



A History of
**ASSOCIATES of VIETNAM
VETERANS OF AMERICA, Inc.**
1999 – 2019

This page is intentionally blank.

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
20th Anniversary

W elcome to Spokane and the 20th anniversary of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. I hope that everyone is ready to have a good time as we celebrate our successes and milestones.

In January 1999, AVVA formally incorporated as a separate organization from Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), but we have never separated ourselves in spirit nor experienced a decline in our admiration of VVA. Over the years, we have evolved from a VVA ‘sister’ status to an independent membership organization.

Numerous goals and milestones have been achieved during our existence; many new programs have been implemented and many projects have been completed. You will read all about them, and no doubt be impressed by them, in the pages of this tribute to our organization.

VVA will be making critical decisions about their future during this meeting; AVVA is facing change also. Please know that we are preparing to meet all challenges that the future will bring through the guidance of a strategic plan that ensures our success and longevity; we anticipate that our next twenty years will be more productive and eventful than these past twenty years that we are celebrating this week.

I want to thank our 20th Anniversary Taskforce for their hard work and endurance in gathering information and creating this lovely tribute to our twenty years of service.

God bless America, God bless our Vietnam Veterans, and God bless their supporters!



Sharon Hobbs, AVVA National President

In Memory



Cathy Keister

National Vice-President

**Life Member & Chapter Representative
Chapter 542**

**Pennsylvania State President
2009 - 2011**

**Region 2 Director
2010 - 2013**

**National Vice-President
2013 -2016 (March)**

AVVA lost Cathy on March 26, 2016



Elayne Mackey

National Vice-President

**Life Member Chapter 47
Chapter Representative
1999 - 2012**

**California State President
2008 - 2019**

**Region 9 Director
2013 - 2016 (April)**

**National Vice-President
April 2016 - 2019**

Appointed to replace Cathy in
April 2016 and was elected in 2017.

AVVA lost Elayne on April 10, 2019



ASSOCIATES OF VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

AVVA NATIONAL OFFICERS

President
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer

NATIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- REGION I** — Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut
- REGION II** — New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware
- REGION III** — West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland, District of Columbia
- REGION IV** — Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
- REGION V** — Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois
- REGION VI** — Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin
- REGION VII** — Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma
- REGION VIII** — Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alaska
- REGION IX** — Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Utah, Guam, Philippines

STATE OFFICERS

States are represented by either a state representative (unincorporated)
Or
A state president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer (incorporated)

CHAPTER OFFICERS

Chapters are represented by either a chapter representative (unincorporated)
Or
A chapter president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer (incorporated)

All information contained herein this publication has been crafted as accurately as we could collect.
If any errors are found, please inform us so our records shall be maintained and current.

AVVA – Who we are

Each year, dedicated Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America Inc. (AVVA) members volunteer infinite hours in support of our brave men and women who served in defense of this great nation. Our membership consists of veterans from all eras, their families and citizens who are committed to the welfare of those who served.

AVVA has established a formidable curriculum comprised of printed materials (Paper Safe, DIC Brochure, Children’s Toxic Exposure Brochure), on-site educational seminars, nationwide Agent Orange Town Hall Meetings, secondary Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD 2), Spousal and Survivor Benefits Seminar.

Our Purpose

AVVA is dedicated to the aggressive advancement of realistic goals, while maintaining integrity and a spirit of unity that reflects its commitment to Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., and to veterans of all eras and their families. We accomplish this through cooperative projects and programs which facilitate, enhance and improve communication with our members and the public.

AVVA is not an auxiliary. Any person committed to the purpose of AVVA, regardless of their age, race, sex or creed, may apply for membership in our organization. We welcome veterans of all eras to join. Our goal mirrors VVA’s motto: “Never again will one Generation of Veterans Abandon Another”.

AVVA, a non-profit organization exempt from federal taxes, began as a 501(C)4 incorporation. It has since been determined that it can best serve veterans and their families by converting to a 501(C)3. This change permits us to solicit funding and accept tax-deductible donations which will sustain educational and other programs for veterans and their families. The IRS status conversion was initiated and completed in 2018.

AVVA is structured to:

- (a) support the values, goals, and exceptional works of Vietnam Veterans of America.
- (b) continue independently after VVA closes business.

