

New England PVA Shines at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games

By Mark Murphy, Executive Director NEPVA

Last month, members, Chapter and VA staff and volunteers of our New England Chapter joyfully traveled to Minneapolis, Minnesota to take part in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games - the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the entire world. The Games bring together veterans from across the country for a week of competition, solidarity, and community, and our Chapter was proud to be represented among such an inspiring group of athletes. Our New England athletes gave it their all, competing in events such as swimming, slalom, pickleball, boccia, 9-ball billiards, archery, air rifle and more. It was a fantastic week filled with sportsmanship and memories - and our members brought home several medals to show for it. We are proud of their accomplishments and look forward to cheering them on at next year's National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Detroit.

While the event was filled with excitement and achievement, our Chapter faced an unexpected challenge upon arrival. Several of our members who rely on bed lifts for their daily needs discovered that their hotel rooms were not equipped with the necessary equipment. For these members, the lack of proper accommodation could have seriously impacted their ability to participate fully in the Games. Thanks to the quick thinking and advocacy of our Chapter President and National Director, Brad Carlson, help arrived fast. Brad

immediately reached out to Tom Wheaton, National Treasurer of PVA, to explain the situation. Drawing on his network and the strong relationships within the PVA community, Tom was able to help coordinate the delivery of the needed lifts in under 24 hours. This swift

It was a fantastic week filled with sportsmanship and memories - and our members brought home several medals to show for it.

resolution not only allowed our members to compete without disruption but also demonstrated the true spirit of PVA - where service, care,

and commitment to our members are always top priorities. Brad's dedication to ensuring every veteran's needs are met, paired with Tom's decisive support, turned a potentially difficult situation into a powerful example of teamwork and advocacy in action. Our Chapter is grateful for the unwavering support of our partners at PVA National and for leaders like Brad and Tom who go above and beyond to serve veterans. Serving our members is at the very core of what we do - whether it's on the competition floor or behind the scenes, we are always ready to roll into action.



NEPVA Members, Volunteers and VA staff at the 2025 Vet Games

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



Dear Friends,

Last month I had the privilege of attending the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Minneapolis, Minnesota alongside several of our New England PVA athletes, Chapter volunteers, and VA staff. This annual event is the largest wheelchair sports competition in the world, and while it represents one of our Chapter’s major expenses each year, it is truly one of the most impactful weeks for the veterans who participate. Seeing our athletes challenge themselves, forge new friendships, and compete with passion and determination reaffirms why this investment is so important.

I want to extend my deepest thanks to all our members who represented the New England Chapter so well, and to our dedicated volunteers and VA staff who so selflessly served our members throughout the week. Their commitment, energy, and support made a difference every single day of the Games.

I also want to share that we recently concluded our Chapter elections, and I am pleased to announce the results:

- Chapter President: Brad Carlson
- Vice President: Mike Moran
- Directors: Bernice DeBlois, Gary Jezierski, Dustin Soroka, and Keelan Zenion

As we stagger elections every couple of years in accordance with our by-laws, I want to congratulate these Board members for being elected and also recognize our entire Board of Directors who truly are the backbone of who we are and what we do as a Chapter. A special thank-you goes to member Mike Savicki for chairing the Election Committee and offering his support and feedback to ensure this year’s election was run so seamlessly.

Finally, it is not too late to join us for one of our favorite traditions of the year: the Annual Chapter Clambake on August 24th. This is a wonderful opportunity for members, families, and friends to come together, enjoy great food, and share in our Chapter’s community. You can reserve your spot by reaching out to me or clicking the QR code in this newsletter.

I look forward to seeing many of you there - and to continuing to serve this incredible community.

Sincerely,

Mark Murphy
Executive Director



Kids Day is one of the most popular events of the National Veterans Games.



Our Members at the 2025 National Veterans Wheelchair Games



From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

It is an honor to share that I have been re-elected to serve as President of the New England PVA for another 3 years. I am deeply grateful to everyone who voted for me and participated in our Chapter election process. Your confidence and trust mean a great deal. I also want to thank all our other Board members for their willingness to serve and their dedication to our mission. A special congratulations to Mike Moran on being elected as Vice President and recently elected Directors in Bernice DeBlois, Gary Jezierski, Dustin Soroka, and Keelan Zenion.

Last month, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games proved once again why they are such an inspiring and impactful event. Our NEPVA Coasters brought home an incredible 19 medals - 17 of them gold! 27 members and volunteers represented our Chapter with excellence, sportsmanship, and team spirit. My heartfelt thanks to all of the volunteers who made the week possible.

Looking ahead, our Annual Chapter Golf Tournament will take place on August 18th at South Shore Country Club in Hingham. This event is always a highlight of our summer and an important fundraiser for our Chapter. I look forward to sharing the results and photos in next month's newsletter.

