

## NEPVA Golf Tournament a Smashing Success

by Mark Murphy

I am happy to share with you that our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual NEPVA Golf Tournament on August 28<sup>th</sup> at Olde Scotland Links in Bridgewater, MA was a smashing success. Highlights of the day included:

- *Selling out the course with 120 registered golfers;*
- *Raising over \$10,000 in support of the Chapter;*
- *Beautiful and mild weather;*
- *Many Chapter friends and supporters joining us for the dinner following golf;*
- *Fun activities, such as the annual putting contest, the famed “hole-in-one” hole, and the Tito’s Hand made Vodka tent with Bloody Mary samples.*

As I am sure you can imagine, a lot of time and planning goes into putting on a golf tournament such as ours, especially with how big it has gotten. A

very special thank you to Chapter volunteers Holly Warshaw, Mitch Fishman and Jim Clark who made sure that everything went seamlessly. We could not have pulled it off without Holly and Jim’s support. We are already starting to think and plan for our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual NEPVA Golf Tournament in 2024, so stay tuned for that!

At the tournament we were delighted to welcome several of our friends and leaders from PVA National, including National Treasurer Tom Wheaton, National Vice-President Josue Cordova, and Past President David Zurfluh. It was wonderful to have them with us for the golf tournament and then to visit the Chapter office for meetings on the following 2 days. On Tuesday night, August 29<sup>th</sup>, we took them to dinner in Boston and then to Fenway Park to see the Red Sox play the Houston Astros. While the Red Sox lost (big surprise), it was great to be in Fenway and enjoy a baseball game together. We as a Chapter are very fortunate to have the support, expertise, and guidance

of Tom, Josue, David, and the entire PVA National organization as we seek to make our Chapter here in New England even more extraordinary.

I have 2 upcoming trips that I would like to tell you about. First, from September 19-22<sup>nd</sup> I will be



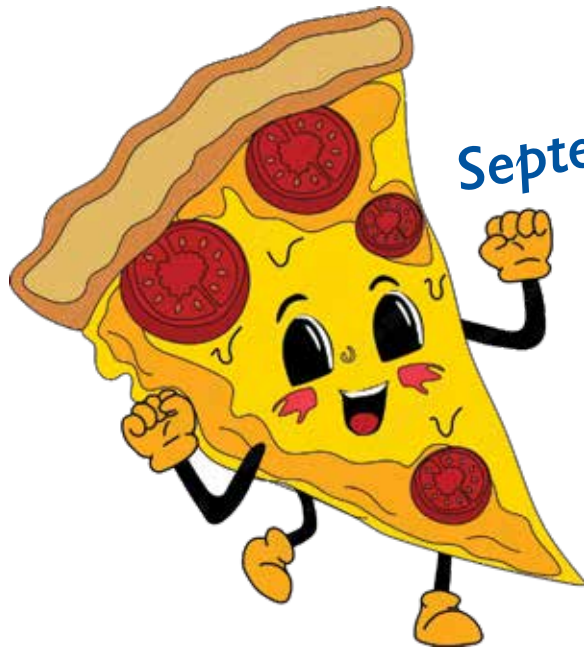
Paragolfers Mark Sanders, John Melvin, Steve Kuketz and Gary Jezierski

*continued on page 3*



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

Denise Pease  
Holly Warshaw  
Mike Moran



**NEPVA Pizza Party at Building 8**

**NEPVA**

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Acting Secretary, Mike Moran  
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**CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS**

Jim Clark                      Denise Pease  
Denise Harvey                Holly Warshaw  
Maureen Morrison-Bohnwagner

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*Cord Word* is published twelve times a year by the New England Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America, 1208 VFW Parkway, Ste 301, West Roxbury, MA 02132 in the interest of Chapter members. Membership in NEPVA entitles you to a free subscription to *Cord Word*. Articles published in *Cord Word* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, New England Chapter. NEPVA neither endorses nor guarantees any of the products or services advertised herein.

