

# Program Engagement Plan

## VA & R

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**Purpose:** The purpose of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee is to promote programs and services that assist and enhance the lives of veterans and their families, ensuring restoration and/or transition to normally functioning lives.

### Key Program Statements and Department VA & R Chairman Notes:

- Promote the VA & R program.
  - Visit different district meetings across the Department.
  - Engage the Legion Family at Mid-Winter and Convention on the importance of the program.
    - Have a thirty-minute meeting during Mid-Winter with VA Deputies prior to the meeting on Saturday.
  - Share available resources with the Legion Family.
- Support the therapeutic rehabilitation and healing of veterans through arts, crafts, and hobbies.
  - Facilitate and host a local Veterans Creative Arts Festival at a local VA center between the dates of January 1, 2025 – March 10, 2025.
  - Contact a local VA staff member that instructs creative arts and recreational therapy (such as creative arts therapists, recreational and occupational therapists, craft care specialists and other healthcare professionals who use the arts in treatment) to see what I can assist with.
- Support veteran caregivers, family members, and survivors.
- Volunteer at local VA facilities, including state VA facilities.
  - Encourage and educate the Auxiliary members to volunteer with the CDCE.
  - Encourage the Auxiliary to participate with VA2K. VA2K is held in the month of May at all VA medical locations. Employees, veterans and community

partners gather to donate to the Hud-Vash/Homeless program as well as a short fitness walk.

- Look for opportunities to support veterans, their caregivers, their families, and their survivors.
- Provide support for VA facilities.
  - Make sure each VA facility has a deputy. If a VA facility does not have one, I will contact the correct district to get representation.
  - A new VA facility will open September 19, 2024 located in Enterprise, AL, I will reach out and provide support.
  - Establish a working relationship with VA Medical Clinic in Biloxi, MS.
- Work closely with VA Deputies and volunteers.
  - Provide them with resources and tools they can use in the field.

## Upcoming Events for VA & R

### Unit 199

American Legion Eastern Shore Unit 199 will host a **Veterans Suicide Prevention Resource Fair** with help of the VA. The Post is located at 700 S. Mobile Street, Fairhope, Alabama 36532. Event date is *Saturday, October 26, 2024, from 10:00am to 3:00 pm.* This is a free event for veterans, military, family members, and the public. Everyone is welcome to attend, not just members of the American Legion.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Veteran's Suicide Prevention Resource Fair is to educate veterans and the public on the significance of veteran suicide prevention. Educate veterans and the public about the impact of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the leading cause of veteran suicide and it being a mental health problem that some veterans develop during their time in service. Provide veterans with available resources and services from the VA.

Types of vendors/services/resources attending the fair.

- Mental Health Services
- Community Resources
- Veteran's Federal and State Benefits
- Local businesses that support veterans
- Veteran owned businesses
- In-Home Care and Assistance
- Legal

- Insurance/Medicare
- Medical Care
- Career Placement Services

### **District 33**

District 33, Sharon Bunton – District President, hosts a hot dog lunch on the 1st Tuesday of each month at the Mobile VA clinic. The district provides all beef hot dogs, chips, beverages and a sweet treat. Engaging with military, veterans, family members and care givers. 150 hot dog lunches are served monthly. The district president collects monetary contributions and meal items from other units in the district.

District 33 provides continuing support and resources for Eagles Landing. Non-perishable food, furniture and clothing items. Eagle's Landing is a 38-unit transitional housing community located in Mobile, Alabama. The program provides temporary housing with wrap-around supportive services which are designed to meet the unique needs of homeless veterans.

### **Unit 153**

Unit 153 hosts Coffee and Doughnuts on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month at the Mobile Clinic from 8 – 10 am. Engages with over 150 veterans, military, family members and caregivers. This is a new program that started in June.

### **Unit 99**

Unit 99 hosts Bingo for Veterans and their caregivers every Wednesday and the first Sunday of the month. William F. Green partners with Unit 99. William F. Green provides the transportation for their residents and caregivers. Lunch and prizes are provided.

### **Available Resources**

- **Wreaths Across America**
  - [WreathsAcrossAmerica.org](http://WreathsAcrossAmerica.org)
  - National Wreaths Across America Day is an event held in more than 3,000 local communities each December. It is a day where volunteers of all ages, demographics and backgrounds gather to place live balsam veterans' wreaths on the headstones of our nation's heroes, joining together to say

each of their names out loud one more time and in doing so, keeping their memories alive.

- Although best known for this annual nationwide event, Wreaths Across America's mission to Remember the Fallen, Honor those that serve and their families, and teach the next generation the value of freedom is yearlong and carried out by individuals finding a way to serve in their communities. Wreaths Across America offers many programs and opportunities to share the stories of veterans, their families and those who serve our country.
- National Wreaths Across America Day will be held on Saturday, December 14, 2024. Join the more than two million volunteers and supporters who will gather to Remember, Honor and Teach at more than 4,225 participating locations in all 50 states, at sea and abroad.

- **Honor Flight Inc.**

- HonorFlight.org
- Honor Flight Network is a national nonprofit organization comprised of independent hubs working together to achieve the Honor Flight mission. In furtherance of this common goal, we have the enormous privilege of showing our nation's veterans the appreciation and honor they deserve. Participation in an Honor Flight trip gives veterans the opportunity to share this momentous occasion with other comrades, remember the fallen, and share their stories and experiences with other veterans. Honored veterans always travel free of charge, thanks to generous donations to our organization. While initially focused on America's World War II veterans, Honor Flight Network has expanded its mission to include those who served during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. The Honor Flight TLC program also honors veterans of any service era who are critically ill.
  - Two hubs are serviced in Alabama
    - Pensacola, FL – Greg White - 334-222-2907 – [greg@wandmcpa.com](mailto:greg@wandmcpa.com)
    - Dothan, AL – Travis Parke – 334-949-7846 – [info@wuregrasshonorflight.com](mailto:info@wuregrasshonorflight.com)

- **Military and Veteran Caregiver Network**

- Hero Care Resource Directory - <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/services-for-veterans/military-veteran-caregiver-network.html>

- Search for community-based resources, national support organizations as well as programs and services serving every zip code in America.
- Categories for support include food, housing, goods, transit, health, money, care, education, work and legal. There are search filters for veterans, service members and caregivers.

- **National Veterans Creative Arts Festival**

- [Member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/VAR](http://Member.legion-aux.org/member/committees/VAR)
- Sponsored in conjunction with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the American Legion Auxiliary and Help Hospitalized Veterans, the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) is a week-long event that showcases the creative achievements of veterans receiving treatment at VA facilities. With participation open to any veteran enrolled at a VA Medical Center, an outpatient clinic, or living in a state veterans home, approximately 140 medal-winning veterans are asked to participate at NVCAF each year. Veterans participate in many mediums, including visual arts such as painting, sculpting and drawing, as well as creative writing, dance, drama and music.

- **Center for Development and Community Engagement (CDCE, formerly known as VAVS)**

- [Volunteer.va.gov](http://Volunteer.va.gov)
- Founded in 1946 to provide for our nation's Veterans while they are cared for by VA health care facilities
- One of the largest centralized volunteer program in the Federal government
- More than 7,400 national and community organizations support the program
- Volunteers have provided over 760 million hours of service and nearly \$1.9 billion dollars in gifts and donations since 1946