



**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

New England Chapter

CORDWORD

The Monthly News Magazine of the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America



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COVID RELIEF GRANT

MEDICATION REFILLS



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER OFFICES



**Michael Negrete
Chapter President**

COVID-19 Member Relief Grant Created.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant hardships to our membership, especially those with already limited financial stability. When a crisis impacts “everyone” – the most marginalized become even more vulnerable in so many different ways. SCI/D not only puts us at greater risk to the coronavirus, but also for other health issues and the disruption of daily life, including the ability to access essential ...*continued on page 6.*



Medication Refills and COVID-19.

As COVID-19 spreads, people who regularly take prescription drugs for chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure may be wondering what will happen with their refills. VA wants you to know we’re working hard to make sure you get your prescriptions on time, and when you need them.

We ask that you request refills of your VA Prescriptions as soon*continued on page 9.*

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Paralyzed Veterans of America

PVA is an organization founded on the brother and sisterhood of service, with a single-minded mission — to empower our brave men and women to regain what they fought for: their freedom and independence. We continue this mission today and fight for the civil rights of paralyzed veterans and all people with disabilities.

Racism, exclusion, and marginalization in any form have no place in our society. For this reason, we stand with our black members, colleagues and supporters — and all affected by senseless violence, oppression and injustice. We are an organization of catastrophically disabled veterans, founded after WWII, who have fought and continue to fight for the founding promises of our country. The broader societal changes that are needed begin with each and every one of us — and they begin by breaking the silence and speaking out. This fight is a duty that belongs to all of us. We owe it to our country.



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PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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CordWord is the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America's (New England PVA) monthly magazine that covers news, health, research, lifestyle and issues of interest and concern to Veterans and others with spinal cord injury and disease. Anyone interested in submitting an article to *CordWord* should email media@newenglandpva.org. The assertions and opinions expressed in articles and announcements in *CordWord* reflect the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the New England PVA. New England PVA can in no way whatsoever be held responsible for the content of such views nor can it be held liable for any direct or indirect damage that may arise from such views.

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Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

A lot has occurred this past month around the country and at the Chapter, and although the office remains closed, we are still extremely busy both maintaining the normal operational commitments of the Chapter and responding to the added demands of COVID-19, all while working remotely. Having put remote access capabilities and infrastructure in-place last year for our inclement winter weather put us well ahead of other larger organizations who had to scramble for remote solutions.

Still at the forefront of our COVID-19 legislative efforts is the array of “Critical Standards of Care” (CSC) throughout the New England states, most notably Massachusetts and Connecticut. One of the most shameful and inequitable policies is “saving the most life years over the most lives.” Simply put, at the time of triage under CSC, if your prognosis after treatment is less than 5 years, you’re prioritized at a lower level or not provided lifesaving treatment over someone who has a chance at a longer life span. We have partnered with a number of disability advocacy organizations to bring greater weight and a louder voice to this fight. To learn more about this and other legislative issues we’re currently focused on, I encourage you to contact Kristen McCone Gordon, our Chapter Government Relations Director. She continues to represent and work tirelessly on our behalf all across New England. We are fortunate to have her experience, talents and skills as part of our team.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, PVA’s Annual Convention in May was held via video-conference, instead of in-person in Dallas, TX. Despite being a virtual meeting, everything went quite well. I had the opportunity to address the Executive Committee and National Board of Directors, which I used to highlight the Chapter’s COVID-19 related legislative challenges and successes, our new Executive Director Mark Murphy’s diligent and fruitful grant funding efforts (No other Chapter has received more COVID-19 grant funding than New England!), and the creation of the COVID-19 Member Relief Grant. The Chapter was recognized a few different times for the tremendous financial improvements we have made over the past few years. Going from historically the worst to one of the best!

This coming July will mark the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA was an unprecedented piece of civil rights legislation signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA worked to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life, including education, employment and government services. Having sustained my spinal cord injury in 2001, I have not had to experience the indignant hardships and discrimination of those who came before me and fought for our rights to simply be recognized and included as a person. I can’t fathom the multitude of challenges and the anguish having to live, to survive, through those times over 30 years ago. We owe advocates like Justin Dart, Ed Roberts and John Hessler a debt of gratitude for their tenacity and courage. Someone once asked how I prefer to be identified, either as “disabled or handicapped”? I said I prefer to “Michael”. Its a genuine honor and privilege to represent and advocate for my fellow service members as part of the New England Chapter and PVA as a whole.

And speaking of advocating, due to the grants we have received, the Board of Directors and I established the COVID-19 Member Relief Grant. The intention was to help those members financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As I have always said “We’re here to help”. Please turn to page 6 to read complete grant details and how to apply for assistance.

As Independence Day approaches and we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Nation, I can’t help but reflect with a bit of melancholy considering the disparaging racial inequalities that have, and continue to, plague it. The United States has always been a beacon of liberty, hope and opportunity for all, not just some. It’s taken decades of challenging advocacy and legislation to move the equality needle for some. Milestones in our Nation’s efforts start early with the Bill of Rights, Abolition of Slavery, the 19th Amendment, the Civil Rights Act and marriage equality under the 14th Amendment. But it takes more than putting pen to paper to affect the intended measure of equality. It takes a heart-felt conscious decision by the people, individually, to make this change happen. Without this, the legislative victories have no more value than the simple paper they are written upon. Will the change needed start with you?

