



American Legion Auxiliary  
Department of Virginia

Are you a Caregiver Hidden Hero? The National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee would like the assistance of Auxiliary members to volunteer to serve as a peer mentor to caregivers within the Military and Veteran Caregivers Network (MVCN).

Serving as a peer mentor allows you to share your experiences and emotional support while providing companionship. Please consider becoming a peer mentor if you are a family member, friend, neighbor who currently (or previously) provides care, assistance, or manages the care of a wounded, ill or injured service member or Veteran. Below is the information from National Headquarters on volunteering as a peer mentor for the Military and Veteran Caregivers Network. Please consider becoming a peer mentor. Contact me at 434-836-8101 or email at [sabrossman@comcast.net](mailto:sabrossman@comcast.net) by January 14, 2016 if you would like to become a peer mentor or obtain further information on the program. This program is an excellent way to show potential members that the American Legion Auxiliary is committed to "Service, not Self"

A special thank you to all Auxiliary members who are caregivers to our Veterans and service members.

Sallie Rossman  
Department of Virginia  
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Chairman  
434-836-8101 (h)/ 434-429-4150 (c)



## **ARE YOU THE NEXT VOLUNTEER?**

by Penny Maklary, Committee Member  
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation  
[ahhpenny@aol.com](mailto:ahhpenny@aol.com)

**Are you a Hidden Hero?**

We asked that question before. Did you help us get the word out? We sure hope so. If not, let us refresh the purpose of the **MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVER NETWORK (MVCN)** and then ask for your help again to reach the Auxiliary's goal of 500 or more volunteers.

### **REFRESH YOUR KNOWLEDGE**

The goals of the **MVCN** are to reduce caregiver isolation; increase caregiver connectedness; increase caregiver engagement, hopefulness and wellbeing; and increase caregiver knowledge and skills.

A caregiver is an individual, who may be a family member, friend or neighbor, who provides a broad range of care and assistance for or manages the care of, an individual with a disabling wound, injury or illness (physical or mental).

The Auxiliary's principal commitment to Hidden Heroes is to provide volunteers for the Military and Veteran Caregiver Network (**MVCN**) by identifying a significant number of Auxiliary members to be trained and serve as peer mentors. Our nation's wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans count on their caregivers and they are now counting on the American Legion Auxiliary. As the world's largest patriotic women's service organization, a significant number of Auxiliary's members have experience caring for a service member or veteran. There are three programs an Auxiliary member can become involved with in the **MILITARY AND VETERAN CAREGIVER NETWORK**: mentoring, community support groups and online community. Volunteers will be peer mentors, group facilitators or online moderators. There is an initial training for all volunteers.

### **PEER MENTOR**

The American Legion Auxiliary encourages its members to sign up to be a **MVCN** peer mentor. Peer mentors engage in a one-to-one relationship with their assigned caregiver. Volunteers will offer advice, tips, emotional support and a listening ear.

A peer mentor supports another caregiver through "companionship": A peer mentor is not responsible for providing direct services to military service members or veterans receiving care. To volunteer as a **MVCN** peer mentor, you must currently be, or have been, a caregiver for a wounded, ill or injured service member or veteran. As part of the application process, you will need to demonstrate your current status or previous experience as a military or veteran caregiver by providing documents for the purpose of vetting only.

The **MVCN** has established the vetting process to protect all caregivers and caregiver peer supporters.

Each peer mentor/mentee relationship is different, but on average we estimate 30 minutes to four hours per week of engagement. Members should expect to commit to at least one year to volunteer as a peer mentor. However, if personal reasons require you to end your service early, that is understandable.

The mentor/mentee relationship may be maintained in-person, by phone, email, chat, text or a combination of communication methods.

All mentors will receive online training that can be done at your own pace in addition to a live, interactive Web-Based Training or classroom training. This training will give you the knowledge and skills needed to guide you. The online training takes approximately four to six hours, at your pace and the classroom training is approximately four to eight hours.

Caregiver mentees will choose their mentors based upon the profile that mentors provide. The more information mentors enter into their profile, the more likely they will be matched.

If a mentee does not feel they have a good match, they may end the match and can request a new

mentor. It is the same with the mentor. Mentors will be included in the **MVCN** online community with other mentors who can help with questions. Mentors will also have access to **MVCN** staff. Mentors who join the **MVCN** online community will be able to connect with other caregivers, whether you are a mentor or mentee. You can voice any concerns or ask questions on group pages or chats.

You can apply to serve as a peer mentor by completing the MVCN peer mentor application at <https://milvetcaregivernetwork.org/engage-in-mentoring/be-a-mentor>. From the homepage, click on "Mentoring" and then "Become a Mentor." Once you complete the peer mentor application, **MVCN** staff will review your information and contact you with more information on the next steps in becoming a mentor. If you have the time and energy, you can mentor more than one caregiver.

If you are a caregiver and need a peer mentor, go to <https://milvetcaregivernetwork.org/wngage-in-mentoring/get-a-mentor>. On the homepage, click on "Mentoring" and then "Request a Mentor."

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1708 Commonwealth Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23230