

Creating a place to call home



DAV Auxiliary Commander of Montana Meg Parsetich [left] with DAV Auxiliary Adjutant of Montana Marsha Schumacher [right]. Parsetich and Schumacher worked together with DAV Chapter 2 of Great Falls, Montana to revitalize the DAV Transportation Network volunteer drivers lounge at the Fort Harrison (Montana) VA Medical Center.

Montana DAV, Auxiliary members show appreciation for drivers

When Hospital Service Coordinator Dawn Timblin viewed the volunteer driver lounge of the Fort Harrison (Montana) VA Medical Center, she was in shock. The couches were torn-up and worn out, the coffee maker was well beyond its lifespan, and the carpet had clearly seen better days.

“When I started here in January of 2021, I spoke with [the state’s DAV Auxiliary Commander] Meg Parsetich a lot,” said Timblin. “I walked in and that couch and those chairs were just so disgusting. I said we need to do something about this

lounge. That's where they took over."

Parsetich, along with the DAV Auxiliary Adjutant of Montana Marsha Schumacher, took Timblin's concerns and ran with them. Volunteer drivers themselves, they were eager to transform the lounge area and create a more comfortable, inviting space. Over the course of three trips, Schumacher and Parsetich made the 200-mile drive to the state capital of Helena, on the hunt for new furnishings.

The two visited Chapter 2 in nearby Great Falls to request help and found a partner willing to offer new items at cost.



Before [left] and after
[right]

"Ashley Furniture really stepped up to the plate and helped," said National 1st Junior Vice Commander Joe Parsetich, a member of Chapter 2. The team scrubbed everything down and shampooed carpets before moving in recliners, a table with chairs and television purchased by the chapter.

"When I walked in the door I was in awestruck, I couldn't believe what I saw. It was day and night," said Critt Crittendon, a DAV volunteer driver out of Butte, Montana. "I had no desire to go down there in the past but now I'll go down there to take a nap and relax."

Montana is the fourth largest state in the U.S. and the Fort Harrison VA Medical Center is, for many veterans, the closest and only location to receive care. DAV volunteer drivers can cover hundreds of miles on any given day.

"Once we begin a trip we're committed and usually have no place to go," said Crittendon. "Two weeks ago I left for trip.

I was gone from my house for 17 and half hours. The veteran needed to go 227 miles away. I had a four and half hour wait during their appointment. I was lucky I had family I could stay with while I waited, but there was nothing like what we have here at Fort Harrison now. I hope every facility starts to make lounges like this for their drivers."

If you're interested in becoming a volunteer driver, please visit www.dav.org/volunteer.