

# Leveraging AMVETS' Investment in National Commander's Tours

*"DCI brought fresh thinking to the Commander's Tours that has benefited everyone. DCI's efforts have greatly enhanced the positive media exposure for AMVETS while supporting the Commanders' focus on key veterans' issues in facilities across the country."*

-- Velma Hart, AMVETS National Finance Director



## The Challenge:

Although AMVETS is one of the nation's premier veterans service organizations, it is essentially a community-based group with activities and programs supported by approximately 200,000 members through 1,300 posts. AMVETS also counts on the active involvement of its Auxiliary, Sons of AMVETS, Junior AMVETS and other subordinate units to deliver local programs and services. At the request of AMVETS state departments, the National Commander annually visits hundreds of posts. Known as Commander's Tours, these visits provide excellent opportunities to solidify connections between posts and the national organization while heightening the profile of both entities.

Devillier Communications, Inc. (DCI) was asked to maximize the public relations component of the Commander's Tours.

## Strategy:

DCI recommended that AMVETS make the Commander's

Tours more newsworthy by including visits to VA facilities, homeless shelters and other veterans programs. Visits to these locations would serve as excellent venues for the Commander to discuss reforms to veterans' benefits including health care, education and employment preference.



## Tactics:

Over the past three years, DCI has played a vital role in arranging and promoting Commander's Tours, including:

- Conducting research and identifying local veterans' issues the Commander could bring to the attention of the media.
- Encouraging AMVETS' planners to arrange the Commander's visits to VA clinics, military installations and/or other programs devoted to assisting veterans.
- Preparing and distributing media advisories that highlight tour stops and focus on benefits received by local veterans as a direct result of AMVETS' efforts.
- Compiling comprehensive press lists of newspapers and radio and television stations in each market visited.
- Providing media with AMVETS' statements including Congressional testimony by the Commander on key veterans' issues.

## Results:

Since 2004, DCI has been involved in approximately 40 tours that generated more than 100 press interviews for AMVETS' National Commanders. This media relations effort resulted in more than 4.1 million impressions. AMVETS stories appeared in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Dayton Daily News*, *The Indianapolis Star*, *The Buffalo News*, the *Alaska Star*, and *La Opinion*, the nation's largest daily Spanish language newspaper, among many others. Commanders have also made a number of local broadcast appearances including interviews on the California NPR radio network; Chicago's WBBM radio and the Illinois Radio Network; KHQA-TV, the CBS affiliate in Quincy, Ill.; and WISN-TV, the ABC affiliate in Milwaukee.



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