Technology fueling human connection

How one DAV chapter is using video conferencing to maintain a sense of normalcy during national period of isolation

Physicist, screenwriter and author, Leonard Mlodinow, once said that “social connection is such a basic feature of human experience that when we are deprived of it, we suffer.”

COVID-19 has deprived many of that human experience. However, DAV Chapter 10 in Fairfax, Va., is committed to leveraging the technology of remote video conferencing to stay socially connected to its members while adhering to the guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Using technology to overcome obstacles while creating opportunity, saving lives and improving our quality of life is not a new concept. Many Americans today grew up with more opportunities due to these technological advancements, but most have never lived through a pandemic where the most basic of human interaction can put themselves and others at risk.

“It’s the first time we’ve actually done this type of informational meeting, but we think it’s very important to be able to reach out to our members,” said Chapter 10 Commander Tom Wendel. “We are putting out a lot of good information to our members. Things like how this is affecting the VA, how it’s impacting DAV, our service offices and our appeals offices. Also, we are letting them know how they can deal with stress in this environment and things of that nature.”

While the chapter has hosted various activities online in the past, such as classes about service-connected disabilities, this opens up the possibility for more flexibility in the future for the chapter.
“If you look at how big our organization is, not all of them can make it to a chapter meeting,” said chapter member and Past Department of Virginia Commander Jim Procunier. “We all know people who don’t like to go to meetings. They don’t like to sit around at a meeting, but they like to stay informed. This format allows for them to find ways to be involved without being at a meeting. I think this may open a lot of doors.”

“While DAV’s governing documents don’t allow for official chapter business to be conducted virtually, it’s outstanding that our local leaders are being technologically innovative in order to stay in touch with our members,” said DAV’s National Membership Director Doug Wells. “Online resources can be invaluable for passing important information along, as well as increasing the opportunity for members to be part of our community.”

Nobody knows exactly how long the COVID-19 outbreak will force organizations to conduct business from home, but using remote technology is one way to bridge the gap between not only work, and social interaction. It’s bringing people together again, and the opportunity to bring more veterans into the organization still exists.

“Members are still able to invite other veterans into our fold during these unusual times with DAV’s Recruit-a-Warrior tool,” said Wells. “Simply enter your email address at dav.org/warrior to receive your personalized referral link and send that to your fellow warriors.”

The chapter has received positive feedback from those involved and intend to continue to hold the online gatherings.

“We had three people join us recently who had never been to any sort of meeting before,” said DAV Deputy Legislative Director and Chapter 10 Adjutant Shane Liermann. “There are probably more who have joined us online but have never been to
a physical event. I think meetings are a great thing. I think claims work is a great thing, but the other thing is just connecting with people again. That’s what we want to do. We all need that connection right now.”