

## ► This Month's #4 Mailing

# Spreading the Word

### Disabled American Veterans brings back lapsed donors with multiple messages

**W**hen targeting lapsed donors, it's often hard to tell what message will resonate enough with them to come back into the fold. Nonprofit organization **Disabled American Veterans (DAV)**, with its legislative headquarters in Washington, D.C., chooses several messages and uses several successful direct mail techniques to increase those chances.

Message No. 1 was: "We miss you! We really do!" Those words rest at the top of the letter, and the notepad premium, which gives the 6" x 9 1/4" package some weight, further expresses that important sentiment. The notepad's first page is actually an additional letter that mentions it's part of a stationary set, complete with address labels and monogrammed stickers so donors can personalize their missives (Archive code #604-172730-0802).

"We've been doing that notepad for a while just to let people know that we've appreciated their gifts in the past," describes Susan Loth, director of fundraising for DAV, who says the notepad's first page was another opportunity for a message that DAV didn't want to pass up. "We have tested it without the notepad message, and it seems like it performs better when it's on there. Plus, it's a classic action device and gets them involved," she adds.

The DAV sends out lapsed strategies three to four times a year, either just before or just after a donor lapses. A million-piece mailing of this package went out, and Loth hopes for a 6 percent to 7 percent response.

The package's second message is all about the DAV. The second paragraph of the letter says, "Please believe me when I say that the disabled vets who defended the honor of our country—and paid the price by being permanently disabled—still need your compassion!" It goes on to say that this is "their hour of greatest need. And we must be there for them." Immediately after these emotion-stirring words, personalization is used in the perfect place: "Right there in your home state

of Kentucky there are 41,568 disabled vets. Please continue to remember them."

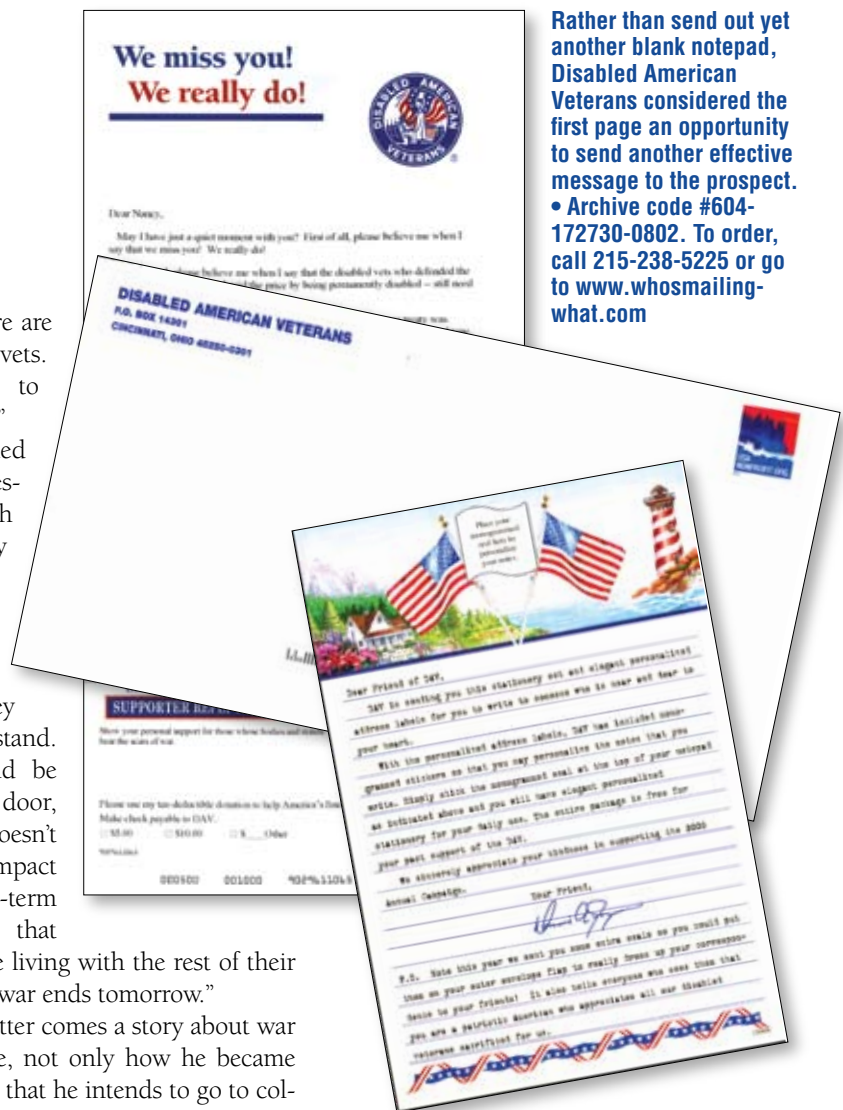
That's called bringing the message home. Loth explains, "We try to use the information that we have so it's meaningful to people, so they really do understand. These vets could be living right next door, or [the donor] doesn't realize the full impact of war, the long-term consequences that these vets will be living with the rest of their lives, even if the war ends tomorrow."

Later in the letter comes a story about war veteran Erik Tate, not only how he became disabled but also that he intends to go to college. "Typically, we will put in a case study that is inspirational, so people understand that their contribution is really doing good work," relates Loth, who says that DAV doesn't try to

make the vets feel like poster children when it tells their stories, but rather shares messages of empowerment.

Along the lines of empowerment, a separate sheet entitled "Help Us Reach Out to Disabled Vets" is also enclosed and lets donors know about all the other programs that the DAV runs, such as The DAV Transportation Network. "The public awareness outreach truly helps us get the word out there, whether they want to volunteer or they know someone who needs assistance. Because we mail to so many people, we have found that it's a great vehicle of communication to let people know who we are and what we do. Someone comes back [from Iraq or Afghanistan] every day now, so you never know who may need some assistance," Loth concludes.

—Ethan Boldt



Rather than send out yet another blank notepad, Disabled American Veterans considered the first page an opportunity to send another effective message to the prospect. • Archive code #604-172730-0802. To order, call 215-238-5225 or go to [www.whosmailing-what.com](http://www.whosmailing-what.com)

## Idea In Action

### Pick the Right Number

Asking for the gift, including listing a few dollar amounts, is crunch time for the mailer. "Yes indeed, response can go down if the figures are off," states Susan Loth, director of fundraising for DAV. "It's a fine line. We set the table, but when you go out and apply it using the computer, there is no rationale in the equation." For example, a donor gives an unusually large gift, but her donor history indicates it's unlikely to happen again—something a computer program might airball.