



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

New England Chapter

# CORDWORD

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



## INSIDE THIS EDITION

## ANGER MGMT TOOLS

## WHAT ARE PODCASTS?



### NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER OFFICES

FROM THE HILL	6
ONLINE VETERAN RESOURCES	8
MERRY CHRISTMAS, MY FRIEND	10
WASHINGTON UPDATE	12-13
COVID-19 TEST BASICS	15
2020 CHAPTER IN MEMORIAM	18
FREE MASKS FOR MEMBERS	19



### Tools can help you control reactions to irritating events

The holidays look different this year. You may be worrying about the health of your loved ones or feeling upset that plans for family gatherings have changed. For many, this anxiety is on top of the stress and blues typically felt during the winter holiday season.

This year's circumstances are difficult, and it's understandable to have bad feelings. However, it's important to also [....continued on page 15.](#)



Podcasts are taking the entertainment world by storm. They are streamable and downloadable audio entertainment, easy for on-the-go listening. Simply put, they are Internet radio shows on demand.

The first podcast launched in 2004 with a computer program that could download Internet radio shows to iPod MP3 players. Today, podcasting is increasing in popularity as an entertainment- and information-sharing platform. Podcast [....continued on page 9.](#)

# Turn Your **Used Vehicle** Into Support for Paralyzed Veterans of America



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

**Vehicle Donation Program**

We'll use the proceeds from the sale of your car, truck, RV or boat to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes.



## **Donating your car is easy, and your gift is tax-deductible**

Vehicle donations to PVA are tax-deductible! Most vehicles are sold through local used-car markets. Our vehicle donation program works to get the highest return per vehicle and handles all the paperwork, too! Whether your vehicle sells for \$500 or less, more than \$500, or more than \$5000, you will be provided with the proper donation tax receipt(s).



**Call 877-900-VETS or donate online at [pva.careasy.org](http://pva.careasy.org)**

# New England PVA Contact Information

1208 VFW Parkway, Suite 301  
West Roxbury, MA 02132  
Phone: (800) 660-1181  
Fax: (857) 203-9685

[www.newenglandpva.org](http://www.newenglandpva.org)  
[info@newenglandpva.org](mailto:info@newenglandpva.org)  
Office Hours: Mon-Fri, 8:30am-4:30pm

## CHAPTER ADMINISTRATION

### NEW ENGLAND PVA OFFICERS

President	Michael G. Negrete
Vice President	Mike Guilbault
Treasurer	Peter Moore
Secretary	Mike Moran

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad Carlson	Mark Sanders
Peter Falcione	Dan Shaul
Wayne Ross	

### NATIONAL DIRECTOR TO PVA

Michael G. Negrete

### STAFF

Executive Director Mark Murphy  
Govt. Relations Dir. Kristen McCone Gordon  
Admin/Accounting Jerry Cole  
Office Volunteer Denise Pease

## PROGRAM DIRECTORS

### PROGRAM DIRECTORS

ADA Coordinator	Neal Williams
Bass Trail Liaison	Jim Wallack
Community Outreach	Mike Guilbault
CordWord Editor	Michael Negrete
Communications Director	Michael Negrete
Membership Officer	Mike Guilbault
MS/ALS Liaison	Peter Falcione
Peer Mentor Representative	Mike Guilbault
Sports Director	Mike Guilbault
Assistant Sports Director	Michael Moran
Volunteer Coordinator	Mark Murphy

## CHAPTER HOSPITAL LIAISONS

### VAMC

Brockton SCIU Bldg 8  
Providence  
Manchester  
Togus  
West Haven  
West Roxbury  
White River Junction  
Northampton

### CHL

Dan Shaul  
Vacant  
Mike Moran  
Neal Williams  
Peter Falcione  
Mike Guilbault  
Mike Moran  
Tim Kelly

## NEW ENGLAND PVA NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

### BOSTON VA REGIONAL OFFICE

Joseph E. Badzmierowski  
Director of Field Services  
J.F.K. Federal Bldg. - Room - 1575 C  
Boston, MA 02203  
Phone: (617) 303-1395 or (800) 795-3607  
Fax: (617) 303-1396

### WEST ROXBURY/BROCKTON VAMC

Pete Demarkis, National Service Officer II  
1400 VFW Parkway, Room AG 60  
West Roxbury, MA 02132  
West Roxbury Phone: (857) 203-6091  
Brockton Phone: (774) 826-2219  
Serving Massachusetts, Rhode Island

### TOGUS, VARO, 1 VA CENTER

Michael Snapes, National Service Officer II  
Bldg. 248, Room 112  
Augusta, ME 04330  
Phone: (207) 621-7394 or (866) 795-1911  
Fax: (207) 621-4829  
Serving Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont

### SYRACUSE VAMC

Charlie Tocci, East-North Area Manager  
800 Irving Ave, Room C419  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
Phone: (315) 425-4400 Ext. 53317  
Fax: (315) 425-2940  
Serving New York and Western Massachusetts

### MANHATTAN

Bruce Weston, National Service Officer  
245 W. Houston Street, Room 212A  
New York, NY 10014  
Phone: (212) 807-3114  
Fax: (212) 807-4047  
Serving Connecticut and New York

## ON THE COVER:

*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](mailto: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.

Products and services advertised in the *CordWord* are for general informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement, recommendation, or guarantee of any kind by New England PVA.



# Out Front

*Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President*

---

A retrospective look at 2020 and COVID's effects on the Chapter as we continue to serve you.

