



# CORDWORD

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

New England Chapter



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## PVA VCP UPDATE



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[Prostate cancer](#) is one of the most common cancers in VA patients. The disease most often affects older men, age 65 and above.

VA has been [partnering](#) with the Prostate Cancer Foundation to ramp up the use of precision oncology to treat Veterans with metastatic prostate cancer—disease that has spread from the prostate gland to other areas of the body. Precision oncology involves giving genetic tests to patients and using the results to help guide treatment.. [....continued on page 21.](#)



“Perseverance” - PVA Member Tracey Cooper-Harris

Tracey Cooper-Harris is no stranger to adversity. She joined the U.S. Army at age 17, serving from 1991-2003 as an Animal Care Sergeant in Operation Enduring Freedom & Operation Iraqi Freedom.

After returning home, she obtained a B.S. in Kinesiology from Cal State Northridge. That same year, she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. She began [....continued on page 19.](#)

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



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

**Vehicle Donation Program**

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



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

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



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

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### NEW ENGLAND PVA OFFICERS

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Vice President	Vacant
Treasurer	Vacant
Secretary	Mike Moran

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad Carlson	Mark Sanders
Wayne Ross	Dan Shaul

### NATIONAL DIRECTOR TO PVA

Vacant

### STAFF

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Govt. Relations Dir. Kristen McCone Gordon  
Admin/Accounting Jerry Cole  
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### PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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Community Outreach	Mike Guilbault
CordWord Editor	Michael Negrete
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Membership Officer	Mike Guilbault
MS/ALS Liaison	Peter Falcione
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Sports Director	Mike Guilbault
Assistant Sports Director	Michael Moran
Volunteer Coordinator	Jerry Cole

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Manchester	Mike Moran
West Haven	Peter Falcione
West Roxbury	Mike Guilbault
White River Junction	Mike Moran
Northampton	Tim Kelly

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ON THE COVER: 2021 PVA Sail to Prevail Weekend - Newport, RI.

*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*

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Great news, with the change in COVID restrictions, our Chapter office is now open! Before stopping by though, please call ahead to obtain a copy of our COVID Office Policies, as there are still precautions we must take to ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers and those visiting the office. We took the opportunity during the closure to have the office deep cleaned, sanitized, and repainted. With COVID somewhat in our rear view mirror, we're hoping to start getting back to some day-to-day normalcy.

This past month I had the privilege of being invited to speak at the iBOT PMD donation to the VA Boston Healthcare System's Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center in West Roxbury. This next generation of iBOT is simply a game changer in providing independence and access. Talking about independence, Dean Kamen said in designing the iBOT - "I've got to restore not just mobility. I've got to restore ... independence, dignity, access." Mobius Mobility will be traveling the country donating 2 iBOTs to each VA SCI/D Center for a total of 50. To see a few pictures and read the full story provided by the Manchester VA please turn to [page 7](#).

This past month PVA's Medical Services conducted their annual site visits at West Roxbury and Brockton VAs. Even though these were conducted entirely via Zoom, there were invaluable take aways from every aspect of the SCI/D in-patient, out-patient and long term care services. VA's staff was very accommodating with their schedules to meet with us and provide their perspectives. One thing we learned of, where we could have an immediate impact was in providing financial assistance for VA SCI/D staff's continued education through the Chapter's "[John Brako Nursing Scholarship](#)" fund. This year alone, we've been able to assist 7 individuals with college tuition, course expenses and re-certifications! To learn more and to apply please visit the "[John Brako Nursing Scholarship](#)" page on the Chapter website. Speaking of the Chapter website, in bringing to Director Ng's attention the VA's computer access block of our website, he was able to have the VA IT department remove the block. VA SCI/D staff are now free to access all the website's [SCI/D resources and information](#) and our [extensive online publications library](#).

We held our first Annual New England PVA Charity Golf Classic on Cape Cod. We had a total of 64 golfers and several generous corporate such as Quincy, MA's Retail Business Services who also provided employee volunteers for the registration table. All things considered, especially COVID's delaying our starting plan, things went extremely well. Many Thanks to Chapter Board member Brad Carlson for his part and initiative to make the Tournament happen. We look to build on what we learned this year for an even bigger and more successful Tournament next year!

A couple things in closing this month, the Chapter is seeking a dedicated individual to fill the role of its National Director to PVA. There is a substantial time commitment and nationwide travel is required to serve in this role, but is an invaluable opportunity to learn, participate and contribute to PVA's mission on a national level. If interested, please see the complete details of the role on [page 23](#) or get in touch with me directly either via [michael@newenglandpva.org](mailto:michael@newenglandpva.org) or 857-229-8825.

Lastly, we are saying goodbye to our Executive Director Mark Murphy who is furthering his career in a more focused fundraising role. I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to Mark for all the hard work he contributed. During an unforeseen global pandemic he was able to secure over \$55,000 in grants, supported the office and our members remotely, and finish off the year with the successful planning and execution of our Golf Tournament. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with him in every aspect as part of the NEPVA team. He provided us with a strong work ethic and positivity when working on complex projects, short notice and sometimes challenging office dynamics. Mark's collaborative attitude and leadership contributed to many successful campaigns and efforts that brought in strong results for the Chapter.

I wish Mark good luck with his future endeavors. I have no doubts he will use the same impressive determination and talent to benefit his new employer. I Thank him for all he's done for our Chapter, our members and especially me. Knowing he was available to handle whatever I might need to task him with, made my job that much easier to accomplish on a daily basis.

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

Michael G. Negrete  
*PVA National Vice President and  
New England Chapter President*

# From the Director's Desk

*Mark Murphy, Chapter Executive Director*

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Friday, July 16th was my last day as Executive Director of the New England PVA Chapter as I recently accepted a new job in full-time fundraising and development work at another non-profit organization. This was a bittersweet decision for me to move on, as I have truly loved working for the Chapter and our members. New England PVA is a very special organization, and I will forever be grateful for my time working on staff. Having come on staff in December 2019, never did I anticipate that 2020 would be such a strange and unique year with the outbreak of a global pandemic that would cause our Chapter office to be closed for over a year and would deeply impact our programs and day-to-day work.

