



New England Chapter

MAY/JUNE 2021

# CORDWORD

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

## New National PSA Unveiled

See page 10



# HONOR

## ★ THE SPOT ★

### INSIDE THIS EDITION

### VA SEC MCDONOUGH

### TELEHEALTH RIGHT NOW



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Remembering the fallen means honoring the nation's unfinished work, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said at Quantico National Cemetery in Virginia May 28.

McDonough said speaking at a national cemetery was a somber reminder of the true meaning of Memorial Day.

"This day reminds us that we must never forget those men and women who stood ready to protect our freedom, our humanity and our democracy," he said. ....continued on page 21.



Mental health, blood pressure, and much more

VA is leading the way in telehealth innovation so Veterans can access care when and where they need it. Telehealth makes it easier for Veterans to connect with their VA care team from the home, clinic, hospital and other convenient locations.

When is telehealth right for a Veteran? Perhaps the Veteran lives far away from the closest VA Medical Center and would prefer to save on gas and the hassle of navigating traffic. Or they may feel safer or just more ....continued on page 19.

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**Paralyzed Veterans  
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**Vehicle Donation Program**

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

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### PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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## ON THE COVER: New National Public Service Announcement - "Honor the Spot"

*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**

What an exciting time it was at this year’s Annual PVA Convention. The New England Chapter’s hard work and dedication was recognized and rewarded by PVA. The Chapter received the following awards, which can be seen on [page 11](#):

- Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award (Last received 17 years ago in 2004)
- Most Outstanding Website (Last received 17 years ago in 2004)
- John M. Price “Most Improved” Chapter Award (Last received 15 years ago in 2006)
- Richard Fuller “Outstanding Achievement in Government Relations” Award (Never received before)

It has been almost 20 years since the New England Chapter has been recognized nationally by PVA in these categories, and the Chapter has never been recognized in the area of Government Relations. Its been through a lot of hard, dedicated and tireless work that has borne the fruit of these rewards. The recognition is humbling among comparison of so many other deserving Chapters. More important than receiving the awards and recognition, is the service to our Chapter members these awards represent.

In taking a brief moment to reflect on these awards, we should each strive continue these efforts, not necessarily for the recognition, but to continuously improve upon the services needed to meet the needs of our Chapter members. The ability to meet their needs not only today, but tomorrow, is the true measure of our success or failure.

Among other New England awards, I was honored and humbled to receive the Dwain Taylor award from National President David Zurfluh for the Voluntary Service program in recognition of volunteer hours and exceptional contributions to PVA during the 2020 fiscal year. Its simply a privilege to serve and give back to an organization that has given me so much.

To read and see more about PVA’s 75th Anniversary Convention start by reading the message from President Joe Biden on [page 8](#) and continue with PN Online’s story about our new National President Charles Brown.

I want to remind everyone of our Inaugural [New England PVA Charity Golf Classic](#) being held at the Falmouth Country Club on Cape Cod next Friday June 11th. You can find more information and register on our website here: [www.newenglandpva.org/golfclassic](http://www.newenglandpva.org/golfclassic). I encourage any of our Chapter members to attend this event to share your story and experiences with our supporters. There is also an awards dinner at end of the day where members are welcome to join the day’s golfers and supporters at no charge.

Finally, I hope this past Memorial Day each of you were able to take a moment to remember and honor those men and women who gave their lives in service to our country preserving our freedom and liberties. President Ronald Reagan stated it best during his 1981 Inauguration speech:

*“Today, the United States stands as a beacon of liberty and democratic strength before the community of nations. We are resolved to stand firm against those who would destroy the freedoms we cherish. We are determined to achieve an enduring peace—a peace with liberty and with honor. This determination, this resolve, is the highest tribute we can pay to the many who have fallen in the service of our Nation.”*

With all the turmoil, partisanship and inequities are Nation is faced with, we should heed Reagan’s words, taking them to heart, that we might pay an honorable tribute to those who gave up their tomorrows for our todays.

To apply Reagan’s words to ourselves, recall my quote of Leon Brown last month, *“Never underestimate the valuable and important difference you make in every life you touch for the impact you make today has a powerful rippling effect on every tomorrow.”*

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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From Monday, May 17th through Sunday, May 23rd I was honored to attend PVA National's 75th Annual Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. Chapter President and National Director Michael Negrete and I proudly represented the New England Chapter throughout the week. Various highlights of the week included some new and interesting PVA resolution proposals, a Yale Neuroscience and Regeneration Research Center presentation, a summary of PVA's FY 2022 budget, and a very informative session explaining PVA's strategic plans for the foreseeable future.

During one of the mornings, I was delighted to attend a meeting of the PVA Association of Chapter Executive Directors, where I was able to learn about some best practices from other Chapter Executive Directors across the nation. I was happy to share some of our own best practices as well, especially as it regards our work in the space of grant writing and positively responding to our members who were so disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the week the New England Chapter was also honored to receive 4 national awards in recognition of various areas of excellence, including the John M. Price Most Improved Chapter Award, the Richard Fuller Outstanding Achievement in Government Relations Award, the Most Outstanding Chapter Website Award, and the Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter Award. We humbly received these awards with the understanding that being recognized in this way is a testament to our shared collaborative efforts in moving our Chapter forward. Our members, Board, staff, volunteers, and donors have all contributed to the ways in which our Chapter has made such incredible strides and growth over the past year, and it is nice to know that this has been observed so demonstrably by others in the PVA community.

We are confirmed to hold our New England PVA Charity Golf Classic on Friday, June 11th at Falmouth Country Club in Falmouth, MA. To register for the tournament or to get some more information on sponsorship opportunities please visit [New England PVA Charity Golf Classic](#) | [New England PVA](#). The day is shaping up to be a wonderful time of fun, friendship, and financial support of the Chapter. Please consider supporting the tournament by registering to play or connecting us with a potential sponsor. If you would like to play in the tournament, please make sure to register as soon as possible. You can reach out to me directly for more information regarding the Golf Classic.

On Monday, May 31st we of course observed Memorial Day, where as a nation we honored and mourned all those who have served in the United States military and died while serving. As US President Harry S. Truman once said, "Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices." As a non-profit Veterans Service Organization primarily serving paralyzed and disabled veterans, I hope we were all able take some time in our own way to honor and mourn all those who have died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.



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*

I'm pleased to inform you of an opportunity to help our Chapter, and the national PVA organization, advance a critical piece of legislation.

We need Congress to pass the **Veterans Families Health Services Act (H.R. 2734/S. 1280)**.

This bill would permanently authorize Assistive Reproductive Therapies (ART) to include In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) services, gamete donation, and surrogacy for veterans with service-connected infertility, and include the treatment of veteran spouses in applicable cases.

Currently, Congress has granted a temporary authorization for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide IVF to veterans with service-connected conditions that affect fertility. While it's encouraging that Congress recognizes the need for this benefit, it's important to note that this is a temporary solution and reauthorization is not guaranteed. Additionally, the temporary authorization neglects the fact that infertility does not have a one-size fits all solution. Many of our members require IVF to conceive, but just as many veterans require a gamete donation or surrogacy to start their families.

We believe that our government has a moral obligation to restore what has been lost due to a veteran's service and sacrifice to this nation. Veterans with service-connected conditions that prevent the conception of pregnancy deserve more than what our government is currently offering them. They deserve a chance to start a family.

### **How NEPVA members can take action**

Join us in encouraging the New England Congressional Delegation to cosponsor the **Veterans Families Health Services Act (H.R. 2734/S. 1280)** by clicking [here](#) and sending an email directly to your Representative's

office. Please tell your family, friends, and neighbors to do the same!