When the year 2020 began, we could have never imagined the effect it would have on us. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed daily life for all of us and taken a significant human and economic toll on the world. Civil unrest following the tragic death of George Floyd emphasized we all have more to do in support of social justice everywhere. This year, more than any in recent memory, we've been reminded how connected we all are.

As we navigate these unprecedented times together, upholding our commitments to our members and the disabled community we serve is one way we can make a difference today, and for the future.

In response to COVID-19, we took decisive steps to protect and support our employees, volunteers and Board members by temporarily closing the Chapter office in March and provided the guidance and ability to work remotely from home. We also shifted much of our fundraising efforts from sports and recreations, since they were canceled due to COVID, to supporting new created COVID-19 relief efforts. Parts of this involved establishing our Member COVID Relief grant and purchasing reusable face-coverings.

To date, the COVID Relief grant has been able to distribute \$11,000 to our members in need throughout New England. We have also shipped, free of charge, nearly 1,000 face-coverings to members, PVA Service Officers, VA Clinics and Long-term Care facilities. These initiatives were made entirely possible through the efforts of our recently hired Executive Director Mark Murphy. Mark was able to secure 6 grants from 4 of the New England states and also made quick connections with other Chapter E.D.'s to source and order the face-coverings.

In response to social injustice, we spoke out alongside PVA National condemning racism, exclusion and marginalization having no place in our society and supported those who have been affected by senseless violence, oppression and injustice.

I would be remiss not to directly point out the inequities in healthcare faced by our members and the disabled communities in New England. Our newly hired Government Relations Director Kristen McCone Gordon had to hit the ground running. Starting with attending the annual PVA Advocacy and Legislation Seminar in Washington, D.C. then having to immediately pivot to addressing the disparities in the Crisis Standards of Care presented by the looming COVID pandemic, while continuing to maintain the efforts required to move PVA's legislative priorities forward.

Mark and Kristen have both quickly become invaluable assets to the Chapter. Each reaching out to make connections and quickly picking up the tasks necessary to ensure our mission has kept moving forward and the needs of our members met regardless of circumstances.

There is no doubt that all we have experienced this past year is bringing about irreversible changes in the way we think and work. It makes me proud to see how smoothly everyone has been able to transition to working remotely. I know for our Office Admin/Bookkeeper Jerry, it was a challenge to start with, but working extremely well now. Previously digitizing our paper workflows and putting in place the remote access infrastructure to accommodate inclement weather have made this possible. We must continue our forward-thinking plans, so we are always prepared for the unexpected.

The world is seeing a crisis of unprecedented nature and effects. All the scenarios experienced up until now have been suddenly overwhelmed by this unstoppable chain of events. This prompts me to share a few thoughts with you.

The first one is the pride in serving an extraordinary organization like the new England Chapter. We are united by a common culture of serving one-another as veterans that makes us unbeatable in the face of events like this, in the face of adversity. The Chapter is going to overcome the difficulties of the moment, and will do so, as always, by not only helping ourselves, but society also.

The second is that we are going to continue providing the necessary resources to meet the needs of all our members, as well as their families and caregivers. To this effect, the Board of Directors, Executive Committee and Staff are in constant communication and meet on a regular basis to monitor the evolution and the effects of the pandemic and to ensure the mission of the Chapter is met in every aspect.

Finally, as we close this year and start the next, please take a moment to consider how you can help us change lives for the better. Volunteer. Donate. Share our message. I wish you all safety, health, happiness and prosperity throughout the Holiday season and into the New Year.

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

Michael G. Negrete  
*Chapter President/PVA National Director  
and Paralyzed Veteran*

# From the Director's Desk

Mark Murphy, Chapter Executive Director

It is hard for me to believe that this month (on December 2nd) I celebrated my one year-anniversary since coming on staff at the New England PVA as Executive Director. What a roller-coaster year it has been! Never would I have imagined when I started in this role that just a few months into my tenure there would be a global pandemic deeply affecting our members, organization, community, and the world at large. Despite the many challenges that COVID-19 has presented to us, including the temporary closing of our Chapter office in March, there have nevertheless been many signs of hope and positivity for our Chapter. As we look back on the past year, I would like to highlight several of these signs of hope, as they are indicative of the strength of our Chapter and the ways in which we are continuing to make a significant impact throughout the New England region:



- We hired a new, experienced, and talented Government Relations Director, Kristen McCone Gordon
- A successful trip to Washington, D.C. for the annual PVA Advocacy/Legislation Seminar, where we had over 20 meetings with Senators, members of Congress and their staffs advocating for issues that impact our organization and membership.
- Applying for and being awarded 6 significant grants from foundations in 4 out of the 6 New England States
- Outreach and support to our members throughout the pandemic, including:
  - Our COVID-19 Member Relief Grant Program, where we offered grants up to \$500 for over 20 members who were negatively impacted by the pandemic because of food insecurity, need of PPE/cleaning supplies, transportation costs, and help to pay for basic living expenses
  - Offering free masks and neck gaiters branded with the New England PVA logo for members of the Chapter
- Virtual participation of myself and Chapter President and National Director Michael Negrete in the PVA National Annual Convention in May
- Passing a robust and substantive budget for our new fiscal year
- Launching our new Chapter website @ <https://www.newenglandpva.org/>

As I look back on this past year, I feel fortunate to be serving in this role as I have the unique opportunity to work every day for the common good of our members and the Chapter. I am eternally grateful to Chapter President Michael Negrete for all his direction and support since I started in this role. Our staff, volunteers, and Board members have also been incredibly helpful in our collaborative efforts of pushing the priorities and plans of the Chapter forward.

