

## NEPVA launches Veterans with MS Program

By Kristen McCone Gordon and Chuck Houle

In 2022, PVA expanded its membership eligibility bylaws to welcome all Veterans with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), which now accounts for 1 in 4 of all PVA members. Our national organization is committed to serving as a resource for veterans with MS as they navigate the ins and outs of living with the disease. Additionally, PVA service officers are trained in securing unique MS benefits from the VA and ensuring quality care for our veterans. PVA can also connect members with MS to resources outside of PVA - we have strong partnerships with prominent MS organizations such as the [National Multiple Sclerosis Society](#) and the [VA's Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence](#).

At the Chapter level, we are thrilled to launch our own program specifically for veterans in New England living with MS.

We seek to be a source of information at the local level, sharing information and advocating for your needs. We also want to build a strong community for our fellow veterans with MS in every New England state.

Our Chapter will be hosting events specific to our members with MS, geared to your interests and abilities. We are also planning informational sessions with service officers, so you have opportunities to ask them questions regarding your care and benefits.

.....  
*...we are thrilled to launch our own program specifically for veterans in New England living with MS.*  
 .....

**Above all else, we want you to know that NEPVA is here for you. Please consider joining us at our inaugural event, in partnership with Home Base, at the Cape Cod Curling Club on Sunday, April 2nd. Please contact Kristen McCone Gordon at [kristen@pvanewengland.org](mailto:kristen@pvanewengland.org) with any questions about the event or our new Veterans with MS program.**

### HIGHLIGHTS

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### BASS TRAIL CELEBRATES 25 YEARS



### CURL WITH US

NEPVA is proud to partner with Home Base on an exciting event to kick off our new Veterans with MS program! This event is open to all veterans, but those with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) are especially encouraged to attend! See the information on pages 4 & 9 and don't hesitate to register – spots will fill up quickly!



THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO MADE VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS ISSUE

John Melvin, Bowling story
Mike Guillbault, Bass Trail story
Harley Freedman, Bass Trail photos



A great group of volunteers at the New England Sportsmans Show promoting the NEPVA Bass Trail. Tony Rinaldi, Tom Blanchard, Lori Chase, Ray (Hunter) Brunelle, Jim Bateman, Mark Fournier, Kathy Carlson, Brad Carlson and Jim Wallack.

NEPVA ADMINISTRATION

New England PVA Officers

President, Brad Carlson
Acting Vice President, Mark Sanders
Acting Secretary, Mike Moran
Treasurer, Vacant

Executive Board

Chuck Houle
Mike Moran
Mark Sanders
Dan Shaul

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Director of Government and Community Affairs, Kristen McCone Gordon
Admin/Accounting, Jerry Cole
Office Volunteer, Denise Pease

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Community Outreach, Mark Sanders
Development Director, Vacant
Membership Officer, Vacant
MS/ALS Liaison, Chuck Houle
Peer Mentor Rep., Mark Sanders
Scholarship Chairman, Vacant
Sports Director, Brad Carlson
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Manchester, NH VAMC, Mike Moran
West Haven, CT VAMC, Ed Dusick
White River Jct, VT VAMC, Chuck Houle
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Executive Director's Report

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

Dear Friends,

As I mentioned in my January CordWord article, at the end of this month myself and other members of our New England Chapter delegation will be attending the Annual PVA Advocacy and Legislation Seminar in Washington DC from February 26th - March 3rd. The first 2 days of the week include training on the relevant legislative issues that PVA has identified in this new Congress, and for the rest of the week we will head to Capitol Hill to meet with various members of Congress and their staff's from throughout the New England region. Kristen has done great work in getting these meetings scheduled, and I am sure we will have much to share when we return as it regards our advocacy efforts. I will provide a comprehensive update on the Seminar in my Cord-Word article next month, as I am sure Kristen and Brad will as well.

