



THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF DAV AND AUXILIARY
NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2017

MAGAZINE

**“We’re the ones that
STAND UP and go
toward the danger
and disaster to help.”**

DAV responds in full force to aid
veterans impacted by catastrophic
hurricanes in U.S. and Puerto Rico.

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A close-up, vertical view of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes. The flag is positioned on the left side of the image, with the stars visible in the upper left and the stripes extending downwards.

Leading advocates to gather in D.C.

DAV has fought many battles on behalf of injured and ill veterans in our nearly 100-year history. And with so many of our most sacred earned benefits on the table, we cannot afford to ease our committed vigilance to safeguard them—both for today's veterans and for those of future generations. Your participation in our growing network of grassroots advocates is critical as we continue down this path, working to secure what the nation's bravest deserve and have earned for their dutiful military service.

Fighting for our fellow veterans is a noble cause, and your voice is one of the most influential tools to protect what they have earned. Please lend your voice to the cause and join us at DAV's annual mid-winter conference at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Va.

You are invited to stand alongside National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster as she presents DAV's legislative agenda to Congress. You will also have an opportunity to meet face to face with your state's lawmakers to make it clear what DAV is fighting for: sensible and lasting reform to the Veterans Affairs health care system, equitable services for women veterans, expansion of caregiver support to veterans of all service eras, and full funding of the VA's programs and services to ensure veterans receive all the care and benefits they have earned.

The mid-winter conference lineup features numerous workshops and seminars to help you better spread the word about DAV's current efforts and key priorities as you work to guide and support advocacy within your own local communities. Come join your fellow DAV leaders as we work to ensure lawmakers and policymakers in Washington hear the voices of America's ill and injured veterans and their families. ■

DAV Mid-Winter Conference
Feb. 25-28, 2018

For more information, visit
dav.org/events/2018-mid-winter-conference

From the NATIONAL COMMANDER DELPHINE METCALF-FOSTER



Raising the voices of women veterans

For too long, too many women veterans have felt unheard, unwelcome and unappreciated for their service and sacrifices. To mitigate this injustice, we must all continue working together to help inspire and accelerate a much-needed, monumental culture shift in the veterans community that recognizes the contributions and changing role of women in the military. That's why, in late August, women veterans from across the nation gathered in Houston for the 2017 National Women Veterans Summit.

Unfortunately, as many women veterans set out to attend the event, flights were rerouted or canceled by incoming Hurricane Harvey, which wreaked havoc on the area just as the summit was set to get underway.

The VA Center for Women Veterans, supported by groups like DAV, still provided an opportunity for women veterans to share their experiences and discuss some of the most critical agenda items to help ensure we receive the care and recognition we have earned through our service to our nation. In abbreviated fashion, some of the most influential women veterans and advocates took action on VA health care and benefits, employment and homelessness, and needed culture changes to help make the VA a more inclusive and comprehensive system for women.

The tireless work of these advocates in the midst of the tragedy unfolding around them was a true testament to their focus, passion and dedication to

the cause. I'm grateful to see we have such stalwart advocates fighting on behalf of women veterans—both within the VA and among our community of veterans service organizations.

Nearly 30 years ago, I walked into a chapter meeting expecting to learn more about our organization. Instead, I was escorted to a meeting of the members' wives. While I would never discount the role of the Auxiliary, I had come to be among my fellow veterans. If I had let myself become discouraged by that initial encounter, I never would have risen through the ranks to become the first female to be elected as DAV's national commander in the organization's near-century history. I never would have had the chance to affect policies and programs as a member of the VA's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. And I never would have had the chance to show other women veterans how grit, determination and fortitude can help to break through new—even historic—barriers.

DAV needs strong leaders to help guide us into the future, and I know there are many capable women and men out there who have what it takes to blaze the trails.

On behalf of DAV, thank you all for your dedicated service to this country. To all my fellow women veterans, I hope you will consider lending your insight and experience as we work to ensure all veterans are empowered to lead high-quality, fulfilled lives.

For more details on the 2017 National Women Veterans Summit, go to Page 10.

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Cover photo by Ricardo Arduengo/Getty Images

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Delphine Metcalf-Foster National Commander
J. Marc Burgess National Adjutant/Publisher

Daniel J. Clare National Communications Director

Ashleigh Byrnes Deputy National Communications Director

Steven Wilson Assistant National Communications Director

Charity A. Edgar Assistant National Communications Director

M. Todd Hunter Assistant National Communications Director

Mary Dever Assistant National Communications Director

Bryan Lett Assistant National Communications Director

James W. Killen Assistant National Communications Director

Austin Shaffner Associate National Communications Director

Doreen Briones Production Manager

Shannan Archer Senior Graphic Designer

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From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS



Remembering fellow veterans in the wake of tragedy

On Veterans Day, we take time to honor those who served in our nation's military and—as veterans—to think of those men and women who stood beside us. But it can also be an opportunity for us to examine how we, as members of DAV, can better accomplish our mission of serving veterans and their families.