On December 4th we were saddened to learn of the passing of past Chapter volunteer and driver George Pease. George's wife Denise continues to be one of our most active supporters and volunteers. I had the opportunity to attend George's wake/visitation on the evening of December 8th, where I personally expressed the gratitude of our Board, staff, and community for George's service and to extend our condolences to Denise and her family. I was very moved that on the prayer card at the funeral home the picture of George showed him wearing a New England PVA branded jacket. May George Rest in Peace.

As we near the end of this calendar year, I hope you will consider donating towards our Annual Appeal so that we may continue our important work and services for paralyzed Veterans throughout New England. Donations can be made securely online at: <https://www.newenglandpva.org/ways-to-give/make-a-donation/>. Please let your family and friends know as well that all donations go towards a great cause and are tax deductible. Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season, and a blessed New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Murphy".

Mark Murphy  
Chapter Executive Director  
and Massachusetts Army National Guard Veteran



# FROM the HILL

*Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director*

Dear Members,

This past year has brought many challenges to all of us. Personally, as I reflect on 2020, joining the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America stands out as a very bright light during a very stressful time.

Over the past year, I've had the opportunity to get to know many of you. I've really enjoyed hearing about your military service and deeply admire the love you have for our country. I've also learned more about your injuries and the obstacles you and your families face on a daily basis because of them. What has moved me the most, however, is the determination I've heard in your voices to live your life to the fullest despite the setbacks you've been dealt.

I believe, now more than ever, that our country needs to do more for the men and women who have sacrificed so much to protect it.

Having the opportunity to advocate for your rights is a great privilege, one that I will never take for granted. It's an honor to be a part of the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America and I look forward to all that we will accomplish together in 2021. In the meantime, I wish you and your families a very happy and healthy holiday season!

Best,  
Kristen McCone Gordon

## **Take Action on the AUTO Act**

There is still time to take action on the AUTO Act!

Please help our Chapter encourage more members of the New England Delegation to cosponsor this legislation by taking a few minutes to fill out our [VoterVoice](#) message. [VoterVoice](#) is a new program from PVA that allows us to harness the grassroots power of our members in a quick, easy, and effective way. The [VoterVoice](#) system enables members to take action by sending a pre-written email to your representatives in Congress. All you need to do is fill in your name, address, and hit send.

As you know, The AUTO for Veterans Act (H.R. 5761/S. 4155) has been one of our most pressing legislative priorities this year. This legislation would lessen the financial burden and expand access to transportation for eligible, disabled veterans by allowing them to receive an additional Automobile Grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), every ten years. Please contact me for more information or with any questions on this important piece of legislation.

## **NEPVA continues to build strong relationships with the New England Congressional Delegation.**

In addition to the conversations we had with Members of Congress and their staff on Capitol Hill back in March, I've been meeting virtually with the district staff of our New England Congressional Delegation throughout the year. To date, I've held briefings with the following district offices:

Congresswoman Trahan; Congressman Moulton; Congressman Keating; Congresswoman Pressley; Congressman McGovern; Congressman Neal; Senator Whitehouse; Senator Hassan; Congresswoman Kuster; Senator Blumenthal; Senator Murphy; Congresswoman Hayes; and, Congressman Himes. The objectives of these meetings are to give our Representatives a better sense of who we are as an organization, highlight the needs and challenges of our members, and to discuss our Chapter's legislative priorities.

Among other issues, I've raised the importance of protecting specialized services at SCI Centers, how our members shouldn't have to shoulder the burden of the full cost of an adapted automobile, and why Congress should make access to IVF a permanent part of the medical benefits package at the VA.

I'm happy to report that I'm seeing strong signs that our outreach efforts are working. Several members of Congress have signed on to our legislative priorities and others have told us they are seriously reviewing them. Another Senator's office asked us to participate in a policy strategy session, so they could ensure that they understood your needs as they develop their 2021 priorities. Additionally, and what I am most encouraged to see, our member participation rate is increasing. More of you are taking the time to participate in our VoterVoice campaigns, and directly contacting your Representatives regarding the issues facing our Chapter members.

These are all promising signs, but our work is not done until our legislative priorities are passed. If you would like to participate in future briefings, or would like me to raise an issue on your behalf in the future, please don't hesitate to let me know.

## **Protecting our members during COVID 19**

As we move through a dangerous time in the course of this pandemic, we continue to monitor and advocate for non-discriminatory Crisis Standards of Care guidelines. We have been resolute in our message that no one should be denied life-saving treatment during this pandemic on account of either underlying disabilities or projected estimations of one's quality of life.

To date, we have sent letters to the state of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut to protest their lack of clear guidance that would protect your rights should hospitals become overwhelmed. Several of our members wrote compelling statements on how their lives would be affected by these draconian policies and we joined forces with our colleagues in disability advocacy communities throughout New England to bolster their efforts. While Massachusetts and New Hampshire have released updated guidance, the state of Connecticut has not. Along with a strong coalition of advocates, we continue to pressure the Lamont Administration to produce clear guidance on this issue. I will continue to update you on this matter as it evolves.