This legislation would greatly expand and improve access to assisted reproductive technology for service members and veterans by:

- Allowing service members to cryopreserve their gametes before deployment to a combat zone or hazardous duty assignment as well as after an injury or illness;jj
- Permanently authorizing fertility treatment and counseling, including assisted reproductive technology like IVF, for veterans and service members;
- Allowing for the use of donated gametes, which ensures that veterans' and service members' spouses, partners, and gestational surrogates are appropriately included in eligibility rules;
- Providing support for service members and veterans to navigate their options, find a provider that meets their needs, and ensure continuity of care after a permanent change of station or relocation;
- Expanding options for veterans with infertility by allowing VA to provide adoption assistance; and
- Requiring VA and the Department of Defense to facilitate research on the long-term reproductive health needs of veterans.

Currently, the following New England Delegation members have formally pledged their support as a cosponsor: Representative McGovern (D,MA); Representative Hayes (D,CT); Representative Moulton (D,MA); Senator Warren (D,MA); Senator Markey (D,MA); Senator Sanders (I,VT); Senator Blumenthal (D,CT); Senator Shaheen (D,NH); and Senator Hassan (D,NH).

We need your help to encourage the rest of our Congressional Delegation to prioritize this issue. Please [contact](#) your Representatives and ask them to cosponsor The Veterans Families Health Services Act (H.R. 2734/S. 1280) today.



## Government Relations Awards

*By Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President*

During the 75th Annual Convention's closing ceremonies Executive Director Mark Murphy and I were proud to accept, on behalf of the Chapter, the PVA's 2020 Richard Fuller Government Relations Award, demonstrating outstanding achievements in government relations. This is the Chapter's first time receiving this award.

We'd like thank all of our Chapter members who participated in our advocacy efforts throughout 2020 and look forward to sharing more opportunities to advance the needs and rights of paralyzed veterans with you.

I'd like to personally say "Thank you" to Kristen, our new Government Relations Director.

A lot was asked of her from day one, starting with attending Ad/Leg in D.C. just days after being hired, then immediately shifting to the support of our member's rights here in New England during a global pandemic. She stepped up to these challenges with extraordinary skill and confidence while still maintaining our continued legislative priorities within the local District offices and D.C. She is without questions, an invaluable asset to the Chapter and the members it serves.

# Expanding Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers

By Elsie Moore via VAntage Point, [blog.va.gov](http://blog.va.gov)

Eva Blackburn has always grabbed life by the horns. She's used to overcoming challenges with a positive attitude and nearly nothing getting her down. When she became her husband's caregiver, she approached her new role with the same positive spirit.

Eventually, however, she began to feel overwhelmed and turned to VA for help. "I noticed a change in my husband and went to VA to see what type of assistance was available for him," she said. "They told us about the Caregiver Support Program and they've supported us far beyond my expectation."

Eva and her husband, Stanley, a Vietnam-era Veteran, are now participants in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), a component of the VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP). They're part of a new population of caregivers and Veterans who may now be eligible for PCAFC.

Now for Caregivers of Veterans who served before May 7, 1975

Established in 2011, PCAFC was implemented to provide resources to caregivers of eligible Veterans who served on or after September 11, 2001. On October 1, 2020, PCAFC expanded to eligible Veterans who served on or before May 7, 1975, including Veterans who served during the Vietnam era.

PCAFC supports Veterans by providing caregivers with education, training and connections to resources specific to the Veteran's condition. Also, the program empowers caregivers and supports their wellbeing through services like self-care courses, support groups and respite care. Respite care provides Veterans with temporary caregiving services, allowing the caregiver to take time for themselves.

Inclusion of Serious Illness

Before the expansion, PCAFC criteria included Veterans who incurred a serious injury. Now, eligibility criteria include serious illness, as well.

"Expanding PCAFC criteria to include serious illness allows CSP to provide services in support of aging Veterans who depend on caregivers to meet their needs," said CSP executive director Colleen Richardson. "It also allows us to help caregivers who are making a significant sacrifice to care for the Veteran and themselves."

Since PCAFC's expansion in October 2020, more than 4,000 Veterans age 60+ have applied and had a caregiver approved by the program. Like Eva, many caregivers within this demographic are supporting Veterans with co-morbidities or the presence of two or more medical conditions.

"Stanley has been on dialysis since 2009," Eva said. "In 2017, he suffered a stroke and then became dependent on a walker in 2019. This program has made it possible for me to provide the care he needs. I'm blessed I'm able to take care of him and that he doesn't have to go to a home."

Preparing for a New Program

With the expansion of PCAFC, the Caregiver Support Program has

increased staffing to meet growing program interest. More than 1700 full-time staff have been hired to ensure all caregivers and Veterans receive the same quality care and support level.

For Eva, the staff have been an actual support system. "I'm usually not the type of person to ask for help," she said. "But it's so nice to know there is someone you can reach out to when you need them. The program's social workers have been that for me."

Support for all Veterans' caregiverskj

Caregivers of Veterans who are not eligible for PCAFC can still receive services and resources through CSP's Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS). PGCSS helps caregivers of Veterans of all eras enrolled in VA health care and offers a wide array of services to family and friends who care for Veterans.

These services include online courses, face-to-face classes, coaching, skills training, telephone support and peer support. Every VA facility has a CSP team who can assist with information and referrals, including more about PGCSS. Caregivers can locate their VA facility's point of contact online.

Caregiver Support Program Resources

Annie Caregiver Text Support is VA's text messaging service that promotes self-care for caregivers. Caregivers need a phone capable of text messaging to enroll.

Building Better Caregivers TM (BBC) is a 6-week online workshop for caregivers of Veterans of all eras. The BBC helps caregivers in two keyways: training in providing better care and assisting caregivers in managing their own emotions, stress and physical health.

Caregiver Education Calls are monthly telephone calls for caregivers with a theme of "Care for the Caregiver." The topics change monthly, and presentation materials can be found on the CSP website.

Caregiver Support Coordinator (CSC) can link you to essential resources and services available to you, as a caregiver, and to the Veteran. Find your local CSC today.

Caregiver Support Line (CSL) offers support by caring licensed professionals. The CSL, 1-855-260-3274, is available toll-free 8 a.m.- 10 p.m. E.T., Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. E.T., Saturday.

Caregiver Support Program Website contains tips, tools, videos and links to resources for caregivers of Veterans of all eras.

Resources for Enhancing All Caregivers Health (REACH VA) Intervention is an evidence-based intervention that is delivered by VA clinical staff to provide individual support to stressed and burdened caregivers of Veterans of all eras.

*Elsie Moore is the National Caregiver Support Program manager for training and education.*

## President's Welcome



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 8, 2021

I send my best wishes to all those celebrating the 75th anniversary of Paralyzed Veterans of America. Organizations like yours are a cornerstone of support for veterans with disabilities, and our Nation is grateful for your continued dedication to advocacy, research, support, and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or dysfunction.

The heroes who serve our Nation and risk their lives on the battlefield represent the best of who we are as Americans. The selfless sacrifices they make keep us all safe, but the wounds they carry—both visible and invisible—should not be theirs to bear alone. As parents of a Service member, Jill and I have long been adamant about our country's sacred obligation to properly prepare our troops when they fight for our freedom and to take care of them and their families when they come back home.

The work of Paralyzed Veterans of America is crucial in ensuring our veterans and families receive the benefits, care, and support they deserve. Your tireless efforts help our wounded heroes live with dignity and freedom, empowering them to overcome any obstacle. You change lives. Your continued commitment to our Nation's veterans is an inspiration to us all, and I am honored to congratulate you on your 75th anniversary.

Those who answer the call of service to our country will always have my support—I am glad to know they have yours too. Thank you again for all that you do. God bless you, and God bless our troops.



A handwritten signature of Joe Biden in black ink, written over a large, stylized diagonal line.

President of the United States

Joe Biden

# New PVA President Elected

By John Roth, Editorial Coordinator via PN Online

## United States Marine Corps veteran elected PVA National President

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) has a new president for the upcoming 2022 fiscal year that begins July 1. Current PVA National Senior Vice President Charles Brown was voted as PVA's national president Friday afternoon at PVA's 75th Annual Convention at the Golden Nugget Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas.