Over the past month we have had several impactful meetings and activities that have been important for our Chapter. In mid-January Chapter President Brad Carlson and I met with a representative from Maxim Healthcare Services. At Maxim, their priority is to provide care for their patients and their families, and they have a team of nurses, therapists, and home health aids to help patients of all ages maintain their quality of life. They are doing really great work in this space, and I am mentioning it here in case any of our members might benefit from their services. If you would like to learn more feel free to contact me directly or visit their website at Maxim Healthcare | Home Healthcare Services.

At the end of January Brad and I also met with 2 representatives from the West Haven, Connecticut Parks & Recreation team. We talked about working with them in the future and hopefully gathering

interested veterans and our own members down in their area who would like to participate in their incredible Adaptive Sports Program. They also mentioned the possibility of setting up a track meet and/or powerlifting meet, which could be very interesting and new. We look forward to maintaining a positive relationship with them moving forward and partnering together for future adaptive sports and recreation events. Speaking of sports, and as many of you know, we no longer have our sports insurance provided through PVA National. I have been working over the past several weeks with Move United (moveunitedsport.org) so that can be finally added to their group insurance. This has been a long time coming and an extensive process, but I am happy to report that things are moving forward nicely. It may seem hard to believe, but the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is only 5 short months away!

We have lots of things happening now throughout our Chapter, but I think that about covers it for now. Until next month, I hope you and your families stay safe, warm, and healthy as we (hopefully) move into the Spring season very soon!

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director





SUNDAY, APRIL 2ND AT 10 AM, 1 PM, AND 3 PM

# CURLING WITH HOME BASE AND THE NEPVA

Sign up online at <https://forms.office.com/r/X2zHkX1gVZ>,  
by scanning the QR code, or emailing [mghadventureseries@partners.org](mailto:mghadventureseries@partners.org)

ARE YOU A VETERAN LOOKING TO  
LEARN A NEW SPORT? BUILD  
CAMARADERIE AND CONFIDENCE ON THE  
ICE WITH A LEARN-TO-CURL LESSON!

*This is a veterans-only event; those with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) are especially encouraged to attend.*



## From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson  
NEPVA President

I hope this note finds you well as we are moving along in 2023. As the weather gets warmer, we are looking forward to a myriad of activities coming up this Spring and Summer. We certainly have a lot of fantastic new and recurring events on the horizon.



### PVA Annual Advocacy/Legislative Seminar

In that vein, and as I shared with you last month, my wife Kathy and I will be attending the PVA Annual Advocacy and Legislative Seminar in Washington, D.C. from February 26<sup>th</sup> to March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Joining us will be Board member Chuck Houle and his wife Eileen, Government Relations/Community Relations Director Kristen McCone Gordon, and Chapter Executive Director Mark Murphy. I am happy to report that we currently have 16 meetings scheduled on Capitol Hill with congressional offices spanning just about all the New England region. I will update you on the highlights of the week and our meetings in my article next month, and I am sure we will advocate compelling on behalf of our Chapter and all our members in New England. There are several important issues that PVA is focusing on legislatively in this congressional cycle, so our trip is crucial as we continue to make a real impact both locally and nationally in our award winning our Government Relations program.

### Annual Chapter Banquet – Save the Date!

I am delighted to share that in consultation with our Board of Directors, we have decided to host our annual banquet a little bit differently this year. Instead of a very formal gathering, we will be hosting an informal outdoor summer barbecue on August 6, 2023, at the Italian American Veteran's Post 45 in Marlborough, MA. All members will be invited, and more information and details will be available in the coming weeks and months. This will be a special and fun gathering, so make sure to save the date of August 6<sup>th</sup> on your calendar!

### Chapter President Office Hours

To get a better sense of the issues and needs impacting our membership, I will continue to host my Chapter President office hours every Thursday from 1:00-3:00pm. You can drop by the office during this time to talk to me directly about any of your questions, feedback, and ideas for our Chapter, and if you are not able to attend in-person we are able to set up a phone call or Zoom meeting. I would encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity as I am looking for additional ways to connect with our members. Communication is very important as we continue to grow and maintain our Chapter.

Until next month, I hope you and families continue to stay safe, happy, and healthy.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson  
Chapter President



Many thanks to Lori Chase for all her years of volunteer work on the NEPVA Bass Trail.

