



**Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation  
Commission**

**2018-2019**

Harl "Butch" Ray  
Chairman

## Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

**Mission Statement:** As proud possessors of a priceless heritage our mission to our veterans is clear. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission (V.A. & R) starts, sponsors and participates in programs and services that enhance the lives of our veterans and their families. Through our efforts we must work to help those who need assistance to restore them to a normal functioning life. Be it physically, mentally, socially, or vocationally.

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### **Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission 2018-2019**

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# **Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program Outline**

## **I. Volunteer Services**

## **II. Support Military Troops**

- A. USO
- B. Squadron/Individual Support (Phone cards, Care Packages)
- C. POW/MIA Issues
- D. AL Operation Comfort Warrior
- E. My Healthy Vet

## **III. Collaborative Program Efforts**

- A. National Veterans Assistance Day
- B. Fisher House
- C. Veterans Suicide Prevention
- D. Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV)
- E. Honor and Remember
- F. Homeless Veterans

## **IV. Supporting American Legion and Auxiliary Programs**

- A. Heroes to Hometown
- B. Homeless Veterans Initiatives
- C. Creative Arts Festival
- D. Missing in America Project
- E. Honor Flight
- F. State Veterans Homes

## **V. National Awards**

- A. VAVS Member of the Year
- B. Best overall participation in the VA&R program based on the annual report form.
  - 1. Detachment
  - 2. District
  - 3. Squadron

## **VI. VA&R Resources**

## **VII. VAVS Application Form**

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## **Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

### **I. Volunteer Services**

#### **VA Medical Center (VAMC) & Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's)**

Volunteer service provided for a veteran within a VAMC or outpatient clinic. The VAVS representative fills a vital role at VA facilities across the country; enabling facility and program administrators to stretch their resources with our guaranteed aid and assistance so they can concentrate on the delivery of core services. Sons can volunteer at CBOC's but cannot be a representative or deputy rep. The CBOC's are tied to a specific VAMC, so the Rep at the VAMC would be the rep for all of the CBOC's within that VAMC. But you can be a volunteer and your hours would be credited just like working at the VAMC. When volunteering at VAMC's; CBOC's, OPC's remember to use 'the Son' code: SOAL303.

**Goal:** Have a VAVS representative in every V.A.M.C. by promoting aggressive recruitment throughout all Detachments; and to ensure that our existing Reps & Deps are certified and if not, get them re-certified.

**Tactics:**

1. Encourage Detachment VA&R chairmen and Detachment Commanders to develop strong working relationships with the VAMC Director in each medical center.
2. Promote participation of the assigned VAVS Representative in the VAVS system.
3. Promote special emphasis on methods of recruiting, retaining, motivating and recognizing volunteers.
4. Promote Veteran-related activities that fulfill volunteer service requirements for high school students by offering them volunteer opportunities through the Sons of The American Legion. Assist VAVS Representatives and Deputies to work with VAVS Chief in creating a Youth Service Project for student volunteers.

**Best Practices:** Set up Volunteer Recruitment tables at all activities and meetings participated in by the Sons of the American Legion.

Offer volunteer opportunities on Detachment and Squadron Websites, newsletters and other types of communication.

Encourage participation in ward parties and special holiday activities.

**Notes:** Representatives and deputies when you receive your confirmation letter from the American Legion, you **must contact** that medical center to schedule your training, background check, etc. or the V.A. **Will not** recognize you as a rep or dep. After you receive your training and are accepted by the V.A. It is your job to keep track of your volunteers, to schedule your annual joint review (AJR) with the V.A. And it is mandatory that you or the dep attend the quarterly meetings.

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## II. Support Military Troops

### A. USO

#### **Tactics:**

1. Encourage promotion and donations to the USO.
2. Create partnerships with USO affiliates and assist with volunteer assistance and program initiatives.

**Best Practice:** Promote the USO facility in the local area and assist with donations and volunteerism needed at the facility. Involve local businesses and individuals in partnerships that can foster a long relationship of donations and volunteers for the program.

### B. Squadron/Individual Support (phone cards, care packages...)

**Goal:** Provide squadrons and individuals information and activities to support active duty military.

#### **Tactic:**

Create partnerships between The American Legion Family to promote special events to support active duty troops.

