



CORDWORD

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

New England Chapter



INSIDE THIS EDITION

HIGHER EDUCATION

PFIZER VS. MODERNA



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As we come to the end of another year, many of us are making resolutions for 2022, including many Veterans who are resolving to return to the classroom to prepare for future careers outside of the military. Student Veterans come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and some may have disabilities associated with their time in service. Higher education support services may be available.

To educate and support those Veterans with disabilities, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Student Veterans of [...continued on page 12.](#)



In the first head-to-head comparison of the effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, researchers examined the electronic health records of Veterans who had received each vaccine. Both vaccines were highly effective in preventing COVID-19 outcomes such as documented infection, hospitalization and death.

However, the Moderna vaccine was found to offer an increased level of protection, including a 21% lower risk of documented infection and 41% lower risk of [...continued on page 17.](#)

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

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



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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

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PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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ON THE COVER:

CordWord is the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America's (New England PVA) monthly magazine that covers news, health, research, lifestyle and issues of interest and concern to Veterans and others with spinal cord injury and disease. Anyone interested in submitting an article to *CordWord* should email media@newenglandpva.org. 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

If there is a season that emphasizes the sense of family and gathering, it is the Holiday Season! This time of the year brings out the softer and more compassionate side of people. We look to give to those less fortunate through food and toy drives, because have a connection with one-another as community as Chapter members and where we live. Such comfort and nostalgia reinforces my belief that underneath everything dividing us, we simply want the best for each other.

This season also allows us to reflect and give thanks for what we have in our lives. Even while navigating through the challenges of a historic global pandemic, the sense of gratitude is heightened for the opportunity to stay healthy and safe through these tempestuous times. I'm deeply saddened for those families who have experienced loss to COVID and otherwise. I know my words may fall short of expressing my sorrow and effort to comfort you, but know you and loved ones are in my thoughts.

As a Chapter, we are thankful for the partnerships we have developed over the years, as these relationships have allowed us to continue providing programs and services for the benefit of our members. For example, even though COVID has completely restricted the Chapter from entering the VA SCIU at Brockton, MA

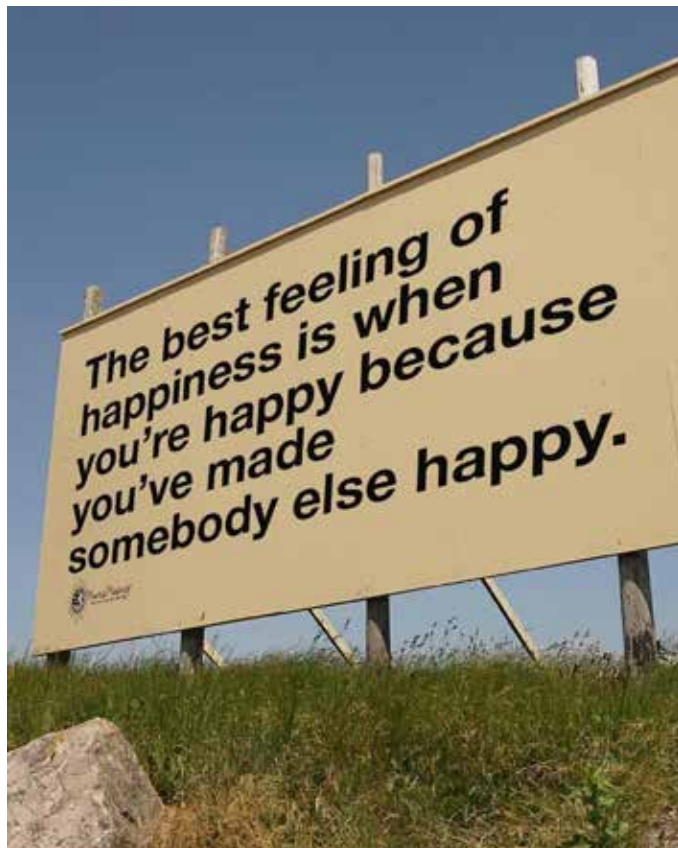
we've be able to continue providing our Monthly "Pizza Parties" bringing a little normalcy to their lives during the extremely stressful circumstances limiting their contact to the outside community.

We will continue to look for ways to invest, support and serve our members, whether through programs, projects, and/or membership engagement activities. With new Executive Director Steve Robinson and Sports Director Brad Carlson, please keep an eye out in the coming year for an array expanded and new programs for our members.

I am grateful to be a part of and serve our PVA family because we make each other better. Together, we make a positive difference in the lives of our members and the greater disabled community. And as I always say, it doesn't take much to make this difference. Its simply a matter of showing respect and compassion for each other.

I wish you and your loved ones joy this holiday season and peace and prosperity in the coming new year.

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



From the Director's Desk

Steve Robinson, Chapter Executive Director

Greetings from the Director's Desk!

The holiday season is officially upon us and it's a great time to celebrate and honor our family and friends. As we wrap up another year here, it's helpful to take some time and reflect on what this year has taught us. Granted, I have only been a part of the New England PVA for a short time, I continue to be amazed at all that I have already learned. I have taken the time to listen to our board members, our staff, and several members regarding the current state of the organization. I am assured and confident that we are primed to emerge out of the pandemic stronger, better and with a new resolve to deliver on our mission. Some immediate projects are taking place in the office.



1. Membership Database update:

The Chapter office will have volunteers contacting each member to check in, update contact information and learn from members how we can better serve them.

2. In Office Gaming Studio:

a. I-Racing Program: We will offer three I-Racing stations for you to play at home or in the office. For more information on iRacing check out their website: www.iracing.com

b. PVA Gaming Laptop Loaner program - We have a high-end gaming laptop available for use in office or to check out for home use. More information will be announced soon.

3. Increase in volunteer engagement

a. Recruitment efforts have been successful at a couple local universities to engage younger volunteers into our organization.

