

THE ADOPT-A-VETERAN PROGRAM

The question you may have is "HOW DO WE DO IT?" Here is the answer in 6 easy steps:

#1 Which Veterans are adoptable?

- Individual Veterans in Veteran hospitals,
- Groups in the Hospital, such as the CLC, Women's, Psychiatric, Mental health, Day treatment, and hospice care units. Adopt a Ward.
- Veterans in assisted care facilities, nursing homes, convalescent homes, retirement and senior living centers.
- Any Veteran with limited, or no family contact who is lonely or shut in, or does not drive.
- Any Elk who qualifies in 1, 2, 3, or 4.
- Veterans in homeless shelters, and Hospital Family programs. Adopt the whole facility.
- Active duty units, especially overseas, can be adopted as Army of Hope and is also encouraged. Possibly a unit of a son or daughter of a member.
- VA Fisher Houses.
- Veterans can be adopted by more than one assembly, feel free to adopt from afar.

#2 Where do I find Veterans to adopt?

- V.A. Hospitals have strict privacy laws. You may have to physically visit the hospital and make up your own list.
- V.A. Hospital Nursing and Hospice unit may be adopted as a group
- Nursing homes assisted living and some senior living facilities have an Activities Director or Social Services representative who can give you the names of the veterans in their facility.
- Churches, Veteran groups, American Legions, or VFW's may give you names of Veterans who are shut in or lonely.
- In your assembly! The veteran member who doesn't come out to the assembly anymore, who is shut in, who doesn't drive, who has physical disabilities and limitations. Ask the secretary or an older member.
- Family and Homeless shelters; have a continuous drive for comfort items and clothing. Have them out for a meal or cater one at their facility. If they are not all Veterans, count the number or percent as determined by the staff of the facility as being adopted.
- Any WWII Vet.

#3 How do I get my Assembly or Council to support an Adopted Veteran?

- Have an Adopt-A-Vet Chairman.
- Assign names to volunteers and committee members.
- "Buttonhole" members; ask them to support the program. This can be done at meetings dinners or parties.
- Have a "Veterans Party " and ask attendees to take a name.
- Get schools, Churches, and other civic and Veteran groups to Adopt-A-Veteran, or contribute items, letters, and room decorations.
- Speak to the groups in your assembly or Council, Ladies or PER's about adoption.
- Teenage children of knights, or Elks Antlers program, Scout groups.
- create and appoint an Adopt-A-Vet Chairperson and Committee

#4 Now that I have adopted a Veteran, what do I do?

- Hospital groups: help the Hospital chair put on activities. Sponsor Bingo, Horse races, Ice Cream socials, meals, as well as luncheons
- Sponsor Sightseeing tours, fishing, boat rides, Bowling, and Restaurant meals.
- Send them cards on birthdays and holidays.
- Drop notes to them or send vacation post cards.
- Give them small gifts of comfort items on holidays or birthdays.
- Take them to dinner or lunch at the lodge or elsewhere.
- Visit them and just chat about their service, their former job, sports, weather, and current events.
- Phone them to check on how they are doing.
- If you are adopting Homeless Veterans, have a continuous drive for clothing and comfort items.
- Some may have computer access and email.
- Drive member Adoptees to lodge meetings and other Lodge events.
- Have schools or school age children make holiday cards and room decorations for holidays
- Give them a desk top flag set for Flag day possibly include their service flag.
- Have a giving tree at Christmas

#5 How much will this cost?

- Maybe nothing! The costs of the program are usually picked up by the individual doing the adopting. This would include cards, postage or small comfort gifts. Larger gifts can be funded through parties, raffles, 50/50's, donations by individuals or lodge groups as the PER's or Ladies.

#6 Where can I get additional help or more information?

- National Program chairman Stew Israel - 734-455-4567 (leave message)
- stigbew@gmail.com
- Elks National Veterans Service Commission Manual. Elks.org

GENERAL THOUGHTS IDEAS AND NOTES

- For outside groups don't be concerned with individual names, be concerned with numbers.
- Privacy laws prevent printing and distribution of names.
- A nursing home or VA unit could be reported with numbers instead of names.
- Some assemblies visit the Adoptees and send cards, some have a visiting committee that go periodically to the Hospital or nursing home.
- Have Church outreach committees adopt.
- Encourage schoolteachers to adopt for community service for the students; English teachers could do a letter writing unit to the adoptees.
- History teachers could assign oral history gathering.
- Ladies' Auxiliaries could have their own adopting or Veterans committee to send cards and visit nursing homes and hospitals.
- Sponsor local sightseeing tours, boat rides, Christmas gift, and homeless Veteran collections.
- They can visit the assemblies, for dinners, lunches, picnics and special parties.
- Some VA Hospitals have Domiciliary units, these are for homeless and maybe adopted as a group with similar activities as nursing home units.
- Some VA's have Fisher Houses where Veterans or their families can stay while they are receiving treatment. (A Ronald McDonald house for Vets).
- Gifts should be comfort items. VA hospitals don't want glass, alcohol or sharp items. Check with the Hospital Chairperson. Say thank You to the Adoptee for guaranteeing our freedom and way of life.

- Remember the 5-minute rule. Ask: how are you doing? and be prepared to listen for at least 5 minutes. You may have to prod by asking questions. This shows you care to invest the time. This should be a labor of Love: Love of God, Love of Country.