**Best Practice:** Providing support to military personnel is a clear part of the mission of The American Legion Family. Sending phone cards to pastoral care at Landstuhl or care packages containing much needed items are always appreciated. Put official send off dates and Welcome Home dates in newsletters, websites and encourage everyone in your Legion Family to attend.

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## C. POW/MIA Issues

**Goal:** Support the initiatives of the National League of Families as they continue to speak out and exert maximum pressure on foreign governments to make a full accounting of America's POW/MIA's.

**Tactics:**

1. Promote observances of POW/MIA Day September 15, 2011 in local communities.
2. Draw attention to the draped chair at every Squadron, county, district and Detachment meeting.

**Best Practices:** Support programs designed to bring the POW/MIA issue to the attention of all citizens as to not let anyone forget the sacrifice they made for our country. Engage the local community to fully recognize POW/MIA Day with media coverage. Involve the entire American Legion Family to host an event on POW/MIA Day such as a breakfast with guest speakers and show the POW/MIA table ceremony.

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## D. Operation Comfort Warriors

**Goal:** Support the initiatives of The American Legion Program Operation Comfort Warriors to assist in the recovery of our nation's wounded heroes.

As U.S. military personnel are coming home where they join other recent veterans who have served, many of these servicemembers have left the battlefield only to be faced with a new fight: a struggle to overcome the mental and physical wounds suffered during deployment. Those with traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are returning home in unprecedented numbers.

Even as the wars conclude, those in the military still face inherent dangers while fighting the global war on terrorism, during training exercises and while performing other dangerous duties.

While the care at many military hospitals and warrior transition units is extraordinary, The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program was created to provide "nonessentials" - items that help wounded warriors' recovery but don't usually show up as a budget line on government spreadsheets.

## **Tactics:**

The Legion contacts officials at military hospitals, warrior transition units and surrounding communities, and obtains lists to determine which items are needed by wounded, injured or ill servicemembers. Once a need is identified, the items are ordered by the Legion and delivered in an expeditious manner. It's as simple as that. No red tape.

## **Best Practices:**

Today, wounded warriors need a variety of items to help in their recovery. Some patients might need loose-fitting sweat suits to cover their healing wounds without adding pressure to burns. Others might need an iPod to help drown out the tinnitus that has plagued their ears since their vehicle struck an IED. Still others might need fitness equipment to rebuild strength in their muscles.

From gift cards to patients at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, to electronics for Marines at Camp Pendleton, OCW represents the Legion's expression of gratitude. These gifts will not make our wounded warriors whole again, but they do express the Legion's gratitude.

The program relies on funds, which are used to purchase items for the servicemembers.

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## **E. My Healthy Vet**

My Healthy Vet is VA's award-winning e-health website, which offers Veterans, active duty soldiers, their dependents and caregivers anywhere, anytime Internet access to VA health care information and services. Launched nationwide in 2003, My Healthy Vet is a free, online Personal Health Record that empowers Veterans to become informed partners in their health care. With My Healthy Vet, America's Veterans can access trusted, secure, and current health and benefits information as well as record and store important health and military history information at their convenience. Registering and using My Healthy Vet is easy and it's free!

With My Healthy Vet, one can access:

- Nine (9) Healthy Living Centers
- Disease + Conditions Centers
- Mental Health Information
- Trusted Health/Medical Information

- Info on VA Benefits & Services
  - Local VA Events & Activities
  - Personal Health Journals
  - Vitals Tracking & Graphing
  - Military Health History
  - Activity/Food Journals
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### **III. Collaborative Program Efforts**

#### **A. National Veterans Assistance Day**

**Goal:** Show respect for this grateful Nation's veterans and the role they have had in securing the freedoms we enjoy.

**Tactics:**

1. Promote May 19, 2012 (the third Saturday in May) as National Veterans Assistance Day in local communities at city hall, county court houses, State Capitols, schools and veterans facilities.
2. Encourage participation within your Post, Unit and Squadron with special events designed to honor these brave men and women.
3. Obtain the National Veterans Assistance Day poster from National and hang in Post home, nursing homes, other veterans halls. Publicize your events in the media, websites and newsletters.

**Best Practices:**

Seek out individuals needing help getting to appointments, getting groceries, yard work, simple home or car repairs, take them prepared meals, honor them on this special day in some small way. Involve the squadron in repairs or clean up around the Post or hold a special dinner or breakfast for these veterans. Visit VA nursing homes and local nursing homes and sit and talk with them. Publish thank you letters for service in the newspapers, websites and newsletters.