As I’ve frequently said, each of us has the individual capacity to make a positive impact in someone’s life. It doesn’t have to be something huge or time consuming. It could be a simple “Hello, how are you doing” as you pass by someone, a small \$10 donation or sharing a few minutes of your time with someone. Theodore Roosevelt said it best, “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael G. Negrete". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael G. Negrete
President and Paralyzed Veteran

From the Director's Desk

Mark Murphy, Chapter Executive Director



We have had many developments on several different fronts over the past month. In addition to the three grants we were previously awarded, I am happy to share that we have now received three more grants through The Greater Lowell Community Foundation, the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation, and The Vermont Community Foundation. I am very proud of how we as an organization are being recognized by so many generous foundations throughout the New England region for the myriad of ways we are effectively serving our members and the disability community at large, especially during these challenging times.

While our Chapter office has remained close because of the pandemic, we are continuing to serve our members in every way possible. I was happy to assist Chapter President Michael Negrete in drafting our COVID-19 Relief Member Grant policy document and working to get this information out to our members and following up with review of applications. If you have any questions about the process of applying for a member relief grant feel free to reach out to myself or Michael Negrete for more information.

At the end of May I participated in the PVA Annual Convention. While the convention was supposed to be in person in Dallas, because of the pandemic it was held virtually via Zoom this year. I was quite edified when our Chapter was verbally recognized by leaders from PVA National for our progress over the last 3 years as it regards the PVA Chapter program expense reports. Our vast improvement in this financial category was noteworthy to the PVA National team, so that is certainly a credit to the Board leadership of New England PVA, particularly over the past couple of years. We were also commended by the National Treasurer and a National Vice-President for our work in being awarded so many grants over the past few months. COVID-19 and its effect on PVA National and Chapters across the country was discussed at length during the convention. Many Chapters shared some of their best practices over these past months, which I found to be interesting and informative.

As we prepare to celebrate the 4th of July and our nation's Independence, I believe that this year we are extra conscious of the racial injustices and inequities that still exist in our society today. For me, it provides an opportunity to reflect on the great gift of our freedom as Americans, while also recognizing how far we still have to go in realizing that all truly means all when we proudly say in our Pledge of Allegiance, "with liberty and justice for all." I hope you and your families have a safe, happy, and healthy Independence Day.

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

Paralyzed Veterans of America
New England Chapter

June 30, 2020
From 1pm - 3pm EST

2020 ANNUAL CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Michael C. Negrete
Chapter President

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

Kristen McCone Gordon
Government Relations Director

TOPICS & DISCUSSIONS

State of the Chapter | Government Relations | COVID-19



Paralyzed Veterans of America

New England Chapter

May 31, 2020

Chapter Members,

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant hardships to our membership, especially those with already limited financial stability. When a crisis impacts “everyone” – the most marginalized become even more vulnerable in so many different ways. SCI/D not only puts us at greater risk to the coronavirus, but also for other health issues and the disruption of daily life, including the ability to access essential services and supplies.

To support our members during these difficult times, the Board of Directors and I created the **Member COVID-19 Relief Grant**. Individual member grants will be provided **up to \$500**. This grant initiative demonstrates the Chapter’s strong solidarity by immediately and directly providing aid to its members in need. This grant can be applied and used for by Chapter members who have been negatively affected by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic needing financial assistance with food insecurity, housing, health care, and other basic living expenses.

To be eligible for this grant, you must be a Chapter member in good standing and not have previously applied for this grant. Members should consider applying if they clearly, and without question, need financial assistance. This will ensure Grant funds can be maximized by helping those encountering the greatest hardships.

To immediately apply for grant consideration, simply email your request to grant-request@newenglandpva.org with the following information:

1. Full Name
2. Current Mailing Address
3. Phone Number
4. Amount Requested
5. Description of how you have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Intended use of the funds, if granted.

The Board of Directors and I genuinely care about your health and well-being. It is our hope the efforts put behind this relief grant will help lighten a few of the hardships borne by some of our members.

As always, if there are any questions or concern, please feel free to contact me directly anytime at michael@newenglandpva.org or 857-229-8825. I am here to serve you however I can.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Negrete
President and Paralyzed Veteran

Cc: Board of Directors
Executive Director Mark Murphy
Correspondence File

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From the Hill

Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director

It continues to be an incredibly challenging time for our country. I am proud to work for an organization that chose to speak up and denounce racism in all forms. I agree with our colleagues in the national office when they stated that, “the broader societal changes that are needed begin with each and every one of us.” For my part, in this role, I am inspired to take a closer look to ensure that the legislation our Chapter pursues affects all of our members equally.

Here at New England PVA, we continue to monitor and advocate for the issues that affect your life. This past month, I’ve had very productive conversations with staff in Congresswoman Hayes (CT) and Trahan’s (MA) offices. I also continue to work closely with state advocates and had the opportunity to participate in a call with Connecticut’s Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz to discuss how the state can best protect the disabled population during the pandemic. These conversations will continue throughout our New England states and with our delegation as we move into the summer months. In the meantime, I want to inform you about an important piece of legislation that has a chance of moving. Please take a moment to read the action alert below and consider calling your Representative!