As we begin to look ahead at 2022, we are imagining what programs and possibilities exist. While our government relations department continues to make waves, we are also excited to begin planning and offering more sports and recreation programs. I am very excited about the year ahead! On behalf of the office staff here at New England PVA, we want to wish you happy holidays. We hope this season is filled with joyful moments with family and friends.

In gratitude for your service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steve Robinson
Executive Director



FROM the HILL

Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director

NEPVA submits testimony to the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs

NEPVA was proud to submit testimony to the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs in support of three pieces of legislation that would have a direct impact on our members

lives in Massachusetts: An Act relative to parking at certain airports; An Act relative to 100% disabled veteran recreation; and, An Act relative to emergency medical transportation provided to veterans.

- **An Act relative to parking at certain airports**

Our Chapter supported H. 3684, An Act relative to parking at certain airports. We believe parking at airports should be both free and accessible for disabled veterans.

- **An Act relative to 100% disabled veteran recreation**

Our Chapter also fully supported H. 3636, An Act relative to 100% Disabled Veteran Recreation. Any Massachusetts resident who is a 100 percent disabled veteran should be entitled to any hunting or fishing license offered by the Commonwealth without fee or cost.

- **An Act relative to emergency medical transportation provided to veterans**

Finally, our Chapter also urged favorable consideration of H.3696, An Act relative to emergency medical transportation provided

to veterans. We believe our disabled veterans have earned the benefit to receive full reimbursement of expenses for emergency medical transportation services to local hospitals or veteran's affairs hospitals. No veteran should have to hesitate to call for emergency services because of the prohibitive costs associated with getting medical care.

In his testimony, [Chapter President Michael Negrete](#) asked the Committee, "to consider the daily challenges faced by veterans who gave so much to protect our Nation's way of life." We believe these bills will benefit our members and are small but important steps in thanking veterans for their service and sacrifice. I look forward to keeping you updated on the progress of this legislation, and aware of our efforts in all of the New England states.

Opportunity to participate in the 2022 Pushing Access Forward Advocacy/Legislation Seminar

The 2022 annual Advocacy/Legislation Seminar will be held virtually March 7th – March 11th. The seminar provides participants with in-depth knowledge of PVA's legislative priorities and an opportunity to meet (virtually!) with Members of Congress and/or their staff. These meetings are incredibly important to our work at NEPVA, and often result in Members of Congress signing onto our priority legislation.

If you are interested in participating and joining our growing NEPVA advocacy team, please reach out to me at kristen@newenglandpva.org or 571-289-8276. I look forward to speaking with you and telling you more about this opportunity!

Immediate Action Needed: Veterans Families Health Services Act

We need your help in advancing a critical piece of legislation. 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! 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. For more information on the legislation, and to take action by emailing your Representative, please click [HERE](#).

We still need your help in passing the AUTO for Veterans Act!

If you haven't yet had the opportunity, there is still time to help the Chapter advance the AUTO for Veterans Act (H.R. 1361/S. 444). Please take a few minutes and fill out the VoterVoice link below. As you may recall, VoterVoice is a new program from PVA that allows us to harness the grassroots power of our members in a quick, easy, and effective way. The VoterVoice system enables members to take action by sending a pre-written email to your members of Congress. All you need to do is fill in your address and hit send. As you may have already read in previous editions of the CordWord, our Chapter has been advocating for the AUTO for Veterans Act (H.R. 1361/S. 444). This legislation would lessen the financial burden and expand access to transportation for eligible, disabled veterans by allowing them to receive an additional Automobile Grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), every ten years. I've been speaking with Congressional district staff about this issue all year but nothing is more powerful than hearing from a constituent. Together, let's get all the New England Delegation onboard! All of the information you need to respond and take action is available here: <https://www.votervoicenet/PVA/campaigns/78011/respond>.

Commemorating a Legacy of Service on the 80th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor

via VAntage Point By Bryan Lett, Public Affairs Specialist for VBA's Office of Strategic Engagement.



We observe the 80th anniversary of the Japanese attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when men and women of the armed forces faced one of the most lethal threats in our country's history with astounding heroism. The sunken [USS Arizona](#) accounted for nearly half of the 2,341 fallen service members that day. The defense of Pearl Harbor and response to save those trapped aboard the USS Arizona is a testament to the resilience and bravery of our armed services. It reminds us of the sacrifice of all Veterans, no matter the war, conflict, or peacetime period you have served.

The U.S. flag that flies above the memorial site brings to mind the many

deeds of bravery by those who served there that day, such as:

[Dorie Miller](#), a Navy steward on the [USS West Virginia](#) who took control of an anti-aircraft machine gun and destroyed two Japanese planes and became the first African American awarded the Navy Cross.

[Donald Stratton](#), who served tirelessly on the Arizona before being rescued from the sinking ship and going on to serve in the Pacific theater. He later lobbied for [Joe George](#), the sailor who saved him, to receive a posthumous Bronze Star.

The many Army Air Force pilots who took to the air to defend the harbor against the attacks.

The 15 Navy personnel who received the Medal of Honor for bravery during the attack.

We offer our sincerest thanks to those who defended our nation 80 years ago today. It's only fitting that the theme for this year's [Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day](#) is valor, sacrifice and peace. These stories, and the many like them, are the ones that drive the benefits and services we deliver at VA.

More on those who served at Pearl Harbor

The [Veterans History Project](#) contains a searchable database of interviews with Veterans stationed at Pearl Harbor during WWII. Several of these Veterans' accounts are featured in VAntage Point profiles created in 2016 and are available [here](#).

VA Committed to Being a Place Free of Harassment, Assault for all Veterans

via VAntage Point

The following letter from VA Secretary Denis McDonough is VA's annual distribution about anti-harassment and sexual assault.

The Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes that Veterans are a diverse group who served and sacrificed on behalf of this great Nation. We all have a responsibility to ensure every Veteran who receives treatment, benefits, or services at a VA facility is treated with dignity and respect.