## Executive Director's Report

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

in Washington, D.C. with Kristen and Brad and Kathy Carlson. As you know, each year we go to the PVA Annual Advocacy and Legislation Seminar in DC. While that week is always incredibly impactful, Kristen has ratcheted up relationships with so many congressional offices that one in-person week per year on Capitol Hill is not enough. During our days in DC, we will have several meetings with congressional offices from throughout the New England region, and we have found that these in-person meetings are essential to pushing legislation forward that will positively impact our members. Thank you to Kristen for all her hard work in organizing this trip.

Also, next month I will be attending the Fall PVA Fall Board of Directors meeting in Orlando, FL from October 21-23<sup>rd</sup>. This will be a time for the PVA Staff,

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*Kristen has ratcheted up relationships with so many congressional offices that one in-person week per year on Capitol Hill is not enough.*

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National Directors, and Chapter staff members to gather and discuss a variety of topics that will impact our members both locally and nationally. I look forward to sharing with you over the coming months how each trip went.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy, Executive Director



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Mark Sanders, Steve Kuketz, Gary Jezierski, and volunteer Maureen Morrison-Bohnwagner

## The World has Lost a Warrior in Sebastian DeFrancesco

by Harley Freedman

Former NEPVA Board Member Sebastian DeFrancesco passed away on August 28th after a long period of declining health. I met Dee, as many of his friends call him, in 1977 when we both were new injuries in the SCI unit at the West Roxbury VA. Back when 20 guys were in one room in the acute SCI unit—we were side by side.

Sebastian was a stand out athlete and soccer player in High School. In 1972, at the age of 19 he enlisted in the Army. His drive and ambition to be his best drew him to the special forces where he became a Green Beret, one of only 6 accepted in a class of 300. In 1977 he was stationed in northern Italy for parachute training, where he was a passenger, injured in a vehicle crash, during a night time training mission.

His list of accomplishments is long. He was a founding member, player and coach of the NEPVA Pitbull Quad Rugby team which was a nationally ranked team throughout the nineties. He was instrumental in getting the sport recognized as a Paralympic sport, as well as influencing PVA to include rugby in the Veteran's Games. He worked with PVA to develop training clinics around the country to promote the sport and get more quads involved. He is a member of the Quad Rugby Hall of Fame.

While NEPVA Sports Director he mentored children at the Mass Hospital School, getting them

involved in wheelchair sports and recreation. The rugby team practiced there a number of times so the kids could see their adult peers playing at a high level. Sebastian was a mentor for disAbleD teens he met throughout his life, he created life long friendships with many of them.

He was always a strong voice, an advocate for justice, who fought for what he thought best. When the new Boston Garden was built he worked tirelessly for ADA seating with site lines that enabled those of us who use wheelchairs to see the action when able bodied folks stand up.

His true sports passion was Table Tennis (don't call it ping-pong anywhere near him) where he excelled and was a multi Paralympic medal winner in the quad division. I personally saw him take on multiple able bodied opponents who thought they were good, only to walk away from the table wondering how a guy sitting down could beat them. Later on in his TT career he took on an administrative role promoting the sport around the world. He is a member of the Table Tennis Hall of Fame.

In the mid ninties he married Liz and moved to Santa Cruz where he joined the board of Bay Area and Western PVA which is based at the Palo Alto VA. When he saw the injustice of homeless Veterans he lobbied Congress, driving a movement that has helped many homeless vets

find their way. He served as the Bay Area PVA Chapters President for many years until his passing.



He has been a tremendous influence on my life as well as countless others, getting many of us involved in wheelchair sports and encouraging us to join the NEPVA and Bay Area PVA and participate in the Chapter's sports and recreation programs. His love of youth sports and the understanding he had that sports builds self esteem lead him to coach and mentor countless kids with disAbilities throughout the Bay Area.

Above all Sebastian was a loving family man to 3 wonderful daughters and his loving wife Liz who nurtured his spirit and will to live through countless health issues over many years. I once asked him what kept him going through all the repeated medical problems, he said "love brother—love for my wife and my 3 girls."

