



VOLUNTARY SERVICE ANNUAL NARRATIVE FY'09

RCN 10-0006

MISSION: To Care for our Veterans with Compassion and Excellence.

VISION: To be a community leader in volunteer management and pacesetter in predicting program direction, identifying methods of accomplishment and developing resources consistent with identified needs in support of service to veterans.

WE VALUE the sacrifices of our Nation's Veterans, the dedication of our volunteers, the contributions and support of individuals, community groups and businesses, fraternal organizations and Veteran Service Organizations.

1. Program Workload, Development and Trends

(a) Volunteer Hours: Stratton VAMC volunteers supplement staff in all Care Lines and our Service Line within the medical center facility plus the Fisher House, our off-station sites such as the Veterans Readjustment Counseling Center, Compensated Work Therapy and Behavioral Health Recovery Center, our staff model Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Contract Community Nursing Homes, and the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery. Our VA volunteers are our most valuable resources. They are a crucial part of the quality care veterans receive at our facilities and outreach programs and are our liaisons to the community. They are the American peoples' representatives at our VA National Cemetery where they provide military funeral honors and offer consolation. Our volunteers' commitment and dedication to their assignments sets the example of how VA will continue to do its part to keep the Nation's promise to veterans. Their generosity of spirit makes our community a better place.

OVERALL TRENDS

	FY'07	FY'08	FY'09	FY'08-09
Total Volunteer Hours	85,792	84,067	89,565	+7%
Regularly Scheduled	75,895	71,982	73,263	+2%
Occasional Hours	9,897	12,085	16,302	+35%
Regularly Scheduled Volunteers	1,071	1,079	984	-9%
Volunteers Recruited	198	139	166	+19%

The number of regularly scheduled volunteers decreased this year; however, our volunteer program continues to expand to new horizons. The hiring of three new recreation therapists has increased volunteer assignments on evenings, weekends and holidays.

The Independent Sector and the Points of Light Foundation have determined that the value of volunteer time should be calculated at \$28.04 per hour for Upstate New York. Based on the total number of volunteer hours for fiscal year 2009, the estimated monetary value of donated time can be assumed as **\$2,511,402.60**. The value of their total contribution in terms of increased patient satisfaction and customer “value added” service cannot be calculated.

Our theme for our annual **Volunteer Recognition Ceremony** this year was “Volunteers are Rays of Sunshine”.

A formal dinner ceremony was held on Sunday, April 26th at the Holiday Inn, Albany, New York.

Two volunteers were presented Presidential Lifetime Achievement Awards for service exceeding 4,000 hours. Two volunteers received Special Contribution Awards for going above and beyond their volunteer duties to serve our patients and staff.



Mary-Ellen Piché, Director, presents the 15,000 award to Charles Drew

(b) Recruitment and Outreach Initiatives: The Volunteer Manager and Volunteer Specialist use every opportunity to spread awareness of our Volunteer Program and extend an invitation to become a part of our VA healthcare team as a VA Volunteer. Our Volunteer Specialist works closely with staff and as special projects are identified or there is a backlog in a specific area, volunteers are mobilized to assist staff until completion. We revised our Volunteer Supervisor’s Handbook to help our staff understand their role in providing the on-the-job training and tips on retaining valuable volunteers.

During this year, we continued our traditional recruitment efforts including contacts with area schools, colleges and vocational training centers, a Volunteer Opportunity listing in our Network Volunteer Newsletter and through referrals from our VA volunteers. Our website link is included on area colleges’ websites. Volunteer opportunities are posted on our Network 2 VAVS Website, Volunteer.gov and Volunteer Match Internet websites.

Our summer youth program provides work experiences that will help them explore career choices. The program encourages work ethics, improve basic skills and provide encouragement to pursue educational opportunities.

We have continued a partnership through the NYC VA Regional Office’s Vocational Rehab Counseling Psychologist to engage veterans who are overcoming their service-connected disabilities and need recent civilian work experience in a position that complements their vocational interest.

Volunteer recruitment information packets are provided to our Veterans Service Center's Associate Manager who brings them to every outreach event throughout the year.

Throughout the year, the Volunteer Specialist welcomes community and active duty personnel in to our facility for tours and visits. She uses those opportunities to encourage volunteerism to support our many programs.

(d) Corporate, Business and Community Partnerships

Voluntary Service forged new partnerships with the Junior League of Albany, NYS Society of Physicians Assistants, Office of Attorney General, and Empire State College SUNY. We maintained relationships with the Colonie Post Office, NYS Division of Veterans Affairs and NYS Department of Taxation & Finance. These partnerships resulted in toiletry and clothing drives to replenish our Because We Care Program supplies.