[VA is committed](#) to ensuring our community is safe, welcoming, and a place that is [free of harassment](#) for all Veterans, their caregivers, volunteers, visitors, and employees. We thank you for honoring all those you encounter in any VA facility by treating them with dignity and respect, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

VA has a zero-tolerance policy for harassing, disruptive, abusive, or violent behavior. Harassment and sexual assault, including sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, is inappropriate conduct and will not be tolerated. Reports of inappropriate conduct are taken seriously. VA will investigate and take action, if warranted, to hold the person engaging in such conduct accountable for their actions. If the offender is a Veteran,

such conduct may result in the Veteran being restricted as to the manner and location at which they can receive treatment.

Experiencing or exposure to harassment can impact us all. When harassment is observed and not reported, it can embolden the harasser to continue the inappropriate conduct and make the experiencer feel unsafe, disrespected, and unwelcome. VA strongly encourages those who witness harassment to support their fellow Veterans by reporting it.

If you have been harassed, sexually harassed, or sexually assaulted or witnessed such behavior at any VA facility contact the VA Police or a VA Management Official. To make a confidential report of sexual assault against any individual or if a non-employee wants to report sexual harassment contact the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) Hotline at 1-800-488-8244.

Veterans can find more information on VA's zero-tolerance harassment policy, reporting procedures, resources, and training opportunities within the VA Anti-Harassment and Anti-Sexual Assault brochure.

Thank you for your service to our Nation and support for your fellow Veterans.



VA Access and Quality Standards?

By Pete Demarkis, PVA Sr. National Service Officer, Boston, MA

PVA's Government Relations Department needs your assistance with gauging how the VA is doing regarding the Access and Quality Standards VA established in 2019.

VA published the following access standards:

- 1. For primary care, mental health, and non-institutional extended care services, 30-minute average drive time standard.
- 2. For specialty care, 60-minute average drive time standard.

3. Appointment wait-time standards of 20 days for primary care, mental health care, and non-institutional extended care services, and 28 days for specialty care from the date of request with certain exception

In addition to this, PVA would also like to know if any members have experienced difficulties in receiving any medical supplies, such as gloves, catheters, or any medications from the pharmacy.

Knowing these access standards and supply concerns, please let your covering PVA Service Officer know if you've experienced any issues or delays with the VA providing access to these services or supplies. You can find a list of Service Officers covering New England and New York on [page 3](#).

Live Whole Health #100: Mindful Holiday Season

via Vantage Point by Alison M. Whitehead, MPH, C-IAYT is the program lead for the Integrative Health Coordinating Center in the VHA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation



The holiday season brings joy, happiness and often stress. There is no better time to practice mindfulness so that you can be present to manage the ups and downs of this busy season.

Mindful awareness is at the heart of [Whole Health](#), and it can help you to be more present to living your life more fully.

In general, mindful awareness may:

Improve your quality of life, helping you experience more moments of your life

Help you see things as they are and observe – but not judge – your experiences

Support your overall health, pain management, stress management, reduction of inflammation, and more

Mindfulness is an intentional and non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. Mindfulness meditation is a type of meditation based on the concept of being mindful, which is simply having increased awareness of the present. Breath awareness and body scan meditations

are examples of mindfulness meditations.

You can start, or restart, your practice informally with simple activities in your daily life, such as stopping to notice how you feel physically and mentally. Perhaps pay attention to the feeling of the water on your hands as you wash dishes, or stop to notice the birds chirping, or the smell of the trees or the wood burning in your fireplace. It is helpful to approach these daily tasks with curiosity and a “beginners mind.” You can also use mindful awareness to help explore what really matters to you.

In this brief video, Greg Serpa, Ph.D. and Christiane Wolf, M.D., Ph.D. from Greater Los Angeles VA Health Care System, and leaders of the VA CALM Mindfulness protocol, talk about four simple ways to cultivate mindfulness. The tactics they review to help achieve mindfulness include:

Grounding

The S.T.O.P. acronym (Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed)

Anchor phrases

The 3 P's (Pause, become Present, Proceed)

For more information and resources on Mindful Awareness, visit: <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/circle-of-health/mindful-awareness.asp>.

Use these seven tips to de-stress during the holidays and year-round: Seven Ways to Manage Stress during the Holidays – Veterans Health Administration (va.gov).

The National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Healthy Living website includes additional mindfulness meditation recordings and other tools for managing and reducing stress, such as the Manage Stress Workbook: https://www.prevention.va.gov/HealthyLiving/Manage_Stress.asp.

Spread Joy, Not Flu this Season: Free Flu Shot at VA or 70,000+ Network Providers

via Vantage Point by Jonathan Ludwig, Senior Communications Specialist for the VHA Office of Community Care

Have you received your flu shot yet? If not, don't worry. It's not too late! This holiday season, there is no better time than now to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu. VA has made it easier than ever to receive your flu shot.

Flu Shots: It's Time to VAX to the MAX!

In addition to every VA medical facility, flu shots are available at no cost for eligible Veterans at more than 70,000 in-network community providers nationwide. According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), you can even get a flu vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine during the same visit.

We encourage you to check out this [brief video](#) or follow these four steps to get your community flu shot:

1. Check your eligibility

Community flu vaccines are available to eligible Veterans who:

- Are enrolled in the VA health care system, and
- Received care through VA from either a VA or community provider within the past 24 months. This eligibility is new for 2021-2022 flu season.

To check your eligibility (for the community urgent care benefit, which includes the flu vaccine):

- Call 800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411), select option 1 (for urgent care information), then option 3 (for urgent care information), and then option 1 again (to check urgent care eligibility), or
- Contact your local VA medical facility.

A great part of this benefit is that you can get a community flu vaccine without prior authorization. Flu vaccines that are provided include standard (quadrivalent), high dose, and preservative-free.

2. Find a participating provider

To find an in-network provider, go to the [VA Facility Locator](#) and enter the following information into the search tool:

- City, state, or postal code: Enter the appropriate ZIP code for your area
- Facility Type: Select "Urgent Care" OR "Community pharmacies (in VA's network)." If you select "Urgent Care," choose "In-network community urgent care"
- Click "Search"
- Choose provider

You can also call 877-881-7618 or your local VA medical facility for help locating an in-network provider. Make sure the provider is in-network to avoid being charged for the flu vaccine.

