**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Columbus VA Celebrates Volunteers During National Volunteer Week**

**Columbus, Ohio -** In recognition of National Volunteer Week, April 17-23, the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System will honor its volunteers with events throughout the week and engage in a public campaign to encourage volunteerism and philanthropy.

For more than 75 years, volunteers have been valued partners at VA facilities nationwide, giving countless hours of support and assistance to veterans. During this past year, 114 Columbus VA volunteers gave more than 14,000 hours of their time caring for and assisting veterans in every area of the facility. Their volunteer hours, together with monetary donations were valued collectively at more than $650,000.

“Even though we were confronted with the challenges surrounding COVID our volunteers continued to serve our veterans generously giving their gift of time,” said Traci Washington, chief of the Center for Development and Civic Engagement at Columbus VA. “They continue to provide support and compassion daily which gives our veterans hope, strength and often courage to face another day.”

National Volunteer Week highlights opportunities where community members can become engaged at the VA through volunteerism. One such program is the volunteer transportation network (VTN) which is available for veterans who might not otherwise have transportation to and from medical appointments.

Volunteer drivers travel thousands of miles annually to ensure veterans have access to much needed healthcare. They provide rides to veterans’ homes, homeless shelters, other VA medical centers in Ohio, and sometimes even out of state as far away as New York.

“The volunteer transportation network was established to provide alternative options for veterans seeking VA services,” said Washington. “Volunteer participation in this program is critical to ensure we can maximize the transportation resources available.”

To learn more about programs like the volunteer transportation network, how to become a volunteer, or other philanthropic opportunities at Columbus VA visit the [Voluntary Services](https://www.va.gov/central-ohio-health-care/work-with-us/volunteer-or-donate/) website or call 614-257-5493.

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**About the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System**

The VA Central Ohio Healthcare System’s four Community Based Outpatient Clinics, stand-alone Mental Health Clinic and level 2 complexity Health Care Center offer a full spectrum of primary care services, evidence based behavioral health care, specialty medicine services, and same day ambulatory surgery for more than 40,000 veterans in 14 counties throughout central Ohio. For more information visit <https://www.va.gov/central-ohio-health-care/>.