

## VA Healthcare Summer Sports Clinic

By Mike Guilbault

On July 24-28 NEPVA members attended the 13th annual VA Healthcare Summer Sports Clinic. Things started with participants and volunteers arriving and registering at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick, RI. With everyone registered we then boarded the buses for the ride to lunch and some golf at the Button Hole Golf Club. They had a few paragolfers that enable wheelchair users to stand and drive balls at the driving range. I have used the paragolf cart many times, so chose to spend my time chipping on to the putting green and putting from my chair. Those who chose were able to walk and play the three hole course. It was a fun afternoon of golf after which we then returned to the hotel for the evenings opening ceremonies.

The Team Captains had contacted all participants prior to the event letting them know which of the four teams they were assigned to. There were the Bears, Foxes, Hawks and Wolves all led by two VA employee team captains. While the dinner was being served we were greeted by Chief of Recreation and CDCE Chief Matt Edwards and then Jenny Vulpis informed us of the planned activities for the week. The Team Guidons were passed out after dinner and locations were picked for the team meetings for us to meet our teammates and learn our schedule for the week.

Tuesday started with breakfast and then teams loaded buses. One group was transported to Newport for sailing with Sail to Prevail at Fort Adams State Park in Newport Harbor, while the other went surfing with AmpSurf at 2nd Beach in Middletown, RI. After lunch at the Sail to Prevail

complex the teams went on to do the other activity they hadn't done in the morning. On Wednesday these two teams then went kayaking and biking while the other two teams made the trip to Newport for sailing and surfing. In the evening we had meals, played some games, socialized in the hotel restaurant and pub or did your own thing. Located close to the Warwick Mall there were plenty of options to go to local clubs if one desired.

Wednesday was the same with breakfast and then loading the buses. My team joined another for the trip to Coventry for biking on the East Bay Bike Path and kayaking on Brickyard Pond. I did morning biking and we again got together for lunch then went on to do the kayaking in the afternoon while the other team did the opposite. We had

*continued on page 8*



### Save the Dates!

**September is going to be Fun!**

**September 8 - Bellingham Shoot**

**September 13 - Shawmee Shoot**

**September 20 - Bass River Shoot**

**September 27 - NEPVA Pizza at building 8**

**September 28 - Seekonk Shoot**



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

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Summer Sports Clinic story

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Sr. & David Conroy Jr.



**Jim Bell of the Italian American War Veterans Post 45 in Marlboro presents Mark Murphy with a donation to NEPVA.**

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**Executive Director's Report**

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe that we only have a few more weeks left of Summer. This has certainly been a busy time of year for all of us at the Chapter, with several events, initiatives, and programs having already happened or being on the horizon. I want to start off by thanking everyone who was able to join us for the Annual Chapter Banquet on August 6<sup>th</sup>. It was a wonderful opportunity for our members to gather in an informal setting to spend time together and celebrate all things New England PVA. The band was amazing, the food was fantastic, and the overall energy throughout the day was strong. A special thank you to everyone who contributed to making the banquet such a success, including Brad and Kathy Carlson, Holly Warshaw, Denise Pease, Kristen McCone Gordon, Tamara Montgomery, and all our supportive friends at the Italian American War Veterans Post in Marlborough.

I am very excited to share that we recently learned that our Chapter will be receiving a \$22,000 grant from the Disabled Veterans National Foundation (DVNF). DVNF

is a charitable organization that provides critically needed support to disabled and at-risk veterans who leave the military wounded (physically or psychologically) after defending our nation's safety and freedom. I had applied for this grant back in May of this year, and we were thrilled to have been recently selected for funding. The grant reviewers were moved by our Chapter's mission and programs, and there is certainly much alignment between their mission and ours. We remain grateful for DVNF's partnership and selecting us for this generous grant.

