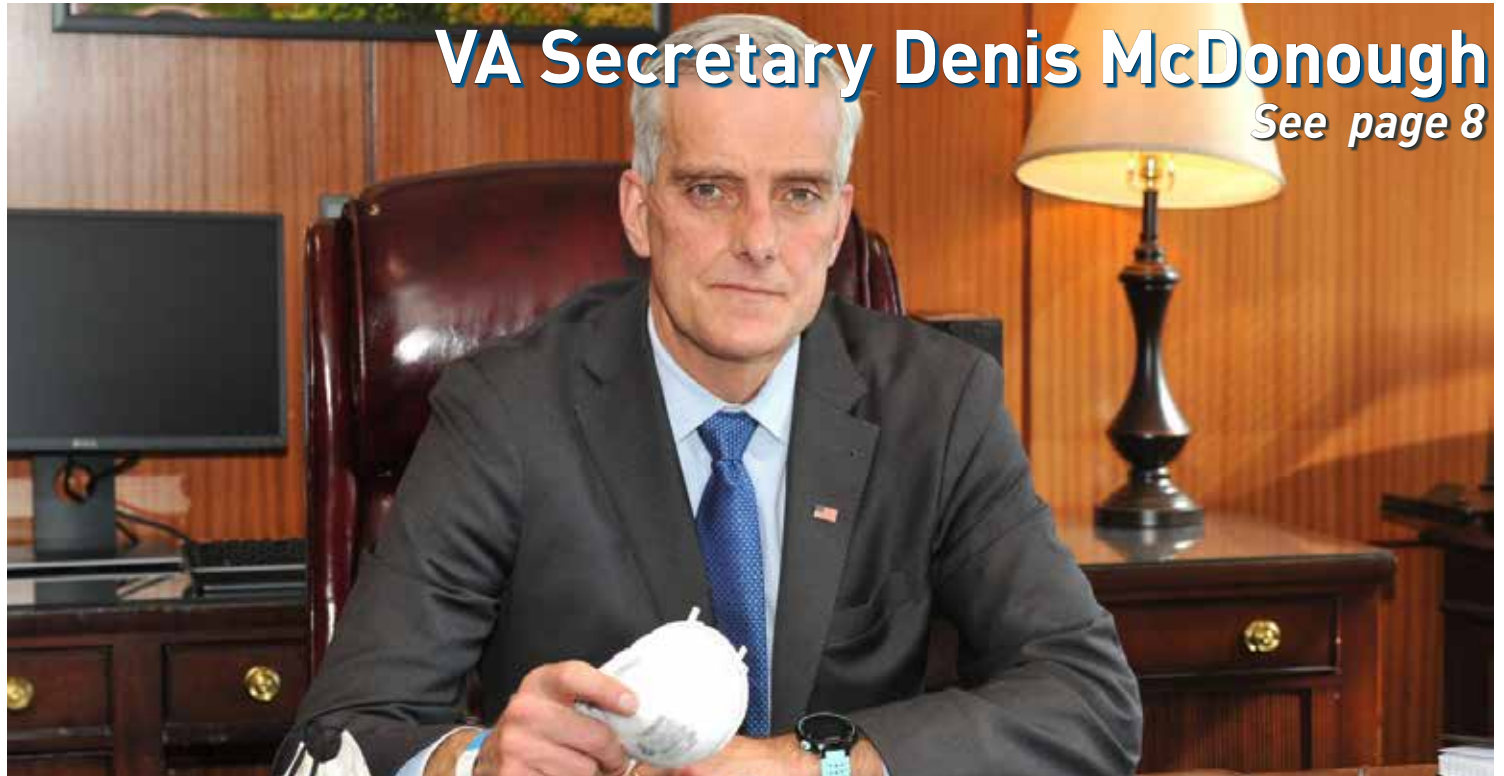




# CORDWORD

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

New England Chapter



## VA Secretary Denis McDonough

See page 8

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### WHITE RIBBONS

### VA SECRETARY BROWN

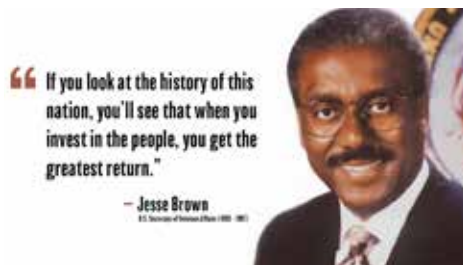


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Harassment is personal. It may seem too personal and scary to trust anyone. But VA wants to be a trusted resource for Veterans who have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, or intimate partner violence (IPV).

In VA health care settings and communities across the country, people are taking the White Ribbon VA call to action to end violence against women and girls, and to promote gender equity, healthy relationships and a new vision of masculinity [.....continued on page 18.](#)



This February, while the nation celebrates Black History Month, VA's Homeless Programs Office (HPO) recognizes that our history of accomplishments preventing and ending Veteran homelessness is built on the work of trailblazing Black men and women. Among these notable individuals is Jesse Brown, a decorated disabled Vietnam Veteran who, in 1993, became the first African American Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Brown, who [.....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.



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**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
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Assistant Sports Director	Michael Moran
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## 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. Badzmirowski  
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 Snape, 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

### BRONX SCI

Amauris Polanco, National Service Officer II  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
James J. Peters VAMC  
130 West Kingsbridge Road, Room 1D-52A  
Bronx, NY 10468  
Phone number: (78) 584-9000 ext. 6272

### 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  
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## ON THE COVER: Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dennis McDonough

*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.

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# Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

I want to do something a little different this month. I want to reflect not only on what COVID has forced us to do, but also share how some critical skills and behaviors prepared the Chapter to not just weather COVID, but actually thrive during it.

Six years ago when I joined the Chapter Board and then received the honor of being elected your President, the

Chapter was in dire straights with the loss of a \$250k revenue stream and an unsustainable amount of continued operating debt. It took a serious look at breaking out of the “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” mentality to move and grow the Chapter beyond where it was then, to where it successfully is now.

I have approached many things in life, including my role at the Chapter, with a view of improving things outside that outdated mentality, where possible. At the Chapter, its always been focused on how to best serve the membership now and in the future. This article I read and saved a few years ago by Mila DeChant really sums up and articulates these critical skills and behaviors and, most importantly, their benefits.

## The Problematic Thinking of “Ain’t Broke, Don’t Fix It”.

Be The Thriver That No One Wants To Become

*(Originally published by Mila DeChant at medium.com on October 29, 2018.)*

We have come to settle in an environment of the sluggish mindset of “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” or “Let’s not recreate the wheel”. The iPhone was never broken for it to be fixed and upgraded to iPhone XS, it was recreated by reinventing. If NASA had not reinvented the wheel, they would not have advanced technology to explore the moon mars.

It is crucial to consistently reinvent and to improve processes even when something is not broken. It allows our human minds and the self to tap into our problem solving, critical thinking, and strategic thinking skills. These skills are not sufficiently promoted at the work place. In a sluggish culture of “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, it oppresses an individual’s and a team’s growth. Here are some positive behaviours this mentality of “Ain’t broke, do not fix it” mindset oppresses.

### 1. Creative Thinking

When employees are discouraged from reinventing the wheel, it discourages creative thinking. When a group does the work or a procedure by following an outdated mantra of “This is how it has always been done”, it does not empower individuals to put their diverse knowledge into action. It only forms a longer line of robots who are programmed to do a task of how it has always been done. Once creative thinking is compromised, your employees can reach a point of burn in a matter of 2-3 months. This leads to disengagement.

