

AMERICA'S Heroes

Volunteering To Assist America's Veterans

(NAPSA)—For centuries, the men and women of the U.S. armed forces have volunteered to protect the United States. But did you know that thousands of veterans are now volunteering to assist other veterans to receive the benefits they have earned.

Approximately 140,000 volunteers annually give more than 13 million hours in service to veterans through the Veterans Affairs (VA) system. And among those volunteers is a group that has already given on the battlefield: the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH).

The MOPH is made up entirely of veterans wounded in combat and who, for their sacrifice, received the Purple Heart medal. Last year, almost 700 volunteers from the group donated some 83,000 hours at 97 medical facilities providing assistance to other veterans. Its Ladies Auxiliary donated an additional 18,000 hours to the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) program.

Jeff Roy, the group's National Commander, intends to increase his organization's role even further. He's set a goal of boosting its volunteer hours by 15 percent and has helped develop a Youth Scholarship Program to reward young people who volunteer.

If you'd like to help a veteran in the area, here's what you should know:

The Role Of Volunteers

Volunteers play a number of roles within the VA. They can



Americans gave more than 13 million volunteer hours to help veterans in just one year.

work in hospital wards, at nursing homes and pharmacies, and in veterans outreach centers. Some volunteers serve as drivers who help bring patients to and from medical appointments. Some participate in recreational activities, birthday celebrations or holiday events. And some simply visit with veterans, helping improve their overall quality of life.

Making A Difference

You can donate time, money and even a car to help veterans. In fact, over 500,000 people have made a vehicle donation to the MOPH since the inception of the program. You may also contact Del "Bulldog" Turner, MOPH National VAVS Director, by phone at (256) 891-0592 or by e-mail at dplusk@aol.com. For more information on the MOPH VAVS program or to join in our other volunteer efforts, visit www.purpleheart.org.