Like you, my heart went out to those affected by the devastating flooding in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico caused by this year's destructive hurricane season. The images and footage on television served as a reminder that natural disasters can strike at any time and can indiscriminately destroy the lives of those in the path of destruction. In particular, photos of nursing home residents stranded in chest-deep floodwaters made me think of the particularly difficult time disabled veterans must experience during such tragic events.

As you'll read in this edition of the magazine, our national service officers and members have gone—and are still going—above and beyond to come to the aid of veterans and their families who were impacted by the storms. I am incredibly proud of those who have put in the extra hours to ensure displaced veterans, many of whom have lost everything, have a friend to turn to in their greatest time of need.

To date, DAV has issued more than \$866,000 in disaster relief funding in 2017, and donors have been exceptionally generous in supporting our efforts by contributing

more than \$859,000—the most we have ever raised in a single year. This enables us to continue providing emergency assistance to veterans for the remainder of the year, including those impacted by the outbreak of wildfires in California.

Of course, we need not wait for disasters to strike to offer a helping hand to veterans in our own communities. There are so many injured and ill veterans among us who could use assistance, whether getting to a medical appointment, filing for a disability claim or other benefits, or even just having a friend to talk to.

John F. Kennedy, a DAV member, once said, “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them.”

At DAV, we're fortunate to be able to live out a mission of service to our fellow veterans. Disaster relief is just one example of how we do more than just talk about helping veterans; we are out there in the community doing what we can to help them in the most desperate of times.

My thanks go out to all of our members and staff who have been there to aid their neighbors and fellow veterans. You have no doubt touched many lives through your hard work and caring, generous spirits.

It takes strong communities to recover following such terrible tragedies. I urge you all to keep our fellow veterans in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and California in your thoughts as they work through the next few months to rebuild and restore their homes, neighborhoods and lives.



Adapting to a new normal

"Adapting to a new normal" [July/August edition] brought back memories of my brother-in-law, who served two tours in Vietnam. Post-traumatic stress and Agent Orange exposure were treated as questions. He retired without putting in for disability pay because he feared it would be deducted from his retirement. It should be much easier for veterans to get help with mental health issues and without fear of forfeiture of current benefits, too. **Walter H. Neumann, Spring Hill, Fla.**

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

In your July/August 2017 issue [Letters, editor's note], you addressed the efforts to reduce Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from 10 years to one. My husband, a DAV life member, passed away March 6, 2017, but he was only granted 100 percent disability in July 2010. Because of the 10-year DIC term, I am not eligible for compensation. It took a long time to get 100 percent for him, and we were married 56 years. I sacrificed greatly and supported him in all his endeavors and war-related injuries. (He was a Purple Heart recipient.) I am so glad you support the change. **Melba Sapp, Bonaire, Ga.**

New VA tool

Your article in the July/August 2017 *DAV Magazine*, "New VA tool provides transparency on facility wait times, quality of care," is promoting VA propaganda. Look at wait times for your VA facility on the website, then call for an appointment. The VA data for return appointments shown on their site is a farce manipulated to make the VA brass look good. Click on the more information link to see how the

wait times are actually calculated.

Walt Larson, U.S. Marine Corps

Editor's Response

Trust in the VA has been shaken, and the department must do what it can to rebuild that trust. This new tool is a reasonable attempt to do just that, and the transparency is self-evident, as the website shows the information displayed is the "Average Wait Times at Individual Facilities" and explains that the "average wait times are shown, actual wait times may be shorter or longer." In addition, the link for more information explains in plain language how VA data is generated.

Cover photo

The July/August 2017 cover photo really hit the spot. I read the magazine from cover to cover and enjoyed every article. All the disabled veterans were smiling, which taught me a lesson. I am 100 percent disabled, but I have all my limbs, and my disabilities are minimal compared to the veterans in the magazine. The lesson I took away is gratitude. I am extremely grateful for my health, and I am proud of all veterans. **Kaare Reierstad, Roseburg, Ore.**

Individual Unemployability

I welcomed National Adjutant Burgess' comments in the September/October 2017 issue ["IU proposal 'dead'"] about the recently killed attempt to stop Individual Unemployability benefits. Thank you, sir. I am hopeful other veterans service organizations express

similar gender inclusive concepts.

Curtis MacKenzie, Suffolk, Va.

Choice

It is very disappointing to see DAV opposed to actual choice for medical care for veterans. Many of us are combat-wounded veterans who have suffered pain and hardship our entire lives as a result of our service. Why would DAV, among others, not support us in receiving medical care, wherever and whenever we want or need it? **Jim Haines, Temple, Texas**

Editor's Response

DAV believes veterans deserve the highest-quality health care when and where they need it. Choice must be part of the solution—we support an integrated health care network that centers on partnerships between the VA and private care, and the ability of veterans and their doctors to make health care decisions together. We encourage you to check out our Setting the Record Straight videos on our YouTube channel for more information about views on Choice. Visit youtube.com/DisabledAmericanVeterans.

