

Honor Flight New England

By John R. Melvin

My name is John R. Melvin, a USAF Viet Nam Veteran. I am also on the Board of Directors New England PVA. I want to tell you about a once in a lifetime occurrence with Honor Flight New England. Back in June of 2022 I received a call from a Sheila Peters to inform me that I had been chosen for the next Honor Flight from Boston Logan Airport to Washington DC. Which was to take place on September 25, 2022. For a few minutes I was speechless and very emotional at the same time. She told me she would contact me again as the time drew near for the flight.

I was told by my best friend that he also had received the same phone call. We would be going on the trip together with our sons. Two days before we were to leave my son calls and tells me that he has the flu and cannot make the flight. I notified Sheila and she assigned me a caregiver to be with me for the entire day.

On the Morning of September 25, 2022, I arrived at Logan airport and went to the State Police barracks where I was met by Sheila



Peters and another person. They helped me from my van into a wheelchair and took me inside of the barracks, where I was given a new Honor Flight jacket and hat. They also presented me with a tee shirt. After everyone had arrived, we were put on two buses and bought to Southwest airlines terminal. As we were taken off the busses, we could hear music playing and people cheering. As we got closer, I saw individuals with American flags and service flags. We could hear people

yelling Welcome Home. This was something that Viet Nam Veterans never got, but were getting it now. Moving on thru a sea of people I noticed my wife Rebecca, my daughter Heather, and brother-in-law Fran Mills. The feelings were overwhelming as I was hugged by my wife. It was great having my family members there

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WINTER SPORTS CLINIC





**THANKS TO ALL THOSE
WHO MADE
VOLUNTEER
CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THIS ISSUE**

Articles

John Melvin, Honor Flight

Mike Guillbault, Winter Sports story

Debra Freed, Bowling article

Photography

Harley Freedman, Holiday party



l to r; Brad Carlson, Dr. Ralph Orlando and Ed Ducik. Dr. Orlando received a plaque for recognition of his years of dedication working with veterans and helping tirelessly at the Sports Clinics.

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Executive Director's Report

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year, and I hope you and your loved ones had a wonderful holiday season. A highlight of mine was hosting over 30 members of my family over my house for a party on Christmas Eve. The weekend prior to that, it was nice to gather for our annual Christmas party with our Board members and their spouses. It is always an enjoyable way to celebrate and appreciate our Board of Directors, who are all volunteers that work tirelessly on behalf of our Chapter. We often do not thank them enough for all they do for our members!

Now that we are progressing along in 2023, we are fortunate to have many good things to look forward to, both coming up soon and later in the year. Next month we have our Annual PVA Advocacy and Legislation Seminar (Ad/Leg) in Washington DC. I was fortunate to attend this Seminar in-person back in 2020 and then virtually in 2021. I am pleased that PVA National is hosting this year's Seminar in-person once again, and we hope to

have several meetings on Capitol Hill with various members of Congress who represent our members throughout the New England states. Kristen is doing fantastic work to ensure that our Chapter delegation is informed and prepared to speak confidently about our legislative priorities this year. I am looking forward to learning more about these priorities and continuing to build solid relationships with our local elected officials. We will be sure to keep you updated on how our preparations for the Seminar are going and will report back on the success of our trip.

We also have several new ideas, initiatives, and plans for the good of our Chapter that you will be hearing about throughout this year. This will include additional sports programs that we have not had in quite a while and a few new gatherings and events that will help to build up our community and give us the opportunity to get to know one another better. More to come on that in the weeks and months ahead. This year we will of course continue to offer and support many of the programs and events that our members have consistently appreciated, such as the Bass Trail, various sports clinics, "Sail to Prevail", National Veteran Wheelchair Games, and the annual golf tournament, just to name a few. Suffice to say that we all have much to look forward to in 2023!

NEPVA President, Brad Carlson and Mark Murphy, Executive Director present Denise Pease flowers and a gift card for her years of volunteer dedication to the Chapter.



Because this month we celebrate the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday, I wanted to share one of my favorite quotes from Dr. King that I think is apropos for our community as a Veteran Service Organization:

“Everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love.”

May this spirit of humility and service guide us as we continue to maintain and grow our Chapter throughout this year.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director



Honor Flight

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to see me off. As we left Logan Airport, the Capt. Came on over the intercom and welcomed everyone home.