PVA National President Elect Charles Brown during the PVA 75th Annual Convention in Las Vegas. (Photo by Christopher Di Virgilio).

Brown was elected, defeating current PVA President David Zurfluh, from the PVA Board of Directors.

Brown is joined by newly elected Senior Vice President Robert Thomas, re-elected vice presidents Tammy Jones and Hack Albertson, newly elected vice presidents Michael Negrete and Josue Cordova and re-elected treasurer Tom Wheaton and re-elected secretary Marcus Murray on the executive committee.

A PVA Florida Chapter member and Marine Corps veteran, Brown, 55, had served as PVA's national senior vice president since 2017 and was a PVA vice president for five years before that.

"I saw the things that the organization was doing and doing well and had a desire to step up and try and put my assistance behind it and grow the organization and serve our members and those members that are out there but they're not being served," says Brown, who served in the Marine Corps from 1985-86 before sustaining a C5-6 spinal-cord injury from a diving accident while serving in Cherry Point, N.C.

"So, for me, it was about really finding those people that are lost and bringing them into PVA. And so, as president, I hope to be able to get the message out further to those people that don't know they can go to VA [Department of Veterans Affairs] hospitals. They can still become members of PVA."

A Loxahatchee, Fla., resident, Brown will replace Zurfluh, who has led PVA the past four years as president. Zurfluh is one of only three PVA presidents to have served four or more years — with the other two being Joseph Fox Sr. (2000-04) and Randy Pleva (2004-09).

"David is a great friend of mine. He's done some great things at PVA. He's

brought stability. He's brought growth. He's led this organization in a quiet manner, but with a strong voice," Brown says. "I'm honored to be his friend. I'm honored to serve right behind him."

Thomas takes the PVA national senior vice president seat after serving as PVA national vice president the last four years. He was elected over current national Vice President Ken Ness.

Thomas has been on the executive committee for the past seven years as vice president and also as national parliamentarian.



PVA Senior Vice President Elect Robert Thomas during the PVA 75th Annual Convention in Las Vegas. (Photo by Christopher Di Virgilio).

A Marine Corps veteran, Albertson was re-elected as national vice president a seventh consecutive year, while Jones, an Air Force veteran, was re-elected for a fourth straight year.

Two newcomers to the committee are Cordova, a PVA Vaughan Chapter member, and Negrete, a PVA New England Chapter member.

An Air Force veteran, Cordova has served on PVA's finance committee, ad hoc committee and investigative committee and is currently a member of the field advisory committee.



PVA Vice President Elect Michael Negrete at the PVA 75th Annual Convention in Las Vegas. (Photo by Christopher Di Virgilio).

Negrete, a Marine Corps and Coast Guard veteran, joined the New

# New PVA President Elected

*continued from page 9*

England PVA Chapter board of directors in 2015, was elected New England PVA Chapter president in 2017 and also serves as the chapter's national director, communications director and editor of the chapter's newsletter, CordWord. He also served on the PVA ad hoc Chapter Hearing Panel, participated in numerous field advisory committee visits in New England and served on the PVA finance committee for the past four years.

The New England PVA Chapter just won the Bob Webb Excellence in Newsletter Award, Chapter Website award, Richard Fuller Outstanding Achievement in Government Relations award and John M. Price Most Improved Chapter award. Negrete also received the Dwain Taylor Award (member) for his 1,697 volunteer hours in fiscal year 2020 at this year's PVA annual convention.

A Navy veteran, Wheaton has served as the organization's treasurer since 2014. He has served on the executive committee for the past 23 years in some capacity, as the organization's senior vice president, vice president and parliamentarian.

An Army veteran, Murray was voted as PVA's secretary for the third consecutive year.



*The newly elected PVA National Executive Committee during the PVA 75th Annual Convention in Las Vegas. (Photo by Christopher Di Virgilio).*

For more of PVA's 75th annual convention coverage, see July's PN magazine and check out the videos on [pnonline.com](http://pnonline.com).



## PVA Unveils New TV Public Service Announcement "Honor the Spot" at 75th Convention

*PVA Communications*



For 75 years, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) has advocated and worked to create a more accessible America for not only paralyzed veterans but all people with disabilities. Accessible parking is crucial to the independence of people with disabilities, and each one of us plays a part in keeping these public spaces available.

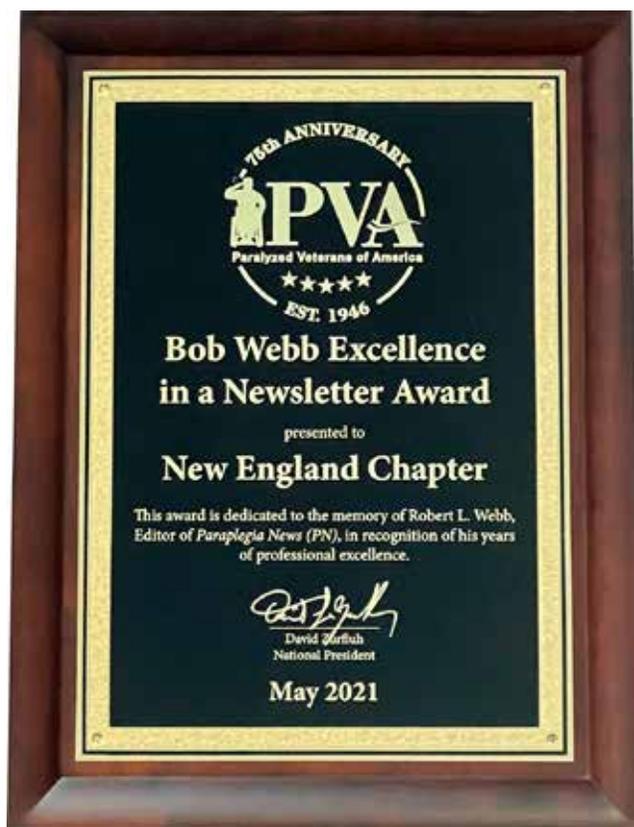
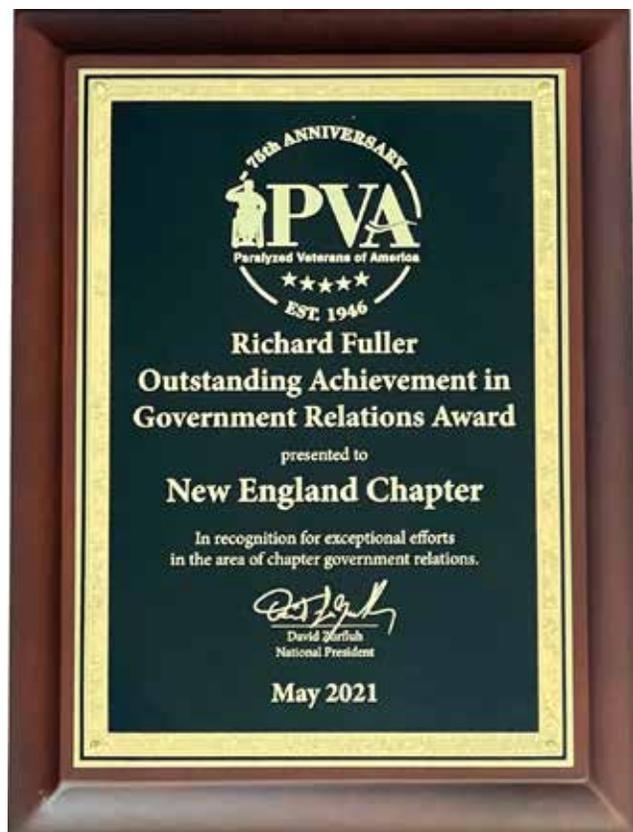
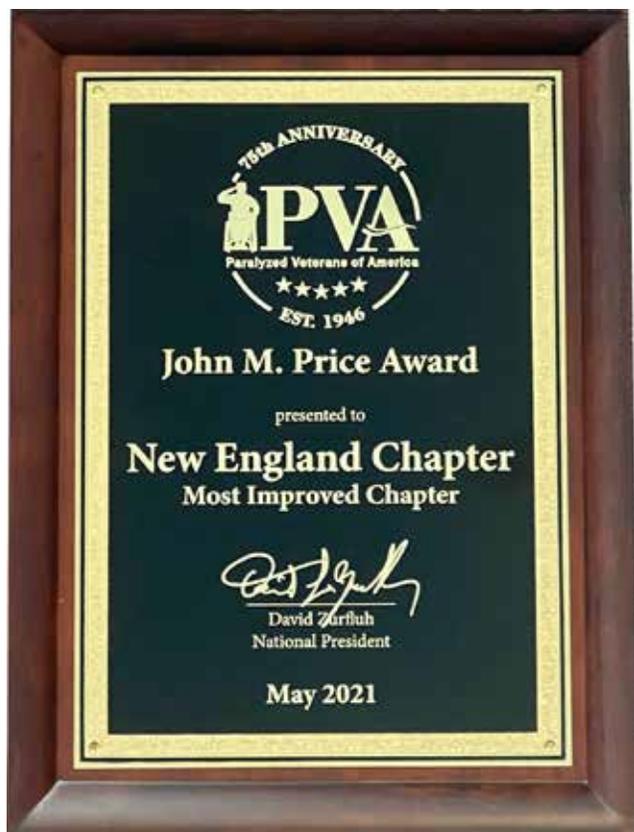
Honor the Spot reminds people across the nation that accessible spaces are a civil right for people with disabilities and should be respected.

