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VA Begins Summer of Service to Bolster Volunteer Assistance for Veterans

Calls Upon Individuals, Organizations and Communities to Serve Veterans in Nationwide Effort

WASHINGTON, DC—The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced a new nationwide initiative designed to build upon its existing partnerships to grow the number of individuals and organizations serving Veterans in their communities. The Department is renewing its commitment to Veterans and embarking upon a “Summer of Service” that seeks the help of citizens across the country to honor that commitment.

“We have made progress over the past year addressing the challenges we face in delivering care and benefits to millions of Veterans and their families,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “While there is more work to do to honor our sacred commitment to Veterans, we also recognize that VA cannot do it alone. We are asking Americans everywhere to join the Summer of Service and help us give back to those who have given so much to our nation.”

In the coming weeks, VA will be working closely with Congressional partners, Veterans Service Organizations, Mayors and local communities, private sector and non-profit organizations, and VA employees to identify new and innovative ways to support VA’s commitment to care for those who “have borne the battle” and their families.

As part of VA’s Summer of Service, the Department has committed to holding an open house in VA facilities the week of June 28 to spur increased local engagement and welcome members of the community interested in supporting the needs of Veterans. VA has also established the following goals to achieve by Labor Day:

- Increasing Volunteers: Committed to engaging with 100,000 volunteers to support care and benefits programs and local events.
- Increasing Community Partners: Committed to expanding current agreements to provide services and support reaching more than 15,000 Veterans and family.
- Recruiting Medical Professionals: Hiring clinicians and clinical support staff to further expand access to care and homelessness.
- Congress: Host Congressional Members and Staffs at VA facilities across the country.

The Department has an outstanding volunteer program, which will be highlighted throughout the country this summer. VA will build upon the ongoing work of its more than 350,000 employees and 76,000 volunteers around the nation. While the central focus of the campaign will be increasing volunteerism and partnerships, it will also provide individuals and communities an opportunity to support other important priorities. Despite a hiring effort that brought more than 11,000 net new employees onboard over the past year, VA still needs more health care providers, claims specialists, medical support assistants, and cemetery directors to continue to expand needed services. VA’s partners can help by getting the word out this summer.

In the last year, VA has completed more than 46 million appointments, an increase of more than two million from the previous year. Nearly 3 million Veterans received care in the private sector, an increase of more than 44 percent from the previous year. The number of Veterans and Survivors receiving monthly compensation and pension benefits has increased to nearly 5 million. In an effort to improve the Veteran’s customer service experience, VA has begun the most comprehensive re-organization in its history. The initiative, called MyVA, has been guided by ideas and recommendations from Veterans, employees, and stakeholders.

“There is no mission more noble than serving Veterans and their families. At VA, we constantly strive to improve the way we do our job,” said McDonald. “State by state, community by community, person by person, there are a number of ways we can all come together to serve Veterans. From expanded partnerships with the private sector and non-profit organizations, to accelerating hiring, to celebrating the commitment of VA employees and volunteers – we need the help of communities everywhere to succeed.”

Volunteers can help to serve Veterans by visiting <http://www.volunteer.va.gov/> to find out the needs of your local VA facility. Follow #VASummerOfService on [Vantage Point](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and join VA in caring for America’s Veterans.

For more information, go to: <http://www.va.gov/vasummerofservice/>

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