Facebook

I greatly appreciate the DAV. Been dealing with back problems for so long, filed two claims myself and was denied without ever being seen. I opted to give the DAV a shot and, lo and behold, I got a compensation and pension exam and my examiner connected my injury to service. Thank you for getting the ball rolling. **Michael White**

WRITE TO US We welcome letters from our readers. Please mail them to DAV Magazine, 3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076, or submit them via email to feedback@dav.org. We regret we are unable to acknowledge every letter due to the volume received. We also welcome feedback on our Facebook (facebook.com/DAV) and Twitter (twitter.com/davhq) pages. Letters used are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety. Messages involving individual claims are referred to the DAV Service Department.



Air Force veteran Ron Shelton (right) was able to complete a claim on site at the 96th DAV National Convention with the help of Brandon McKinney, a national service officer.

Decisions

ON THE SPOT

DAV and VA work together to provide expedited claims service at 96th DAV National Convention

By Charity Edgar

National service officers brought life-changing benefits assistance to veterans at DAV's annual national convention. And for the first time ever, claim adjudicators from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs were also on site to help expedite and finalize claims on the spot at this year's event in New Orleans.

"With so many members attending the DAV national convention each year, it only makes sense to bring our renowned claims assistance along with us," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "We were delighted to have not only our staff on site, but our partners at the VA as well, in order to best serve veterans."

This year, the VA provided staff at the event, including decision review officers and raters who could expedite and finalize claims, enabling service officers to provide ready-to-rate cases to them for consideration in real time.

"When DAV approached me about this idea, I immediately saw an opportunity for two organizations with one common goal to work together and improve the claims process for veterans on the spot," said Rob Reynolds, DAV past national commander and current deputy assistant secretary for disability assistance at the Veterans Benefits Administration. "The true credit

belongs to the strong partnership between DAV and the New Orleans regional office employees, who helped make the event a success."

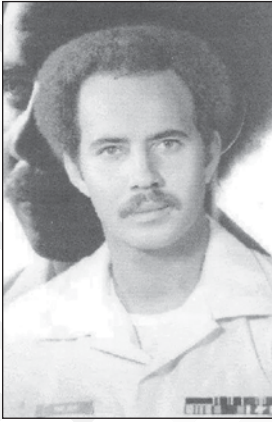
National service officers met with more than 300 veterans at the 96th DAV National Convention in New Orleans. Senior Associate National Service Officer Brandon McKinney, based out of Togus, Maine, was one of the DAV staff members who provided claims assistance.

"When I first enrolled in VA benefits, someone helped me," explained the Air Force veteran. "I'm paying it forward. That's why we [service officers] are chosen for this job. Every single one of us wants to help veterans get the benefits they are eligible for through service."

Hayward "Ron" Shelton was one of the first veterans McKinney met with in the Big Easy. It was the first national convention for the DAV life member from Chapter 6 in Hampton, Va., who was encouraged to attend by his wife Patricia, who serves as the adjutant of DAV Auxiliary Unit 6, and Past Chapter Commander Derek Mackey.

After Shelton, an Air Force veteran, retired from the U.S. Postal Service, his wife had convinced Mackey, who had served as best man at the Shelton wedding, to get him out of the house.

"And boy did he ever!" said Patricia Shelton, who



Above: Ron Shelton served as an air traffic controller in Vietnam.

Right: DAV is a family affair for Ron and Patricia Shelton, who attended their first DAV national convention together in New Orleans.



explained that Mackey brought the couple into what she describes as the DAV family. More than a dozen from the Hampton DAV chapter and DAV Auxiliary unit made the trek together to New Orleans.

Between business sessions, Patricia Shelton urged her husband to talk to a service officer after seeing the signage advertising benefits assistance.

"I walked in, and there was Brandon," said Ron. "I introduced myself, and the rest was history."

Ron Shelton had submitted a VA claim in the past but wasn't sure of the status or the way forward. McKinney looked him up and found the case in appeals. After speaking with the veteran, the service officer believed he could get him a higher rating that better reflected the severity of his post-traumatic stress.

"I was getting ready to cry," said Ron. "I said, 'Are you serious?'"

McKinney worked with the VA and confirmed an increased rating.

"I told my wife, and she started crying. My family means the whole world to me, and this is life changing," said Shelton. "It impacted us in ways I can't express. I'll be able to help my family now."

While serving in Vietnam as an air traffic controller, Shelton had a lot of experiences that continue to haunt him.

"I saw rockets fly by, and one of my best friends hung himself in our barracks," he reflected. The former airman understands that it isn't easy for a lot of people to discuss these experiences or get help for invisible wounds. He encourages fellow veterans to seek assistance through the VA and not be afraid to ask for support through that process.

"I'd tell anyone who has a claim in and isn't sure how things are going to come see DAV," added Shelton.

As for McKinney, he says the best part of his job is being able to tell his wife that he does something great every day.

"I tell veterans what they need in order to obtain their earned benefits. I stay current with, and follow, federal regulations in order to best counsel clients on what or what not to do with each claim," said McKinney. "The benefit I receive is the potential to change people's lives."

To which Shelton responded, simply, "He changed mine." ■



Learn More Online

You don't have to wait until the 97th DAV National Convention next year in Reno, Nev., to receive benefits assistance. Find your local national service officer by visiting dav.org/veterans/find-your-local-office.