# Government Relations Report

Kristen McCone Gordon  
Director of Government and Community Affairs

Dear Members,

It's been a busy and exciting month planning for AD/LEG! Our team is well prepared and eager to meet with members of the New England Congressional Delegation to advocate for your needs. I look forward to sharing our progress – and hopefully a new list of cosponsors – upon our return!

Sincerely,

Kristen McCone Gordon  
Director of Government and Community Affairs



## NEPVA travels to Washington, D.C. to advocate for New England Veterans

The 2023 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar is quickly approaching! As previously mentioned, this is the first time since 2020 that chapters have been able to go into the Capital to meet in-person with members of Congress and their staff. We are well prepared for a busy and very productive week!

Our Chapter Delegation will be breaking into two teams to cover the most ground. I will accompany Chuck and Eileen Houle, while Mark Murphy will staff Brad and Kathy Carlson. We want congressional offices to not only understand our legislative priorities but to hear first-hand from paralyzed veterans and their caregivers about their lived experiences. Our

Chapter deeply values our caregivers, and we are eager to hear how PVA's legislative agenda for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress addresses their unique and specific needs. We are grateful for Kathy Carlson and Eileen

Houle's willingness to travel to D.C. to share their experiences and volunteer for the Chapter. Thank you, Kathy and Eileen!

I look forward to sharing our legislative priorities and recapping our trip in our next edition of the Cord Word. In the

meantime, and as a reminder, please reach out to me at [kristen@pvanewengland.org](mailto:kristen@pvanewengland.org) if you are interested in joining our advocacy team. There are always opportunities to get involved!

*We want congressional offices to not only understand our legislative priorities but to hear first-hand from paralyzed veterans and their caregivers about their lived experiences.*

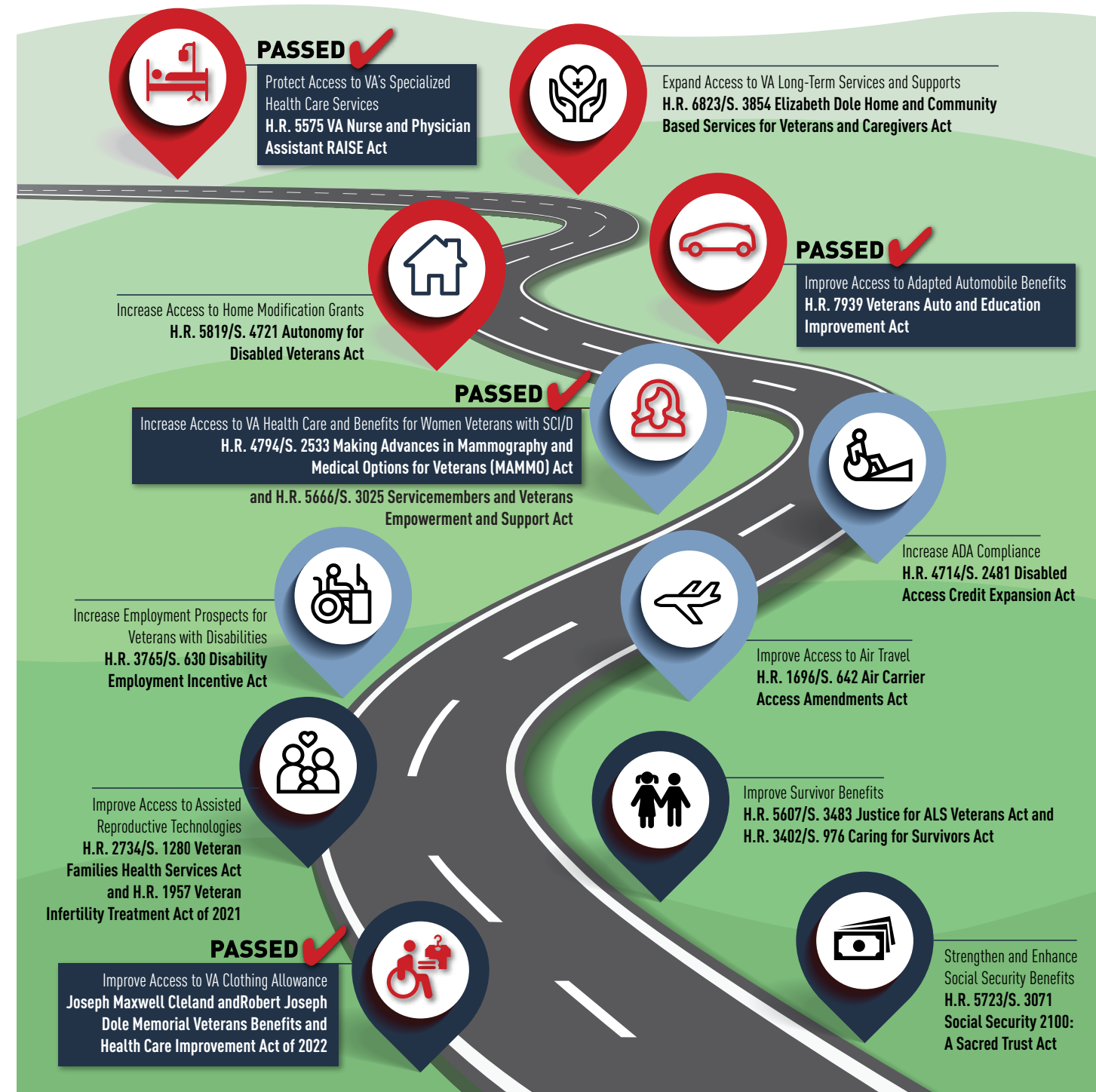
### PVA's legislative success thus far...

