

NEPVA Wraps Up Summer with Gathering & Golf

by Mark Murphy, Executive Director NEPVA

I want to open my article by extending my sincere thanks to Kristen McCone Gordon for her contributions for the past 4 ½ years as Director of Government Relations and Community Affairs for the Chapter. As Kristen begins to move on to new opportunities, her efforts and work have been greatly appreciated, and we wish her success and fulfillment in all her future endeavors. We will continue to develop and grow the strong government relations program that Kristen has begun for the Chapter.

While for many Chapters things perhaps slow down in the late summer months, here in New England things have only gotten busier and busier! We held our Annual Golf Tournament on August 19th where we sold out all foursomes and raised significant funds for the Chapter. The weather was perfect for golf until the rain at the very end! We had a wonderful dinner following golf, where we got to spend time with our supporters and tournament attendees. I am grateful to all our volunteers and tournament planning committee members in Holly Warshaw, Jim Clark, Mitch Fishman, and Brad Carlson for helping to make it such a special day. We could not have done it without them, and we are already beginning to plan for next year's tournament.

On September 8th we held our Annual Chapter Membership Gathering at the Italian American War Veterans Post 45. We were fortunate to have many Chapter members, VA staff members, Chapter volunteers, and friends in attendance. It was a casual get-together with great food as we enjoyed a laid-back Sunday afternoon in celebration of our members. We

We held our Annual Golf Tournament on August 19th where we sold out all foursomes and raised significant funds for the Chapter.

enjoyed chowder, steak, lobster, chicken, and all the accompaniments. The DJ, games, 50/50 raffle, and cash bar made it a lot of fun. The

New England Patriots even won their first game of the season, which was the icing on the cake!

During the membership gathering I also presented our 2024 Pierik Awards to 4 outstanding VA medical staff members. The Pierik Awards are presented to members of the VA medical staff for the West Roxbury and Brockton SCI Units. The recipients are chosen by their peers for the exemplary nature of their actions which makes them

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On September 8th we held our Annual Chapter Membership Gathering at the Italian American War Veterans Post 45 in Marlboro, MA.



Our Annual Golf Tournament on August 19th raised significant funds for the chapter.



photos by Mike Moran

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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

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By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

Congratulations to Chris, Maggi, Ashleigh, and Marieflores on being our well-deserved 2024 Pierik Awards winners!

stand out. I presented the awards to the following individuals, along with a bit of background on each:

Christina Allen “Chris” is a Veteran and great asset to the SCI team in Brockton. She is an experienced nurse with a strong skill set in handling the most complex situations, which makes her truly exceptional. Her dedication to her patients and her kindness and compassion in every interaction makes a difference to each veteran she serves.

Margaret Murray “Maggi” is an experienced nursing assistant who remains calm under pressure while connecting with patients on a personal level. The way in which she offers both expertise and empathy is awe-inspiring. She goes above and beyond for her colleagues and veterans, and she embodies what it means to be a caregiver.

Ashleigh Cieri is one of the strongest assets to the nursing team on the acute spinal cord injury unit. She is a veteran RN with a robust skill set and an enormous heart. Ashleigh cares deeply for all veterans, quickly builds strong rapport with patients, and lays the foundation for high quality patient care.



Christina Allen



Margaret Murray



Ashleigh Cieri

Marieflores (not in attendance) is a veteran nursing assistant on the acute spinal cord injury unit. She is an essential member of the evening shift with a strong work ethic and she is highly proficient in all things SCI. Marieflores is always willing to lend a hand and routinely goes above and beyond for each veteran she serves.

Congratulations to Chris, Maggi, Ashleigh, and Marieflores on being our well-deserved 2024 Pierik Awards winners!

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director



photos: Harley Freedman

2024 PVA New England Annual Membership Gathering



We received a generous donation from Italian American War Veterans (ITAM) Post 45 in Marlborough, MA.