As I am sure you know by now, on August 28<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting our Annual Chapter Golf Tournament at Olde Scotland Links in Bridgewater, MA. It is shaping up to

be a tremendous day, and a lot of work has gone into making the day a success. This is an opportunity for Chapter members, PVA National leaders, volunteers, friends, and supporters to come together in support of New England PVA. It is also one of our major event fundraisers of the entire year. I look forward to sharing



how the Tournament goes in my column next month.

Finally, I have recently undertaken an extensive project to ensure that we have current and active email addresses for all Chapters members. Over the past month or so I have sent several emails

to our members, and about 25-50 of those were never delivered due to email addresses being either inactive or defunct. If you have not been receiving any emails from me over the past 4 weeks, please email me at [mmurphy@pvanewengland.org](mailto:mmurphy@pvanewengland.org) with your correct email address. We are only able to communicate with you to the extent that we have your current contact information. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy  
Executive Director

## The Pierik Award, 2022 & 2023

- The Nominee has demonstrated leadership, expertise, collaboration and success in providing quality care for Veterans with SCI/D, ALS, MS.
- The Nominee has measurably improved quality patient outcomes and patient safety as a result of his/her practice in direct or indirect patient care of Veterans with SCI/D, ALS, or MS.
- The Nominee's accomplishments have enacted positive change to enhancing care delivery to individuals with SCI/D, ALS, or MS.
- The Nominee is recognized as a role model for their exceptional care delivery to patients and their families.
- The Nominee demonstrates dedicated advocacy to improving the lives of veterans with SCI/D, ALS, and MS and their support systems.



Photos top to bottom:

Nicole Maciulavicius; *Caring, thorough, patient, balances home, school and work at the same time. Makes cupcakes and cheesecakes for the guys. Always there with a smile.*

Sam Koshgarian, (Navy Veteran); *Is always willing to help and takes on much of the units "heavy lifting". Dependable, funny, Very caring. Loved by nursing and patients alike.*

Previous winners who never got recognized due to Covid  
 RYANNE CROYLE (Army Veteran); *Because of lockdowns and Covid, RYANNE was unable to get the recognition she deserves. So glad we are finally able to honor her and all her hard work and years of dedication to the SCI Unit.*

MALIKA ZGHAOUI, was not present  
*Compassionate, empathetic, dependable. She embodies the VA iCARE values and is passionate in the care she provides to each and every one of her patients. Her care is praised often by her coworkers and patients alike.*

## From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson  
 NEPVA President

Dear Friends,

Let me begin by saying how grateful I am for everyone who attended and supported our Annual Chapter Banquet on August 6<sup>th</sup> at the Italian American War Veterans Post 45 in Marlboro. I received such positive feedback from everyone in attendance with the speeches, the food, the band, and how it was such a nice opportunity to bring our Chapter members and supporters together and enjoy each other's company. I am also grateful to everyone for supporting my wife Kathy who had been in the sun a little bit too long and got dehydrated. She was and is okay, and I deeply appreciate everyone who assisted her and me at the banquet. We look forward to another great event next year!

We have been preparing in earnest for our Annual Chapter Golf Tournament at Olde Scotland Links in Bridgewater, MA on Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup>. Tournament registrations have been coming in quickly, and excitement is growing as we get closer and closer to the big day. We look forward to welcoming some of our friends from PVA National who will be in town that week as well. All proceeds from the Tournament supports our Chapter and members.

A major priority for our Board and staff over the past several weeks has been working to conclude our annual audit and relevant reports. Getting this all completed is required to ensure proper financial reporting

and management to both the US government and PVA National, and it takes an incredible amount of time and effort to compile all the proper documentation. A special thank you to Staff Accountant Tamara Montgomery and Executive Director Mark Murphy for their hard work in bringing these annual requirements to completion.

On Thursday, July 20<sup>th</sup> I was delighted to join Kristen McCone Gordon in Boston as we met with the district staff of Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren. The next day, July 21<sup>st</sup>, we went to meet in-person with Senator Jack Reed from Rhode Island. These meetings are so incredibly important as we are always striving to find new ways to connect with our local elected leaders and advocate for the needs of our members. I remain so grateful to our Director of Government Relations and Community Relations Kristen McCone Gordon for her guidance, passion, and professionalism as we prepare for these vital meetings with our elected leaders.