Happy 101st Birthday!



by Brad Carlson
NEPVA President



Also, don't forget - there's still time to register for our upcoming Clambake! Join us for a day of fun, live entertainment, awards, and friendship. Check the flyer in this issue for more details.

Finally, I want to express a special thank you to our Chapter Executive Director Mark Murphy for his tireless dedication and support. From major events like the Wheelchair Games and Golf Tournament to building stronger programs and partnerships, his leadership has been instrumental in strengthening our Chapter.

Thank you all for your continued support and commitment to our Chapter. I look forward to the months and years ahead as we continue to grow, serve, and make a difference together.

Sincerely,

Brad Carlson
Chapter President & National Director



Above: Chapter President Brad Carlson high fives another competitor after their match.

Left: We wish Mr. James Lee a very happy 101st birthday! A celebration of James was held on Sunday, August 10th at the Brockton VA Building 8. Our Chapter is proud to include James as a member and supporter, and we are grateful for his service as a World War 2 Veteran.

It sure was great being able to attend the VA Summer Sports Clinic once again!

by Mike Guilbault

From July 21 to July 25, VA Boston Healthcare held its 15th Annual Summer Sports Clinic in Rhode Island. I was very pleased to be able to attend once again after missing the last few due to hospital inpatient status and medical issues. This year, almost half the participants were first timers! What a great thing to see, word-of-mouth is getting out there how beneficial that these programs can be. The famous saying from our Winter Sports Clinic still holds true, "Rehabilitation through Recreation". There is no better place to witness how true this is until you see what happens at these Clinics!

The week began with the participants registering, getting fitted for the bike they're going to ride at Cycling. We then head to the Button Hole Golf Course for lunch, grab the clubs and take some swings. The driving range gets quite busy as most people head there to try their luck hitting some balls. They have a few of the ParaGolfers, a motorized golf chair. Similar to a sit ski you get all strapped in to keep yourself safe, the chair can then be raised to get one in the standing position very similar to a standing table. Us wheelers can then stand and hit balls at the driving range. Advanced golfers

can ride it around the course to play a round; however, this is an intro day so they stay at the driving range where everyone can try them out. I just grabbed a wedge and putter and headed over to the practice green with some fellow Wolves and practiced chipping and putting. There are those that play golf regularly and they can head right out and start playing the course. Everyone had fun and was cooked by the sun! Once again VA medical looked after us and had plenty of sunscreen so there were no lobsters getting on the bus back to the hotel.

We jumped back on the bus for the ride back to Warwick, where everyone got cleaned up, dressed up and prepared to attend the Opening Ceremonies. There we have a decent dinner and the MC starts the week's program. The Chaplain gave the invocation and then some of the VIPs attending speak, wish us luck and let us know how pleased they are the VA is able to offer the event. We are very lucky here in New England, we are one of very few VAs that offer such great Recreational Therapy programs. I believe we are the only VA that holds these week long Clinics. Each team is then presented their Guide On. After

completion of every event the volunteers give the team a white small ribbon with the name of the event to attach to the top of the Team Guide On. The participants are broken up into 4 teams, the Foxes, the Hawks, the Bears and the Wolves. Each Team gets together for a Team meeting where you actually meet your team leaders in person after talking with one on the phone. The Captains then ask who is willing to be the one responsible for the Guide On. It needs to go everywhere the Team does and be available at each venue. You also meet your teammates, some of whom I had never met. Having attended so many Clinics I was already good friends with some of my fellow Wolves. We actually had four NEPVA members on our team! Way more than any other team, whether that was an advantage or disadvantage I guess you'd have to ask our Team Captains.

The real fun begins on Tuesday and Wednesday. Each day the buses make a trip to either Barrington or Newport and two teams go to each location. In Newport, we do sailing and surfing. My team sailed in the morning and surfed in the afternoon. We have lunch there at the Sail to Prevail venue near Fort Adam's State Park in

Newport Harbor. The other teams ride to Barrington where there they participated in cycling and kayaking. This year Del's Lemonade once again came and provided free, frozen lemonade to help us keep cool. I have to acknowledge the amazing volunteers who make this all happen, without our partner organizations and the volunteers none of us would be able to do any of these activities. The VA also insures our

“Rehabilitation through Recreation” There is no better place to witness how true this is until you see what happens at these Clinics!

safety as each team is assigned an RN and there is a doctor present at every venue. I was lucky and got Dr. Charles from the Providence VA as a passenger on my boat. He's sailed with me before and enjoys my little bit of crazy. We had much more wind and bigger waves than our last trip together; yet, he decided to join me again. He was even learning to run the sails and what the ropes do to control them!