NEPVA is proud of our contributions in #pushingaccessforward for our veterans. The graphic on page 7 highlights these accomplishments. We are eager to add more check marks during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress!



# OUR VETERAN JOURNEY

From the bedside to the transition home and beyond, PVA fights for catastrophically disabled veterans, their families and caregivers at every twist and turn along their life journey. PVA advocates before Congress to ensure their claims are filed, their benefits are secured, and that they receive specialized, veteran-centric health care. PVA also works to ensure our members' voices are heard year-round and that they are given equitable access to meaningful careers, adaptive housing and automobile grants, accessible communities, assisted reproductive technologies, and more. And when a veteran has transitioned on, PVA works to ensure their families are taken care of.



## Celebrating the Founders of the Bass Trail

by Mike Guilbault

It is with great sadness I am sharing the news that NEPVA has lost another great partner. Bob “Soupy” Campbell passed away December 6th. The Chapter would like to send our heartfelt thanks and condolences to the Campbell family and all his loved ones.

For those who don't know, Soupy was one of the Co-Founders of the NEPVA Bass Trail from the American Eagle Bass Anglers (AEBA) club in Woburn, MA. The Trail will be entering its 25th year in the 2023 season. The Trail started with a one day Tournament on the Charles River in 1997 after Tiny LaFontaine contacted the Chapter with the idea and asked if we would be interested in getting our members out fishing in a Tournament. Some Chapter members had been traveling to fish in the PVA National Bass

Tournaments. Why not do a local one for those who could not get to the National Tournaments?

I started attending the AEBA meetings in Woburn to observe them plan the event. After the first few years they decided that it would be nice to hold a second Tournament at Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire. We then started holding the 2nd Tournament annually there as well. We were moving to different locations each year when the Trail first started, eventually getting into the locations which now host the Tournaments each year. For years we had a few boats towed in the Halloween Parade in Woburn with Jim Wallack and myself strapped onto the bow throwing candy to the children. That's just one of the ways we started to spread awareness about the Trail.

In order to raise funds we started to attend Sportsman's Shows and also spread the word of the opportunity for any disabled person, not just veterans to join the Tournaments.

The Trail continued to grow as we added Tournaments in CT and Maine! Our goal was to have a Tournament in each one of the 6 New England states. After getting a few held in RI we finally got a Tournament in VT, giving us one in every state that year! The Trail now consists of just 3 Tournaments, Charles River, Lake Winnepesaukee and the last of the season in Maine.



