

Volunteer News And Notes

An Inspiring Look At One Blind Veteran Who Helps So Many Others

(NAPSA)—Years of helping other blinded veterans paid off recently for one dedicated volunteer, in the form of the Department of Veterans Affairs's (VA) National Male Volunteer of the Year award.

James Hogan has logged more than 2,800 hours of voluntary service as one of 260 volunteers nationwide performing 34,177 hours of service a year through the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA).

Since 1945, BVA has assisted blinded veterans and their families in adjusting to life without sight and in regaining confidence and independence. The organization of blinded veterans helping blinded veterans was originally founded by combat-blinded veterans of World War II.

Through service programs, regional groups, resources, and advocacy before the legislative and executive branches of government, it makes life better for blinded veterans. There's no charge for any BVA service and you don't have to be a member to get help. All legally blinded veterans are eligible for assistance whether they become blind during or after active-duty military service.

BVA volunteers work out of VA medical centers, outpatient clinics and regional offices but are also active in their communities. The volunteers are often blinded veterans themselves but they can also be spouses, family members, and friends of BVA. For example, Hogan's dedicated service has also involved his wife, Pam, who vol-



Jim Hogan with Atticus, his guide dog, has been named Department of Veterans Affairs's Male Volunteer of the Year.

unteers with him. In addition, his guide dog of nine years, Atticus, has also served as a therapy dog at times for VA hospital patients.

The volunteers help blinded veterans get the assistance they need when they need it. Sometimes, volunteers speak one on one with blinded veterans; at other times, they listen and share ideas in groups. BVA volunteers provide information on programs and services, encouraging blinded veterans to use the opportunities that will help them become more independent and self-sufficient. They also demonstrate equipment and aids used by the blind.

Hogan performs a multitude of volunteer tasks as a VA volunteer, serving blind and visually im-

paired veterans in the Visual Impairment Service Team (VIST) program. He helps veterans attend fishing trips by arranging transportation for them and with VIST Support Group activities. One of his specialties is also outreach to younger Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans and their families regarding benefits, adjustment to disability and educational opportunities.

Hogan visits regularly with veterans and mobilizes his Disabled American Veterans chapter to bring treats and cheer to hospitalized patients.

He also works with Vietnam Veterans of America on their annual Homeless Stand Downs, and helps the Elks raise funds for an annual veterans' luncheon and the Boy Scouts place more than 6,000 flags on veterans' graves on Memorial Day.

A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Hogan was diagnosed with hearing loss as a young boy and quickly began using hearing devices. Determined to fulfill his dream of serving his country, he enlisted in the Navy at the height of the Vietnam War. After serving in Vietnam combat areas, he re-entered civilian life in 1973. Ten years later, he was diagnosed with Ushers II, a degenerative disease that causes both vision and hearing loss.

Learn More

For further facts on BVA, what it can do and how you can help, go to www.bva.org or call (800) 669-7079.