Our Winter Sports Clinic partner NEHSA, New England Healing Sports Association ran the kayaking on Brickyard Pond. Many of their volunteers also assisted with cycling on the East Bay Bike Path along with some from Northeast Passage, who

brought plenty of bikes down. The Sail to Prevail program in Newport once again had a bunch of amazing volunteers and a good time was had by all. My Instructor Morgan is heading to Michigan State as a freshman, I hope she has a great year as a Spartan. There wasn't much wind and sailing was not as fun; yet, you learn more about sailing in light wind since it's so much easier in a good strong wind. Morgan did teach me a

few tricks to help in light wind, she made sure to advise me that what she showed me was illegal in a race! The volunteers there are all very good at sailing and many have been sailing since they were quite young and most have raced. At least the wind wasn't so little that they had to send the motorboat out to tow us in, this year it ran around with the photographer who took some great photos!

The same can be said for the wonderful people from AmpSurf. We ate lunch headed down to Second Beach for surfing Tuesday. We had many volunteers help push us out to the beach, get us out into the water and onto the boards. Then as-

sisting us with the surfing and although the waves weren't great, you need quite a team to push out through the incoming waves. Most of us could not paddle out there on our own. It sure gives one respect for a real surfer that does it all independently! The waves were big enough for us all to catch some great rides. I really enjoyed myself, I wasn't able to use the shorter board with handles I have used in the past.

The AmpSurf crew informed me there was another way I could surf without having to lie on the board. They had me sit up and had a volunteer ride the board sitting behind me to keep me stable. We did so well doing so that my Instructor Justin who was pushing us onto the wave as it came in was able to jump on and stand behind my helper, his daughter Emma. I was excited since I was the only one on my team that did the triple thing, and we did it many times! I was pretty pleased and rode until they wouldn't let me go anymore! I had an amazing day and the water temperature was beautiful, no wetsuit required this year.

My team then went to Barrington on Wednesday where we hand cycled in the morning, had lunch and then pushed across a parking lot to get to the pond where the kayaking crew was ready to help us go pad-

continued from page 8



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ding. I have to mention Kevin Carr, owner of Creating Ability, who was not there this year, but has attended many times in the past. We utilize many of the devices he's invented which make adaptive kayaking so much more enjoyable for those of us with limited mobility. The transfer box he invented to help us wheelers get in and out of the kayak is a true lifesaver and gives one's shoulders a break.

After two great days of fun, Thursday we went to Johnson and Wales College in Providence. There we had a sports day and there was multiple sports available for everyone to try at the Wildcat Field House! We had bowling, cornhole, ladder golf, pickle ball, basketball, boccia and curling.

I believe I had the most fun of all on that day. I miss going to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games which was a conflict as the weeks overlapped and I decided to stay in Rhode Island. One thing I've missed very much at the NVWGs is the Annual Kids Day where I've been lucky enough to be a Mentor to young disabled children from the local area where the games are held, this year it was in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I had a youngster to Mentor here at Sports Day!

At the sports day, I was lucky enough that since CDCE Chief Matt Edwards brought his son Lincoln, I was able to have him

as my partner in bowling, ladder golf and cornhole plus we played some boccia, which Lincoln got very good at. He is probably playing as I write this since his mom planned to buy a Boccia set and they're on vacation now. I really enjoyed getting to know the young man and I understand he was standing up and surfing the day I was in Barrington.

Each Team was at a different venue Tuesday and Wednesday so I only was able to chat with my fellow Wolves those days. It was really great getting out and seeing my fellow veterans from every Team and getting to chat with them at the Sports Day. I haven't been able to attend these activities in a few years so it was great to be back. I also enjoyed watching the first timers have a wonderful time. The self-confidence people gain during these activities allows them to go home and be comfortable trying all kinds of new things.

After returning from Johnson and Wales and getting cleaned up, it was time for the Closing Ceremonies Banquet. Master of Ceremonies, Matt Edwards did a great job as always, and as the teams turned in their Guide Ons to conclude our week, he then called up the volunteers from each venue to present an award for their event. This year my Team Captains were very proud since three of the five awards were pre-

sented to one of my fellow Wolves teammates. Another wonderful benefit of the closing ceremonies is many of the VA VIPs that sign off on the funding in order to run these recreation programs were present.

One great thing I saw was volunteer extraordinaire Michelle Bergeron got a bike company to bring down a bicycle, which could be used by some of us who were unable to use the bikes available. She was one of the volunteers that rode with me when my bike broke so she was able to explain what happened and how having one of those bikes would benefit myself and others with similar mobility impairments. With the people who sign off on the purchase of such equipment there to see it was really great timing, thank you so much Michelle.

Now for the award winners, so many people could have won these awards and it's very difficult for the volunteers to choose only one, but they do their debating and discussions and come up with one person to receive an award for each venue. There was only one unanimous pick. That was the Kayaking award that went to Connecticut NEPVA member Thomas Ferland. There is a pretty good story that goes into the reason why but I'll leave that for you to find out. All you have to do is talk to anyone who attended the clinic as

they all know the story since it was told when the award was given.

