

NEPVA is Here for Veterans with MS

NEPVA kicks off the Veterans with MS program with Adaptive Curling Lessons at the Cape Cod Curling Club

The *Veterans with MS* program had a successful inaugural event on April 2nd at the Cape Cod Curling Club in Falmouth, MA! We were so excited to meet veterans and volunteers from across New England at our Learn to Curl sessions. Chapter President Brad Carlson kicked-off each well-attended session by welcoming participants and describing the work that the Chapter does for paralyzed veterans. Brad also announced our new program specifically for veterans with MS, and we were thrilled to gain a few new members from the event. We hope to see you all at our next *Veterans with MS* event!



This event was a partnership with Home Base and the Cape Cod Curling Club. For more information on the free mental health services that Home Base provides eligible veterans, please visit their website at homebase.org.

MS and Service Connection: What you need to know! An informational zoom with PVA's senior national service officer Pete DeMarkis

All NEPVA members with MS are invited to an informational zoom on June 22nd at 10am featuring Senior National Service Officer Pete DeMarkis. Pete and his colleagues are highly skilled at securing benefits for veterans with MS. Co-hosted by Director Chuck Houle, the zoom will include a brief presentation on navigating MS and service connection followed by an informal Q&A with Mr. DeMarkis.

A zoom link will follow soon. In the meantime, please save the date and contact Kristen (kristen@pvanewengland.org) with any questions!

Looking for volunteers to join the Veterans with MS Committee

We are so excited about the launch of our new Veterans with MS program and are committed to providing quality programming for our members. We are looking to form a small committee, composed of NEPVA members with MS, to help advise us on what opportunities and information would be most beneficial to our members. Previous experience is not necessary – just a desire to join an inclusive and motivated group of people committed to serving other veterans with MS and having some fun along the way!

If you are interested in getting involved and hearing more about this opportunity, please contact Kristen McCone Gordon at kristen@pvanewengland.org.



THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO MADE VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS ISSUE

Sandy McAra-Curling Photographs



NEPVA Board Member Mark Sanders sends one at the recent curling clinic held at Cape Cod Curling club. More photos on page 5.

NEPVA

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Executive Director's Report

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

Dear Friends,

The past month has been very busy with many important activities and planning for upcoming events. On April 13th myself and Brad Carlson attended the WooSox Triple-A minor league baseball game in Worcester, MA. Brad was honored on the field as President of our Chapter and National Director to PVA. It was nice for Brad and our Chapter to be recognized, and we received a standing ovation from those in attendance. A special thank you to Kristen McCone Gordon for helping to facilitate this recognition and our attendance at the game.

We have been happy to have Tamara Montgomery start last month as our new Chapter staff accountant. She has been doing great work thus far and has been enormously patient as we have worked through this transition. If you have a need to reach Tamara, feel free to contact her at tamara@pvanewengland.org.

As I have shared previously, I have been putting a more aggressive emphasis on applying for grant funding. I am happy to report that we have received a \$5,000 grant from The Pilot Company. We are very grateful for their support. I have submitted several other grants as well. I will continue to research other grant opportunities out there and will apply for as many as I am able. Our hope is that my focus on development work will grow our fundraising program and help support and sustain our members and the long-term financial viability of our Chapter.

I want to say a word of thanks to some of our Chapter volunteers. PVA National reached out to me recently to let me know that Denise Pease, Lori Chase, and Raymond Brunelle have reached volunteer hour thresholds deserving of a lapel rocker pin. Each of them had between 1,000-2,500+ volunteer hours logged on behalf of the Chapter. Board member and Chapter Vice-President Mark Sanders was also recognized through the Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) program where he reached a threshold of over 1,290 hours of service at the West Roxbury VA. Please join me in congratulating Mark, Denise, Lori, Raymond, and all our Chapter volunteers who so selflessly serve our Chapter and membership. We could not do what we do without their support!

Finally, along with Brad and Kathy Carlson I will be attending the PVA National Convention in Omaha, Nebraska on May 8-14th. I look forward to reporting back next month on any highlights from the Convention.

Sincerely,

Mark



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From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

I hope this message finds you well. There are several issues of important I would like to bring to your attention. It is time for upcoming Chapter elections, so be on the lookout for information coming your way regarding the nominating process. Executive Director Mark Murphy and I visited the Olde Scotland Links golf course in Bridgewater, MA on April 18th for a site visit. This is where we will be hosting our Annual Chapter Golf Tournament on August 28th. Make sure to save the date, and I am excited we are hosting the tournament at this venue as it is a beautiful course and function facility. We will be posting flyers to promote the tournament in the coming weeks and approaching businesses for sponsorships as well.

