

Greetings 2021-2022 VFW Auxiliary Department Presidents and Department Chairmen:

My name is Robyn Kuznik, and I am honored and would like to thank incoming National President Jean Hamil for appointing me as National Hospital Ambassador for the 2021-2022 Program Year.

My journey with VFW Auxiliary started in 1997 when my sister Renee encouraged me to join under the eligibility of our father William Kuznik, USMC, 1st Mar DIV, Korean War. At the time, my son Michael was six years old, and I did not have much time to devote to an organization but joined to continue my voice for veterans. Approximately ten years later, I started to get more involved with the organization with my Auxiliary, District and attending Department functions. I was learning more about the Auxiliary and what amazing things we did for our veterans and their families.

In October 2009, I met a veteran at a local VFW in my District. I took him to his first Department event which was the Department President's Homecoming. He had a blast with all the members, and it was another side to the VFW he had never seen. He attended his first state Convention, and I got him in touch with the veteran's service office, as I believed he should reapply for benefits, or for an increase. This is where my journey with the VA started. I went with him to every appointment and helped him get the assistance he really needed to make a difference in his life. This gentleman, my husband Michael, tells the Auxiliary that I saved him. But in all, I think we saved each other. I honestly believe that I was put in his path to show him that he can get better. Mike and I will be celebrating our 10-year anniversary this year. We have four children and three grandchildren between us.

In 2012, after assisting Mike with his VA claim I decided to start volunteering as a claims consultant with the California VFW Service Department. After five months, I was offered a full-time position and started to attend training sessions in Annapolis, Maryland with National Veterans Service (NVS). I worked inside the Northern California Health Care System at Mather VA Hospital for five years, and then moved over to the Veterans Benefit Administration building until retirement in 2020. In this position, I assisted thousands of veterans and their families with benefits, compensation and pension claims. This is such wonderful work and the thought of a veteran finally receiving benefits that they so deserved is so rewarding!

I served as Department President of California in 2020-2021 during COVID and encouraged our members to try new avenues in which to communicate. I held monthly Zoom meetings with Department Officers, District Presidents and Department Chairmen to keep in constant communication. Sharing ideas of how to still accomplish helping veterans and their families despite the pandemic.

This year, we have a unique opportunity to educate our communities of VA and non-VA facilities about the Honor Escort Program. I look forward to working with each one of you and sharing this wonderful program with the nation.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Loyally,

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2021-2022 HOSPITAL



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“Soaring Above & Beyond”

I believe it is our attitude that determines our altitude. It is our attitude that allows us to soar above those things that would otherwise overcome us. - [T. D. Jakes](#)

Promotion # 1 – July 2021

Welcome to the 2021-2022 VFW Auxiliary Program year! I am excited to serve this year as the National Hospital Ambassador! I have ideas to share with you this year to inspire our organization in honoring our veterans and recruiting new volunteers.

We have found new ways to work our Hospital Program this past year through COVID-19, and we will continue to learn more modern ways to get the word out to veterans and their families.

As your Department Hospital Chairman, you will guide your state with sharing our ideas to make your local medical facilities more effective in their support of our veteran population. Over the past four years we have seen a consistent drop in volunteerism at VA facilities, non-VA facilities, veterans homes and skilled nursing homes. I would love to see our number of volunteers and the number of volunteer hours soar to new heights. We, as members, need to think outside of the box and find ways to make this happen.

I encourage each of you to be creative and help inspire your District and Auxiliary Chairmen to get the word out:

- Reward and praise your Chairmen for doing great work.
- Remind them of the goals and deadlines to achieve their goals.
- Encourage them to share and SWAP ideas with each other.
- Share new ways of volunteering.
- Use and share the [Hospital Program Guide](#) and the [VAVS Participation Guide](#).

Volunteering is the lifeline of the Hospital Program. It is important to stay in contact with your VAVS representative to know what is needed and what changes have been made due to COVID-19. As said before, if on-site volunteering is not a possibility, use your Post Home to keep your Hospital volunteers actively engaged. Please remember that not all veterans use VA facilities. They can be served at nursing homes, local hospitals in your community, vet

centers and clinics. Please check with each facility regarding rules for visiting and volunteering or commit to becoming a regularly scheduled VAVS volunteer.

Honors Escort Program:

New to the Hospital Program this year is the Honors Escort Program found in some VA facilities. In the spirit of patriotism and respect for those served, the VA Honors Escort is aligned with the Department of Veteran Affairs Mission Statement:

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise “To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan” by serving and honoring the men and women who are America’s Veterans.

This program teaches the following:

- The Flag Code
- Proper Etiquette and handling of the Flag
- American Flag – The meaning of each Fold
- Steps of the Honors Escort



I will be sharing more about this initiative and how we can educate the facilities in our communities how to properly give our veterans their “final salute.”

Volunteer Recruitment, Recognition and Support

New volunteers are needed every day across the nation in our communities. Volunteers create a friendly and caring environment for veterans and their families. Here are a few tips for recruiting and maintaining volunteers:

- Contact volunteers by email or phone for special events.
- Monthly signup sheet for regular events.
- Celebrate your volunteers with a thank you event.
- Recognize your Hospital volunteers.
- Ask someone to volunteer, they may have never been asked before.



For more information on how to become a volunteer, download the Hospital Program Guide and VAVS Participation Guide at vfwauxiliary.org/resources.

During the 2021-2022 Program Year, I am here to assist you in any way I can. Please reach out to me with questions, ideas, and the great ways you are inspiring your Departments and I am looking forward to “Soaring Above & Beyond” in this Hospital Program together.

Loyally,

Robyn A. Kuznik

2021-2021 VFW Auxiliary National Hospital Ambassador