### 2. Open Dialogue

Open dialogue is slowly diminished by those who refuse to use creativity

to think outside the box in order to rethink or reinvent. A shift in communication style and communication culture is noticeable within the team when a culture of back dated work mindset is anchored. Communication now shifts from an open dialogue culture to a singular one sided communication. Your people will feel their voice is not heard and will stonewall.

### 3. Simplification

Simplification of processes get eliminated with the stagnant believe of “ain’t broke, don’t fix it” mentality. Simplifying processes allows your team to build their creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving, and creative strategy skills. When simplification is obstructed, it creates a culture and team who abide by the singular outdated work etiquette of not taking action. This also prevents your team mates from becoming owners of projects when improvements can be made. It deskills your team.

### 4. Curiosity

Curiosity of learning and advancing knowledge is inhibited from this singular back dated thinking as well. Curiosity is human nature and it comes innately. When an environment promotes an outdated set of work guide, it creates a viscous scenario similar to a factory production line — No questions asked, just do what is told.

### 5. Rediscovering Ones Strengths

When you prevent your team from sparking their curiosity, allowing room for simplification, having open dialogues, or creative thinking, it causes a huge impairment. An impairment where others cannot rediscover their strengths. Ones strengths changes and new experiences cultivates one to inherit and discover new strengths.

*“Businesses do not evolve singularly with technology. It evolves when your humans within an organization are empowered and are liberated. Rethink Human Innovation.” -Mila DeChant*

It is an organization’s social responsibility to improve in how they cultivate their talent. It is their social responsibility to change from an oppressive mindset to a more evolved state of growth. When businesses and technology are improving and innovating swiftly, our human innovation at the work place has to innovate in parallel to the business.

**Fix it even if it’s not broken - it promotes collaboration.**

My hope in sharing this article and its thoughts with you, is to help us all see the potential future that lies ahead for us by simply looking beyond some of the outdated things we feel a need to continue clinging onto. I know it might seem like a bold thought, but its truly a necessary one.

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

# From the Director's Desk

Mark Murphy, Chapter Executive Director

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As we move along in this month of February, there have been several snowstorms that have hit us quite hard, at least in Massachusetts. On a more hopeful note, the days are getting a bit longer with each passing day, which makes me look forward to warmer weather and Spring. As many of you know, I love to golf, so suffice it to say that Winter is not my favorite season! Speaking of golf, I am happy to share that we are currently in the planning stages to host a New England PVA golf Tournament this Summer on Cape Cod. It has been several years since we have had a golf tournament, so we are delighted to be bringing it back. Brad Carlson, who serves on our Board of Directors, and I have taken the lead on planning out the details so that we can have a financially successful, fun, and safe golf tournament. In my CordWord column next month, I will be able to share more specific details on the tournament with you, including some "Save the Date" information. Please stay tuned on that front!



On January 21st I participated with Chapter President Michael Negrete in a statewide Veteran Service Organization (VSO)/VA update call with the Director of the VA Boston Healthcare System. The VA is continually assessing the current process for how the COVID-19 vaccine is being distributed to veterans based on age, medical condition, and the availability of vaccines as they receive limited doses each week. The doses go very quickly into the arms of the people who need it most, so that has presented several challenges to the process. As a Chapter we will continue to monitor all guidance that we receive regarding this and will keep you informed as that information becomes available.

I joined a conference call on January 27th regarding the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New York City in August. PVA is working diligently to provide a safe and healthy experience for all who want to participate in the Games this year. The current plan is to still have the Games in person, but PVA has said that based on several factors they reserve the right to adjust that if necessary (just like last year.) Registration opened on January 11th and officially closes on April 2nd. Our Chapter deadline for registration is March 2nd so that Sports Director Mike Guilbault and I can properly execute all the many important logistics for the Games as early as possible. If you plan on attending, please reach out to Mike and myself to keep us informed.

Along with Kristen McCone Gordon and Chapter President Michael Negrete, we have been preparing for the Annual PVA Advocacy/Legislation Seminar during the first week of March, which will be held virtually this year because of the pandemic. Kristen has been reaching out to several congressional offices to set up virtual meetings throughout the week. Last year when we were able to attend this Seminar in Washington D.C. I had only been on staff for just a few months, but I was very impressed with the professionalism and details in the PVA issue briefings, in addition to the access that we had to in person meetings with several members of Congress and Senators from New England. This year will be a bit different as we participate virtually, but I look forward to the various PVA trainings on the issues that will enable us to effectively advocate for the good of our Chapter and members. Next month in my column here I will be glad to report on how the Seminar and our meetings went, including the issues that PVA has highlighted as being among the most important for this particular legislative year. Until then, I hope you remain safe and healthy as we continue to progress forward in these interesting and challenging times.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Murphy  
Chapter Executive Director  
and Massachusetts Army National Guard Veteran



# FROM the HILL

*Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director*

Dear Members,

I'm pleased to share the following updates from our government relations program. As always, please reach out to me with any questions, concerns, or to become more involved in our advocacy efforts!

Sincerely, Kristen McCone Gordon

- Government Relations Director

## **Opportunities still available to attend Pushing Access Forward: PVA's 2021 Advocacy/Legislative Seminar**

Preparations are underway for this year's virtual Pushing Access Forward: PVA's 2021 Advocacy/Legislative Seminar on March 1st and 2nd. Immediately following the seminar, our Chapter will be conducting briefings with several members of the New England Congressional Delegation. Among other issues, we plan to discuss the urgency of preserving access to VA's specialized services, increasing access to long-term care for veterans with SCI/D, and improving access to transportation for the most severely disabled veterans. Please visit <https://www.newenglandpva.org/advocacy/> for more information on our 2021 legislative priorities.

I'm pleased to announce that there are several spots still available for New England PVA members who are interested in joining our Chapter's Delegation. Please know that experience in government relations or public policy is not required to participate. More than anything, our legislators want to hear directly from the men and women affected by the issues at hand. Your participation, and willingness to share your personal experiences, will directly contribute to our Chapter's effectiveness in advancing our legislative priorities.

All members interested in joining our growing advocacy team are asked to attend two virtual training meetings. If you are interested in participating, or would like more information on ways you can be involved, please contact me at [kristen@newenglandpva.org](mailto:kristen@newenglandpva.org). I would love to work with you to advance our federal advocacy efforts!

## **Assessing the vaccine roll-out**

VA rolled out its Vaccine Distribution Plan in mid-December, and we've been pleased to hear that so many of our members have already received the vaccination. In an effort to assess progress to-date, National PVA is conducting a survey on the vaccine offerings and experiences across the country. The survey can be found here: Understanding PVA Member Access to COVID-19 Vaccine. This information will give PVA an overview of the problems and concerns members face as the vaccine continues to roll out.

Please also note that PVA is aware that many members are concerned about their caregivers' access to the vaccine. As noted in the Washington Update, On January 12, VA issued a memo regarding access through VA to the vaccine for veterans who are enrolled in VA's Program of

Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). Veterans' primary and secondary caregivers as designated through the PCAFC can receive testing and vaccines "in balance with site-specific resources, needs, vaccine availability, hesitancy to accept the vaccine, and status of the pandemic locally." In response to questions from PVA, VA has stated that they are having conversations about how they can provide the COVID vaccine to caregivers who are not part of the PCAFC, including family members who provide bowel and bladder care. National PVA will inform all Chapters of new information as it becomes available.

## **New England PVA joins a coalition of advocates in denouncing discriminatory hospital rationing in CT**

NEPVA continues to advocate that all New England states must release non-discriminatory Crisis Standards of Care guidelines in the event that hospitals become overwhelmed during COVID-19 and future emergencies.