Download and play this public service announcement at [psadirect.com/pva](http://psadirect.com/pva) to remind your audience to Honor the Spot.

For more information about how Paralyzed Veterans of America is working to create a more accessible America, visit [www.PVA.org/HonorTheSpot](http://www.PVA.org/HonorTheSpot).

Thank you in advance for your support of Paralyzed Veterans of America. If you have any questions regarding PSA formats or media distribution, please contact us at [PVA@PSAdirect.com](mailto:PVA@PSAdirect.com).

# New England Chapter 75th Convention Awards



# PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

PVA Washington Update Volume 27, Number 9 & 10

## Update on VA Comprehensive Family Caregiver Expansion

The rollout of the expansion of VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) began on October 1, 2020. As of April 2021, VA reports having received over 70,000 applications. VA has acted on over 40,000 of those applications and 30,000 were pending further action. Of those reviewed, VA has approved 5,000 applicants and denied 38,000.

VA has provided several reasons for the denials. Some of the reasons given for denials at the time of intake are listed below:

- 7,500 applications or 19 percent were denied because they did not have a singular or combined VA disability rating of 70 percent or greater.
- 5,800 applications or 15 percent were denied because their serious injury was not within the current eligibility dates (on or before May 7, 1975, and on or after September 11, 2001).
- 400 applications or one percent were denied because the individual does not receive care at home or will not do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

VA provided some of the following reasons for denying applications based on assessment of the veteran by VA's Centralized Eligibility and Appeals

Team (CEAT):

- 12,100 applications or 31 percent were denied because the veteran did not require personal services for six months due to activities of daily living or supervision, protection or instruction needs.
- 2,900 applications or seven percent were denied because participation in the PCAFC was deemed not in the veteran's best interest.
- 1,800 applications or four percent were denied because the veteran did not require personal care services that would be provided by the Family Caregiver or such services would be simultaneously and regularly provided by or through others.
- 60 applications or one percent were denied because the caregiver was assessed to be not capable nor willing to provide the personal care services.

We will continue to closely follow the implementation of the expansion of VA's PCAFC. If you have specific questions about your application, please contact your National Service Officer for assistance.

## PVA Government Relations and the Anita Bloom Women Veterans Health Committee Host Advocacy Webinar

On April 27, PVA's Government Relations Department and the Anita Bloom Women Veterans Health Committee co-hosted a webinar entitled, "The Power of Veteran Voices: Influencing Change at the Local, State, and National Level." The purpose of the webinar was to inform PVA women members about becoming involved in advocacy and to educate all PVA members about the unique issues faced by women veterans. To start the webinar, Associate Legislative Director Maureen Elias gave an update on PVA's women veterans legislative priorities and discussed new legislation that would expand access to Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART),

including IVF. Following her presentation, Maureen led a panel of PVA members Kerry Reyna, Teresa Gaspar, and PVA National Vice President Tammy Jones where they shared their experiences of advocating at the local, state, and national level. Anita Bloom Committee co-chair Anne Robinson ended the webinar with an update on activities of the Committee. You may view the webinar after registering [here](#). To advocate for expanded access to ART, please click [here](#).

## Reeve Foundation Summit 2021

The Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation held its second annual Summit in late April. A virtual conference, the event featured keynotes and conversations with numerous leaders and advocates within the disability movement; sessions on the latest in spinal cord injury (SCI) research; and workshops focused on travel, education and employment, caregiving, the intersection of race and disability, and other topics important to people living with SCI. In an opening plenary, long-time advocate Judy Heumann spoke of the need for reinvigorating knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 saying that people with disabilities "may be aware of these laws today but they don't really understand their rights under the law." Broadway star and actress Ali Stroker was interviewed by Will Reeve, son of the Foundation's founders, and shared her experiences growing up with an SCI that she acquired

in a car accident at age two. In a session on the new world of remote work, Michael Sanders with the National Telecommuting Institute (NTI) spoke with two nonprofit representatives about their organizations' partnerships with NTI's remote employment program, NTI@Home. A workshop on travel for people with disabilities featured a discussion of accessibility in cruising with Ron Pettit from Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines and tips for finding accessible hotel rooms from Katie Murphy and Cecilia Rider, recreation therapists with the Shepherd Center. Panelists in a forum entitled, "Black Lives Living with Paralysis," related the double burden that many people of color with disabilities bear in dealing with denial of services or employment or in encounters with law enforcement. Information about the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation can be found [here](#).

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## Senate Finance Committee Examines SSA Service Delivery During Pandemic

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On April 29, the Senate Finance Committee conducted a hearing looking into the ways in which COVID-19 hindered the Social Security Administration (SSA) in delivering services to claimants and beneficiaries. Witnesses included Grace Kim, Deputy Commissioner, Operations for SSA; Peggy Murphy with the National Council of Social Security

Management Associations; Kascadare Causeya, Program Manager for Central City Concern in Portland, OR; and Tara Dawson McGuinness with New Practice Lab, New America. The recording of the hearing can be found [here](#).

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## Survey: Accessible COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution

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The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies is conducting a survey to find where people with disabilities continue to face barriers in accessing the COVID-19 vaccine. The survey should take only about 10 minutes and will assist the Partnership in identifying strategies for equitable access to

the COVID-19 vaccine for people with disabilities. If an alternative format is needed, please contact Priya Penner at [p.penner@disasterstrategies.org](mailto:p.penner@disasterstrategies.org). To access the survey, please click [here](#).

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## Additional Automobile Allowance Legislation Introduced

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On May 19, Rep. Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) and HVAC Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) introduced the Care Access Resources (CARS) for Vets Act (H.R. 3304). This legislation would allow eligible service-connected veterans to receive an additional automobile grant if ten years have lapsed since their last grant. This legislation would also codify the provision of certain

vehicle modification for veterans with non-service-connected qualifying conditions. More information about the CARS legislation is available [here](#). PVA supports both the CARS for Vets Act and the previously introduced AUTO for Veterans Act (H.R. 1361/S. 444).

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## House Passes Veterans-related Legislation

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The House recently passed [10 bills](#) to make VA benefits and services more accessible and improve overall management of the Department. While PVA supported many of the bills during hearings earlier this year, two of them stood out as being of particular interest. First, over the past year, VA has received large sums of money from multiple COVID-related legislative packages to combat the virus and deliver health care and benefits for veterans. Passage of H.R. 2911, the VA Transparency and Trust Act of 2021, would help Congress keep better track of how this money is being spent. Second, H.R. 2494 would create a new administration within VA to oversee the agency's education, training, employment, and other programs focused on helping veterans in the transition to civilian life. The new

Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration would be headed by an Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition. Programs like Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) and Specially Adaptive Housing (SAH) would likely receive a higher level of visibility under the new administration. In turn, this would lead to stronger oversight and accountability for the delivery of services and benefits. PVA also believes it would help to foster the innovation needed to ensure that the delivery of these benefits and services are modernized, and allow for focused collaboration with other agencies and programs, including the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service.