I believe that we had 78 veterans on board. Our flight was about one and a half hours long. We landed at Baltimore

Airport and again we were welcomed by crowds of people all waving the Ameri-

can flags. We were taken to greyhound busses for our 45-minute ride to Washing ton DC. We visited the WW11, Korean, Viet Nam, USAF, Marine memorials. We also visited the Tomb of the unknown soldier and watched the changing of the guards. Also went to Washington memorial and Lincoln. As we returned to the busses after a full day of sightseeing, I would bring home a life time of memories of an unforgettable day

I would bring home a life time of memories of an unforgettable day and new friends.



John Melvin with Honor Flight Volunteer Steve on the Honor Flight plane. Sitting behind them is John's best friend Jack Stacy and his son.



John with his wife Rebecca & daughter Heather with Honor flight volunteer Steve.

and new friends. Before getting to the Baltimore Airport, we were given a sit-down dinner at the Sheraton hotel. After dinner we returned to the airport for our flight home.

Again, there was a sea of people waiting for us, music was playing proud to be an American. We soon loaded back on the plane for our trip back to Boston. I want to thank Joe Byron the founder of Honor Flight New England, Sheila Peters, and all the staff for a day I know that I will never forget.



Best friends John Melvin & Jack Stacy together in Washington DC.

From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President

Happy New Year to all NEPVA members! I hope you all had a very healthy and happy holiday season and are looking forward to new opportunities in 2023.

Our Chapter Office is busy planning events and activities for our NEPVA membership. I'm happy to share a few updates below, and ask you to please reach out and let us know if there are any other programming activities you would like to see in 2023 or any issues you are experiencing that our Chapter may be able to assist with. We are here to serve you and create a vibrant and diverse community of veterans!

I'm also pleased to announce a few opportunities for NEPVA members to become involved in the Chapter. **We are currently looking to fill the following roles: Assistant Sports Director and members of the Board of Directors. If you are interested in joining a dynamic group of people, committed to serving our fellow veterans, please reach out to Executive Director Mark Murphy (mmurphy@pvanewengland.org).** Please know past experience is not required, only a strong commitment to serving our Chapter! We would particularly love to welcome more women veterans to leadership positions. Please consider joining our leadership team!

Winter Sports Clinic

The 25th annual adaptive Winter Sports Clinic occurred on January 9-13 at Mount Sunapee. I was reminded that this is the longest-running but also the second-largest in the United States. Due to COVID I was unfortunately unable to attend. I was happy but not surprised to hear that it was another successful event for veterans throughout New England!

Advocacy/Legislative seminar in Washington, D.C. next month

Preparations are underway for our Chapter to attend the annual Advocacy/Legislative seminar in Washington, D.C. next month. I'm personally thrilled that the seminar is in-person again, and am eager to join our team advocating

on Capitol Hill. This year our Chapter Delegation will include myself, Chuck Houle, Kristen McCone Gordon, and Mark Murphy. We will be breaking into two teams to ensure we are able to meet with Representatives throughout New England. Special thanks to Chuck and Eileen Houle for joining our team and continuing to represent the Board of Directors before Congress!



Please be on the lookout for more information from Kristen McCone Gordon, our Director of Government and Community Affairs. Kristen is building a strong group of advocates and is looking for more members to join her team. Please know that previous experience is not required or even expected. All are welcome, and all will have an opportunity to make a difference for our Chapter. Please contact Kristen (kristen@pvanewengland.org) if you are interested in learning more!

Chapter President Office Hours

In an effort to get a better sense of the issues and needs impacting our membership, I'll be hosting Chapter President Office Hours every Thursday from 1pm-3pm. There is no formal agenda, please don't feel like you need a specific reason to join, this is just an opportunity to speak directly with our members to hear what is happening in your lives and how the Chapter can best support you. So please, join me for a cup of coffee and conversation!

Our team is also happy to set-up a zoom link for any member out of state or unable to travel to the office.

Please consider stopping by, or zooming in, to tell me how you've been and what the Chapter can do for you!

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson

Government Relations Report

Kristen McCone Gordon
Director of Government and Community Affairs

Dear Members,

Happy New Year!

I'm happy to share this month's updates with you. As always, please reach out with questions, concerns, and ideas. We have a busy new year ahead of us and I look forward to working with you to advocate for the needs and rights of paralyzed veterans.