However, we weathered the storm together, and I am very proud of the ways in which we made such incredible strides to move our Chapter forward in the face of so many immense challenges. We applied for and received a record number of new grants, which certainly contributed to our solid financial standing. I am particularly proud of the fact that we were awarded the Most Improved Chapter Award by PVA National at the 75th PVA Annual Convention in Las Vegas this past May.



As I have now moved on from the Chapter, I would like to express my gratitude and sincere appreciation for our members, Board, and staff who have been so supportive of me and my work. Since the day I was hired, Chapter President Michael Negrete patiently showed me the ins and outs of the Chapter and helped me innumerable other ways. I will forever be grateful for Michael's support and encouragement throughout my tenure. I also am grateful for Board member Brad Carlson, whom I worked with very closely on several initiatives and projects, including running our very successful golf tournament in June. I am so appreciative of Brad's friendship and guidance. The Chapter staff is also incredibly gifted, dedicated, and committed to serving our members and pushing the mission of the organization forward. Kristen McCone Gordon and Jerry Cole deserve much credit for all the tireless work they put in day after day, often in unseen ways. I will forever be thankful to have had Kristen and Jerry as such competent and professional colleagues in our shared collaborative efforts working for the Chapter.

While I am very much looking forward to my new position, I will certainly miss the New England PVA and our members. I intend to serve the Chapter as an active volunteer moving forward. This is not a goodbye, as I am sure I will see you down the line at future Chapter events and programs. If you would like to stay in touch or reach me, feel free to email my personal email at [murph3166@gmail.com](mailto:murph3166@gmail.com). My hope is that the New England PVA will continue to flourish, grow, and continue to make a positive impact in the lives of veterans with SCI/D and all persons with disabilities. I am confident that this hope will become a reality through the leadership of the Board, staff, and members who contribute so much to the Chapter. Thank you again for all the support, and I will miss you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Murphy

*Chapter Executive Director*

*and Massachusetts Army National Guard Veteran*



# FROM the HILL

*Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director*

## Ensuring Workplaces are Accessible to All

The New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America is joining forces with our partners in the disability advocacy community in Massachusetts to support [AN ACT REMOVING BARRIERS TO WORK THAT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS, AND SENIORS](#) (The Accessible MA Act).

In 1968, Massachusetts led the nation's efforts to make communities accessible for all by creating the MA Architectural Access Board (MAAB). The Board balances the interests of property owners and accessibility needs by establishing and enforcing building codes during permitting. However, the MAAB was not given purview over workplaces, so current code does not require workspace accessibility even in new or extensively renovated buildings.

The ACCESSIBLE MA Act would finally allow the MAAB to meet the promise of the ADA and enforce accessibility in new or renovated workplaces. It will also guide developers and architects on innovative ways to provide access.

It is well past time for Massachusetts to provide accessible workplaces. Given the accessibility issues throughout the state, it's no surprise that the unemployment rate for people with disabilities in MA is twice that of non-disabled people. Our members, and all individuals in the disability community, have the right to find meaningful and rewarding work. The ACCESSIBLE MA ACT is a strong step in removing discriminatory barriers.

I look forward to keeping you informed of our progress in advancing this legislation. We are also reviewing workplace accessibility issues and legislative options in our other New England states. If you have experienced workplace accessibility challenges in any New England state, please reach out to me at [kristen@newenglandpva.org](mailto:kristen@newenglandpva.org).

Join our efforts in advocating for fertility benefits for our service-connected members

We still need your help in urging 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.

Please take action by clicking [HERE](#) and sending an email directly to your Representative's office.

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;
- 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.

The New England Delegation has expressed interest in this issue but they need to hear from more constituents. Please [CONTACT your Representatives](#) and ask them to cosponsor **The Veterans Families Health Services Act (H.R. 2734/S. 1280)** today. Please tell your family, friends, and neighbors to do the same!

## NEPVA encourages more New England Congressional Delegation members to cosponsor PVA's legislative priorities

We are thrilled to announce that Congresswoman Chellie Pingree has pledged her support of the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act of 2021 as a cosponsor!

Additionally, Congressman Jared Golden and Senator Angus King have both signed onto the AUTO Act as cosponsors. The entire Maine Congressional Delegation has now officially pledged their support of this critical piece of legislation.

To learn more about our PVA legislative priorities, and to take action by contacting your Representatives, please visit the [PVA resource page](#).





# iBOT PMD Donation to VA Boston Healthcare System

via FaceBook - VA New England Center for Innovation Excellence photos by Kristin Pressly



Vincent Ng, left, director of the VA Boston Healthcare System, introduces Dr. Sunil Sabharwal, second from left, chief of the VA Boston Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center during the iBOT donation event at the West Roxbury campus of the VA Boston Healthcare System

Mobius Mobility donated an iBOT Personal Mobility Device, or PMD, to the VA Boston Healthcare System's Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center in West Roxbury, Mass., June 7, 2021 as part of a national effort spearheaded by the VA New England Center for Innovation Excellence.

Participants at the event included host Vincent Ng, director of the #VA Boston Healthcare System, Kevin Forrest, director of the VA Manchester Healthcare System, which serves as the virtual home of the VA New England Center for Innovation Excellence, also known as NECIE, Michael Negrete, chapter president and national director, of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Anthony Dias, commander of the Mass. Department of the American Legion, Bruce Dobson, vice president of the Mass. State Council, Vietnam Veterans of America, Lucas Merrow, chief executive officer of Mobius Mobility and Dr. Sunil Sabharwal, chief of the VA Boston Spinal Cord Injury/Disorder Center.



Lucas Merrow, chief executive officer of Mobius Mobility, takes questions from the audience during the iBOT donation event at the West Roxbury campus of the VA Boston Healthcare System

The iBOT PMD is a remarkable device for those needing mobility assistance, enhancing not only their ability to negotiate obstacles, but

social interaction, as well. The donation will facilitate staff education and patient demonstration, supporting their understanding of iBOT capabilities and assisting with proper assessment and fit.