Veterans Career Program

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- Build confidence in your career pursuits.
- And much more!



## We Will:

- Provide one-on-one guidance to help you find **meaningful employment, education and volunteer opportunities**.
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- Be a **Partner for Life** to assist you for the duration of your career.

[PVA.org/VeteransCareerProgram](http://PVA.org/VeteransCareerProgram) • [VeteransCareerProgram@PVA.org](mailto:VeteransCareerProgram@PVA.org) • [f ParalyzedVeterans](https://www.facebook.com/ParalyzedVeterans) • [i PVA1946](https://www.instagram.com/PVA1946)

# Upcoming PVA Veterans Career Program Webinar: Veterans and Social Security Disability Insurance

By Lauren Lobrano, Director, PVA Veterans Career Program



**DATE:** June 17  
**TIME:** 2:00-3:00 pm ET  
**LOCATION:** Online via Zoom

PVA Government Relations will host a webinar on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

SSDI is an important benefit for which most veterans with catastrophic disabilities will qualify. However, many veterans and their families have

misconceptions about this Social Security Administration (SSA) program and may be unfamiliar with SSA's efforts to serve veterans with disabilities.

ML Jordan, Jr., Supervisory Social Insurance Specialist with SSA's Division of Strategic Communications, will join PVA Advocacy staff to offer an overview of the SSDI program and its benefits, discuss some common myths surrounding receipt of VA and Social Security benefits, outline SSA's Wounded Warrior/VA Permanent and Total claims process, and share ways that SSA is reaching out to the veteran community.

To register, please click [here](#).

## Welcome Alex Spanger to the PVA Veterans Career Program

By Lauren Lobrano, Director, PVA Veterans Career Program



Please join me in welcoming Alex Spangler, M.A., CRC, to the PVA Veterans Career Program team. Alex will be based out of the McGuire VAMC in Richmond, VA and will cover the following states: DC, IN, KY, MD, OH, TN, VA, WV. For PVA Chapters in these states, we will be in touch soon to schedule and introductory Zoom meeting in early June (after Convention).

Alex lives in Virginia and is married with three kids and another on

the way. For the past 10 years, Alex has worked with individuals with disabilities. At the start of his career, he worked for two years as a job

coach, assisting individuals with disabilities to help them find and maintain jobs, while also working with veterans to help with community support services. Then, for five years, he worked as a Placement Counselor with the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services while pursuing his master's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation.

After obtaining his master's degree, Alex worked as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the Commonwealth of Virginia. Alex is passionate about working with veterans and has been looking forward to the opportunity to work with them on a more consistent basis since he began his career working with individuals with disabilities.

In his free-time, Alex and his wife are wedding photographers. (P.S., if anyone ever wants family pictures taken, they would be free of charge for all co-workers!!)

## New England Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor



**Tiffany Miller, M.Ed., CRC**

Vocational Rehabilitation  
Counselor

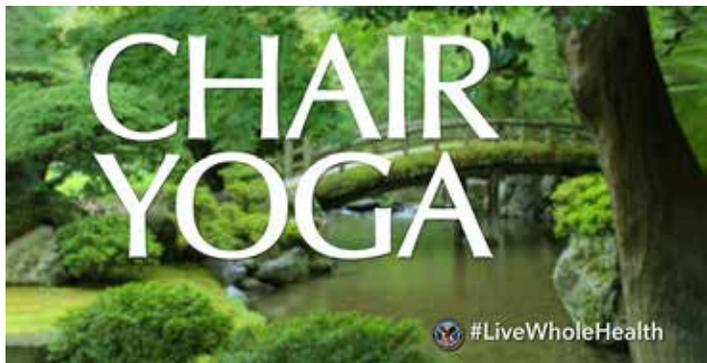
Phone: (202) 257-0144

Email: [TiffanyM@pva.org](mailto:TiffanyM@pva.org)

Region: CT, DE, MA, ME, NH, NJ,  
NY, PA, RI VT

# Live Whole Health #70: Chair Yoga

By Andrea Young via Vantage Point blogs.va.gov



When it comes to yoga, we hear these often: “I can’t do yoga, I’m not flexible,” or “I don’t know what all the fuss is about yoga,” or “My daughter does yoga, but she’s young and fit,” and “You won’t catch me in yoga pants!” But what about chair yoga?

If you believe these statements, and applied them to chair yoga, you would be missing out on a practice that could literally change your life.

Yoga has been found to increase flexibility, strength and balance. Yoga can help relieve arthritis symptoms and back pain. Yoga can relax your body and mind, and improve your sleep. Most of all, yoga is for everybody – regardless of age, fitness level or ability.

Check out this chair yoga session with Mary Ann Douglas, Whole Health recreation assistant at the Grand Island VA in Nebraska. This 34-minute gentle and relaxing yoga series demonstrates how yoga can be practiced

and adapted at any age and for all bodies. Perhaps this easy alternative practice may make its way into your routine.

## Move your body!

Yoga is an excellent way to begin to move your body in a gentle and supported way. Learn more about yoga here: <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/Veteran-Handouts/docs/Yoga-508Final-9-4-2018.pdf>.

Registered Nurse Fletcher Watson, from the Roseburg VA Medical Center in Oregon, has been working with Veterans since 2014 to introduce them to yoga and other complementary and integrative health practices. In a previous blog post, he said, “(With yoga), this ability to simply notice and stay present gets strengthened and seems to translate powerfully into everyday life for many of our Veterans...”

May is a great time to start moving your body. Biking, walking, swimming, gardening, yardwork, playing a sport and actively playing with children or pets are some examples to ‘move it, move it.’ Yoga is another way to move your body. The key is to make a movement plan that you can incorporate into your lifestyle and repeat regularly. Any activity that uses your energy to move the large muscles in your body is helpful to your whole health and mental health.

*Andrea Young is a Field Implementation Team Consultant for the Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation.*

## How to Access Your Health Records through Third Party Applications

Submitted by VA’s Office of Information and Technology (OIT), Washington, D.C.



Are you a Veteran with an upcoming health care appointment? Need to quickly check the date of your last tetanus shot? Need to remember what antibiotic you last took, or to review your health records before your next visit? Finding what you need, when you need it, in your VA health care history can seem daunting. It doesn’t have to be. One quick and easy solution is [third-party applications](#).

VA is the largest health care provider in the United States. VA’s Office of

Information and Technology built an Application Programming Interface (API) a few years ago for Apple and other developers to develop user-friendly tools for Veterans.

The result: These applications will let you find the VA information you need at home, in clinician waiting rooms, or anywhere with your mobile phone, laptop or other devices. You can view your health care records or track your medications from your mobile phone.

Using these apps is never a requirement, but makes managing your health data easier.

These third-party apps follow VA security rules. The law requires they are open about how they access, store, and use your data, so you’re always in control. To help answer your questions, review the [FAQs page](#).

*Submitted by VA’s Office of Information and Technology (OIT), Washington, D.C. OIT is always seeking to improve customer service to ensure VA consistently delivers exceptional customer service to our Veterans.*

# Take One Step Today to Start Feeling Better

VA Connecticut Healthcare System



One step today can make all the difference.

This [Mental Health Month](#), VA is sharing 10 pieces of advice for veterans — from veterans — on ways to begin to improve your well-being.

Veterans who may be facing a mental health challenge are encouraged to take One Step Today from among the 10 suggestions. You might explore your creativity, learn to forgive, or enroll in VA health care. The list is filled with inspirational stories from veterans whose lives got better by

following suggestions like these.