VVA was set up to have an end date, as they are only allowed members who served during the Vietnam War. AVVA, having the ability to include anyone, was designed to be a perpetual organization, and looks to a future in which we carry on with our programs, and serve our veterans and their families.

The Origin of the AVVA

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. began as a group of people dedicated to advancing the work of Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. (VVA). For many years prior to 1999, people who were friends or family members of Vietnam Veterans of America were members of VVA as non-voting associate members. Our first AVVA National Liaison was Linda Wilson of Florida in 1986. At that time VVA appointed the AVVA Liaison to their board.

By 1998, VVA was notified by the IRS that they had exceeded the limit of non-veteran members, and had to accept that their concern for their congressional charter left them at a turning point. The associates had grown in number, and by IRS standards, had to branch off into a separate organization, that is dependent on the parent organization to exist.

In January 1999 AVVA formally incorporated as a separate organization from VVA, although we have never separated ourselves in spirit or in our activities. The first official bylaws for Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America were adopted, and the first national officers were sworn in at a two-day meeting in Orlando, FL. Since then we have evolved from a 'sister' organization to an independent membership and support organization, working side-by-side with VVA on both agendas.

In August of 2000, the first official convention for AVVA was held in Buffalo, NY, electing the first official officers and regional directors. Bylaws were then amended and adopted by the state representatives.

The founding board of directors were:

Nancy Switzer, President	Mary Miller, Vice-President
Fran Davis, Secretary	Bill Williams, Treasurer

Kathi TauerRegion 1 Director
Margaret WojciejowiczRegion 2 Director
Elaine Simmons.....Region 3 Director
Mary Yeomans.....Region 4 Director
Marcia HicksRegion 5 Director
Jeani WellsRegion 6 Director
Patsy Varnell.....Region 7 Director
Yvonne Hill.....Region 8 Director
Sonja HolybeeRegion 9 Director
The first VVA Special Advisor was Rocky Gothard.

From 2000 to 2010, AVVA held its elections and conventions in even numbered years. Our conventions coincided with the VVA Leadership Conferences. In 2010 AVVA's membership voted to change our convention years to odd numbered years. This gave us the opportunity for greater attendance of AVVA membership, and our conventions and leadership conferences would now coincide with VVA.



In 2002 states began to incorporate as subsidiaries of the national organization. The first state to incorporate was Illinois.

In 2004, the national bylaws were amended to allow chapters to become incorporated within their own states. In approximately 2011 or 2012, the organization made the distinction between incorporated and unincorporated chapters and states.

Due to the change in convention years from even to odd, the 2010 board of directors and all state and chapter representatives and presidents served a three-year term, setting our first odd year convention in 2013. Since that time, all conventions are held in odd numbered years, and all terms of office for all levels were set as two year terms. The 2019 convention in Spokane, WA will mark AVVA's 10th National Convention and its 20th anniversary.

The AVVA Logo



The AVVA logo has been in use since we incorporated. Our logo is a variation of the VVA logo, (a design based on the Vietnam Service Ribbon). This was done to show our direct affiliation with, and respect for, VVA. We added the rocker at the bottom stating "Together Always ©" as our promise to always work alongside VVA. The name, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. (VVA) and the VVA logo are copyrighted. Therefore, our name and logo are used with the express written permission of VVA.

Due to the special license agreement that exists between the two organizations, permitting AVVA to use the derivatives of the VVA copyrighted logo and name, anyone who wishes to use the name or logo must first get permission to do so from National AVVA.

The AVVA flag uses the opposite base color (green) of the Vietnam Veterans of America flag (yellow) to distinguish the two. Both flags are based on the colors of the Vietnam Service Medal.



Organizational Structure

Prior to 1999, AVVA positions were known as “Liaisons” to VVA, and were appointed by the VVA chapter, state, or national presidents and regional directors. When AVVA incorporated as a national organization, legally independent of VVA, bylaws were crafted to require elections within the AVVA membership.

In 2000, at the first AVVA National Convention, the state representatives, derived from the existing state “liaisons” elected the first official national officers and regional directors.

