



U.S. Department  
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# News Release

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## **VA encourages communities to connect with Veteran patients during National Salute to Veteran Patients week**

**WASHINGTON** — The Department of Veterans Affairs emboldens communities to reach out to hospitalized Veterans at VA medical centers across the nation, Feb. 13-19, during [National Salute to Veteran Patients](#) week.

Since 1978, VA has used Valentine's Day to provide a weeklong commemoration for Veteran patients by encouraging individuals to seek opportunities to volunteer at their local VA facilities, visit with inpatients, and distribute gifts and cards to hospitalized Veterans.

"As we take a moment to salute our Veteran patients, VA recognizes the efforts of volunteers and community members who help support our mission and we encourage all Americans to reach out to VA to explore more ways to give back," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "For more than 75 years, volunteers have helped us keep America's promise to Veterans by providing supplemental services and support when and where Veterans need them most."

"The National Salute honors Vets and lifts our spirits. We love volunteering to give Veterans valentines and remind them that they are not forgotten," said U.S. Army Veteran and VA volunteer, John Schuler. "As a Veteran, I love receiving cards from the kids and items from Voluntary Service [because] it makes me feel loved. The National Salute is a tradition we love at VA Central California in Fresno. Vets, if no one has told you they love you today, I do."

In 2021, schools, community groups, and youth organizations nationwide sent more than 174,000 valentines to VA medical centers, which were distributed to Veteran patients at facilities across the country. Additionally, nearly 1,200 volunteers and more than 1,000 community organizations contributed to events and activities recognizing hospitalized Veterans.

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In addition to donations VA provides volunteers with virtual and remote assignments such as the [Compassionate Contact Corps](#) which allow them to safely support Veterans during the pandemic.

To learn more about [volunteer opportunities](#) or to join the mission to honor the sacrifice and service of America's Veterans during the National Salute or any time of year, contact your nearest VA facility.

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