

Time to Retire

By: Paul Nyerick, Chapter Board of Director

After 29 years of faithful and dedicated service, Dr. Laura Davis has officially retired from the West Haven VA Medical Center in Connecticut. Throughout her distinguished career, Dr. Davis served as a provider in the Spinal Cord Injury and Disease (SCI/D) unit, offering compassionate, expert care to countless veterans living with paralysis and other serious conditions.

Dr. Davis's professionalism, warmth, and patient-centered approach made a profound impact on those she treated - offering not only medical support but reassurance and dignity during some of life's most difficult moments. Her contributions extended far beyond the clinic - she was a steadfast ally to our New England Chapter and a trusted advocate for paralyzed veterans throughout the region.



L to R: Paul Nyerick presents Dr. Laura Davis a commemorative clock with Eddie Dusick and Thomas Ferland (standing).

On June 27th, I had the honor of attending her retirement celebration at the hospital, alongside fellow Chapter members Eddie Dusick and Thomas Ferland. It was a heartfelt gathering, filled with gratitude and admiration for a woman whose career has touched so many lives.

To mark the occasion, we presented Dr. Davis with a beautiful mantle clock, a token of appreciation from our Chapter. It serves as a symbolic reminder of the time she devoted to her

Dr. Davis has gone above and beyond throughout her career - not just as a skilled medical provider, but as a compassionate advocate who always treated our members with dignity and respect.

patients and the legacy she leaves behind at the West Haven VA. The idea for the clock came from Chapter President and National Director Brad Carlson, who said it best: "A plaque is not enough to honor such an important person who has been a constant supporter of our Chapter and members. Dr. Davis has gone above and beyond throughout her career - not just as a skilled medical provider, but as a compassionate advocate who always treated our members with dignity and respect. Her legacy will live on in the lives she touched and the trust she built with so many in our community."

From all of us at the New England Chapter, we extend our heartfelt thanks to Dr. Davis and wish her a joyful, restful, and well-deserved retirement. We hope she carries with her the same sense of fulfillment and pride that she inspired in others during her incredibly impactful career.

The New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America (New England PVA) is a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1947 that has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members – veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction.



The New England PVA uses that expertise to be the leading advocate for:

- Quality health care for our members
- Research and education addressing spinal cord injury and dysfunction
- Benefits available because of our members' military service
- Civil rights and opportunities that maximize the independence of our members

To enable paralyzed veterans to continue to honor this commitment, we recruit and retain members who have the experience, energy, dedication, and passion necessary to manage the organization and ensure adequate resources to sustain the programs essential for the Chapter to achieve its mission.

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Executive Director's Report

By Mark Murphy

Executive Director NEPVA

As I sit down to write this month's Executive Director article, our team is in full preparation mode for one of the highlights of the year: the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, taking place this month in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We are proud to be supporting our New England Chapter athletes as they travel to compete, connect, and showcase their strength, determination, and spirit. It is always an incredible experience - one that reminds us of the power of adaptive sports to transform lives. We will be sharing highlights and photos from the Games in next month's newsletter, so be sure to stay tuned!

In the meantime, this edition includes information about two of our own cornerstone events coming up in August - and we hope to see many of you there:

Annual Chapter Clambake – August 24th

We are heading back to the Italian American War Veterans Post 45 in Marlborough, MA for our beloved Annual Summer Clambake - a day of great food, friendship, and community. In the past this event was branded and promoted as our Annual Chapter Banquet in honor of our members, but due to popular demand we have had this Clambake the past several years to informally gather as Chapter members, staff, volunteers, VA staff, donors and friends to honor our members and the good work of our Chapter. See inside this newsletter for full details and to RSVP via Event Brite. Space is limited, so register soon!

Annual Chapter Golf Tournament – August 18th

We look forward to teeing off once again at the beautiful South Shore Country Club in Hingham, MA. This is one of our biggest fundraising events of the year, and all proceeds directly support our Chapter's programs and services for veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders.

[Click Here to register for the Golf Tournament](#)

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director

*We all had a great
time at last years
annual Clam Bake.
Hope to see you there
on August 24th*



*Whether you are an
athlete, a supporter, or
just someone who believes
in Chapter's mission,
thank you for being part
of this community. Here's
to a great summer, and
I look forward to seeing
many of you soon!*



Washington Update

House Committee Hearing Examines Veterans Legislation

On June 24, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, met to examine nearly a dozen bills impacting the availability of benefits for veterans. In a statement for the record, PVA strongly endorsed the **Caring for Survivors Act (H.R. 2055)**, which would increase the amount of VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to an amount equal to 55 percent of the compensation received by a 100 percent service-disabled veteran with a spouse. This change would bring the benefit in line with the standard for survivors of federal employees. The bill would also reduce the timeframe a veteran needed to be rated totally disabled from 10 to five years. Current law restricts the DIC benefit for survivors if the veteran was rated at 100 percent for less than ten years before his or her death. The reforms included in the Caring for Survivors Act would allow greater numbers of survivors to benefit from this important program.

