



# *The Sons of The American Legion*

## *VA&R Commission*

### **National Newsletter**

April 2015

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### **Becoming a VAVS Representative or Deputy Representative**

Submitted by Doug Murphy

What is meant by being a VAVS Representative or Deputy? What are the duties of this position how does one become such a person?

A VAVS Representative or Deputy is an appointed position. This person becomes a part of the VAVS committee whose job is to serve in an advisory capacity to the Director and other concerned staff in coordinating plans and policies for community participation in the VAVS Volunteer Program. This Committee is generally chaired by the Associate Medical Director and the Deputy Chair is the "Chief" of Voluntary Service. Its members are the Rep's and Dep's of each service organization active at the Va. Hospital.

The duties of a Rep or Dep are simple, attend the quarterly meetings, be an active volunteer member and report the information back to your Detachment. Making sure that all information such as policies, procedures, needs and special programs of the hospital are being relayed down to the Squadron members

To qualify as such a person, one should have sufficient time to attend the VAVS quarterly meetings and participate in its activities and have a desire to help the Veterans who use that facility. This person should also have sufficient leadership ability to gain the respect and support of the Detachment they represent. They must be able to understand and explain to the Detachment and Squadrons the VAVS programs, the issues affecting the hospital and the Veterans in its care. Also having the great ability to coerce, cajole, plead and beg for volunteers and donations to support the programs and events put on by the hospital.

Once you are selected by your Detachment, a Certification form should be completed by the Detachment, Department and sent to the National Authorized Certified Official. You should then receive your confirmation letter from The American Legion, which will also be sent to the Chief of Voluntary Service. You then contact the Chief of Voluntary Services to schedule your training and background check. After training, and you are accepted by VA, you will begin your work as a Representative or Deputy of the Sons of The American Legion at that VA hospital.

## **“National Veterans Assistance Day”**

**May 16<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Submitted by Mark McCue

Once again, it will be “National Veterans Assistance Day” and the myriad of needs facing our Veterans is constantly growing. On Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 Sons of The American Legion Squadrons from all across this great nation, will be joining together to assist our deserving Veterans with those needs.

Sons will be helping Veterans in their own neighborhood and communities; it doesn't get much better than that. Whether it is helping with yard work, household hold chores, running some errands or a community event for Veterans or just spending a little of your time with the less mobile Veterans or those that are hospital bound.

We must also see if we can assist the family members of our servicemen and women. Just knowing that their families are being looked after is a huge relief for our service members and a great way of showing our appreciation for their service.

With today's privacy laws finding a veteran in need sometime proves to be a difficult task. The National VA&R Commission has developed a poster that you can distribute that invites Veterans to contact you.

Another way of getting the word out is to let Veteran Service Providers know about your desire to help. A good place to start is your Post service officer, town or County Veterans agent and Blue Star Mothers. Any of these can help you by letting their clients or members know you are available to assist.

All Squadrons are encouraged to develop an active VA&R program which encourages all its members to participate in” National Veterans Assistance Day”. This can be coordinated as a group effort or each member can assist Veterans on their own. This is also a great way to expose your fellow members to the satisfaction you get when you help Veterans. There are no special skills needed to assist our Veterans just a desire to help Veterans and their families.

Since May of 2008, "National Veterans Assistance Day" has been growing and we hope that May 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 will be our biggest year yet. So dust off your shovels and rakes, gas up the lawn equipment, rally your fellow Squadron members and let's get this one done!

Please do not forget to record your hours and money spent on your Consolidated Report Forms.

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

Submitted by Chairman Clint Bolt

This is the most prestigious individual award given by The Sons of The American Legion. It recognizes the very best of the best, and speaks right to the very heart of why we were established. That is to "Volunteer" for and assists America's Veterans.

Names like PNC. Bill Sparwasser, Doug Murphy, Ersal King and last year's recipient Bruno Williamson. These are some of the men that have been selected, in years past, as our "Volunteer of The Year". To further Honor these recipients the National Commander makes each a Distinguished Guest of our National Convention.

The application and guidelines are on our National web site and it can be reproduced by detachments for their Squadrons.