***Sebastian, rest easy my brother, you deserve it.***

# From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson  
NEPVA President

Dear Friends,

As I write this article, I have so much to be thankful for. I am continually impressed and moved the dedication and hard work of our Chapter staff, volunteers, VA staff, and our Chapter Board of Directors. The work of being Chapter President and National Director to PVA is not easy and is extremely time consuming, however I am the first one to recognize that I could not do any of this important work without the help of others. With Mark and Kristen on our staff, my fellow Board members, and Chapter volunteers Holly Warshaw, Mitch Fishman, Denise Pease, Jim Clark, and Denise Harvey I am confident in saying that I believe we have one of the best PVA Chapters in the United States. I also have to say a special thank you to my wife Kathy. Her steadfast support of me and my work in the Chapter is truly unbelievable. She does a lot of volunteer work for the Chapter that no one ever sees. She is truly my better half. I am proud that the Chapter staff, Board, and our volunteers are a team, and I am so grateful that we support each other, push each other to be better, and are always striving to excel together. And we all do it for our members.

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Golf Tournament on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Golfers, friends, loved ones, Chapter members, PVA National leadership staff, dedicated volunteers, and our talented staff ensured that the Tournament went off without a hitch. Holly Warshaw and Jim Clark did an amazing job as our volunteer Tournament directors, and it showed. We got a lot of positive feedback from attendees on how well the day went. One of the golfers reached out to say, "I have had the opportunity to touch base with the groups I facilitated, and everyone had a great time. All expressed their desire to attend next year. Well done to you and all who helped make this event happen. I plan on playing next year and will continue to gather groups." Thank you to everyone

who contributed to making our Annual Golf Tournament the amazing day that it was.



We had a very productive visit from PVA National in August, including National Treasurer Tom Wheaton, National Vice-President Josue Cordova, and Past President David Zurfluh. They attended the golf tournament, visited the Chapter office for meetings, and we

even took in a Red Sox game together! Luckily there were no Yankees fans in the group. Thank you to Tom, Josue, and David for their dedication and support of our Chapter and PVA.

On September 19-22<sup>nd</sup> Kathy and I will join Kristen McCone Gordon and Mark

Murphy on a trip to Washington, D.C. for in-person meetings with several members of Congress and U.S. Senators. I always look forward to these meetings as it is an opportunity to share my story and advocate for the health and well being of my fellow disabled and paralyzed veterans. I am sure the week will be very busy and will make a discernible difference in our government relations work. Thank you to Kristen for setting up all these important meetings.

This month, all members will be receiving an email with the results of our recent Chapter election. We will also announce and list the results of the election in the October edition of the CordWord. A sincere thank you to everyone who voted.

You can see that the theme of my article this month is gratitude. And I would like to conclude my article the way

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**Thank you to everyone who  
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Annual Golf Tournament  
the amazing day that it was.**

## Government Relations Report

Kristen McCone Gordon  
Director of Government and Community Affairs

Dear NEPVA Members,

### Fall is off to a busy start!

Our Advocacy team is off to Washington next week conducting what I hope becomes an annual Chapter tradition – AD/LEG 2.0! Given there are so many members of the New England Congressional Delegation, we are unable to meet with all of them during the annual Advocacy/Legislative seminar trip (AD/LEG) to the Capital in March. So, we've decided to add another day! Brad and Kathy Carlson and Executive Director Mark Murphy will be joining me as we advocate for the legislative issues impacting our members' lives.

The fall is a busy and critical time in Congress, with strong possibilities that we will see movement on some of our priority legislative issues including Air Travel Accessibility and the Elizabeth Dole Act. We want to have a strong presence on the Hill and ensure that the New England Congressional Delegation understands why these issues are so important to paralyzed veterans. I'm grateful to the NEPVA board for continuing to prioritize the Chapter's advocacy efforts and looking forward to updating everyone on what we accomplish during our meetings.