If you would like a copy of our letters, or would like to discuss this in greater detail, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

# VA's Compassionate Contact Corps

via VAntage Point - [www.blogs.va.gov](http://www.blogs.va.gov)



## They will call Veterans who may just want to talk to someone

In response to today's restrictions, VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) has developed and implemented a new social prescription program called Compassionate Contact Corps.

Veterans can benefit from this tele-support program if they are lonely, socially isolated or would simply like to talk to someone regularly. Trained volunteers provide support by making periodic phone calls or video calls.

Volunteers and Veterans are typically matched based on mutual interests.

Volunteers can call when it's best for the Veteran, volunteer and caregivers' schedules.

VAVS partnered with VA Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Caregiver Support, Home-Based Primary Care, Women's Health, Whole Health and others to help structure the training and promote the program.

Many of the volunteers are members of Veteran service organizations and understand the unique challenges Veterans face.

## Participation requires referral by a clinician

New volunteers are welcome. Current volunteers are also welcome, especially those unable to return to their medical center or original volunteer posts. You can continue serving our Veterans virtually. All volunteers must complete Compassionate Contact Corps training.

Training includes modules on confidentiality, privacy, customer service, empathy, compassion, support and boundaries. These connections are more than a health and welfare check. However, they do not offer clinical, spiritual, or financial advice or guidance to Veterans or their caregivers.

With so much time spent isolating and quarantining, a program like Compassionate Contact Corps is a great reminder, especially during the holiday season, of the continued bond between Veterans and VA.

There are over 50 sites in some stage of implementation of the program.

If there is not a program currently in your area, you may be assigned a non-local volunteer that is eager to connect with you. All of our volunteers believe in the mission of VA and are integral in helping VA keep the nation's promise to our heroes.

To begin receiving Compassionate Contact Corps calls, please speak with your clinician or social worker and ask for a referral. If you would like to volunteer for Compassionate Contact Corps or one of VA's other volunteer opportunities, please click [HERE](#).

*VAntage Point Contributor - Prince Taylor is deputy director of VA Voluntary Service and an Ed.D. candidate at Vanderbilt University.*

#Be There  
for Veterans and Servicemembers

Send a text.

 **Veterans  
Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

# VA's Online Resources for Veterans Now More Convenient

via VAntage Point - [www.blogs.va.gov](http://www.blogs.va.gov)

Updated for use at home or on the go

After many months of facing the COVID-19 pandemic, many are feeling on edge. Worrying about catching the virus, financial difficulties, isolation: these challenging times are causing a lot of anxiety.

VA's Veteran Training website offers [free online self-help programs](#) to help. VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention developed the programs specifically for Veterans, service members, and their families.

These online tools and resources now work on both computers and mobile devices.

**Veterans, service members and families: online programs help you cope with stress**

Experiencing stress and anxiety, especially now, is not a form of weakness. If you find yourself struggling to cope, you may find these online programs helpful:

- [Moving Forward](#): This course teaches problem solving skills to help you better handle life's challenges, such as managing stress and adjustment issues, as well as balancing school, family life, and financial difficulties.
- [Parenting for Veterans](#): In this updated course, you will find tools to help reconnect with your kids and strengthen your parenting skills.
- [Path to Better Sleep](#): If getting a good night's rest is a nightly

challenge, use [Sleep Check-Up](#) to better understand your sleep problems. If you've been diagnosed with insomnia, try the Path to Better Sleep course. It can help you develop habits that promote a healthy pattern of sleep.

- [Sleep Apnea](#): This is a new resource on the Veteran Training website. If you have been diagnosed with or may have sleep apnea, try the Sleep Apnea page. This page has useful resources, such as videos, fact sheets and links to other helpful sleep health sites.
- [Anger & Irritability Management Skills \(AIMS\)](#): This course can help you control your reactions to irritating events and manage angry feelings. AIMS is a Veteran-specific. Veterans and service members around the world have used it.

**COVID-19 Coach mobile app for support**

As the pandemic stretches into the holiday season, we also recommend using the newest VA Mobile App, [COVID-19 Coach](#), to support your overall mental health during these challenging times.

Don't wait to seek out the help you need. If these self-help programs do not work for you, we recommend talking to your VA health care provider about next steps.

*Dr. Carolyn Greene, Ph.D., is national manager of web services for VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.*

## 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

**Free Indego Webinars**

During the first Thursday of every month you can join a free live webinar to learn more about the Indego and hear from a veteran who owns a device already.



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

Email: [support.indego@parker.com](mailto:support.indego@parker.com)  
Phone: 844-846-3346





# What are Podcasts?

via VAntage Point - [www.blogs.va.gov](http://www.blogs.va.gov)

## WHAT IS A PODCAST?



via VAntage Point - [www.blogs.va.gov](http://www.blogs.va.gov)

Podcasts are taking the entertainment world by storm. They are streamable and downloadable audio entertainment, easy for on-the-go listening. Simply put, they are Internet radio shows on demand.

The first podcast launched in 2004 with a computer program that could download Internet radio shows to iPod MP3 players. Today, podcasting is increasing in popularity as an entertainment- and information-sharing platform. Podcast topics range from narratives to news, cooking and murder mysteries to informative talks on almost every topic imaginable.

Podcasts are usually released as a series with new episodes available at regular intervals, similar to how episodes of TV shows are broadcast on a schedule. Episodes vary in length and there is no standard time for a podcast. Most series tend to keep episodes to similar lengths, but running time is up to the creator.