The Kayaking award was presented by Carly Bascom NEHSA ED but Thomas also called up Jen Stark from the White River Junction VA and a NEHSA volunteer as well. I think he just wanted his picture to have him surrounded by ladies!

Jen also presented the Cycling award



to Corinne McGrath-Preston from VT.

Hadley and South made the trip up from Newport to represent Sail to Prevail and present the Sailing award to Sarah LaPlante from RI. Each of those award winners were fellow Wolves, my Team Captains were quite happy. The next award was for Surfing and Randi Woodrow was there to represent AmpSurf and presented the Surfing award to Vesper Aisling of New Hampshire.

She told us the story about how Vesper was scared to go in the water originally but ended up standing up and surfing the entire time, pretty good for a Rookie! This year they added a new award, the Rookie of the Year Award and that was won by Team Foxes Joe Kozaczka. The final award presented was the Best Volunteer won by Air Force Veteran, Dany Cote from the White River Junction VA. I'm sure that was a very difficult one to pick as well since every one of the volunteers who helps make these activities available to us all is an award winner in my book.

Finally the highlight of the night, the amazing Slideshow put together by Emily Ostroff who works nonstop all week collecting the pictures from all the photographers. I won't even get into all she does, it's amazing. You can see for yourself. Check

out: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUdZiq8-10w>

There is also some really great drone footage of Surfing taken by Justin Speegle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6khLiWYycU>



Many Thanks to all the great Photographers;

Emily Ostroff
Ron Miyashiro
Jen Stark
Kelly Costa
Randi Woodrow
Laura Vigneau
Barrett Franklin
Damien Powell
Michelle Bergeron
Elizabeth Mossi

Service Officers Report

Hello to all chapter members. With summer in full swing comes the need to keep cool and beat the heat. Be sure to be aware of the temperature in your surroundings; and make sure to monitor your own temperature as you enjoy these warm summer days.

The Senate is currently considering a rule passed by the House that clarifies issues related to adaptive equipment. The bill, which is titled the Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation Act of 2025 (H.R.1364), clarifies the inclusion of medically necessary automobile adaptations in the Department of Veterans Affairs' definition of "medical services". The act is written to ensure veterans with disabilities may more easily access vehicle modifications they need.

The bill specifically modifies Section 1701(6)(I) of title 38, United States Code, to read as follows:

The provision of any medically necessary automobile adaptations for driver or passenger use, including—

1. ramp and kneeling systems
2. raised doors or lowered floors
3. raised roofs
4. air conditioning
5. occupied and unoccupied mobility lifts
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by Michael Snape,
Senior National Service Officer

This amendment will make clearer what is considered medically necessary automobile adaptations and help to eliminate uncertainty raised in this area during the recent passage of the Advancing Uniform Transportation Opportunities (AUTO for Veterans Act) (See May/November 2024 articles for more information on this act) as to what are considered eligible adaptations. The bill is currently in committee in the Senate. Passage of this rule will hopefully reduce/eliminate confusion as to what is considered necessary medical equipment for eligible chapter members as they apply for future auto grants and adaptive equipment.

We will address any further action on this proposed rule in a future article. If you have any questions or concerns related to current adaptive equipment or auto grant issues in the interim, please discuss them with your local PVA National Service officer.

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](#).



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In Memoriam – Charles A. “Charlie” Schena

We are saddened to share the passing of Charles A. “Charlie” Schena, longtime member and former Treasurer of the New England PVA, on July 27, 2025, at the age of 73. A U.S. Air Force veteran, dedicated volunteer, and passionate advocate for the disability community, Charlie devoted his life to service and to championing causes that improved the lives of others. Charlie’s leadership and advocacy played a role in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and his decades of volunteer work left a lasting legacy. He will be remembered for his positivity, kindness, and commitment to making a difference.

Chapter President and National Director Brad Carlson and his wife Kathy, along with Chapter volunteer Denise Pease, attended Charlie’s wake service on behalf of our Chapter. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife, Marion, his son Michael and family, and all who knew and loved him. May he rest in peace.



PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA – REGIONAL NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICERS

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DJ, games, 50/50 raffle, cash bar, lots of fun!

SUNDAY AUGUST 24 2025

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the VA Staff
& Volunteers who
made the trip to
the Games possible!*



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Sports Day at Johnson & Wales



The Rookie of the Year Award was won by Team Foxes Joe Kozaczka seen handcycling below.



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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Paralyzed Veterans of America

New England Chapter

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**JOIN US at
Annual Chapter Banquet & Clambake**

Sunday, August 24th

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and volunteers. Under a pavilion with DJ and cash
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