Bob “Soupy” Campbell would often drive his hotrod to the tournaments. Tiny LaFontaine was a great MC when it came time to weigh the fish.



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

This long lasting very successful program would not have been possible without the AEBA club lead by Tiny and Soupy all those years ago. The Trail family is proud to be continuing the program even with the passing of the great men who started it all. Tiny and Soupy are smiling down on us at each event seeing how their vision has turned into a giant family of anglers, boat captains and volunteers carrying on the Trail they started.

One more individual who has been there since our very first Tournament on the Charles is Ray “Hunter” Brunelle, Tiny's best friend and President of the NH Nam Knights motorcycle club. In addition to attending each Tournament and getting the anglers from their wheelchairs into the boats safely, the Knights also send members to assist in fundraising at the Sportsman's shows! They also hold Pizza parties at the Manchester NH VAMC when allowed.

This shows that our most successful programs are only possible due to the contributions of other great partner organizations and their volunteers. Tiny and Soupy may no longer be with us but their dream of a New England Bass Trail of Tournaments lives on each season.

**NEPVA celebrates the 25th Anniversary of the Bass Trail and gives thanks to Soupy, Tiny, the Nam Knights and the AEBA who made it all possible.**



The Nam Knights have been there from the beginning helping disabled anglers on to the boats.

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

### Home Base Adventure Series: Curling with the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America

Are you a veteran looking to learn a new sport? Join Home Base and the New England Paralyzed Veterans Association for learn-to-curl lessons at the Cape Cod Curling Club! Build camaraderie and confidence on the ice with an hour-long lesson and hear what services Home Base and the NEPVA can offer you. We will have lessons throughout the day, please select all time slots that work for you.

Paralyzed Veterans of America, New England Chapter (NEPVA) is a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1947. We have unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members – veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction, including those with MS and ALS. **This is a veteran-only event and though this event is open to all veterans, those with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) are especially encouraged to attend.**

The event will be on **Sunday, April 2nd at the Cape Cod Curling Club, 37 Highfield Drive, Falmouth, MA 02540**. The club is fully wheelchair-accessible and parking is free. Tickets are limited for this event and Home Base will likely run a lottery. **Register by Wednesday, March 15th at 5 pm for a chance to attend!**

**Register today!!!**

## Dear NEPVA MS Members,

My name is Chuck Houle.

I'm a 12-year Army Vet that was diagnosed with this god-awful disease in early 2000. I really had nowhere to turn and did not know of anyone with MS. A good friend (who now happens to be President of the PVA New England Chapter) and I were at a curling event in Denver, CO. We had sat down for supper at the hotel and the dining room was full of folks watching a basketball game, it just happened to be a service officer function. I got a lot of my questions answered and my friend clued me in on who to contact to take care of my needs. Point being - get to know your PVA service officer as they can help you navigate through the questions you may have on disability ratings and navigating the VA system.

*...get to know your PVA service officer as they can help you navigate through the questions you may have on disability ratings and navigating the VA system.*

Please keep your eyes open for upcoming events and opportunities in our Cord Words and on our Facebook page. We have a lot of things coming up for our MS members and I look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

Chuck Houle  
MS Liaison, Board of Directors, New England PVA  
Cell: 802-249-0119  
chuck@pvanewengland.org

## 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



## Meet Pete Demarkis, Sr. National Service Officer

Pete is an Iraq War Veteran, having served with the US Army and Army National Guard from 1999-2007. Shortly after discharge, Pete began working in the Veteran Services field, and has obtained a Masters degree in Mental Health and Veteran Psychology. Over the past 15 years, Pete has continuously and tirelessly served and advocated for the Veteran population and their dependents in VHA and VBA systems' navigation and benefits applications, and has worked in schools, jails, homeless shelters, VA buildings and other government funded housing. Pete is well-versed in all-things-VA and is very passionate about his service and is dedicated to the populations he serves.