Our partnerships with **faith-based organizations** resulted in monetary, toiletry and afghan donations from parishioners of Woestina Reformed Church, First Lutheran Church, Brunswick Church, Clifton Park United Methodist Church, Lishakill Reformed Church, and Mayfield Methodist Church.



Throughout the year, the **Transportation Security Administration at the Albany International Airport** donated surplus jackets, sweaters, vests, pants and shirts for our clothing program. The total value of all the clothing transfers was \$4.440 this fiscal year.

This year the Volunteer Manager provided the TSA Administrative Officer with contact names and phone numbers at VAMCs across the country to expand this clothing transfer program nationally. This initiative was publicized in the Times Union Newspaper, our Volunteer Newsletter and the **V**anguard magazine.

Our Fisher House receives donations on a regular basis from **Best Buys, Wal-Mart, Newman's Own and Pepsi.**

Active duty personnel from **Scotia Stratton Air Force Base's Chapel Group** enrolled as regularly scheduled volunteers and visit hospitalized veterans on evenings and weekends.



The Fisher House Serenity Garden was dedicated August 4, 2009, funded by donations received in memory of 17 Veterans and volunteers. Family members and friends attended the program and toured the garden. Audrey Fisher honored dedicated Fisher House volunteers and the staff of Facilities Management Service that designed and constructed the garden. A picnic lunch was prepared and served by employees of the Johnstown **Wal-Marts Distribution Center**. The garden is a quiet repose for the families of hospitalized Veterans staying at this comfort home.

Soldier's Angels partnered with **TGIF Restaurant** for a 3-day fundraiser. For every \$20 spent by customers, \$5 was donated to Soldier's Angels who in turn donated the funds to the Stratton VAMC's clothing and toiletry program. A check for \$240 was received and deposited in the GPF account.

Employees from **Olive Garden Restaurant** delivered 62 dinners and visited with residents on our Community Living Center on Labor Day. A local newspaper featured the story including photos of our residents enjoying the meal.

Greater Capital Association of Realtors, Inc. held a Realtor Day in September. Proceeds from their silent auction and raffle were donated to the Stratton VAMC and Fisher House. A check for \$5,330 was received.

Celery LLC donated 5 specially equipped fax machines to the Stratton Inn and Adult Day Health Care Program for veterans to send handwritten messages to their friends and family's computer e-mail address. The company provides *free of charge* any consumables (paper and ink) and the service agreement for this equipment.

First grade students from **St. Jude's School in Wynantskill** celebrated Memorial Day by decorating a display board, visiting patients, and singing patriotic songs.

The **New York State Correctional Facility** in Wilton donated over 200 gifts to our facility in December and members distributed them to the Adult Day Health Care and Infusion Suite patients. Volunteers distributed the rest of the gifts to inpatients and to other outpatient programs at our facility. The group returned in March with 100 Easter baskets for our patients. In addition, they donated \$250 towards a patient retreat for chronically ill veterans of our Infectious Disease Clinic held at Taconic Copake Falls.

American Cancer Society's Daffodil Days provided vases filled with daffodils for each hospitalized veteran in March.

Mohawk Dairy (local business) donated and delivered ice cream mix for our ice cream machine every other week for a value of \$4,000.

Albany MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Station) Unit members visited and distributed military logo gifts to hospitalized veterans and residents of our Community Living Center. They also donated books to our library.



TeleFlora’s Make Someone Smile Day brought fresh flowers and plants in happy face bowl vases to our hospitalized veterans. This visitation was televised on a local news channel.

Price Chopper (Golub Corporation) continues to donate coffee for our outpatient coffee program throughout the year. An AMVET volunteer picks up the donations from their warehouse and delivers them to the medical center.

(e) Gifts and Donations: Voluntary Service actively promotes awareness of patient activities and medical center programs and encourages community support. Our Network 2 Volunteer Newsletter and volunteer website includes a Donation Needs List to benefit patient care. This list is also posted on our hallway bulletin board and periodically attached to our VAVS Committee minutes. Care Line Managers and staff are invited to VAVS Committee Meetings to appeal for specific needs. Donations increased by **24%** this year.

DONATION TRENDS

	FY-07	FY-08	FY-09	Comparison FY’07 to FY’08
CASH	\$102,391.74	\$239,630.60	\$350,049.62	+ 110,419.02
NON-CASH	\$531,158.75	\$519,502.80	\$585,145.76	+65,642.96
TOTALS	\$633,550.49	\$759,133.40	\$939,195.38	+ 180,061.98

Credit Cards are accepted for monetary donations. Our station received one credit card donation during this fiscal year. There is a national initiative to add this to our websites which will help to spread awareness of this donation avenue.