Along with our partners in the disability advocacy community in CT, we are urging the Lamont Administration to take immediate action to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are protected from discrimination amidst the continuing COVID-19 public health crisis. The Coalition calls on the Department of Public Health to end its almost year-long refusal to issue uniform guidance to all Connecticut hospitals in the event of any necessary rationing of life-sustaining treatments. A copy of our most recent press release can be found [HERE](#).

If you are a Connecticut resident and would like to become more involved in this issue, please contact me as soon as possible at [Kristen@newenglandpva.org](mailto:kristen@newenglandpva.org).

## **PVA Policy Podcasts**

In an effort to find new ways to disseminate updates on PVA's policy priorities, National PVA is launching a podcast which is now available to members across the country.

The first recording features Heather Ansley (Associate Executive Director of Government Relations) and Morgan Brown (National Legislative Director), who will discuss PVA's legislative successes on veterans policy in 2020 and provide an overview of our VA-focused issues in 2021.

The audio recording may be shared with anyone interested in learning more about our efforts, so please feel free to distribute this widely!

To access the recording, please visit: [https://pva.zoom.us/rec/play/GmWm6e1wVN2HTV02nWV6\\_SF8gmoP7VOIYHTkUo\\_FNtAznRO1t10Urg0BUOdhmS8DZE5zkF5uUBD7xYY6.Wkix6m1ZID5aq0lz](https://pva.zoom.us/rec/play/GmWm6e1wVN2HTV02nWV6_SF8gmoP7VOIYHTkUo_FNtAznRO1t10Urg0BUOdhmS8DZE5zkF5uUBD7xYY6.Wkix6m1ZID5aq0lz)

# VA Receives Additional 200,000 COVID-19 Vaccine Doses to Administer to Veterans, Employees

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care facilities are receiving a one-time supplemental allocation of 200,000 Moderna COVID-19 vaccine doses this

week from the Department of Health and Human Services.

This distribution is in addition to VA's normally scheduled delivery of approximately 125,000 doses of both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines each week.

"In accordance to Centers for [Disease Control and Prevention's phased allocation considerations](#), VA has worked diligently to offer and administer the COVID-19 vaccine as quickly as possible to Veterans who receive care at VA," said Acting VA Under Secretary for Health, Richard Stone, M.D. "The additional doses will help us to continue reaching our Veterans at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 during this

period of limited supply."

VA facilities already receiving the Moderna vaccine, as well as several new sites, will get additional doses this week from the supplemental allocation. VA is currently providing vaccines at more than 215 sites nationally and is reaching out to Veterans who are currently eligible for vaccination.

As of Feb. 10, VA has administered at least one dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine collectively to 1,047,187 Veterans, employees and federal partners. VA's goal is to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to all Veterans who are enrolled and eligible to receive VA health care. Veterans who are not enrolled can learn about [eligibility](#), and those who qualify, may apply for [enrollment](#).

Learn more about [VA COVID-19 vaccines](#) or contact your care team.

# VA Administers 1 Million COVID-19 Doses, Publishes Facility Vaccination Numbers

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reached a milestone in just a month and a half's time administering 1 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine to

Veterans and VA health care workers.

As of Feb. 2, VA has dispensed at least one dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine to more than 582,000 Veterans and has fully vaccinated over 44,000, totaling more than 626,000 doses. This is in addition to administering more than 401,000 doses to VA employees, and more than 1,200 vaccine doses to federal partners.

"In addition to administering 1 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, VA has begun publishing the number of Veterans who have received Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna vaccines at each facility across its enterprise," said Acting VA Secretary Dat Tran. "The number of doses administered to Veterans at each facility will be updated daily on the [VA COVID-19 National Summary website](#)."

VA employees across the country are working diligently to vaccinate the department's health care personnel and the most vulnerable Veterans as quickly as possible. Making the data about vaccine doses administered to Veterans available publicly, VA is taking another step toward being as transparent as possible during the pandemic.

VA is currently providing vaccines at more than 215 sites nationally with plans to expand to additional sites as vaccine supplies increase. As with

states distributing vaccines, VA is currently in the limited supply phase, anticipating an increase in weekly vaccine doses in March. Until VA receives an increase in vaccines, many facilities may temporarily run out of vaccines for short periods of time.

VA will continue to follow current [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) guidance](#) and the [VA COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution Plan](#) until new CDC guidance is available. The distribution plan lays out VA's overarching intent but implementation of vaccination on a large scale requires agility and flexibility in order to meet the daily threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The federal government will continue to work with states and the private sector to effectively execute an aggressive vaccination strategy, focusing on the immediate actions necessary to convert vaccines into vaccinations.

VA is reaching out to Veterans who are eligible for vaccination. Veterans who would like additional information can visit the [VA COVID-19 vaccines webpage](#), visit their [local facility's website](#) or contact their care team.

# A Message from VA Secretary Denis McDonough

via *VAntage Point* [blogs.va.gov](https://blogs.va.gov)



The U.S. Senate confirmed VA Secretary nominee Denis McDonough Monday, Feb. 8, and he was sworn in today as the eleventh VA secretary.

As I begin my tenure at the Department of Veterans Affairs, I want to take a moment to speak directly to Veterans and other VA stakeholders and share my thoughts on VA's mission and the road ahead.

It is the honor of my lifetime to join the VA workforce in serving Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. We live in peace and security today because of the sacrifices of generations of Veterans. My career has afforded me a privilege available to relatively few Americans: to see up close the excellence of our Armed Forces in the field on my regular visits to Afghanistan and Iraq; to witness the strength and resilience of our wounded warriors at Walter Reed; and to experience the unimaginable grief of military families there at Dover when our fallen heroes come home one final time. From that I have a passion to fight relentlessly every day to ensure that VA serves our Veterans as well as they have served America.

Throughout those experiences I've also been deeply impressed by the dedication and excellence of VA employees. I look forward to being a true partner with the men and women of VA – dedicated, highly-skilled professionals, many Veterans themselves – Veterans serving Veterans who deserve our profound respect and support.

At this moment when our country must come together, caring for you – our country's Veterans and your families – is a mission that can unite us all.

The president has called on every American to embrace our responsibility to support our Veterans and their families. So this administration will work with other federal departments and agencies, with Veterans service organizations, with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), and with other state and local organizations, both public and private, who have the best interests of Veterans and their families at heart. We must work together to serve all Veterans.

President Biden has defined our country's most sacred obligation as preparing and equipping the troops we send into harm's way and then caring for them and their families when they return. Here's how we at VA will fulfill our part of that sacred obligation.

Every decision I make will be determined by a simple principle, that it increases Veterans' access to care and benefits and improves outcomes for them.

Our highest priorities will be VA's three core responsibilities: providing all our Veterans timely, world-class health care; ensuring they and their families have access to the benefits they've earned; and honoring our Veterans with a final resting place that's a lasting tribute to their service.

In addition, we'll do everything in our power to help Veterans get through this pandemic; help them build civilian lives through education and jobs worthy of their skills and service; ensure that VA welcomes all Veterans, including women, Veterans of color and LGBTQ Veterans; work to eliminate Veterans' homelessness and reduce suicide; and keep faith with their families and caregivers.

Assessments of our efforts will be measured by the outcomes we generate for Veterans and by listening to what Veterans have to say about their experiences. We will be strengthened by the advice and support of Veterans service organizations and by hearing from our partners and respected organizations who share our mission of improving Veterans' lives.

We're going to focus on living our core VA I-CARE values in all our interactions. Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence – these values will define who we are, our culture, and how we care for Veterans and other VA colleagues.