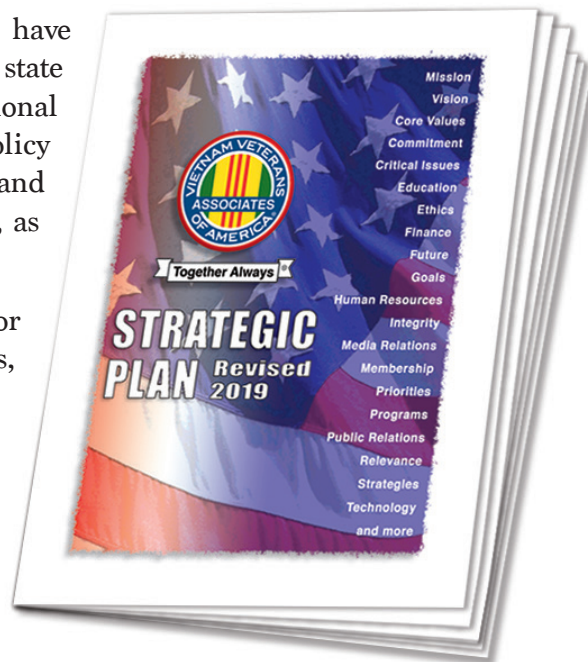
In 2001, the first official elections were held for the positions of state representatives.

April 2001, the Associates affiliated with VVA chapters elected their first affiliated chapter representatives. For the first election, there were no guidelines outside of holding regular membership in the corporation. The most important issue was for the AVVA members affiliated with each VVA chapter to have elected representation. Until 2013 only state representatives or presidents voted at national conventions. During the 2010 convention, policy was changed to include chapter presidents and representatives, and at-large representatives, as voting delegates.

Currently, AVVA holds its elections for chapters and states in even numbered years, and its conventions in odd numbered years.

In April of 2019 the AVVA Board of Directors adopted a Strategic Plan outlining our needs to remain a perpetual organization.

The Strategic Plan is available at avva.org.



MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

PRE-INCORPORATION - AVVA LIAISONS

1986-1988 Linda Wilson (FL)	1988-1989 Mary Mills (OH)	1989-1991 Pat Schwoegler (IN)	1991-1995 Joann Harkins (VA)	1995-1999 Nancy Switzer (NY)
---------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	---	--	--

Original Board of Directors 1999 – 2000

(Formed during our Incorporation Process)

Nancy Switzer President	Mary Miller Vice-President	Fran Davis Secretary	Bill Williams Treasurer
(Regional Directors)			
Region 1: Kathi Tauer Region 2: Margaret Wojciechowicz Region 3: Elaine Simmons	Region 4: Mary Yeomans Region 5: Marsha Hicks Region 6: Jeani Wells	Region 7: Patsy Varnell Region 8: Yvonne Hill Region 9: Sonja Holybee	

2000–2002

(First Official Convention – Buffalo, NY)

Nancy Switzer President	Mary Miller Vice-President	Fran Davis Secretary	Bill Williams Treasurer
(Regional Directors)			
Region 1: Kathi Tauer Region 2: Margaret Wojciechowicz Region 3: Elaine Simmons	Region 4: Mary Yeomans Region 5: Marsha Hicks Region 6: Jeani Wells	Region 7: Patsy Varnell Region 8: Yvonne Hill Region 9: Sonja Holybee	

2002–2004 (Tucson, AZ)

Nancy Switzer President	Mary Miller Vice-President	Fran Davis Secretary	Bill Williams Treasurer
(Regional Directors)			
Region 1: Kathi Tauer Region 2: Margaret Wojciechowicz Region 3: Elaine Simmons	Region 4: Mary Yeomans Region 5: Marsha Hicks Region 6: Jeani Wells	Region 7: Patsy Varnell Region 8: Yvonne Hill Region 9: Sonja Holybee	

2004–2006 (Nashville, TN)

Mary Miller President	Fran Davis Vice-President	Patsy Varnell Secretary	Sonja Holybee Treasurer
(Regional Directors)			
Region 1: Susan Chechoski Region 2: Linda Haberkorn Region 3: Nancy Nix	Region 4: Mary Yeomans Region 5: Judy Bolio Region 6: Diane Kuhn	Region 7: Kathy Andras Region 8: Bill Williams Region 9: Anne Pancrazio	