From the NATIONAL SERVICE DIRECTOR JAMES T. MARSZALEK



Take control of your claim

The VA claims process can be frustrating for a number of reasons.

Unavailable evidence, bureaucratic hurdles and incomplete paperwork can all lead to delays in the adjudication of your claim—a process

many veterans feel is already long enough. However, the VA has introduced a new claims submission option that allows the department to complete a claim within 30 days of submission.

The Decision Ready Claim (DRC)

initiative allows a veteran with a service-connected disability to submit a disability compensation claim for increase, which is a claim requesting an increase to the current disability evaluation due to the worsening of the condition. To do so, the veteran needs to appoint an accredited representative, such as a DAV national service officer, and work together to file an Intent to File (VA Form 21-0966) to protect the effective date for a potential DRC. This allows the representative and veteran to obtain all necessary records; request medical exams; complete required VA forms; and submit a complete, formal, ready-to-rate claims package that will receive expedited consideration for adjudication.

An ideal claim for the DRC process at this stage requires very little development through the VA to prove an

increase is appropriate. For instance, say a veteran has a 40 percent disability rating for service-connected prostate cancer that is in remission. If the cancer returns, the veteran can work with a

service officer to request an increase accompanied by a Disability Benefits Questionnaire completed either by a VA physician or outside doctor.

While the initiative currently only handles claims for increase, DAV will continue to

work with the VA to expand DRCs for additional types of claims in the future.

This is where you come in, because veterans must use the DRC program for it to succeed. The VA's goal of a 30-day wait from filing to adjudication is completely reasonable, but the VA is not going to come looking for you to ask for your participation. If you're a veteran who meets the current DRC criteria, I encourage you to contact a national service officer to assist you in the process. If not, I encourage you to spread the word among your fellow veterans about this exciting new initiative.

As always, thank you for your service to this great nation. We are forever indebted for your sacrifices, and we will continue to serve you and help you take control of your claim for the best, most timely outcome.

Veterans must use the [Decision Ready Claim] program for it to succeed. ... The VA is not going to come looking for you to ask for your participation.

HELP AMID HAVOC

DAV's Disaster Relief Program provides assistance to veterans and families in the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria

By M. Todd Hunter

Freda Sampe returned to her Texas home in late August after taking her 16-year-old daughter, Amahree, on an important trip to California.

"She has some visual issues," Sampe explained about her daughter. "We recently found out she's legally blind, so I wanted her to see the mountains just in case it worsens."

Perhaps the trip's precious memories lingered fresh in her thoughts, or her family's upcoming move to St. Louis weighed on her mind, but Sampe found herself unaware of the disaster about to unfold—a Category 4 hurricane barreling straight toward the coast of Texas.

She only learned of the incoming storm after returning home to Port Arthur, a coastal town 90 miles east of Houston, when a friend told her she was watching "Harvey" on television.

"So, I clicked the remote and started looking for 'The Steve Harvey Show,'" Sampe admitted of her misunderstanding. "But I found on The Weather Channel that there was a Hurricane Harvey, and I fled."

Having already evacuated the area during Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Ike, Sampe was no stranger to evacuating



Freda Sampe (center) and her daughter, Amahree, received a draft and supply kit from Jennifer Kellogg (left), a national service officer supervisor, after being displaced from her home in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. Sampe's husband, an Army veteran and DAV life member, said, "This is what they [DAV] do—we are all one family."



(Right to left) Chapter 1 Senior Vice Commander Luis Carrasquillo, NSO Supervisor Alex Martinez, Chapter 1 Treasurer Franklin Martinez and two local veterans discuss DAV's disaster relief efforts in response to the damage left by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. Government officials estimate electricity will not be restored to the entire island until sometime in December.

ahead of natural disasters and the devastation they can bring. After packing some family mementos, Sampe and her daughter headed nearly 300 miles inland to Waco to wait out the storm. Unfortunately, they had to wait longer than expected.

"The roads are flooded, the cars are flooded, homes are flooded," she said. "We can't go back to our homes or even see if we still have one. We're just stuck in a hotel room, waiting, until FEMA tells us we can go back."

Finding herself displaced with a disabled daughter for an unknown amount of time, and with her husband—a retired Army veteran—already in St. Louis working his new postal service job, Sampe needed assistance. That's when she found a DAV disaster response team in Waco.

Made up of DAV national service officers, the team issued Sampe and her daughter a disaster relief grant for food, clothing and temporary shelter on account of their status as dependent family members of a veteran.

For Sampe, the assistance meant peace of mind during a troubling and challenging time.

"Vets help vets, right?" said Jennifer Kellogg, a national service officer supervisor. "We're the ones that stand up and go toward the danger and disaster to help our fellow countrymen. That's what we do."

"We were pulling young babies and children out of homes," said DAV Department of Texas Commander Robert Delgado, who led localized relief efforts in Houston in the immediate aftermath of the storm.