It was a memorable and uplifting day to see so many of our members, supporters, and friends coming together and showing the strength of our community.



photos: Harley Freedman

From the President's Desk

by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President

Dear Friends,

On August 19th we of course held our Annual Golf Tournament at the South Shore Country Club in Hingham, MA. It was a tremendous success! From the moment people started to arrive and check in, it was clear that the day was going to be special. The camaraderie was palpable, and the competitive spirit was inspiring. Beyond the excitement on the course, it was the collective effort and generosity of everyone there that made the day so memorable. We raised solid funds for the Chapter, thanks to the contributions and participation of many. Every dollar raised will directly impact the lives of our members. **A special thank you goes out to our incredibly dedicated volunteers, including golf tournament planning committee members Holly Warshaw, Jim Clark, Mitch Fishman, and Mark Murphy.** We are also grateful to all our sponsors and players as their commitment and enthusiasm were the driving forces behind the tournament's success. Even though we had a pelting of rain as we finished playing, it was still an amazing day!

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks to all who attended our membership gathering and cookout on September 8th at the Italian American War Veterans (ITAM) Post 45 in Marlborough, MA. It was a memorable and uplifting day to see so many of our members, supporters, and friends coming together and showing the strength of our community. Throughout the afternoon I had the opportunity to connect with friends and make new acquaintances, with each conversation leaving me more inspired and energized than the last. Above all, we were delighted to have the opportunity to honor and celebrate the service of our members. So many people played a role in making this event possible, from our dedicated staff and volunteers to our ITAM friends. Their hard work and dedication were instrumental in creating an atmosphere of warmth, hospitality, and inclusivity. Again, thank you to everyone who attended. I am honored to be part of such a vibrant community.

With a few months left in our calendar year, we are looking forward with hope and optimism. Together, we will continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our members and their families, and recent events like our Chapter golf tournament and our annual membership gathering serve as powerful reminders of the impact we can achieve when we come together in unity and purpose.

Finally, and as you will see in Kristen's article this month, after almost 5 years working for the Chapter Kristen will be moving on to a new opportunity. We are grateful to Kristen for her dedicated service to our Chapter and members over these last years, and we wish her and her family all the very best. Kristen left our Chapter Government Relations program in a better position than she found it, and for that we are grateful!

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson
Chapter President and National Director



Kathy and Brad Carlson at membership gathering.

Government Relations Report

*Kristen McCone Gordon
Director of Government and Community Affairs*

Dear NEPVA Members,

After four and a half wonderful years, I'm leaving the Chapter to pursue a new professional challenge. I am so proud of all we have accomplished together and wish the Chapter continued success!



I'd like to thank Chapter President Brad Carlson, former Chapter President Michael Negrete, current and past board members, and Executive Director Mark Murphy for the support, collaboration, and collegiality they've shown me over the years. I'd also like to thank the incredible Chapter volunteers for working so hard to support our programs and events. They truly are essential to the work we do.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the Chapter's Government and Community Affairs Director. I wish you and your families good health and happiness!

With gratitude for your service,

Kristen

VA FUNDING SHORTFALL UPDATE

Last month, we reported that Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) had introduced legislation seeking to cover a \$2.883 billion shortage in VA's fiscal year (FY) 2024 mandatory accounts that fund disability compensation, survivor, and education benefits. The Veterans Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024 would not only provide the needed funding, but would also require VA to report on potential cost savings measures within VA Central Office, direct the Government Accountability Office to review the circumstances that led to the budget shortfall, and instruct the VA to submit a revised budget for FY 2025.



Efforts to fast track the bill through the upper chamber before the August recess ended when a handful of Senators objected to considering the bill, prior to examining why the shortfall existed in the first place. As a result, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee will likely hold a hearing in early September to assess the cause of the shortfall and identify potential corrective actions. Congress needs to pass legislation addressing the funding gap before September 20. [Take action now](#) to let your members of Congress know that this shortfall must be addressed as soon as possible.

NEPVA's Veterans with MS Program

**BUILDING COMMUNITY
INFORMATION SHARING**

Dear Members of the NEPVA Veterans with MS program,

I'm happy to share the latest newsletter from the National PVA MS Committee. I hope you find this information as helpful as I have. If you haven't already signed up to receive these newsletters directly to your inbox, please take a moment and do it here: <https://pva.org/research-resources/publication/ms-newsletter/>. I'm consistently impressed with the information our colleagues at National include in each edition and encourage all of you to take advantage of all the opportunities they offer.