Best,
Kristen McCone Gordon
Director of Government and Community Affairs



Congress Passes The Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022

We are thrilled to announce that Congress passed the Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022!

Now signed by the President, this legislation authorizes the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to provide an additional automobile allowance immediately to eligible veterans if 30 years have elapsed since the date they received their first automobile grant. Over time, the period would shorten to 10 years. While we wish the final bill that passed provided more immediate relief to all veterans, this is undoubtedly a very positive outcome as the previous law only allowed veterans to receive a single grant once over the course of their lifetime.

The legislation also changes the definition of "medical services," to include certain vehicle modifications like van lifts, which are offered through VA's Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) program. This will help ensure veterans with non-service-connected illnesses and injuries continue to receive help through the AAE program. Additionally, non-articulating trailers designed to transport powered wheelchairs, powered scooters, or other similar mobility devices will now be designated as adaptive equipment.

We were happy to see that this legislation includes provisions from the House passed H.R. 3304, the AUTO for Veterans Act, which has been a priority of our Chapter for several years.

Senator Susan Collins, the co-author of the senate version, has remarked that NEPVA member Neal Williams was the inspiration behind her filing the original legislation. The Senator wrote in a recent press release:

"Neal Williams, a disabled veteran in Shirley, Maine, has had to purchase several adaptive vehicles since 1999, with each one lasting more than 250,000 miles. A new van costs well over \$50,000, which is more than he paid for his home. Neal was the inspiration behind the AUTO for Veterans Act, and this important step will help those like Neal who have served our nation so honorably and sacrificed so much for our freedom."

Our Chapter thanks Neal and all of our NEPVA members who contacted their Representatives on this issue. Your voice helped garner significant support from the New England Congressional Delegation and impacted the lives of paralyzed veterans throughout the country.

For more information on how The Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022 will improve the lives of paralyzed veterans, please read National PVA's press release, which includes a statement from Executive Director Carl Blake. <https://pva.org/.../pva-applauds-congress-for-passing.../>.

Dates announced for the 2023 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar—Pushing Access Forward

The 2023 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar will be held in person in Washington, DC on February 27th – March 2nd. This is the first time since 2020 that Chapters have been able to bring delegations to the Capital to meet in-person with Members of Congress and their staff. We are thrilled to have this opportunity again and are looking forward to a busy, and very productive week.

I will be joined this year by Chapter President Brad Carlson, Executive Director Mark Murphy, and Director and MS Chapter Lead, Chuck Houle. We'll spend the first two days in D.C. in training, learning the details of PVA's legislative agenda and determining which issues most impact our members in New England. We will then lobby the New England Congressional Delegation, urging their support of the issues affecting their constituents.

While we are limited in the number of people who can travel to D.C., there will be opportunities for interested NEPVA members to participate over zoom. **If you are interested in joining the Advocacy/Legislative Seminar via zoom to receive training on our legislative priorities, please contact me ASAP at kristen@pvanewengland.org.** Please know that I lobby congressional offices year-round, so there will be more opportunities to meet with members of Congress and their staff. Please contact me and let me know if you are interested in joining our advocacy team!

In the meantime, to learn more about all of PVA's legislative priorities and help push more important legislation forward, join PVAction Force today and show your support at PVA.org.

NEPVA out in the Community

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, our Chapter is enjoying being more out and about in the community! This month Chapter President Brad Carlson and Director Mike Moran represented the Chapter at the Winter Sports Clinic in Mr. Sunapee, New Hampshire. Next month, Chapter leadership and/or staff will attend the Empire Games in Lake Placid, the AD/LEG seminar in Washington, D.C., among other local events as well.



Please follow our Facebook page

(Paralyzed Veterans of America, New England Chapter) for information on events for veterans throughout New England. A huge thank you to our amazing social media coordinators, Kathy Carlson and Holly Warshaw, for their work sharing events for our members! Please let us know if there are events in your area!

Kristen McCone Gordon, NEPVA Government Relations Director presents Kathy Carlson a bouquet and gift card for her volunteer work for NEPVA.