While Delgado expected the flooding and downed trees and powerlines, dealing with alligators, snakes and raw sewage was an unforeseen hazard. Regardless,

he and members of his local Chapter 233 banded together to use their personal vehicles to get veterans to the VA regional office.

"We have a deep belief in taking care of one another," said Delgado. "It doesn't matter about race, religion, creed or whatever. We care about our neighbors. And even if it puts us at risk, we'll take that risk to ensure their safety."

Disaster response teams have handed out more than 880 drafts and supply kits throughout Texas since Harvey made landfall, with additional assistance also being provided in St. Petersburg, Florida; Decatur, Georgia; and San Juan, Puerto Rico, in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. DAV has provided nearly 1,510 drafts totaling more than \$573,000 to veterans and their families across the Gulf Coast and Puerto Rico in the wake of these destructive hurricanes—more than half of the \$866,000 the organization has provided nationwide in 2017.

"It's us doing what we're supposed to do. We're keeping the promise," said Delgado. "It's not just filing claims. When we see veterans in need, we're going to take care of them and get them everything we can to get them back on their feet."

For that, Sampe said she and her husband are greatly appreciative.

"He's a lifetime member of DAV," Sampe explained. "He was very proud and said, 'This is what they do—we are all one family.'"

After a pause and a smile she added, "My family is away, but I've been adopted by DAV." ■

Unhindered by Harvey

2017 National Women Veterans Summit a success despite hurricane



Assistant National Legislative Director Shurhonda Love (center) took part in the Veterans Experience panel, sharing insight about her own service and transition to civilian life. (Photo by Bob Levey/Getty Images)

It seemed there was a never-ending series of roadblocks to get the 2017 National Women Veterans Summit up and running in Houston. After being pushed back several times due to logistical concerns, the event was finally on track for Aug. 25–26.

The event, hosted by the VA Center for Women Veterans and sponsored by numerous veterans groups and corporate donors, including DAV, was planned for over 800 women veterans to attend to discuss critical issues and share in sisterhood and camaraderie. From across the country, participants booked their travel and made their way to Texas for an event a long time in the making (the last event was held six years ago), which promised to be one of the largest gatherings of women veterans to date.

And then came Hurricane Harvey, predicted to make landfall as a Category 4 hurricane on the evening of the summit's first day. Houston—and the event itself—was directly in the storm's path.

But after so many setbacks, Center for Women Veterans Director Kayla Williams was not keen to pull the plug altogether. Instead, she relied on the fact that she was surrounded by persistent, versatile and resilient women veterans and went to work condensing two days' worth of events into a half day to ensure participants could experience the spirit of the summit and still get out of Houston before the storm hit.

"I was amazed at how resilient and adaptable all our on-site participants were as we made multiple on-the-fly adjustments to the schedule as the weather forecast progressively worsened," said Williams.

Williams said that, thanks to support from the summit partners, participants were still able to view the documentary film "Journey to Normal"—which

explores the stresses of deployment and challenges of reintegration—and take part in a "comedy boot camp" with women veteran comedians who stressed how humor can be an important part of resilience. Additionally, participants stepped up and took part in retooled panels and sessions.

"Plans were changing every step of the way, but members from DAV and the DAV Interim Women Veterans Committee were boots on the ground," said Assistant National Legislative Director Shurhonda Love. "Our philosophy was—whether there were one or 1,000 participants—as long as it is safe, we would do our best to provide them with the knowledge they came to receive."

Despite the abbreviated schedule, the underlying purpose of the event shone through: Provide women veterans a national venue through which their service could be recognized and their voices heard.

"Hurricane Harvey prevented us from accomplishing all that we wanted to do on site but won't stop us in the long run," added Williams.

She noted her staff is currently working with presenters and panelists to create and share virtual presentations and other resources.

Additionally, Williams is walking away from this year's event with strong support for the VA to hold a national women veterans summit every four years, choosing varied nationwide venues to maximize access to participants across the country.

"The energy and excitement women veterans around the country showed for the summit when it was announced reaffirmed to me how much passion exists among our community to learn about resources and best practices—and to support and encourage one another as veterans," said Williams. ■



What does **VETERANS DAY** mean to you?

Every year on Nov. 11, Americans come together to celebrate the military members and veterans who have so bravely served our country. DAV took to social media to find out what Veterans Day means to the men and women who served, their families and supporters.



William Elkins Honor, sacrifice, hope and freedom. The remembrance of loved ones lost and the ones who returned broken. My duty to my comrades and their families at home who still need help. We must never leave a soldier behind.

Mike Sciales I think of the comrades and good times we had together because it was those people who made it all so rewarding. I think of the ones who never came back, and won't forget what they did for us. Then I see some of the terrible things by the government that deny veterans the care and respect they deserve, and it breaks my heart.

Susana Kelton My husband was a Vietnam vet, and I miss him dearly. Vets from that era were treated with disrespect when they returned from that war. It gives all a chance to show them our support, which was due them. Let us sing praises to all our veterans, here and gone.

Scott Saldukas I think of everything—more than on any other day. Especially, those who have endured selfless pain for a lifetime so everyone can rest their head next to their loved ones. As an OIF/OEF vet, I thank all of them before me, especially Vietnam vets—they dealt and deal with more than any human should have to. Much love to all my vets out there.