The [VA Podcast Network](#) focuses on informative, news-related, and interview-style shows. The Network currently includes seven podcasts:

- [Borne the Battle](#)
- [Vets First](#)
- [Fresh Focus](#)
- [My Life, My Story](#)
- [Delivering More Together](#)
- [TAC Talks](#)
- [RMIRECC Short Takes on Suicide Prevention](#)

### Same Content, New Format

The podcast community includes both new and old content. Some radio networks, such as National Public Radio (NPR), publish their content in podcast form as well as radio broadcasts. Podcasts re-imagine traditional radio-style broadcasts to optimize them for convenience and accessibility in an increasingly digital world.

### How to find and watch podcasts

You can stream and download a podcast from multiple websites and apps. Some podcast platforms are available on computers, smart devices or both. Google Podcasts and Apple Podcasts are free apps and services. Stitcher, Spotify and iHeartRadio are currently free with advertisements but offer ad-free, paid subscriptions.

The easiest way to find a podcast is to search for it by name on a search engine, or within a website or mobile app. If you want to browse a podcast library, search the Internet for one of the services by name or click one of the links below. If you are using a mobile device, such as an Android or iPhone, they should already have the Google Podcasts or Apple Podcasts app installed. Search the device for 'podcast,' click on the app and browse the available podcast offerings. You can also search for specific shows in those apps.

Podcasts produced by the VA Podcast Network are available on all the listed services. They are also accessible through the [VAntage Point Blog](#) and Department of Veterans Affairs [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.



### The major podcast platforms are:

- [Apple Podcasts](#) - The Apple Podcast app is available on Apple devices, such as iPads and iPhones. Apple Podcasts can also be accessed through iTunes on Macs and PCs.
- [Spotify](#) - is a music and podcast streaming service that is available on the website, computer app and mobile apps.
- [Google Podcasts](#) - is also available on the website and mobile app. The app is available from the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.
- [Stitcher](#) - is a podcast player that is available on their website and mobile app. It can be accessed from a computer via the website and on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets on the Stitcher app.
- [iHeartRadio](#) - is a music, radio and podcast streaming service that is available on the iHeartRadio website and mobile app. The app can be downloaded from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.

*Jana Jenkins is a podcast intern with VA's Digital Media Engagement Team. She is an undergraduate student at the College of Saint Benedict studying Communication.*

# “Merry Christmas, My Friend”

As originally published in 1991 “Leatherneck” magazine. Author Corporal James M. Schmidt, USMC



‘Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,  
In a one-bedroom house made of plaster and stone.

I had come down the chimney, with presents to give  
and to see just who in this home did live.

As I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,  
no tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.  
No stocking by the fire, just boots filled with sand.  
On the wall hung pictures of a far distant land.

With medals and badges, awards of all kind,  
a sobering thought soon came to my mind.  
For this house was different, unlike any I’d seen.  
This was the home of a U.S. Marine.

I’d heard stories about them, I had to see more,  
so I walked down the hall and pushed open the door.  
And there he lay sleeping, silent, alone,  
Curled up on the floor in his one-bedroom home.

He seemed so gentle, his face so serene,  
Not how I pictured a U.S. Marine.  
Was this the hero, of whom I’d just read?  
Curled up in his poncho, a floor for his bed?

His head was clean-shaven, his weathered face tan.  
I soon understood, this was more than a man.  
For I realized the families that I saw that night,  
owed their lives to these men, who were willing to fight.

Soon around the Nation, the children would play,  
And grown-ups would celebrate on a bright Christmas day.  
They all enjoyed freedom, each month and all year,  
because of Marines like this one lying here.

I couldn’t help wonder how many lay alone,  
on a cold Christmas Eve, in a land far from home.  
Just the very thought brought a tear to my eye.  
I dropped to my knees and I started to cry.

He must have awoken, for I heard a rough voice,  
“Santa, don’t cry, this life is my choice  
I fight for freedom, I don’t ask for more.  
My life is my God, my Country, my Corps.”

With that he rolled over, drifted off into sleep,  
I couldn’t control it, I continued to weep.

I watched him for hours, so silent and still.  
I noticed he shivered from the cold night’s chill.  
So I took off my jacket, the one made of red,  
and covered this Marine from his toes to his head.

Then I put on his T-shirt of scarlet and gold,  
with an eagle, globe and anchor emblazoned so bold.  
And although it barely fit me, I began to swell with pride,  
and for one shining moment, I was Marine Corps deep  
inside.

I didn’t want to leave him so quiet in the night,  
this guardian of honor so willing to fight.  
But half asleep he rolled over,  
and in a voice clean and pure,  
said “Carry on, Santa, it’s Christmas Day, all secure.”

One look at my watch and I knew he was right,  
Merry Christmas my friend,

*Semper Fi and Good Night.*

# 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:

- Minivans, full-size vans and trucks
- The latest in adaptive technology
- Complete maintenance and service
- Rental vans — veterans receive a 10% discount

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



SUVs



Trucks



Lifts and stowage products



Electronic control systems

**USA's largest accessible van dealer!**

**Gray**  
32 Lewiston Road, Unit 2B  
Gray, ME 04039  
207-747-2064

**Londonderry**  
54 Wentworth Avenue  
Londonderry, NH 03053  
603-210-4610

**Norwood**  
333 Boston Providence Turnpike  
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

  
**mobilityworks®**  
www.mobilityworks.com

# PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE

PVA Washington Update Volume 26, Number 21

## ***American Airlines Revises Weight Limits on Regional Aircraft***

In response to a requirement from the Canadian government, American Airlines published earlier this year weight limits for assistive devices stowed on their aircraft. In October, John Morris, a wheelchair user and travel blogger, was denied travel due to the weight of his power wheelchair. This incident resulted in an extreme amount of anxiety among passengers with disabilities who use power wheelchairs who feared that they would be denied boarding or have their chair damaged due to its being dismantled in order to meet the weight limit requirements.