Silver Anniversary at Winter Sports Clinic

by Mike Guilbault

This year was the 25th annual Winter Sports Clinic for Disabled Veterans hosted by NEHSA and Mount Sunapee, January 9-13. We arrived at the Hilton Garden Inn in Lebanon, NH to register, get COVID tested and had the opportunity to play Sled Hockey with the ice vets. During registration participants were informed of their ski schedules and the alternate activities, which included; hockey, pool kayaking, cardio drumming, rowing and pickleball. The Opening Ceremonies conducted by Matt Edwards, Chief of CDCE were held on Monday evening. We were treated to a great meal and the Team Guidons were passed out followed by the team meetings.

Despite a very warm start to winter there was great snow coverage thanks

...the Winter Sports Clinic is a life changing week. We get people out of their comfort zone and doing things they thought they never would be able to do again...

to some wonderful snowmaking at Mount Sunapee. Tuesday all the activities began, with groups of skier participating in morning or afternoon sessions. Breakfast started at 06:00 each day, the food was delicious and there was a great variety. Those skiing mornings loaded up on the bus to the mountain, while afternoon skiers were able to eat a little later and participate in alternate activities. Everyone met at the ski lodge for lunch and then the morning skiers had the opportunity to try alternate activities later in the day. The same routine was continued each day until Thursday, the last day of skiing and activities.

The closing ceremonies were held Thursday night and again hosted by Matt Edwards along with another great meal. The teams returned the

guidons and the Awards were then given out. Since we had a bunch of first timers this year, besides

Richard Smith winning Rookie of the Year, two other first time participants also won Awards. Mike Shepard who does Recreation Therapy with Jenn Stark at the White River Junction VA was the first rookie to ever win the Top Gun Award and Rob Sanchas also took home the Human Snow Plow Award. Then there were the other Awards given to participants that were not rookies! Stephen McCarthy won the Blood, Sweat and Tears Award, Deb Kew won the Veteran's Choice Award, Ed Dusick won the Most Dangerous Award, Tina Lavallee the Phoenix Award and I was honored and humbled to win the Tony Santilli Founders Award. I'm sure not many people would believe I could be speechless, but I was,



CT member Ed Dusick, Most Dangerous winner still skiing his Flag ski.



Many veterans enjoyed playing sled hockey with the Ice Vets on Monday.

probably since I was afraid if I said anything besides Thank You I'd have ended up crying!

This was the 25th anniversary since Tony and Ralph Marche co-founded the event and it was I who Ralph contacted to get participants to attend the first Clinic, where we only had 11 participants. We now need to cap the event at 50 participants and have a waiting list. It shows the benefits of the event and how it has grown throughout the disabled veterans community. I am the only participant who has attended all 25 so I did feel deserving of the award, and it being at the 25th Anniversary it was great timing and is very special to me.

I mentioned all the new rookies this year, we get multiple rookies each year; yet, we stay within our 50 maximum participants. Well we have gone over a few times, 53 and the maximum ever was 57 if I recall. The thing is the Winter Sports Clinic is a life changing week. We get people out of their comfort zone and doing things they thought they never would be able to do again and also they

attempt new things they may have never even heard of. I know I wasn't aware there was such a thing as Cardio Drumming but will tell you it was a big hit and many loved it.

As one of the independent skiers, or a Wing Ding as our team is named I get to ski mornings and afternoons; therefore, I don't get to try many alternate activities. I did take Thursday afternoon off to try pickleball which is the fastest growing sport in the country, both for the disabled and able bodied players. Like tennis it's a sport where a wheelchair user can play against an able bodied player. I get two bounces while they get one just as in tennis. I understand why it is growing so fast, what a fun game to play!

One of the reasons we don't have 100 participants after all these years relates to what I mentioned previously. Well some people find they can't tolerate the cold and skiing is not for them, they prefer to go to the Caribbean than the slopes in January. Some move away or just reach an age they no longer care to ski. More important is how we get people out of their comfort zone and

trying new things. This really boosts their confidence and the goal is that they will continue to do so when they return home. I know that's the case with many past participants, Major Anthony Smith became a grand master and now teaches Martial arts and has multiple schools. Christy Gardner became very involved in sled hockey and even made Team USA for the Paralympics, sadly we sent the mens team but not the womens. Many that know Christy also know Moxie, the amazing service dog she had. Now Christy is running a service dog training school and that keeps her

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CT member Tom Ferland does some stand up skiing



RI member Roland Fillion showing off in his Dynamique ski.