This means that all VA patients, staff, their families, caregivers, survivors, visitors and advocates must feel safe in a workplace free of harassment and discrimination. I will not accept discrimination, harassment or assault at any level or at any facility within VA. We will provide a safe, inclusive environment for Veterans and VA employees. Simultaneously, in VHA and VBA, we will redouble our efforts to care for Veterans who are survivors of military sexual trauma, ensuring they can all count on VA's support.

We can achieve our mission only by embracing the incredible diversity that defines our Veteran population and all of America, leveraging everyone's talents and passions. I commit to these principles, and I will make sure that my senior leadership team reflects and embeds them in everything we do.

We are fortunate to have a strong ally and leader in the White House. President Biden gave me a clear mission – to be a fierce, staunch advocate for Veterans and their families. His marching order to me is clear – fight like hell for Veterans. And we are going to fight like hell to give our Veterans and their families the benefits, services, respect and dignity they deserve.

I fully embrace this mission, and I know the VA workforce does, too.

May God bless our troops, our Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors – and, as a nation, may we always give them our very best.



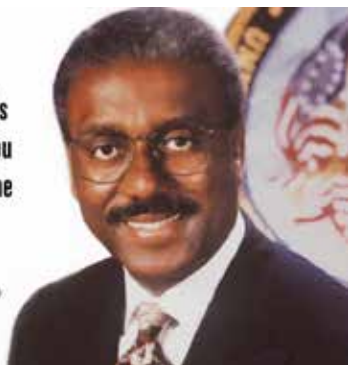


# In Honor of Black History Month: Remembering Former VA Secretary Jesse Brown

via Vantage Point by Monica Diaz, Executive Director of the VHA Homeless Programs Office

“If you look at the history of this nation, you’ll see that when you invest in the people, you get the greatest return.”

— Jesse Brown  
U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs (1993 - 1997)



This February, while the nation celebrates Black History Month, VA’s Homeless Programs Office (HPO) recognizes that our history of accomplishments preventing and ending Veteran homelessness is built on the work of trailblazing Black men and women. Among these notable individuals is Jesse Brown, a decorated disabled Vietnam Veteran who, in 1993, became the first African American Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Secretary Brown, who wanted to be known as the Secretary for Veterans Affairs, was an advocate, visionary and leader whose commitment to Veterans led to an expansion of VA benefits and programs. Along with delivering on a number of far-sighted goals to innovate within the Department, Brown extended disability payments to Veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and Agent Orange exposure, expanded services to women Veterans, and addressed the needs of Veterans experiencing homelessness.

Upon nominating Brown for VA Secretary, President Clinton told USA Today that Brown “knows first-hand that those who have given of themselves to fight for this country deserve the best this nation can offer.” In 1965, while serving as a Marine in Da Nang Vietnam, Brown was wounded in combat, leaving his shattered right arm partially paralyzed. During his recovery at Great Lakes Naval Hospital outside of Chicago, Brown worked with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to file for VA benefits. With few jobs available for Black people that did not involve manual labor, the prospects for a Black man with the use of only one hand were bleak. However, as Brown’s mother Lucille told the Chicago Tribune, “He adjusted, and he never felt handicapped or sorry for himself. He made up his mind to try to find out what to do in life.”

In 1967, Brown took a job as a DAV national service officer, launching a 26-year career that culminated in his appointment as DAV’s first African American executive director in 1988. Throughout his tenure with DAV, Brown continually pushed Congress, the White House, and other federal agencies to support legislation that improved the health and welfare of disabled Veterans and their families.

Brown’s uncompromising advocacy of Veterans’ rights made him an ideal choice to head VA at a time when the agency was besieged by criticism and calls to shrink its scope and reduce Veterans’ benefits. Firm in his belief that Veterans were the only group of people who actually paid for

the benefits they receive, Brown tackled the plight of homeless Veterans, convening the first National Summit on Homelessness Among Veterans in 1994. He reinvented VA’s homeless assistance network, promoting a continuum of care approach to serving homeless Veterans in the community. With community partnerships, he helped develop medical services, transitional shelter, permanent housing, and employment programs for those with abuse, psychiatric, and physical disorders.

Brown’s efforts on behalf of homeless Veterans put him in the spotlight, and he was named co-vice chair of the Federal Interagency Council on the Homeless, a role that allowed him to make addressing the needs of homeless Veterans a national priority.

When Brown retired in 1997, VA’s funding had increased by almost \$1 billion more than the previous year’s spending plan in an era of rampant budget cutting and a declining Veteran population. Further reflecting Brown’s belief that “the way we treat our Veterans is an indication of who we are as a nation,” VA became the nation’s largest provider of services for homeless people.

Secretary Brown died on August 15, 2002, of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig’s Disease. In May 2004, the West Side VA Medical Center in Chicago was renamed the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, becoming the second of two VA facilities named after an African American Veteran.

Brown’s vision of ending the national tragedy of Veteran homelessness lives on through the work of Black leaders and Veterans’ advocates. Ralph Cooper, co-founder of the National Committee of Homeless Veterans; Andre Simpson, executive vice president and chief operations officer of Veterans Village of San Diego and NCHV board member; and Wendy Charece McClinton, CEO, Black Veterans for Social Justice are only a few who are building on Secretary Brown’s legacy.

Through their work and the work of others, VA’s HPO offers a wide array of services and initiatives connecting homeless and at-risk Veterans with housing solutions, health care, community employment services, and other required supports. This large integrated network of homeless assistance programs has helped more than 80 communities and three states – Connecticut, Delaware, and Virginia – effectively end homelessness among Veterans. Since 2010, more than 850,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness through HUD’s targeted housing vouchers and VA’s homelessness programs.





## Rollin' with Gilbo

By Mike Guilbault, Chapter VP and Sports Director

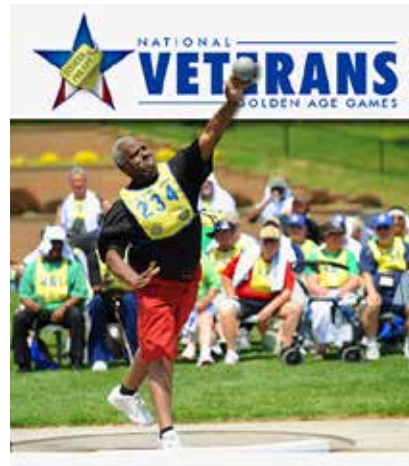
The deadline for getting on the Chapter NVWG Team is coming up fast. Please if you are planning to attend you must contact the Chapter and make sure we are aware. You can contact us by email at [sports@newenglandpva.org](mailto:sports@newenglandpva.org) or calling the office to inform the Executive Director. Remember as I wrote last month our deadline is March 2 and not April 2 if you want funding assistance from the

Chapter. In addition to the online registration the paperwork you need to provide is available at <https://www.wheelchairgames.org/athletes/registration/> right below the blue REGISTER NOW button. This year many of the forms we have filled out at Registration Day are now some of the paperwork which needs to be submitted along with General Medical and Physical form so there's now 9 pages to mail in. You need to send your Confirmation email saying your application is complete to [sports@newenglandpva.org](mailto:sports@newenglandpva.org) to let us know you have successfully registered.



Also remember the Golden Age Games are also being held in Madison, WI June 21-26 so those interested need visit <https://www.blogs.va.gov/>

[nvspse/national-veterans-golden-age-games/](https://www.nvspse/national-veterans-golden-age-games/) and make sure you get



registered and again inform the Chapter as above for the NVWG. So far they are still planning on holding them so we can wait and hope they do happen. Sadly the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Colorado has been cancelled this year due to the pandemic. As people start to get the vaccine and state rules allow for gatherings hopefully no more of the wonderful Recreation

Events held annually will be cancelled. All we can do is wait and see; we are planning for these events to happen until notified differently.