3. Go to the provider

Before going to the provider:

- Call ahead to make sure the provider offers the flu vaccine through this benefit.
- Print the [Billing Information Card](#) (or have it viewable on your mobile device) and take it with you to the provider.

When you arrive:

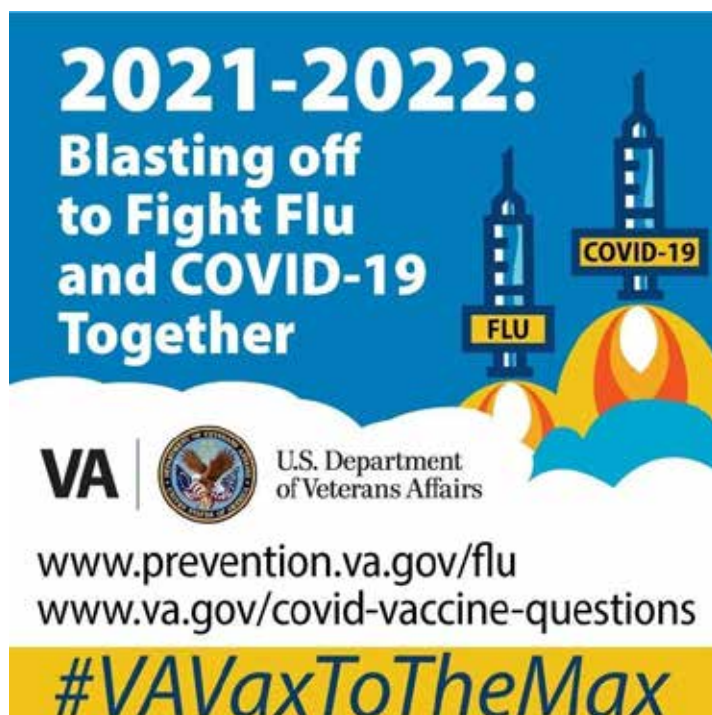
- Tell them you're a Veteran enrolled in VA health care, and
- You would like to get a flu shot, paid for by VA.
- Show your government-issued ID and the [Billing Information Card](#).

4. Get vaccine

There is no copayment charge if your visit consists only of a flu vaccine. In addition, flu-vaccine only visits do not count toward visits and/or copayments associated with using VA's urgent care benefit.

More information

- [Flu Shots – Community Care](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Community Flu Vaccines](#)
- [Influenza \(Flu\) – VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention](#)
- [Influenza \(Flu\) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)



PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

PVA Washington Update Volume 28, Issue 19

House Hearing Looks at VA Efforts to Modernize Its Medical Supply Chain

On November 18, the House Veterans' Affairs, Oversight and Investigations and Information Technology Subcommittees held a hearing looking at VA's efforts to modernize its medical supply chain system. VA has long faced challenges in achieving efficient acquisitions and a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report says the department's lethargic efforts to modernize its supply chain may now be putting the quality of veterans' health care at risk.

Many of the findings of this report were addressed during the hearing, including VA's failure to fully enact GAO recommendations to improve acquisition management at VA and the absence of a comprehensive plan to implement a new system. Throughout the hearing, lawmakers expressed concern with the cost of developing a new program, numerous

managerial problems, and the lack of clarity as to whether the Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support (DMLSS) or prime vendor systems are suitable for use by VA for its future supply system.

The COVID-19 pandemic exasperated VA's supply woes. Too many PVA members have experienced problems with VA filling prescriptions for critical items needed for veterans to perform wound and bowel and bladder care at home. We shared this information with congressional staff in advance of the hearing along with word that VA is experiencing shortages of wheelchair parts, durable medical equipment, and even lab specimen tubes. The staff appreciated our inputs and are looking into the issues raised. The hearing was recorded and can be viewed [here](#).

Amtrak Investments under Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

On November 15, President Biden signed the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law. Among its many provisions, the legislation provides Amtrak with an investment of \$66 billion to eliminate its maintenance backlog, modernize the Northeast Corridor, and improve rail service in areas outside the northeast and mid-Atlantic. Within these totals, \$22 billion would be provided as grants to Amtrak; \$24 billion as federal-state partnership grants for Northeast Corridor modernization; \$12 billion for partnership grants for intercity rail service, including high-speed rail; \$5 billion for rail improvement and safety grants; and \$3 billion for grade crossing safety improvements. The legislation also expands Amtrak's Board to add a position for a disability advocate.

According to an inspector general report from September 2021, Amtrak has made progress on overdue Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance requirements. Amtrak reported that the ADA requires that 516 stations across its rail network be compliant. It is responsible for making various combinations of station components accessible at individual stations, including the station structure, train platform, and parking area. Based on federal regulation and lease agreements with third parties, Amtrak has determined it has sole and shared responsibility for 386 of these stations. Over the next six years, Amtrak will embark on a plan to bring more than 300 stations into ADA compliance.

PVA Submits Statement in House MST Hearing

On November 17, PVA submitted a [statement for the record](#) for a joint House Veterans' Affairs, Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs and Health Subcommittees hearing titled, "Supporting Survivors: Assessing VA's Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Programs." PVA's statement focused on a set of VA Office of Inspector General reports that relayed the department's shortcomings in MST claims process. Our statement stressed the importance of raters and clinicians being aware of the complicated conditions of veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders and other disabilities who might file MST claims.

Representative Raul Ruiz (D-CA) referred to our statement when questioning witnesses, asking if VA offered specialized training for staff when it comes to complexities often seen in veterans with serious disabilities. VA stressed the importance of training, but PVA believes more work needs to be done in this area to ensure that veterans with complex disabilities receive equitable support when filing MST claims. You can watch the hearing [here](#).