I'm also happy to share an important advocacy opportunity on page 7 from one of our partners, *Changing Spaces Massachusetts*. The Changing Spaces Campaign is a network of advocates bringing awareness to the need for Adjustable-Height Universal Changing Tables in public family restrooms. There is currently a bill before the Massachusetts Legislature that would make public bathrooms more accessible and accommodating to wheelchair users. **To all our Massachusetts members, please read the information on page 7 and let me know if you are interested in testifying on An Act Requiring Universal Changing Stations in Public Buildings.** No experience is necessary for this, I can guide you through the process! For those members who are not Massachusetts residents, I would love to hear your input on this issue as well. Please reach out to me at [kristen@pvanewengland.org](mailto:kristen@pvanewengland.org) and let me know if you are impacted by the status of public bathrooms in your state and would like the Chapter to advocate on your behalf.

With gratitude for your service,

Kristen McCone Gordon



our priority

legislative issues

Air Travel Accessibility

& the

Elizabeth Dole Act

### President's Report

*continued from page 5*

that I started: by saying thank you again. Thank you to everyone for their love, support, and dedication to our Chapter over the past several weeks. It has made such a difference for so many, and I cannot say thank you enough for who you are and what you do for our Chapter and its members.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson  
Chapter President and  
National Director



### **Who We Are**

The Changing Spaces Campaign is a network of advocates bringing awareness to the need for Adjustable-Height Universal Changing Tables in public family restrooms.

Too often individuals with disabilities are left out of our community events and activities due to a lack of equipment that would make inclusion possible.

Universal Changing Tables are powered, height adjustable tables large enough to support an adult weighing up to 300 lbs, allowing caretakers of all abilities to safely assist individuals of any age or size with their toileting while in public.

### **Our Mission**

To promote dignity, safety, and equality for individuals with disabilities who cannot safely utilize standard handicapped accessible restrooms. To promote inclusion so that each person can live their life to the fullest, and our communities can benefit from the talents and contributions of all.

### **Call to Action**

[Bill H.212](#) is set to be heard by the MA Legislature on September 12<sup>th</sup>. The Arc of Massachusetts has made H.212 a [legislative priority for this session](#). If the bill does not pass in this session, we will not have the opportunity to legislate Universal Changing Tables in public buildings until 2028 at the earliest. We need the disability advocacy network across the state to mobilize, contacting all of our legislators over the next month to convey how impactful this accessibility upgrade would be within our community. Until our public places move to adopt universal changing tables, our communities will not be truly inclusive of people with intellectual or physical disabilities. The time to act is now.

[ACT NOW](#): Ask your legislators to support H.212 and Require Universal Changing Stations in Public Buildings. Accessible through QR code below.

[Learn more about Changing Spaces Massachusetts](#) and how you can help ensure that all disabled residents and visitors of the Commonwealth are welcomed into the community and provided the safety, comfort and dignity that they deserve.



## Let's Do Some Curling

**Cape Cod Curling Club** is hosting their annual Wheelchair Curling Bonspiel during our regular curling season this year. While we have been hosting this event as a part of club's annual Summerspiel season since 2010, we have chosen to move it to November as a way to help make the cost of traveling and staying on the Cape a bit easier for our wheelchair curlers. In addition, it will be easier to get accessible rooms when there are less tourists taking them all. Registration for this event is open to all, and folks can sign up as individual curlers or as a team.

In addition, we wanted to let you know that we will be holding a Wheelchair Curling Open House on Saturday, October 7th from 10am to 2pm. The Open House is free of charge to all. We will be holding regular practices for Wheelchair Curlers on Sundays and Wednesdays during the regular season from 12 noon to 2pm. So we can arrange personal 'Open Houses' if you have any folks inquiring after the big start of the year event. The personal sessions would need to be scheduled when we had enough staff to help support and teach while the regular practice is going on.

*for more Curling info see the flyers on pages 13 & 15 for the Open House and the Bonspiel*



**If you would like to register you can do so at these links:**

- Wheelchair Curling Open House (10/7): [www.capecodcurling.org/wheelchaircurling](http://www.capecodcurling.org/wheelchaircurling)
- Tony Colacchio International Wheelchair Bonspiel (11/9-11/12): <https://tinyurl.com/CapeWheelSpielReg23>

If they have any questions or concerns, they can always reach out to us at: [wheelchaircurling@capecodcurling.org](mailto:wheelchaircurling@capecodcurling.org)





## Come Shooting with Us



## Save the Dates!

### September 28

Wampanoag Rod and Gun Club  
78 Cross St., Seekonk

### October 11

Monument Beach Sportsman Club  
199 McArthur Blvd., Buzzards Bay

*NEPVA volunteer Denise Pease at the recent Bellingham shoot.*

## Sailing on Lake Champlain with Northeast Disabled Athletic Association

Our adaptive sailing program began in 2006 at The Moorings Marina in Colchester, VT. We purchased two Martin 16 adaptive sailboats with the help of a generous grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation.