There are still plenty of virtual opportunities and some in person activities being held which you can find checking the [Chapter website](#) as we try to post all the [activities](#) that we become aware of. For the skiers out there NEHSA is still giving lessons so even though we had to cancel our 2021 Winter Sports Clinic you can still go up and ski at Mount Sunapee with NEHSA, just contact them. You can find the COVID precautions they are taking by checking their website <http://www.nehsa.org> In addition to NEHSA some other programs at different resorts are also still not totally closed down; however, each program has different requirements and one needs to contact that program to find out whether you could get out on the slopes with them. The other programs I've skied with that are still options for you to hit the slopes are VASS (Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports) <http://www.vermontadaptive.org> at Pico Mountain, Sugarbush Resort and Bolton Valley. LRDS (Lakes Region Disabled Sports) at Gunstock Mountain in NH. NEDS (New England Disabled Sports) <https://nedisabledsports.org> at Loon Mountain and Bretton Woods. Maine Adaptive at Sunday River and Sugarloaf <HTTP://maineadaptive.org> is currently only doing standing skiers but are trying to phase into sit skiing when possible. You can contact these programs and hopefully hit the slopes at those mountains if they are closer to you and you are able to meet the requirements for that program. I believe Gaylord Sports in CT which is doing a virtual Sled Hockey Discovery Night via Zoom February 17 6:00-7:30 PM and may also be offering some skiing opportunities so keep an eye on their website for info on opportunities they provide in case we don't get them posted on our Chapter calendar which we try to do when possible, their website for events is <https://www.gaylord.org/community-sports-assoc>. Each program's requirements are a bit different and changing often with the phases in the state. I know I love Sunday River and Bretton Woods and they have snow later in the season as it melts away in some other resorts, so I hope to see Sunday River phase in the sit skiing before the seasons end. Stay safe and be well my fellow members.

# National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic Registration Opens

via *Vantage Point blogs.va.gov*



## Rehabilitation program marks 13th year supporting Veterans

VA is accepting applications from Veterans interested in participating in the 2021 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic. Applications are available online at [www.summersportsclinic.va.gov](http://www.summersportsclinic.va.gov). The deadline to submit an application is May 1, 2021. Participation is open to eligible Veterans receiving care at any VA medical facility.

The National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic is a rehabilitation sports and recreation program for Veterans with disabilities, and takes place annually in San Diego, California. It's hosted by the [VA San Diego Healthcare System](#). This year's clinic is scheduled for Sept. 19-24. VA hosts the clinic in collaboration with presenting sponsor, [Wounded Warrior Project](#), the [Veterans Canteen Service](#), as well as dozens of other partners.

"The National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic exemplifies VA's commitment to improve the quality of life for Veterans with disabilities," said Maggie Kremer, director of the National Veterans Summer Sports

Clinic. "The mission of this innovative program is to provide a training ground for both Veterans and health care providers in exciting outdoor summer sports. Our overall objective is to instill the rehabilitation value of leisure pursuits as a viable means to aid in community reintegration and build a strong foundation which will further Veterans' dedication to better health and a rewarding lifestyle."

Army Veteran Adam Greathouse is a past participant at the Clinic and said the event is one of the highlights of his rehabilitation.

"I absolutely loved the challenge and opportunity to surf. Feeling nervous and unsure – riding that wave in – what a confidence builder that was," he said. "If any Veterans out there are thinking about going to the National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic, I would highly recommend you accept that challenge. I did and it helped change my life."

VA continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and will have an update on plans by late May. For more information and updates on status, visit [www.summersportsclinic.va.gov](http://www.summersportsclinic.va.gov) and follow VA Adaptive Sports Programs on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram at @Sports4Vets.

## More on the NVSSC

[Navy Veteran credits National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic with keeping him on the move](#)

[Veterans find healing, recovery in the surf during National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic](#)

[Army Veteran survives multiple medical challenges and is now inspiring other Veterans at annual VA event](#)

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# PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

PVA Washington Update Volume 27, Number 3

## *PVA's Public Policy Priorities for 2021 are Now Online*

PVA's 2021 policy priorities are now available on pva.org. Our priorities include: improving the VA health care system and available services, improving VA benefits, and improving and protecting the systems and

civil rights that support people with disabilities. PVA's full list of priorities is available [HERE](#).

## *Senate Confirms VA Secretary*

On February 8, the Senate voted 87-7 to confirm Denis McDonough to be the next VA Secretary. In a [statement](#) released following McDonough's confirmation, PVA Executive Director Carl Blake stated, "PVA has enjoyed a close relationship with the VA in the past and hopes to build upon that rich history with an even more collaborative and transparent partnership." Blake also stated that, "With a career in public service, we are hopeful Secretary McDonough's understanding of government and politics will

help him navigate the challenges inherent in the second-largest federal agency, and America's most complex health care and benefits system." At the end of January, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing on McDonough's nomination. During the [hearing](#), Secretary McDonough told Committee members that most of his decisions would be based on whether they increase access and improve outcomes for veterans.

## *Independent Budget Veterans Agenda and VA Budget Recommendations Released*

On February 1, the Independent Budget Veterans Service Organizations (IBVSOs)—DAV (Disabled American Veterans), PVA, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) released The Independent Budget: [Veterans Agenda for the 117th Congress](#) and our [VA budget recommendations](#) for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 advance appropriations. In the Veterans Agenda for the 117th Congress, the IBVSOs elected to focus on 11 critical issues addressing health care, benefits, and education and employment. Several of the critical issues, including ensuring veterans access to long-term care and support services and sufficient VA health care staffing, directly relate to PVA priorities.

For FY 2022, the IB recommends Congress appropriate approximately \$120.3 billion for all VA programs and services, a 10.2 percent increase over FY 2021 appropriations levels. The IB estimates the VA health care system will require \$81.5 billion in FY 2022, an 8.5 percent increase, to provide care to more than seven million unique users. This recommendation would allow VA to fill over 10,000 health care vacancies, complete the caregiver program expansion, increase home-based long-term care services, and address inequities in health care delivery to women and minority veterans.

## *New Mask Mandate In Public Transportation and Hubs*

Following the issuance of an Executive Order, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued an [Order](#) on January 29 requiring travelers to wear masks on public conveyances, including airplanes, trains, subways, taxis, and buses, to prevent the spread of COVID. Operators of transportation hubs must also require all persons to wear a mask when entering or on the premises of a transportation hub. The CDC Order exempts from the mask requirement people with disabilities who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, for reasons related to the disability.

In response to COVID-19, U.S. and foreign air carriers generally have implemented policies requiring passengers to wear masks onboard aircraft even before the issuance of the Executive Order and the CDC Order. Some carriers have adopted policies that expressly allow "no exceptions" to the mask requirement other than for children under the age of two. Following the CDC Order, DOT has released a notice of enforcement policy stating that airlines are expected to review their face mask policies immediately and to revise them as necessary to comply with the Air Carrier Access Act.

The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) security procedures also now require that all individuals must wear masks at the checkpoints and baggage screening locations. In the event that a person with a disability advises a TSA Officer that they have a disability that prevents them from wearing a mask, the TSA Officer may notify a supervisor to assist. Medical documentation to support an exemption from the mask-wearing mandate should be on the passenger's licensed physician's letterhead, and should include the passenger's name, and clearly state that he or she cannot wear or safely wear a mask. Passengers may be asked if they can wear a mask during screening for a short-duration, only when additional screening may be required (e.g., pat-down) and social distancing is not possible. If passengers have concerns before, during, or after your screening, they may ask for a Passenger Support Specialist or Supervisory TSA Officer.