Squadrons submit their member to the Detachment Adjutant at their Detachment Convention where the Detachments select one winner and that is sent to National Adjutant, Indianapolis IN. Thirty (30) days prior to Nation Convention. Our National winner will be selected from those entries at National Convention in Baltimore Md. this summer.

## **Missing in America Project**

Submitted by Greg Price

The Missing in America Project is sometimes called MIAP for short. It was launched nationwide in early 2007 by Fred Salanti, a former Major in the U.S. Army during Vietnam. The MIAP is made up of volunteers that are willing to visit funeral homes and mortuaries across the U.S., for the purpose of helping locate, identify and inter any unclaimed cremated remains (cremains) of our Veterans that may be sitting on shelves sometime for many, many years.

In May 2007, The American Legion showed its support for the MIAP with Resolution 24. This resolution lets Legionnaires know they can assist in locating and identifying the created remains that have been unclaimed in their local areas.

We Sons of The American Legion have also shown our support for Resolution 24. We too, have committed ourselves to visiting funeral homes in our communities, and assist in finding unclaimed remains. Then we seek to obtain the documentation that will help to secure a final resting place for these forgotten heroes.

One example of those forgotten Veterans that had been sitting on shelves for years. The McCormack brothers Zuinglius and Lycurgus fought with Indiana's 132<sup>nd</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiments in the Civil War. They had been sitting on a shelf since their deaths in 1908 and 1912 respectively. MIAP volunteers discovered them in 2013 and with their help were able to get them buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

So far, 33 states have passed legislation that will hold Funeral Homes harmless for sharing any personal information with non-family members that have volunteered to help get Veteran cremains off the shelves and to help inter them with the Honors that they have earned and deserve.

Since 2007, more than 2000 veterans have been located and buried across the country. Their military service spans from the civil war to the Vietnam War eras. All Veterans that are located and identified as Honorably Discharged from service will be interred with full military honors.

Not all unclaimed cremains are veterans. That is why it is important to get as much information as possible to verify if any are Veterans. Ask if there is a DD214 available or any military documentation that shows their release from service was under condition other than dishonorable.

Share the information you find with your Post Service Officer. If there is a discharge or a document that **does not** show Dishonorable, the service Officer can contact a National Cemetery in your state to arrange a possible burial date.

You can also ask the Funeral home for the name of, their date of birth, date of death and social security number. Then with this information the Service Officer can contact the MIAP State Coordinator (go to [miap.us](http://miap.us) and click on contact us, scroll to your state). They will then contact National Military record Center in St. Louis and fill out the National Cemetery Scheduling and Eligibility Office verification form on each cremain. Once those verifications are returned you will know if that cremain is a Veteran.

The possibility of getting one of those forgotten Veterans buried with Honor could begin with you. Visit those Funeral homes see if there are any remains. Let your MIAP coordinator know which homes you visited so that information can be added to the list of visited funeral homes

Helping with this project is just another way the Sons of The American Legion support our Veterans. The bottom of the POW MIA flag says, "You Are Not Forgotten". Let's continue to remember them and help them join their military brothers and sisters, so they can hear the words "Welcome Home".

## **Fisher House**

Submitted by Chuck Treat

## Fisher House Foundation receives 10th consecutive "Four-Star" rating from Charity Navigator

March 2014

For the tenth year in a row, Fisher House Foundation has received the coveted "Four-Star" rating for sound fiscal management from Charity Navigator, the nation's premier charity-rating agency, placing Fisher House among the top 1% of charities nationwide.

Out of the thousands of nonprofits Charity Navigator evaluates, only one out of four earns 4 stars — a rating that, now, with our new accountability and transparency metrics, demands even greater rigor, responsibility and commitment to openness," said Ken Berger, president and CEO, Charity Navigator.

Charity Navigator helps guide intelligent giving by evaluating the financial health and accountability & transparency of roughly 5,500 mid-to-large sized charities that garner roughly 50% of all private contributions made in the USA each year (not including houses of worship). Charity Navigator accepts no advertising or donations from the organizations it evaluates, ensuring unbiased evaluations, nor does it charge the public for this trusted data.

"We are humbled that our nation's premier charity-rating agency has recognized Fisher House Foundation ten years in a row for the work we have done for our military families," said Ken Fisher, Chairman of Fisher House Foundation.

