

DAV 5K goes virtual



Kurt Oehlstrom Frascchetti and family participate in the 2020 virtual DAV 5K.

Annual event to honor veterans hosts

With the health and wellness of its participants at the forefront, DAV transitioned its traditional in-person 5K in Cincinnati to a virtual-only event in 2020. The first-ever virtual DAV 5K featured more than 3,400 participants taking part in every state across the country.

While the event kicked off online Nov. 7, individuals could walk, roll, run or ride the distance anytime and anywhere between Nov. 7 and 11 as their way to thank those who served and raise awareness of the issues veterans face each day.

Cleveland native Kurt Oehlstrom Frascchetti knows well how important and life-changing simple awareness of DAV and its services can be for veterans.

"I learned about DAV through the perfect example of Marines taking care of Marines," Oehlstrom Frascchetti said. "I'll never forget it."

He was walking with his youngest son down the street in their new community when he bumped into his new neighbor, DAV service officer Jacob Drost.



Marine veteran Oehlstrom Frascchetti (third from the left) had difficulty pursuing his benefits until chance led him to meet DAV benefits advocate Jacob Drost.

"We introduced ourselves, and as it normally unfolds, we quickly learned that we were both Marine Corps veterans," said Oehlstrom Frascchetti. "As our conversation progressed, my newly found brother noticed I was injured, recovering from a recent surgery, and asked if I was service-connected [disabled]."

Kurt felt like he had injuries that would qualify for a disability rating and had tried to maneuver through the VA claims system in the past. However, the complexity of the process would ultimately keep him from attaining service connection.

“Right then, on a Sunday, on his day off, with zero requirements to act, Drost asked some questions, took that information and went to work,” Oehlstrom Frascchetti said. “Jacob, through the DAV, did for me what I would have never been able to do on my own. He provided me with the support to connect all the dots, making a positive, lasting improvement in my life and health. I will forever be grateful to Jacob as well as DAV for their support.”

It took three years to compile everything needed but ultimately proved successful.

Oehlstrom Frascchetti now has his service connection. Now, living in Pensacola, Florida, he has paid it forward through participation in the DAV 5K and by joining the organization. In 2020, he was the top individual fundraiser and captain of the top fundraising team, who raised more than \$5,000 to support the charity’s mission.

“Over the past few years, this event has become synonymous with camaraderie and perseverance,” said National Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski. “And why wouldn’t it be? There are so many amazing stories you hear as a part of this event, and it’s one of the reasons we look forward to the DAV 5K each year.”



Marine veteran and 2018 Freedom Award recipient Jatáya Taylor pushes her limits during the virtual DAV 5K. Taylor took part

in the 5K by
handcycling her
own course in
Denver's
Washington Park.

The opening ceremonies were hosted by Cincinnati-based radio personalities Chris O'Brien and Janeen Coyle, while DAV's 2018 Freedom Award winner and Marine veteran Jatáya Taylor got things started at the virtual starting line.

"I was thrilled to be a part of it," Taylor said. "It doesn't matter what branch you served in. We are all members of the same team and served to protect the same freedoms. And for all of you who did not serve in the military, you are just as important, because you stand with us and lend your support to ensure we have the ability to enjoy the freedoms that we fought for."

The closing ceremonies included awards for the best finish line photo, most patriotic outfit, best costume, and most unique course or landmark before they finished with virtual cheers.

"This year's 5K was unlike any other we have done," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess, "but the dedication and spirit of our participants did not fade at all. We want to thank our presenting sponsor, Humana, for all of their support in making this virtual event a success. All of our supporters and participants proved that distance was no match for their commitment to our nation's veterans and their families. It's genuinely appreciated and truly inspiring to see."