“When you have other [veterans] who have been through the same things you’ve been through, and who have dealt with them in all different kinds of ways, it helps you in immeasurable ways.” — [Daniel](#), U.S. Marine Corps veteran

While there is no single path to resolve a mental health concern, every day, veterans can start taking small steps to improve your quality of life. These steps can boost your mood and enhance your self-esteem, putting you in a better place to overcome your challenges — either on your own or with support from VA.

This May, we encourage everyone to visit [MakeTheConnection.net/MHM](#) to hear advice for veterans — from veterans — about overcoming the same mental health challenges that many who have served in the military face. By taking One Step Today, you can start your journey toward a healthier tomorrow.

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David\*, Peristeen® user

\*David is a Peristeen® user who has received compensation from Coloplast to provide this information. Talk to your healthcare professional about which product might be right for you.

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# 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.

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**Essex Junction**  
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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  
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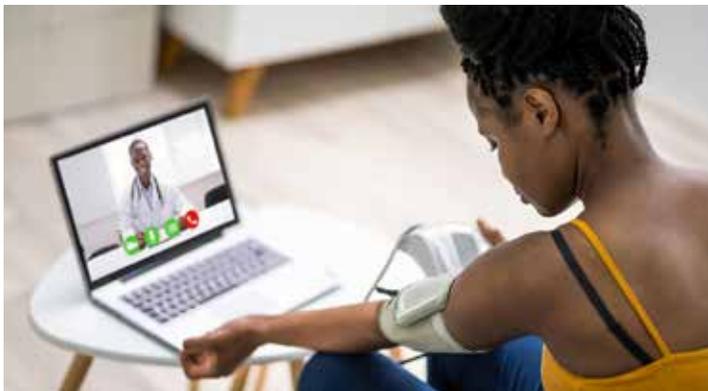


[www.mobilityworks.com](http://www.mobilityworks.com)

[www.newenglandpva.org](http://www.newenglandpva.org)

# Nine Ways Veterans are Using Telehealth Right Now

By Treva Lutes, Communications Specialist with the VA Office of Connected Care via [VAntage Point blog.va.gov](#).



## Mental health, blood pressure, and much more

VA is leading the way in telehealth innovation so Veterans can access care when and where they need it. Telehealth makes it easier for Veterans to connect with their VA care team from the home, clinic, hospital and [other convenient locations](#).

When is telehealth right for a Veteran? Perhaps the Veteran lives far away from the closest VA Medical Center and would prefer to save on gas and the hassle of navigating traffic. Or they may feel safer or just more comfortable having their appointment from home.

Here are nine ways Veterans across the country are using telehealth as part of their VA care plan:

### 1. Primary care

Routine appointments with a primary care physician can often be conducted virtually. Video visits enable the VA provider to see the Veteran just as if they were in the exam room. And some Veterans can relay information such as heart rate and blood pressure from home monitoring devices.

With these telehealth technologies, Veterans can receive physicals and screenings – for conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity and depression – from any location with an internet connection.

### 2. Follow-up visits

While the first visit after sustaining an injury or infection might require a trip to the clinic, the follow-up appointments might not. Many VA providers can conduct virtual follow-up visits to assess progress or suggest changes to treatment – all while the Veteran stays home to rest and recover.

### 3. Management of chronic health conditions

VA providers can monitor and treat high blood pressure, heart disease and other chronic illnesses through telehealth, which gives them a more accurate picture of a Veteran's health.

And this [89-year-old Veteran](#) in Illinois who monitors his high blood pressure from home appreciates the extra time he can spend with his family.

### 4. Test results

VA providers and Veterans can discuss test results and subsequent recommendations through video visits rather than phone calls. Connecting face-to-face over video – even when miles apart – can help

Veterans actively engage in their treatment plans and help providers know when Veterans need additional support.

Veterans can also use their Premium [My HealthVet](#) Premium account to access test results through Blue Button and [Secure Messaging](#).

### 5. Care for common illnesses and ailments

With telehealth, Veterans can get help with common issues such as allergies, colds and flu. They can also use video visits to show VA providers skin issues. Those issues include rashes and moles and receive their recommendations on the spot.

With any of these common issues, the provider may diagnose and prescribe a treatment right away. They may also recommend [remote patient monitoring](#), which is also conducted conveniently through telehealth.

### 6. Mental health care

Using telehealth technologies, VA mental health providers can screen and treat Veterans for anxiety, depression, PTSD and more. By combining real-time, interactive video visits with therapists and free [VA mental health apps](#), telehealth connects Veterans to the mental health resources they need.

### 7. Nutrition education

Food choices can affect health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. By connecting with nutritionists through videoconferencing, Veterans and their families can receive personalized nutrition education and counseling and make changes to improve their health.

### 8. General rehabilitation

Physical and occupational therapists can treat Veterans using telehealth technology and VA Video Connect. These tools let them stay safely at home. Please read about how a [retired colonel with numerous injuries](#) and chronic pain was so impressed with the telephysical therapy that he wrote a glowing letter to his medical center's director.

### 9. Group visits

VA Video Connect and other telehealth technologies enable groups of people to receive care together. Group video visits are typical in mental health care, nutrition education, rehabilitation and general health education. Some Veterans, especially those living in remote areas, turn to these group sessions to reduce social isolation.

And VA chaplains often hold video visits to connect sick Veterans with family members living in different locations.

### Ask your provider if telehealth is a good fit

Remember, Veterans should always consult their VA provider to see if telehealth is a good fit for their health care needs. Some telehealth programs may not be available in all locations

To learn about telehealth options in your area, visit [telehealth.va.gov](#) and reach out to your health care team at your local VA Medical Center.

*Treva Lutes is a communications specialist with the VA Office of Connected Care.*

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# Remembering Fallen Means Honoring Unfinished Work: VA Secretary Dennis McDonough

By Adam Stump, VA Public Affairs Specialist, via VAntage Point



Remembering the fallen means honoring the nation's unfinished work, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said at Quantico National Cemetery in Virginia May 28.

McDonough said speaking at a national cemetery was a somber reminder of the true meaning of Memorial Day.

"This day reminds us that we must never forget those men and women who stood ready to protect our freedom, our humanity and our democracy," he said.

The secretary cited his personal experience with remembering Veterans. During his upbringing in Minnesota, McDonough's teacher and mentor was John Samuelson, an Army Veteran buried at Fort Snelling. Coach Sam, as people called him, fought in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. During a 10th grade assembly, Samuelson told his story of landing at Normandy on D-Day.

"He told us about jumping from his craft, sinking in the saltwater because of the weight of his gear, and fellow soldiers dying on the bloody sand as they fought to defeat Nazi Germany," McDonough said.

"On a beautiful day like today, and with a deepened sense of gratitude, I knelt at his gravesite last Thursday and told my hero that I had never forgotten the lessons he taught me about courage, about selfless service and sacrifice, and about the importance of honorable service to this nation," the secretary said.

The secretary also cited several buried at Quantico. These included:

- Hector Cafferata, a Korean War Veteran and Medal of Honor recipient
- William "Rich" Higgins, chief of a 75-member United Nations peace keeping force, killed by pro-Iranian Shiites.
- James Brooks, one of the first African American recruits to join the Marine Corps and train at Montford Point.
- Louis Lowery, who took a famous photo of Marines raising a flag on top of Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima.
- Frederick Branch, the first black commissioned officer in the U.S.

Marine Corps who served in World War II and in Korea.

- Sailor Jamie Fallon, Soldier and Vietnam Veteran Donald Simmons, and Cheryl Sincok, wife of Chief Warrant Officer Five Craig W. Sincok, who all died in the Pentagon Sept. 11, 2001.

"Their stories are the reasons we come back to these hallowed grounds," McDonough said. "And behind every marker in this cemetery is a story worth knowing, worth remembering, worth emulating."

McDonough said as spectators gathered, service members were busy defending the nation against threats to American ideals and democracy.