2006–2008 (Tucson, AZ)

Mary Miller President	Elaine Simmons Vice-President	Patsy Varnell Secretary	Sonja Holybee Treasurer
(Regional Directors)			
Region 1: Frances Cartier Region 2: Linda Haberkorn Region 3: Nancy Nix	Region 4: Mary Yeomans Region 5: Judy Bolio Region 6: Diane Kuhn	Region 7: Kathy Andras Region 8: David Mitchell Region 9: Erma Hibbler	

2008–2010 (Greensboro, NC)

Elaine Simmons
President

Mary Yeomans
Vice-President

Patsy Varnell
Secretary

Bill Williams
Treasurer

(Regional Directors)

Region 1: Frances Cartier
Region 2: Nancy Switzer
Region 3: Sharon Hobbs

Region 4: Suzanne Bloom-Weber
Region 5: Penny Meinhardt
Region 6: Pat Furno

Region 7: Debbie Lemmones
Region 8: Francis Rowan
Region 9: Carl Southern

2010–2013

(3 Year Transition Term – Orlando, FL)

Nancy Switzer
President

Francis Cartier
Vice-President

Sharon Hobbs
Secretary

Bill Williams
Treasurer

(Regional Directors)

Region 1: Donna Anderson
Region 2: Cathy Keister
Region 3: Donna Cromwell

Region 4: Suzanne Bloom-Weber
Region 5: Penny Meinhardt
Region 6: Pat Furno

Region 7: Kathy Andras
Region 8: Francis Rowan
Region 9: Joanna Henshaw

2013–2015 (Jackson, FL)

Sharon Hobbs
President

Cathy Keister
Vice-President

Joanna Henshaw
Secretary

Bill Williams
Treasurer

(Regional Directors)

Region 1: Frances Cartier
Region 2: Nancy Rekowski
Region 3: Beverly Pounds

Region 4: Jeri Wallis
Region 5: Penny Meinhardt
Region 6: Sherry Wright-Anderson

Region 7: Kathy Andras
Region 8: John Birch
Region 9: Elayne Mackey

2015–2017 (Springfield, IL)

Sharon Hobbs
President

Cathy Keister
Vice-President

Joanna Henshaw
Secretary

Kathy Andras
Treasurer

(Regional Directors)

Region 1: Vacant
Region 2: Nancy Rekowski
Region 3: Beverly Pounds

Region 4: Jeri Wallis
Region 5: Cecilia Essenmacher
Region 6: Diane Nicholson

Region 7: Percilla Newberry
Region 8: John Birch
Region 9: Elayne Mackey

2017–2019 (New Orleans, LA)

Sharon Hobbs
President

Elayne Mackey
Vice-President

Nina Schloffel
Secretary

Kathy Andras
Treasurer

(Regional Directors)

Region 1: Joanne Blum
Region 2: Nancy Rekowski
Region 3: Kaye Gardner

Region 4: Jeri Wallis
Region 5: Cecilia Essenmacher
Region 6: Fran Davis

Region 7: Teresa Rangel
Region 8: John Birch
Region 9: Casey Ferrell

(Regional Deputy Directors)

Region 2: Bobbie Morris
Region 3: Hope Summers

Region 4: Susan Henthorn
Region 5: Don Jones

Region 6: Diane Nicholson
Region 7: Suzie Meeks

Awards presented by AVVA are listed by year, using the records available to us. There were some years when a particular award may not have been presented. There may be particular years for which we cannot find the records. We thought you might enjoy remembering the many recipients.

PRESIDENT’S COMMENDATION MEDAL

2011 Wes Guidry (Alabama)	2013 Charlie Hobbs (Tennessee)	2015 Cathy Keister (South Carolina)	2016 Bernie Rekowski (Pennsylvania)	2017 Marsha Four (Pennsylvania)
2011 Bill Williams (Montana)	2013 Sharon Hobbs (Tennessee)	2015 Sandy Miller (Pennsylvania)	2016 Suzanne Blohm-Weber (Florida)	2017 Dr. Tom Hall (Kansas)
2012 Nancy Rekowski (Pennsylvania)	2013 Elayne Mackey (California)	2016 Joyce Koprowski (Florida)	2017 Kathy Andras (Louisiana)	2017 Beverly Pounds (Tennessee)
2012 Marilyn Rose (Texas)	2013 Mokie Porter (Maryland)	2016 Steve Mackey (California)	2017 Dr. Tom Burger (District of Columbia)	2018 Jake Barsottini (Pennsylvania)
2013 Kathy Andras (Louisiana)	2015 Joanna Henshaw (Nevada)	2016 Bobbie Morris (Pennsylvania)	2017 Blanch Duggins (Virginia)	2018 Susan Henthorn (Georgia)