During this fiscal year, donated funds and material gifts provided the following:

- Four treatment tables for physical therapy. One treatment table for bariatric patients.
- Recumbent cross trainer for Cardiac Rehab
- Electric Hi-Lo Stand-in Table for physical therapy
- Wii recreation game sets for recreation therapy
- Children’s table and chairs for the Mental Health Clinic waiting room.
- Project Lifesaver equipment for our Police & Security Service to track and locate missing patients with dementia related disorders
- Urinary bag covers (handmade by sewing guilds, saving the VAMC from purchasing at \$15 each)

- Funding to provide a new sound system for the Chapel
- New shuttle van for our patient parking lot
- New DAV van for our Volunteer Transportation Program
- 10 new wheelchairs for the lobby and inpatient wards
- Microwave ovens for the chemical dependency unit and 7B
- Artwork for the 8B patient day room
- Equine therapy treatment sessions (to supplement grant money received)
- Exercise equipment and banner stands for the MOVE! Program
- Funds to repair the Chapel organ
- Pocketalker listening devices for our Community Living Center
- New 52-gallon fish tank for the OR waiting room
- Funding to support the Network Behavioral Health Care Line Veteran Recovery Day held in Syracuse
- Sweatshirts, tee shirts, jeans, sweatpants, underwear, coats, hats, scarves, gloves and sneakers for our “Because We Care” program
- Coffee pots, coffee, tea, sugar and creamora for patients’ use in wards and clinics
- Funds to subsidize meals prepared in the Behavioral Health Recovery Center
- Cookouts, recreation therapy activities, holiday dinners and parties, and off-station trips for hospitalized veterans and veterans in structured outpatient programs.
- Funds to send veterans to participate in the Winter Sports Clinic, Golden Age Games, Wheelchair Games and Creative Arts Festival

All wheelchairs and other equipment purchased through donated funds are stenciled, or a plaque is attached, to acknowledge the donor. Voluntary Service is committed to insuring that patients and staff are aware of the generosity of our veterans’ service organizations, fraternal organizations and the community. Our thank you letters to the donors inform them of this permanent acknowledgment.

(f) Customer Service Initiatives: We work hard to maintain valuable programs plus explore opportunities to enhance our services and increase patient satisfaction.

Patient programs and amenities that have been maintained during this fiscal year:

- Flower deliveries to patients
- Library Book Cart to inpatient wards; magazines & books to waiting rooms
- Craft Cart, playing cards, search-a-word and crossword books
- All occasion cards, postage stamps, envelopes, writing paper and pens

- CDTA bus passes
 - Comfort kits (to new admissions) and toiletry items provided to all inpatient wards, Stratton Inn, Behavioral Health Recovery Center and Homeless Program
- Canteen Coupon Books for haircuts and meals
- Coffee Program for patients in outpatient areas
- Afghans, non-skid slippers, trachea bibs, urinary bag covers
- Clothing & toiletry program (to patients referred by staff social workers and providers)
- Dog Pet Therapy Program
- Wheelchairs in our main lobby designated for outpatients.
- Courtesy carts placed in main lobby for the convenience of veterans and visitors
- Magnifying eyeglasses for veterans who are not eligible for VA issue
- Daily newspapers for inpatients whose families provide the funds.
- Maintenance of fish aquariums in waiting room areas for patients' relaxation

Volunteers' customer service initiatives to assist employees and VA programs:

- Comfort items on each inpatient ward are maintained and stocked by a volunteer on a weekly basis
- Large and small mail-out projects are folded, labeled, stuffed and sealed
- Assist staff with medical center programs and special events' activities (decorating, escorting patients, refreshment serving, set up and cleanup duties)
- Volunteers assist at the front lobby Greeter Desk

Voluntary Service participates in **Advanced Clinic Access** initiatives to reduce clinic no shows. Volunteers call veterans to remind them of their upcoming appointments. This reduces no shows and cancellations after the appointment time.



Our **Welcome Buddy Program** volunteers visited **2,163** newly admitted patients throughout this fiscal year. In addition to the friendly visit, each veteran was given a "Thinking of You" card, an afghan, bag of toiletries, a Schedule of Recreation Activities sheet for the week, and pamphlets on Patient Rights and Responsibilities, Patient Safety Program, SpeakUP and Fall Prevention. Women inpatients are given a special red travel case filled with special ladies' toiletry items.

