

NOTRE DAME SENIOR ALUMNI (NDSA)
GOD, COUNTRY, NOTRE DAME
VA AND MILITARY HOSPITAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
“SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED”

INTRODUCTION

In response to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Notre Dame Alumni Association developed the God, Country, Notre Dame Initiative for members of the Notre Dame family to unite in prayer and support for those called to protect our God-given freedom. Through this initiative alumni and friends are encouraged to render support to those men and women who serve or have served our country in military, government, and civil service roles and to those families left behind. Clubs and Classes are urged to initiate projects and programs that will bolster the morale of those who have protected us throughout the world and in our own communities. As part of the Alumni Association God, Country, Notre Dame Initiative, NDSA has developed and sponsors the VA and Military Hospital Assistance Program. While this Program is sponsored by NDSA, it is open to alumni and friends of all ages.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

VA is the second largest of the Cabinet departments and operates nationwide programs for the benefit of approximately 70 million Americans potentially eligible because they are veterans, family members or survivors of veterans. Perhaps the most visible of all VA benefits and services is health care. Data compiled in 2006 indicates the VA system includes 158 hospitals (at least one in each of the 48 contiguous states), 854 ambulatory care and community-based outpatient clinics, 132 nursing homes and 42 residential rehabilitation treatment programs. There is a VA health care facility near you!

The VA actively seeks volunteers and operates the largest volunteer program in the Federal Government, supplementing staff and resources in all areas of patient care and support in order to serve our nation's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion. Most VA facilities have Voluntary Service Program Managers who stand ready to make it simple and easy for individuals and groups to begin a voluntary assistance program.

Depending on the volunteer interests, time availability, etc. and the needs of a specific VA facility, an assistance program can take on a variety of forms, including but not limited to:

- Regular patient visitations
- Patient transportation
- Staffing information disks
- Performing clerical tasks
- Donation of personal comfort items
- Facility maintenance
- Organizing and providing entertainment
- Professional service – accounting, data processing, etc.
- Organizing and providing educational activities

A VA Assistance Program can easily be initiated by following a few simple steps:

1. Access the VA volunteer website www.va.gov/volunteer. From the list of facilities map on the website, locate the VA facility near you. The information provided on this facility will include a telephone contact number.
2. Call the VA facility and speak to the Voluntary Service Program Manager or other person in charge of volunteer coordination. This person will provide information on volunteer opportunities available, procedures, etc. and set up a personal meeting if appropriate.
3. Plan and then implement a VA Assistance Program which responds to the needs of the VA facility and the interests, time availability, skills, etc. of your Club members.

One example of a successful VA Assistance program is the regular patient visitation program of the Ann Arbor Club. On the second Sunday afternoon of each month Club members (usually 5 or 6) visit patients (usually a total of about 10) at the Ann Arbor VA Hospital. On an annual basis this Club Program results in serving approximately 120 of those who served us.

MILITARY HOSPITALS

The Army, Navy and Air Force operate a total of approximately 60 hospitals and medical centers in the United States. For security and other reasons volunteer opportunities are more limited than at VA facilities but are still plentiful. A list of facilities and contact telephone numbers may be found at www.theagapecenter.com/hospitals/military.htm. Setting up a Military Assistance Program can be done by taking steps similar to those advised above for a VA Assistance Program.

The San Diego Club has service programs at the Camp Pendleton and Balboa Navy Hospitals. As an example of providing educational activities, a Club member made a presentation on credit card abuse at a class for wounded Marines and staff at the Balboa Navy Hospital.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information and answers to questions about the VA and Military Hospital Assistance Program may be obtained from your NDSA Regional Director, Alumni Association Affinity Groups Senior Director Tom Monaghan at monaghan.1@nd.edu or Dick Griffin '60 at rrrgriff@aol.com.