CATHY KEISTER SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

Pennsylvania Chapter 542 — 2017 New Orleans
Sandra Carl, AVVA Chapter 966, NC — 2018 Palm Springs

FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

2002 Loren Herrick, MO Marge Herrick, MO	2006 Kathy Upchurch, AZ Jim Messner, OH	2012 Sandra Womack, TX
2003 Charlie Montgomery, VA Nancy Montgomery, VA Linda Green, TX John Kahler, TX Kate Pantorilla Janis Roznowski	2007 Patsy Varnell, OK Dennis Bohm, WI	2013 Rita Vitale, OR
2004 Joyce Koprowski, FL VVA FL State Council AVVA FI State Assoc. Duwayne Sogis, FL	2009 Suzie Meeks, TX	2014 Sharon Hodge, MD
	2010 Terry Clauson, OR	2015 John Emery Sr., WI John Emery Jr., WI
	2011 Judith Anderson, OR Jeani Wella, MO	2016 Mabel Foreman, LA
		2018 Rosa Nevarez, TX AVVA Chapter 966, NC

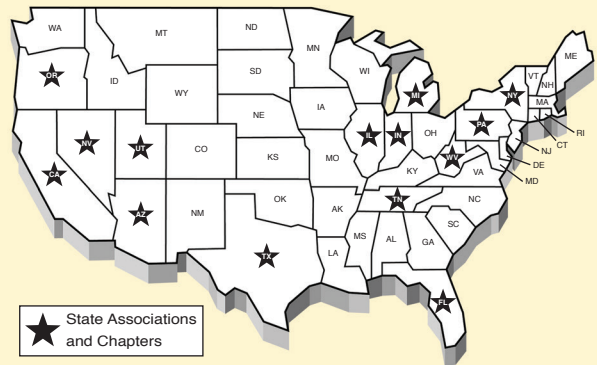
AVVA MEMBER OF THE YEAR

1992 Judy Jackson (Missouri)	2006 Diane Nicholson (Kansas)
1993 Doreen Spelts (Pennsylvania)	2007 Cheri Steers (New York)
1994 Jeani Wells (Missouri)	2008 Elayne Mackey (California)
1995 Nancy Nix (South Carolina)	2009 Pam Bush (Oregon)
1996 Bill Williams (Montana)	2010 Penny Meinhardt (Michigan)
1997 Peggy Eddings (Florida)	2011 Elayne Mackey (California)
1998 Paul Timmons (Florida)	2012 Linda Mollohan (Arizona)
1999 Martha Lynch (Virginia)	2013 Lynn Wesp (Arizona)
2000 Lennox Mitto (Florida)	2014 Sue Dirks (Louisiana)
2001 Paul Kirby (Virginia)	2015 Nina Schloffel (California)
2002 Iris Perkins (California)	2016 Teresa Rangel (Texas)
2003 Matthew Davison (California)	2017 Penny Meinhardt (Michigan)
2005 Joyce Koprowski (Florida)	2018 Willa Burgess (Montana)

INCORPORATED STATES AND CHAPTERS

In 2002 AVVA began incorporating the State Associations. In 2008 we began incorporating chapters. Below you will find those subsidiaries who are currently incorporated in AVVA, listed in order of the region in which they reside.