Our "**Because We Care**" program provided for the needs of **528** veterans this year. A total of **2,348 items** were provided. Items issued included sweatpants, sweatshirts, underwear, sneakers, slippers, socks, tee shirts, jeans, hats, gloves, coats, carry bags, toiletry items, shower shoes, and belts. In addition, Voluntary Service provides postage stamps, envelopes, bus tokens, and phone cards.

Shuttle Service: This valuable customer service program is separate from the Volunteer Transportation Program and is supervised by the Volunteer Specialist. Coverage is scheduled weekdays to and from our parking lot and front entrance. Volunteers provided this courtesy to **9,327** veterans and visitors this year; an average of 777 per month. During this fiscal year, the medical center initiated a Valet Parking program which has been very well received by patients arriving for their appointments. Even with the Valet Parking, our shuttle van transported 134 more passengers than the previous year.

Our hospitalized veterans and Adult Day Health Care program veterans are offered **haircuts** once a week by a local beautician under contract with Canteen Service. Through organization support, Voluntary Service provides the \$10 in Canteen Books for each haircut for those who do not have them so that no veteran is denied this service.

Voluntary Service continues to take the lead on **Voting Assistance for VA Patients** to ensure that inpatients are informed of their right to vote and have the mechanisms available to them. Flyers were posted on inpatient wards and our Community Living Center. Nursing and Social Work staff assisted hospitalized veterans with voter registration and absentee ballots.

(g) **Successful Events, Projects and Activities**



Voluntary Service coordinated our medical center's participation in Albany's **Memorial Day and Veterans Day Parades**. Volunteers and our VAMC and Network 2 staff walked with our medical center banner and American Flags showing our VA and community spirit. We handed flags and patriotic bracelets to veterans and children along the parade route.

The Behavioral Health Recovery Center held their **Thanksgiving Dinner**, for their patients, thanks to Voluntary Services' efforts to find sponsors to fund the catering cost.

Veterans and Fraternal Organizations participated in an **Adopt a Vet** program during the holiday season, providing food and gift items to veterans and their families.

The American Legion Auxiliary members continued their **ALA Holiday Gift Program** tradition and visited inpatients and outreach program veterans. Each veteran identified a family member to receive an American Express gift card as their holiday gift.

The VAVS Executive Committee's **Annual Holiday Gift Distribution** provided visits, gifts and Canteen Books to the hospitalized veterans.



National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans was a weeklong activity-filled tribute. Many community groups, scouts, students, elected officials and musical entertainers participated in visitations, entertainment and activities during the day, evening and weekend hours.

Cadets from Stratton Air base's Civil Air Patrol and Campbell School of Irish Dance students held a ceremony in our auditorium which received newspaper and television coverage.

Marine Corps League members sponsored a ceremony and breakfast to honor the **Anniversary of the Battle for Iwo-Jima** on February 20th. Veterans present on the island at that historic moment were acknowledged.



The annual **4th of July Picnic** was held in the Wilson Lounge where patients were seated in the outside patio area or inside, whichever they preferred. Volunteers from all of our Veterans Service Organizations and Fraternal Organizations donated, barbequed and served the veterans seated at the picnic tables.

Stratton VAMC partnered with the NY Giants football team, University at Albany and the NY National Guard for our second annual **Welcome Home Veterans Event** on August 7th during Giants Training camp. Veterans were provided premium access to watch practice and ask for autographs. Donated funds provided refreshments, OIF/OEF bumper stickers, bracelets and car magnets.

(h) Annual Programs and Continuing Events: Every event is an opportunity to spread awareness of our quality healthcare services. In addition to the events already mentioned, the following programs and events were planned, conducted and/or supported by Voluntary Service during FY'09:

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| Long-term Care Thanksgiving Dinner | AMVETS "Because We Care" Day |
| Long-term Care Holiday Dinner | Masonic Day |
| Saratoga Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony | Annual Blessing of the Hands |
| Saratoga Cemetery Veterans Day Ceremony | POW/MIA Recognition Day |
| Brotherhood Award/Reception | POW/MIA Remembrance Day |
| Cancer Survivors Day Ceremony | Gold Star Mothers' Day |
| Holiday Party for Employees and Volunteers | |

Voluntary Service staff work closely with the Recreation Therapists and assist whenever needed to insure a proper patient to staff ratio for special events for daytime and evening events.

The Volunteer Manager attended the Pearl Harbor Ceremony at the Zaloga American Legion Post on December 7, the Blue Star Mothers of America Blue Jean Ball on April 4th, and the China Beach annual fundraiser for the Tri-County Council Vietnam Veterans on August 15th.