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## **B. Fisher House**

**Goal:** Provide volunteer resources and increase annual monetary donations.

**Tactics:**

1. Continue to financially support the Fisher House program through Detachment and Squadron donations.
2. Encourage Squadron members to volunteer at facilities in their areas.
3. Set up information display at Detachment, District and Squadron meetings to increase awareness of the mission and needs of Fisher House.

**Best Practices:**

Utilize the CD from Fisher House and the SONS Poster from the National web site to set up informational displays to increase awareness of the mission and needs of the Fisher House. In addition to money, squadrons can provide support to the families by furnishing gas cards, or gift cards to enable them to have some sense of individuality while living at the facility. Volunteer to baby sit, run errands, or work around the grounds putting up and taking down seasonal displays.

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## **C. Veteran's Suicide Prevention/ Crisis Hotline**

**Goal:** Spread information about veterans at risk for suicide and what action squadron members can take to help stop this tragedy.

**Tactics:**

1. Inform and promote awareness of the signs of veterans at high risk for suicide.
2. Every VA Medical center has a suicide prevention phone line and squadron members should be encouraged to help answer phones and refer to the correct Counselor.

**Best Practice:**

Inform the local American Legion Family about the warning signs of a veteran at high risk for suicide and share the information with the community, friends and families of veterans. VA medical centers are required to have suicide hot

lines and they need volunteers to help answer the phones, not as counselors but to help direct calls where they need to go.

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## **D. Help Hospitalized Veterans (HHV)**

### **Mission:**

Help Hospitalized Veterans is a national, non-profit organization established for the purpose of distributing therapeutic arts & crafts kits, free of charge, to patients receiving care at Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, state nursing homes for veterans and military hospitals. HHV also encourages volunteerism and pen-pal relationships with hospitalized veterans.

### **What we can do:**

For so many reasons it is important to help our veterans and active military personnel when they need us most. HHV cannot accomplish its mission without the help of generous, caring individuals like you. Every day HHV makes a difference in the lives of men and women who have served their country so valiantly.

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## **IV. Support American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary Programs**

### **A. Heroes to Hometown**

**Goal:** Help disabled veterans coming home from VA medical centers integrate back into their communities and still receive the care they need to recover.

### **Tactics:**

1. Increase awareness of this program and mission.
2. Encourage members of the American Legion Family to become “Buddies”

### **Best Practices**

Hand out brochures to American Legion Family members and study the program and ways that you can help. Develop a plan so that when called upon you can smoothly swing into action on behalf of the veteran.

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## **B. Homeless Veteran Initiatives**

It has been determined that veterans become homeless and are at risk for homelessness for the same reasons as non-veterans, including due to the rising foreclosure and unemployment rates, as well as due to veteran specific issues.

The foreclosure rates in military communities increases at four times the national average. Mental health issues (e.g., PTSD, mood disorders and substance abuse) have been deemed among the primary risks for homelessness among veterans. Other issues have been determined to be: severe shortage of affordable housing, livable income and access to health care; drug and alcohol abuse problems; lack of adequate family and social support; high unemployment rate especially among those who joined post 9/11.

The effects of combat exposure do not disappear as the years go by. Recent studies reveal that 10% of Vietnam Veterans still suffer severe PTSD symptoms and that their combat exposure continues to place them at risk for negative social and psychological consequences.

### **Goal:**

Work collaboratively with the VA Homeless Veterans Program, The American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and the National Coalition of Homeless Veterans to encourage active participation in homeless veterans initiatives.

### **Tactics:**

1. Work with the VA Homeless Veterans Program (HVP) Office to disseminate information related to Project CHALENG (Homeless Veterans Outreach).
2. Seek out and support Homeless Veterans Shelters.

### **Best Practices:**

Adopt a Homeless Veteran's Shelter in your community or send support to one in your Detachment. Support them with toiletry items, clothing, books and cleaning supplies.

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## **C. Creative Arts Festival**

**Goal:**

Promotes the annual competition that recognizes the progress and recovery made through recreation therapy, and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of our nation's veterans after disability or life crisis.

**Tactics:**

1. Encourage VAVS Representatives to publicize and promote getting volunteers for local events in their respective centers.
2. Publicize the time and place on the National Web page with a link to the Creative Arts Festival.
3. Increase Detachment contributions.