New York State Association
Pennsylvania State Association
Tennessee State Association
West Virginia State Association
Florida State Association
Michigan State Association
Illinois State Association
Indiana State Association
Texas State Association
California State Association
Nevada State Association
Arizona State Association



Chapter 131
(Region II Pennsylvania)

Chapter 415
(Region II Pennsylvania)

Chapter 542
(Region II Pennsylvania)

Chapter 791
(Region II Pennsylvania)

Chapter 862
(Region II Pennsylvania)

Chapter 203
(Region III Tennessee)

Chapter 240
(Region III Tennessee)

Chapter 950
(Region III Tennessee)

Chapter 1004
(Region III Tennessee)

Chapter 949
(Region III West Virginia)

Chapter 1074
(Region III West Virginia)

Chapter 274
(Region V Michigan)

Chapter 299
(Region V Illinois)

Chapter 669
(Region V Illinois)

Chapter 574
(Region VII Texas)

Chapter 805
(Region VIII Oregon)

Chapter 975
(Region IX Arizona)

Chapter 1079
(Region IX Utah)

Membership

Currently, AVVA has 1173 members who were members when AVVA incorporated in January 1999 and who are still members. Of those members 125 continue to pay either annual or three-year membership dues, and the rest are Life Members.

We now have more than 10,215 members spread across all 50 states and three territories; Guam, the Philippines and Puerto Rico. There are 12 states that are incorporated with elected officers, 18 states having elected representatives, and 20 states with no elected representation.

Chapter Status

AVVA has 559 chapters with 52 states and territories having At-Large members. 18 of the 559 chapters are incorporated. Chapter incorporation requires a minimum of 10 members. We have 289 chapters that are below the required number of members to consider incorporation. That is 51% of the 559.

We have 51 chapters with 1 member. Our largest chapter has 301 members. There are nine chapters that have 100 or more members; 2 of them incorporated. 745 of our 10,000+ members are in incorporated chapters.

Of the more than 10,215 current members, at least 6,925 are life members. At least 2,349 are annual or 3 year, and at least 496 are dual members. The region with the highest number of members is region 3, followed closely by region 2. (Numbers are as of 4/30/19)

Historical Information

Donations to other organizations and to our members

In 2000 Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America (AVVA) asked Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) to be included

in the Project Friendship program. Since that time, it has become an AVVA/VVA project. Over the years AVVA collected more than \$90,500 in donations to deserving Veteran related charities in the cities in which our conventions and leadership conferences were held. These donations came from our members, both VVA and AVVA. Our members should be very proud!





Other Grants: Over the years AVVA has donated more than \$7500.00 in grants to Veteran Related Organizations and to others, in the form of our Helping Hands Grants (formerly named Homeless Grants).

AVVA has created brochures and the “Paper Safe” for the benefit of our members and veterans in general:

Paper Safe approx. 250,000 plus online availability

DIC Brochure 70,000

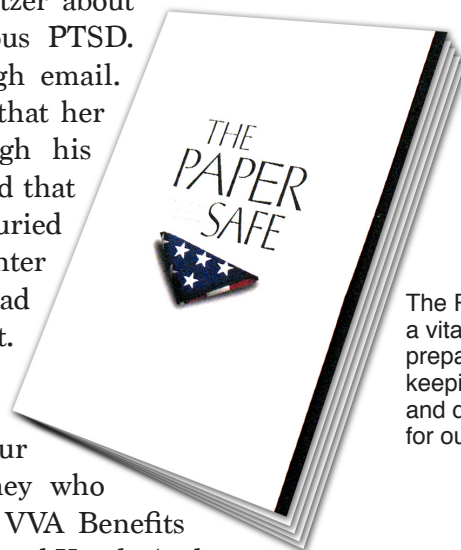
Children’s Toxic Exposure Brochure 62,000 (cost shared with VVA)

PTSD 2 Brochures 15,000 (Thank you Chapter 47 CA, for funding this 1st printing)

Available Publications

The Paper Safe: Around the time that we were incorporating AVVA, a member had been emailing Nancy Switzer about her husband’s health; he had cancer and serious PTSD. They talked for hours on the phone and through email. One day, the wife contacted Nancy and told her that her husband had passed away. While going through his personal things, she found his DD214 and realized that he was a decorated veteran who could have been buried with military honors. Later, the woman’s daughter contacted Nancy and told her that her mother had committed suicide because she felt so much guilt. Nancy Switzer realized then that we needed to educate our spouses and families on survivor benefits and the need for keeping records for our families. Nancy Switzer worked with an attorney who dealt with estate planning, Len Selfon, the then VVA Benefits Director, Mokie Porter, Communications Director and Xande Anderer, and they created the Paper Safe. It was presented to the AVVA National Board of Directors and was unanimously adopted. The demand for Paper Safes is becoming overwhelming. Because of the expense and the overwhelming requests, we have begun asking for donations from the requesters specifically for the postage.