NECIE was established through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary's Center for Strategic Partnerships and VA National Centers for Innovation to Impact, and operationalized out of VA New England Healthcare System in 2020. Areas of focus include healthcare and lifestyle solutions for aging Veterans, rural access to world-class healthcare, and technology solutions for chronic and/or complex illness and injury. NECIE works to foster collaboration between VA and academia, industry, non-profits and other government agencies.



From left to right, Michael Negrete, PVA National Vice President, New England Chapter President of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Lucas Merrow, chief executive officer of Mobius Mobility and Air Force Veteran Mike Moran after the iBOT donation event at the West Roxbury campus of the VA Boston Healthcare System

The VA Boston HCS consists of main campuses in Brockton, Jamaica Plain and West Roxbury, and VA outpatient clinics in Lowell, Quincy, Framingham, Plymouth and Boston. VA Boston also operates specialty clinics at the Bedford VA Medical Center. Together, the facilities provide care for more than 55,000 Veterans from the greater Boston area and across New England, delivering world-class health care and services, including primary care, mental health, diagnostics, surgery, pharmacy and rehabilitation, on both an outpatient and inpatient basis. VA Boston HCS also offers palliative, hospice and long-term care.

Mobius Mobility manufactures and distributes the iBOT® PMD, a breakthrough mobility product for people with disabilities. #REACHCLIMBGO #teamiBOT.





# Sports Update

Mike Guilbault, Sports Director

The 1st Bass Trail Tournament on the Charles River was a great success again this year. There will be a full article with pictures written by one of the Bass Trail Directors. I will just mention it was well attended and the Chapter would like to thank the Newton Yacht Club, the Nam Knights and all the Bass Trail Boaters and volunteers for a great Tournament

again this June.

our VA events like the Winter and Summer Sports Clinics along with others like the Charles River kayak paddles.



2021 Sail to Prevail PVA Weekend, Newport, RI. New England PVA Chapter member Mike Guilbault.



Peter Moore (left) and Matt McConnell show their freshly caught bass. KAITO AU

The Sail to Prevail Weekend was held and sadly we were only able to sail one day. We all had a great day on the water Saturday and a wonderful dinner together with our instructors and the staff of Sail to Prevail; however, the Sunday sailing was canceled due to a fore-casted small craft advisory. It was very disappointing to all of us who were looking forward to sailing Sunday as well. Unfortunately, one participant was not able to attend Saturday and only came down and checked into the hotel after we sailed Saturday, joined us for dinner but no sailing Sunday.



Vincent "Porkchop" Willmott assists Jim Wallack, the bass trail liaison to the NEPVA, after his return from fishing. KAITO AU

The Summer Sports Clinic in RI is still scheduled to happen the week of July 19-23rd. All those attending registered long ago and have received confirmation of their acceptance. Let us hope it is going to be great weather and the event is wonderful as it always has been in past years.

I am sad to inform you all that our great partner in recreation NEHSA has once again lost 2 long time volunteers. Past President, volunteer, and Instructor Erik Wheeler and the amazing Earl Plummer, Jr. Both Earl and wife Mary got involved with NEHSA in the early years and have been volunteering for over 40 years! Any loss to NEHSA is a great loss to our members as so many of us benefit by participating in their programs as well as all the volunteer hours that NEHSA volunteers put in supporting

The National Summer Sports Clinic in San Diego, CA has been canceled for this year. It is being held virtually September 19-24. Unfortunately, registration is closed as they have already reached capacity. I can only hope Jenny Vulpis who is normally a coach there in San Diego will be arranging for some recreation events to go along with the virtual Clinic even if we cannot be officially part of the event. I believe Amp Surf is planning some surfing events and kayaking has been a weekly program along with hand cycling as part of the VA Recreation Programs for years. COVID put an end to that so far this year, but we can hope the restrictions are lifted soon and by later this summer we will be able to do some kayaking and cycling. Jenny did have the Annual Charles River paddle scheduled and it had to be canceled due to the date being during the excessive heat wave.





# My HealtheVet Advanced Accounts will be Discontinued

via VAntage Point - Treva Lutes is the communications director for the Office of Connected Care.



[My HealtheVet](#), VA's online patient portal, gives you access to your VA health information so you can understand and manage your VA care.

Beginning in September 2021, My HealtheVet Advanced accounts will be discontinued.

If you have an Advanced account today and do not upgrade to a Premium account, your account will revert to a Basic account. If that occurs, you will lose access to the pharmacy features, including the ability to request and track your VA prescription refills.

That means... it's time to upgrade to a Premium account.

With a free Premium account, you can securely access your VA health information, 24/7.

## Using your My HealtheVet Premium account, you will be able to:

- Request VA prescription refills, track your VA medications, and access your current VA prescriptions and prescription history.
- View, download and print your VA health information, reports and images from your VA medical record.
- Send online secure messages to your VA care team to ask them non-urgent health questions; ask to renew your medications; and send updates on your condition.
- View, schedule, reschedule and cancel VA appointments.

## How to get started

If you are new to My HealtheVet, create an account by visiting the [My HealtheVet website](#), selecting Register, and filling out the required fields. Make sure to check the boxes verifying that you are a VA patient and Veteran.

If you are already a user, you may have a Premium account. If you do, there will be a "P" icon next to your name.

Also, if you currently use secure messaging on My HealtheVet, you're all set. Patients who use secure messaging already have a Premium account.

## Three ways to upgrade to Premium level

If you have an Advanced account, there are three ways to upgrade to Premium level: in person, online or through a video appointment. Upgrading your account is free.

If you want to upgrade in person or through a video appointment, contact the My HealtheVet coordinator in your local VA facility. Ask about upgrading to a Premium account.

You can locate your VA facility's contact information through [VA's facility locator tool](#).

To upgrade online, you'll need to use your DS Logon Premium or ID.me secure sign-in credentials. You can learn more about the online upgrading process on the [My HealtheVet blog post](#).

## Now is the time to upgrade your My HealtheVet account

With a Premium account, you'll still be able to request refills of your VA prescriptions. You'll also gain access to all the tools, including secure messaging, access to your VA medical record online and more.

## Get more information

To learn more, visit the [My HealtheVet website](#), watch the [My HealtheVet Premium video](#), or contact your VA facility's My HealtheVet coordinator.

