



FOR THE FAITH AND IN THE  
SERVICE OF HUMANITY



St John

# Eyes on the Future

THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

PRIORY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Confrères,  
At the June 26th Annual Meeting of the Priory in the USA, the St John Volunteer Corps (SJVC) was formally launched. Over the years, Confrères have asked if volunteer opportunities would be available to them to support the work of the Order of St John beyond making their annual oblation to The St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital. With the advent of the SJVC, the Priory now has a hands-on service delivery function similar to that of other Priors in which all Confrères can actively — and personally — participate. Importantly, this initiative will be organized and managed by Confrères, allowing the Washington office staff to focus on other critical activities, such as fundraising.

The leaders of the SJVC are Vice-Chancellor Gray Heppner and Confrère Richard Southby. At the June Chapter meeting of the Priory, I appointed Gray Heppner as a Vice-Chancellor to give added emphasis to the new initiative of SJVC. It is only fitting that these two individuals head this effort because the SJVC is their idea, and their efforts brought this concept to fruition.

The process for the development and approval of the SJVC has been thorough and complete. As recounted in this special edition of *Eyes on the Future*, several ideas were brought before the Priory Chapter. To review these proposals, a steering committee was formed. From the steering committee, a recommendation to approve the formation of the SJVC was presented to the Priory Chapter and was unanimously adopted. Meanwhile, a pilot project was initiated by the San Francisco region at the end of last winter, and their efforts have produced valuable insights into the operational and practical aspects of the SJVC.

Lord Prior Anthony Mellows, OBE, TD, asked me to present the notion of the SJVC to the steering committee of the Grand Council in the presence of the Grand Prior, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO.

The idea of a service delivery function for the Priory in the USA was warmly received, particularly by the Grand Prior, who asked a number of questions about the SJVC. Subsequently, my presentation to the May Grand Council meeting in Wales met with an enthusiastic response to the Priory in the USA's moving beyond its fundraising priority to a service delivery function somewhat similar to what other Priors have.

Given the significance and challenges of starting up this new initiative, we have determined that the SJVC be rolled out gradually, and initially it will be open only to Confrères. The work of the San Francisco region is ongoing, and the Charleston and Connecticut regions received the go-ahead at the Priory's Annual Meeting. It is our goal to activate all the current regions by St John's Day in June 2014. Each region will be notified when it can start up, and Regional Chairs will direct each region's effort. Meanwhile, the three regions already activated will gather further intelligence that will benefit the regional start-ups that follow.

Any questions about the St John Volunteer Corps should be directed to Confrères Gray Heppner and Richard Southby, who have my complete confidence in their leadership of the SJVC.

*Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum*  
**A. Marshall Acuff Jr., Prior**



A. Marshall Acuff Jr., KStJ



# THE ST JOHN VOLUNTEER CORPS: AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE THROUGH SERVICE

COL (Ret) D. Gray Heppner, MD, CStJ  
COL (Ret) Richard F. Southby, PhD (Med), CStJ

In an era that emphasizes hands-on volunteer service, explorations have been ongoing as to how Confrères can further the work of the Order of St John by contributing not only money but services as well. This motivation springs from a desire to emulate the remarkable charitable first aid and ambulance services provided globally by St John Ambulance volunteers, and to follow the principles of service on which the Order was founded so long ago. We can now offer you the chance to further live out your vows taken upon Investiture to help the sick and the poor.

After many heartfelt discussions with Confrères, we formally proposed the establishment of the St John Volunteer Corps to the Board of Governors in June of 2012 in a letter excerpted below.

*"Dear Governors,  
We are pleased to present you a draft proposal for your consideration that would establish a framework for members of the Priory in the USA to provide charitable community service. Towards this end, we propose the establishment of the St John Volunteer Corps (SJVC)..."*

*"...SJVC would be recognized as a service contribution to the Priory, thereby broadening the scope of current activities, which include hosting and supporting events, pilgrimages, health care services at The St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, oblations, and special gifts. The SJVC would thus become an outward and visible sign of the Member's commitment to the ideals of St John – Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum..."*

*"...It is hoped that by creating charitable service opportunities, SJVC will build esprit de corps, earn recognition for community leadership, and boost recruitment of active, younger members, all to realize better our mission of service..."*

Although the concept of the SJVC as presented met with general approbation, important questions were asked, questions that would have to be answered before the project's launch:

- Would participation create legal liability for the Priory?
- Would the SJVC divert Priory funds from support of The St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital?
- Would the program be accessible to all, irrespective of profession, seniority, or geography?
- Should the SJVC work chiefly with a single group or with many different organizations?
- Should a pilot program be initiated and evaluated before deciding on a national voluntary service program?

