

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR, VFW PROGRAMS ON COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORTING

Mid-year reports covering the period May 1 to October 31 are due to National VFW Programs Director on December 1.

End of year reports covering the period November 1 to April 30 are due to National VFW Programs Director on June 1.

Actual money amount expended for Post or Auxiliary funds in support of community service projects; in-kind dollar value of donated items to non-members or use of Post home by a community service organization, and the use of the IRS authorized \$.14 per mile for use of a volunteer's automobile for charitable work, are some important dollars to report. Please make sure you include hours and dollars for hospital work and all VFW and Ladies Auxiliary Recognition Programs (i.e. Voice of Democracy, Patriot's Pen, etc.).

The National Ladies Auxiliary Headquarters requested Department Auxiliary representatives to cooperate with VFW Department representative in providing the above information to you.

Community service, as defined by the National Community Service Trust Act "encompasses any human act serving the common good; in the interest of the community." Elsewhere, community service is further defined as "a service that is performed for the benefit of the public or its institutions."

The VFW subscribes to the above, but adds that, for the purposes of volunteer recognition VFW community service must be performed by and as a representative of the VFW for an organization outside of the VFW and its Auxiliaries, and must be verified by an authorized representative of that organization. As it is the intent of VFW community service to impact a broad

spectrum of the local community, credit will only be given for a maximum of 1,000 hours to any single outside organization within a twelve-month period.

In addition, efforts performed for the benefit of the Post or Auxiliary's should not be considered community service. An example of this type of effort would be maintenance, upkeep or beautification of the Post home, cooking or serving a meal for a Post fundraiser, or working on bingo night. Additionally, efforts that are part of the normal requirements of a Post or Auxiliary would not be considered community service. Examples of this would be providing an honor guard for a member's funeral, flying the American Flag, and conducting Flag retirement programs (unless this is performed for the entire community).

A particularly controversial area in VFW community service is service to one's church. Generally, these efforts are not considered community service for two reasons: 1) they are not performed for the community at large; 2) they are part of an individual's service to their faith and not to the VFW. The exception to this would be performing the same service for all the churches, etc. in a given community.

Analysis of the most recent Community Service Reports revealed that too many Posts are not clear on how community service hours and dollars should be reported.

HOURS: When the Post reports to the Department, they should list the hours of community service performed by the Post, affiliated Cootie Scratch, Ladies Auxiliary, Men's Auxiliary, Sons of the VFW and Junior Girls for that reporting period. **Only volunteer service hours benefiting the community are to be reported.** Volunteer hours committed to projects and activities benefiting the Post and its affiliated units listed above cannot be reported.

MONEY: The money that should be reported are the **dollars donated or expended by the members** in the performance of the community service hours reported, plus \$.14 per mile for each mile driven by the volunteers.

DO NOT REPORT: The value of the hours worked is a calculation made at the national level only. Posts and Departments should never report any figures derived from the value of hours worked.

IMPORTANCE OF ACCURATE REPORTING: It is of the utmost importance that VFW Posts report their volunteer hours and especially their donations accurately. A Post that inflates the amounts of money they donate, intentionally or otherwise, may place their not-for-profit status in jeopardy.