On Thursday, April 13th myself, my wife Kathy, and Mark Murphy attended the WooSox game. Our Chapter was mentioned and honored on the field, which was really moving. To be recognized in this way was very important as we are always striving to get our Chapter name out there in the community. The game was a lot of fun even though the WooSox sadly lost 15-1!

While it may seem hard to believe, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is less than 3 months away. This years Games will be held in Portland, Oregon from July 4-9th. I will be attending along with several other members of the Chapter and high-level Chapter volunteers. For more information on the Games, please visit www.wheelchairgames.org.

I will be attending the PVA National Convention next month in my capacity as Chapter President and PVA National Director. This year's convention is being held in Omaha, Nebraska. The Annual Convention is a great opportunity to network with other Chapter Presidents, PVA National Directors, PVA staff, and other Chapter staff members. There is also a lot of important PVA business

by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President



that is worked on throughout the week. I will be happy to let you know in my column next month on any action items of importance after the Convention.

As I have said to you previously, myself and our Board of Directors are here to serve you, our members. Always feel free to reach out to me should you need assistance in any way. I hope you are staying safe and healthy as we move into hopefully warmer weather!

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson,
Chapter President and National Director



Above: Veteran curler Brad Carlson gives some pointers to a new wheelchair curler. page 5: Veterans and volunteers from across New England gathered at our Learn to Curl sessions in partnership with Homebase.



photography by Sandy McAra



Government Relations Report

Kristen McCone Gordon
Director of Government and Community Affairs

Dear NEPVA Members,

Our government relations efforts are in full gear following a successful trip to Washington last month. As you know, we had 16 meetings on the Capitol and heard many pledges of support, often directly from the Members of Congress themselves. I'm happy to report that we are off to a strong start, but the bulk of our advocacy work begins now.

One of our Chapter's leading objectives in our government relations program is to secure as many cosponsors as possible on PVA's priority legislation. While we always appreciate positive feedback and conversations with Members of Congress, our biggest measure of success is whether or not the Representative formally pledges their support as a cosponsor on our legislation. During the last congressional session, the number of cosponsors on PVA's priority legislation from the New England Delegation was incredibly high – something we should all be proud of. Since the 118th congressional session started in January, many of our bills have just recently been re-introduced so we need to rebuild our cosponsor list to ensure that the issues impacting our members move through Congress and become law.

I write to you this month with a familiar but urgent plea – please take a few minutes to follow the link below and write to your members of Congress in support of our legislation. We are focused right now on three bills in particular: The Air Carrier Access Amendments Act (H.R. 1267/S. 545), The Elizabeth Dole Act (H.R.542/S. 141), and The Veterans Infertility Treatment Act of 2023 (H.R. 544). This takes only a few minutes but is incredibly effective and helpful to our efforts. Our government relations team continues to brief congressional offices about the intricacies of the legislation, but as you know, hearing directly from a constituent is the most impactful part of the advocacy process.

All of the information you need to contact your Representatives can be found here: <https://www.votervoice.net/PVA/home>. Please take a moment to fill in your information so an automated email in support of these issues will be sent directly to your Representatives in Congress.

I appreciate your support and look forward to updating you as our cosponsor lists grow. In the meantime, if you are interested in joining me during a congressional briefing, please reach out directly at kristen@pvanewengland.org. We are planning visits to congressional district offices this summer and I would love to have as many interested members as possible join me.

With gratitude,

Kristen McCone Gordon



focused
on 3 bills

**The Air Carrier Access
Amendments Act
(H.R. 1267/S. 545)**

**The Elizabeth Dole Act
(H.R.542/S. 141)**

**The Veterans Infertility
Treatment Act of 2023
(H.R. 544)**

**Recommended Reading:
An Article from PVA's Chief of Medical Services, Dr. Stephen Yerkovich**

Looking for a Good Explanation of MS to Provide Others?

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month is a time for everyone to learn more about the neurological disease that currently affects almost one million Americans. About 200 people are diagnosed with MS each week and it is becoming more prevalent every year. It affects all races and nationalities, but is more prevalent in areas further from the equator. Both men and women are impacted, but four times as many women are stricken with MS than men. Despite years of intense research, the cause of MS is still unknown. Risk factors include smoking, stress, low vitamin D levels, inflammation, and obesity.