Bill Miller As a veteran myself, it is the day I thank all the other veterans I have known over the years, including my best friend and my sister-in-law—heroes both!

Amanda Maria Snyder It's a day to thank our brothers and sisters for having our sixes.

Michael Golden It reminds me of my days as a combat medic and how I would do it all over again.



Tegan Griffith @TeganGriffith It's a family affair for me. I share mutual bonds with my dad and brother, as well as my veteran peers on campus. It's *our* day.



warriorwifeforallife More than I can say, I am with my husband every day of his life and am amazed by his continuing courage. His fight, his will, his desire. I can't put into words what it means to me, but you can damn well believe I think they deserve more than they get!

beccaswinks It's an extra opportunity for me to celebrate and thank our veterans for all they do. I am able to walk out of my front door in safety, speak my mind and worship at will because our men and women have fought, and continue to fight, for the freedoms we enjoy and take for granted every day. They are our guardian angels, watching over and protecting us!

todd.case It shouldn't be just one day out of the year, but for most people it is the one day that they thank each and every veteran for the sacrifices they have made to provide the freedom everyone here has today. I have sacrificed my share, and my knees have paid the price. I am a disabled veteran.

Social networking messages have been edited for grammar, clarity, space and style.

Legislative goals



Our future is
determined by
voices of veterans

By Mary Dever

One of the most important ways a veteran can effect positive change is to advocate for it with our elected leaders. At DAV's national convention each year, members gathered to discuss and approve the organization's legislative and public policy goals for the upcoming year.

These legislative goals are based directly on resolutions submitted by DAV departments and chapters across the country, with DAV members serving as the driving force behind the organization's advocacy mission. This year, at the 96th annual DAV National Convention in New Orleans, members adopted 149 resolutions to support and direct advocacy efforts on behalf of injured and ill veterans, families and survivors.

"Our legislative program is successful because our members are willing to speak up about issues that

matter most," said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. "We fight every day in Washington to ensure Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs hear the collective voice of DAV members. Participation in the resolution process at the chapter and department level is critical, and provides a guide for important policy and legislative decisions we make every day on behalf of the organization."

Following is a partial list of key resolutions adopted at the 2017 convention. To see the full list of resolutions, visit dav.org/learn-more/legislation/resolutions.

Disability compensation and other benefits

- Oppose reduction, taxation or elimination of veterans benefits.
- Support legislation to increase VA disability compensation rates.



“Participation in the resolution process at the chapter and department level is critical, and provides a guide for important policy and legislative decisions we make every day on behalf of the organization.”

—Joy Ilem, National Legislative Director

- Oppose any proposal that would reduce payments of VA disability compensation by payments of Social Security disability insurance or any other federal benefit paid to a veteran.
- Support legislation wherein service in the waters offshore Vietnam establishes a presumption of exposure to Agent Orange.
- Support legislation to remove the prohibition against concurrent receipt of Survivor Benefit Plan and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.
- Support legislation to provide service connection for disabling conditions resulting from toxic and environmental exposures.
- Support legislation to provide realistic cost-of-living adjustments.
- Expand presumptions for service connection for former prisoners of war.
- Support legislation authorizing the presumption of service connection for all radiogenic diseases, and eliminate dose exposure estimate requirements.

Medical and health care services

- Strengthen, reform and sustain the VA health care system.
- Support legislation to provide comprehensive support services for caregivers of severely wounded, injured and ill veterans from all eras.
- Support enhanced medical services and benefits for women veterans.
- Ensure timely access to quality VA health care and medical services.
- Support program improvements and enhanced resources for VA mental health programs.
- Support enhanced treatment for survivors of military sexual trauma.

- Support humane, consistent pain management programs in the veterans health care system.
- Improve the care and benefits for veterans exposed to military toxic and environmental hazards.
- Support legislation to establish a comprehensive program for traumatic brain injury rehabilitation.
- Support sustained and sufficient funding to improve services for homeless veterans.

General issues

- Support sufficient, timely and predictable funding for all VA programs, benefits and services.
- Support legislation to remove the prohibition against concurrent receipt of longevity retired pay and veterans disability compensation for all longevity-retired veterans.
- Support veterans' preference in public employment.
- Protect veterans from employment discrimination when receiving health care for service-connected conditions.
- Support the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.
- Extend military commissary and exchange privileges to service-connected disabled veterans and their dependents.
- Seek the immediate release of any Americans who may still be held captive following any war, and the return and identification of the remains of any Americans who died during those wars.
- Extend space-available air travel aboard military aircraft to all 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans.
- Extend eligibility for mortgage protection life insurance to service-connected disabled veterans rated permanently and totally disabled.
- Increase the face value of Service-Disabled Veterans' Insurance (RH).
- Support the continued growth of Veterans Treatment Courts for justice-involved veterans. ■



Former U.S. Marine and mentor William Delaney embraces a fellow Marine who just completed a treatment program at the Kent County Courthouse in Warwick, R.I. The Veterans Treatment Court opened six years ago in Warwick as the first specialty court in New England to help veterans avoid jail and turn their lives around. (Charles Krupa/AP)

Bill calls for enhanced support in Veterans Treatment Court

A new bill aims to provide more support for military veterans involved with Veterans Treatment Court system, which serves as a treatment option and alternative to jail for offenders accused of low-level crimes.