## YOUR INVITED: CHAPTER BOARD MEETINGS - ONLINE or IN-PERSON

Chapter members interested in attending our monthly Board of Director's meeting, either online or in-person, 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". For Online access you will receive the meeting connection information via email a few days before the meeting. If asking to attend In-Person, you will receive the Chapter's COVID-19 office access policies and protocols.

The regular monthly Board meetings are typically held the first Wednesday of the month and start at 10:45 AM. As with all Board meetings, Chapter members are encouraged to attend, but please be reminded you'll have the opportunity to listen-in to the meeting's discussions, but reserved from speaking unless specifically 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).

# 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](https://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).

#HonorTheSpot



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\*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.

Prior to use, refer to product labeling for complete product instructions for use, contraindications, warnings and precautions.

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David\*,  
Peristeen® user

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# Vet Center Helping to Redefine “I’m fine”

via VAntage Point, Andrea Madrazo is a public affairs specialist detailed to Vet Centers and Readjustment Counseling



Navy Vietnam Veteran Harry Collins always believed he was fine. He stuck to his daily routines and went to work, leading an outwardly normal life. But his “I’m fine” routine never included how to manage his thoughts and emotions following his war time service.

Collins recalled opening the door to the Lexington (KY) Vet Center with tears streaming down his face. Where his mind once was swarming with suicidal thoughts now showed a cheerful, memorable laugh.

Collins credited his life to his local [Vet Center](#).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is not a visible wound, and Collins was unaware he was experiencing every symptom listed in the PTSD brochure found at the Lexington (KY) Vet Center. He even chuckled and said, “Who wrote this about me?” the first time he and his Vet Center counselor talked.

Collins felt he was at a breaking point before he could muster up the courage to visit what he now calls his ‘foundation’ [Vet Center].

“I always thought I was fine, but I was not,” he said. “Although we may not realize it, we need someone to talk to beyond just our family and friends. At the Vet Center, you have people who have walked the same ground, they have been there and done it. They know what you are talking about. You know you are being heard and understood.”

For the past 30 years, the community and friendship Collins discovered within the walls of his Vet Center kept him coming back. His foundation of support does not stop once he leaves the Vet Center, it extends to his friendships as well. Collins shared a special bond with a fellow Vietnam Veteran who has become a close friend to not only himself but his family as well.

Vet Centers offer a team-based approach to services, where not only do Veterans, service members and family members build life-long friendships with each other, but they also have a counselor in their corner.

In Collins’ case, his counselor holds a special place in his heart and is more than just a mentor, but a friend too.

“Carla Loveless-Tackett [Lexington (KY) Vet Center Counselor] talks me through it,” he said. “She helps me to see the other side. Carla saved

my life. If it was not for her, I would not be here right now. I would have checked out. She is more than a counselor – she is an amazing woman who has become my friend.”

Now, Collins feels ‘centered’ and true to himself thanks to his local Vet Center. He never misses a chance to tell any Veteran or service member who he encounters to “do yourself a favor and go check out the Vet Center.”

For Loveless-Tackett, serving as a counselor is not a job title, it is her passion. For twelve years, she’s learned so much from each and every Veteran and service member she’s served.

“This is not a job to me, it is a matter of loving what I do,” she said. “Our Veterans deserve so much, and I hope I can at least help them through their difficult days so that they can find joy and start to feel laughter and beauty in the world. I am humbled that they allow me to be a part of their journey, share their pain and help them find stable footing. The Vet Center is there for him [Harry Collins] just like he was there for us.”

The Lexington (KY) Vet Center is one of 300 Vet Centers across the nation known to numerous others as their ‘foundation,’ continually helping others to reach, “I’m fine.”

“A lot of us do not know what the signs of PTSD are and think that it is for ‘sissies,” Collins said. “Even I did. But the truth is most all of us are impacted by what we have been through. We all need someone to go with us. We need to buckle up the strength to get help because the reward is just so unbelievable.”

*VA Vet Centers are built to serve communities that ultimately lead to strong bonds of camaraderie and connection. Vet Centers offer an array of readjustment services and specialized counseling to eligible Veterans, service members and families. Learn more by visiting [vetcenter.va.gov](http://vetcenter.va.gov) or call the confidential Vet Center Call Center 24/7 at 1.877.927.8387.*





# PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

*PVA Washington Update Volume 27, Number 12*

## ***House Appropriations Committee Approves VA Spending Bill***

On June 30, the House Appropriations Committee approved the VA appropriations bill for FY 2022 and FY 2023 advance appropriations by a vote of 33-24. No significant changes were made to the bill that was approved by a voice vote on June 25 by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations. The bill provides a total of \$113.1 billion in

discretionary appropriations for VA, an increase of \$8.7 billion above the 2021 enacted level, and \$176.4 million above the President's budget request. More information about the bill's VA provisions is available [here](#).

## ***House Veterans Affairs Committee Examines Veterans Bills***

On July 14, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC), Subcommittee on Health held a hearing to examine pending bills addressing a wide range of veterans-related issues. PVA submitted a statement for the record on 11 bills for the hearing. A couple of bills of note include the VIPER Act of 2021 and legislation addressing VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). The VIPER Act would exclude VA's research activities from the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act in the same manner that the National Institutes of Health receives for sponsored research. PVA strongly supports the elimination of this obstacle to critical biomedical research. The legislation would also authorize additional resources to help address long-standing infrastructure needs for research labs and facilities, including repairs for life-safety deficiencies to ensure VA researchers can perform their work in safe workspaces.

The PCAFC legislation would prohibit the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) from reviewing VA decisions on program applications. It would also

give VA the authority to begin the second phase of the PCAFC expansion sooner. Finally, it would direct VA to provide Congress quarterly reports about denials of PCAFC applications based on the "best medical interest" criteria. PVA expressed concerns with efforts to limit appeals of program denials. We also noted that although we appreciated the effort to move up the start date of the second phase, as written, VA could announce the start date on September 30, 2022, so no actual acceleration would take place.

A recording of the hearing is available [here](#).