**Best Practices:**

Encourage Detachments to provide information to Squadrons requesting them to seek out information about local events and encourage them to sponsor participants on the local level.

Encourage Detachments to offer award incentives to Squadrons who contribute to The Creative Arts Festival.

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**D. Missing in America Project**

**Goal:** to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed remains of American veterans.

**Tactics:**

1. Have squadron Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Chairmen visit their local funeral homes for any unidentified remains.
2. Have local Squadrons help with the inter costs.
3. Provide links to Missing in America Project on Detachment Web pages.

**Best Practices:**

Encourage Detachments to provide information in newsletters, websites, or in committee meetings on Missing in America Project. Encourage members to visit their local funeral homes for remains and help to inter them with full military honors.

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## **E. Honor Flight**

### **Goal:**

Helping every single veteran in America, willing and able of getting on a plane or a bus, visit THEIR memorials.

### **Priority:**

Top priority is given to America's most senior heroes — survivors of World War II and any veteran with a terminal illness who wishes to visit THEIR memorials. The program will naturally transition to Korean War, Vietnam War and all other veterans who served, on a chronological basis.

### **Philosophy:**

Since America felt it was important to build a memorial to the service and the ultimate sacrifice of her veterans, the Honor Flight Network believes it's equally important that they actually get to visit and experience THEIR memorials.

**Veterans are taken on a first come first served basis unless a veteran from any era is terminally ill and they are put to the top of the list.**

-The normal ratio is 8 veterans to 3 guardians

-The cost is free to the veteran unless they want to buy souvenirs, from Illinois it costs about \$500 to send a veteran on an Honor Flight.

-Honor Flight Receives no government help all donations are from citizens, fraternal groups and corporations.

-South West Airlines has become the official commercial airline for Honor Flight

-Honor Flight Is in 30 states with 71 hubs

With a waiting list of over 8000 veterans; unless a spouse is also a veteran they cannot go on the flight.

## **F. State Veterans Homes**

A State Veterans Home is a home approved by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, which was established by a State for veterans disabled by age, disease, or otherwise who by reason of such disability are incapable of earning a living. There are now 147 homes nationwide in 50 states plus Puerto Rico. This gives more opportunities for volunteering. Volunteers receive the same recognition and credit for hours as VAVS volunteers. The need for volunteers at state run veterans homes are the same as the needs that volunteers fill at our Veteran Administration Medical Centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

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## **V. VA&R Awards and Scholarships**

### **A. Charles B Rigsby Volunteer of the Year Award**

A plaque and SAL cap will be presented to the Volunteer of the Year at the National Convention, this award, will be based on the Rehabilitation Commission's judging reports submitted to the National Rehabilitation Commission prior to the National Convention.

The Rigsby application is on the National Web page in a down loadable form and should be reproduced by Detachment for their squadrons.

Rehabilitation and assistance to veterans should be reported on an outstanding individual, if applicable, from any Squadron.

Squadrons should submit their nominees to be judged at Detachment Conventions.

Detachments will select one application from their respective State during their Detachment Convention and send it to the National Adjutant, Sons of The American Legion, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

The National Winner will be chosen at the National Convention.

This is a yearly award and is based on the applicants work during the current membership year. It is not a lifetime achievement award.

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**B. Kirby Kepler Memorial Award**

Presented for the best Squadron Rehabilitation report as reported on the annual Squadron Consolidated Report Form; a laminated plaque of the award is presented to the winning Squadron, and may be retained permanently by the Squadron.

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**C. Allen I. O'Brian Memorial Award**

Presented for the best District Rehabilitation report as reported on the annual Squadron Consolidated Report Form; a laminated plaque of the award is presented to the winning District and may be retained permanently by the District.

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**D. Earl Webster Memorial Award**

Presented for the best Detachment Rehabilitation report as reported on the annual Squadron Consolidated Report Form; a laminated plaque of the award is presented to the winning Detachment and may be retained permanently by the Detachment.

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**E. James H. Parke Memorial Fund Scholarship**

The Sons will contribute \$1,000 annually to the James H Parke Memorial Fund Scholarship from the National SAL VA&R Commission. For more information on this scholarship and eligibility criteria contact the VA Medical Center in your region.