Independent Budget and other VSOs Raise Need for Congress to Finalize VA Budget for Fiscal Year 2022

On November 10, the Independent Budget veterans service organizations (VSO), PVA, DAV, and VFW, along with five other VSOs sent a letter to Senate leadership to express serious concerns about reports that the Senate was considering approving a full-year continuing resolution (CR) to fund the federal government for the remainder of fiscal year (FY) 2022. A full-year CR would have significant negative consequences for veterans,

their families, caregivers, and survivors. FY 2022 began on October 1. Congress passed a continuing resolution to fund the government through December 3.

Justice Department Sues Uber for Overcharging People with Disabilities

The Justice Department has filed a lawsuit under the ADA against Uber Technologies Inc. (Uber) for charging “wait time” fees to passengers who, because of disability, need more time to enter a vehicle. In April 2016, Uber began charging passengers wait time fees in a number of cities, eventually expanding the policy nationwide. Wait time fees start two minutes after the Uber vehicle arrives at the pickup location and are charged until the vehicle begins its trip.

The department’s complaint alleges that Uber violates the ADA by failing to reasonably modify its wait time fee policy for passengers who, because of disability, need more than two minutes to get in an Uber vehicle. Passengers with disabilities may need additional time to enter a vehicle for various reasons. A passenger may, for example, use a wheelchair or walker that needs to be broken down and stored in the vehicle. The department’s lawsuit alleges that, even when Uber is aware that a

passenger’s need for additional time is clearly disability-based, Uber starts charging a wait time fee at the two-minute mark.

The lawsuit seeks relief from the court, including ordering Uber to stop discriminating against individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the department asks the court to order Uber to modify its wait time fee policy to comply with the ADA; train its staff and drivers on the ADA; pay money damages to people subjected to the illegal wait time fees; and pay a civil penalty to vindicate the public’s interest in eliminating disability discrimination.

Anyone who may have been charged wait time fees, should contact the Justice Department at 833-591-0425 (toll-free), 202-305-6786, or send an email to Uber.Fee@usdoj.gov. The complaint can be viewed [here](#).

Survey for Women Veterans

The Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in collaboration with the VA Center for Women Veterans is conducting a survey for women veterans. The survey is looking to understand why

these veterans may not be accessing their benefits and services. Please complete this [5-minute survey](#) if you are a woman veteran.

Myths About ADA Enforcement

In “DeBunking Disability Enforcement Myths,” two University of Pennsylvania law professors examine some of the most troubling and intransigent misrepresentations about disability rights enforcement. Among these are: filing a disability law suit is taking advantage of the

system; the ADA is the source of much predatory litigation; and stopping or delaying ADA lawsuits is the only way to protect small businesses from these abusive practices. The full article is available [here](#).



Higher Education Support Services Available for Veterans with Disabilities

By Charles McCaffrey, Associate Director, Paralyzed Veterans of America Veterans Career Program

As we come to the end of another year, many of us are making resolutions for 2022, including many Veterans who are resolving to return to the classroom to prepare for future careers outside of the military. Student Veterans come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, and some may have disabilities associated with their time in service. Higher education support services may be available.

To educate and support those Veterans with disabilities, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Student Veterans of America and Wounded Warrior Project partnered with the PsychArmor Institute to produce two informational courses with accompanying introductory videos. These videos – featuring Veterans with disabilities who successfully navigated school – are designed to assist student Veterans with their academic journey.

Getting Started

The first course focuses on “why” Veterans with disabilities should pursue higher education. As former student Veteran Shaun Castle shared, “Since your transition from the military, you may have wondered if going to college is the right choice for you. Because of your service, you are very different from the typical college student. Your injuries, whether visible or invisible, in addition to your experience in the world, make you unique.”

You aren’t a typical college student. You aren’t fresh out of high school. Maybe you’re fresh from the battlefield. And your path to higher education is also different from a conventional student’s. And that’s ok. This course will help you navigate your path to the degree that prepares you for your post-military career.

View the introductory video at <https://psycharmor.org/courses/pva01/>, then follow the link to register for the course.

Know Your Rights

“You don’t look disabled,” a professor once told former student Veteran Maureen Elias as she asked about testing alternatives due to an injury connected to her wrist that made it difficult for her to take a written essay exam. Veterans with an acquired disability may not be aware of how to navigate accessibility offices or how to request accommodations. Worse, some may think of the accommodations as a “hand out” rather than support that is an equalizer.

Five common accommodations for students with disabilities include:

- Removing physical barriers to provide access to buildings.
- Changing a classroom environment or task to allow a student with a disability to participate.
- Modifying policies, practices or procedures.
- Providing auxiliary aids and services.
- Making other adaptations or modifications that enable a student to participate in the college’s programs, services and activities.

The second course in the series outlines the value and process for seeking appropriate assistance and support through your school’s accessibility or disability office. View the introductory video at <https://psycharmor.org/courses/pva02/>, then follow the link to register for the course.

Wherever you are in your educational journey, we encourage you to watch these short videos to better prepare yourself for what is next. To learn more about educational resources for Veterans, visit <https://psycharmor.org/paralyzed-veterans-america-course/>.





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 • VeteransCareerProgram@PVA.org • [f](#) ParalyzedVeterans • [t](#) [@](#) PVA1946

PVA Releases Statement on the Passing of Decorated WWII Veteran/Disability Rights Champion Sen. Bob Dole

via pva.org - PVA Communications Department



Paralyzed Veterans of America National President Charles Brown today released the following statement on the passing of long-time public servant and PVA supporter Senator Bob Dole:

“PVA joins the nation in mourning the passing of Senator Bob Dole and extends our heartfelt prayers to Senator Elizabeth Dole and the entire Dole Family. Prior to becoming one of America’s longest-serving U.S. Senators, Dole served in the U.S. Army and later became a decorated World War II Veteran and two-time Purple Heart recipient. A champion of the Americans with Disabilities Act, he devoted his entire life to advancing the cause of people with disabilities, as well as advocating for servicemen and women who sacrifice their lives for this nation. Following his tenure in Congress, Dole worked tirelessly on seeking U.S. ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

More than a public figure, fierce advocate, and war hero, Dole was one of Paralyzed Veterans of America’s dearest friends. He was the first recipient of PVA’s Gordon H. Mansfield Congressional Leadership Award for his ongoing support of disabled Veterans, the 2017 Speedy Award recipient for outstanding accomplishments in the field of paraplegia – PVA’s highest honor; and a steadfast supporter. Very few can match his record of service and commitment, but we all can learn from his example.”

