



Stanford United Students for Veterans' Health Newsletter

USVH Quick Facts

- 🇺🇸 Serves long-term care patients in Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospitals
- 🇺🇸 Founded in 1994
- 🇺🇸 Headquartered in the Haas Center for Public Service
- 🇺🇸 5 chapters nationwide in:
Worcester, Massachusetts
Santa Clara University
Stanford University
San Francisco State University
University of Texas
- 🇺🇸 Over 62 active volunteers in the Stanford chapter
- 🇺🇸 Volunteering shifts happening every day of the week

USVH National Board 2015-2016

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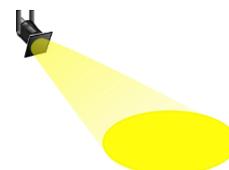
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Join Stanford USVH!

7 Questions with Andre Vanier, Co-Founder of USVH

What inspired you to found USVH?

In the spring of 1994, my brother was a Stanford student volunteering in the Alzheimer's Ward at the Palo Alto Veterans Affairs Administration Hospital. He discovered a group of patients suffering from loneliness. He made a vow that these patients, and others like them, would never know such despair again. With that promise, he and I launched United Students for Veterans' Health (USVH). The Stanford program began with 35 volunteers dedicating their afternoons and evenings to interact with the veteran patients by going on walks, playing games, and having quiet chats. This call to serve started to echo widely and USVH grew to expand to other parts of the country.

Currently, we recruit through talking to dorms and large-size lecture classes, posting flyers around campus, and emailing students. How did you recruit volunteers in the early days of USVH?

Pretty much the exact same way. The only difference back then is that messages got left on my brother's tape cassette answering machine.

What were some challenges of establishing USVH and growing it into a nationwide volunteering group?

Inspiring students to volunteer with hospitalized veterans can be challenging. The average age of volunteers in the VA system is over 75 years old. The VA has consistently struggled to activate younger generations to volunteer. USVH has faced the same struggle. Students have a myriad of academic and social demands that compete for their time. Indeed, the primary challenge we typically face is in identifying student leaders who are willing to commit to our cause. But once we find such leaders, we can provide them with tremendous support to help them found volunteer chapters. For many of those founders,

USVH is the most meaningful experience of their time on campus.

How did volunteering with USVH shape your Stanford experience?

Volunteering with USVH was the single best thing I did in college. I formed friendships with several vets, including one patient named Bill. Bill was originally from Ohio. He served in WW II and after the war was over he came back and became a bus driver. His wife had passed on some years prior and he had a beautiful painted picture of her in his small room. I can still that picture now. I used to spend hours just listening to Bill talk about life after the war. Those conversations were both a welcome reprieve from class-work and a powerful reminder that life on campus was just a very narrow cross section of real life.

In June of my sophomore year, my parents visited Stanford right before we were getting ready to leave for summer break. My brother and I took my parents to visit the VA to meet the patients. I'll never forget what happened when my parents said goodbye to Bill. He looked at them and said with emotion in his voice, "You know, we really miss these guys when they're gone."

How has your involvement with USVH contributed to your professional career?

USVH is rather unique on campus in that it has always modeled itself as a non-profit organization rather than a typical student group. The experience of co-founding USVH helped me realize how much I enjoy working with people to make new ideas come to life. That experience is part of what led me to become an entrepreneur and co-found two internet companies.

How would you like to see USVH progress in the future?

The work that USVH has done in the last 20 years has been significant. You've



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- Andre Vanier, co-founder of United Students for Veterans' Health

touched the lives of many thousands of lonely hospitalized veterans through the service of so many student volunteers. In so doing, we've made a real impact. But the need is so much greater. There are over one hundred VA hospitals located in proximity to a college campus where USVH could take root. As we look to the next 20 years, I would like to see USVH seize that opportunity to expand our service.

Would you like to share any words of wisdom and/or encouragement to our current USVH volunteers?

"USVH is about giving back to those who have given so much." Some days you may feel that volunteering is really hard. Having worked with hundreds of student leaders and volunteers over the last 20 years, I can tell you with confidence that the time you invest volunteering with USVH is absolutely priceless. Later in life you'll come to see with even greater clarity the significance of what you have done. Some patients might not be able to communicate back warmth or appreciation. But your impact is very real and the generosity you are showing through your service is your treasure.

Recap: USVH Veterans' Day BBQ

Stanford USVH held a Veterans' Day BBQ on Saturday, November 7, 2015 at the Menlo Park Division of the Palo Alto Health Care System.



Planned by Directors of Special Events Montana Morris and Alyssa Morrison, the barbecue served to celebrate and remember our veterans.

Twelve USVH volunteers came to support the event and spent the morning raising tents, setting tables with patriotic decorations, and preparing food for the BBQ. At noon, volunteers

wheeled over 30 veterans from their wards to the main outdoor patio. Everyone enjoyed freshly-grilled hamburgers and hotdogs, lemonade, and various appetizers while listening to live guitar music.

Thank you volunteers, and thank you veterans!



Spotlights

Health: Alzheimer's Disease

According to a study published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*, veterans are at elevated risk for dementia. Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, is characterized by serious memory loss and behavioral changes. Found mostly in adults 65 and older, Alzheimer's is a progressive disease, with late-stage Alzheimer's resulting in an individual's loss of awareness of his or her environment. Although there is no current cure, VA health care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs offers a range of services for veterans with Alzheimer's.

Sources:

http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_what_is_alzheimers.asp
http://www.alz.org/documents_custom/military_risk_factors_alzheimer_s_and_dementia_final_6-17-14.pdf
http://www.va.gov/geriatrics/Alzheimers_And_Dementia_Care.asp





Over 9 million veterans served during the Vietnam War era.

History: The 1972 Christmas Bombing Campaign

Near the end of 1972, President Richard Nixon ordered the controversial 1972 Christmas Bombing campaign in an effort to speed negotiations between North Vietnam and the United States. Beginning on December 18, roughly 2000 strike aircraft dropped 20,000 tons of bombs in Hanoi. Over 1600 civilian lives were claimed. Stiff Vietnamese resistance downed almost 30 US warplanes, and

some American aircrews refused to fly their missions altogether. Although almost universally condemned as genocide, the New Year following the Christmas Bombing Campaign saw Hanoi and the United States reach an accord on Jan. 27, 1973.

Sources:

<http://www.nationalvietnamveteransfoundation.org/statistics.htm>

<http://militaryhistorynow.com/2014/12/15/the-war-on-christmas-15-famous-battles-that-were-fought-over-the-holidays/>

Want to Get Involved with Stanford USVH?

Hey guys! We're a volunteer organization that helps out at the Menlo Park VA. We're looking for as many new recruits as possible right now to help support and better the lives of our veterans.

- * We volunteer 2 hours per week.
- * We provide carpools for getting to and from the VA.
- * The timing is very flexible (14 different times are offered per week).
- * Leadership positions are available.
- * It's a great way to give back to the community and do something positive!
- * It's an opportunity for hands-on experience with veterans suffering from PTSD, Alzheimer's, Dementia, and Parkinson's.
- * It's meaningful clinical experience.



The USVH is a truly amazing program, and it brightens the days of everyone involved. The veterans light up the moment they see us walk through the door, and volunteers always leave with smiles on their faces.

If you are at all interested in applying or have any questions at all, please email us at carlyo@stanford.edu. Applications will be released during the first week of winter quarter!

Thanks for reading!