I'm also happy to report that our "Ask a Social Worker!" Zoom has been rescheduled for September 24th at noon.

I highly encourage your participation in what will be a very informative and relaxed event. I will be joined by Michelle Turcotte-Smail, LICSW Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders Clinic and Polytrauma Clinic Social Work Coordinator at the White River Junction VA Medical Center and Cristina Birdsall, LICSW Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders Clinical Coordinator at VA Connecticut Healthcare. Michelle and Tina are

a both a wealth of knowledge and this promises to be a very informative discussion.

Please consider zooming in and hearing about benefits you may be eligible for through your local VA. Here is the zoom link for the event: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83650458384?pwd=bOi4V2A0LG0xJiBPU7lX7bhG9LWaKy.1> We'll be sharing this via email and Facebook (be sure to follow us if you don't already!) as well.

I hope you all enjoyed a wonderful summer and I look forward to seeing you in the fall!

Sincerely,
Chuck Houle
Chapter MS Liaison



Scan the QR for MS Newsletter

Webinar Recording Now Available: Protecting Disability Rights Through Regulation

On July 23, Senior Advocacy Attorney Danica Gonzalves and Advocacy Attorney Anthonya James dove into administrative advocacy and the importance of reviewing and responding to proposed regulations. The webinar titled, "Protecting Disability Rights Through Regulation," covered ways to use administrative advocacy when it comes to the federal rulemaking process and how groups and individuals can participate in it. You can watch a recording of the webinar [here](#).



Scan the
QR code to
watch the
webinar!

Advocacy During the August Congressional Recess

The House and Senate are only holding pro forma sessions during the month of August, so lawmakers are home working in state and local district offices. A pro forma session is a brief meeting of the chamber (e.g., a few minutes) where no formal legislative business is conducted. As a general rule, your elected officials are usually more accessible when they are in their states and districts and we encourage members to take advantage of that. Plan to attend town hall meetings or meet with them in their local offices. They may also be attending parades and other community celebrations so be sure to keep an eye out for these opportunities as well. Each of these venues offer great opportunities for you to introduce yourself to your elected officials and share your concerns with them. As a reminder, check out PVA's policy priorities for the August recess.

Our Members at the 2024 Summer Sports Clinic





Thanks to the Photographers: Amanda Brillhart, Belle Channell, Elizabeth Mossi, Emily Ostroff, Kate Versluis, Michelle Bergeron, Win Danielson, David Silva, Kelly Costa, Marilyn Kendall, Kate Bridges, Randi Woodrow, Elizabeth Mossi, Kyle Toto. And Mikey G for Cord Word photo editing.



Service Officers Report

by Zachary T. Nuetzel
National Service Officer

In last month's chapter article, National Service Officer Zachary Nuetzel discussed the process for requesting a discharge upgrade. The article provided identification and consideration of the different pieces of the discharge upgrade process. The article noted that in order to correct discharges older than 15 years, a submission to a service board of corrections is needed. Please note that service members who are seeking a discharge upgrade and have been separated for less than 15 years, must first submit the DD Form 293, Application for the Review of Discharge from the Armed Forces of the United States, to their respective Service Discharge Review Board prior to submitting any application to a Board of Correction.

The secretary of a military service department, who acts through a board for correction of military records, has the authority to change any military record when necessary to correct an error or remove an injustice. A correction board may consider applications for correction of a military record, including a review of a discharge issued by courts martial. Some of the other records that may be considered for correction include administrative inaccuracies, pay and allowances, decorations and awards, performance evaluations and derogatory information, disabilities, promotions and rank, and separation and discharges (please note that this is not an all-inclusive listing).

Chapter members, their survivors, or legal representatives, normally must file a request for correction within three years after discovery of an alleged error or injustice. The board may excuse failure to file within the prescribed time, however, if it finds it would be in the interest of justice to do so. It is an applicant's responsibility to show why the filing of the application was delayed and why it would be in the interest of justice for the board to consider it despite the delay.

In order to warrant a correction, it is necessary to show to the satisfaction of the service board that the alleged entry or omission in the records was in error or unjust. Applications

should include all available evidence, such as signed statements of witnesses, a brief of arguments supporting the requested correction, and any other supporting evidence.

