



Our National History

Volunteers of America was founded in 1896 by social reformers Ballington and Maud Booth. They envisioned a movement dedicated to “reaching and uplifting” the American people. The Booths pledged the organization to “go wherever we are needed, and do whatever comes to hand.” That declaration has guided Volunteers of America’s outreach efforts ever since.

In the early 1970s, the organization formed additional sub-entities of the parent organization to address the affordable housing and short- and long-term healthcare needs of older adults. It began to invest in and build an infrastructure of programs to fill these service gaps in various local communities.

The Depression

The Great Depression of the 1930s stretched the nation’s private social welfare system to the breaking point. Volunteers of America mobilized to assist the millions of people who were unemployed, hungry and homeless. Relief efforts included employment bureaus, wood yards, soup kitchens and “Penny Pantries” where every food item cost one cent.



The 1960s

Volunteers of America’s mission in housing dates to our organization’s founding, but it was in the 1960s that the organization helped accelerate large scale availability of affordable housing by taking part in numerous federal housing programs. Since 1968, Volunteers of America has developed more than 300 affordable housing complexes in more than 30 states.



Today

Now in our second century of service, Volunteers of America is one of the nation’s largest and most comprehensive human services organizations, touching the lives of more than 2 million people each year in communities across the United States and Puerto Rico.



The Early 1900s

In turn-of-the-century America, there was no shortage of work to do. Volunteers of America moved into tenement districts to care for people in poverty. They organized day nurseries and summer camps, provided housing for single men and women, and established the nation’s first system of halfway houses for released prisoners.



Wartime

Volunteers of America served proudly on the home front during both world wars. The organization operated canteens, overnight lodging and Sunday breakfasts for soldiers and sailors on leave. Affordable housing and child care were provided for defense industry workers. Further, Volunteers of America spearheaded community salvage drives during World War II, collecting millions of pounds of scrap metal, rubber and fiber for the war effort.



The 1970s

In the 1970s, the organization emerged as a major provider of professional long-term care. Today, Volunteers of America National Services owns and operates home health care agencies, long-term care nursing facilities, short-term rehabilitation centers and assisted and independent living residences. Several locations also include memory support for those living with dementia or Alzheimer’s.

Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) is also a main focus and expansion area for the organization as it seeks to find innovative and cost-effective ways to support older adults within their own communities.



Planning for the future, Volunteers of America National Services will continue to assess the needs of the communities it serves, while also establishing ourselves as a preferred provider of aging services to support the nation’s rapidly growing senior population.