ACTION ALERT: There is a strong chance that one of PVA’s legislative priorities will move to the floor for a vote. We need your help to make sure our congressional delegation knows this bill is important to

paralyzed veterans in New England.

Name of bill: Improvements to the Specially Adapted Housing Program (The Ryan Kules Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019/ Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019, H.R. 3504/ S. 2022)

What the current law allows: Veterans and service members who have sustained certain significant service-connected disabilities are eligible for grants to assist with the building, remodeling, or purchasing of an adapted home. The current maximum grant is \$90,364. A service member or veteran may use the grant three times, up to the maximum dollar amount allowed.

What the new law would do: 1) Allow VA to prioritize a veteran’s Specially Adapted Housing claim if the veteran has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, including ALS; 2) Increase the amount of the Specially Adaptive Housing grant to better match current construction costs; 3) Establish a supplementary grant for veterans who need it.

What is the status: The bill is currently in the House Committee on Veterans Affairs but may be moving to the floor for a vote in the coming month.

How can you help: Contact your member of Congress and ask them to support this bill! You can find contact information for your representative here: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>. Make sure to tell them you are a member of the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America!

CELEBRATE THE ADA 30TH ANNIVERSARY

On July 26, we will mark the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This landmark disability rights law provided protections for people with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, and public accommodations. PVA was a key part of the coalition that pressed for its passage and has created a dedicated web page – www.pva.org/ADA - containing fact sheets about various aspects of the law and links to resources that can help advocates and supporters draw attention to the law’s achievements as well as the need for continued enforcement vigilance.

While PVA and many other organizations had planned numerous public events to celebrate the ADA, the current public health environment means that those events will be mainly virtual. However, there is an array of material for online ADA anniversary events and local activities that have been collected by the national network of ADA Centers to ensure that supporters of the ADA can mark this occasion in appropriate style.

One very basic way advocates can ensure attention to the ADA in their community is to ask their local government officials who is the ADA Coordinator. Communities with 50 or more employees are required by the ADA to designate such a position and were supposed to create a transition plan for compliance with the ADA. To observe ADA 30, advocates can ask the ADA coordinator to engage with the disability

community to re-evaluate and update existing transition plans, assess pedestrian access and identify areas in need of improvement, or survey websites for accessibility and prioritize web pages to be updated based on use and content.

Efforts are underway to highlight the ADA on social media through posts on Twitter and Facebook and through the use of hashtags such as #ThanksToTheADA. Through these platforms, supporters are invited to share a moment in their lives when they were thankful for the ADA. Ways to participate through videos, pictures, written words, or other means can be found here. More information can also be found here.

As noted, PVA has been highlighting aspects of the ADA throughout 2020 – in issue briefs, PN articles, and our own social media. Recent articles have focused on the history of the ADA and PVA’s role in its passage, challenges in hotel and parking access, and housing that is and is not covered by the ADA. Forthcoming articles will focus on the ADA’s coverage of service animals, employment protections, voting access, and existing tax credits and deductions that promote compliance with the law. PVA is also planning an ADA 30 webinar on July 23 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. ET. Details about that event will be made available in the coming weeks. Check www.pva.org/ADA for updates.

COVID Testing Over the Road

VA Boston Healthcare System - Pallas Wahl, Public Affairs



The Mobile COVID Testing Team delivers care to Veterans where and when they need it; in their homes.

Frank Hammond's wife Brenda does the driving for their two-person family. Lately, failing health, risk of infection and both their immune systems have kept them off the road, isolated and at home. They have been busy preparing for Frank's move to a specialized facility. The program has an open bed right now, but a COVID test is required before he'll be accepted there. The Hammonds had a problem; they're both at risk for infection, they can't get Frank to a testing location and they may lose the open bed and his spot in the home.

On this day, Hilary Lanza, Registered Nurse, GI Endoscopy and Bob Smith, Occupational Therapist from VA Boston Healthcare System, part of the Mobile COVID Testing Unit, pull into the large apartment complex where the Hammonds reside. The team is greeted with an expression of gratitude for their dedication, especially for driving in the rain.

Introductions are made as Lanza dons her personalized protective Equipment (PPE) explaining to Frank how each piece is important in protecting him as well as her. Brenda, a former VA Boston Spinal Cord Injury Nurse (SCI) looks on and nods knowingly; she has seen many virus' over the years and knows the protocol.

Smith, who accompanied Lanza on the trip is responsible for coordinating among many services to keep the vehicle stocked, clean and ready for travel. He also calls the patients to keep them updated on the status of the team's travel.

Frank listens carefully to how the test involves a deep nasal swab that will seem to be tickling his sinuses, and that he may feel discomfort. He says he's prepared; he's had nasal swabs before. He tilts his head back, the swab is successful, and he comes through with minimal discomfort, just as Lanza stated.

Nurse Lanza processes the swab by ensuring it's properly labeled, dated, packaged and sealed in accordance with CDC and VA guidelines; results should be ready in two days. The team thanks the Hammonds for their combined service, wishes them the best and heads to the vehicle for the next appointment down the road.

