



ADOPT-A-VET PROGRAM

Continuity Guide



JANUARY 12, 2019
NEBRASKA ELKS ASSOCIATION

ADOPT-A-VET PROGRAM

Many older veterans in hospitals, VA homes, nursing homes and care centers have limited or no family nearby. Without social engagement and positive interaction, veterans' health can suffer. The Elks family is all over the nation, and Elks volunteers can support local veterans by participating in the Adopt-a-Veterans Program and providing friendship and assistance.

Eligibility: This program is targeted toward any veterans that are lonely or isolated. Veterans in VA hospitals, assisted care homes, community living center, retirement homes, homeless and transitional shelters, and hospital domiciliary programs are all eligible. Individuals can adopt more than one veteran, and Lodges can adopt certain floors, units or even whole facilities.

Getting Started: VA hospitals have strict privacy laws. You may have to physically visit the hospital and make up your own list. Or, try contacting the facility's Activities Director or Social Services representative for the names of veterans. Additionally, churches, veteran's groups, American Legions, VFWs or similar organizations may know a veteran in need of support.

Recruiting Volunteers: Ask members to adopt a veteran at Lodge meetings and events. Approach schools, churches, civic groups and other community organizations about adopting a veteran, or contributing supplies, letters or gifts. Don't forget about youth volunteers—ask scout troops, Antlers participants and student groups to get involved.

Guide for Visits: Be a friend. Ask questions. Listen to their thoughts and concerns. Visit regularly. Send cards. Check in with phone calls. Invite veterans to be guests at Lodge meals and events. Remember birthdays, special events and especially holidays.

Cost of Program: The cost of this program is very small and is almost always covered by the volunteer. Cards, small gifts and donations of necessary supplies are common. If a veteran needs a larger gift, this can possibly be funded through raffles, 50/50s, donations by individuals or Lodge groups such as the PERs or Ladies. Please clear all gifts with the facility beforehand. Additionally, many stores may offer a discount for a charitable project if you ask.

In 2016-17:

- **7,634** Elks adopted **38,342** veterans through this program.
- Elks recruited **2,436** friends and family members to participate.
- Altogether, these volunteers spent **45,473** hours serving and supporting these veterans.

Adopt-A-Veteran Suggested Activities

VA and State Hospital activities should be coordinated with the hospital, VAVS Representative, Voluntary Services, and recreation staff. CLC is the Community Living Center which was formerly known as the Nursing Home Care Unit and may include short term rehab and hospice units. Don't forget the local nursing home veterans. Private nursing homes usually have a Recreation Director to work with. As a rule, VA hospitals have their outings during weekdays so as not to pay over time. Plan your luncheons or other activities during work hours. Many VA's have homeless programs with a domiciliary. Be sure to include them and find out about their special needs.

Make an effort to do something special on our country's patriotic days, such as Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, July 4th, Marine Birthday, Patriot Day, Pearl Harbor Day, Armed Forces Day, POW/MIA Day.

Many veterans are lonely during the holidays, so be sure to include them in your plans for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Eve, Memorial Day, 4th of July.

If your Lodge has a VAVS Representative, work with him or her to support the local hospital, nursing home, Outpatient Center, USO, or domiciliary. VAVS Representatives meet quarterly with the staff of the hospital and have exact knowledge of the hospital's needs and wants. If your Lodge does not have a VAVS Representative among your Members, promote Veterans Service programs and recruit members to volunteer on a regular basis at local facilities.

If funding is a problem, don't forget to apply for grants offered by the Elks National Foundation and the Elks National Veterans Service Commission.