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**VI. Resources**

Many forms and publications can be found on the National web-sites of The American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. Please visit these sites for additional information on all topics related to Veteran Affairs and Rehabilitation.

A quick search via any internet browser can also lead you to information and

resources on these and many other programs that assist in helping our nation's heroes!



**VAVS Hospital/Medical Center Representative  
Certification Form**

# Sons of The American Legion

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Detachment of: \_\_\_\_\_

**Director**  
**National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission**  
**1608 "K" Street, N.W.**  
**Washington, D.C. 20006**

The following SAL member has been recommended to be the VAVS Representative or Deputy Representative at the following VA Hospital/Medical Center:

**NAME & ADDRESS OF FACILITY** \_\_\_\_\_

## A. REPRESENTATIVE

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron # \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

## B. DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron # \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information---Optional \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Expiration of term of this appointment will be two years from date of application. Re appointments should accomplished during Detachment Conventions.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Adjutant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Detachment Commander

## INSTRUCTIONS

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this form is to certify VAVS hospital representatives in each VA facility.

The SAL member nominated should be familiar with the VAVS program and have the intent of serving in this vital position for at least two (2) years. A Deputy representative can be appointed to assist the SAL VAVS representative.

**PROCEDURES:**

1. The SAL VAVS nominee must be at least 21 years of age as of the date of application. This does not effect the age of volunteers in hospitals as they are governed by the Director of the VAVS program at the VA medical facility.
2. The term of this appointment cannot exceed 2 years from the date of the application. Appointments should be made during the SAL Detachment Conventions and nomination forms submitted to the Department Headquarters. Upon the Department Adjutant's approval, the nomination form should be forwarded to the Director, VA&R, Washington for final approval.
3. Upon notification of approval from the Director, VA&R, Washington, the nominee will contact the Director of Voluntary Services at the hospital for guidance, policy and general instructions as to his duties and responsibilities associated with the VAVS program and his appointment. The SAL VAVS representative will ensure that all SAL volunteer hours are credited to the SAL account # SOAL 303.
4. A Deputy VAVS representative is optional, but, if nominated will assist the SAL VAVS Representative in his duties as described by the Director of the VAVS program at the medical facility.

**FORM:**

1. Complete all items applicable. The section "Additional Information" should be completed on nominees as to past experience or qualifications if any.
2. The form must be signed by both the Detachment Commander and by the Department Adjutant and submitted to the Director VA&R, 1608 "K" St., Washington, D.C. 20006 for final approval.
3. A copy of this form should be kept by the Detachment and the Department for record purposes. Detachments are responsible for maintaining records of their hospital representative and the expiration dates.]



# Charles B. Rigsby Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Volunteer of the Year Award

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## Section I General Data

Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_  
(name, address, city, state, zip code) (date)

Squadron #: \_\_\_\_\_  
(name, address, city, state, zip code of Squadron)

SAL Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Detachment of \_\_\_\_\_

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## Section II Total VAVS Hours and Visits

Number of Hours Volunteered: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Visits: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Section III Remarks

Volunteer Activities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Location of Volunteer Performance (VA Homes and Hospitals): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

General Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Section IV Certification

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Attested by: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# WHAT TO DO WHEN FILLING OUT THIS FORM

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## Section I General Data

**General:** Squadrons should submit their nominee, if available, to the Detachment Adjutant. During the Detachment Convention, the appropriate Detachment officials should select one nominee, from all requests, as the nominee from the Detachment and send it to National Headquarters no later than thirty (30) days prior to the National Convention. Only one nominee per Detachment can be submitted to National Headquarters.

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## Section II Total VAVS Hours and Visits

**Period:** The period of this volunteer award should be from Detachment Convention to Detachment Convention. Overlapping periods should not be counted.

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## Section III Remarks

**Activities:** This section should be completed in detail as to the types of volunteer activities (what the nominee actually did) that were performed. If additional space is required, please use additional paper stapled to the original form.

**Location:** This section should list the locations (names of hospitals and homes) and location of where the nominee's volunteer work was actually performed.

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## Section IV Certification

**Certification:** The report can be submitted by any SAL or Legion Family member (must not be related) who belongs to the same Squadron or Post. The report should be attested to by the Squadron or Post Commander.

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## MAIL TO :

SAL National Liaison  
American Legion National Headquarters  
P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, IN 46206