Those chapter members who wish to apply for correction of the discharge should submit DD Form 149, Application for Correction of Military Records to their relevant service branch. Please note that the form contains addresses to

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submit (mail) the application to the separate service departments. The application can be found at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/forms/dd/dd0149.pdf>



Please make sure to check the below websites for up to date instructions on applying to the various service correction boards as they do differ from one service branch to another. Please note that the address for the Board of Naval Corrections is for both Navy and Marine Corps service branches.

Air Force Review Boards Agency (includes Space Force applicants)

Website: <https://afrba-portal.cce.af.mil/#>



Army Review Boards Agency

Website: <http://arba.army.pentagon.mil/>



Board for Correction of Naval Records (includes Marine Corps applicants)

Website: <https://www.secnav.navy.mil/mra/bcncr/Pages/default.aspx>



DHS Office of the General Counsel Board for Correction of Military Records

Website: <https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Legal/BCMR/>



Once submitted, a completed application for correction of a service record may not result in a positive outcome, corrections granted are a relatively rare circumstance. These requests require consideration and review of many areas, including prior service records, corrective record evidence to be submitted, and veteran and witness statements. As always, if you have questions while completing this process, you should reach out to your local National Service officer for assistance.

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NEPVA's Veterans with MS Program

BUILDING COMMUNITY ← → **INFORMATION SHARING**

Get the information you need...Ask a social worker! New Date and Time!

All NEPVA members with MS and their caregivers are invited to an informational zoom on **September 24th at noon** with VA social workers Michelle Turcotte-Smail and Tina Birdsall. Co-hosted by NEPVA Director Chuck Houle, the zoom will include a brief presentation on benefits available to veterans with MS followed by an informational Q&A session.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83650458384?pwd=bOi4V2A0LG0xJiBPU7IX7bhG9LWaKy.1>

Meeting ID: 836 5045 8384 **Passcode:** 857487

Presenters:

Chuck Houle

Member of the New England Chapter Board of Directors and Chapter MS lead to National PVA.

Michelle Turcotte-Smail, LICSW

Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders Clinic and Polytrauma Clinic Social Work Coordinator at the White River Junction VA Medical Center. Michelle has worked for Veterans Health Administration for 14 years in the Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders Clinic, Polytrauma Clinic, Primary Care, and Geriatrics.

Cristina Birdsall, LICSW

Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders Clinical Coordinator at VA Connecticut Healthcare. Tina Birdsall, LSCW received her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from University of Connecticut and her Master's Degree in Social Work from Southern Connecticut State University. She began her social work career at the West Haven VA in 2012 on the inpatient hospital units before transitioning to the Spinal Cord Coordinator position in 2016. Tina took over the role as ALS Coordinator in 2020.

Please contact Kristen McCone Gordon at kristen@pvanewengland.org with any questions on this event or NEPVA Veterans with MS program.



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Policy Changes to Expand Access to Affordable Housing for Homeless Veterans

Recently, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) made changes to long-standing agency policy that created barriers for disabled veterans when accessing VA Supportive Housing Vouchers, or HUD-VASH. With this policy change, HUD will no longer consider disability benefits as earned income when determining eligibility for rental assistance. This shift means thousands of disabled homeless veterans who were previously ineligible for rental assistance through the VA will now be able to find housing using the HUD-VASH program.

This change will be particularly impactful for homeless veterans who find themselves in areas with a high cost of living. Nearly 11,000 homeless veterans live in California, notoriously one of the most expensive states in the country. The shift in HUD policy will help many of them get off the streets and connect them to a case worker who can help with employment services and other VA benefits. Congress had been urging HUD to make the change, but HUD was

hesitant to do so for fear that it would prohibit the most vulnerable from accessing HUD-VASH vouchers.

2024 PVA Priorities

Protect Access to VA's Specialized Health Care Services

Expand Access to VA Long-Term Services and Supports and their Survivors

Improve VA Benefits and Health Care Services for Paralyzed Veterans and their Survivors

Protect the Civil Rights of People with Disabilities

Improve Access to Social Security Benefits

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



New England Chapter

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Seekonk Shoot

Northeast Passage

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