The bill—the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act (S. 946)—calls for authorization of \$5.5 million for each fiscal year from 2017 through 2027 to hire 50 additional Veterans Affairs outreach specialists to ensure veterans have greater access to effective and personalized treatment throughout their time in the system. Funding priority would be given to VA facilities that work with newly established or understaffed treatment courts.

DAV has long been a proponent of Veterans Treatment Courts and the Veterans Justice Outreach program, and backs the new proposal.

“DAV Resolution 105 calls for the continued growth of Veterans Treatment Courts,” said DAV National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. “DAV’s commitment to this program is demonstrated by the many members who have volunteered to serve as mentors in courts across the country.”

Alternative treatment courts remove veterans from the regular criminal justice process and help them address symptoms that are prevalent among veterans, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse, which is often a form of self-medication. In a treatment court, the presiding judge works with the veteran to establish a structured rehabilitation program tailored to his or her specific needs.

Many DAV members have proudly served as mentors in related initiatives nationwide for nearly

a decade, some having successfully completed the program themselves.

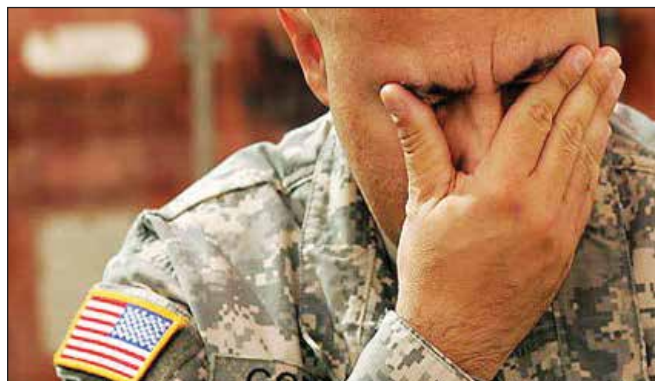
For veterans who do not live in an area with a Veterans Treatment Court, the Department of Veterans Affairs created the Veterans Justice Outreach program, where each VA medical center has named a justice outreach specialist. Outreach specialists serve as a link between veterans, the VA and the local justice system.

Studies show mental illness often plays a role in crimes committed by veterans, and according to the National Institute of Corrections, veterans account for nine of every 100 individuals in U.S. jails and prisons.

There are currently 334 Veterans Treatment Courts throughout the U.S. serving 15,000 individuals. According to a 2016 study published by the Community Mental Health Journal, veterans who participated in a treatment program have shown significant improvement in a number of areas, including mental and emotional health, substance abuse problems, housing challenges, relationships and overall well-being and functionality.

“The goal of treatment courts isn’t about alleviating accountability; it’s about recognizing the unique and extenuating circumstances that draw some veterans into the system in the first place,” said DAV National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster. “The vast majority of veterans, regardless of the mistakes they may have made at a difficult time in their lives, have a unique capacity to contribute to society.

“We should support any effort that will connect them with the care they need to lead productive lives with honor and dignity.” ■



Veterans with ‘bad paper’ discharges getting second look

■ Earlier this year, the Government Accountability Office released a report detailing thousands of potentially improper discharges the Department of Defense (DOD) issued from 2011 to 2015, related primarily to veterans diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder.

The report focused on how those injuries can affect behaviors and concluded that disciplinary problems related to those conditions could have led to a number of general or other than honorable discharges.

In response to the findings, the DOD has released new guidance to allow more veterans time to have their “bad paper” discharges reviewed and potentially changed. Specifically, veterans with discharges related to military sexual trauma or mental health conditions no longer have a 15-year time limit to request review of their discharges.

“The new guidance clarifies that the liberal consideration policy includes conditions resulting from post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, sexual assault or sexual harassment,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Reggie Yager, the acting director of legal policy in the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. “The policy is meant to ease the burden on veterans and give them a reasonable opportunity to establish the extenuating circumstances of their discharge.”

The Department of Veterans Affairs generally accepts discharges characterized as honorable or general (under honorable conditions) for purposes of veterans benefits. However, there are some VA benefit

limitations for those who have general discharges.

If a veteran received an other than honorable discharge, he or she is generally disqualified from receiving VA health care.

According to the report, 91,764 service members were discharged for misconduct during the 2011–2015 timespan. Sixty-two percent of those were diagnosed with PTSD, TBI or other conditions such as adjustment, anxiety, bipolar or substance use disorders within two years before leaving the service.



To find out more about the new guidelines, visit defense.gov/News/News-Releases/News-Release-View/Article/1292833/dod-releases-clarifying-guidance-to-veterans-regarding-discharges-and-military. If you need help with a discharge review, please contact your local DAV national service officer, dav.org/veterans/find-your-local-office.