1. Bingo. Ask the hospital if they have all the materials needed. Procure Canteen books ahead of time to be used as prizes. You should have four or more volunteers.
2. Horse racing: check with the hospital to see if they have a track, wooden horses and dice to move them. You'll need Canteen books to pay off win, place and show. Four or more volunteers needed.
3. Start an Adopt-A-Vet program for individuals in nursing homes, VA, State hospitals, or communities that don't have many relatives, visitors or are shut in. Give them certificates of adoption available through Grand Lodge. You can make up your own computer-generated certificates. See Grand Lodge program.
4. Sponsor small concerts at the CLC or hospital open area. Arrange these events through Volunteer services.
5. Sponsor fishing on piers, small lakes, commercial party fishing or member's boats.
6. Sponsor boat rides. Members with boats or boat club membership could help.
7. Car show at the VA or at the lodge. Ideally with other events and lodge visitations.

8. OEF/OIF or OND (Operation New Dawn- The current war in Afghanistan) welcome home events. The VA has an OEF/OIF coordinator. Send off or welcome home events from local guard or reserve units can be held at the Lodge.
9. Have Veterans from hospitals, nursing homes, or senior residences come as guests to Lodge meals: Steaks, Picnics, Pig Roasts, BBQs, Holidays, or any reason. Beware of religious restrictions and hospital policy.
10. Fine dining event at the CLC/Nursing home. Have a special meal served by tuxedoed waiters. Cater this under hospital direction.
11. Hold a dance with ladies of the Elks. Bring in a band or have a DJ at the CLC. You may want to decorate with a special theme. Music should match the population of the CLC. Have as many ladies as possible.
12. Christmas gifts can be donated, or you can use a giving tree for specific Veterans. Empty stockings can be distributed and filled by Elk families. In general, no alcohol, glass or sharp items are permitted. Stores like Target and Wal-Mart may give you good prices or make donations.
13. Have the Easter Bunny visit the CLC or nursing home and give sugar free candy.
14. Have clothing drives for the hospital Clothing store, or homeless veteran program. (Note: Hospitals will only accept new clothing, but homeless shelters usually accept used outerwear.)
15. Give Comfort Care Kits from Federated Wholesale, Inc., the VA hospital Canteen Service, or other sources to the CLC or incoming new patients.
16. Special events for Elks Veterans Remembrance Month in November, and National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans (Valentine's) week. This may include volunteering for a Valentines for Veterans concert. This could include off station visits to the Lodge for dinners. (You have special events in
17. Hospital wide hot dog or sub sandwich luncheons and ice cream socials. Ice cream in three-gallon tubs may be ordered through the hospital. Toppings, spoons, dishes and scoops need to be brought in to the event. A band or just a musician could make the event more festive.
18. Miniature Golf at a course or make one at the facility on carpeting. 2 by 4's could be placed to guide the golf balls. Bring balls, clubs and practice holes.
19. Poker, black jack, Texas Hold-Em or stud type poker party with Canteen books to the winners with the most chips. You'll need dealers. Cards may be ordered through the Elks' Playing Cards for Veterans program.
20. Promote schools/youth to make cards and/or decorations for Veterans Day, Memorial Day and other Holidays. This could be an Antlers project. Work with members who teach to make it part of their lessons. Offer to deliver the cards and decorations.