## ***House Veterans Affairs Committee Examines VA Appeals Process***

The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 (AMA) (P.L. 115-55) created a new decision review process for claims and appeals. Veterans who appeal directly to BVA now have three lanes to choose from: Direct Review, Evidence Submission, or a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge. On July 13, the HVAC, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing to examine VA's efforts to implement the Act and modernize the appeals process. VA has made significant progress in recent years, reducing the legacy claims backlog (pre-February 19, 2019, process) from a high of 472,000 appeals in November 2017 to fewer than 135,000 today. In discussions leading up to the passage of the AMA, VA promised Congress they would resolve these claims by the end of 2022.

During the hearing, VA officials informed the Subcommittee that the department would not be able to resolve them all until sometime in 2023 due to unavoidable delays caused by the pandemic. By the end of 2023, they believe their entire focus will be on newer appeals. However, VA recently announced plans to automatically review claims

from veterans who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of three presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange: bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. Representatives from the Government Accountability Office and veterans service organizations warned Congress this is likely to generate a lot more work for the Veterans Benefits Administration and BVA. Neither handles workload surges well and without a plan to handle them, the list of hearing backlogs will once again grow over time. Additional subjects discussed during the hearing included the tele-hearing environment, improved training for VA employees to ensure better comprehension and execution of AMA procedures, and the adequacy of VA information technology to support the claims and appeals process. You can view the hearing [here](#).

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## *Executive Order Issued for Federal Workforce on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility*

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On June 25, President Biden signed an Executive Order calling for the federal government – as part of a larger effort to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in its workforce – to become a model employer of people with disabilities. The Executive Order directs key agencies, including the Department of Labor and the U.S. Access Board, to coordinate across the federal government to ensure that all federal workplaces and technologies are fully accessible; improve the process for requesting reasonable accommodations; and ensure that all federal employees understand their rights to request reasonable accommodations. The Executive Order also directs a review of Schedule A Hiring Authority

for individuals with disabilities to assess opportunities to enhance employment opportunities and financial security for employees with disabilities. The Executive Order also directs the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Labor to take steps to expand the use of the Workforce Recruitment Program for college students and recent graduates with disabilities. A fact sheet about the Executive Order can be found [here](#).

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## *Fair COLA for Seniors Act Introduced*

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On July 1, Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) introduced the Fair COLA for Seniors Act of 2021 (H.R. 4315). This legislation, which PVA supports, would require using the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) when calculating cost of living adjustments (COLAs) for federal retirement programs. The proposed index would adjust the benefits programs such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, civil service

retirement, military retirement, veterans' pension and compensation, and other retirement programs. The bill has been referred to Ways and Means, Veterans' Affairs, Oversight and Reform, and Armed Services Committees.





Veterans Career Program

# Career Support for ALL Veterans

With Paralyzed Veterans of America's Veterans Career Program,

## You Will:

- Receive carefully tailored **one-on-one support** from a career expert 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.
- 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**.
- Assess your current abilities, training, and experience and help you identify career goals.
- Guide you through development and enhancement of your resume and cover letter.
- 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/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)



# PVA VETERANS CAREER PROGRAM UPDATE

June 2021

## TRACEY COOPER-HARRIS: PERSEVERANCE

Tracey Cooper-Harris is no stranger to adversity. She joined the U.S. Army at age 17, serving from 1991-2003 as an Animal Care Sergeant in Operation Enduring Freedom & Operation Iraqi Freedom.



After returning home, she obtained a B.S. in Kinesiology from Cal State Northridge. That same year, she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

She began working for the VA, helping veterans overcome difficult issues after service. Looking to bring in more resources, she reached out to PVA's Veterans Career Program (formerly PAVE). Not only did she learn the ways that the program could help the veterans she was working with, she discovered she was eligible for PVA membership and joined the California chapter.

Wanting to fulfill her dream of being a Clemson graduate, Tracey began working on her Master's in public administration – but she didn't realize the challenges ahead.

***"With MS, I have issues with the heat. The words start slurring and my balance is off," Tracey says. "I also have to be careful with stress."***

Tracey didn't realize the ways stress could affect her until her father got sick. She was on the West Coast working and doing her Master's online, and her father was on the East Coast. Tracey was going back and forth to care for him and see her family, and it was hard on her. She had a relapse. They changed her medication, and she didn't react well. Her father passed. She lost her job. Then she failed four courses, back to back.

***"I went through a downward spiral. It was just one thing after the other," Tracey recalls.***

With the support of her wife and fellow veterans, and drawing on her determination, Tracey approached her dean and got back on track. The dean told her she could continue her school while on academic probation, but she would have to make "A's in all her classes. Tracey was undeterred.

***"I have been waiting on [a Clemson degree] since I first stepped foot on that campus in 1999, coming from Korea," she says.***

When she finally finished with school, she reached out to PVA for employment help.

***"The Veterans Career Program has been great. My counselor Taylor Scott helped me find online certifications, helped me with both my federal and civilian resumes, got my Schedule A letter, sent me jobs, and made sure I was doing everything I needed to do," says Tracey.***

## IMPACT + OPPORTUNITIES

### 21 Client Placements

- 18 Paid Employment
- 3 Training/Education

### 19 Veterans

### 2 Family Members



### 1 PVA Member

## 116 Total Placements in 2021

## WOMEN VETERANS EMPOWERMENT SERIES: "LEGACY" FEATURING KARI MILLER-ORTIZ

Join PVA for a Women Veterans Empowerment Webinar on Thursday, July 20th, at 2:00 p.m. ET. This month we will hear from Kari Miller-Ortiz, a disabled US Army Veteran, on how the decorated Paralympian chartered a new path through adaptive sports, and is empowering other wounded, ill, and injured veterans to return to work as a corporate recruiter. Kari will return to the Paralympics this year as on-air voice with NBC Paralympic broadcast team. Register [here](#).



Tracey really appreciated the specialized service. ***"She would send me job leads specifically tailored for me. She sent me things that fit my goals."***

Tracey also took advantage of Veterans Career Live sessions, which helped keep her motivated. She liked that they were small, which helped with networking, and they are recorded, so she never had to worry about missing anything.