A Martin 16 sailboat can carry one sailor and one crew. The boat has been modified to be operated from a seated position. A series of pull ropes enables a sailor to use the rudder and control the lines for the mainsail and the jib.

Our boats can also be controlled with a sip 'n' puff switch, granting sailors with significant mobility or dexterity impairments the chance to captain independently.

Our boats are available for use during sailing season,

which runs on Lake Champlain from late May to late September. Contact [sailing@disabledathletics.org](mailto:sailing@disabledathletics.org) for more information, or to schedule a sail.

NDAAs has organized programs for local athletes in activities including:

- Archery
- Biathlon
- Bocce
- Cross-Country skiing
- Handcycling
- Kayaking
- Power soccer
- Sailing
- Sled Hockey
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- Wheelchair basketball

**Find out more at [www.disabledathletics.org](http://www.disabledathletics.org)**



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Email: support.indego@parker.com



## Service Officers Report

### Fraud Alert!

There has been an area recently where the VA has noted that the possibility of fraud can occur, and they have asked veteran service officers to advise our members. This article addresses that request.

The area of concern focuses on Public DBQs (Disability Benefit Questionnaires), which are medical forms that veterans download and submit to their healthcare provider (either through the VA or via a community provider). The information on these DBQs is completed by the healthcare provider (veterans cannot complete them), and helps VA to appropriately assess veteran disability benefit claims.

Recently, the VA has advised that there have been instances noted of companies with unaccredited representatives which are charging a fee for completing these forms for the veteran, or a fee percentage of the difference between the veteran's current compensation and possible higher disability income received. These providers may promise that veterans will have a better or higher chance of a success in obtaining a higher rate of compensation; they may assign physicians who may sometimes exaggerate what the actual veteran's medical evidence will support (Food for thought- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is) They may also advise veterans not to attend VA exams.

Having discussed this issue with several veterans, an example of the possible charges that a veteran might incur is a fee of six months of the difference between a veteran's current compensation and the possible higher disability income received. This fee cost can be up to several thousand dollars for a significant increase in disability income.

Please note that initial applications for benefits and increase claims are provided at no cost to veterans, including the evaluation examination. Please note that specific parties (such as a private attorney) can appropriately charge a fee for appeals claims (but these fees are capped at a specific percentage by the VA). **We recommend the following to assist in avoiding the above issue.**

**Verify that the representative you are working with to file your claim or appeal is accredited. You can search for this on [OGC - Accreditation Search \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/ogc).**

**Make sure to work with your accredited representative in getting any public DBQs or VA examinations completed for your disability claim.**

*continued on page 12*

### 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  
fax: (617) 303-1396

#### WEST ROXBURY/BROCKTON VAMC

Pete Demarkis, National Service Officer II  
1400 VFW Parkway, Room AG 60  
West Roxbury, MA 02132  
West Roxbury phone: (857) 203-6091  
Serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island

#### TOGAS, VARO, I VA CENTER

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

#### BRONX SCI

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

#### MANHATTAN

Zachary T. Nuetzel, National Service Officer  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
245 W. Houston St., Room 4W59.50  
New York, NY 10014  
phone: (212) 807-3114  
zacharyn@pva.org  
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#### 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

**Service Officer Report***continued from page 11*

*companies with unac-credited representatives ... are charging a fee for completing these forms for the veteran.*

Please ensure that you are providing accurate information concerning your disability to the VA. Providing, or having provided for you, false information on your disability condition to the VA can be considered a violation of federal law.

