

**Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**  
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**By 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice – Lynda Griffin**

**HISTORY OF THE FORMAL VETERANS AFFAIRS & REHABILITATION VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

Since World War I, the women of the American Legion Auxiliary have taken an active role in the care and rehabilitation of veterans. These early efforts, however, were largely uncoordinated and not integrated into a formal healthcare plan or program. It wasn't until 1930 that care and rehabilitation for veterans were integrated under a unified Veterans Affairs program similar to what we know today.

During World War II, it was determined that a need existed for a coordinated volunteer effort to direct the activity of committed individuals and hundreds of service and welfare groups such as the Auxiliary. This need developed into a formal volunteer program providing aid and assistance to members of the armed forces injured in war.

By the end of the war, the immediate focal point of interest for many volunteer groups seemed lost; however, leaders of these groups realized that the training these volunteers had received during wartime shouldn't be lost, and a new outlet for their efforts had to be identified.

Since these volunteers had focused specifically on aiding and assisting Service members, it was only natural that leadership of the groups they represented decided to focus their time, skill, and effort in peacetime, helping care for a new group of men and women now considered veterans.

On April 8, 1946, representatives of several veterans service organizations, including The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary, met in Washington, D.C., with the Assistant Administrator for Special Services. This meeting resulted in the still new Veterans Administration developing regulations and procedures making a provision for the use of volunteers through the VA Special Services program for hospitalized veterans. Before this meeting concluded, their first VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Advisory Committee was formed.

In later years, as more wars ensued, the American Legion Auxiliary heeded the call for volunteers. In 1964, the Auxiliary inaugurated a new program called Field Service Volunteers. Answering a need and call to action, in 1974 the ALA introduced the Home Service program which recognized and supplemented the care given to America's veterans.

Regardless of where service takes place, American Legion Auxiliary members are known across the country as a go-to resource for this country's veterans and their families. The Auxiliary membership is proud of its legacy of volunteer service, and it is our goal to continue our valuable contribution in the years to come. Both programs continue to reflect our care, commitment, and compassion for veterans.

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