21. High Schools could assign Oral Histories and have students find out what the Veteran did, where they were stationed and other stories. The Library of Congress sponsors the National Veterans History Project and you can find useful tools and guidelines at: <http://www.loc.gov/vets/> This would be especially good for Nursing Homes.
22. Coffee cart with cookies and bottled water. Go room to room or set up in a commons area.
23. Sponsor therapeutic Horseback riding arranged through a local stable.
24. Sponsor a POW luncheon. The VA also has special events for POWs.
25. Baseball, football or other sports game outings. Include college or semi-pro leagues in your area.
26. Sponsor trips to zoos and other local attractions.
27. Bowling and pizza parties at local bowling alley.
28. Monthly birthday parties with balloons, cake and ice cream. Special entertainment or musicians can add festivity.
29. Sponsor Art/Craft contests, work with an art therapist, and provide ribbons. Donate to the Creative Arts Festival.
30. Holiday parties, dinners, picnics and bar-b-ques either at the Lodge, hospital, or nursing home.
31. Coffee and doughnuts after religious services. Work with the Chaplain Service.
32. Sponsor Wii sports tournaments.
33. Theme Parties: St. Patrick's, Valentines, Easter, Christmas in July, Halloween, Luau, Mardi Gras, Sea Cruise, Stay-Cation, Cinco de Mayo, Kentucky Derby, Baseball opening day, Super bowl party, as well as other sports rivalries as Army-Navy, USC-Notre Dame, Texas-Texas AM etc.
34. Bring in a beanbag toss game and hold tournaments.
35. Bring in a Karaoke machine with a good singer to inspire others.
36. Do car racing around the dining or day area with remote control cars.
37. Trivia Tournament: sports, Military, or general knowledge. Give canteen books as prizes.
38. Sponsor the moving wall. Have it at the VA or Lodge.
39. Donate or volunteer to operate a popcorn machine in commons area for outpatients.
40. Sponsor a Veteran job fair by working with community or private employment services.
41. Donate cookies or cases of fruit to Veteran homeless shelters or VA transitional housing.
42. Pass out small desk flags with stands to Vets in hospitals or nursing homes.

43. Give flowers or candy to nursing stations as a thank you for their patriotic work.
44. Support Stand Downs for homeless Veterans. Offer to donate the Lodge facilities, money, articles of clothing, toiletries, and playing cards from the Elks card program. Volunteer to host and escort. These events can be from 1 to 3 days and offer medical, clothing and legal aid.
45. Tea for women veterans. Check hospital for food policy.
46. Get involved with female Veterans program at the VA. Some have baby showers or donate gifts of baby items.
47. Participate in the Army of Hope by adopting the family of an overseas soldier and provide assistance in mowing, shoveling snow, and general repairs. Invite them to the Lodge for a meal.
48. Adopt an overseas unit of a member's son, daughter, grandson or granddaughter. Send snacks, toiletries, or other comfort items.
49. Form a choral group or recruit one to serenade the Veterans with patriotic songs and classical standards from the past. Do Christmas caroling, St. Patrick's Day Irish songs.
50. Amateur, Veteran, Variety show put on by volunteers, staff and patients.
51. Volunteer at community based VA clinics by offering coffee, food, and being a morale booster.
52. Support Wounded Warriors by sponsoring Hunting or Fishing trips. Contact them through the internet.
53. Sponsor or help with horticulture projects such as serenity gardens and raised bed gardening. Get the Master Gardeners association, garden clubs, or county extension service to help.
54. Help recruit for pet therapy programs where members can visit hospitals and nursing homes with their pets.
55. Pizza parties for various hospital units. Think beyond CLC and offer to Psych, Alcohol Abuse, and day treatment units.
56. Hold the Elks Flag Day service at the VA, nursing homes, or senior residences.
57. Google Homeless Veterans and your city's name to see if there are nongovernment facilities to support.
58. Drive Adoptees who are Member of the Elks to Lodge meetings and other Lodge events
59. Visit them and just chat about their service, their former job, sports, weather, and current events
60. Phone them to check on how they are doing.

NEBRASKA ELKS ADOPT A VET PROGRAM

PLEASE FILL IN THE BLANKS – DUE by March 31st Each Year

Number of Adopted Veterans : _____

Number of veteran's programs : _____

Amount of money spent : _____

Miles driven by Elks : _____

Miles driven by Non- Elks : _____

Number of Elks involved : _____

Number of Non – Elks involved : _____

List your number one Veteran's event for the year: _____

Thank you very much.

Justin Brandt / Adopt A Vet Chairman

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Questions? Contact the Veterans Service Commission at Vets@elks.org or 773/755-4736. Or, contact Adopt-a-Veterans Chairman Stewart Israel at stewizzy@yahoo.com.



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