Indego® Gets Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again

NEW VA Program offers eligible veterans an Indego® exoskeleton at NO COST!



What’s the Indego exoskeleton?

It’s an FDA-approved robotic device that enables spinal cord injury patients (level T3-L5) to walk again.

- ✓ Regain your independence
- ✓ Enjoy eye-level conversations
- ✓ Improve your cardio & bone density



Scan with your mobile phone to receive information or schedule a demonstration.

Contact us today to find out if you are eligible to receive an Indego exoskeleton at no cost.

Phone: 844-846-3346

Email: support.indego@parker.com



“I was dropped on a Jetway.” - Airlines make it dangerous for people with disabilities to fly. (USA Today Op-ed)

via pva.org by PVA President Charles Brown USA Today opinion contributor

Air travel is ill-equipped for millions of people with disabilities, particularly wheelchair users.

In our highly mobile society, air travel is unquestionably the fastest way to get to our destination, but it is ill-equipped for millions of people with disabilities, particularly wheelchair users.

Air travel is a broken system in need of attention, as the recent death of disability rights activist Engracia Figueroa illustrates. Figueroa's careless mistreatment at the hands of an airline is not an isolated event – though it is among the most egregious. Figueroa died after an airline broke her custom-fit wheelchair. She spent weeks in a loaner chair, which caused a pressure sore that led to her death.

Paralyzed veterans, like myself, know of these situations all too well. Marine veteran Paul Stewart's leg was twisted and dragged after it fell off a broken aisle chair. Marine veteran Redzuan Razak developed pressure sores after a long wait in an aisle chair before his wheelchair was returned. Army veteran Derrick McMillon fell backward in his chair, hitting his head on the floor and knocking over his service dog after his wheelchair was damaged during a flight. These are only a few stories of wheelchair users who have been injured during air travel. For some, it's either too hard to talk about or embarrassing because it happened around other people and we try to put on a brave face.

Air travel is difficult for many people, but these difficulties are twofold for passengers with spinal cord injuries who face a host of other issues invisible to other travelers. There are practically no accessibility features on airplanes, nor are they required.

As of 2019, of the top eight U.S. airlines, only 4.5% of their single-aisle aircraft had accessible restrooms. Four airlines didn't have any at all. Of the top eight U.S. airlines, only 4.5% of their single-aisle aircraft have accessible restrooms. Four airlines don't have any at all.

Because there are no means to fly in a customized wheelchair, disabled travelers often must relinquish their independence, dignity and safety to low-paid, inadequately trained airline assistants, usually contractors, who transfer them onto ill-fitted, often broken aisle chairs to get on and off airplanes.

This process often subjects them to bruises, abrasions and falls that can be life-threatening for those with spinal cord-related issues.

As a Marine veteran who was injured while serving this country, I am frequently called upon by Paralyzed Veterans of America to travel across the country to assist veterans.

Accident led to 3 months in hospital

In 2019, airline contractors dropped me onto the jetway while transferring me from my custom wheelchair into an aisle chair while boarding a flight. My tailbone was fractured, and a dangerous infection quickly developed. I spent three months in the hospital fighting for my life.

Sadly, this was not the first time I had trouble flying. Two years earlier, my roughly \$40,000 powerchair was severely damaged, forcing me to miss an important meeting and shell out thousands of dollars due to the airline's refusal to cover all costs.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed the bipartisan Air Carrier Access Act into law, thereby acknowledging the rights of people with disabilities to travel by air. While it was a monumental step forward, critical reforms are needed today to ensure wheelchair users can travel by air safely and humanely.

The problem is systemic, requiring action by Congress and the Department of Transportation to ensure that commercial air travel is accessible for passengers with disabilities.

Improve passengers' rights

We urge Congress to pass the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act and improve the civil rights of passengers with disabilities by increasing enforcement of the law and requiring new and existing aircraft to meet accessibility standards.

In 2019 and 2020, roughly 14,000 wheelchairs were damaged, delayed or lost. Airlines must design aircraft that provide wheelchair users with a path of travel to board airplanes independently and the option to fly safely in their personal wheelchairs.

They must also improve wheelchair stowage options for those who wish to fly from a passenger seat and require accessible lavatories on planes. The airline industry must take decisive action to make its business model more inclusive and safer for all passengers, including those with disabilities, both now and in the future.

People with disabilities are tired of hearing that real change is years away. In the short term, airlines must provide better-fitting aisle chairs with intact and functioning straps to securely transfer passengers.

Airlines must also improve the transfer process with universal training that better meets the needs of people with significant mobility impairments.

And they must undertake significant measures to stop wheelchair damage. Figueroa's death should not have happened. How many more wheelchair users must die or be injured by improperly trained airline contractors or personnel?

How many more custom chairs must be damaged or destroyed by airlines? How much more money must be allocated and how many more years must pass before lasting change occurs?

It is time for Congress to step up and act. We have waited on the sidelines long enough. [Sign our petition to pass the ACAA.](#)

Read the original article in [USA Today](#).

Empowering Women Veterans

via pva.org - PVA Communications Department



Women veterans make up 1.8 million of the U.S. population, of which roughly 10 percent are disabled and enrolled with the Department of Veterans Affairs. They are the fastest growing Veteran population, yet many of these women often feel forgotten and pushed aside while trying to navigate a system that wasn't designed to address their unique healthcare needs. They also feel isolated not only from the entire Veteran population, but from each other.