## THE 2012 INVESTITURE: A LEAP FORWARD

As the SJVC crystallized, these questions were considered. At the Annual Investiture the project took a giant step. At the Priory Chapter meeting, we presented further rationale for a national SJVC. Two proposals were considered: San Francisco Regional Chair Nigel Heath, OSTJ, proposed an alliance with the local Veterans Administration Hospital's Visual Impairment Service Team, and Charleston Regional Chair Julian V. Brandt III (Vic), OSTJ, and Cornelia Pelzer, MSTJ, proposed an alliance with Operation Sight in Charleston. Prior Acuff then appointed Anne Coleman, MD, PhD, OSTJ, to chair an interim National Service Committee composed of ourselves, Vic Brandt; Thomas R. Cox III, CStJ, and Nigel Heath to evaluate and recommend these service proposals.

At the Investiture, there was great enthusiasm at the Priory Hospitaller's breakfast, attended by the Chairman of St John Eye Hospital Group, Order Hospitaller Nicholas Woolf. Lastly, at the Chivalry Breakfast, Lord Prior Anthony Mellows and Guy Stair Sainty, KStJ, both professed that service is the *sine qua non* of an Order of Chivalry (e.g. the Order of St John), thus supporting the foundation and *raison d'être* for the SJVC.

## A GREEN LIGHT FROM THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

The pace quickened. On the local level, Nigel Heath fully developed a pilot SJVC program at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Nationally, we negotiated a letter of agreement with Laura Balun, Director, Voluntary Service Office, at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Our document outlined the framework for US Priory Members to represent the Order of St John while performing voluntary service in any of the VA's 1700 hospitals and clinics nationwide. Director Balun's return letter to the Prior, which was in turn endorsed by Dr. Coleman's committee, outlined the program's essential elements and contained the complete contact list for all VA facilities:

*I am pleased to welcome the Order to the ranks of patriotic organizations committed to serve our nation's veterans through voluntary service:*

- 1) *The principal point of contact for coordinating service at any VA medical center is the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program Manager...*
- 2) *St John volunteers will find that each VAVS Program Man-*



Don Lee Klein Jr., MSTJ, and a veteran root for the home team.

*ager keeps a current listing of service need and is responsible for matching volunteer talents and interests against these needs...*

*3) St John volunteers performing volunteer service will be considered to be without compensation employees. As such they are covered by the Federal Torts Claim Act and by Workman's Compensation...*

*4) St John volunteers will complete required background investigations and training before commencing any service...*

*5) St John volunteers may wear the insignia/device/shirt of the Order of St John while performing their assignment, although the VA facility may also require a VA jacket/vest...*

*6) St John volunteers will sign into the volunteer sign-in computer located at each VA medical center. This will allow your organization to track the number of volunteers devoting their hours to St John and the number of hours served...*

*7) St John volunteers may volunteer for vision-related services, if the assignments are available, but are not limited to such duties..."*

On January 24, 2013 the Priory Chapter unanimously voted to establish the SJVC, and the Prior appointed us as National Voluntary Service Coordinators. We were charged with drafting a handbook for volunteers who would give charitable service to our nation's veterans.

The Lord Prior Mellows, having been fully briefed by Prior Acuff at this stage, offered his encouragement:

*"I am truly delighted at the decision of the US Priory to form the St John Volunteer Corps – this is a decision which has attracted*

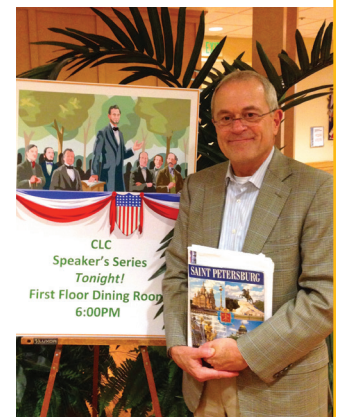
***"We are only limited by our imagination in what we can do for veterans."***

– San Francisco Regional Chair Nigel Heath, OSTJ

On February 23, 2013, San Francisco Bay Area Confrères volunteered as the pilot group for the St John Volunteer Corps' initiative with the Veterans Affairs (VA). Fifteen of us gathered for an orientation briefing led by the Coordinator of Volunteer Services at the VA Medical Center. We learned about the many opportunities to serve veterans, both at the hospital and in various outpatient programs, and on a regular basis or as time allows. These include: acting as drivers, greeters, and readers, as well as planning social and recreational events for veterans and generally helping out as the need arises.

The Coordinator of the Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) spoke about the VA's comprehensive program for visually impaired or legally blind veterans, describing in depth the treatment available for veterans suffering from Glaucoma, Retinitis Pigmentosa, Macular Degeneration, Diabetic Retinopathy and other conditions. There is clear synergy between the services provided by VIST and the mission of the Priory,

*much praise from many parts of the St John world. Practical volunteering in the service of others has always been at the heart of the Order, and the St John Volunteer Corps splendidly reflects this principle. It is an excellent initiative, and I will look forward with optimism to hearing of its progress. Everyone who is or has been in any way involved in this venture has the very best wishes and sincerest thanks from the whole Order – and from me personally."*



Featured speaker Daniel Riley, CStJ, took vets on "A Two Week Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow."