Mike Guilbault skis with Lou Peroni, his Instructor at the very first WSC who has also been to all 25 years!

One thing that many veterans, whether able-bodied or disabled may agree upon is that sports helped them, mentally, physically, emotionally. This seems to be especially true for veterans who have become disabled either by losing a limb or becoming wheelchair bound.

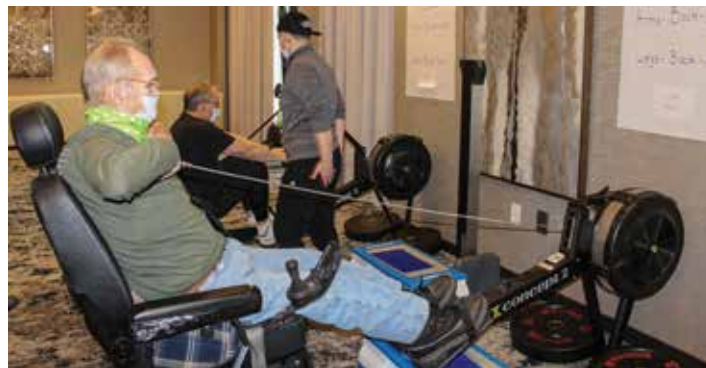
from returning. There's Greg 'Hollywood' Reynolds who went on to play for the USA Amputee Softball Team which has him busy traveling all over and also mentoring other young amputees. I can't imagine only having one hand to tie my shoes; yet, he does it daily and teaches youngsters how to do it as well. I could go on but you get the picture, it is a life changing event and some do go home, try new things and are so successful they can't come back again. That's a good thing both for them and the rookies they make room for.

Now that I've written about all the benefits of attending the Clinic you may want to consider checking it out. Don't think you can't do it, the folks at NEHSA can get anyone out on the hill. We have even had an elderly gentleman on a ventilator riding a sit ski down the mountain. If one can't do it on their own the Instructors are incredible and will go hands on and just give you a ride down the mountain. My friend and former NEPVA Board Member, the late John Brako had no trunk or hand function but he came every year and got the same instructor that would ski fast and bring him down trails only the best skiers can navigate. John, would just put his arms out like he was a bird flying and you couldn't wipe the smile off his face all week.

John, would just put his arms out like he was a bird flying and you couldn't wipe the smile off his face all week.



Top Gun Michael Shepard skied with Clinic Co-Founder Ralph Marche and Maura Nee.



A veteran tries the rowing, another new alternate activity.



John Bacon shows his form that won him the Most Improved Award.



Wing Ding Team Leader Elizabeth Koch Mossii takes a nice selfie with Wing Ding Ed Dusick.

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- David Silva
- Carly Bascom
- Elizabeth Mossi
- Meg McLaughlin
- Kelly Costa
- Kelly Cossaboom

WINTER SPORTS CLINIC AWARDS

Award Name	Recipient:
Human Snow Plow	Robert Sanchas
Rookie of the Year	Richard Smith
Most Improved	John Bacon
Top Gun	Michael Shepard
Most Dangerous	Edward Dusick
Blood, Sweat, and Tears	Stephen McCarthy
Support Award	Anne Hewitt
Veteran's Choice	Debra Kew
The Ralph Marche Leadership Award	N/A
Jim Koss (Give Me a chance I'll make you proud)	Carlos Lopes
Ken Medeiros Phoenix Award	Tina Lavallee
Donald Cantlin Best Instructor Award	Steve and Rhina Carroll
Tony Santilli Founder's Award	Michael Guilbault



Cardio drumming another new alternate activity held at the hotel.



Ken Medeiros Phoenix Award winner Tina Depointe Lavallee does some kayaking.

www.pvanewengland.org



Blood, Sweat and Tears Award winner Steve McCarthy hits a nice back-hand in pickleball.



