement program in VISN 2, our Medical Centers and CBOCs continue to offer more appointment times with flexibility to Veterans -

- Offering, where applicable, early morning, evening and Saturday appointments
- Expanding the use of telehealth services which provides Veterans, the convenience of getting specialty care without the travel time.
- Referring Veterans when necessary to an outside community provider under the fee basis program
- Adding more Mobile Clinic vans to serve Veterans in rural areas
- Expanding the Binghamton and Rochester CBOCs

I hope the information I have provided will help you to continue to assist us in encouraging Veterans to enroll in VA health care so they can get the care they so well deserve.

Thank you.

Darlene A. DeLancey, M.S.
Interim Network Director
Albany Highlights

Gift Bags from AMVETS

Assemblymember Angelo Santabarbara (fourth from left) and local American Veterans (AMVETS) members distributed over 200 gift bags to Veterans. The gift bags included personal care items such as soap, shampoo and toothbrushes.

Mixed Martial Arts Event

Members of a Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) organization visited with Albany Veterans and donated 30 tickets to attend an MMA event. The members also donated 50 t-shirts to Veterans.

Volunteer Award

Ed Carroll, an 11-year volunteer, was awarded the President’s Volunteer Service Award for volunteering over 4,000 hours in support of Veterans. He received the award during the volunteer recognition social held at Albany VA Medical Center.

Wish List

- Cans of regular coffee, creamer and sugar
- Crossword puzzle books (large print)
- Gift cards for Walmart, Price Chopper or ShopRite
- Shower shoes
- Sweatpants and sweatshirts (all sizes)
- T-shirts and underwear (all sizes)
- iTunes gift cards

Please contact Jim Keller at (518) 626-5506 for additional information.

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Volunteer Opportunities

- Canteen service
- Clothing room
- Companionship program
- Disabled American Veteran (DAV) van drivers
- Fisher House support
- Lab courier
- No Veteran Dies Alone - Hospice
- Kiosk
- Wheelchair escorts
- Vocational program support
- VA Voluntary Service office administrative staff

Please contact Noney Grier at (518) 626-5507 for the most up-to-date volunteer opportunities.

Calendar

**Saturday, August 2**
Car Show Sponsored by Vietnam Veterans of America
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Employee Parking Lot

**Saturday, August 23**
Capital Region Veterans Stand Down
8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Colonie Elks Lodge, Latham

**Tuesday, September 9**
VA Voluntary Service Committee Meeting
1:00 p.m., Auditorium

**Friday, September 19**
POW/MIA Remembrance Day
10:00 a.m., Auditorium

Volunteer Social

More than 90 volunteers enjoyed a three-hour “Recognition Social” at the Albany VA Medical Center. The volunteers received awards for their service and enjoyed sandwiches, salads and an assortment of sweets during the event.

Albany Youth Program

Albany High School Seniors Emely Mejia (left) and Zaria Graham (second from right) presented a certificate of appreciation to Linda Weiss, Director Albany VA Medical Center (right), and Noney Grier, Voluntary Service Specialist (second from left), for their support to the Youth Volunteer Program.
Don Beaver from the Cuba Masons donated a bike to the medical center’s bike program. Over the last few years, the Cuba Masons have donated several bikes to the bike program.

More than 375 Troop Ride motorcycle riders visited Veterans at the medical center on Saturday, July 26, 2014. Over the past seven years the riders, many who are Veterans themselves, have been visiting Veterans. Left to right: Lynn Dinehart, Volunteer & Recreation Manager, and Dave O’Dell, Troop Ride Coordinator.
Bath Highlights

Canistee Valley Family Practice Donation

Lynn Dinehart (left), Bath VA Voluntary Service Manager, is presented with a donation for Veterans from the Canistee Valley Family Practice.

VA Voluntary Service Executive Group Meets Director

The VA Voluntary Service Executive group met with Michael Swartz, Director Bath VA Medical Center (right, standing).