(i) New and Unique Volunteer Assignments

Homeless Veteran Outreach Worker/Mentor: provides outreach to homeless veterans in the community. Provides mentor services for homeless veterans engaging in the HCHV (Health Care for Homeless Veterans) program. Volunteer provides feedback to the staff concerning activities and interactions with veterans.

Homeless Veteran Outreach Worker/Mentor/Driver: in addition to outreach efforts and mentoring, transports veterans to scheduled appointments and activities using VA van. Volunteer provides feedback to staff.

Painter: assists Paint Shop staff on projects throughout the facility.

Massage Therapist: licensed volunteer provides neck, shoulder and hand massage to veterans on as part of patient care according to patient needs in geriatrics, radiation therapy and surgical unit.

Veteran Volunteer Companionship Program: Volunteer becomes companion to resident in Community Living Center, visiting, reading and taking outside for fresh air. Program allows mutual supporting friendship to grow and develop.

Veterans Voice of Stratton VA Behavioral Health Consumer Advisory Council: Veteran-run peer council providing insight and input about making services more effective and desired by veterans. Provide recommendations into service planning and implementation, consistent with national, VISN and local guidelines. Outreach to community to educate and promote awareness.

Buddy Cart Volunteer: Visits newly admitted patients with cart supplied with toiletry bags, afghans, activity books, decks of cards, welcome card and information brochures.

Mammography Center: clerical support and outreach duties that allow the mammographer to focus on imaging duties.

Welcome Back Troops: give a hero's welcome at the airport to soldiers coming home and giving them VAMC Veterans Service Center and OEF/OIF outreach information

Quick Card Survey Volunteer: unlocks the collection boxes throughout our facility, restocks cards and brings completed customer service surveys to the Performance Management office.

My HealthVet Volunteer: assists veterans in navigating the website program to obtain information and/or post their own progress results.

Ward Toiletry Cart Volunteer: Comfort items stored on each inpatient ward are replenished once a week to maintain an adequate supply.

Bakers: bake tasty treats, providing aroma therapy and deliciously warm desserts. Positions are located in the Fisher House and our Community Living Center.

Palliative Care Visitor: provides comfort and visitation for patients on our Hospice Unit.

Lobby Ambassadors: greet veterans arriving by VA or County vans, obtain wheelchairs for patients as needed and escort them to their clinic appointments.

Dog Pet Therapy Program: Our wonderful four-footed volunteers bring their youthful exuberance and affection to our hospitalized veterans and outpatients.

(j) Assessment of VAVS Committee: Our **VAVS Committee** met four times in fiscal year 2009. The meetings included announcements of certifications and recertifications of organization representatives and deputies, Management Reports by the Director (or her designee) and the Care Line Leaders, updates on committees and medical center programs, announcements and upcoming events. Comprehensive meeting minutes are appreciated by the members as they are able to insert the information into their organization newsletters and read excerpts at their monthly meetings. Our VAVS Committee minutes are posted on our station's intranet shared community library for easy access by VA staff.

The **VAVS Executive Committee** serves to strengthen our Volunteer Program by helping us to achieve goals. The committee oversees a “Volunteer of the Month” recognition initiative. Members review the nominations, select the award recipients, and send notification letters to the nominator and nominee. The write-up is posted on Albany’s section of the Network 2 VAVS Website. A glass case outside the 3rd floor auditorium spotlights our award recipient.

Our Veterans Service Center Manager conducted six **Veterans Service Officer Meetings** during the fiscal year. The agendas included information on veterans’ benefits as well as presentations by our Director, Care Line Managers, CBOC Operations Officer, Voluntary Service, and Network staff.

Our medical center has had a **Veterans Holiday Committee** for many years comprised of members from many of our VAVS veterans’ organizations. This committee continues to use its fundraising efforts to support VA recreation events and activities, inpatient holiday parties, holiday gifts, and sending patients to the National Rehab Games and Creative Arts Festival.

Volunteers actively participated as **Committee Members** of the Management Assistance Council Networks 2 & 3, Capital Region Veterans Stand Down Committee, and the Saratoga VA Cemetery Support Committee.

2. Program Management: Voluntary Service is in the Service Line under the Associate Director. The Service Line’s monthly meetings focus on our team effort to provide material support and guidance to each other as well as to the Clinical Care Lines and to strategize to meet established goals (Network and Medical Center Performance Measures, and local priorities).

(a) Staffing: The Volunteer office is currently staffed by a Volunteer Manager GS-12 and Volunteer Specialist GS-10. We are fortunate to have dedicated volunteers who serve as our office receptionists. They type our donation acknowledgment letters and assist us with our day-to-day duties.