A friend in the veterans community who knew Tracey was looking for a job sent her a lead – and with her resume polished and ready, Tracey applied. She recently began working for a California Congresswoman as a military and veterans liaison, which she loves.

***"PVA's Veterans Career Program is a really good way for veterans who have spinal cord injury and disease to know that if you want to work, or volunteer, or stay active in the community, this is a way to do it. You have resources out there available to you."***



Powered By:



# Fresh Focus S6 #34: Caregiver Support Program

via VAntage Point - Fresh Focus Dietitians Beth Blair and Lindsey Purcell welcome Jonnah Coffel, LCSW, from the Marion VA Health Care System via VAntage Point



During a nutrition assessment, a registered dietitian nutritionist will ask your Veteran a lot of questions, but also to you, the caregiver. Being a caregiver comes with a unique set of challenges, and the Caregiver Support Program can help.

Listen in to episode 34 of [Fresh Focus](#), as we welcome Jonnah Coffel to shed light on what to do if you are experiencing some caregiver burden.

There are two unique programs within the [Caregiver Support Program](#):

- The Program of [General Caregiver Support Services](#).
- The Program Of [Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers](#).

General Caregiver Support Services includes 3 main areas

1. Resource and referral. GCSS can assist with navigating VA services, including those available as part of the Veteran's healthcare and benefits.
2. Education, training, and support. GCSS has a plethora of resources for caregivers that focus on self-care, managing caregiver fatigue and stress, and assisting with navigating caregiver issues.
3. Counseling for caregivers. If the caregiver is experiencing challenges that are in connection with the Veteran's treatment, they can be referred for counseling sessions.

Please remember that, as a family caregiver, you play an important role in caring for the Veteran at home and in the community.

**How to find Caregiver Support Program resources:**

- Reach out to your assigned outpatient clinic and request to speak to the Primary Care Social Worker.
- Contact your local VA and ask to speak to the Caregiver Support Program's program support assistant, who can connect you with the appropriate clinician to best meet your needs.
- Caregivers can also contact the [National Caregiver Support Line](#) at 1-855-260-3274 regarding VA services or supportive counseling, Monday through Friday, from 7am to 7pm CST. This line is staffed by VA clinical social workers. They will link the callers to their local caregiver support coordinators..

## Free Self Development eCourse now available from Travis Manion Foundation

via VAntage Point - Olivia Gregory is a content manager & copywriter for the Travis Manion Foundation

A free self development eCourse is now available from the Travis Manion Foundation, and its first question asks, Are you thriving?

If not, now's the time to harness your unique qualities to reach your full potential. This is the perfect tool for Veterans looking to create actionable goals to achieve success in their careers and well-being. The course is recommended for those transitioning from military to civilian life, looking to begin a new career or any number of life changes big or small. This opportunity is available for all at no cost.

Studies show that people who intentionally use their strongest character strengths every day increase their well-being, improve their satisfaction at work and are better positioned to thrive. In completing the course, you will gain insight into your unique strengths, find fulfillment and learn how to more effectively connect with others. Access this free course now and take on challenges ahead with a deepened sense of purpose.

### What to expect

Begin the Leading With Your Strengths course by clicking the button below. You will be directed to log in to or create your free Spartan

Development Center account. After you log in, you will be automatically redirected to register for the course. Once registered, the eCourse takes about an hour to complete. You'll be on your way to thriving in no time.

[Access the LWYS eCourse from Travis Manion Foundation](#)

### About the Travis Manion Foundation

The Travis Manion Foundation unites communities to strengthen America's national character by empowering Veterans and families of fallen heroes to develop and lead future generations. In 2007, 1st Lt. Travis Manion (USMC) was killed in Iraq while saving his wounded teammates. Guided by his ethos, "If not me, then who..." Veterans continue their service, develop strong relationships with their communities and thrive in their post-military lives by serving as character role models to youth. As a result, communities prosper and the character of our nation's heroes live on in the next generation.

Additional information about the Foundation can be found at [www.travismanion.org](http://www.travismanion.org). Follow us on Instagram @TravisManionFoundation or on Twitter @TMFoundation for updates on our programs and events.

# Live Whole Health #79: Gratitude to Improve Your Life

via VAntage Point - Esperanza Lugo, MA, Doctoral Candidate, is the whole health coach for all of VA Northern California

Many people are drawn to meditation to help manage those times when things seem down or out of our control. There are many different types of meditation, including visualization, compassion, gratitude, breath, mantra – and the list goes on. These meditations can improve your life by reducing stress and anxiety, and help you feel more grounded and at ease.

But there's another kind, too.

Loving kindness meditation is a self-care technique that can be done anywhere. It can be used to increase overall well-being and can even reduce stress while increasing love for self and others. Those last two can be difficult: Some find it challenging to send love and kindness to yourself and to others (including those difficult people in our lives). Nonetheless, it can bring healing and a sense of power.

To practice loving kindness, you will repeat loving kindness intentions toward yourself and others through a set of specific phrases. To make it more personal, you're invited to change the phrases to words that are more meaningful to you and to the people you're offering the love and kindness to. You will start with offering yourself loving kindness. Then you offer it to someone that has helped you in your life. Next you offer it to a neutral person, demonstrating that you can care and offer good

intentions to someone you barely know. Finally, you send the intentions to a difficult person in your life, opening up the healing action of forgiveness which can increase your sense of peace and release any anger taking up space in your heart.

Leo Tolstoy wrote that "Happiness is in your ability to love others." To get there, we find that it helps to start with a person who has mildly frustrated you, then move on to those who have hurt you the most in life. To send a difficult person loving kindness does not mean that what they did to you was okay or that you forget, but that you can still promote feelings of unconditional love and kindness, which can be so freeing!

Remember you do not need to judge when it comes to sending loving kindness to yourself and to others. This practice is simply an expression of positive and affirming thoughts and feelings toward yourself and others.

Check out this [22-minute version](#) of the loving kindness meditation from Dr. David Kearney from VA Puget Sound.

For more information on compassion and scripted loving kindness meditation, click [HERE](#).