Volunteer Opportunities

- Disabled American Veterans (DAV) drivers
- Reminder calls assistant
- Patient escorts for medical appointments
- Clerical support - various departments
- Special event volunteers
- Friendly visitor volunteer – visit with Veterans
- Recreational aide

Wish List

- Body wash
- Bread machine mixes
- Coffee
- Creamer/sugar packets
- Denture adhesive*
- Denture cleanser*
- Deodorant
- Gift cards for fast food, Walmart or Tops Market ($5 - $10)
- Jewelry making supplies/beads
- Lotion
- Plain fleece blankets - twin size
- Shampoo
- Stamps

*Homeless Veterans program and Jump Start program both need cleaning supplies, toasters, coffee maker, dishes, silverware, and pots & pans (can be gently used).
Canandaigua Highlights

Pie, Ice Cream, Plant & Rummage Sale

Thanks to everyone who supported the annual Canandaigua VA “Pie, Ice Cream, Plant & Rummage Sale” held on May 15. A total of $2,059.07 was raised to support activities for Veterans.

Day of Caring

On April 24, volunteers from the Ontario County ARC helped beautify the garden in the back of building 7 as part of the Ontario County Day of Caring.

Wish List

- Coffee, creamer, sugar, sugar substitute
- Deodorant, shampoo, shaving cream, body lotion, nail clippers
- Forever postage stamps
- Gift cards from Walmart/Wegmans/Tops/iTunes/prepaid gas cards/Dunkin Donuts/Tim Horton’s
- Monetary donations for wood shop
- Monetary donations needed to support the Recreation Therapy Canine Program
- New socks and underwear, sweatshirts, sweatpants and t-shirts, swim trunks
- Non-perishable foods and baking items
- Paper plates, paper napkins
- Sneakers, shoe laces
- Tickets to sporting events, zoo, bowling and movie tickets

For Homeless Program:

- Air mattresses - new
- Alarm clocks
- Brooms
- Mops
- New blankets & pillows
- New kitchen items (dishes/utensils)
- New vacuum cleaners
- Toilet paper and cleaning supplies

Monetary donations are always welcome. If you or your organization wish to make a donation, to the account of your choice, please specify that you are in agreement that food and beverages may be purchased for Veterans. This is in compliance with the new rules and regulations associated with the purchase of food.

Contact Voluntary Service for more information

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Canandaigua Highlights

Pontoon Boat Donated

On June 2, Perinton Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8495 officially presented the Canandaigua VA Medical Center with the donation of the brand new pontoon boat. The organization raised $21,000 to purchase the boat.

Left to Right - Roy LaRose; Dick Grube, VA Voluntary Service Representative; Dave Johnson; Dick Bartela; Jerry Gropp; Kenneth Gippe.

Volunteer Opportunities

All volunteers must complete an orientation prior to volunteering. Orientations are held in Voluntary Service. Please call Utaw Vines to schedule an appointment at (585) 393-7757. Thank you for considering volunteering with the Canandaigua VA Medical Center!

Canandaigua VA/Rochester VA Outpatient Clinic

- **Activities** - recreation activities, socialization, games, cleanup, and wheelchair escort. Evenings, weekends
- **Clerical assistant** - filing, organizing, answering the phone. Days and hours flexible
- **Hospice care** - as needed; prefer Hospice-trained volunteers, but all applicants considered
- **Transportation** - driving a government vehicle to transport ambulatory Veterans to and from medical appointments. Various locations and times available
- **Grounds crew volunteer** - assist in planting, clearing, and beautifying the campus
- **Laundry volunteer** - weekdays 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., three or more hour shifts
- **Loving Spoonful Volunteer** - evening & weekend meal time, assist nursing & nutrition staff at meal times - training required (we provide)
- **My HealtheVet** - distribute information and assist Veterans interested in registering in the program
- **Wheelchair escorts** - various times available to push wheelchair Veterans to a variety of locations within the facility such as dental clinic, x-ray department or taking Veterans on a walk around our beautiful grounds

Marine (IRR) Mega Muster

From left to right are Sons of the American Legion members Ross Polson, Joe Cleveland, Gabe Cinquegrana and Jim Murray.

The Ontario County Sons of the American Legion sponsored the cooking and food provided to over 600 Marines and family members at the Marine Inactive Ready Reserves (IRR) Mega Muster that was held on May 17 at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center.

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On June 6, the **Canandaigua Middle School Jazz Band** performed at the medical center.

Members of the **Grand Lodge of NYS Masonic War Veterans**, post colors at the Memorial Day Observance held on May 27.

### Great Volunteer Opportunity

Patient Shadowing is a great new program where a volunteer or an employee shadows a Veteran through their medical visit. The “shadower” gets to provide fresh eyes as to how Veterans’ visits go and give feedback on any areas where services can be improved. If you are an outgoing person, interested in seeing how our Veterans receive their care, and would like to make a difference, this opportunity could be for you. For more information on the shadowing program please contact **Louise Motyka** at (585) 393-7729.