2022-2023 ANNUAL CALENDAR



PVA BASS TOURNAMENT SERIES

Mid-America Bass Tournament
September 16-18, 2022
Eufaula, OK

Vaughan Bass Tournament
October 7-9, 2022
Rend Lake, IL

Southeastern Bass Tournament
September 30-October 2, 2022
Evans, GA

**Florida Gulf Coast Bass
Tournament**
March 24-26, 2023
Kissimmee, FL

**Kentucky-Indiana Bass
Tournament**
April 21-23, 2023
Kuttawa, KY

Mid-Atlantic Bass Tournament
June 2-4, 2023
Hopewell, VA

Capital Clash Bass Tournament
June 9-11, 2023
Waldorf, MD

PVA BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT SERIES

Mid-South Billiards Tournament
October 28-29, 2022
Memphis, TN

**Mid-Atlantic Billiards
Tournament**
March 17-19, 2023
Richmond, VA

**Mid-America Billiards
Tournament**
June 16-18, 2023
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Buckeye Billiards Tournament
June 24-26, 2023
Columbus, OH

AIR RIFLE & PISTOL PROGRAM

National Postal Matches
November 2022 – March 2023

Wisconsin Air Gun
March 11-12, 2023
Milwaukee, WI

*Additional in-person events
coming soon!*

PVA BOWLING TOURNAMENT SERIES

**Great Plains Bowling
Tournament**
July 28-31, 2022
Council Bluffs, IA

**Mid-Atlantic Bowling
Tournament**
September 9-11, 2022
Richmond, VA

Nevada Bowling Tournament
December 2-5, 2022
Las Vegas, NV

**Florida Gulf Coast Bowling
Tournament**
February 23-25, 2023, Tampa,
FL

**Mid-America Bowling
Tournament**
March 31 – April 3, 2023
Oklahoma City, OK

PVA NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS CIRCUIT

North Central Trapshoot
September 9-11, 2022
Sioux Falls, SD

Oregon Trapshoot
September 23-25, 2022,
Oregon

Wisconsin Trapshoot, May
19-21, 2023, Green Bay, WI

Cal-Diego Trapshoot
March 17-19, 2023
Redlands, CA

Nevada Trapshoot
March 31-April 2, 2023
Las Vegas, NV

Vaughan Trapshoot
May 26-28, 2023
Elburn, IL

Iowa Shooting Trapshoot *
June 16-18, 2023
Cedar Rapids, IA
**Year-End Tournament*

BOCCIA

**New England Boccia
Tournament**
November 5-6, 2022
West Roxbury, MA

**West Virginia Boccia
Tournament**
December 3-4, 2022
Charleston, WV

Bayou Boccia Tournament
February 3-5, 2023
Gulfport, MS

Gateway Boccia Tournament
March 17-19, 2023
St. Louis, MO

HANDCYCLING

**Echelon Racing League Virtual
Paracycling Series (Online)**
November 2022 -February 2023

**PVA High Performance
Off-Road HC Camp**
August 13-18, 2022
Crested Butte, Colorado

**Off-Road Handcycling
Championships**
August 19-21, 2022
Crested Butte, Colorado

Pocahontas Off-Road Camp
September 29 – October 2, 2022
Chesterfield, VA

Tampa VA Handcycling Clinic
January 21, 2023
Tampa, FL

PVA High Performance Camp
January 30 – February 3, 2023
Brooksville, FL

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS

**PVA – NWBA Lakeshore
Basketball Camp**
August 4-7, 2022
Birmingham, AL

Bay Area & Western Disc Golf
August 19-20, 2022
San Jose, CA

New England Disc Golf Clinic
September 10, 2022
Ft. Devens, MA

PVA Rugby Clinic
September 16-18, 2022
Phoenix, AZ

New England Basketball Camp
September 23-26, 2022
New Haven, CT

**PVA Wheelchair Rugby
Invitational**
February
New Haven, CT

NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES



July 4-9, 2023
Portland, Oregon

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER FOR AN EVENT: PVA.ORG/ADAPTIVE-SPORTS

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It's Official – Para Bowling Team 2023

By Debra A. Freed

It amazes me that we are already in 2023! What amazes me more is the various changes that have come through, especially in my life. I am exceedingly grateful that they have all been for the better.

In 2021, I tried out for para-cycling. I promise, my nickname is the Turtle for a reason when it comes to that sport. I enjoy it. I can still do handcycling, which is good exercise but racing – not for this Turtle. So, what else is there? Also in 2021, I took up air-pistol on the recommendations of a couple of fellow handcyclists who also shoot air-rifle. And bowling was slowly being allowed to return in person.

