

**Department of Arizona VA&R
Western Division Progress Report
Marge Christianson, Chairman
October 1, 2024**

The Department of Arizona held 3 Veteran Creative Arts Festivals (at each VAMC in Arizona).

The Phoenix VA brought in professional artists to judge the works while veterans and their guests enjoyed art and snacks. People's Choice voting was a hit and the VAMC Director came to the award presentation. As a co-sponsoring organization, it was an honor to address all the attendees, thank them and inform them about the ALA's contribution.

The Tucson VCAF had a "Wine Tasting" theme (really grape juice) that added an air of elegance to the works. Veterans, guests, staff and volunteers enjoyed the charcuterie plate & "wine" while viewing the art. New this year were display boards, donated by the Auxiliary, for the Creative Writing submission which gave them far more visibility than just lying on tables. The winning art was then put on display at the Tucson Mall so the public could view it!

The Prescott VCAF was held for 3 days at the Yavapai County Fair for the second year. This enabled far more "pedestrian" traffic than previous years. A beautiful "palette-designed" cake was served during the award presentation.

Work is underway for three Gift Shops.

The Phoenix VAMC is under construction so Post 1, the nearest to the hospital, will host the event. Work is being done to provide transportation between the hospital and the Post as well as widely promoting the event in local businesses.

The Tucson VAMC, due in large part to our VAVS Rep, has approved a traditional gift shop at the VAMC. This event will include the veterans in the hospital as well as assist the homeless veteran group on the last day of the shop.

The Prescott VAMC is assisting with gift selection for those in the Community Living Center. Volunteers, including the entire Legion Family, will then go room to room with treats, gifts and good cheer. Following that there will be a "assembly line" gift selection for those in the Domiciliary, along with food and entertainment.

Work is underway to receive "Wish Lists" from the 4 State Homes in Arizona. Past Department President Barbara White selected the State Homes as her special project two years ago, so funds are now available! Five therapeutic recliners will be delivered next week to the Phoenix State Home! Unfortunately, personnel changeover and limited resources at the State Homes are making this effort a bit of a challenge. In the meantime, birthday cards, birthday parties and the opening of the new Flagstaff Home are occurring.

Wreaths Across America is being promoted via the Department website and the popular Department Ring Your Bell Facebook page (which has 1,200 members).

As always, Units in Arizona have been busy supporting our veterans. Unit 107 held a “bachelor auction” to raise funds to the Phoenix VAMC. Unit 16 is gathering warm clothing for veterans for the upcoming cold weather in southern Arizona. Auxiliary Units are supporting events like Stand downs and seminars in and out of their Post Homes. Junior members are distributing poppies and helping at fundraising pancake breakfasts.

The Department VA&R team is putting an emphasis on re-engaging members in the VAMC/State Homes. Card signing events for veteran birthdays (the Phoenix State home delivers cards to each veteran on their birthday) and upcoming holidays are occurring. Southern Arizona Units, coordinated by the Department Chairman, take turns holding a monthly birthday party for veterans at the Tucson State Home. Promotion of VCAF increased participation and the same is hoped for the Gift Shops.

We are excited about the coming year and what we can do to support our veterans.