### Calendar

**Second Monday of each month**
(October – December)
- Bee Keepers Association Meeting Month
- 7:00 p.m.

**Third Monday of each month**
(October – December)
- Canandaigua Lake Trout Unlimited Meeting
- 7:30 p.m.

**Fourth Tuesday of each month**
(October – May)
- Project Healing Waters Clinic
- 7:00 p.m.

**Fourth Wednesday of each month**
- R/C Model Flying Club
- 6:00 p.m.

**Tuesday, August 5**
- Denny & Her Escorts Ice Cream Social
- 6:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, August 6**
- VA Voluntary Service/Community Council Meeting
- 6:00 p.m.

**Tuesday, August 19**
- Student Recognition Day
- Volunteer Lounge
- Building 7
- 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

* **Sunday, September 7**
- Bingo
- Noon

* **Thursday, September 11**
- Patriot Day Program
- 1:00 p.m.

* **Sunday, October 12**
- Bingo
- Noon

**Tuesday, October 21**
- Food Safety Course
- 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Pavilion

Catholic Mass is held Monday, Tuesday and Friday in the Catholic Chapel in Building 3 at 11:00 a.m. Sunday Catholic Mass Service in building 8B at 6:30 p.m.

Protestant Services are held Sundays starting at 8:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Please contact Chaplain Service at (585) 393-7886 for more information.

* **Escorts Needed**
  Escorts are needed 45 minutes prior to events to take Veterans to the auditorium and/or pavilion. Without your assistance, many of the Veterans may not be able to participate.
More than 50 Corning Inc. employees participated in United Way’s Day of Caring at Bath VA Medical Center. The volunteers helped spruce up the campus by repainting signs, pulling weeds, picking up trash and planting fresh flowers. The end results made Bath’s campus look like a well-tended park.

“We encourage corporations to volunteer at VA’s all over the U.S.,” said Lynn Dinehart, Bath VA Voluntary Service Manager.

“Many corporations have in their mission statement to serve the community so they call us and we build relationships,” said Dinehart. “We could not support and sponsor most of our events and services to our Veterans without the generosity of our community partners.”

There are many volunteer opportunities available for community corporations and businesses.

“Larger groups are typically needed to support our National Cemeteries, Fisher Houses and larger group Veteran events,” said Jim Keller, VA Voluntary Service Officer at the Albany VA.

If you think your company or business might be interested in volunteering at VA call your nearest VA Voluntary Service office and ask for more information.
Volunteer Effort: Corning Incorporated Spends Days Caring for Veterans
Wish List:
- Body powder (small, travel size, only)
- Combs (black pocket)
- Denture cleaner
- Denture grip
- Hair brushes
- Nail clippers (fingernail)
- Sweat Pants (all sizes)
- Sweat Shirts (all sizes)

Volunteer Celebration!

Left to right: James Cody, Director Syracuse VA Medical Center; Magdeleine Wellner, Volunteer of the Year Recipient; Robert Hawes, Voluntary Service Manager.

Patients and Families Enjoy Horticulture Therapy Program

Horticulture Therapy is the use of plants to re-connect Veterans with nature and helps Veterans strengthen their muscles and improve their mental health. Horticulture Therapy at Syracuse VA Medical Center is a joint collaboration between Syracuse VA Recreation Therapists and researchers from SUNY-ESF. The SUNY-ESF students engage patients in gardening and nature-based activities several times a week.

The rooftop garden, part of the horticulture program, hosts barbecues and serves as a gathering place for patients and their family members to relax. Additionally, herbs and vegetables are grown on the rooftop and these items are used during cookout events in the Community Living Center.

Patients work indoors when the weather is bad and pot plants to put in their rooms.

Horticulture Therapy plants.

Left to right: James Cody, Director Syracuse VA Medical Center; George Green, volunteer with over 20,000 hours of volunteer time; Robert Hawes, Voluntary Service Manager. Many volunteers received more than one nomination. Bill Fowler, Carol Sinesi, and George Green were all nominated multiple times.