The Volunteer Manager was appointed this year to the Board of Survey for medical center equipment.

(b) Awards & Public Recognition



Marion Shields was one of ten volunteers throughout the Capital Region honored on April 29th with the 2009 County Executive Volunteer Award. Marion bakes treats on the ward for the Hospice and Community Living Center patients. Every Monday (even on holidays), she bakes and delivers warm goodies, spending quality time with each patient and their visiting family members.

Henry Rosenzweig DAV and Antoinette Vellano DAVA received Certificates of Honorable Mention for their nominations to the George H. Seal Memorial Award

Lebra Crupi, United Voluntary Services, received a Certificate of Honorable Mention for nomination to the 2009 Jefferson Award. Previous recipient Cliff Darfler, Nat’l Order of Trenchrats, was appointed to the 2009 Jefferson Award’s nominating committee.

Howard J. Lasker, Masonic Service Association, was awarded “2009 Distinguished Veteran of the Year” by the New York State Military Heritage Institute.

Karen Covey, Volunteer Manager, received a Headlight Recognition Award for assistance with the Champions Challenge Health Promotion.

Stephanie Bonenfant, Volunteer Specialist, received a Spotlight Recognition Award for her immediate assistance in assigning volunteers to escort patients to the CAT scan located in a mobile trailer for a 6 week period.

(c) Training and Orientation: Volunteer applicants are interviewed and complete their initial orientation process on a one-to-one basis. Orientation includes training with written policies on HIPAA, Safety, Cyber Security, Fire Procedures, Emergency Preparedness, Hazardous Materials, Sexual Harassment, Diversity in the Workplace, Infection Control, TB Tests, Patient Rights and Patient Abuse. Volunteers applying for sensitive positions are fingerprinted by our Human Resources department. Each person is given a Volunteer Handbook, PPD verification sheet, and a copy of our most recent VISN 2 Volunteer Newsletter.

Medical center staff and volunteers receive their mandatory **annual safety training** each October by attending the exhibits in our auditorium that review policies and procedures promoting a safe environment. The exhibits use storyboards, videos and handouts to educate staff and volunteers while they complete a quiz sheet. Volunteer attendance sheets are sent to Voluntary Service for our education files. Volunteers who miss the training opportunity are provided a booklet and quiz to complete for training credit. **Computer Security Training** is completed by all staff and volunteers with computer access.

Voluntary Service uses a variety of initiatives to **educate our staff** about the entire scope of the VAVS program:

- Articles are placed in the Notable News (daily computer announcements) to call attention to special events, new initiatives, and honor our Volunteer of the Month.
- The Volunteer Manager provides training on General Post Funds to all new account managers and purchase card holders.
- A copy of the Volunteer Supervisor’s Handbook is provided to every staff member that supervises a volunteer.

(d) The Patient Transportation Office is staffed solely by volunteers. The Volunteer Specialist supervises and trains the volunteers in this program. During this fiscal year, the office was staffed by an average of 6 volunteers per weekday. They transported 4,906 hospitalized veterans and outpatients (ambulatory and in wheelchairs) to scheduled appointments within the facility. In addition to patient trips, volunteers perform the following customer service tasks:

- Return empty stretchers to the Operating Room after patient is returned to the ward.
- Wheelchair roundup to retrieve our Lobby wheelchairs
- Complete large and small mail-out projects
- Serve as alternates for our Welcome Buddy volunteers
- Deliver flower arrangements received for inpatients
- Deliver requested items to the nursing stations

(e) Volunteer Transportation Program: Our Volunteer Drivers are given a Network 2 DAV Driver Handbook during their orientation to assist them in carrying out their assigned duties. The handbook contains DAV Transportation Network van rules, our Network Memorandum “Network 2 Volunteer Drivers and Vehicle Usage”, transportation driver position description, forms and instructions. We are committed to following VISN 2 standardized regulations regarding the vans being used strictly for patient transportation to a medical appointment.

Charles Drew has served as our Hospital Service Coordinator in a **volunteer** capacity since February 2, 2004. He has a good working relationship with the medical center transportation coordinator and they help each other when trips are going to the same destination to save time, manpower and fuel.

We presently have 15 vans in operation in our Volunteer Transportation Program. Vans are placed in secure locations in Fulton County, Hudson, Malone, Plattsburgh, Schenectady, Schroon Lake and Sidney. A new 12-passenger van was received in August 2009 for Sidney.



