

At the time of writing I am at the National Convention in Kentucky having just listened to this year's National Ambassadors promoting their programs. One clear message from their promotions and from several of the workshops I've attended is that the reporting we do on our program activities remains a critical part of our process. It's probably true to say that most of us get satisfaction from the act of helping our Veterans and their families and not from doing the paperwork – however that paperwork is extremely important. It tells the VFW what we, as an Auxiliary, are doing to support their mission and in turn the statistics generated are used by the VFW on fact Sheets to maintain our access to political leaders and support our position with the IRS. While I would prefer to get reports in our online system I will of course accept reports in any form You can use the old paper form or just give me a call if you prefer. My contact details can be found on the state roster under member login.

One final thing on reporting.....if you submit a VFW report, please make sure that my email is in your email contact list. Then, if I have a follow up question, my email to you will hopefully get to your inbox and not your junk mail. I have sent out many clarifying questions already this year but have not received many replies. If a report you submitted has not shown up as approved on the dashboard, it maybe that I am awaiting a reply!

The National Program Award for this year will be for the Most Outstanding activity and/or event to increase awareness of suicide and mental health for veterans, military and their families. This year one Auxiliary in each of the 10 program divisions will receive a \$25 award. Please note that National will no longer be giving citations to Auxiliaries for completing certain tasks as they have in the past. Your entry for the National Award needs to be to me by March 31, 2025.

Another variation to the VFS program that I would like to highlight to start the year is the focus on Child Care for Active Duty Service Members, In the past we have been encouraged to assist those that may be caring for others by maybe sitting with their loved one for a few hours while they take a break or offering to take on a task they don't have time to do. This year we are encouraged to give back to active military families with young children. It could be by babysitting or by donating some baby items such as diapers. For those with experience of having youngsters around it may be as simple as giving some friendly advice or a sympathetic ear to a stressed parent.

Until next month.....

Helen Steinberg