The VA Boston Mobile COVID Testing Unit is designed with customer service at the forefront; serving Veterans recommended for COVID testing yet unable to safely access a testing site. This team brings the test to them, offering care when and where it's needed. To date, the team has tested Veterans homebound due to medical or mobility issues; symptomatic Veterans who rely on public transportation and want to avoid exposing others; and as in the Hammond case, homebound patients requiring COVID testing prior to short or long-term admission to a care facility.

These Veterans have personally been impacted by the efforts and outcomes of the Mobile COVID Testing Team. Services such as logistics, lab, infectious disease, infection control, and emergency management



services bring testing to a patients' home safely and effectively and allow the team to continue its mission.

Mobile COVID Testing Unit members are Robert Smith, OT, HBPC, Karen Harnois, RN, MOVE, Dr. John Gooley, ENT, Dr. Michael Cohen, ENT, Dr. Jacquelin Quin, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Hilary Lanza, RN, GI Endoscopy



Medication Refills and COVID-19

via My HealtheVet



As COVID-19 spreads, people who regularly take prescription drugs for chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure may be wondering what will happen with their refills. VA wants you to know we're working hard to make sure you get your prescriptions on time, and when you need them.

We ask that you request refills of your VA Prescriptions as soon as possible. VA will process your refill request, and have it sent to you before you're scheduled to run out.

How do Veterans request refills of their prescriptions?

To prevent waste and reduce the risk that unneeded medications could fall into the wrong hands, VA does not automatically refill medications. To receive a medication refill authorized by your VA prescriber, you must actively request a refill using one of the methods described below:

Online with My HealtheVet: You can request refills of your refillable VA-issued prescriptions, track VA prescription deliveries, view VA prescription history online.

The NEW Rx Refill Mobile App: You can request refills of your refillable VA-issued prescriptions, track VA prescription deliveries, view VA prescription history from the convenience of your mobile device.

Telephone Call: Most VA Pharmacies have automated telephone refill

lines. The phone number of your local VA Pharmacy can be found on your prescription label. To order refills by phone, you will need the prescription number (shown as RX # on the prescription label) and your Social Security Number. For many prescriptions that are no longer refillable, this automated system may allow you to send a request for more of this medication to be sent to you. For some medications, the healthcare team will need to contact you first.

By Mail: VA Pharmacy provides a refill request form with each prescription filled. To refill by mail, please complete the request form and mail it to your VA pharmacy at the address listed on the paperwork that arrives with your prescription.

The COVID-19 situation is changing fast. Try not to forget to take your medications or refill your prescriptions. Not having certain medications could cause health problems that require medical attention, putting you at greater risk of exposure with a facility visit. Veterans who forget to re-order their medications in time always have the option of contacting their VA medical center pharmacy, using the phone number on the prescription label or using My HealtheVet's Secure Messaging (sign in required) to message their health care team, especially if your prescription is no longer refillable.

As last resort, you may visit your VA pharmacy in person to request a refill. You may be subject to screening prior to entering the facility. You might also have a very long wait to have your prescription refilled. Visiting in person can unnecessarily put you and other at risk of infection.

Keeping yourself healthy is one of the best ways to defend yourself against COVID-19. VA knows that this can be a stressful time for Veterans, make sure you're doing everything you can to keep your immune system strong and healthy.



VA Video Connect Visits Increase 1000% During COVID-19 Pandemic

VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



Video appointments provide Veterans safe, convenient access to care

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today telehealth video appointments using VA Video Connect increased from approximately 10,000 to 120,000 appointments a week between February and May of 2020.

This increase of 1000% is attributed to VA providers and Veterans taking precautions against COVID-19.

“As we near the three-year anniversary of the launch of VA Video Connect, even during these challenging times, VA has and continues to maintain access to high-quality health care for Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “As the service becomes more popular, VA remains committed to providing a seamless user experience to ensure Veterans have access to care where and when they need it.”

VA Video Connect allows Veterans and their caregivers to meet virtually

with their VA care teams on any computer, tablet, or mobile device with an Internet connection. It is one of the largest and most successful digital health platforms in the nation and currently enables more than 25,000 virtual appointments, including mental health appointments each day.

VA is also taking strides to bridge the digital divide for Veterans who lack the technology or broadband Internet connectivity required to participate in VA telehealth services. More than 26,000 cellular-enabled tablets are currently distributed to Veterans across the country. Major wireless carriers T-Mobile, Sprint, now part of T-Mobile, SafeLink by Tracfone and Verizon are allowing Veterans to access VA telehealth services without incurring data charges.

Due to increased demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, VA is rapidly expanding VA Video Connect, allowing more Veterans and VA care teams to connect by video. During this time, Veterans using VA Video Connect with limited data plans could temporarily experience data charges. While, cellular carriers are taking measures to support Veterans during this period of expansion — Veterans with concerns are encouraged to contact their carrier.

Read more about VA Video Connect. For information about VA's telehealth services visit connectedcare.va.gov.

Getting Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again with Indego® New VA Program offers eligible veterans an Indego® Exoskeleton at no cost.



What is Indego?

A robotic device that enables veterans to walk again.

Indego is an FDA-approved exoskeleton worn around the waist and legs that enables individuals paralyzed from spinal cord injuries to stand and walk, offering a new level of independence.