PVA Member Advocacy Toolkit Now Available

PVA recently released an advocacy toolkit designed to empower individuals, regardless of experience level, with resources and guidance to effectively advocate. By sharing personal stories and engaging in meaningful conversations, PVA member advocates can drive meaningful change, locally and nationally, while shaping a better future.

SCAN TO QR
TO SEE THE
TOOL BOX



We also supported the **Ernest Peltz Accrued Veterans Benefits Act (H.R. 3123)**, which would allow the VA to award entitlement to accrued pension benefits to the surviving family members of veterans who were awarded entitlement but who died before their benefits were paid. In many cases, accrued benefits can be paid to surviving family members in DIC claims. We believe that it makes sense that the VA treats Non-Service Connected (NSC) Pension claims the same. Additionally, veterans who are eligible for NSC Pension benefits are at the poverty level, so these funds could be critical to helping the surviving family members.

Finally, the Veterans Health Administration currently lacks an integrated system to manage applications and appeals pertaining to its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). As a result, medical records and patient documents are scattered across multiple platforms, many of which are not accessible to all VA staff involved in the process. This creates delays, confusion, and unjust denials, particularly during appeals, which can take years to resolve. Also, some of our members receive care from outside providers that could be relevant to their PCAFC application; thus, capturing this information is extremely desirable.

PVA supported the **Veterans' Caregivers Appeals Modernization Act (H.R. 3833)**, which seeks to create a single system where medical records, including those from providers outside of VA, PCAFC applications, PCAFC assessments, and Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Team decisions through all levels of appeals would be kept. This would give all interested parties access to the complete information for each veteran and caregiver through a single records system. Such a

continued on page 15

From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

This month, I want to shine a spotlight on an article in this newsletter that you won't want to miss. My fellow Board Member, Paul Nyerick, has written a heartfelt tribute to Dr. Laura Davis, who recently retired after 29 years of service at the West Haven VA Medical Center. Dr. Davis has been a longtime ally to our Chapter and a trusted advocate for paralyzed veterans throughout New England. I had the honor of helping select a special gift for her retirement on behalf of our Chapter - a beautiful mantle clock - symbolizing the time and care she gave to so many. Please take a moment to read Paul's article. Dr. Davis truly deserves all the recognition and thanks we can give.

As we publish this July newsletter edition, our Chapter is gearing up for one of the most exciting events of the year - the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, taking place in Minneapolis, Minnesota this year. We're incredibly proud of the athletes representing New England, and we can't wait to cheer them on as they compete and connect with veterans from across the country. As we do every year, our Chapter delegation is sporting brand-new shirts - take a look at the photo below to see just how sharp the team will be looking! These shirts represent not just our Chapter pride, but the strength and determination of every veteran athlete who trains and competes year-round.



Kathy and Brad Carlson look forward to seeing you at the annual Clam Bake.

Looking ahead to August, we hope to see many of you at two of our most anticipated annual events:

The New England PVA Annual Golf Tournament is taking place on August 18th at South Shore Country Club in Hingham, MA. This is a great day on the greens and a key fundraiser for our Chapter. Thank you in advance to our Golf Tournament Committee members Holly Warshaw, Jim Clark, Mitch Fishman, and Mark Murphy. I am honored to be working with them on the Committee as well to make this year's tournament a huge success once again.

On August 24th, we'll gather for our Annual Clambake at the ITAM Post 45 in Marlboro, MA, a long-standing tradition of our Chapter. Check the back this newsletter for how to RSVP, or go to the Chapter website.

Finally, thank you for being part of our Chapter family. Your steadfast and supportive presence and participation are what makes this community stronger. Hope to see you around this Summer!

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson
Chapter President & National Director



Oppose Dismantling the VA's SCI/D System of Care

Time has proven that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the best provider of care for veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D). It is essential that leaders in Washington, DC know this so they can ensure the VA's SCI/D system of care is protected. In recent years, we have seen cracks begin to develop in the system as it struggles with numerous clinical vacancies and infrastructure deficiencies that compromise veterans' care. We need to reverse these trends.

