

## Spousal & Survivor Benefit Program Committee Report

July 21, 2023

### Committee Members:

Jennifer Ellis, Region 8 Director – Chair S&S Benefit Program

Kathy Andres, National Vice President, S&SB Advisor

Bobbi Morris, Region 2 Director

Hope Summers, Region 3 Director

Jean Kloos, Treasurer Chapter 805, Oregon

Ora Wall, Chapter 630, Louisiana

Gail Dubois Broussard, Chapter 630, Louisiana

The Spousal and Survivor Benefit Program Committee activities were placed on hold due to the untimely death of my husband, Bruce Ellis on November 26, 2022. Our next meeting was scheduled for that following week in November but I was in no shape to continue with our plans. This experience has definitely given me a unique perspective on the loss of yet another close loved one and the consequences of their untimely departure. Oftentimes it is the slow goodbye from a long term illness that can end one's life. Then there is the sudden, what just happened, goodbye, that can throw us into shock which can last quite some time. Either way, grief is a difficult process and as much preparation as possible that can be made is definitely a life saver. AVVA's paper safe or other similar tools are extremely helpful along with attending S&SB Seminars.

Not long after his passing, on March 9, 2023, I along with some of Chapter 805 Leadership, participated in From Heartbreak To Hope training sessions with Nina Schloffel leading. This was timely as I was able to have a deeper understanding of the need for this type of support in AVVA. I believe that it is imperative to implement this program as many more of our Vietnam Veterans are dying at an alarming rate, and I mean alarming. Our devoted Honor Guard is performing multiple memorials daily at our local National Cemetery, 2-3 per day. The need for more Spousal and Survivor Benefit Seminars and From Heartbreak to Hope

support groups is enormous. We have assigned a chairperson to facilitate the seminars on a regular basis here in Douglas County.

In addition, Nina is very equipped to coach the FHTH support group trainings, both Sessions 1 and 2. The information is easy to implement and will be rewarding to eventually participate in. During the Region 8/9 Pre-Convention Conference I was honored to step up and relay the information on her behalf as she was unable to attend. In doing so I learned even more as I dove deeper in studying the material. I was able to gently share my own experience of grief and point out some of the challenges I faced along the way. These subjects are difficult for many to discuss with their spouses and in some cases even harder to implement.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you on our committee. I appreciate your support during this difficult time. I know that many of you have had your own loss to deal with and I appreciate all that you have done to continue our efforts. I hope we can all be a genuine support to each other and to our members as we are all part of the process of healing.

Jennifer Ellis, Region 8 Director  
Spousal & Survivor Benefit Program Chair