## A NATURAL PARTNERSHIP: VA AND SJVC

The Department of Veterans Affairs is well organized to work with individuals and organizations such as St John that are willing to donate their time to helping veterans. It is the goal of the SJVC to build a robust effort within St John to support our veterans.

As an example of volunteer opportunities, the VA lists opportunities to serve as greeters, hospice volunteers, van drivers, vocational assistance volunteers, patient visitors, chapel volunteers and elder companions for the home-based Primary Care Program. And as the San Francisco pilot program illustrates, the VA is receptive to creative new ideas such as sponsoring veterans at major league baseball games!

**VOLUNTEER CORPS** CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE

so VIST was a strong point of interest for us all. We watched a demonstration of the latest adaptive technology and participated in a simulation training exercise involving role-play between a visually-impaired veteran and a volunteer.

Our first outing was on June 19, 2013, when we hosted a group of blind and partially sighted vets at the San Francisco Giants vs. Padres baseball game. Each Confrère "buddied-up" with a vet and shared the excitement of the game. A great time was had by all, plus the Giants won 4-2! The SJVC now assists weekly in a residential art program at Fort Miley helping vets with their focus and motor skills, and has organized a monthly speaker series, with Confrères presenting interesting subjects to veterans. We are also helping to develop a reading library with focus on large print texts for blind and visually-impaired vets, and participation in larger VA gatherings such as the annual Wheelchair Regatta and the Welcome Home and Veterans Day parades. Our "pilot group" is flying!

## ABOUT THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem is a serving Order of Chivalry under the British Crown. The honor of membership is bestowed by warrant of its sovereign head, HM Queen Elizabeth II. The Grand Prior of the Order is HRH The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO.

The Priory in the USA, constituted in 1996 by authority of Her Majesty, is one of eight international Priories. Since its founding in 1957, its primary mission is to support The St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital in East Jerusalem. Over the years, American Members have raised millions of dollars and provided substantial donations of medical supplies to support the work of the Hospital. For over a century, the Hospital has provided first-quality ophthalmic care to thousands of people in the Holy Land, without regard to gender, race, creed, or ability to pay.



# St John

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## VOLUNTEER CORPS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

### THE ROLLOUT: HOW THE PROGRAM WILL WORK

The SJVC will be implemented sequentially, region by region, with the goal of rollout in all regions by St John's Day 2014. We have now completed the first version of the SJVC Handbook for Volunteers, which is available from the US Priory office or from [www.saintjohn.org](http://www.saintjohn.org). For now, membership and participation in the SJVC is strictly limited to Members of the Order of St John. *If you are interested, you should first contact your Regional Chair for further information on joining the SJVC, as Regional Chairs, and not the Priory's Washington office staff, administer the program.* Once your one-page application is accepted, the Regional Chair will coordinate all necessary steps, including the initial contact with local Veterans Affairs, an orientation session, introduction to the VA Service Program Manager, and identification of specific volunteer duties.

### RECOGNITION OF SJVC VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Participation in the SJVC is voluntary, and we hope you will accept this opportunity to engage in a variety of service activities in VA facilities throughout the US. To track and encourage participation, the Priory has developed a recognition system of stars awarded for specific hours of volunteer service. Prior Acuff has confirmed that SJVC service hours, in addition to hosting and supporting events, participation in pilgrimages and health care services at The St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, and contributing oblations and special gifts will be considered when evaluating each Member's support of the Priory.

### HONORING OUR TRADITION WITH AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

The St John Volunteer Corps honors the Hospitallers' tradition of service. With your active support, we are confident that it will build *esprit de corps* within the Priory, enable members to earn recognition for St John in the community, and boost recruitment of active, younger members seeking service activities in line with our mission. We welcome you to the St John Volunteer Corps!

## NATIONAL COORDINATORS



D. Gray Heppner, Jr., MD, FACP, FASTMH, COL (USA Retired), CStJ is committed to meeting the needs of veterans. After medical training in Veterans' Hospitals in Salem, Minneapolis and Baltimore, he served 20 years' active duty at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, working to develop vaccines to protect soldier and public health, both of which continue to be his vocation and avocation. He works with the Department of Defense, The Sergeant Thomas Joseph Sullivan Center and the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund. Now a Vice-Chancellor of the Priory in the USA, Gray is a past Hospitaller (2009-2013), and an active member of the Anglican Christ Church of Vienna, VA.



Richard F. Southby, PhD (Med), FFPH, COL (USA Retired), CStJ, is the Executive Dean and Distinguished Professor of Global Health Emeritus at The George Washington University. In Australia, he was active in the cadet training program of the St John Ambulance Brigade and an Assistant Troop Leader with the Boy Scouts. Since migrating to the US in 1979, his major volunteer activities

have been as a Troop Leader, Boy Scouts of America, with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in University Park, Maryland, and as the Commanding Officer of the Reserve Corps Division of the Metropolitan Police Department, in Washington, DC, where he was also Senior Warden of St. David's Episcopal Church. As COL Southby, Richard volunteers as Academic Adviser to the Army ROTC Battalion at Georgetown University.