Indego can currently be used with spinal cord injury levels of T3 to L5 in community or home settings. The device offers:

- Lightweight, modular design
- Slim profile compatible with most wheelchairs
- Rapid setup and breakdown for easy transportation
- Can be used with forearm crutches or walker



Contact us today to find out if you are eligible to receive an Indego exoskeleton

Email: support.indego@parker.com

Phone: 844-846-3346



One Place, Many Health Apps

via My HealtheVet



Manage your apps, manage your health.

Getting enough sleep, exercise, eating well, managing your appointments and medications are all key to staying healthy. A healthy lifestyle can seem like a lot of work. That's why VA offers My HealtheVet as well as mobile apps like VA Video Connect, MOVE! Coach, and VA Online Scheduling; and now VA Launchpad for Veterans can help you manage it all. With VA Launchpad, you can reach these apps and many more, all in one place.

Find the VA apps for you

VA Launchpad organizes VA mobile apps into five categories:

- **Manage My Health** - apps that help you take an active role in your health care.
- **Communicate with My Care Team** - apps for connecting with your VA care team.
- **Share My Vital Health Information with My Care Team** - apps that track and share information with your health care team.
- **Improve My Mental Health** - apps that help with specific conditions related to mental health.
- **Improve My Life** - apps to help you lose weight, quit smoking, and

more.

Some of the mobile apps available on VA Launchpad do not need you to sign in to access them. But, others such as REVAMP, Annie, and Mobile Kidney, will require a secure sign in.

New VA mobile apps will also automatically appear in VA Launchpad as they become available.

Be active in your care

With dozens of VA apps available, it can be tricky to find the one you need. So, VA Launchpad offers you a variety of apps in one convenient spot. "VA has numerous apps in their mobile app store intended to help Veterans take charge of their health. With dozens of VA apps available, however, it can be tricky to find the one Veterans really want or need. To make it easier for our Veterans to find the perfect app, VA developed the VA Launchpad app," said Kathleen Frisbee, Ph.D., executive director of Connected Health, VA Office of Connected Care. "By downloading VA Launchpad for Veterans, you can easily open this one app to find VA's entire library of apps that have been developed specifically for Veterans. It's all right there, at your fingertips."

Discover the VA mobile apps that can help you by downloading VA Launchpad today. It's available for free on iTunes or Google Play.

If you're interested in taking an active role in your health care, you should also upgrade your My HealtheVet account to Premium. This will allow you to use online features, such as VA Prescription Refill, Secure Messaging, and VA Appointments (sign in required).

Combating Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness During COVID-19

via pva.org



Paralyzed Veterans of America

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) wants our veterans and their caregivers to overcome loneliness during this time of social distancing.

While sheltering in place helps us stop the spread of COVID-19, the decreased social engagement and lessening of medical visits can lead to feelings of helplessness, isolation, and loneliness. For those living with mental health issues and chronic diseases, we may see a worsening of symptoms. There are things we can do to take care of ourselves and help #BeThere for others. If you are able, try to spend a little time outdoors each day, even if just for a few minutes on your front porch, as there are many benefits to being outside. Keep your mind occupied and take a break from the news by working on free coursework, listening to audio-

books, watching virtual concerts, plays, & tours of museums, or calling or writing friends and loved ones. Don't have Internet access? For the next two months, Comcast is providing free Internet service for disabled veterans.

If you do find yourself struggling with increased anxiety, depression or other psychological symptoms, you can call or text mental health professionals at Psychological Health Center of Excellence Psychological Recourse Center, call or chat with peers at Veterans 4 Warriors, or use some of the self-help strategies at Make the Connection. If you need help right away, we encourage you to call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, and press "1" if you are a veteran, texting 838255, or chatting via their <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/hotline>.

ReWalk®

The ReWalk Exoskeleton-Suited for Your Mission



Retired Army Sergeant Terry Vereline crosses the finish line of the 2019 New York City Marathon after walking 26.2 miles in her ReWalk Exoskeleton. She received this device in 2014 and has used it to take nearly 1,000,000 steps in the past five years.

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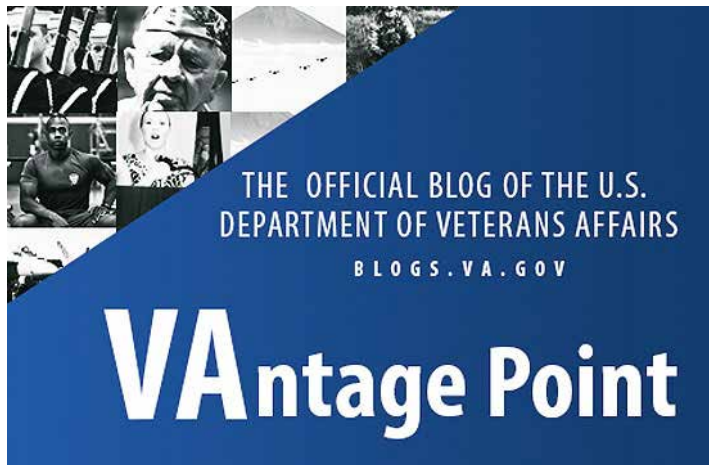
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20 Little Known Facts about VA Medical Centers

via VAntage Point



VA medical centers not only provide top-notch care to 9 million Veterans, but many have long and interesting backstories.