## 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)

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# ReWalk®

## The ReWalk Exoskeleton-Suited for Your Mission



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

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

**Contact ReWalk for More Information**

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or 508.251.1154 Option 2**

### What is *Your* Mission?

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

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# SWAM21 - Swim with a Mission

By Wayne Ross, Chapter Board of Directors



I travel to Northeast Delta Dental Stadium in Manchester New Hampshire and witnessed an action packed day of fun with live military demonstrations. The opening ceremony featured skydivers with flag parachutes who exited a helicopter and flew down from the sky during the national anthem with both landing gracefully on their feet.

They were several K9 demonstrations and some highly

motivated, severely injured former Navy SEALs sharing their stories.

Several other veterans service organizations were also distributing information, a couple of which I learned about for the first time.

The picture is of me with three of the Navy SEALs at this event! I appreciate the Chapter funding my ticket to attend this exciting event.

## Army Veteran finds Purpose in Adaptive Sports – and a New Career

via Vantage Point - Kameela Din is the technical writer for the CWT Program at VA Palo Alto.



Army Veteran Desiree Emilio-Duverge sat in the VA Palo Alto campus canteen with a fellow Veteran who was telling her about his son and how he hoped to visit him soon. It was a very personal conversation. When the gentleman got up to leave, I asked him how long they'd known each other.

"We just met before you got here!" Desi, as she's known to most, exclaimed.

Desi tends to make connections everywhere she goes. Priscilla

Azcueta is Desi's Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) case manager and joked, "If we leave her alone in the cafeteria for 10 minutes, she will have met everybody in there!"

Although she's known for this friendly exuberance, the CWT alum has had a long journey.

Desi is in a wheelchair full-time and lives with chronic pain, the result of a severe respiratory illness she developed during her time in service in Germany.

"The wheelchair is the easy part," she said. "The chronic pain is what never stops and it's high grade."

**"I needed to distance myself from the pain."**

At the time of her initial spinal injury, Desi was told she needed a surgery she may not survive or, at best, would leave her breathing out of a trach tube the rest of her life.

Although she survived and now breathes without the use of a tube, she also suffered a quadriplegic C-spine injury during the procedure that

would leave her in a wheelchair for the rest of her life.

"I was resolved that I'm not going to let this kill me," she said. "I needed to distance myself from the pain."

Getting involved with Challenge Aspen, a non-profit organization that offers adaptive outdoor activities for individuals with physical or cognitive disabilities, she learned to ski using adaptive equipment and found a new passion.

"It changed me to my core," she said. "I needed adrenaline, not pity."

Along with adaptive sports, she also embraced possibilities for a new career which is what led her to CWT.

With Azcueta as her case manager, the two explored the idea of Desi going into business for herself, marketing her crochet work.

### Donates items for charities that support Veterans

"Her strongest passion was her crochet," Azcueta said, explaining that for the past few years, Desi has been making crocheted sweaters, hats, vests and more. She donates many of them as auction items for charities that support children and disabled Veterans.

Her designs have brought in thousands of dollars for these charities over the past few years and she enjoys making unique items that cater to the adaptive community.

"You can't walk into Kohl's and find a sweater or a blouse with one arm," she said. "When I saw that selling these items brought in money, I realized it can be a way to give back to disabled Veterans and children. I became impassioned. Veterans are supposed to be taking care of Veterans."

She explained that adaptive sports and her work with CWT helped her gain confidence. She encourages others who have been through trauma to embrace challenges as opportunities.

"Look for what you don't know how to do," she added. "If you only look for the familiar, there's no challenge. Make an adventure of it. There's a place for you and your part is absolutely necessary."



# Connect With What Matters



## Being there makes a difference

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

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

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

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



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**Essex Junction**  
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Essex Junction, VT 05452  
802-222-0265

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

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



# Genetic Testing – The New Standard in Treatment for Advanced Prostate Cancer

via Vantage Point - Nancy Volkens is a freelance writer supporting the VA Office of Research and Development



[Prostate cancer](#) is one of the most common cancers in VA patients. The disease most often affects older men, age 65 and above.

VA has been [partnering](#) with the Prostate Cancer Foundation to ramp up the use of precision oncology to treat Veterans with metastatic prostate cancer—disease that has spread from the prostate gland to other areas of the body. Precision oncology involves giving genetic tests to patients and using the results to help guide treatment.

VA Research Currents spoke with two experts to learn more about how Veterans with advanced, or metastatic, prostate cancer can be helped through genetic testing and precision oncology. The answers below were provided by Dr. Julie Graff, an oncologist with the Portland VA Health Care System and Oregon Health and Science University; and Dr. Maren Scheuner, a physician and geneticist at the San Francisco VA Health Care System and the University of California, San Francisco.

## VA Research Currents: What is the purpose of genetic testing for men with metastatic prostate cancer?

Genetic testing looks for variations in a person's genes. Finding gene variations can help with decisions about cancer treatment. Finding gene variations can also help to understand why cancer developed and how best to find cancers early or to prevent them altogether.

### What are genes and how do they contribute to cancer?

Humans have about 25,000 genes. Your genes are found inside the cells of your body. Genes are made of DNA. The DNA is a code for a set of instructions that control how your body grows, develops, and maintains itself. DNA changes that are harmful to your health are called mutations. Gene mutations that promote cell growth can lead to cancer. Gene mutations that prevent the repair of DNA mistakes can lead to cancer. Mutations in genes that repair mistakes in DNA, like the BRCA2 gene, are important causes of prostate cancer.

### How do gene mutations happen?

Gene mutations can happen for many reasons. For example, exposure to smoking, the sun, radiation, viruses, or certain chemicals can sometimes cause gene mutations. Sometimes gene mutations happen by chance, as

cells normally grow and make new cells.

Most gene mutations are acquired throughout your lifetime and can happen in any cell. Therefore, acquired gene mutations are only present in some cells of the body. Fortunately, our cells can fix most acquired gene mutations, but not all. Cancers have many acquired gene mutations.