Join PVA National President Robert Thomas by signing your name to ensure Congress and the Administration know that its SCI/D system of care is necessary for the health of paralyzed veterans and is an essential part of the VA system. Our goal is to uplift your voice with the petition when President Thomas testifies before a Joint Session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees this spring.

Petition Text

We urge you to oppose dismantling the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders (SCI/D) system of care, as veterans overwhelmingly prefer to receive their care at the VA and community providers are not equipped to adequately meet their needs. Veterans with an SCI/D tend to have complex medical needs, resulting in a need to see a multitude of medical specialists in a variety of different fields. The cohesive medical care provided by the VA medical system ensures that veterans can receive the care they need in one place. It also alleviates the often burdensome need to forward their complex medical history from one specialist to another to ensure their complex cases are fully cared for.

The VA's SCI/D system is the crown jewel of its health care system. The VA's integrated approach enhances continuity of care and fosters trust among veterans, who value the specialized services tailored to their unique needs. The failure in recent years to properly fund, staff, and invest in the system's infrastructure is slowly dismantling the SCI/D system of care, leaving paralyzed veterans with inferior care options in the community. The United States government must affirm its commitment to those who served, particularly those with the most significant disabilities, and ensure they receive the best possible care where they feel safe and comfortable.

PVAction Force Update: Sign Our Petition

We need your help as we raise our united voice through our petition urging Congress to oppose any efforts to dismantle the VA's spinal cord injuries and disorders system of care. Our goal is to reach 5,000 signatures by June's Advocacy/Legislation Seminar. We currently have over 2,800 signatures. When we meet with members of Congress in June, we plan to share the number of individuals in their states and districts who have signed the petition to raise awareness on how important this is to us. If you have not had the chance to sign it, there is still time. Sign your name to our petition today.

Scan the QR code to access the petition and help save the VA SCI/D system of care.



VA Summer Sports Clinic July 21st-July 25th

Check back in August
to see the 2025 photos!



Veteran Usability Recruiting Opportunity

PVA recently participated in a briefing by VA's Section 508 Compliance Office, which ensures systems and information technology platforms are compliant with federal laws related to digital accessibility. According to the office, their efforts have increased website compliance from 26 percent in 2022 to 98 percent today.

The VA would like to hear from veterans about the accessibility barriers they encounter. Participating in user experience research studies pro-

vides them with a direct link to veterans about how they engage with VA platforms, apps, and other VA systems. If you would

like to participate in the user experience studies, visit <https://veteranusability.us/>. After registering, you'll be asked to fill out a Participant Recruiting Screener Questionnaire which will determine your eligibility for specific studies. The VA will send studies that align with the responses given in the Screener Questionnaire to further determine your eligibility for participation in each study.



**SCAN QR TO
PARTICIPATE**

Sports & Recreation

Northeast Passage Veteran Recreation

We strive to create an open and welcoming environment for Veterans in all of our programs. Veterans and Active Duty Service Members from all eras and of all ability levels are encouraged to participate in this program. Most options are provided at no cost to Veterans & Members of the Armed Forces through funding from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, a partnership with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Operation Hat Trick and local organizations.

Join Northeast Passage for any of our regularly scheduled Adaptive Sports & Recreation events or check out one of our competitive teams in sled hockey, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair lacrosse or power soccer.

We also have a consistent offering of Veteran specific recreation events throughout the year. Join us, and other local Veterans, for group outings that shift with the seasons.
northeastpassage.org

Northeast Passage offers to Veterans:

Cycling

Saltwater and freshwater fishing

Fly Fishing/Tying

Indoor rock climbing

Wood carving and art

Water skiing

Kayaking & Paddleboarding

Archery

Bowling

Air Riflery

Enjoy Massachusetts State Parks with the Universal Access Program

Discover adaptive recreation programs in Massachusetts state parks. These programs offer specialized equipment, modifications, and staff support and instruction.

The Universal Access Program offers guided adaptive recreation programs year-round and statewide. We strive to make our programs accessible to as many people as possible. We want our programs to feel welcoming, safe, and approachable to people with disabilities.

Our structured programs offer adaptive equipment and gear. Our staff have experience in providing activity instruction and support to people with a broad range of disabilities. We choose our programs locations to be as accessible as possible to people using mobility devices. Our program bases have accessible parking close by.

You will need to pre-register to attend a program. We understand that our program designs and locations may not be accessible to you depending on your individual situation. If you need an accommodation, please let us know during registration. We will do our best to provide the type of support you need to take part in our programs.

Each program has Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC). For safety and risk management considerations, everyone who attends our programs must meet these EEC. If you have questions about the EEC or about accommodations at programs, please get in touch with us.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program provides outdoor recreation opportunities in Massachusetts state parks for visitors of all abilities.