MS is an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system, the brain, and the spinal cord. With MS, a person's own immune system mistakenly attacks their myelin, the outer protective covering of nerves, the brain and the spinal cord. Myelin enables nerve signals to travel effectively without getting short-circuited like the electrical current in a worn electrical wire. Where and how much myelin is destroyed by the immune system determines the type and severity of symptoms a person will have. As such, people with MS have a wide variety of symptoms. The most common are fatigue, numbness and tingling, loss of balance and dizziness, spasms, tremor, pain, bladder problems, bowel problems, vision problems, loss of strength and mobility, depression, and anxiety.

When someone is suspected of having MS, doctors employ a number of tests to confirm the diagnosis. While there is no specific blood test to diagnose MS, doctors may order blood tests to exclude other diseases that may mimic MS. A spinal tap is often performed to identify antibodies indicative of MS in the cerebral spinal fluid. Evoked potential testing can also be performed to measure abnormalities in nerve transmission seen in MS. Since the widespread use of MRIs, the diagnosis of MS has become more straightforward. Now, in most cases, a diagnosis of MS can be made based on a pattern of symptoms consistent with the disease and MRI changes that confirm it.

There are four types of MS often starting with Clinically Isolated Syndrome (CIS). In CIS, a person has neurologic symptoms that last at least 24 hours and usually either totally or partially resolve. While individuals who develop CIS do not technically have MS, they are at risk of developing the full-blown disease. To delay the progression to MS, these patients are currently treated with disease modifying therapy.

MS is an autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system, the brain, and the spinal cord. With MS, a person's own immune system mistakenly attacks their myelin, the outer protective covering of nerves, the brain and the spinal cord.

The most common form of MS is Relapsing - Remitting MS (RRMS), in which there are attacks followed by remissions. 85% of people with MS are initially diagnosed with this form. Many patients with RRMS will subsequently develop Secondary Progressive MS (SPMS), where the clinical course is relentlessly downhill without any significant remissions. The last type of MS is Primary Progressive MS (PPMS), in which neurologic function progressively worsens from the time of diagnosis.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for MS. However, in recent years more than a dozen Disease Modifying Therapies have been developed that can significantly slow the progression of MS and limit disability. They are particularly successful with RRMS, less so with the progressive forms of the disease. They are available in oral formulations, as well as injectable and infused types. Hopefully, continued research will uncover the cause of MS and a cure will be developed.

Stephen Yerkovich, MD,
Chief of Medical Services, Paralyzed Veterans of America

PVA PRESENTS: A WEBINAR SERIES

The 5 W's



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- ★ *Understanding the Issues and Becoming a Change Agent*
- ★ *Who is Advocating and Who With*
- ★ *The Art of Advocacy*

First session — April 25, 3 pm (EST)

Fundamentals of Government

[Click here to register](#)

For the members who complete the entire series, a GVR certificate of completion will be awarded. *(Something Fancy to show off to your friends)*



Washington Update

PVA Testifies on Improving the Passenger Experience

On March 23, Heather Ansley, Associate Executive Director of Government Relations, and Lee Page, Senior Associate Advocacy Director, testified on Capitol Hill in support of improving access to air travel for passengers with disabilities.

Mr. Page testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation. The hearing addressed what should be included in the next FAA Reauthorization to improve the passenger experience. His testimony was focused on the need for the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act (ACAAA) (H.R. 1267/S. 545), which would improve enforcement and require standards of access. Specifically, the bill would instruct the Secretary of Transportation, in direct consultation with the Access Board, to develop standards of access. One such standard would address allowing a wheelchair user to roll onto an airplane to a designated place where they can lock in and fly from their wheelchair or transfer into an airline seat with their chair being stowed in a closet or in the cargo hold. Airlines would be required to operate aircraft that comply with the standards five years after adoption. The measure would also refer violations of the law to the Department of Justice for further enforcement.

There were many questions from the panel about disability-related concerns. Rep. Hank Johnson (D-GA) spoke about having heard from a constituent that their wheelchair had been mishandled. He wanted to know if better training was needed. Mr. Page noted that the bigger issue is the process required to stow a wheelchair. Rep. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) asked whether higher pay for workers would lead to better service. Mr. Page agreed that it could lead to less staff turnover. Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN), an original ACAA cosponsor, wanted to know what was the one provision that needed to be included in the Reauthorization. Mr. Page testified that access standards are desperately needed.

Over in the Senate, Ms. Ansley testified before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee in a hearing titled, “[Enhancing Consumer Protections and Connectivity in Air Transportation](#).” She testified that although the last FAA Reauthorization allowed the Department of Transportation to assess triple the amount of the allowable fine for wheelchair damage or injury to a passenger with a disability, the Department has yet to assess any fines under this provision. She further testified that despite a significant focus in the last FAA Reauthorization on improving the safety and dignity of passengers with disabilities, the needle has barely moved. In fact, the percentage of wheelchairs and scooters mishandled in 2022 was the same percent as those lost, damaged, or delayed in 2019.