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## ***A Framework for Integrating Family Caregivers into the Health Care Team***

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RAND Corporation published a study in mid-January examining the role of family caregivers in a health care team and making recommendations for effective involvement of caregivers in supporting loved ones with disabilities or chronic health conditions. Four themes around barriers to integrating caregivers into health care teams emerged from the study report including: (1) identifying caregivers; (2) communication and information-sharing; (3) time limitations and competing demands; and (4) trust and cultural barriers. The authors also identified six policy areas in which initiatives could mitigate these barriers: (1) identify and record

information on family caregivers; (2) incentivize providers to engage with family caregivers; (3) invest in programs that provide supportive services for family caregivers; (4) expand access to and funding for care coordinators to support caregivers and connect them to clinical information; (5) implement training programs for providers and caregivers to facilitate effective communication; and (6) develop, test, and improve caregiver access to technologies that foster caregiver-provider care integration and information-sharing. A downloadable version of the report can be found [HERE](#).

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## ***PVA Webinar: Access to the COVID Vaccine for SCI/D Veterans***

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In an effort to provide our members with more information about VA's rollout of the COVID vaccine, we are hosting a webinar with VA on Friday, February 26 at 1:00 pm ET. Please register in advance for this webinar

[HERE](#). This webinar will present members with an opportunity to hear directly from VA leadership about the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine.

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## ***U.S. Access Board Webinar: Medical Care and Long-Term Care Facilities***

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The next webinar in the U.S. Access Board's free monthly series will take place March 4 from 2:30 – 4:00 pm ET and will provide an in-depth review of ADA and Architectural Barriers Act requirements for medical care and long-term care facilities, including hospitals, rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, and other facilities. The presenters will review scoping and technical requirements for exam rooms, patient bedrooms,

bathrooms, accessible routes, accessible parking, and other spaces and elements. They will also provide a brief overview on the Board's voluntary Medical Diagnostic Equipment Standards. Visit [www.accessibilityonline.org](http://www.accessibilityonline.org) for more information or to register.



# Veterans, Military, Families get Answers to COVID-19 Vaccine Questions

via VAntage Point by Adam Stump, Public Affairs Specialist with VA's Digital Media Engagement team



Veterans and military members received answers to COVID-19 vaccine questions from senior medical and military leaders during a virtual session Feb. 4.

The forum covered a wide variety of questions about the vaccine, including the effectiveness, availability and length of protection.

[Dr. Anthony Fauci](#), director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, started the

panel by addressing the sobering statistics. He said COVID-19, which has killed more than 430,000 Americans, is still killing more than 3,000 Americans a day.

“That is the sobering and sad news,” Fauci said. “But, the light at the end of the tunnel is the extraordinary success that we’ve had with the vaccine development program.”

## Effectiveness

Fauci said Americans have received more than 32 million vaccines from the two approved, with four more under development. While millions already received the vaccine, he said some still have questions whether to get the vaccine. He noted that the two vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech had more than 74,000 trials. Fauci cited the “extraordinary” 94-95% effective rate, then added that there were no cut corners or safety issues – two facts independently verified by scientists.

“That’s the reason why many of you hear me, every day in the media, saying when your turn comes up, please get vaccinated both for your own safety, for that of your family and that for the American community in general,” he said.

Fauci also answered a question about the length of effectiveness. Because vaccinations are still in the early stages, medical leaders are still gathering data on the effective length.

“We hope it’s longer than a year,” Fauci said.

## Additional questions

The doctor also said that those with autoimmune disease often ask if they should receive the vaccine. He said that that’s even “more reason” to receive a vaccine – to prevent serious complications or death.

Fauci then addressed a question about how the messenger RNA vaccine works. Other vaccines put a weakened or inactivated germ into a person’s body. Messenger RNA vaccines teach human cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune response. That immune response produces antibodies.

The RNA decays after a few days and does not enter a person’s DNA. The technology, he said, dates back over a decade.

[Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Ramón “CZ” Colón-López](#) said he recently received his second dose of the vaccine.

“I’m glad to say that I had a sore arm that subsided within a day as the only side effect,” said the senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “I credit much of that with staying healthy and fit.”

## Veterans receiving vaccine

[Dr. Richard Stone](#), the acting under secretary for health at the Veterans Health Administration, said receiving a COVID-19 vaccine was a “personal decision.” He advised Veterans to talk to their medical provider at their VA facility.

Stone said the immunocompromised are at a greater risk for COVID-19, including severe complications. He said VA is focusing on high-risk Veterans first.

“We’re prioritizing based on risk,” Stone said. He added that vaccine companies are ramping up production, which will greatly increase the number of Veterans who can receive the vaccine. He said the faster Veterans get vaccines, the faster Veterans can resume normal lives.

“None of us are going to be able to resume our lives and be able to get out and do the things we want to do until we get to the point of 60 or 70% of the American population immunized,” he said.

Stone also highlighted VA’s efforts, which includes [administering over one million doses](#) of the COVID-19 vaccine to Veterans and VA health care workers. He also said designated family caregivers of Veterans participating in the [Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers](#) can receive COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

Blue Star Families and the American Red Cross hosted the event. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, director of the Defense Health Agency, also provided information during the forum.

## More information

Read about a new rollout tool that notifies high-risk Vets when to expect their vaccine: <https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/84122/new-tool-notifies-vets-vaccine/>.

To get the latest updates and sign up to stay informed about COVID-19 vaccines, visit <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>.

View the VA COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution Plan: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/docs/n-coronavirus/VHA-COVID-Vaccine-Plan-14Dec2020.pdf>.

Veterans who would like additional information can visit the VA COVID-19 vaccines webpage, visit their local facility’s website or contact their care team.

# Connect With What Matters



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Norwood, MA 02062  
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# How Veterans, Designated Caregivers can get COVID-19 Vaccine from the VA

via VAntage Point by Adam Stump, Public Affairs Specialist with VA's Digital Media Engagement team

As of Feb. 3, 2021, VA is providing COVID-19 vaccine to the following groups:

- Veterans living in VA long-term care facilities
- Veterans who already receive care at VA and are at high risk from COVID-19 based on VA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [risk criteria](#). At many VA health care facilities, this group includes all Veterans who are at least 75 years old. Each facility will determine when Veterans in this group can receive a vaccine. They'll base this decision on vaccine availability, local needs, and the strict vaccine storage and handling requirements of the vaccines.
- Family caregivers who are enrolled in VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). PCAFC Caregivers are eligible for vaccination when the Veteran they care for becomes eligible. VA will tell the family caregiver if they can get a vaccine when VA invites the Veteran to get one.
- VA health care personnel. Vaccinating VA health care personnel helps continue to provide care for Veterans.

VA is first prioritizing Veterans who are actively receiving health care from VA. If Veterans are not currently receiving health care through VA, find out eligibility and how to [apply here](#).

## How can Veterans find out when they can get the vaccine?

Veterans and caregivers can sign up for an easy way to stay informed about getting a COVID-19 vaccine through VA at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed>.

When Veterans and caregivers sign up, VA will also ask about vaccine plans. A local VA health facility may use this information to determine when to contact Veterans and caregivers once their risk group becomes eligible.

**Note:** VA will contact every eligible Veteran in each risk group. Veterans don't need to sign up to get a vaccine.

## How will VA contact Veterans when they're eligible to get a vaccine?

Veterans enrolled in and eligible for VA health care can receive personalized COVID-19 vaccine information from VA in three different ways.

### 1. By text message

VA's VEText program reminds Veterans of upcoming appointments via text message. Veterans may also receive text message updates about availability and scheduling for COVID-19 vaccines.

