

VFW Department of New Jersey Community Service Report Guidelines

How a Post interacts with its community determines the relevancy of the VFW. Someone once said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." The VFW and its ability to impact veterans, youth, political issues, patriotism, civic pride, volunteerism, and almost anything you can name, is directly dependent upon the Post being recognized as a caring and involved participant in the community. Hopefully, this guide will provide some ideas as to how a Post can create and grow the kind of reputation that will benefit their community and themselves. The impact on the community is immeasurable. The benefit to the Post is new members, more effective fundraising, greater participation in events and tremendous goodwill. The Post is, for most Americans, the only thing they know about the VFW. Make sure those Americans in your community have a favorable opinion of our great organization and our veterans.

This is a guide to assist you in completing your Community Service Report. ONE QUESTION: Why do we have to report these activities? ANSWER: We are a non-profit organization, and we can justify our non-profit status by reporting our activities. A copy of this report should be on file at your Post in the event you are audited by the IRS. Additionally we use this data to effectively advocate in Trenton & Washington DC for you, your fellow veterans, troops & families.

It is of the utmost importance that VFW Posts and Auxiliaries report their volunteer hours and especially their donations accurately. A Post that inflates the amounts of money or time they donate, intentionally or otherwise, may place their not-for-profit status in jeopardy. Conversely, failure to report donations or volunteer hours could also place the post's non-profit status in jeopardy.

The reporting period is July 1 through June 30. You must report at least quarterly but take care to report per the All American or All State guidelines for that year if you plan on competing in those programs.

What is the definition of "community service"?

It is easier to describe what is not a community service than what is. Community service is any activity performed by members of the VFW, Auxiliary, Cooties, Riders, or other VFW volunteers, while representing the VFW. The service must be under the umbrella of the VFW and not while employed or volunteering for another organization. A good rule of thumb is if the service is held at your post or the members are wearing VFW covers or apparel when off location, then it is VFW community service. Any aid, assistance or event held for veterans, troops, or families as a VFW member or VFW activity is a community service. Parades, veteran/patriotic ceremonies, color guard presentations, or VFW representation at community events – fairs – or festivals would be considered community service. Non-compensated use of VFW facilities by other non-profit or government organizations is a community service and both the hours and cost to the post (utilities/clean-up) should be reported as community service.

DEPARTMENT EVENTS - Include Beverly and Finns Point Memorial Services, and the Christmas or Holiday parties annually sponsored events by the Department at the VA and NJ DMAVA medical and home facilities. It also includes Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen contests and awards ceremonies.

DONATIONS: Donations made by the post should be reported on the community activity form.

What is not a community service:

- Church activities such as attending or conducting services as a member of the church, pastor, or usher as they are part of an individual's service to their faith and not to the VFW.
- Volunteer fire or EMT service.
- Activities as a paid employee.
- Maintenance, upkeep or beautification of the Post home, cooking or serving a meal for a Post fundraiser, or working on bingo night.
- Poppy Drives are not community service although the funds collected should be reported when donated out from the Relief Fund.
- Efforts that are part of the normal requirements of a Post or Auxiliary would not be considered community service. Examples of this would be providing an honor guard for a member's funeral, flying the American Flag at the post, or holding the required monthly meeting.
- The canteen / hall rentals or the costs of their operation.
- Conventions, conferences, meetings, or training.
- ***Recycling will no longer be considered a community activity.***

DO NOT REPORT: The value of the volunteer hours worked; the value is a calculation made at the national level only. Posts and Departments should never report any figures derived from the value of hours worked.

FUNDRAISERS: Fundraisers to support a specific charitable organization or purpose are community activities. The cost and volunteer hours to host the event along with the funds donated from the event should be reported.

Nonspecific fundraisers such as "for veteran causes" or regular dart leagues, corn hole/horseshoe tournaments, ect; are generally not community activities. Any funds raised from those events later donated would be reported on the community activity report.

HOURS: When the Post reports to the Department, they should list the hours of community service performed by the Post, affiliated Cootie, Auxiliary, and Rider Groups for that reporting period. The time spent by a member driving to and from the event along with 14 cents per mile driven in service can be included. Additionally, the hours the post spent planning and preparing for the event should be reported.

MONETARY OR MATERIAL DONATIONS: The money/donations that should be reported are the amount & value donated or expended by the post in the performance of the community service hours reported, plus \$.14 per mile for each mile driven by the volunteers. Material donations would be something such as food, clothing, or other items acquired by the post (by purchase or donation) and given to others as a charitable gift. A post can claim the retail value of the items on the report.

If you have any questions, please contact the State Adjutant