Finally, last month the PVA Medical Services team conducted an in-person site survey at the West Roxbury and Brockton VA facilities. The early feedback we got from the team was

overwhelmingly positive.

One of their major recommendations is that the VA hire more nursing and medical staff. This is something not just particular to us as they have seen this need in their site surveys across the country. We were happy to welcome the PVA Medical Services team to be among us and are delighted they had a productive and well received visit.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson,  
 Chapter President and National Director



*I had the pleasure of joining 99 year old Jackie Martling as he was honored at August 14th WooSox game.*

# Government Relations Report

Kristen McCone Gordon  
Director of Government and Community Affairs

Dear NEPVA Members,

I hope you are all having a fun and relaxing summer. It was so wonderful to see many of you at our Chapter banquet!

I am writing this month with an urgent request for your assistance. National PVA is asking all Chapters to engage in PVAAction Force alerts throughout August. These alerts represent key legislative priorities focused on the unique needs of PVA members. Many of them are also NEPVA priorities as well, issues we have been discussing with our legislators for years, including Improving Access to Air Travel for People with Disabilities.

There have been several important and encouraging updates to this legislation, which you can read about below. We need every NEPVA member to send their legislator an email in support of this issue today. You can send an email by filling in your contact information here: <https://www.votervoice.net/iframes/PVA/Campaigns/102729/Respond>

Time is of the essence with this – we are so close! Please take a moment to contact your legislators today and encourage your friends and family to do the same!

With gratitude for your service,

Kristen McCone Gordon



## Improving Access to Air Travel for People with Disabilities

Nearly 40 years ago, President Ronald Reagan signed the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) into law. The ACAA prohibits disability-based discrimination in air travel.

The major problem with commercial air travel continues to be that airplanes have very few accessibility features to accommodate passengers with disabilities. Unlike other forms of mass transportation which allow wheelchair users to travel while seated in their wheelchairs, commercial air travel requires power wheelchair users to have their highly customized, expensive devices stowed in the cargo hold for the flight. This leaves baggage handlers to figure out how to fit these devices into cargo holds not designed to receive or stow them. It also leaves

the passengers who depend on them anxious that their device will not be returned to them in a usable condition. On July 20, the House passed H.R. 3935, the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act. This legislation would reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for five years. We are pleased that the legislation includes several important provisions that would improve the air travel experience for people with disabilities. Some of these provisions include training requirements for assisting passengers with limited mobility and properly stowing assistive devices; improving the Department of Transportation's (DOT) complaint process; and

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## PVA Position:

**Congress must ensure that the final version of this year's FAA Reauthorization includes provisions that will meaningfully improve the air travel experience of passengers with disabilities. Such provisions include, at a minimum, increased training for workers, better data collection and analysis, improved complaint processing, continued study into the ability of passengers to fly while seated in their wheelchairs, and improved disability access standards.**

# NEPVA's Veterans with MS Program Veterans with MS Advisory Group There is still time to join!

information sharing  
&  
community building

The first meeting of the Veterans with MS Advisory Group will be held via zoom on September 12th at 6pm. Any NEPVA member with MS is invited and encouraged to join us!

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](mailto:kristen@pvanewengland.org) with the subject line: Veterans with MS Committee. Thanks to all who have already expressed interest – please check your email for the zoom link!

*continued from page 6*

addressing the need for more access standards. The bill also requires continued study into safe and secure in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems; and for DOT to perform a more in-depth analysis of mishandled wheelchairs as reported by airlines. Additionally, the legislation reauthorizes the Air Carrier Access Act Advisory Committee and includes a focus on the needs of passengers with disabilities in evacuations. The bill includes elements of the PVA-supported Air Carrier Access Amendments Act (ACAAA) (H.R. 1267) and the MOBILE Act (H.R. 3082). The Senate's version of the FAA Reauthorization Act, S. 1939, also includes several disability-related provisions, including elements of the MOBILE Act (S. 1459). We support adding amendments based on the ACAA (S. 545) that would improve the disability-related complaint process and improve disability access standards. Committee action on the bill has been delayed.