When you work at VA, you're a part of a major piece of America's history. Our roots date back to the Civil War, when the first hospitals and homes for disabled former soldiers began to open.

Today, across the nation, we provide top-notch care to 9 million Veterans in our medical centers. Many of these have long and unique backstories themselves. Whether you're considering a career at VA or have worked here for years, you might be surprised by some of these 20 little-known facts about VA medical centers.

1. The Togus VA Medical Center in Maine is the oldest facility for Veterans in the nation.
2. The Bob Stump VA Medical Center in Prescott, Ariz., is located at the site of Fort Whipple, a base for the U.S. cavalry after the Civil War. It later became headquarters for the Rough Riders during the Spanish American War.
3. The Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System began on an abandoned recreation spot known as Pastime Park, which at various times had been a skating rink, bowling alley, dance hall and a notorious roadside tavern.
4. Tibor Rubin VA Medical Center in Long Beach, Calif., is named for the only Holocaust survivor to be awarded the Medal of Honor.
5. The incredible views of the Smoky Mountains at the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center in Mountain Home, Tenn., (pictured at the top) were intended to benefit the recovery of the tuberculosis patients who were first treated there.
6. Even before its official dedication, the VA San Diego Healthcare System jumped into action to provide emergency care following a 1972 California earthquake.
7. The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic — which offers disabled Veterans the chance to ski, rock climb, scuba dive and more — is held each year at the VAMC in Grand Junction, Colo.
8. When the original Wilmington VA Medical Center opened on Aug. 26, 1946, 77% of the staff were Veterans.
9. The first VA hospital in Miami, Fla., was actually a former hotel.
10. At the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital and Clinics, Veterans participated in weekly taste tests to set the menu at the American

Heroes Café.

11. The Boise VA Medical Center occupies most of the former Fort Boise. Its sandstone buildings are some of the oldest in the city.
12. The site of the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital in Hines, Ill., was once a former board track racecourse. Popular in the early 1900s, board track racing was a motorsport race on an oval racecourse with a surface of wooden planks.
13. The Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center in Chicago, Ill., is the first partnership between VA and the Department of Defense, integrating Veteran and Naval health care into one facility. It's also named for Apollo 13 astronaut Jim Lovell, played by Tom Hanks in the popular movie.
14. Arrowheads and relics from Susquehannock tribe can still be found on Perry Point Peninsula, home of the Perry Point VA Medical Center in Maryland.
15. The Battle Creek VA Medical Center was initially called Veterans Hospital Number 100 because it was the 100th VA hospital built in the United States.
16. Henry Ford attended the groundbreaking of the John D. Dingell VA Medical Center in Detroit.
17. At the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, three large atria in the facility allow for a window with natural light in each patient's room.
18. From the 1920s to 1965, the Cloud VA Medical Center's farm served as both occupational therapy and a source of local crops and milk for the hospital.
19. The VA Medical Center in St. Louis, Mo., occupies the Jefferson Barracks, the oldest operating U.S. military installation west of the Mississippi River.
20. The Montana VA Health Care System serves one of the highest per-capita Veteran populations in the U.S. — almost 10% of the state's population has served!



PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE

PVA Washington Update Volume 26, Number 10 & 11

House Veterans' Committee Examines VA's Pandemic Response

On June 11, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee met to review VA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many panel members commended VA for early actions like limiting visitors to facilities with high risk populations like the SCI/D centers. Dr. Richard Stone, Executive in Charge, Veterans Health Administration said that VA hired nearly thousands of new employees during the pandemic, includes roughly 4,000 registered nurses. Much concern was expressed about VA's availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks, gloves, and gowns. Dr. Stone assured the panel that the department currently has what it needs to safely provide care.

The availability of COVID-19 testing was another area of high interest prompting several questions from committee members. At one point,

Dr. Stone told the committee that VA would like to provide on demand testing for veterans and employees but its ability to do that is limited by the availability of testing materials.

In PVA's statement for the hearing record, we noted that VA has tested most of the veterans who were inpatients in its SCI/D centers and SCI/D long-term care facilities. This aggressive effort led to the early identification and treatment of those with the virus and minimized the risk of further exposure to the remainder of this extremely vulnerable population. However, we pointed out that we do not know how many veterans who are on VA's SCI/D registry but not inpatient or living in VA facilities have been tested. We also relayed our members' interest in being tested for the virus and its antibodies.

Update on PVA's Legislative Efforts on Behalf of Women Veterans

On May 19, Maureen Elias, Associate Legislative Director, spoke at a House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC), Women Veterans Task Force virtual forum titled, "Resilience and Coping: Mental Health of Women Veterans." In her remarks, Ms. Elias spoke about the need for VA health care providers to screen for mental health issues, including depression and in-home and caregiver violence among women veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D); the need for more research for women veterans with SCI/D; and the need for VA to track information on the usage of VA mental health services among women veterans with SCI/D. She also applauded VA's use of special hiring abilities during COVID-19 and encouraged Congress to keep those in place after the pandemic to fill VA vacancies, especially the thousands of vacant mental health provider positions. Ms. Elias also asked that efforts undertaken to increase the use of telehealth continue as veterans with SCI/D are at high-risk for the virus.