Veterans may receive one of three different types of messages. All text messages will tell Veterans their facility is offering the vaccine and will come from the short phone number 53079

- Some facilities will invite the Veteran to make a vaccine appointment directly by text message.
- Other facilities will provide instructions on a number to call to schedule a vaccine
- Some facilities are also using text message to notify Veterans of

vaccination events, such as drive-through clinics, for eligible risk groups.

Every enrolled Veteran with a cell phone number listed in their health record is automatically enrolled receive text messages. Veterans who receive care at VA should make sure their cell phone number is up to date in their VA.gov profile. This is the number a VA health facility will use to contact a Veteran by text. Veterans can update phone numbers online at <https://www.va.gov/profile/>. Veterans can also update contact information during check-in at an appointment. Please don't call a facility to update a phone number.

Learn more about VEText at [https://www.va.gov/HEALTH/VEText\\_FAQs.asp](https://www.va.gov/HEALTH/VEText_FAQs.asp).

### 2. Via email

Veterans who sign up to stay informed about COVID-19 vaccines will receive general updates via email. Veterans who [subscribe to Vet Resources](#) or [My HealthVet](#) may also receive periodic updates about VA's vaccination efforts along with helpful reminders. Emails from VA will always come from a va.gov email address.

VA is also using email to let Veterans know about upcoming opportunities to get a vaccine at their local VA health facility. These emails may also contain information on why a Veteran should consider getting the vaccine, which vaccine they may receive, and instructions on how to make an appointment or when to arrive for a vaccination event.

Veterans who receive care at VA should check their VA.gov profile at <https://www.va.gov/profile/> to make sure their email address is up to date.

### 3. Via U.S. Postal Service mail

VA is also sending out letters in the mail to tell Veterans how to receive the vaccine.

Veterans who receive care at VA should check their VA.gov profile at <https://www.va.gov/profile/> to make sure their mailing address is up to date.

### Second dose reminders

After a Veteran receives the first dose, they will receive follow up information reminding them to come in for their second dose. These reminders may come via VEText, email or regular mail—the same ways the Veteran received the first notification.

### More information

Find answers to general VA COVID-19 vaccine questions at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>.

To receive ongoing updates about VA's COVID-19 vaccine efforts and to indicate your interest in getting the vaccine once you're eligible, visit <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed>.

# VA Supports the White Ribbon Campaign

via VAntage Point by Dr. Patricia Hayes, Chief Officer for Women's Health at the Veterans Health Administration



Harassment is personal. It may seem too personal and scary to trust anyone. But VA wants to be a trusted resource for Veterans who have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, or intimate partner violence (IPV).

In VA health care settings and communities across the country, people are taking the White Ribbon VA call to action to end violence against women and girls, and to promote gender

equity, healthy relationships and a new vision of masculinity.

The campaign also seeks to provide resources for those who are or have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) and to help them tell their stories.

## Suffered in silence for years

Veronika Mudra, co-founder of [White Ribbon USA](#), emphasizes the need to speak up and reach out. Mudra personally knows about IPV. She and her son emigrated from the Ukraine six years ago after receiving asylum in the US due to IPV. For years she suffered in silence, living with fear, worried that if she spoke out, she would be further isolated.

VA's white ribbon symbolizes and promotes a campaign of anti-violence against women.

When her ex-partner continued to threaten her and tried to take her son away, she realized she had to publicly tell her story. When she did, she found more support, resources, and people who were willing to help than she ever thought possible.

"I didn't expect to get that much support. It gave me strength to keep on

doing what I was doing. It was a turning point for me," she said.

## Intimate partner violence knows no borders

IPV can happen to anyone: women or men, in heterosexual or same-sex relationships, whether they live together or are sexually intimate. IPV can be ongoing from a past relationship. It can happen at the office or in "good homes." And, as Mudra experienced, it knows no borders.

IPV has also become a shadow epidemic of the COVID-19 pandemic. The stress caused by the pandemic has raised the prevalence of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual violence and harassment within and outside the home.

Unfortunately, people who experience IPV often don't seek help because they feel ashamed and embarrassed or are afraid to speak up. But they are not alone. About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner.

## Speak Up – You will get compassionate care

VA wants Veterans and their families to be able to speak up about [IPV](#) without fear – to know they will get compassionate care and access to the resources they need to address their physical and mental health needs.

Resources and support are available for those who have experienced or are currently experiencing [IPV](#). If you want to know more, please visit our [IPV Assistance site](#).

If you would like confidential help with your relationship, please contact your local [Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program](#).

You can also talk with your primary care social worker or other provider and women Veterans can ask for the Women Veterans Program Manager or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) 24/7.

*Dr. Patricia Hayes is chief officer for Women's Health at the Veterans Health Administration.*

## Chapter Board Vacancy, Your Opportunity to Serve!

Board directorship is just one of a variety of ways Chapter members can contribute and participate in the Chapter's direction. While Directors are not necessarily expected to have specific prior training or experience in managing or running a business, there are some characteristics that effective Directors share in common.

### What is the Board of Directors and What does it do?

The Board of Directors is the governing body representing the Membership of the New England Chapter. It is composed of nine Chapter members. All Directors represent the Chapter membership at-large rather than any special subgroup. Terms for Directors are for two years.

The Board is responsible for ensuring organizational performance of the Chapter on behalf of all members. This work includes developing clearly stated expectations through written policies; delegating responsibility for, and authority over, the achievement of stated objectives; and monitoring

compliance with written policies. The Board is also responsible for active engagement with our Chapter membership.

By devoting time to focus on the big-picture vision of the Chapter, the Board ensures we adequately position the Chapter for the maximum benefit of our Membership, as well as anticipate trends and values which may have a critical impact on our relevance and survival.

The Board governs the organization and delegates the majority of operational duties to its employees. The Board is primarily involved in strategic planning, financial oversight, Member engagement and service, and community awareness.

If you are interested in serving, please email Chapter President Michael Negrete at [michael@newenglandpva.org](mailto:michael@newenglandpva.org) to receive complete details.

# VA BOSTON COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE

- VA Boston is following national guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and VA *which is different from the plan of any state.*
- We plan to offer the vaccine to **ALL** Veterans who receive care at VA Boston.
- The first inpatient Veterans and staff were vaccinated on **December 21, 2020.**
- Vaccinations began for outpatients on **January 5, 2021.**
- Currently we're using the Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine which requires a second shot 28 days after the first – we must administer both.
- Veterans **MUST BE** enrolled in VA Healthcare to receive the vaccine.
- Designated caregivers enrolled in the VA Caregivers Support Program are eligible.
- Service-Connected Disability Rating is not a factor in vaccination eligibility.
- The vaccine is voluntary.
- Our projected timetable **depending on vaccine availability** is:

TARGET GROUP (Veterans enrolled at VA Boston)	PROJECTED DATE (Dates may change depending on vaccine availability)
Residents of VA Boston's Community Living Center or Spinal Cord Injury Unit	December 2020
High risk Veterans who have dialysis, chemotherapy, transplant or living in congregate living situations or homeless	January 2021
Veterans age 85+	February 2021
Veterans age 75+	March 2021
Veterans age 65+	April 2021
Veterans age 50+	May 2021
Veterans aged 50 and younger	June 2021



- VA Boston will call Veterans in the targeted group to offer a vaccine appointment.
- Once the vaccine has been offered to all Veterans in an age group, we will move on to call the next group.
- Drop-in clinics will be announced on VA Boston's social media pages - **VA Boston Healthcare System** on Facebook and **VA Boston HC** on Twitter.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Boston Healthcare System

**For More Information:** [www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/)  
**Become a Patient:** [www.boston.va.gov/patients/eligibility.asp](http://www.boston.va.gov/patients/eligibility.asp)

# PAVE PROGRAM UPDATE

December 2020

## SUCCESS STORY: SEAN FERRY



PVA Keystone Chapter member and U.S. Air Force veteran Sean Ferry was six months into a trying job search when he reached out to PVA's PAVE program.