TRANSPORTATION TRENDS

	FY'07	FY'08	FY'09	FY'08 – FY'09
Miles Traveled	272,196	186,051	198,410	+12,359 (+7%)
Veterans Served	16,463	15,408	16,439	+1,085 (+7%)

(f) Community Relations and Activities

VA Voluntary Service Network Newsletter: Volunteer Managers in VISN 2 in collaboration with the Network Communications Office publish a quarterly newsletter that is mailed to our volunteers, community partners, elected officials, and area schools/colleges. Each edition contains a Message from the Network Director, features that interest all our volunteers and a page for each station’s articles, photos, volunteer opportunities, donation wish lists and calendar of events. A survey is conducted each year to obtain input from our readers. Comments and suggestions are shared during newsletter conference calls.

Stratton Times: The Volunteer Manager is a contributing member of the Editorial Board for the bi-monthly employee newsletter.

VISN 2 Voluntary Service Website: our website promotes volunteerism and includes our Annual Narrative Report, volunteer opportunities and donation needs lists.

VISN 2 Community Calendar: Information on Albany VAMC’s upcoming special events and programs are posted on our Network web page by the Volunteer Manager to promote awareness and attendance.

Speaking Engagements: The Volunteer Manager attends events in the community throughout the year representing our Service and our medical center. She was a speaker at the following community events:

American Legion Auxiliary's State Convention
Glendaal Elementary School's Veterans Day Ceremony
Saratoga VA National Cemetery's 10th Anniversary Ceremony
Albany Masonic Temple's Tribute Ceremony to Howard J. Lasker
Realtor Day for the Greater Capital Assoc. of Realtors Inc.
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8692 Loyalty Day Ceremony – April 2009
Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8692 Ladies Auxiliary Meetings (monthly)

Visiting Officials: Voluntary Service welcomed individuals and groups from elected officials' offices and veterans' organizations, providing meeting opportunities and tours of areas of interest. Visitors during this fiscal year included:

Congressman Paul Tonko
Tina Panetta Zaza, Constituent Representative to Congressman Tonko
Dominica Millington, representing Congressman Tonko
Senator Neil Breslin
Assemblyman John McEneny
Assemblyman Robert Reilly
Assemblyman Jim Tedisco
Michael Miller, Regional Coordinator, NYS Assembly Office of Assemblyman Tedisco
Mark Jordan, Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Gordon
Patty Pirog and Linda Underwood, representing Assemblyman Gordon
Arthur Boreali, representing Assemblyman Peter Lopez
Albany County Executive Michael Breslin
Rensselaer County Executive Kathy Jimino
Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings
Troy Mayor Harry Tutunjian
Col. James McDonough, Director, NYS Division of Veterans Affairs
William Kraus, Exec. Deputy Director, NYS Division of Veterans Affairs
New York Naval Militia personnel
Active Duty Navy Sea Cadets
Jerry Layne, Major League Umpire
Cindy Campbell, VFW Auxiliary State President
Leanne Lemley, National Conductress VFW Auxiliary
Bob Finnerty, DAV State Commander
Sidney Silver, DAV State Adjutant
Terry Schuyler, DAV Aux. State Commander
Marie Sternecker, DAV Aux. Senior Vice Commander
Thomas Paglia, Chairman, Masonic Veterans Service Committee/Outreach Program
Order of Eastern Star Greene-Ulster District Officers
Lt. Col. Andrew Morgado, Professor Military Science Siena College



Dr. Cipolaro, VA Dentist examines veteran at the Stand Down

Stand Down: The Volunteer Manager served on the planning committee and as coordinator for 241 community volunteers at the October 2008 Capital Region Veterans Stand Down at the Colonie Elks Lodge. She recruited and assigned community volunteers who served as van drivers, squad leaders, registration workers, and dining area helpers. This annual event is a joint community effort between our VAMC, NYS Division of Veterans Affairs, New York Guard, Navy Reserves, Elks, Eastern New York Homeless Veterans Coalition, Department of Labor, the Salvation Army, Albany Medical Center Hospital, Seton Health, county social services departments, and veterans' service agencies.