"Our 4-star Charity Navigator rating demonstrates to our supporters that we take our fiduciary and governance responsibilities very seriously."

"Only 1% of the charities we rate have received at least 10 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Fisher House Foundation outperforms most other charities in America.

This 'Exceptional' designation from Charity Navigator differentiates Fisher House Foundation from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust," Berger said.

*Forbes*, *Business Week*, and *Kiplinger's Financial Magazine* and others have celebrated Charity Navigator's unique method of applying data-driven analysis to the charitable sector. Charity Navigator evaluates ten times more charities than its nearest competitor and currently attracts more visitors to its website than all other charity rating groups combined, thus making it the leading charity evaluator in America. Charity Navigator's irrefutable data shows that users of its site gave more than they planned to before viewing its findings.

*A Fisher House is "a home away from home" for families of patients receiving medical care at major military and VA medical centers. The homes are normally located within walking distance of the treatment facility or have transportation available. There are 64 Fisher Houses located on 23 military installations and 24 VA medical centers. Many more houses are under construction or in design.*

### About Fisher House

Fisher House Foundation is best known for a network of comfort homes where military and veterans' families can stay at no cost while a loved one is receiving treatment.

These homes are located at major Military and VA Medical Centers nationwide, close to the medical

center or hospital they serve. Fisher Houses have up to 21 suites, with private bedrooms and baths. Families share a common kitchen, laundry facilities, a warm dining room and an inviting living room. Fisher House Foundation ensures that there is never a lodging fee. Since inception, the program has saved military and veterans' families an estimated \$235



**64 Houses In Operation - 25,000 Families Served In 2014**  
**\$282,000,000 In Savings To Families Since 1990**  
**5.8 MILLION Days Of Lodging Provided**

million in out of pocket costs for lodging and transportation.

Fisher Houses are given to the U. S. Government as gifts. Military service secretaries and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs are responsible for the operation and maintenance of the homes. The Fisher House Foundation, Inc., a not-for-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the

IRS code, builds new houses, and assists in the coordination of private support and encourages public support for the homes.

The foundation also manages a grant program that supports other military charities and scholarship funds for military children, spouses and children of fallen and disabled veterans.

## **Volunteers**

Fisher Houses have full-time salaried managers, but depend on volunteers and voluntary support to enhance daily operations and program expansion. Learn more about volunteering by contacting your local Fisher House.

### **Assist at a Local Fisher House**

At our Fisher Houses, volunteer opportunities include: bringing in meals and snacks for residents, helping with general housekeeping chores, organizing goods drives such as paper product drives, cleaning supplies, laundry supplies, etc. Also, there are often young mothers and fathers in the homes who may feel overwhelmed, our volunteers offer babysitting service and help play with the children to give the parents a break and some quiet time.

During the holidays we often have volunteers who will help with decorating, children toy drives, and gifts for those staying at the home through the holidays.

Some Fisher Houses have a 'wish list' of items that the manager would like to add and/or replace in the house. These wish lists have included large items such as children's back yard play sets, barbeque grills, laptop computers for each room, outdoor tables and chairs, as well as smaller items such as books, DVDs, and small appliances.

We also welcome volunteers to tend to the gardens surrounding the house. Although the homes and landscape are maintained by the military base and the Veterans Administration, both are limited in offering enhancements to the landscape. Our volunteers often step in and plant the seasonal flowers and shrubbery to make the homes an even more inviting environment.



*For more about Fisher House Foundation,  
please visit: [www.FisherHouse.org](http://www.FisherHouse.org)*

### **S.A.L. National VA&R Committee**

#### **National VA&R Chairman**

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#### **National VA&R Vice-Chairman**

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# National Veterans Assistance Day

May 16, 2015

**“You Served US,” now it’s our time to serve you.**

*Finding the opportunity to be of service...for those who served...*

- Take a Veteran to the store • Visit a Veteran at home • Invite a Veteran to dinner
- Take treats to Veterans at your local nursing home
- Sponsor a group of Veterans to an Baseball game or other local Event
- Sponsor a group of Veterans today at the Museum
- Invite to the Post for dinner and camaraderie with other Veterans • Visit our Veterans at the V.A.
- Does a Veteran need help with house repairs?

*Find the Opportunity!*