"Nothing in life prepares you for this. But those folks from PVA were there. They gave my family hope for a future."-Anne Robinson, U.S. Army Veteran and PVA Texas Chapter member

PVA's ties to women Veterans date back to its first meeting in 1946 with the arrival of its first female Veteran member, Anita Bloom (affectionately known as "Nita"), who fought to ensure women Veterans' healthcare needs were properly met. PVA continues Nita's legacy to this day as part of its Women Veterans Initiative. From the development of its Anita Bloom Committee and creation of its Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat to its advocacy efforts and informative webinars, PVA serves as the nation's leader in securing safe, equal, and accessible health and wellness services that are at least equal to what they had prior to joining the service and suffering a disability.

Anita Bloom Women Veterans Committee

Vision

To provide PVA women Veteran members, regardless of age, race, color, disability, national or ethnic origin, or religious expression, an opportunity to achieve an improved quality of life through inclusive, safe, and equal access to healthcare, benefits, recreational opportunities, and employment services they have earned.

Mission

To strengthen the leadership, amplify the voices, and highlight the needs of PVA women members in their pursuit of quality healthcare, accessibility, and benefits. The committee will work with all PVA departments to secure these services and benefits.

Outreach and Engagement

The Anita Bloom Women Veterans Committee (ABWVC) will collaborate with the PVA national Communications Department, PVA Publications, and Membership Department in providing and publicizing resources, knowledge, and services that would directly benefit PVA women Veteran members. The Committee will identify potential women members and encourage them to join PVA. This Committee will encourage broad participation of the members in activities and events for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and information in a context of partnership to influence public decisions and advocacy.

Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat

Created For Women By Women

From service members and family members to caregivers and more, women Veterans wear many different hats, and so do the unique health care challenges they face. PVA's Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat (formerly known as WE Served) is an all-expenses-paid retreat that focuses on the holistic well-being of women veterans with disabilities. This immersive and outcomes-driven experience – limited to just 40 attendees – is designed to empower women to navigate the unique challenges of their everyday lives ... and help them flourish.

Participants enjoy four days of learning and community-building in an inclusive and supportive environment. During the retreat, PVA assembles a line-up of experts and thought leaders who present on topics including:

- Whole health – mind, body, and spirit
- Independent living
- Financial security
- Nutrition
- Finding meaningful employment
- Accessing VA benefits
- Women's health

The goal of this retreat is for women Veterans to walk away with not only new friendships and bonds, but also information and tools they need to be UnstoppABLE at home, at work, in their community, and throughout their life.

To learn more or get involved simply contact our program managers:

Tammy Jones, PVA National Vice President at tjones@pva.org or Cheryl Vines at cheryl@pva.org.

Researchers Carry Out the First Head-to-Head Comparison of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 Vaccines

via Vantage Point by Tamar Nordenberg, freelance writer supporting VA's Office of Research and Development



In the first head-to-head comparison of the effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, researchers examined the electronic health records of Veterans who had received each vaccine. Both vaccines were highly effective in preventing COVID-19 outcomes such as documented infection, hospitalization and death.

However, the Moderna vaccine was found to offer an increased level of protection, including a 21% lower risk of documented infection and 41% lower risk of hospitalization, according to the research team, whose findings were published on December 1, 2021, in the “New England Journal of Medicine.”

“Both vaccines are incredibly effective, with only rare breakthrough cases,” said Dr. J.P. Casas, a member of the research team made up of experts from VA, the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, and executive director of VA’s Million Veteran Program for genetics and health research. “But regardless of the predominant strain – Alpha earlier and then Delta later – Moderna was shown to be slightly more effective.”

Research focuses on Alpha variant

Researchers designed their comparative effectiveness study to address the previously unanswered question of which of the two mRNA vaccines is more effective. Effectiveness was measured in terms of five COVID-related outcomes: documented COVID-19, symptomatic disease, hospitalization, ICU admission and death. The investigators relied on the electronic health records of U.S. Veterans who received one of the two COVID-19 vaccines between early January 2021 and mid-May 2021.

As initially designed, the research focused on the Alpha variant that predominated at the time. The study matched 219,842 recipients of the Pfizer vaccine to the same number of recipients of the Moderna vaccine. The two groups were matched based on a variety of clinical and demographic factors that could affect outcomes.

Over the study’s 24-week follow-up period, the estimated risk of documented infection was 4.52 events per 1,000 people in the Moderna vaccine group and 5.75 per 1,000 in the Pfizer group. This represents an excess of 1.23 cases of documented infection per 1,000 people in the Pfizer group. The investigators also observed an excess of symptomatic COVID-19 (0.44 events), hospitalization (0.55 events), ICU admission (0.10 events), and death (0.02 events) per 1,000 people in the Pfizer group relative to the Moderna group, but these differences were smaller.

Either vaccine is recommended to anyone offered a choice

This pattern of a lower risk for Moderna held up in an additional phase of research covering a time frame with Delta as the main strain. In this comparison, excess risk of documented infection over 12 weeks was 6.54 events per 1,000 people for the Pfizer vaccine, compared to Moderna. Given the shorter time frame available for this supplementary research, infection was the only outcome researchers analyzed. Also, the estimates were considered less precise because a smaller number of individuals were eligible for this analysis.

Randomized trials comparing the mRNA vaccines against placebos had previously shown both vaccines to be very effective against symptomatic COVID-19 infection (95% effectiveness for Pfizer-BioNTech, 94% for Moderna), and similar benefits were observed in real-world vaccine use.

“Given the high effectiveness of both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, confirmed by our study, either one is recommended to any individual offered a choice between the two,” said the study’s first author, Dr. Barbra A. Dickerman, an epidemiology instructor with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “However, while the estimated differences in effectiveness were small on an absolute scale, they may be meaningful when considering the large population scale at which these vaccines are deployed. This information may be helpful for larger decision-making bodies.”

More Information

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

Click [here](#) to read more about VA COVID-19 research.