Some gene mutations are inherited from our parents. Inherited gene mutations usually are found in every cell of the body. Inherited gene mutations cannot be fixed by our cells. Rarely, an inherited gene mutation causes tumors or cancers. Clues to an inherited gene mutation include younger age of cancer diagnosis and family members with the same or related cancers. For example, an inherited BRCA2 gene mutation increases the risk for prostate, breast, ovarian and pancreatic cancers, and melanoma.

### What are the possible benefits of genetic testing?

If an acquired or inherited gene mutation is found, you might benefit from new drugs that can increase survival in men with metastatic prostate cancer. For example, PARP inhibitors are used to treat metastatic prostate cancer with acquired or inherited BRCA2 gene mutations. You can also learn about other cancer risks and begin screening for early detection or make lifestyle changes to prevent those cancers. [Editor's note: Read the story of an [Army Veteran](#) with prostate cancer who was helped through genetic testing.]

### What are the possible harms of genetic testing?

There are some physical harms possible from a tumor biopsy or a blood draw. There are other possible harms from genetic testing for inherited gene mutations. If you learn that you have an inherited cancer gene mutation, this may increase anxiety or distress or cause some concern about talking with family about your results. Your oncologist may refer you to a genetics specialist to help cope with these types of issues if they come up.

If you would like to know more about genetic testing for yourself or a loved one with prostate cancer, speak with your physician or other health care provider.

### More Information

Click [here](#) to read the full story.

Click [here](#) to learn more about VA research.

# ADAPTIVE DEFENSIVE SHOOTING SUMMIT

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## A SHOOTING EVENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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September 10-11, 2021



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Go to: [adaptiveshoot.com](http://adaptiveshoot.com) for more info  
Follow the event on FaceBook  
Registration opens May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021



### SIG Sauer Academy Epping, NH

- \$95 Entry fee includes lunch
- Friday training session with SIG Academy Instructors
- Saturday ten stage defensive pistol match
- Industry demonstration bay
- Trophies and prizes



# JULY CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Gregory J Lane	Ronald A Rogers	Lloyd P Coughlin	Roger R Patch
Ronald F Stevens	William A Anthony	Gordon W Mellis	William J Sweeney
Richard F Prouty	Russell M Gallant	Ibelia Diaz	David P Cambio
Francis X Prucha	James S Barrett	Albert A Brusseau	Sheldon L Pascar
Charles Yessian	Daniel J Phelan	Clement R Vayda	John R Melvin
Floyd T Smith	Douglas J Carrier	John P Vibert	Samuel J Keyser
Donald J Plunkett	Frank A Vogeli	Prince E Blue	Brian E Archer
Raymond Lindeman	Louis Corvese	James A Palm	
Theodore D Lynch	Normand L Dumais	Edward J Walsh	
Sarah Hickland	Deanne P Connors	John F Pillsbury	
Charles P Abbott	Ellen M Corindia	Michael G Negrete	
Brendan R Higgins	Thomas Hall	John H Miner	
Kevin B Strel	Kevin R Gelineau	John D Indelicato	
David P Carnegie	Robert P Zimmer	Gary J Paulette	
David Lee Keniston	Luigi A Rasetta	Percy P Annis	
Paul J Budrow	Colleen M Bholo-Dey	Dennis M O'Brien	

## OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE: CHAPTER NATIONAL DIRECTOR

### Responsibilities and Duties of the National Director

- Attend the PVA Orientation Program for recently elected, first time National Directors. This shall be an annual two (2) day program to be held at the PVA office building in Washington, DC, if approved through the budget process. A planned agenda will be arranged which would give the National Directors an excellent opportunity to learn about and observe the PVA operation and clearly define their responsibilities. The program is to be held at a convenient date prior to the PVA Annual Convention. *Attendance will be mandatory for all eligible National Directors.*
- A National Director shall be required to prepare for and participate in all regular and special meetings of the National Board of Directors. Those who have accepted appointment to standing and special committees are expected to participate in all such meetings as scheduled.
- A National Director shall be familiar with PVA's mission, purposes, goals, policies, and programs.
- When asked, a National Director should be willing to serve in leadership positions or undertake special assignments.
- A National Director should avoid prejudiced judgments on the basis of information received from individuals and urge those with grievances to follow established policies and procedures.
- Individual National Directors should ask timely and substantive questions at board and committee meetings consistent with their conscience and convictions, while supporting the majority decision on issues decided by the Board of Directors.
- All National Directors shall maintain confidentiality of the board's executive sessions, and shall speak for the board only when authorized to do so. No National Director shall represent himself or herself as speaking for PVA unless specifically authorized to do so.
- It is a function of the National Executive Director to support the administrative needs of the Board of Directors. National Directors will access staff resources through the office of the Executive Director or through the National Executive Committee.

- National Directors shall be familiar with PVA's financial statements and annual budgets and shall otherwise assist the entire board in fulfilling its fiduciary responsibility.

### Responsibility to the Chapter

- The National Director must be a certified member in good standing of the chapter.
- The National Director should attend meetings of the Chapter Board of Directors.
- The chapter shall develop policies whereby the reporting procedures of the National Director to the Chapter Board of Directors and members are described.
- The Chapter Board of Directors and the National Director may jointly develop written policies and procedures to review pending national issues and proposals.
- The National Director must keep the Chapter President informed in a timely manner of decisions and actions of National PVA which affect the chapter.
- The National Director must be familiar with and understand National bylaws, policies, and procedures and the chapter's bylaws, policies and procedures.

There is a substantial time commitment and nationwide travel required to serve in this role.

- Please ensure you are able to freely travel for board and committee meetings throughout the country. Travel expenses are reimbursed in compliance with PVA travel policies.
- You must have reliable access to Internet and email services on a regular basis.
- Although not required, it is preferred this role be held by a Non-Board member of the Chapter.

To learn more about this opportunity to serve the New England Chapter and PVA nationally, please contact Chapter President Michael Negrete via email at [michael@newenglandpva.org](mailto:michael@newenglandpva.org) or by phone at 857-229-8825.

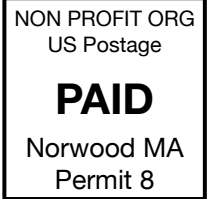


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**Office Hours**  
Mon-Fri, 8:30am - 4:30pm



## 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.*