Following an outcry from the disability community, including a letter from PVA and 17 other disability and veterans organizations, American worked with the manufacturers of its regional jets on their interpretation of weight limits for those aircraft. On November 23, American announced

that it has eliminated the conservative weight guidelines and replaced them with guidelines, approved and reviewed by FAA, that better reflect the ability of the cargo floor to support mobility devices and wheelchairs based on their distributed weight. Their [website](#) has been updated to reflect distributed weight limits for their regional aircraft.

We understand this change should ensure that American is able to continue to transport large power wheelchairs on their regional aircraft. Please contact Heather Ansley, Associate Executive Director, Government Relations, at [heathera@pva.org](mailto:heathera@pva.org) if you encounter any difficulties on American Airlines related to carriage of wheelchairs.

## ***Transition of Power Begins in Washington***

Following the outcome of the November 3 election, the Biden-Harris Agency Review Transition teams have started meeting with stakeholders to learn more about their priorities for the incoming Administration. PVA recently met with the leaders of the VA's transition team and provided information about our goals for the new Administration. Some of the priorities relayed included: preserving access to specialized health care services, reversing recent decisions by the Veterans Benefits Administration that will harm the VA claims process, and increasing access to long-term care within VA for veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders. PVA has also met with the team for the Department of Transportation and will be meeting with other agencies in the coming

weeks.

On Capitol Hill, the Democrats have retained the House after winning more than the 218 seats necessary to retain control of the chamber. Control of the Senate hinges on a pair of January runoff elections in Georgia. Meanwhile the House and Senate's top leadership will remain unchanged as Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) were easily reelected by members of their respective parties.

## ***Disability Inclusive Emergency Preparedness Effort Launched***

The Association of University Centers on Disability and National Center on Disability and Public Health are undertaking Prepared4All, an initiative that aims to increase the number of individuals with disabilities and disability organizations that are actively engaged in local emergency planning efforts. Prepared4All links disability organizations and individuals with emergency management agencies, public health professionals, and

health provider organizations on a local level. Inclusion coaches from the disability community will form "Action Teams" that will collaborate with local emergency management, public health, and health providers to offer a menu of services to support disability inclusion. To learn more about the "Prepared4All" initiative, click [here](#) or email [Prepared4All@aucd.org](mailto:Prepared4All@aucd.org).

## ***Update on Agent Orange Provision in NDAA***

The House and Senate have entered formal negotiations on the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Conferees will take a final look at provisions in the House and Senate versions of the bill before choosing what stays in the final bill and what gets discarded. One of these items is a Senate-approved provision that would add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism to VA's list of presumptive

diseases connected to Agent Orange exposure. Opposition to this change centers on cost. PVA believes a price tag should not serve as a barrier to providing the benefits long delayed to these Vietnam War veterans. We encourage [PVA Chapters and members to ask their members of Congress](#) to instruct conferees to retain this provision in the final NDAA.

## ***VA's First EHR Modernization Deployment a Success***

Following three delays since November 2019, VA has [launched](#) its Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) system at the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane, WA. Along with Mann-

Grandstaff VA Medical Center, the Cerner-led project deployed at the medical center's four associated community-based outpatient clinics and the West Consolidated Patient Account Center in Las Vegas, NV.

---

## *U.S. Access Board Launched New Website*

The U.S. Access Board has redesigned and updated its [website](#). The new site features a streamlined design to make information easier to find. New menus and cross links enhance navigation of key resources, including the ADA Accessibility Standards and the Section 508 Standards. In addition,

the site updates information on Board programs and services, including training and filing of complaints under the Architectural Barriers Act. Send questions or comments on the site to [webmaster@access-board.gov](mailto:webmaster@access-board.gov).

---

## *TEAM Veteran Caregivers Act Passes Senate*

S. 2216, the “Transparency and Effective Accountability Measures for Veteran Caregivers Act” (TEAM Veteran Caregivers Act) passed the Senate on November 17 by unanimous consent.

In 2018 VA’s Office of the Inspector General [reported](#) that the Department failed to adequately manage its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) and recommended improvements and reforms. For much of the past two years, PVA has been working with Senators Gary Peters (D-MI) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) to craft this legislation which directs several changes to improve the program.

As passed by the Senate, the TEAM Veteran Caregivers Act:

**Ensures all caregivers are included in the veterans’ medical records.** Currently, only certain caregivers participating in the Caregiver Support Program are included in veterans’ medical records. Including all caregivers in medical records strengthens communication between VA and caregivers and recognizes them as part of the clinical team.

**Requires a minimum standard of information in downgrade notification letters.** This bill would require VA to provide an explanation of any downgrade or termination decisions. Caregivers have reported that their decision letters are sometimes missing important information that would be necessary to file an appeal.

**Extends benefits after certain veterans are deemed ineligible for the program.** Caregivers have reported being dropped within a couple weeks of receiving a termination letter and have no time to appeal or make new accommodations. This bill codifies VA’s goal of maintaining care for an extended period of 150 days in certain cases where a veteran is terminated from the program.