The VA MS Centers of Excellence **MS & Vets** podcast series discusses important issues related to the health and quality of life for Veterans with multiple sclerosis. During every episode you'll hear subject matter experts weigh in on multiple sclerosis issues and VA services. A new podcast is posted the 2nd Monday of each month.

**August Podcast**

**Managing Multiple Sclerosis Fatigue**

Information about receiving alerts for new MS & Vets podcasts is on the [VA MS Centers of Excellence website](#). If you missed the last podcast, [Caregiver Burnout and Self-Care](#), it is still available for listening.




U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence

Summer Summer Clinic

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the luck of Del's Lemonade showing up and we had the chance to cool off with a nice taste of their frozen treat, either watermelon or lemonade flavor or even a mixture if one chose. We got to see many of our Winter Sports Clinic friends from NEHSA who volunteered both kayaking and biking. After getting back to the hotel and cleaning up we once again had the meal and joined together for games or the other activities just as the previous evening. We were lucky weather wise as our days were rain free even though we did get some evening storms. The only time we got wet during the day was while surfing!

Thursday was interesting as the volunteers had the opportunity to join the veteran participants. Each had the choice to rise early, grab breakfast and then bus down to Galilee to go fishing on the 7 B's boat. The other choice was to sleep in a bit later then have breakfast and get bused to Colt State Park in Bristol for a fun beach day. They played some corn hole, did some paddle boarding and enjoyed just chilling or cooling off in the water swimming or lounging on floats. It's great that the volunteers who work the same event both Tuesday and Wednesday get to come and join the veterans and get some recreation themselves after working so hard to insure the veterans had a great time the two previous days.

Thursday evening the Closing Ceremonies are held and in addition to a good meal, awards are given out for each activity all four teams participated in. There is also a Volunteer Award and I'm sure that's a very hard one to choose with so many great volunteers doing all they can to help the veterans all week. Many thanks to all the photographers and Emily Ostroff who collects all the photos and put up the album collections online as well as the slideshow shown at closing ceremonies. I will include the links to both at the end of the article so that you can check them out yourself.

Master of Ceremonies Matt Edwards stated his observations and thanked all the staff and volunteers. Matt was very involved and participated himself in multiple venues while observing all of them. Both he and his wife Kelly joined us kayaking Wednesday afternoon

after checking out the surfing earlier. He also joined us fishing while Kelly joined the Beach Day fun on Thursday. He was very pleased to see all the smiles on the veteran participants all week. He then passed the mic off to Jenny for her to carry on the Award presentations and get the Guidons back from the teams before the grand finale slideshow. Jenny would call up a representative from the team volunteers for each event that were present and they would speak about then announce the winner of the Award.

This years Award winners were:

<b>Biking</b>	<b>Michael Shepard</b>	<b>Army</b>
<b>Kayaking</b>	<b>Michael Perry</b>	<b>Marine</b>
<b>Sailing</b>	<b>Jody Shaffer</b>	<b>Air Force</b>
<b>Surfing</b>	<b>Tony Liquori</b>	<b>Army</b>
<b>Volunteer Award</b>	<b>David Conroy Sr. &amp; David Conroy Jr.</b>	

The collection of photos can be seen

@: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/vaboston/collections/72157721964084447/>

To view the slideshow shown at the Closing Ceremonies check out this link: <https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipOJQF4lkBO96eJKy50zlxT8HwmhkuhIDslWax>



Mike on the East Bay Bike Path.