“*Having been given the opportunity to serve with PVA has been great, to say the least. I am grateful to be part of a tight-knit community, with some of the most knowledgeable, passionate, and caring Veterans' representatives in the field. I am devoted to my brothers and sisters, I am dedicated to sharing the knowledge that's been shared with me and fighting for what is right, and I'm still driven by the values that were instilled in me during Basic Training: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. I imagine I always will be. I truly believe these same values and passion are at the core of PVA, and I am proud to be part of such a team.*”



Pete has offices in both West Roxbury and Brockton, MA VAMCs and represents Veterans across New England. Pete can be reached using the below contact information.

Pete Demarkis  
Senior National Service Officer  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
1400 VFW Parkway, AG-60  
West Roxbury, MA 02132  
857.203.6091  
peted@pva.org

### PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA – REGIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

#### BOSTON VA REGIONAL OFFICE

Joseph E. Badzmierowski  
Director of Field Services  
J.F.K. Federal Building - Room - 1575 C  
BOSTON, MA 02203  
phone: (617) 303-1395 & 1-800-795-3607  
fax: (617) 303-1396

#### TOGAS, VARO, I VA CENTER

Michael Snape, National Service Officer II  
Bldg. 248, Room 112  
Augusta, ME 04330  
phone: (207) 621-7394 or (866) 795-1911  
fax: (207) 621-4829  
Serving Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont

#### MANHATTAN

Bruce Weston, National Service Officer  
245 W. Houston St., Room 212A  
NY, NY 10014  
phone: (212) 807-3114  
fax: (212) 807-4047  
Serving New York & Connecticut

#### WEST ROXBURY/BROCKTON VAMC

Peter Demarkis, National Service Officer II  
1400 VFW Parkway, Room AG 60  
West Roxbury, MA 02132  
West Roxbury phone: (857) 203-6091  
Brockton Phone: (774) 826-2219  
Serving Massachusetts & Rhode Island

#### BRONX SCI

Amauris Polanco, National Service Officer II  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
James J. Peters VAMC  
130 West Kingsbridge Rd., Room 1D-52A  
Bronx, NY 10468  
phone: (718) 584-9000 ext. 6272

#### SYRACUSE VAMC

Charlie Tocci, East-North Area Manager  
800 Irving Ave., Room C419  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
phone: (315) 425-4400 ext. 53317  
fax: (315) 425-2940  
Serving New York & Western MA



# 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](http://PVA.ORG/ADAPTIVE-SPORTS)

## PVA Nevada Chapter Bowling Tournament

December 2022 in Las Vegas

By John R. Melvin

Hi there! My name is John R. Melvin. I am a U.S. Air Force Vietnam Veteran who became a member of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, New England Chapter several years ago. However, I didn't take up bowling until about July 2021 when I entered my first bowling competition at the Hybrid National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

I never bowled standing up. My wife, Rebecca or better know at Becca bowled Candle-pin. Bowling was never my sport until July 2021. I joined the America Wheelchair Bowling Association (AWBA), one of the oldest wheelchair bowling programs in the U.S. if not the oldest, and joined the Chapter bowling league – NEPVA Rollers.

Since then I have participated in several tournaments. My first tournament was the 61st National AWBA which was held in Las Vegas in late 2021. There are three categories under AWBA. The first is B category where you are basically a new bowler and you get added pointed to equal a minimum of 200. So, when I first started, my average was maybe a 95, add 105 otherwise known as a handicap, then it becomes 200. A Division means one has to have an average score of 126 or a bit better, is still allowed a handicap. However, scratch bowlers are

just that, they are not eligible for a handicap. From that first tournament, I ended up 8 out of 19 B bowlers. Also, at that first tournament, I bowled with friend and bowling partner, Deb Freed, we did the Doubles and Team event. We were amazed to win 3rd place in Team.

I have since bowled in the Mid-America Chapter Tournament, the Florida Gulf Coast Chapter Tournament, and the 62nd National AWBA tournament. Again coming in the top 10 in B – Division.