Like Mr. Page, she also gave a strong endorsement for the ACAA. She further noted our support for including provisions in the Reauthorization that would require greater analysis and aggregation of wheelchair mishandling data to look for trends and facilitate development of solutions; improved access to seating accommodations; increased flight options at no additional cost if a passenger’s wheelchair cannot be stowed in a particular aircraft’s cargo hold; and continued research on the technological and economic feasibility of airlines implementing in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems.

In an exchange with ACAA sponsor Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Ms. Ansley noted that airlines have been exempted from access standards that other transportation providers, including Amtrak and Greyhound, have to comply with. She also noted that we have seen no innovation or improvements in the nearly four decades since the law originally passed.

[Please contact your members of Congress and ask them to cosponsor the ACAA](#)

NEPVA honored on the field with a standing O at WooSox game



...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.

Zachary T. Nuetzel is a United States Marine Corps veteran who served from 2013-2017. He served as a tank crewman with 2nd Tank Battalion. Upon leaving active duty, he used his GI Bill to attend college. While in college he served on the board as treasurer or secretary of numerous clubs. He obtained an associate's degree from Suffolk County Community College before transferring to CUNY Queens College to pursue a bachelor's degree. In 2022, he received a degree in Applied Linguistics: TESOL. Zachary has experience working with adolescent mental health disabilities, adaptive sports, immigrant communities, and in schools. After working in underserved communities, Zachary decided to pursue a career in the non-profit sector. As a veteran himself, working with a veteran's service organization was a perfect fit.



"Working with PVA has been an amazing opportunity. I am glad that I have the opportunity to advocate for, and assist, veteran's who have given so much to our nation. I am incredibly grateful to work with a dedicated team of professionals who are always willing to impart their knowledge and help me, and the veteran's we represent, receive the best representation possible. As a Marine veteran myself, I am proud to say that I have the opportunity to continue working with veterans and their families."

Zachary works in Manhattan, at the New York Regional Office. He serves New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He can be reached using the contact information seen below.

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PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA – REGIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

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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



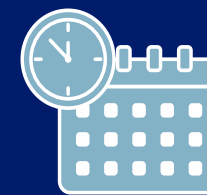
July 4-9, 2023
Portland, Oregon



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REGISTRATION

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Veteran Housing Search Group

HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR VETERAN HOUSEHOLDS

WHO: This group occurs weekly for Veterans looking for information on affordable housing search

WHERE/WHEN:

VA Outpatient Clinic, 251 Causeway St 2nd floor, Boston
AND VVC on Fridays 12PM-1PM Starting 10/14/22

Jamaica Plain VA Medical Center, 3D 122 Mondays
2:00PM-3PM

Brockton VA, Building 7- Room A103 Wednesdays from
1pm-2pm

Contact: Liam Connolly (617) 719-2464
Tony Zelano (617) 435-7557
Peter Obour-Mensah (617) 839-0619

Also: Section 8/HUD-VASH Vouchers Not Needed to Attend.
Non HUD-VASH Applicants are encouraged to Attend.

PVA PRESENTS ON PASSENGERS WITH DISABILITIES' AIR TRAVEL RIGHTS

On March 23, Danica Gonzalves, Advocacy Attorney, presented at the Jacobus tenBroek Disability Law Symposium on the air travel rights of passengers with disabilities and the discrimination they face. The Symposium is considered the leading disability law conference that brings together nationally renowned disability rights advocates to examine issues; explore strategies; and pursue integration, social equality, and personal dignity for individuals with disabilities and the disability rights community. During the presentation, disability rights advocates learned about the turmoil passengers with disabilities experience and how legislation and regulations can improve air travel. Advocates also received vital information on how to enforce passengers with disabilities' rights and hold air carriers accountable by filing complaints, and the importance of the pending laws and rulemaking.

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Email: info@pvanewengland.org

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9:00am-4:30pm



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**

[https://www.pvanewengland.org/activities-
events/adaptive-sports/fishing/](https://www.pvanewengland.org/activities-events/adaptive-sports/fishing/)

Join Us at Our Upcoming Events

August 6, 2023

Annual Chapter Banquet
Italian American War Veterans
Marlboro, MA.

August 28, 2023

Annual Chapter Golf Tournament
Olde Scotland Links
Bridgewater, MA.