Surfing at 2nd Beach, Middletown



Kayaking on Brickyard Pond



Fort Adams State Park in Newport Harbor



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## A GREAT TIME WAS HAD BY ALL AT THE 2023 NEPVA BANQUET



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#### BOSTON VA REGIONAL OFFICE

Joseph E. Badzmierowski  
Director of Field Services  
J.F.K. Federal Building - Room - 1575 C  
BOSTON, MA 02203  
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#### TOGAS, VARO, I VA CENTER

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#### MANHATTAN

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Sailing is beneficial for the mind, body and spirit – just the feeling of freedom on the water is joyfully refreshing, and learning to maneuver the boat takes teamwork, while accomplishing new sailing skills results and self-confidence.



CEO Paul Callahan greeted veterans.



This massive ship was impressive!



The veterans who braved the rainy Saturday morning had another tasty lunch and were rewarded with a wonderful afternoon of sailing when the weather cleared up nicely!

## Sail to Prevail 2023 NEPVA Weekend • Newport, RI NEPVA Veterans Prevail !

New England Paralyzed Veterans of America, once again, provided funds for a two-day sailing program. A full slate of 25 people had registered; there were actually 20 participants on the water, representing the Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard.

Accessible hotel rooms were booked for long-distance attendees at the Holiday Inn Express and the Howard Johnson's, so the veterans could easily be at the dock for morning sailing. Our thanks to those who "commuted" from home each day, too.

Meals were discounted by local restaurants. The group enjoyed a selection of tasty sandwich wraps from Cru Café for lunches, and a three-course dinner at La Forge Restaurant Friday evening.

Sailing was postponed Saturday morning due to inclement weather, but those who waited until lunchtime were rewarded with a beautiful afternoon of sailing to finish off the event!

### Building Confidence and Skill

*Our skipper, Libby, was my favorite. She offered me the most hands-on experience that I had ever experienced. So, the take away result was confidence along with skill. Otherwise, I am so grateful to be a participant of this event. Thank you!*

John V. (Army, left below knee amputee)

*Ed liked the conversation on the boat and the company. I enjoyed the instructor, Kat - she was a smooth sailor! Dinner is always a fan favorite.*

Ed & Katie T. (Army, ParC-Para/TBI/

**20**  
**participants**  
**on the water,**  
**representing**  
**the Army,**  
**Navy, Air**  
**Force and**  
**Coast Guard.**

*We really liked our skipper, South. She handled the boat with great expertise and style, and she was excellent at answering our questions and had interesting info on things in the area. Huck really worked hard to get us into the tiller seat which included changing boats. Also enjoyed the company of Stewart who has never been on a sailboat.*

Paul R. (Army, paraplegic, spinal cord T-12)

*Those folks at Sail To Prevail really make you feel special.*

Steve M. (Air Force, TBI- seizures)

*The team is always amazing, making us feel welcome and valued. Our sailing leader, Kat, was wonderful to interact with, very knowledgeable and a pleasure to get to know! Finally, we always appreciate Patty for her seamless coordination of the entire event, from the initial e-mail to the delicious meal and fellowship on Friday. We are so grateful to have been a part of this spectacular event! Thank you!*

Ray & Michelle (Army, SCI C5&6, left side core paralysis)

### First-Time Participant

*It was so much fun, and I met some wonderful people. The sun came out, so that was great! Crew outstanding!!! Very knowledgeable. Answered all my curious questions about the sea and how different sailboats are rigged. I would absolutely recommend this to everyone. I had a great time, and the pictures will go in my scrap book! Thank you all very much!*

Gary J. (US Coast Guard, paraplegic)



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## New England Chapter

### **2023 BASS TRAIL DATES**

**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 28, 2023**

Annual Chapter Golf Tournament  
Olde Scotland Links  
Bridgewater, MA

**September 8 - Bellingham Shoot**

**September 13 - Shawmee Shoot**

**September 20 - Bass River Shoot**

**September 27 - NEPVA Pizza at building 8**

**September 28 - Seekonk Shoot**

all above Sept. events start at 11am.