Then, on May 21, PVA hosted a veterans service organization (VSO) round table with Andrea Goldstein, Senior Policy Advisor for the HVAC, Women Veterans Task Force. PVA National Vice President Tammy Jones, Associate Executive Director of Government Affairs Heather Ansley, and Ms. Elias participated in the event as well as representatives from IAVA, DAV, VFW, The American Legion, and MOAA. The VSO representatives discussed the most pressing concerns they had including a lack of targeted outreach to women veterans from VA, the status of VA's "Stand up to Sexual Harassment" campaign, the Deborah Sampson Act legislation, and VA staffing shortages.

American Association on Health and Disability COVID-19 and Disability Survey

The American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD) has released the COVID-19 and Disability Survey [Summary Report](#). The purpose of the survey was to conduct a rapid, real-time online assessment of the

coronavirus pandemic's impact on access to health care on adults with a range of disabilities and was conducted from April 17 through May 1. The survey and report can be found on the [AAHD website](#).

House Education and Labor Committee Hosts Forum on COVID-19 and People with Disabilities

On May 18, the House Education and Labor Committee convened a [member briefing](#) to hear from two witnesses about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on people with disabilities. The briefing featured expert testimony from Shireen McSpadden, Executive Director of the

Department of Disability and Aging Services for the City and County of San Francisco, and Kelly Buckland, Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living. The forum broadcast can be found on [YouTube](#).

Celebrate the 30th ADA Anniversary



On July 26, we will mark the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This landmark disability rights law provided protections for people with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, and public accommodations. PVA was a key part of the coalition that pressed for its passage and has created a dedicated web page – www.pva.org/ADA - containing fact sheets about various aspects of the law and links to resources that can help advocates and supporters draw attention to the law's achievements as well as the need for continued enforcement vigilance.

While PVA and many other organizations had planned numerous public events to celebrate the ADA, the current public health environment means that those events will be mainly virtual. However, there is an array of material for online ADA anniversary events and local activities that have been collected by the national network of ADA Centers to ensure that supporters of the ADA can mark this occasion in appropriate style.

One very basic way advocates can ensure attention to the ADA in their

community is to ask their local government officials who is the ADA Coordinator. Communities with 50 or more employees are required by the ADA to designate such a position and were supposed to create a transition plan for compliance with the ADA. To observe ADA 30, advocates can ask the ADA coordinator to engage with the disability community to re-evaluate and update existing transition plans, assess pedestrian access and identify areas in need of improvement, or survey websites for accessibility and prioritize web pages to be updated based on use and content.

Efforts are underway to highlight the ADA on social media through posts on Twitter and Facebook and through the use of hashtags such as #ThanksToTheADA. Through these platforms, supporters are invited to share a moment in their lives when they were thankful for the ADA. Ways to participate through videos, pictures, written words, or other means can be found here. More information can also be found here.

As noted, PVA has been highlighting aspects of the ADA throughout 2020 – in issue briefs, PN articles, and our own social media. Recent articles have focused on the history of the ADA and PVA's role in its passage, challenges in hotel and parking access, and housing that is and is not covered by the ADA. Forthcoming articles will focus on the ADA's coverage of service animals, employment protections, voting access, and existing tax credits and deductions that promote compliance with the law. PVA is also planning an ADA 30 webinar on July 23 from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. ET. Details about that event will be made available in the coming weeks. Check www.pva.org/ADA for updates.

Veterans Legacy Memorial Website Updates

Just prior to Memorial Day, VA updated their Veterans Legacy Memorial [website](#) so that friends, families, and visitors can leave tributes and/or comments on a veteran's memorial page. This applies to any veteran interred in any of VA's 140 national cemeteries. To [find a veteran](#), enter the name in the database search tool. You can modify your search by branch, war era, and location. After creating an account on the website, you can leave a direct entry, reply to someone else's tribute, or leave a memento or photos. You can then share that tribute on social media.

You can also like someone else's tribute. There are plans to expand this service for veterans interred at Army cemeteries (including Arlington National Cemetery), cemeteries managed by other military departments, the National Park Service, the American Battle Monuments Commission, tribal cemeteries, state/territory cemeteries, or private cemeteries.

VA to Resume In-Person Disability Exams

Over 230,000 compensation and pension (C&P) exams were placed on hold during the pandemic. Some veterans who cancelled their appointments or whose appointments were cancelled due to COVID-19 are being reported as no shows. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) increased the number of appointments that could be conducted through telehealth or through ACE exams so veterans' claims could proceed. VA facilities have begun phasing back in services at 20 facilities. VBA's contract medical disability examination vendors are gradually resuming in-person exams in those locations as well. This week, in

Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, Utah, and Wyoming vendors will begin scheduling and completing pending in-person exams as soon as possible. These exams will be held according to the personal protective equipment, sanitation, and distancing requirements prescribed by VBA. Also, there will be no decision on a claim if a claimant fails to appear for an exam due to continuing concerns about exposure to the COVID-19 virus.



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PAVE

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- Create an effective LinkedIn profile.
- Identify and engage in networking opportunities in your community.
- And much more!