"Remembering means honoring the lives of those who fought for something greater than themselves, for a land they would never return to, for freedom many never even fully experienced themselves," he said.

In addition to McDonough, U.S. Representatives Mark Takano and Rob Wittman spoke at the event.



Marines from Marine Corps Base Quantico prepare for a 21-gun salute during the May 28, 2021, Memorial Day observance at Quantico National Cemetery.

Adam Stump is a public affairs specialist with VA's Digital Media Engagement team. He is a retired Air Force Veteran who served 20 years, including two deployments to Afghanistan for detention operations and special operations.



# The Last Rhino! My Visit to Huntsville, Alabama

By Chapter Member Debra A. Freed



Many are not happy with 2020 and would be truly grateful to forget it altogether. Before going on, I want to recognize that many people died due to a very contagious virus dubbed Coronavirus 2019 (because it was discovered in 2019). Let us not forget them or the courageous caregivers, medical professionals, and numerous National Guard folks who provided outstanding services in the face of unique adversity, at least not something found in the last 100 years.

Many would not even consider travelling during this difficult period. However, a couple of vaccines were developed in record time and I was blessed with getting mine early. I had the outstanding opportunity to attend two events in April.

The first, PVA Racing's Off-Road Camp. This was unique, at least to me, for several reasons. It would be a day's drive to Pocahontas Park, in Chesterville, Virginia. It was a great time to learn off-roading. The bikes, handcycles and or recumbents had power-assist. Well, most of them did. It was a great opportunity to learn whether I liked it or not. Yes, I did like it, but I also learned it is not something for me. However, I hope more folks get an opportunity to try. There will be another camp in early November, same place. I would recommend it to any and all who have an interest. I believe everyone who went really had a good time and learned lots!!!! Plus, no one got sick!!!!

My second trip after returning home for a week was down to Huntsville, Alabama. I know some folks were like, really Debra, you are going home? Ah, yeah! I didn't have anyone down that neck of the states to visit and I know I would need way more clothing than what I packed for the first trip.

Huntsville was a two day driving trip. I left on the 12th. Trust me, there was traffic but for the most part, we kept moving and I made Huntsville late morning on the 13th. A shout out to Alabamian Cesar Soto and his wife, Ms. Nellie. They met me where I was, took me to lunch, then helped me get on Redstone Arsenal where the PVA Racing Team was staying. Alabama is/was one of the few remaining states I need to get all 50 states on the books. However, I didn't know anything about Redstone, an active duty Army base and all I have is my VA ID.

We stayed at the somewhat new on-base hotel. It was very nice! The rooms had mini kitchens with a dishwasher. It also offered free laundry services, which I thought was really cool. Because of C-19, there were restrictions. What we have come to know at normal housekeeping duties were very limited. You put your trash outside your room at the end of the day or early in the a.m. If you needed fresh towels, you put your used

towels outside your door and then could get fresh towels from the desk. They did offer breakfast but again with strict guidelines. Because I had the mini kitchen, I had meals in my room.

The next day, I would take a bike ride around the area, not going too far in order not to get lost. Then I went out to the visitor's center because I wanted to be able to leave base without having a problem returning on my own. Believe it or not, at the Visitor's Center, we were required to submit our license and military ID. I didn't have one, but a VA ID would work. The woman who took care of me scanned my face, and my IDs, and then said I could use the BX and Commissary with my VA ID. Well, that was new to me because while I am 100%, I am not medically retired or a retired service-member. However, it worked. I went grocery shopping!.

The remainder of the week would consist of regular bike ride outings early in the a.m for me, come in, have breakfast, and meet with the group. We would convoy to the training side. As embarrassing as it is to admit, I got lost the first time riding the time trial route. I almost threw in the towel then. But a number of folks said to give it another try. So, I did. I was the oldest of the group, the only other female, and the slowest of the group. So why bother? I was about to compete with the elite, those folks, young and not so young vying for a spot on the U.S. Paralympic Cycling team hoping to make it to go to Tokyo!

The time trial was just over 9 miles long. If I could do it in under an hour, I would be happy. While still the slowest of any of the groups, I did it in 52 minutes and so many seconds. I was a happy camper. I did not realize that medals were given for time trials. I also did not realize that I was one of three in my class. The classes are not the same as what VA & PVA use for the National Veterans' Wheelchair Games, but I understood them. There were only three in my class H-4. O.K! So I got lucky. I was still the slowest of any group, no matter the class. Again, I was ready to throw in the towel. But my buddies, Antonio D, Mike R, Jackie J, Jody S, Manny, and Cesar S, who already helped me out when I arrived wouldn't let me throw in the towel.



The race, would be 7.5 miles a lap, but the requirement was to do four laps for our category, 30 miles. Wait? What? 30 miles? That would take me nearly 3hrs! If you have even seen the original Jumanji movie with Mr. Robin Williams, there is a scene in there where the animals from the local zoo escape. They are running down the main road. As one of the primary characters sits in her car and waits for them to pass, she is about to make a right when all of a sudden, a last animal, a rhinoceros comes

huffing and puffing by. So, that is what I was the last Rhino, still moving, hoping to catch the group. Oh course, the group had lapped me at least once already!

The difference between the time trial and the race was we got to finish the time trial (another reason to get it done in under an hour) but the race is different. When the first person finishes, then whatever lap a rider is on, the rider finishes that lap and calls it a day. I truly thought of quitting after the first lap. I didn't! I was, however, about to start lap 3 when I was waived off. Trust me, you do not ignore a wave off. Hey, I got two laps, a little over 15miles in about 1.5hrs.

Well, I enjoyed learning a lot, competing against folks that were half my age or younger but ready to return home. Uh, not so fast! When I left the hotel that morning, I had packed everything so when I was done with the race, I could start heading home. After the race, I cleaned up a bit,

changed out of sweaty clothes and was just about to close up the ramp when I got a call from Leigh, the other female in our group. She said I needed to be on the podium. Wait? What? I didn't finish! "I will explain when you get up here, but get up here." OK, that is when I learned that whoever finishes first, the others finish their lap and they are done. But it doesn't mean out of the running for a medal.

I am grateful to Leigh for creating a route list for the time trial, and for getting me up on the podium before I left. I am grateful to all who convinced me to stay and to stop whining like a 4 year old. I am grateful to USA Cycling and the USOPC, the group that classifies riders for giving me a provisional classification so I could race in the first place. And even though I was the last Rhino, I am grateful to Joy for supporting me in this endeavor. I'm going to try again and head out to Idaho in July. Who knows, maybe I won't be the last Rhino!

## Honor Those Who have Borne the Battle at VA

via [Vantage Point blogs.va.gov](https://VantagePointblogs.va.gov)



### Memorial Day has special meaning at VA, where our patients and many of our employees served in the military

Memorial Day has special meaning at VA, where every day we care for those who have given so much for our country.

To us, this holiday is about much more than barbecues and discount sales. It's about taking time to solemnly remember those servicemen and servicewomen who did not make it back home.

Honoring those who've borne the battle is important at VA because it's not only our patients who are former military — about one in every three [VA workers](#) once put on the uniform.

An understanding of what it takes to serve is imbued throughout the halls of every VA facility. Like in the military, a shared commitment to our mission runs through everything we do. That commitment is to ensure that millions of Veterans across the country receive the health care they need to lead full, happy lives.

"I'm extremely passionate about VA health care, and I want other Veterans to know that these resources are here for them," said U.S. Navy Veteran Heather Roe, a public affairs specialist at the [Cleveland VA Medical Center](#).

### A home for Veterans

At VA, we are dedicated to supporting Veterans every day, whether by delivering that world-class health care or providing paths to lasting

civilian careers for transitioning military personnel.

No one embodies that philosophy more than Kristina Snell, manager of the Intermediate Care Technician (ICT) National program. A Veteran herself, Snell has dedicated her time at VA to helping transitioning military personnel find meaningful careers caring for other Veterans.