Publications Origins



The Paper Safe, a vital tool for preparing and keeping records and documents for our families.

DIC Brochure - Survivor Benefits: This brochure was developed because, as the director of Veterans' Benefits for AVVA, Nancy Switzer saw a need in our chapters and states for a handout of some kind that educates our members about their benefits, and would advise them to see an accredited Service Officer for help after their veteran passed. The brochure gives our members the basics about the benefits that a spouse or family member might be entitled to upon the loss of their Veteran.

Children's (Agent Orange) Brochure: This brochure was created by our AVVA committee on Toxic Exposure with the help of Mokie Porter, Communications Director for VVA. It was created from our town hall meetings as a hand out, for families to follow if they felt their child was affected by their parents' exposure to toxins while in service. We have found that there are now at least three generations affected by toxins, and we wanted the public to understand.

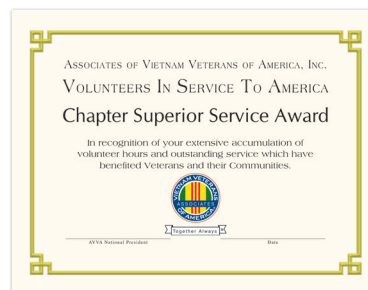
The VISTA Program

VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America)



Cathy Keister
Past Vice-President of AVVA, developer of the VISTA program which tracks and rewards the commitments of our members.

A program started by AVVA in 2014. This program was developed by our past Vice-President, Cathy Keister, who believed we should be tracking and rewarding our members' commitment. This program tracks the thousands of hours our members work to serve their communities. Our members volunteer their time helping the disabled, visiting patients in hospitals, organizing and running community and fundraising events, working in nursing homes and hospice facilities, driving people to doctor appointments or on daily errands, and a host of other tasks to help in their local areas.



VISTA was developed as a means of tracking those hours and rewarding our members for their selfless actions. Members, chapters, states and regions with the highest total hours reported are awarded each year at conventions and conferences. To date, we have tracked over 98,238 hours - and these are just the hours that have been reported.

It is estimated that AVVA members donate over 1,000,000 a year. We can only acknowledge those hours that are reported.



2018 Recipients

VISTA 1st Place Award

Rita Clifton, with 1158 hours.
The award was accepted for Rita by
Georgia State President,
Susan Henthorn (R),
pictured with Jeri Wallis,
Region IV Director (L)

VISTA 2nd Place Award

Linda Myers

VISTA 3rd Place Award

Linda Yates

VISTA 1st Place for State

Tennessee

VISTA 1st Place for Region

Region 3

In an effort to educate and support the families of veterans about the benefits available to them through the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America has created a program focused on bringing awareness to what is currently available to the spouse, widow, widower, and family of the veteran. Federal benefits are constant for everyone; state-funded benefits can vary. With that in mind, this program is designed to be implemented at the state and chapter levels where both federal and in-state funded programs are relevant.

This community event can be very successful if carefully planned and advertised. This program is only available through our website. Included in this program are all the tools needed to plan and execute your seminar.

This program will be of great benefit to all our members, as well as others in our community, such as the families of veterans of our more recent conflicts. Perhaps most especially of value to the younger veterans, because they do not have a good source of information. We can be that source for them.

Spousal and Survivor Benefits Program

Wreath Laying Ceremonies

AVVA holds wreath laying ceremonies in Washington DC during national holidays. On Memorial Day and Veterans Day of every year, AVVA lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Vietnam Memorial Wall and the Vietnam In-Memory Plaque on behalf of our members.



Sharon Hobbs, AVVA President



Cathy Keister and Beverly Pounds

Training and Education

AVVA National has, over the years, created several training visuals. We are working on more.