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 for more information, or to schedule a sail.

NDA has organized programs for local athletes in activities including:

- Archery
- Biathalon
- Bocce
- Cross-Country skiing
- Handcycling
- Kayaking
- Power Soccer
- Sailing
- Sled Hockey
- Tennis
- Water Skiing
- Wheelchair Basketball

Find out more at www.disabledathletics.org



Veterans Fishing Tournament

The Veterans Fishing Tournaments are open water bass tournaments for veterans or service members with a permanent physical disability, visual impairment or PTSD. Tournaments are held in May on Candlewood Lake in Danbury, CT or in September on Lake Congamond in Southwick, MA. Each veteran will be paired with an experienced angler and boat captain for a day on the water. The tournament includes all fishing equipment, a weigh-in and an awards luncheon. Prizes are awarded for the top 3 weights.

This event is organized in collaboration with the Major Steven "Roy" Andrews Fishing Outreach Program and CT Bass Nation.

<https://sportsassociation.gaylord.org/veterans-fishing-tournament>

Lake Congamond

Date: September 16, 2025

Check-in: 7 a.m. – 7:15 a.m.

Fishing: 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Weigh-In: 2 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Awards and Lunch: 3 p.m. – 4 p.m.



Senate Appropriations Committee Looks at Proposed VA Funding Numbers

VA Secretary Doug Collins testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs on June 24 to discuss the Administration's fiscal year 2026 budget request. To quickly recap, the Administration requested a total of \$441.3 billion for the department. Roughly \$134.6 billion of that amount would come from discretionary spending. That coupled with \$52.7 billion in mandatory spending for the Toxic Exposures Fund (TEF) would give VA \$187.2 billion for its operational needs in the next fiscal year which begins on October 1, 2025.

Secretary Collins told the subcommittee his goals for the VA are the same as any veterans service organization and those who have served: easy and good access; quality facilities; and excellent and efficient use of taxpayer dollars. When asked about the accuracy of the department's projected needs, he told Subcommittee Chairman, Senator John Boozman (R-AR), that they are keeping a close eye on what is happening with the department's funding to ensure there won't be a need to request supplemental funding later in the year. He said their projected numbers and assumptions were "solid," and assured the committee that VA is where it needs to be.

Ranking Member Jon Ossoff (D-GA) asked how much of the medical services request would be allocated for personnel and how many people he intends to employ through these accounts. Secretary Collins said there are currently 465,000 VA employees, of which 409,000 are in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). He intends to bring the latter number down slightly to 396,000 employees, but they are not cutting any physicians. He said they would probably be hiring even more and promised to provide subcommittee members with more details later in the week.

In an exchange with Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), the secretary said the implementation of 51 pilot projects under the Elizabeth Dole Act is on track and 10 have not been fully implemented. Also, nine of them are behind schedule due to funding challenges, and a couple have not yet started. Other topics were discussed, including the need to change how the VA approaches new construction, the possibility of a large reduction in force, and the department's ongoing effort to implement a new electronic health record.

REMINDER: Seeking Potential Class Members in Lawsuit Against Car Rental Company

Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) filed a class action lawsuit against Hertz for failing to provide hand controls in most of the types of vehicles they offer for rent. DRA is seeking policy changes on behalf of a proposed class of people with mobility disabilities. If you have ever tried to rent a vehicle with hand controls from Hertz but could not get the type of vehicle you wanted, DRA wants to hear from you! DRA has put together a simple survey to collect potential class members' contact information. DRA will contact everyone who fills out the form. You can access the survey using the QR.. You can learn more about this lawsuit on [DRA's Ho v. The Hertz Corporation webpage](#).



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

PVA Submits Comments on DOE's Direct Rules

PVA recently submitted public comments in opposition to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) proposed direct final rules Rescinding New Construction Requirements Related to Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs or Activities and Rescinding Regulations Related to Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs or Activities (General Provisions). The direct final rules propose to eliminate critical systems ensuring physical access to facilities receiving DOE funds. These systems play an essential role in the implementation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which protects disabled people from discrimination and includes "elimination of architectural barriers" as one of its central aims. If implemented, these final rules could lead to new construction that is inaccessible to people with disabilities, and upend decades of reliance on established accessibility standards, creating conflicts with other statutory and regulatory standards.

The proposed rules would go into effect on July 15, unless significant adverse comments were received by June 16. Significant adverse comments are those that oppose the rule and, alone or in combination, raise serious issues with each of its key justifications—issues serious enough to require a detailed response.

