

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

As AVVA moves forward into the new term, it is time for us come out of the "support shadow" and begin our quest to not only support the Vietnam Veteran but to **enhance, engage, and enroll**.

Enhance AVVA's presence in the community. Often times VVA members are stretched too thin to reach all areas of need. As the Associate members, we can help reach a little farther by volunteering in the Community. **Suggestions:** (1) Volunteer to represent the VVA Chapter on a Committee for the upcoming military holiday celebrations; this way, you know that the Vietnam Vet will be recognized and you may be responsible for building bridges where gaps often exist between Service Organizations. (2) Volunteer at the local Veteran's Outpatient Clinic or Community Kitchen. Associates are an extension of the VVA Chapter; our presence can enrich and promote their visibility in the community.

Engage by attending Chapter functions. Attending meetings is definitely part of our support mechanism; however, we can do more. Fundraisers and membership drives are necessary for Chapter survival; Associates should be visible during these times. Potential members need to know that their spouses are welcome and that they can become an active part of the organization as well. We promote the "family atmosphere" so we should live it too.

Engage by keeping the Affiliate up-to-date. Each month the Chapter Representative (or Point-of-Contact) should include an article in the Chapter's newsletter. This doesn't have to be a 5-page document, just one or two paragraphs on what is happening with AVVA. If nothing is happening, then say so; but don't let "nothing is happening" keep you from communicating. A regular note to the Associates lets them know that they are important and that their membership matters. We, as a corporation, may not have the financial means to offer incentives to renew membership, but we can give a few minutes of our time each month.

What? Your Chapter does not have a monthly newsletter? Then maybe this should be your next quest? Ask permission from the Chapter BOD; ask for printing and mailing costs; then go to work! Start with a one-pager. Ask the President to submit an article; list any upcoming events with dates and times. Along with your AVVA article, that should be a full page. Oh, and be sure that all AVVA members are included in your mail out.

Enroll others. Adding members to the AVVA roster is a wonderful way to tap into resources that may be hidden. Formal organization empowers us to unite and learn from other AVVA chapters. Belonging to a large group opens opportunities to share ideas, successes, and failures. It is also an avenue to extend membership into the community who, in most areas of the country, want to belong.

Enrollment possibilities. Unlike VVA there are no restrictions as to who can be a member of AVVA. There are no age limits. Potential members do not have to be associated with a VVA member in any way. **REMEMBER:** We are an Association- not an auxiliary- which means anyone can join: family, friends, neighbors, community, and veterans from other eras.

Enroll Spouses (or significant others): The first place to begin recruiting is within the Chapter itself. Support for spouses comes in all shapes and sizes, but the one thing that Vietnam Vets have is a **bond:** a bond that cannot be broken or replaced; a bond that we as supporters may never understand; but nevertheless, it is real. They find solace by being in the company of other veterans. **AVVA is our support group- our bond- and sometimes, our means of coping.**

Enroll Family: Family is a great resource for membership. Like yourself, they love the person who you are supporting, so families are willing to share in your reinforcement of that person. Children, grandchildren, brothers, and sisters are all eligible.

Enroll the Community: Over the past few years, community support with the Vietnam Vet has become very positive. Friends and neighbors want to become supporters. Fundraisers and membership drives for VVA are perfect times to recruit AVVA members too. Did you know that there Korean Vets, Desert Storm Vets, and Iraq Freedom Vets who hold life memberships in AVVA?

Enroll the VVA Chapter Members: Last, but certainly not least, is the VVA Chapter itself. Although, anyone eligible for VVA membership cannot vote or hold office in AVVA, they can return our support for them by joining AVVA. After all, support should be mutual existence.

Advancement in AVVA begins with you and me. It doesn't take huge numbers to make a difference. It takes one person with a vision. (Two people can make a phenomenal impact on your chapter's progression.) AVVA wants to make a difference; AVVA asks you to grow.

Remember: we are only limited by our own uncertainty and indifference. Will you be the catalyst behind your AVVA chapter's growth?

Together Always,

Sharon Hobbs, President