The following is a list of the current tools:

- **Using the AVVA Website**
Power Point Presentation
- **Recruiting and Retaining Members**
Power Point Presentation/Printable Document
- **Incorporating a State or Chapter**
Power Point Presentation/Printable Document
- **Holding Elections, Chapters**
Power Point Presentation/Printable Document
- **Holding Elections, States**
Power Point Presentation/Printable Document
- **The AVVA Vista Program**
Power Point Presentation/Printable Document
- **How to Set Up a Townhall Meeting (AO)**
Power Point Presentation
- **Training document for new board members, along with training meeting after elections**



Dorothea Di Giovanni
 Ardmore, PA — Chapter 67
 Longest Active Life Member
 (since 11/1/1982)

Nancy Switzer
 Rochester, NY
 Region II — Chapter 20
 1st AVVA National President



Jeff White
 Philadelphia, PA
 Region II — Chapter 466
 1st Dual Member and
 Lifetime member of AVVA
 (Past President of
 PA VVA State Council)

Frederick Steinkirchner
 Pittsburgh, PA
 The oldest AVVA member from Chapter 862
 Life Member since 2016
 107 Years Young
 Pictured with Bobbie Morris, President AVVA, Chapter 862

In Memory Plaque



Ruth Coder Fitzgerald spearheaded a national campaign to place a memory plaque at the Vietnam Wall in Washington, DC honoring veterans who fought in Vietnam and died later of combat-related causes, such as the effects of Agent Orange.

Fitzgerald was certain that her brother, John Coder, an Air Force helicopter pilot in Vietnam died of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 1992, was a victim of Agent Orange exposure.

Her determination and diligence for 8 years resulted with an act of Congress to place the 'In Memory Plaque' at the National Mall in Washington, DC.

In November of 2004, the 'In Memory Plaque' was dedicated to all those who died from physical and/or psychological illnesses as a result of their service in Vietnam.

Soon after the dedication the plaque began to deteriorate and was in need of repair or replacement. In approximately 2011-2012, the staff at the Arts Council was approached by two widows (AVVA members) to plea for restoration of the plaque.



To restore the dignity of the plaque, the redesign had to have the approval of three government agencies: Council of Fine Arts (CFA), the National Park Service (NPS) who would maintain it, and the DC Planning Commission (DCPC).

Architect J.C. Cummings created two beautiful designs. Both were rejected by the CFA. We later learned that a redesign that might possibly upstage The Wall would never be accepted. So, a past member of the CFA Board

gave us advice on what would be accepted: slightly elevated, no more than 4 inches.

In 2015, Vietnam Veteran Memorial Fund (VVMF) contacted AVVA President, Sharon Hobbs, to suggest a partnership to complete the repair. Jim Knotts, CEO of VVMF, gave comprehensive assistance needed to help AVVA complete the task. With VVMF's clout, assistance and financial support, the proposal for the plaque's repair was accepted in 2017. Materials and stone had been accepted. The Plaque's completion took another year.



That memorial was restored and rests in the grounds approximately between the Vietnam Memorial Wall and the statue of the Three Soldiers.



The re-dedication was on Memorial Day 2019. Although the design was not what AVVA first envisioned, it is now easy to find, and has a presence.

The plaque reads: “In memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice.”

A full history of this memorial can be found online by searching with keywords: “Vietnam In Memory Plaque”.



Before



After



AVVA 2018 Board of Directors

(L-R) Terri Rangel, Joanne Blum, Nina Schloffel, Fran Davis, Kathy Andras, Sharon Hobbs, John Birch, Elayne Mackey, Kaye Gardner, Casey Ferrell, Cecilia Essenmacher, Nancy Rekowski, Jeri Wallis



The AVVA Presidents

Mary Miller, Nancy Switzer, Sharon Hobbs, Elaine Simmons

A Very Special Thank You to:

Sharon Hobbs
Research

Joanna Henshaw
Research and Development

Wayne Gregory
Dave Simmons
Photographers

Cecilia Essenmacher
Mary Miller
Bobbie Morris
Elaine Simmons
Nancy Switzer
Contributors

Bernie Rekowski
Graphic Design

Nancy Rekowski
Chair

And to all who contribute their time and energy towards the promotion of our events and activities.

“Together Always”



This page is intentionally blank.



ASSOCIATES OF VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC.

8719 Colesville Road, Suite 100 | Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-585-4000 | www.avva.org