If you are working with a private attorney to file an appeal, make sure that any fees are negotiated up front (a reminder that these fees are capped by the VA); and note that fees which appear excessive can be reviewed/challenged via a request for review through the VA.

**Please note that PVA national service officers provide many of these services at no cost to veterans, including representing the veteran in the appeals up to the Board of Veterans Appeals.**

As always, we recommend that you work through your national service officer with any questions regarding the above issues.

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

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- Health Services and Checks**




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- Military Vehicle and Equipment Displays**
- Women Veterans Seminar at 10:30**
- Kid's Zone! Pony Rides, Bounce House and More**



\*For more information, go to [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com) and search for "Massachusetts Veterans Expo", email [VABostonVets@va.gov](mailto:VABostonVets@va.gov) or call (617) 275-6101.



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## **Cape Cod Curling Club** October 7th ~ 10am to 2pm

The Cape Cod Curling Club's Wheelchair Curling Program is excited to invite all wheelchair users, & persons with mobility issues to join us for an open house, to learn about and try out the great sport of curling! The event will include an introduction to the sport, on-ice instruction and a chance to play in a shortened game.

On-ice instruction will be conducted by Cape Cod Wheelchair curlers, including 2-time US Paralympian, Meghan Lino!

**HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?** NOTHING! We are excited to share our sport, so there is no cost to come out and enjoy yourselves on the ice at our Open House.

**WHAT IS NEEDED?** Warm clothes and a desire to play and enjoy a new sport. That is it!

**WHERE IS THE CLUB?** 37 Highfield Drive, Falmouth MA 02540

**REGISTER AT:** [www.CapeCodCurling.org/wheelchaircurling](http://www.CapeCodCurling.org/wheelchaircurling)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION EMAIL US AT:** [WheelchairCurling@CapeCodCurling.org](mailto:WheelchairCurling@CapeCodCurling.org)

**Cape Cod Curling Club**  
37 Highfield Drive, Falmouth, MA 02540  
(508) 540-2414



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**\$175 USD per person Transportation Charge (optional)**

**\$70 USD per Non-Curling attendee for all meals**

*(Entries are accepted through October 15, 2023)*



## Includes:

- 3 games guaranteed, 3 events
- Continental Breakfast every morning during the competition
- Casual Lunch on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday
- Cocktail Reception: Thursday Eve.
- Supper on Friday & Saturday night.
- Finals & Awards Brunch on Sunday Morning

*Schedule is subject to change based on the number of entries received*



Cape Cod Curling Club  
37 Highfield Drive, P.O. Box 396  
Falmouth, MA 02541 • (508) 540-2414

**On-line registration is available at:**

**<https://tinyurl.com/CapeWheelSpielReg23>**

**Reservations plus all applicable fees must be received in US dollars on or before October 15, 2023.** Payment can be made electronically or by check.

**Entry fee** includes all curling games, meals and awards.

**Transportation charge** includes one round trip from/to Logan Airport and the Curling Club, plus a daily round trip from/to hotel and the Club (some restrictions apply).

**Non-curlers** who wish to guarantee advance meal reservations will include all breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Otherwise, meals may be available during the course of the event on a pay-as-you-go limited basis.

**For Registration and Information, contact:**

**Kathy Maloney**, Co-Chair • Phone: 617-834-0807  
Email: kaamaloney@gmail.com

**Nanci Pacheco**, Co-Chair • Phone: 774-392-0106  
Email: nanpach7@gmail.com

**[www.capecodcurling.org](http://www.capecodcurling.org)**

Paralyzed Veterans of America  
New England Chapter  
1208 VFW Parkway, Suite 301  
West Roxbury, MA 02132

tel: 617 942-8678  
800 660-1181  
fax: 857 203-9685

Email: [info@pvanewengland.org](mailto:info@pvanewengland.org)

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



New England Chapter

## 2023 BASS TRAIL

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



## Join Us at Our Upcoming Events

### September 28

Wampanoag Rod and Gun Club  
78 Cross St., Seekonk

### October 11

Monument Beach Sportsman Club  
199 McArthur Blvd., Buzzards Bay