"Working at VA is the best kept secret. Not only do you have our really amazing mission, but people at VA care about you," Snell said.

Through the ICT program, former combat medics, medical technicians and corpsmen can make a difference working as allied health professionals in fields like emergency medicine, critical care, geriatric care, primary care, specialty surgery and more.

[Our transitioning military personnel initiative](#) also serves as a pipeline to a variety of [rewarding careers](#) that allow you to continue serving your country by helping other Veterans get better, faster. You can find a VA career as a [law enforcement officer](#), [custodial worker](#), or [medical support assistant or technologist](#).

### Work at VA

Today and every day, we honor those who have served in the armed forces at VA. Consider a career caring for those who have valiantly dedicated their lives our nation.

READ about how we [serve those who served](#).

LEARN about the VA's [history of caring](#) for Veterans.

EXPLORE VA careers for Veterans and [transitioning military](#).

NOTE: Positions listed in this post were open at the time of publication. All current available positions are listed at [USAJobs.gov](#).

# VA.gov Becomes Central Login for Accessing Benefits

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



Veterans and their families may begin accessing their VA benefits and services on the new and user-friendly [VA.gov website](https://va.gov) starting April 30.

Users will be able to access information about VA benefits and services through a single site rather than through multiple locations.

All benefits-related features previously located in the [eBenefits](#) web

portal will be available on [VA.gov](https://va.gov). Veterans are encouraged to start logging into the site using their current Digital Service (DS) Logon or creating a new account using ID.me.

“VA.gov offers Veterans an enhanced site in terms of usability and security with the implementation of two-factor authentication,” said Acting VA Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy. “The most frequently used features are now readily accessible on one website to include the ability to file a disability claim, check the status of a claim or change direct deposit and payment history.”

The eBenefits site will remain functional through March 31, 2022, to give Veterans an opportunity to complete claims started on the platform. Thereafter, VA.gov becomes the single source solution to access VA benefit and service information online.

U.S. Digital Service worked with thousands of Veterans to test the new and improved VA.gov. The department wanted to ensure Veterans deemed the site functional before migrating Veterans’ data.

## VA expands COVID-19 Vaccinations to Adolescents Under SAVE LIVES Act

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs via *VAntage Point* [blogs.va.gov](https://blogs.va.gov)



WASHINGTON, DC – The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding COVID-19 vaccinations for some 12- to 17-year-olds as part of the [SAVE LIVES Act](#).

Certain VA medical centers across the country will prepare this week to

offer the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

It will be available to Veteran caregivers and those who qualify as [beneficiaries](#) under VA’s Civilian Health and Medical Program. The expansion is in line with [recent recommendations](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Food and Drug Administration. Previously, VA was only vaccinating adults age 18 and older.

“Our VA teams have worked tirelessly to provide care throughout the pandemic. Now we’re taking another step in the fight against COVID-19 by expanding vaccination access,” said VA Acting Under Secretary for Health Richard Stone, M.D. “This will save lives. We look forward to helping our nation move forward in this effort.”

Veterans can [contact](#) their local VA medical facility for more information or sign up their adolescent to receive a vaccine by visiting the [COVID-19 webpage](#).

### 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).



# Veterans Crisis Line **Fact Sheet**

## Confidential crisis help for Veterans and their families

The Veterans Crisis Line is a toll-free, confidential resource that connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responders.

Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, chat online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net**, or send a text message to **838255** to receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.

The responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances — from Veterans coping with mental health issues that were never addressed to recent Veterans struggling with relationships or the transition back to civilian life. Veterans Crisis Line responders provide support when these and other issues — such as chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, and even homelessness — reach a crisis point. Some of the responders are Veterans themselves and understand what Veterans and their families and friends have been through.

Since its launch in 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has answered nearly 4.9 million calls and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis more than 159,000 times. The Veterans Crisis Line anonymous online chat service, added in 2009, has engaged in more than 565,000 chats. In November 2011, the Veterans Crisis Line introduced a text-messaging service to provide another way for Veterans to connect with confidential, round-the-clock support and since then has responded to nearly 176,000 texts.

In 2011, the National Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline was renamed the Veterans Crisis Line to encourage Veterans and their families and friends, who may be the first to realize a Veteran is in emotional distress, to reach out for support when issues reach a crisis point, even if it is not a suicidal crisis.

VA is working to make sure that all Veterans and their loved ones are aware of the Veterans Crisis Line. To reach as many Veterans as possible, VA is coordinating with communities and partner groups nationwide, including community-based organizations, Veterans Service Organizations, and local health care providers, to let Veterans and their loved ones know that support is available whenever, if ever, they need it.

### Whether you're a Veteran or a friend or family member concerned about one, confidential assistance is only a call, click, or text away.

For more information about the Veterans Crisis Line, visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net)  
For more information about VA's mental health resources, visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov)

8/2020

• • • • • Confidential crisis chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text **838255** • • • • •



# Getting Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again with Indego®

New VA Program offers eligible veterans an Indego® Exoskeleton at no cost.



## What is Indego?

**A robotic device that enables veterans to walk again.**

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

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

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



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

**Email:** [support.indego@parker.com](mailto:support.indego@parker.com)

**Phone:** 844-846-3346



## FREE MEMBER FACE 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](#).

**STOP!**  
**COVID-19**

# MAY CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

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William P Richardson	Jeffrey H Blocker	Stephen E Ellis	Anthony J DiNallo
Steven D Billiel	Raymond J Steele	Dulcie L Cooper	Tim P Fournier
Allan H Schmidt	Craig W Upton	Gregg A Josephson	Tom B Ralston
David G Lund	Herman Ouellette	William M Barlow	James J Halloran
Terence R Travers	Bonnie J Dunnells	Rocky M Austin	George L DeBarge
Bryan H Dusty	Walter C Farrington	Craig B Patterson	Timothy E Tynan
Michael J Delle Fave	Dennis J Millette	Stephen D Rufo	Francis T Uva
Robert Follows	Christopher C Cefalo	Kevin J Corbin	Kristofer T Reckner
Stefan Bozydaj	Michael F Tierney	Marsha L Vece	Kenneth L Handy
Thomas M Muradian	Earl Haines	Christopher L Gagne	Ean R Oliver
Donald P Candage	Stephen J Aylward	Michael N Gilbert	Brett T Graveline
James Cabrera	Michael J Berschwinger	Nelson E Brown	Patrick R McKenzie
Gary P Dupuis	Kenneth J Grover	Elias Rojas	Brett A Smith
Phillip H Segal	Richard R Gallant	Frank G Nagle	Edward G Trost
James K Wallack	Raymond R Rioux	Monte L Brubaker	Frederick C Leonard
Paul E Cormier	George Yankoschuk	Wilford L McNeil	Richard J Perkins

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# JUNE CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

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Duncan A Morrison	Larry J France	David R Alejos	Brent J Cote
Patricia A Baines	Theresa M Perry	Scott A McAuslin	George J Breault
Andrew C Treventi	Patricia Thibodeau	James M Barbaro	Robert F Martin
John P Dailey	James Larouche	William A Lowder	David A Pelkey
Robert A Dorsey	Gregory P Major	Charles J Houle	James A Wilcox
Eugene Williams	Henry R Champagne	Louis V Hebert	Bonnie R Sauve
Joseph Guay	George A St. Hilaire	Phyllis Vidito	Willena Rosemond-Lopes
Kenneth J Maze	Scott J MacDonald	Thomas T O'Connor	Amanda J Morse
Richard E Cross	Reid A Crossman	Dennis P Kusnierz	Carl L Farris
Donald V Morin	Alfred J Fenton	Roland R Marcoux	John V Caristo
Richard C Rideout	David C Wilson	Gary L Labbe	Leonard P Sansoucy
Donald J Bessette	Richard J Lane	Matthew J Posniewski	
Gerald J Laplante	John B Penniman	Jason P Millett	

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Paralyzed Veterans of America  
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**Office Hours**  
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## NEPVA BASS TRAIL TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

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.

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.*