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- Regularly communicate with you to track progress and identify other resources to assist in the job search process.
- Be a **Partner for Life** to assist you for the duration of your career.

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Not Your Average Veterans Employment Program - PVA's PAVE Program

via PVA.org

PAVE

Paving Access for Veterans Employment

With the [COVID-19](#) pandemic currently in our midst, we are in uncharted territory. The employment arena has changed, who is hiring has changed, and we are experiencing record unemployment. [PVA's employment program, PAVE](#), is stepping up by adjusting what we do and how we do it. We are focusing on meeting all of our clients' needs, to make sure they are receiving holistic support. We know that the focus may shift, but our ability to be there, every day, for our clients will not change.

One of the biggest differences between PAVE and other veteran employment programs is that we have a [team of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors](#), in addition to our Employment Analysts. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are specifically trained in the vocational, medical, and psychological aspects of disability. This means we have specialized experience in helping individuals evaluate transferable skills, request accommodations, find positions that build on their experience and interests, as well as making sure that they are going to be successful in their positions. In sum, we help individuals with disabilities live full, independent lives.

Interestingly, these skills allow us to better serve all veterans, spouses and caregivers by giving them a personalized and tailored experience. Within PAVE, we provide one-on-one support focused on helping our clients' independent goals. PAVE has a "partner for life" guarantee, so if at any point our client needs additional assistance we are still here to offer a helping hand.

A PAVE client and U.S. Air Force Veteran, Sharon, shared this: "Getting the laptop opened up new doors like giving me the ability to bank online, reach out to employers, and continue volunteer work, which is vital at this time. Having a computer to apply for positions was the hardest part. It has gotten me going on my job search and has made finding employment feel like it is within reach."

Here are some examples of how our PAVE team is going above and beyond to support our individual clients:

- Making an extra effort to check in on those who are isolated, live alone, or are at risk
- Providing additional [PAVE Connect](#) virtual sessions to discuss pivoting the job search during COVID-19
- Assisting our clients with filling out unemployment applications and staying up to date on unemployment changes
- Checking in on our clients who are "essential" and making sure they are handling the extra hours/stress
- Interpreting the CARES Act for small business owners
- Sharing remote positions and urgent employer hiring needs

- Researching and distributing remote/free resources for continuing education
- Tracking and sharing free resources for phone/internet/computer/food in their community
- Setting up individual Zoom meetings with clients to assist with application submissions
- Checking in on transitioning service members and teaching them tips for networking and reaching out to employers through virtual platforms
- Constantly promoting posts on LinkedIn of employers who are hiring for both temporary and full-time employment roles

During this time, PAVE is getting to know the specific needs of our clients and meeting them where they are. We are challenging ourselves and our clients to think outside the box and are actively working to find the resources they need to attain even better opportunities. Instead of becoming stagnant, PAVE is striving to be flexible and creative. This includes helping our clients adjust their job search but most importantly making sure they know that in spite of being socially isolated, they are always a part of our community.

Please reach out to Paralyzed Veterans of America's PAVE team if you have any questions or need support. We also have a lot of resources online such as a transformation toolkit and interactive virtual engagement sessions called PAVE Connect. Please check out PVA.org/PAVE or email us at pave@pva.org for more information.

[Allison Borden, MS, CRC, CCM](#) - Allison is a PAVE Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor based at the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond, VA. Allison has more than 6 years as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and has worked for PAVE for almost 2 years. A native of Chicago, Allison received her bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Master's degree from Virginia Commonwealth University.

[Genia Hachenberg, MS, CRC](#) - Genia is a PAVE Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor based in Atlanta, GA. Genia has over 20 years of experience in both private, federal and non-profit sectors. She is also a native of Atlanta earning her Master's Degree from Georgia State University.

NEPVA Bass Trail Upcoming Tournaments

Mike Guilbault, VP & Sports Director



The Massachusetts Bass Federation has decided to **cancel** the Sept 11-13 Lake Winnepesaukee Bass Tournament.

For more information about the Bass Trail or any other sports activities and events, contact Chapter Sports Director Mike Guilbault at 800-660-1181 #5 or email at rollingilbo@newenglandpva.org.

PVA Sports - Virtual Spin Sessions via Zoom



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Meeting ID: 852-9800-1714

Weds & Sat, 12-2 PM EST:

Meeting ID: 840-3436-4148

To sign up, email:
handcycling@pva.org



Connect With What Matters



Being there makes a difference

Recently the Ride-Away team joined forces with MobilityWorks so that we could provide our veterans with the largest selection of mobility solutions that best fit their physical capabilities and lifestyle. Veterans have unique needs so we treat each of them as individuals. First of all, we listen. Then, we work together find the best solution. Collectively, Ride-Away and MobilityWorks will continue to build on our mission to help veterans connect with who and what matters most.

MobilityWorks has more than 50 locations across the country with the largest selection of accessible vehicles and adaptive solutions:

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MobilityWorks is committed to serving you. Contact us today so we can evaluate your needs and find a solution that best fits your lifestyle.



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Norwood, MA 02062
781-222-3622

Essex Junction
5C David Drive
Essex Junction, VT 05452
802-222-0265

North Attleboro
57 George Leven Drive
North Attleboro MA 02760
508-859-0940

East Hartford
104 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108
860-215-4100


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