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



ANNUAL AIR RIFLE & AIR PISTOL PROGRAM

Cal-Diego Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

December 3, 2021
Camp Pendleton
Camp Pendleton, CA

Wisconsin Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

March 11-12, 2022
Milwaukee Tech Area College
Milwaukee, WI

Mid-Atlantic Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

March 2022 (Dates TBD)
Colonial Shooting Academy
Richmond, VA

Buckeye Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament *

April 14-16, 2022
Spire Institute
Geneva, OH
**Buckeye Wheelchair Games*

PVA BOATING/FISHING TOUR

Mid-America Bass Tournament

September 10-12, 2021
Lake Eufaula
Eufaula, OK

Vaughan Bass Tournament

October 8-10, 2021
The Lakes of Egypt
Marion, IL

Southeastern Bass Tournament

October 15-17, 2021
Thurmond/Clarks Hill Lake
Evans, GA

Florida Gulf Coast Bass Tournament

April 1-3, 2022
Lake Toho
Kissimmee, FL

Kentucky-Indiana Bass Tournament

April 22-24, 2022
Lake Barkley
Kuttawa, KY

Mid-Atlantic Bass Tournament

June 10-12, 2022
James & Appomattox Rivers
Hopewell, VA

Capital Clash Bass Tournament

June 17-19, 2022
Potomac River
Waldorf, MD

ANNUAL PVA/NWPA BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT SERIES

Buckeye Billiards Tournament

July 17-18, 2021
8 Ball Sports Bar & Billiards
Columbus, OH

Mid-South Billiards Tournament

October 15-16, 2021
Clicks Billiards
Memphis, TN

Mid-Atlantic Billiards Tournament

March 18-20, 2022
Diamond Billiards
Midlothian, VA

ANNUAL PVA/AWBA BOWLING TOURNAMENT SERIES

Great Plains Bowling Tournament

July 29-August 1, 2021
Thunderbowl
Council Bluffs, IA

Mid-Atlantic Bowling Tournament

September 24-26, 2021
Bowl America
Midlothian, VA

Florida Gulf Coast Bowling Tourn.

February 23-25, 2022
Pin Chasers
Tampa, FL

Vaughan Bowling Tournament

April 2022 (Dates TBD)
Bowlero
Romeoville, IL

PVA NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS CIRCUIT

North Central Trapshoot

September 11-12, 2021
Crooks Gun Club
Sioux Falls, SD

Cal-Diego Trapshoot

March 25-27, 2022
Redlands Shooting Park
Redlands, CA

Nevada Trapshoot

April 1-3, 2022
Clark County Shooting Park
Las Vegas, NV

Florida Gulf Coast Trapshoot

May 13-15, 2022
Silver Dollar Trap Club
Odessa, FL

Vaughan Trapshoot

June 3-5, 2022
St. Charles Sportsmen's Club
Elburn, IL

Wisconsin Trapshoot

June 10-12, 2022
Brown County Sportsman Club
Green Bay, WI

Iowa Shooting Trapshoot *

June 17-19, 2022
Otter Creek Sportsman Club
Cedar Rapids, IA
**Year-End Tournament*

Mid-Atlantic Trapshoot

(Dates TBD)
Conservation Park of Virginia
Charles City, VA

BOCCIA

KY-IN Boccia Tournament

July 17-18, 2021
Indianapolis, IN

KY-IN Boccia Tournament

September 25-26, 2021
Bowling Green, KY

Bayou Boccia Tournament

February 11-12, 2022
Gulfport, MS

Buckeye Boccia Tournament *

April 14-16, 2022
Geneva, OH
**Buckeye Wheelchair Games*

Mid-Atlantic Boccia Tournament

May 2022 (Dates TBD)
Richmond, VA

Vaughan Boccia Tournament

(Dates TBD)
Carol Stream, IL

HANDCYCLING

Echelon Racing League ToAD Virtual Criterium Races

November 2021 -February 2022

PVAR High Performance Camp

January 29 – February 3, 2022
Brooksville, FL

Museum of Aviation Marathon

January 15, 2022
Warner Robins, GA

Carbonbike USA

February 5-6, 2022
Gainesville, FL

Valley of the Sun

February 18-20, 2022
Phoenix, AZ

Off-Road Spring Expo

April 13-16, 2022
Chesterfield, VA

Redlands Cycling Classic

April 20-24, 2022
Redlands, CA

Gettysburg Marathon

April 2022 (Dates TBD)
Gettysburg, PA

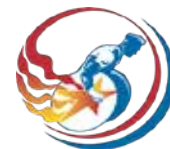
Tour of America's Dairylands

June 2022 (Dates TBD)
Milwaukee, WI

Wichita Omnium

June 2022 (Dates TBD)
Wichita, KS

NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES



July 7-12, 2022
Tempe, AZ



DECEMBER CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Robert L Aldrich
Jacqueline E Austin
James Bahamonde
Michael J Burns
Shannon M Callahan
Craig C Cascella
David J Cass
Joseph B Chase
Paul J Chisson
John R Clukey
Norman A Comire
Steven A Curtis
Edward R Dusick
Ronald E Estrella
Peter Falcione
Robert A Ferrusi
Michael J Fiore
Bernard C Fitzpatrick

Michael B Frappier
Frederick J Gentner
Ericka J Haddad
James G Hamlin
Luis A Jimenez
Thomas E Kelley
Lorraine A Kelly
Andrew C Kidder
Robert G La Barge
Timothy S LaPlant
Terence R McGovern
William E McLaughlin
David A Michalski
Richard A Morin
Maureen M Northern
Hugh M O'Donnell
Alfred A Paulicelli
Thomas B Perrotto

Douglas V Proctor
Bruce A Reid
Carl K Rich
David T Roberts
Charles A Schena
Melinda Simms
Karl R Smith
William E Southard
Gerald F Stasko
Patricia A Thomas
Michael D Tipa
Edward H Tyler
Timon H Underwood
Steven L Westland
Samuel P Woodward
Christopher M Young



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



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 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 10:30 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.

Serving Paralyzed Veterans and the Disabled Community Since 1947.