



# NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## VA Voluntary Service Celebrates National Volunteer Week

**OMAHA, Neb.** — Volunteers are the unsung work force who are irreplaceable at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System joins the nation to celebrate their dedication during National Volunteer Week, April 15 to 21.

“Although we recognize their contributions daily, this special week is a public way to show our appreciation for what our volunteers have done over the past year,” said Chris Shipp, chief, voluntary services for the VA NWIHCS.

Special recognition events are being held to honor their service to the VA and Veterans on April 17 in Grand Island, April 26 in Omaha and May 3 in Lincoln.

In 2011 alone, volunteers donated more than 107,000 hours that equated to more than \$2 million in labor at VA NWIHCS facilities.

Volunteers perform a variety of tasks. Greeters direct patients around the VA health care facilities. Others bake cookies for patients. And others answer phones and provide assistance.

One of the biggest areas where volunteers assist is transportation. Drivers at all of the VA NWIHCS sites transport Veterans to medical appointments.

Nationally, there are more than 87,000 volunteers with the VA, who contributed more than 12 million hours of service and an estimated \$90 million in gifts and donations.

Since 1946, VAVS volunteers have donated more than 736 million hours of service; and VAVS is one of the largest volunteer programs in the Federal government. More than 350 national and community organizations support VAVS. The program is supported by a VAVS National Advisory Committee, composed of 57 major Veteran, civic and service organizations, which reports to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs through the Under Secretary for Health.

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## VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION-2/2/2/2

National Volunteer Week began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing an annual celebration of volunteering. During National Volunteer Week, the Department honors and recognizes VA volunteers for their service to Veterans.

To become a volunteer or learn more about the VAVS program, contact 1-800-451-5796, ext. 93284. For more information, visit <http://www.nebraska.va.gov/giving>.

**MEDIA NOTE:** News media interested in sharing volunteer stories or covering the recognition events in Omaha, Lincoln or Grand Island should call Will Ackerman, Public Affairs, at 402-995-4719 or e-mail [william.ackerman@va.gov](mailto:william.ackerman@va.gov).

The VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System's mission is to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. VA NWIHCS employees serve more than 161,000 Veterans in Nebraska, western Iowa and portions of Kansas and Missouri. The system includes a tertiary medical center in Omaha and a Community Living Center in Grand Island, Neb. Community-based outpatient clinics are located in Lincoln, Grand Island, North Platte, Norfolk, and Bellevue, Neb., and Shenandoah, Iowa; and a contract outreach clinic in O'Neill, Neb. For more information, visit <http://www.nebraska.va.gov>

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