Because of Covid-19, there were not a lot of opportunities to go anywhere, do anything, be with people, etc. I had learned that bowling and para-bowling are officially Olympic and Paralympic sports. WOW! United States Bowling Congress (USBC) would invite 2 women and 2 men to participate in the first ever world competition of para-bowling - first ever

Para World Cup Bowling event in Dubai, UAE. This was in conjunction with the current World Cup of bowling taking place as well. To my surprise, I came home with three medals.

Rolling into 2022, USBC would require a new application process for Para-Team 2022, of which I applied and again was accepted. The 2022 trip would have been to Queensland, Australia. Australia has always been a bucket list item. However, it was not to be, not because of illness or injury, but it just didn't happen. So, USBC found a way to make it up to the para-team by hosting friendship matches with the best able-bodied bowlers at the recent USA Team Trials and then making their selection for Para-Team USA! I apologize for not mentioning two people who deserve a great deal of credit for putting together this event – Mike Spridco (Senior Director – Rules & Compliance & our Dubai coach and Ms. Kendra Cameron-Curry, Program Director – High Performance. Ms. Kendra was also a long time Team USA member until her retirement in 2021.

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The trials were held in Las Vegas, NV at the Gold Coast Resort & Casino. Who knew that bowling was truly such a big sport in Vegas? There are several hotels that have large bowling alleys – Sunset Station and now we learn of Gold Coast – it has 70 ten-pin lanes.

There were four women – Ms. Stacey Clower, Ms. Jennifer Hooten, Ms. Toodie Perry and myself. There were four fellows: Mr. George Holscher, Mr. Eddy Hutchens, Mr. David Nelson, and Mr. Mark Shepard. We were then teamed up with one of the top female and male TEAM USA bowlers and a great coach.

The team I was on consisted of Mark Shepard, Mr. Kristopher Prather, Ms. Shannon O’Keefe, myself and our coach was none other than former Olympian and recently retired Kelly Kulick. We would bowl Baker Style. If you are not familiar with Baker Style, it is a rotation process - each person bowls only two times unless they are the co-anchor or anchor. So, the first game, I was made anchor – not where I would have put me. However, I am proud to say that even though my first two frames were far from stellar, my last frame I threw three balls – an 8 /Spare and my final ball was a strike, which helped us finish Game one in 2nd place out of 4 teams. The next game I only has to bowl twice and we held on to 2nd place. Unfortunately, I lost my focus and the team ended up in 3rd place, which put us out of the running for 1st or 2nd. That was okay because we all ended up winners. How can I say that?

Para-bowling has been around for over 60 years (check out American Wheelchair Bowling Association’s website (AWBA.org). For bowling to finally make the National and International stage is a tremendous achievement and to be part of its beginnings, I am very humbled and proud to be one of the “poster-children” to move this sport forward. While our bowling was limited, we were able to watch first hand some of the best in the U.S. compete, from Amateur to Juniors to Professional. They were simply amazing. We also learned a lot watching them. Unfortunately, I cannot throw nearly as fast as they can but I can do okay with my speed and working on when to throw the ball.

Saturday evening, after the Amateur and Junior roll-offs were done, there was a huge presentation. This was for the selection of TEAM USA from Juniors on up. The Junior Men and Women were chosen, then Para-Team USA were selected and all 8 of us made it. During the weekend I had heard comments like, well, you were chosen because they need women on the team. Not So Fast! As stated earlier there was a publicized open application process. I know for a fact there are over 30 wheelchair women bowlers who bowl at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (where I got my start in bowling & the New England Chapter’s bowling league), not to mention a number of women bowlers we see at various para-bowling events throughout the U.S. so they are out there. Finally, Team USA Women and Men were chosen.

Many of you also know that I am a competition air-pistol shooter hoping to make Team USA in air pistol and perhaps another pistol event. So, I started looking at my schedule for 2023. With new information it seems I will be traveling every month whether for bowling, air pistol or maybe both in 2023, some of it internationally.

That being said, I chose to resign from the Board of Directors for the New England Chapter. I hope to remain an active member and participate as best I can when I can, but my goals and aspirations are to represent my country on the National and International stage again.



Mark Shepard, Mr. Kristopher Prather, Ms. Shannon O’Keefe, myself and our coach was none other than former Olympian and recently retired Kelly Kulick.

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We have a bunch of programs in the works for spring and summer. Stay tuned to the website and the CordWord for more info on our upcoming programs.