

REGION 8 REPORT

September 2026

Region 8 is flourishing with new State Representatives at the helm such as Peggy Chillemi in Oregon and Millie Pattison in Alaska. I have been working with them, training them to understand their roles and setting goals. Peggy is focusing on the VA Mission Act and educating our veterans on the law and its Community Care services availability. Steve Jordan, Washington State Representative and Willa Burgess in Montana continue to maintain their positions and assist Veterans throughout their states.

I represented AVVA at two separate Veteran Expos, one in Roseburg, OR and one in Lincoln City, OR as Regional Director establishing new contacts throughout the state. One surprising encounter was with a veteran and his spouse who live in Idaho and would like to join AVVA and possibly become our POC for that area. The expo in Lincoln City was a week long event held at Chinook Winds Casino and Resort celebrating our Veterans and First Responders during the week of 9/11 Remembrance in NW Oregon. We manned a station in the expo tent representing AVVA as we distributed information folders, pamphlets and crisis line products. I thoroughly enjoy meeting veterans and their spouses or widows, one on one, supporting them with information and direction. Often times just listening and encouraging them is what they need most. The Expo tents had multiple VSO's available to assist with individual cases. One Lady stood out as she had recently lost her husband and wasn't sure how to handle life beyond. The From Heartbreak to Hope training kicked in and I was able to communicate with her regarding Challenges, Victories, Self Care and Homework (which I always relay has no due date). She was in tears with an abundance of appreciation as she felt as if she actually had land legs again.

I have recently been invited to Washington State to share some of our programs with VVA at a monthly Hero Café and additionally planning a Spousal and Survivor Benefit seminar in Seattle. Additionally, Alaska VVA State Representative, Craig Wade, is planning a Town Hall for the Aging Veteran in March of 2027 and has invited me to participate.

I do want to comment on our Leadership Conference last August in Jacksonville, Florida. First of all, it was an honor participating as an Interim Chaplain and praying over our luncheon. Also thanks to Barbara Coen, Mary Ann Newman and Kathy Andres, as the business card holder gifts were a success! I continue to hold out hope for our organizations and their continued building up financially, with mutual honor and respect.

Jennifer Ellis

Region 8 Director