A special thanks to the organizations that provided activity, in kind, and monetary donations for the medical center during the months of April, May and June!
Western New York Highlights

AMVETS Post 45 Donates to “No One Dies Alone Program”

Left to right: Victor Wiatrowski, American Veterans (AMVETS) Post 45 Representative; Jason Petti, Associate Director VA Western New York Healthcare System; Louise Brown, AMVETS Post 45 Auxiliary; Dennis Kluczynski, AMVETS Post 45.

Continuous Support

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Orchard Park Post 6247 continue to show support to Veterans and are shown here with a check donation. Left to right: VFW Representatives Clay Speidler; John Stefco; Gene Gavigan, VFW Post 6247 Commander; Brian Stiller, Director VA Western New York Healthcare System; John Margulies; Brian Kelly; Brownie Barnes.

Check Presentation

The American Legion Grand Island Post 1346 donates to Veterans annually. Left to right: Joseph Synakowski, Judge Advocate; Fred Wornick, Commander; Brian Stiller, Director VA Western New York Healthcare System; Richard Schmidt, 1st Vice Commander; Bo Pikas, Scholarship Chairman.

Day of Caring

Genesee County’s United Way “Day of Caring” event attracted many volunteers in the month of May. Left to right: Randall Sheffer, VA Engineering Department; Carol Nicometo, Day of Caring Volunteer; Lori Brade, Day of Caring Volunteer; Jenna Raphael, Day of Caring Volunteer; James Steger, VA Engineering Department.
Western New York Highlights

Quilts for Veterans

American Legion Auxiliary Post 9249 made quilts for Veterans. Left to right: Dawn Mastorilli, Assistant Treasurer; Rosemary Wojick, Secretary; Kelly Clark-Roberts, Volunteer Program Specialist; Kathleen Blake, Erie County Council President.

Wish list

- Baby powder
- Combs/hair brushes
- Crock style shoes (all sizes, preferably with back strap)
- Denture cream, denture adhesive
- Deodorant
- Nail clippers
- Shaving cream
- Sweatpants (all sizes)
- Sweatshirts - zip up hoodie, pull over hoodie, or crew neck (all sizes)
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- T-shirts (all sizes)

Volunteer Opportunities

- Friendly Visitor - visit with Veterans in their rooms and chat, watch TV, play games, socialize
- Discharge Escort - escort patients from their inpatient room to pharmacy, ride home, assist with discharge paperwork, make reminder phone calls for future appointments, miscellaneous clerical work
- In-Home Respite Friendly Visitor - visit with Veterans in their home so their caregiver can get some “worry free” time away

Veteran Donation

Niagara Falls Military Order of Purple Heart Lt. John Paul Bobo Chapter 264 donated to Veterans. Left to right: Terry Partch, MOPH Post 264; Jason Jaskula, Volunteer Program Specialist; Mike Targon, MOPH Post 264.

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Cargill “Bird Feeders” for Veterans

Employees from Cargill took time to donate and present three bird feeders and supplies for Veteran enjoyment.

Women’s Center for Hope

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hendershott-Manness Post 374 Ladies Auxiliary presented fundraiser proceeds to the Batavia Campus Women’s Center for Hope. Left to right: Debbie Long, Chaplain; Laurie Fox, PTSD Staff Nurse; Katy Cooper, Jr. Vice President; Diana Mayer, President; Rebecca Welch, LCSW, PTSD Program Supervisor; David Ramsey, PTSD Nurse Manager; Betty Pettit, Past President; Jane Howard, Treasurer.

Calendar

Wednesday, August 6
Stand Down
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Connecticut Street Armory
184 Connecticut Street

Saturday, August 9
Welcome Home Troops
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Buffalo & Erie Co. Naval & Military Park

Sunday, August 10
Veterans Day Parade
1:00 p.m., Erie County Fair

Thursday, August 14
Creative Arts Festival – Summer Art Show
11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Freedom Hall

Wednesday, August 20
Volunteer Awards Luncheon
Batavia Campus
12:00 p.m., Clarion Hotel – Batavia

Wednesday, September 17
Batavia VA Voluntary Service Meeting
1:30 p.m., Building 4, Auditorium

Friday, September 26
Commanders Day
9:00 a.m., Freedom Hall

Saturday, October 11
Sunwing Electronic Recycling Event
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Buffalo Campus,
E Wing Outpatient Entrance/Parking Ramp

Saturday, October 18
VA Voluntary Service Annual Luncheon
11:00 a.m, Buffalo Campus
Freedom Hall
You can now make a donation online to the Veteran program of your choice.

www.visn2.va.gov