Sean, who is paralyzed from the neck down (C4 – quadriplegic), wanted to be an engaged and contributing member of society but was having problems finding a position where he could work from home and use necessary adaptive equipment.

VCP Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Genia Hachenberg, M.S., CRC, and Sean spent time discussing Sean's passions, including computers, and also discussing adaptive equipment that he needed to accommodate employment. They explored employers who value disabled veterans and are willing to integrate adaptive equipment into their systems.

One of Genia's colleagues shared information about JLodge, a quality assurance company that focuses on hiring Americans with disabilities. Sean applied for a position, had three interviews, passed their assessments, and was put into a pool of qualified candidates for the next employment class. Genia advocated for Sean with JLodge, working with them on the necessary accommodations and making sure their equipment would be compatible with Sean's online keyboard and other equipment.

Sean was hired as a Quality Analyst and started working four hours a day, five days a week from home. Sean was empowered through employment while also having a schedule that lets him successfully manage his health.

Unfortunately, due to the economic recession and the loss of a contract, Sean's position was eliminated. Genia and Sean worked together to find a variety of different opportunities. In the meantime, Genia learned that J. Lodge, Sean's previous employer, had been acquired by Cognosante and they intended to open several quality analyst positions. Genia reached out on behalf of Sean to share his previous experience and advocate for him to be an early candidate when they started hiring again. This outreach and Sean's exemplary performance paid off and in December Sean accepted a new position with Cognosante as a quality analyst.

Sean was also selected to work with GovernmentCIO and the Kessler Foundation as part of their research and program evaluation initiatives.

## IMPACT + OPPORTUNITIES

### 18 Client Placements

- 15 Paid Employment
- 3 Training/Education

### 4 PVA Members

### 14 Veterans

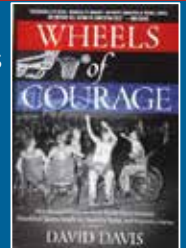
### 4 Family Members

### 223 Total Placements through December



## WHEELS OF COURAGE: AUTHOR DISCUSSION

Join PVA for a live book club webinar on Thursday, February 4, 2021 at 1 p.m. EST, as we host author David Davis to discuss his new book *Wheels of Courage: How Paralyzed Veterans from World War II Invented Wheelchair Sports, Fought for Disability Rights, and Inspired a Nation*.



Out of the carnage of World War II comes an unforgettable tale about defying the odds and finding hope in the most harrowing circumstances. Register for the event [here](#).

## OUT WITH PAVE, IN WITH PVA VETERANS CAREER PROGRAM

As PVA approaches its 75<sup>th</sup> year of advocating for and supporting veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders, as well as all people with disabilities, we are updating the name of our employment program.

The change from Paving Access to Veterans Employment (PAVE) to **PVA Veterans Career Program** highlights our commitment to a holistic support for veterans and their family members. We felt it is important to incorporate "career" in our name as it demonstrates our focus on assisting members of the veteran community with long-term employment, volunteer and educational opportunities and adds more clarity and uniformity to PVA programming.



**PAVE**  
Paving Access for Veterans Employment

Powered by





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



# Meet Ms. Kathryn Potenzone - New SCI Outpatient Nurse Practitioner

*Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President*

Ms. Kathryn “Katie” Potenzone, MSN, APRN, NP-C is the new SCI Outpatient Nurse Practitioner at the West Roxbury, MA Outpatient clinic. Katie knew her passion was with Spinal Cord Injury when she completed a clinical rotation on A2.

A2 safe during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Katie graduated with her MSN and Adult Gero-NP from Boston College in 2019. While continuing to work at the VA as a registered nurse, she pursued an NP opportunity at UMass Boston in their busy college health department where she learned how to care for a variety of patients. She loves teaching and serves as adjunct faculty at Regis College of Nursing.

Katie said, “I really enjoy working with the SCI population. I have to say I cried more times than I want to admit when I was at the NVWG 2 years ago, I was blown away by what everyone could do! The strength and courage that all my SCI Veterans exhibit is so inspiring. Working in SCI, I learn something new every day and I feel like I belong here. Someone once told me, choose a job you love, and you will never work a day in your life. This feeling has not gone away in the 5 years I have spent in spinal cord!”

The best way to get in touch with Katie is via secure messaging on [My HealthVet](#). To speak with her in-person, her office number is 867-203-6556.

Katie completed her Bachelors in Nursing at the University of Massachusetts, Boston in 2015. She began her career here at the VA at the Adult Day Health Program at the Chelsea Soldier’s Home. She later transitioned to 81B, the long-term care SCI unit in Brockton where she immediately felt at home. While on 81B she traveled to Louisville, Kentucky with a group of residents to the Wheelchair Games. She cared for the Veterans of 81B for 2 years before she was promoted to Assistant Nurse Manager on A2 at the West Roxbury VA.

Katie spent a year as the Assistant Nurse Manager / Nurse Manager for A2 where she worked with nursing staff to create a more robust CARF program and develop policies and procedures to keep the Veterans on

## 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 before the meeting or sooner. 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 unless called upon.

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](#).



# FEBRUARY CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Donald V Baker	James R Cummings	Ronald J Evans	Robert E Heller	Paul D Matula	Russell Suarez
William M Banyas	Bunker L Davis	Glenn S Friar	Kevin C Hickey	Thomas P McDonald	Peter P Virtuoso
Thomas L Batchelder	Bernice B De Blois	Alfred J Ghergia	Lloyd G Jones	Bruce E Millen	Norman Voter
Paul A Batutis	Michael J Dechene	Daren J Gorneault	Kenneth J Kane	Gary Okeefe	Leo F Williams
Michael Benedetto	Harold A Decker	David M Gregory	Charles L Lalumiere	Robert T Parsons	Mark R Winchell
Tim A Bryant	Kevin W Deeds	Christine M Griffin	Monique M Laverdure	Drew A Prescott	Raymond A Zaccarino
Peter D Cappella	Gary N Denmark	Michael A Guilbault	Ryan M Levy	Jimmie Pugh	
David L Cogley	Bryan J Donisi	Charles E Hall	Neil C Lewis	Wayne N Ross	
John E Corbett	Michael J Dowling	Dale H Hallowell	Wendy F Mabins	Walter H Seeba	
Anne Marie Cuellar	Louis J Dupilka	Arnold A Hayes	Sean P Martin	Timothy D Smith	
John R Cullerton	Richard L Eno	Kevin Hebert	Robert P Matseas	David J Stephens	



## NEPVA BASS Trail Tournament Event Schedule

June 5, 2021: Charles River - Newton Mass. Newton Yacht Club

September 10-12, 2021: Lake Winnepesaukee - Camp Robindel, Moultonborough NH

October 1-3, 2021: North Pond - Camp Pine Tree, Rome, ME

NEPVA Bass Trail will be strictly adhering to each individual State's COVID guidelines. Please check the [Chapter's Bass Trail website page](#) frequently for any registration and Tournament updates.

## 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



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

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New England Chapter

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♥ Make a Donation

SUPPORT PARALYZED VETERANS

## Make A Difference in 2021!

Start the New Year by helping change the lives of Paralyzed Veterans! Help them live rich and fulfilling lives through therapeutic sports and recreational activities, continuing education opportunities, and most importantly, equal public access.

MAKE A DONATION



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.*