S. 2216 has been presented to the House where it awaits further action.



# 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.**

**Did You Know That Paralyzed US Veterans May be Eligible For a ReWalk Exoskeleton?**

**Contact ReWalk for More Information**

**rewalk.com/contact  
or 508.251.1154 Option 2**

### What is *Your* Mission?

Whether your goals include experiencing the proven health-related benefits of exoskeleton assisted walking, standing to hug a loved one or completing an entire marathon, ReWalk can you help you achieve them.

ReWalk Robotics  
200 Donald Lynch Boulevard,  
Marlborough, MA 01752  
[www.rewalk.com](http://www.rewalk.com)



**ReWalk™**  
///Robotics

# Veterans: Don't just "Deal with" Your Anger

via VAntage Point - [www.blogs.va.gov](http://www.blogs.va.gov)

## Tools can help you control reactions to irritating events

The holidays look different this year. You may be worrying about the health of your loved ones or feeling upset that plans for family gatherings have changed. For many, this anxiety is on top of the stress and blues typically felt during the winter holiday season.

This year's circumstances are difficult, and it's understandable to have bad feelings. However, it's important to also think about how getting too angry can have consequences that affect those around you.

VA has tools and services to help Veterans struggling to manage angry feelings or control reactions to irritating events. The online web course, [Anger & Irritability Management Skills \(AIMS\)](#), is a free, anonymous, self-help program based on training that was developed for Veterans.

### What's in the Course

- AIMS offers a [Deep Breathing exercise](#) for different lengths of time. You'll learn a few seconds can make a difference.
- There is a [2-minute quiz](#) you can take to see if the AIMS web program is right for you.

- You can use the personalized [Anger Control Plan](#) to map out your goals for completing the course.

This online tool and the other resources available on the [Veteran Training website](#) have been updated to work on both computers and mobile devices so you can use them at home or on-the-go.

### Take the AIMS course at your own pace

The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like you remember. Learning to recognize your triggers or warning signs will help you combat angry feelings before they lead to a bad situation.

Don't wait to seek the help you need. Take the AIMS course at your own pace. If it was recommended by your VA health care provider, be sure to follow their guidance. If AIMS doesn't work for you, we recommend following up with your VA provider about next steps.

*Dr. Carolyn Greene, Ph.D., VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Web Services national manager.*

# COVID-19 Test Basics

via My HealtheVet - [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

COVID-19 test results from any lab test ordered by a VA health care team will appear in your My HealtheVet account. [Sign in to your account](#) and follow these steps to access your COVID-19 test results:

Select Labs + Tests on the home page

Select View More under VA Chemistry/Hematology

Review the summary list 'by date' for COVID-19 test results performed at your VA facility

To view your test results, you must have a Premium account. If you do not yet have a Premium account, there are [steps you can take, or you can contact your local medical center](#).

COVID-19 cases are surging across the country. More people than ever are getting tested. Do you know about the different tests available? To better understand how these tests work and their main differences, we've listed [some of the COVID-19 test basics](#), with help from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### Molecular test

This [diagnostic test](#) is highly accurate and often referred to as an RT-PCR test. You might take one if you or your doctor think you have COVID-19. It is considered the most accurate type of test. A health care provider will collect mucus from your nose or throat using a specialized swab in most cases. Depending on your testing location, results may take up to a week.

### Antigen test

Antigen tests work like molecular testing but much faster. They're less expensive and often called a 'rapid test.' Your health worker will swab the back of your nose or throat to collect a sample. However, if you have

symptoms but test negative, your doctor may have you take a molecular test to rule out a false negative. Results may be available within 15 - 30 minutes.

### Antibody test

Molecular and antibody tests do not diagnose an active infection. Only an antibody test can determine past exposure. Antibody tests do not, however, reveal active infection. The test can take a couple of days to process and is done by a blood test. It will tell you if you've ever been infected. Antibodies don't become detectable until several days after an infection has started, so an antibody test can be falsely negative soon after you develop symptoms. Results may be available within 1 - 3 days.

### VA and COVID-19 test results

VA medical centers use all three types of tests. To get a test, you must have an appointment. You can request an appointment in any of these ways:

Send a [secure message](#) to your VA health care provider

Schedule an [appointment online](#)

Or call your provider. Find your [provider's phone number](#)

The next time you talk to your doctor either in person or by video, make sure you ask questions about COVID-19 testing.

### Read More

[Coronavirus Disease 2019 Testing Basics \(FDA\)](#)

[Get Your COVID-19 Test Results Online from My HealtheVet](#)

[Who Should Get Tested? \(CDC\)](#)



Paralyzed Veterans  
of America

# PAVE

Paving Access for Veterans Employment

## Employment Support for ALL Veterans

With PAVE, Paralyzed Veterans of America's Employment Program,

### You Will:

- Receive carefully tailored **one-on-one support** from a PAVE team member.
- Set goals to achieve your career objective.
- Learn how to craft an effective resume and cover letter specific to your career interests.
- Develop effective interview and communication skills so you are confident in interviews.
- Craft job search strategies to meet your employment goals.
- Create an effective LinkedIn profile.
- Identify and engage in networking opportunities in your community.
- And much more!



### We Will:

- Provide one-on-one guidance to help you find **meaningful employment**.
- Guide you through development and enhancement of your resume and cover letter.
- Assess your current abilities, training, and experience and help you identify career goals.
- Teach you how to build an effective LinkedIn profile page.
- Practice mock interviews to hone your skills before you interact with employers.
- 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.

