About the Presenter

**Ron Rolfes**

- US Air Force Retired
- Nationale Directeur VAVS/SVH
- VAVS Nationale Representative
- Co-Chair Partnership Sub-Committee of the VAVS National Advisory Committee, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Sous Chef de Chemin Der Fer 2005, Sous Directeur Membership 2001-2004, Grande Chef de Gare du Germany 1999
- 29 years of membership with La Societe
ABOUT THE PRESENTER

• Fred Lesinski
  - Chief, Community Engagement & Veteran Experience
  - Ralph H. Johnson VAMC
  - Charleston, S.C.
  - VISN Liaison Area 7
  - US Air Force “4 and out” Desert Storm AWACS aircrew
Who is in the Room?

• National Officers
• VAVS Sous Directeurs
• Grande/Cabane Officers
• New VAVS Reps/Deps
• Seasoned VAVS Reps/Deps
• Other VAVS Volunteers
What We’ll Cover

- Overview of VA Voluntary Service & snapshot of statistics
- Organizational Structure
- Purpose of the National Advisory Committee
- Responsibilities of Reps/ Deps
- Priorities moving forward
- VA Patient Experience
VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Overview

• VA Voluntary Service (VAVS), founded in 1946 is one of the largest volunteer programs in the federal government.

• VA Voluntary Service's mission is to provide a structured volunteer program under the management of VA compensated employees in cooperation with community resources to **serve America’s Veterans and their families** with dignity and compassion.

• VAVS supports VA and VHA strategic goals by recruiting, supporting and retaining a knowledgeable, diverse and engaged supplemental workforce.

• VAVS has provided over 73 years of service, and during that time VAVS volunteers accounted for more than 802.7 million hours in service to our nation’s heroes.
VAVS Overview:
What’s your Why?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mt4YU6eQaFc
VAVS Overview
Key Definitions

- **Without Compensation (WOC)** - Volunteers accepted in the VAVS Program are considered WOC employees. WOC precludes monetary payments, or any form of compensation by VA not authorized by policy.

- **Regularly Scheduled (RS) Volunteers** - RS volunteers are individuals who have registered to participate in the VAVS Program in a regularly scheduled assignment under VA supervision and who have completed a volunteer orientation. (Frequency of participation is determined locally)

- **Occasional Volunteers (OV)** - Occasional volunteers are those individuals serving under the VAVS Program who do not meet the requirements of RS volunteers. Individuals frequently volunteer with a group or organization on an occasional basis.

- **Student Volunteers** - Student volunteers under the age of 18 must have written parental or guardian approval to participate in the VAVS Program. The minimum age for volunteers is determined by facility management.
VAVS Annual Impact

Volunteers: 63,000 +

Hours of Service: 9.5 Million

Donations: $89 Million

National and Community Partnerships: 7,400
VAVS Organizational Structure

Sabrina C. Clark
Director
VA Voluntary Service Office

VCO VAVS Responsibilities

Field Resource Team

VA VAVS VISN Liaison Chiefs

VA VAVS Field Staff

VA VAVS National Executive Committee

VA VAVS National Advisory Committee

Local VA VAVS Committees
National Advisory Committee (NAC)

- Established by VA Circular No. 117 in 1946
- Became a federally chartered advisory committee in February 1973
- Advises the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, through the Under Secretary for Health, and is responsible for:
  - Coordinating and promoting the VAVS program
  - Communicating VA policies to various organization constituencies
  - Making recommendations to improve volunteer services to Veterans
Responsibilities of the VAVS National Representative (Directeur)

- Official liaison between his/her organization and VHA CO in all aspects of the VAVS program
- Assists Grande Chef de Gare’s, Correspondants or VAVS Directeur’s and the National Certifying Official in the selection and certification/decertification of local VAVS Reps/Deps
- Provides initial guidance and information to local Reps and Deps
Responsibilities of the Grande Directeur VAVS

• Official liaison between his/her Grande and Nationale Directeur in all aspects of the VAVS program

• Assists Grande Chef de Gare’s, Correspondants or Locale VAVS Directeur’s in the selection and certification/decertification of local VAVS Reps/Deps

• Ensures that La Societe is represented in all VA Facilities within his/her Area of Responsibility
Local VAVS Rep/Dep Responsibilities

- Contact the Local VAVS Chief or designee upon receiving Certification
- Complete orientation & training to become an RS volunteer
- Assist with improving the VAVS program
- Provide input/feedback to VA staff & VAVS Committee
- Recruit volunteers
- Promote donations of financial & material goods

- Attend and participate in VAVS Committee meetings
- Assist in the removal of organization’s volunteers when necessary
- Serve on subcommittees and task groups
- Maintain organization’s records (hours, donations)
- Coordinate facility activities and projects
- Conduct Annual Joint Reviews
  Advise & inform organization of VAVS and VA issues and concerns
Qualifications of a Great Volunteer

• Sincere interest in the welfare of Veteran patients and a desire to help them
• Ability to work with others
• Leadership – “Most essential trait of a Rep/Deputy Rep”
• Knowledge of La Societe and VA
• Ability to communicate and disseminate information
• And the most important qualification...
Ability to Attend....