PVA's comments expressed our concerns about the proposed rules and urged DOE to withdraw them. The comments detailed how the rules are procedurally unlawful because direct final rulemaking is reserved for the promulgation of routine and non-controversial rules. The comments also discuss the history and importance of the rules DOE is trying to eliminate and how Congress has repeatedly and consistently recognized the need for design standards to ensure access for disabled people and consistency for federal funding recipients. PVA will continue to monitor the status of this rulemaking.

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Serving New York & Western MA



NEW ENGLAND PVA CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

The Event

Serving paralyzed and disabled Veterans for over 75 years, the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America is pleased to offer the 5th Annual Golf Classic. We invite all companies, individuals and friends of New England PVA to participate in this grand charity tournament.

Tournament

11:00 a.m. Have lunch, purchase your raffle and Mulligan entries and check out our silent auction items.

Noon. Shotgun Start, rain or shine. Scramble format.

4:00 p.m. Enjoy a beverage and place your bids on silent and ticket auction items.

4:30 p.m. "Golf in Italy" buffet served from Ironwood of Hingham.

Registration

Golf \$600 – Foursome or \$150 Single
Includes all meals and a swag bag

Who Benefits

We hope to fill the playing field with 120 golfers supporting the free programs and services provided by New England PVA to paralyzed veterans throughout New England.

NON-Profit

New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America is a Registered 501(c)3 Non-Profit. EIN: 04-6112881

Questions

Contact Holly Warshaw

Phone 508-846-0538

Email holly@pvanewengland.org

**MONDAY
AUGUST 18, 2025
NOON
SHOTGUN**



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**SIGN UP EARLY WE WILL CLOSE
TOURNAMENT AT 120 GOLFERS**

DEADLINES

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Registrations Friday, August 1, 2025

www.pvanewengland.org/golfclassic



charity
GOLF
classic

Washington Update continued

Accessibility at the National ADA Symposium

On July 17-18, Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley and Advocacy Attorney Anthonya James presented on transportation and hotel accessibility at the National ADA Symposium in Atlanta, Georgia. The National ADA Symposium is a comprehensive conference on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Symposium is an initiative of the ADA National Network and coordinated by the Great Plains ADA Center. Over 80 sessions covering a wide variety of ADA topics, including accessible parks and recreation, venue accessibility, web accessibility, and accessible housing, were presented during the event.

Ms. Ansley and Ms. James presented two sessions at the Symposium. The first presentation, “Travel Barriers for Wheelchair Users – Hotels: The ADA, Best Practices and Advocacy,” discussed the accessibility barriers wheelchair users often encounter at hotels, as well as ADA requirements for accommodations, and how hotels can go above and beyond the minimum legal requirements. The other presentation, “The Future of Transportation: The Impact of Disability Accessibility and Equity,” discussed evolutions in transportation, new technology, revisions to old technology, and the effect of recent changes in Washington, DC, as well as the need to shift advocacy strategies.

The National ADA Network and the Great Plains ADA Center’s websites offer ADA webinars, resources on ADA topics, and technical assistance for answers to ADA questions.

www.pvanewengland.org

PVA Policy Priorities

With a new Congress and a new Administration in Washington, D.C., PVA’s priorities for 2025 are focused on ensuring access to the care and benefits PVA members have earned and the civil rights protections they deserve. We look forward to working with our champions to move these priorities forward throughout the year.

PVA priorities for 2025 are as follows:

- **Protect VA’s Specialized Health Care Services**
- **Increase Access to Long-Term Services and Supports for Veterans with SCI/D**
- **Improve Veterans’ Financial Security**
- **Enhance Access to Health Care Services for Veterans with SCI/D**
- **Defend the Freedoms of Veterans with Disabilities**

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Washington update*continued from page 4*

move is way overdue and might be achievable by leveraging VA's existing systems versus creating or procuring a new product. The bill also clarifies deadlines to file an appeal and allows caregivers to be eligible for past-due caregiver stipends, if the caregiver application is eventually granted on appeal, including in cases where the veteran dies during the pendency of the appeal.



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



New England Chapter

Annual Chapter Banquet & Clambake

Sunday, August 24th

Italian American War Veterans Post 45
Marlborough, MA

Free for members and guests, VA and Chapter Staff,
and volunteers. Under a pavilion with DJ and cash
bar. Fellowship and fun for all!



*Scan the QR to sign-
up for the Clam Bake.*

Join Us at Upcoming Events

Annual Chapter Golf Tournament

Monday, August 18th

South Shore Country Club in Hingham, MA

12 noon shotgun start on

Dinner, drinks, and awards to follow

A great day of golf!

Register for the 2025 NEPVA Golf Tournament