In December of 2022, the PVA Nevada Chapter held its regular tournament. After the 1st day of bowling I was in 3rd place (we bowled three strings in the morning and another three in the afternoon. I stayed in third place until the 3rd day where we bowled the last string which would move me up to 2nd and then a roll-off. The top five bowlers from their respective divisions would participate in the final event – the Roll Off. The way it works is the 5th place bowls the 4th, whoever wins that game bowls for 3rd, until there are only two left and they bowl for 1st. Being 2nd, I wouldn't bowl for a bit. The competition was pretty intense. I would bowl Ms. Stacy Clowers. Stacy, is on Para



John and Becca Melvin

Team USA hoping to make the brand new Paralympic program.

Stacy was a very good competitor. However, in the end, I would beat Stacy and keep 2nd. Now, I have Mr. Bill Burns who pretty much stayed at #1 the whole Tournament. I would not look at the scores. Being first to bowl allows the

bowler to be the last one to finish. Sometimes this is good, and sometimes, well, not so much. As stated, I would not look at the scores. I had a couple of strikes early on and a couple of spares. In the tenth frame, if we are lucky we get three balls. Bill ended up with a spare allowing him a 3rd ball. However, Bill was tracking scores and came over to congratulate me. That was the first time I looked at my scores. I still needed to finish the 10th frame. My first ball was a strike. My 2nd ball would knock down 9 pins giving me an opportunity for a 3rd and final ball. And I got the

*continued on page 15*



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## bowling

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spare! It was at that point I realized that I had won First place in the B-Division. My wife Becca was first to come over and congratulate me on my win. I never thought in my wildest dreams especially for only bowling a year and five months that I would be in this position.

The best part of bowling with the PVA and AWBA is everyone wants you to become a better bowler and is always giving you tips. Wheelchair bowling is a wonderful opportunity to get exercise, meet new people and travel. My goal is to become an A Division Bowler, get better and become a Scratch bowler. I too want to represent my country once more like Ms. Stacy and Debra are doing now for Para Team USA Bowling.

Thank you to everyone who has helped me to get to this level of bowling. Debra Freed – my usual bowling partner, Maureen Morrison Bohnwagner, PVA New England Bowling Coach and Director who has worked with me



*John Melvin with fellow bowlers, Toodie Perry and Stacey Clowers.*

on my bowling skills and Rob Larson of Boston Bowl in Hanover, MA, is my bowling instructor. Without their help, I would not be bowling at this level. I thank you all.

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## New England Chapter

### 2023 BASS TRAIL DATES

**June 3, Charles River NEPVA Bass  
Tournament at Newton Yacht Club**

**September 8-10, Lake Winnepesaukee  
NEPVA Bass Tournament, Camp Robindel,  
Moultonborough, NH**

**September 29-October 1, Maine Bass  
Tournament, Camp Wavus, Maine**

## The Gaylord Sports Association

**Exercise For Life Discovery Night**  
Thursday, February 23, 2023  
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM  
Gaylord Physical Therapy, Cheshire

**Indoor Adaptive Pickleball Clinic**  
Wednesday, March 1, 2023  
10:30AM - 12:30 PM  
New Horizons Village  
37 Bliss Memorial Rd  
Unionville, CT

**Adaptive Climbing Clinic**  
Saturday, April 1, 2023  
Two Sessions Available:  
1:00 PM - 3:30 PM or  
4:30 PM - 7:00 PM  
Central Rock Gym  
Glastonbury, CT

**Kayak Class**  
Friday, March 17, 2023  
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM  
Flagg Pool  
Gaylord Specialty Healthcare  
Wallingford, CT

**Archery Clinics**  
Tuesday, March 7, 2023  
2:00PM - 3:00PM  
3:00PM - 4:00PM  
All Skill Levels  
Roncari Hall  
Gaylord Specialty  
Healthcare  
Wallingford, CT

**Boccia Open Play**  
Tuesday, March 21, 2023  
2:00 PM - 3:30 PM  
Roncari Hall  
Gaylord Specialty  
Healthcare  
Wallingford, CT

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Winter Series  
Thursdays  
6:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
Feb. 16, Mar. 2,  
Mar. 16, Mar. 30 & Apr. 13  
Roncari Hall at Gaylord in  
Wallingford or virtual via  
ZOOM