Regularly Scheduled
VAVS Committee Meetings
Annual Joint Review
VA Forms 10-1240 and 10-1240a

Two forms:
• VA Form 10-1240: Summary of Annual Joint Review
• VA Form 10-1240a: Response to VAVS Summary Annual Joint Review

Purpose:
• To assess organization’s participation in the VAVS program, communicate information to the National Representative, and receive feedback from the National Representative

Representative responsibilities:
• Know the month the organization is scheduled for AJR
• Make an appointment with Voluntary Service
• Provide input into data, goals, objectives, and comments
Why Volunteer?

- To gain work experience
- To learn new skills
- To meet new people
- To give something back
- To be of service to others
- Social Interaction
What Do Volunteers Do?

- Patient Ambassador/Red Vest Volunteer
- Patient Escort
- Volunteer Drivers (DAV / VTN & Parking Lot Shuttle)
- Clerical Positions
- Information Desks / Guest Relations / Concierge Programs
- Chaplain Service
- Recreation Therapy
- Nursing Service / Hospice / Palliative Care
- Pharmacy Service
- Waiting Room Attendants
- Patient Meal Assistants
- Respite Care
Non-Traditional Volunteer Assignments

- Virtual Volunteers
- Fundraisers for Special Projects
- Volunteer Team Leaders
- Recruiters
- Speakers Bureau Organizer or Participant
- Trainers & Educators
- Writers (newsletters, recruitment ads, grants, social media posts)
- Community Liaisons
What You Can Do...

- Ambassador / Greeter
- Courtesy Coffee
- Guest Service or Information Desk
- Hospice/Respite Care
- MOVE! Program
- My HealtheVet
- Recruit New Volunteers
- Offer New Ideas

Get Involved!
Challenges

• Ensuring VA Voluntary Service is viewed as a profession
• Retention of volunteers (aging organization population, demographics, etc.)
• Recruitment of volunteers (generational considerations)
• Staff & volunteer education
• New volunteer assignments & opportunities
  – Episodic assignments
  – Opportunities beyond Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 4:30 pm
• Personal identity verification processing including timely completion of an appropriate level background check
TO ALL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Customer Service Policy Statement

As VA Secretary, it is my privilege to champion VA’s commitment to provide an excellent customer service experience (CX) to all Veterans, Servicemembers, their families, caregivers, and survivors in our delivery of care, benefits, and memorial services.

The delivery of excellent CX is my responsibility and the responsibility of all VA employees. We will be guided by our core VA values: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. These values define our culture of customer service and shape the standards of behavior expected of us all as VA employees.

Our collective commitment to excellence in customer service will result in a customer experience that is consistently positive in terms of its ease, effectiveness, and emotional resonance. When the interactions between VA employees and our Veteran customers in these areas are positive, our Veteran will trust and choose VA, for their care, benefits, and memorial services across their lifetime.
VA Patient Experience

Patient Experience Defined:
The sum of all interactions shaped by the organization’s culture, that influence Veterans’ and their families’ perceptions along their health care journey.
VA Patient Experience

Which of these is the most impactful driver of patient experience?
Which is least?
VA Patient Experience

Keys to sustainable and positive patient experiences:
1. “Train and Hope”
2. Change Management models (EE & PX)
3. Accountability
4. Hardwire Practices

Prioritization: Impact and Effort
Measures that matter – measurements of patient perceptions of care are accurate reflections of actual care.
Key Transformational Components

• Behaving as a competitive healthcare provider – paradigm shift from “entitlees” to “consumers with choice” due to Choice and MISSION Act
• Heavy reliance on expertise (Beryl, Studer, Press Ganey, other healthcare organizations)
• Focus on Just Culture, High Reliability, and Employee Engagement – “patients come second”
• Data, data, data
• Tell, Teach, Practice, Reward
  – Directives – easy to tell without training
  – Training of complex skills (communication)
  – Practice – simulation and exam room/bedside with feedback and evaluation
  – Reward high performers
  – (Not listed) – help misaligned hires find positions better aligned with their strengths or jobs elsewhere…
How can YOU help?

- “Red Coat” Ambassador programs – improves wayfinding, access, reduces frustration
- Reminder calls – improves access (reduce no-shows), human vs. robocall accountability and care
- Drivers – improves access (especially rural and vulnerable Veterans)
- Patient Escort – employee engagement, patient perceptions of wait (helping staff helps Veterans!)
- Patient Visitation – perception of wait
- Some VA’s have a Home Visitor program
- Clinic waiting room management (rounding for wait times, access, coffee service/comfort)
- Administrative help
- Own the Moment/Patient Experience trainer – helps many areas
- Food pantry, clothing room, other unique VAMC assignments
The Power is in the Ask!