[pva.org/pave](http://pva.org/pave) • [info@pva.org](mailto:info@pva.org) •  ParalyzedVeterans •   PVA1946



# Do You Have a Mask?

via [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)



During the coronavirus pandemic, we're all trying to do our part and help stop the spread of COVID-19. Whether it's social distancing, washing our hands, or cleaning surfaces, we're trying to protect ourselves and stay healthy.

We recommend you bring your own face covering, such as a cloth mask or scarf. This is required for all patients and families in public and administrative areas of facilities. If you don't have a face covering, ask a staff member, and they will provide you with one. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers [helpful guides](#) on making suitable masks at home for personal use.

If you have non-urgent medical concerns, schedule an appointment with your health care team through [VA Video Connect](#). This tool allows Veterans at home to meet with VA health care providers through live video on any computer, tablet, or mobile device with an Internet connection.

## Face coverings or masks now required at all VA facilities

All VA facilities require the use of face coverings or masks for all patients, families, staff, and volunteers. The health and safety of Veterans, and the staff who care for them, is and always has been VA's top priority.



## Paralyzed Veterans of America

### Vehicle Donation Program

We'll use the proceeds from the sale of your vehicle to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes.

To learn more:

877-900-VETS | [pva.careasy.org](http://pva.careasy.org)



## Turn Your Used Vehicle Into Support for Paralyzed Veterans of America





**2020 CHAPTER MEMBER DECEASED ROLL CALL**

**John E. Farley  
Ragnar Hanson  
Robert F. Longley  
Christopher J. Munn  
Edward W. Herzig  
Gregory Mazur  
Edward F. Burke**

**Richard Diaz  
Dennis J. Dixon  
Keith A. Coleman  
Francis H. Lynch  
Gilbert E. Broberg  
Ralph E. Cox  
James M. Hilliard**



NOVEMBER CORD WORD CORRECTION: "Thankful for Fishing, Family, and Friends" - 2nd Place Finishers Chip Servant and Stephen McCann with total weight 7.55 and Lunker 3.88.

# DECEMBER CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Edward R Dusick  
Hugh M O'Donnell  
Steven A Curtis  
Charles A Schena  
Lorraine A Kelly  
Craig C Cascella  
Carl K Rich  
Catherine G Bernier  
Karl R Smith  
Christopher M Young  
Ronald E Estrella  
Robert A Ferrusi  
Robert G La Barge  
James Bahamonde  
Edward HTyler  
Maureen M Northern  
Bruce A Reid  
Alfred A Paulicelli

Samuel P Woodward  
Douglas V Proctor  
Bernard C Fitzpatrick  
Peter Falcione  
Terence R McGovern  
Frank A LoSciuto  
John R Clukey  
Robert L Aldrich  
William E McLaughlin  
Thomas B Perrotto  
Joseph B Chase  
Michael DTipa  
William E Southard  
Gelsomino M Venditti  
Richard A Morin  
Frederick J Gentner  
Thomas E Kelley  
David T Roberts

Paul J Chisson  
Ericka J Haddad  
Shannon M Callahan  
Luis A Jimenez  
Thomas F Culliney  
Timon H Underwood  
Timothy S LaPlant  
Norman A Comire  
Michael B Frappier  
Michael J Fiore  
David A Michalski  
David J Cass  
Patricia A Thomas  
Steven L Westland  
Andrew C Kidder  
Melinda Simms  
James G Hamlin

## YOUR INVITED: CHAPTER ONLINE BOARD MEETINGS

Chapter members interested in attending the “virtual” monthly Board of Director’s meeting may do so by sending an email request with your full name and address to [meetings@newenglandpva.org](mailto:meetings@newenglandpva.org) requesting a “BOD Meeting Invite”. You will receive the meeting connection information via email the day of the meeting. The regular monthly Board meetings are typically held the first Wednesday of the month and start at 10:45 AM. As with the in-person meetings, you’ll have the opportunity to listen-in to the meeting’s discussions, but reserved from speaking.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Chapter Board meetings, please email them to [meetings@newenglandpva.org](mailto:meetings@newenglandpva.org).

## FREE Member Masks and Neck Gaiters



New England PVA Chapter members can now receive two free reusable cloth masks and neck gaiters. Simply complete and submit the request form on the [Chapter website](#) with your name, current mailing address and phone number. Limit one request per member while supplies last.

To offset shipping cost for you and/or other members in need, please help by making a donation in any amount by click associate [website link](#).



Paralyzed Veterans of America  
New England Chapter  
1208 VFW Parkway, Suite 301  
West Roxbury, MA 02132

T 800-660-1181  
F 857-203-9685

info@newenglandpva.org  
www.newenglandpva.org

Office Hours  
Mon-Fri, 8:30am - 4:30pm

NON PROFIT ORG  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Norwood MA  
Permit 8



# UNSTOPPABLE

NEVER BACK DOWN.  
NEVER GIVE UP.

Paralyzed Veterans of America  
is a life-long partner and  
advocate for veterans and  
all people with disabilities.

www.newenglandpva.org

 Paralyzed Veterans  
of America  
New England Chapter

For the most timely Sports and Activities information  
please visit the Chapter's website at [www.newenglandpva.org](http://www.newenglandpva.org) or email [sports@newenglandpva.org](mailto:sports@newenglandpva.org)

*Serving Paralyzed Veterans and the Disabled Community Since 1947.*