(g) Report of Program Goals

(1) FY'09 Goals Achieved

Volunteer Recruitment:

- Recruited and placed 19% more volunteers in FY 09 than FY 08
- Increased visitation and tours to active duty personnel and community groups
- Increased the number of volunteers in our pet therapy program
- Increased the number of direct patient care volunteer assignments (i.e. massage therapy, Veteran Volunteer Companionship Program)
- Created new veteran outreach positions (Homeless Veteran Outreach Worker/Mentor/Driver and Veterans Behavioral Health Consumer Advisory Council)
- Increased virtual volunteer assignments (dispatcher for outplaced transportation vans)
- Increased volunteer opportunities for evening and weekend recreation therapy

Improve Access to Care:

- Maintained number of volunteer drivers to complete the weekday schedule for our parking lot shuttle
- New shuttle van and Volunteer Transportation Program van donated to our VAMC
- Volunteers made clinic appointment reminder calls to veterans to reduce no-show rates and cancellations after appointment times.
- Increased number of Patient Transport Volunteers (Escort) in afternoon hours.
- Maintained an adequate supply of wheelchairs for outpatients' use by obtaining donated funds to purchase as needed. Ten wheelchairs were donated this year by the VFW Auxiliary.
- Provided bus tokens to patients referred to our office by social workers who had no transportation home

Improve Customer Service:

- Replenished stock of toiletries on inpatient wards each Thursday so that personal comfort items are always available for patient care
- Established new community partnerships to support our clothing/toiletry program
- Increased the number of Greeter Desk and Lobby Ambassador Volunteers to provide directions and assistance to patients and visitors. Increased evening and weekend coverage.
- Provided an assortment of magnifying eyeglasses for veterans who are not eligible for eyeglasses from the VA
- Provided canteen books to veterans referred to our office for meals or haircuts.
- Welcome Buddy Cart volunteers welcomed all new admissions and give them personal comfort items to make their stay more comfortable

Improve Healthcare Value:

- Supported OEF/OIF's Welcome Home Celebration
- Volunteers support the My Health@Vet program
- Purchased equipment for the MOVE! Program
- Purchased equipment for rehab medicine departments

Enhance, Preserve and Restore Patient Function:

- Provided funds to support the Network Behavioral Health Care Line Veteran Recovery Day in Syracuse
- Provided funds to expand number of equine therapy treatment sessions
- Purchased Project Lifesaver equipment for our VA police to track and locate missing patients
- Veterans History Project volunteers collected memories and documents of veterans (including employees) preserving their experiences for future generations.
- Through donated funds, purchased equipment for physical therapy, occupational therapy and Kinesiotherapy.
- Met fundraising goals to transport veterans and recreation therapists to all the national rehab games this year.
 - Met every request for coats, clothing, footwear, bus token and toiletry needs for indigent veterans and emergent patient needs.

(2) FY'10 Goals

Volunteer Recruitment:

- Increase nontraditional support
- Increase off-tour hour volunteer assignments
- Keep volunteer turnover low
- Convert occasional volunteers to regularly scheduled
- Monitor vacated volunteer positions to recruit replacements

Improve Access to Care:

- Continue to recruit for volunteer opportunities at staff model CBOC's and other off-station sites.
- Increase volunteers to support Advance Clinic Access telephone reminders
- Maintain adequate numbers of drivers for our Volunteer Transportation Program and Shuttle Program.

Improve Customer Service:

- Continue to offer assistance to ambulatory surgery unit and inpatient wards by providing escorts for all discharges to the entranceway and bringing the wheelchair back again.
- Provide on-going staff training to provide guidance on volunteer supervision, increase volunteer opportunities, and increase knowledge of our VAVS program.
- Continue recruitment efforts to maintain Greeter Desk volunteer coverage for evening and weekend hours.
- Create new beneficial partnerships within the community to maintain clothing and toiletry program supplies

Improve Healthcare Value:

- Increase participation by faith-based and community organizations.
- Support Welcome Home Celebrations and OIF/OEF outreach
- Continue to enlist donation support to purchase rehabilitative equipment as requested by the physical therapy and occupational therapy units

Enhance, Preserve and Restore Patient Function:

- Promote participation of veterans in the Veterans History Project
- Obtain sufficient donations to the adaptive sports program and transport Albany veterans to the Winter Sports Clinic, Golden Age Games, Summer Sports Clinic, Wheelchair Games and Creative Arts Festival.

(h) Professional Development:

Public Relations: The Volunteer Manager provided public relations coverage in the absence of the medical center's Director of Public Relations and Marketing.

Professional Affiliations: The Volunteer Manager is a member of the Volunteer Administrators Association of the Capital Region (VAACR). During this fiscal year, the Volunteer Manager served on the VAACR Executive Board as Secretary.

The Volunteer Manager is a member of VFW 8692 Ladies Auxiliary, Tri-County Council Vietnam Veterans and Polish American Citizens Center.

Training: The Volunteer Manager and Volunteer Specialist completed all mandatory education training required of Stratton VAMC employees.

KAREN B. COVEY
Volunteer Manager

STEPHANIE BONENFANT
Volunteer Specialist