Rural veterans could see increased VA resources

■ Veterans Affairs Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin announced he has plans to change regulations for the State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program to make it easier for states to receive VA funding to construct veterans homes in rural areas.

While State Veterans Homes provide veterans with nursing home, domiciliary or adult day health care and are owned, operated and managed by state governments, highly rural areas of the country are often left without construction grants from the Department of Veterans Affairs because of the smaller population of veterans.

In highly rural areas, there could be 500 miles between one State Veterans Home and the next, giving family members limited options when searching for a conveniently located facility for a veteran family member.

Shulkin said that by incorporating considerations for the needs of rural veterans into the ranking priorities for grant applications in the regulations, states that are less densely populated may find it easier to compete for the limited VA construction grant funding that is available.



Find out more about the VA's geriatrics and extended care programs by visiting va.gov/GERIATRICS/Guide/LongTermCare/State_Veterans_Homes.asp.

Surviving and thriving

By Bryan Lett

How DAV member's close call reinvigorated his drive to give back

In 2015, Tom Cousino's wife Heidi Bjurstrom had—as any concerned spouse would—urged him to seek medical attention for inexplicable pain in his knees and ankles.

Cousino, an Army veteran, had been volunteering with the DAV Transportation Network in Portland, Ore., for roughly a year, helping get veterans to and from medical appointments.

“One day while he was volunteering, he looked sick, and it was suggested for him to go to the emergency room,” said Bjurstrom. After thorough testing and evaluation, it was determined that Cousino would need surgery to address an ongoing hip condition.

Though Cousino had experienced some breathing problems in the days leading up to the surgery, he dismissed it as mere anxiety, and the doctors prepped him for surgery.

“It was routine,” said Bjurstrom. “They took him back, and I was expecting about a two- to four-hour wait.”

That's when everything went black for her husband, and their lives became anything but routine. Cousino had a massive pulmonary embolism, or blood clot, in his heart—what doctors sometimes call a “widow maker.” And as Bjurstrom helplessly stood by, two cardiac teams worked feverishly to keep her husband alive.

Though doctors were able to save his life, Cousino was far from out of the woods.



Tom Cousino began his rehab program almost immediately after an unexpected open-heart surgery in 2016. His doctors expected him to be in the rehab facility for up to six months, but after just two weeks, Cousino left for home.

“All of the doctors were scratching their heads,” he said. “They didn’t know what to do. They had already gotten the chaplain and told my wife I would likely die.”

An MRI revealed Cousino had also suffered a stroke. Furthermore, the medications prescribed to break up the blood clots were not working. Precious minutes ticked by, and doctors decided open-heart surgery was the best solution.

“He was in intensive care for nine days—nobody expected him to live,” said Bjurstrom. “Four separate times, I signed his life away on things they wanted to try.”

Though Cousino's open-heart procedure went well, his prognosis was unknown, and the expectations for his recovery were modest. He awoke unable to speak or move his right side.

“The doctors weren’t sure if I would be able to walk or talk again,” said Cousino. “It was possible I

would end up a vegetable and need taken care of the rest of my life.”

In a change of luck that Cousino credits to the support he received from DAV at every level, things began to slowly improve. He began to feel his right side and even speak. But despite his progress, there were lasting impacts on both Cousino and Bjurstrom.

“I had to quit my job right after getting my master's degree in order to care for Tom,” said Bjurstrom. “My education was swept under the rug because of his

needs. I never saw this coming; it's just a curveball that life throws you. It changed my understanding of what it meant to be a caregiver and shifted my whole perspective."

Another pillar of strength for Cousino and his wife was the fact that they knew they could count on DAV.

"We are a big family here at DAV," said National Membership Director Doug Wells. "When one of our members—or any veteran—is down, we will do all we can to get them back up. A big part of that process is being there for them and listening to what they need."

"I kept thinking that I can't let my people down," Cousino said. "I love DAV. I love helping people. I really believe you can come back from anything—even when the odds are stacked against you. Keep pushing yourself and drive on."

Though Cousino isn't yet back to driving for the Transportation Network, he has reinvested himself in a cause that has become near and dear to his heart: He now serves on DAV's Legislation and Veterans Rights Committee and acts as the Benefits Protection Team leader in his home state.

"I think the health scare just made me more determined to continue to help my fellow veterans," he said.

"I kept thinking that **I can't let my people down**. I love DAV. I love helping people. I really believe you can come back from anything—even when the odds are stacked against you. Keep pushing yourself and drive on."

—Tom Cousino, DAV Department of Oregon
1st Junior Vice Commander

Taking his recovery one day at a time, Cousino continues to volunteer his time as he's able. After his hip surgery—slated for the end of the year—he will put his focus on one issue of critical importance: veteran suicide.

"No veteran should die alone," said Cousino. "Suicide prevention is my top priority, and I hope that new legislation can bring these numbers down. I'm hoping that we, as veterans, can be there for those who need us." ■

Did you know that DAV members have access to great discounts on products and services?

When you take advantage of these offers, our partners will donate back to DAV, helping us keep the promise to more ill and injured veterans.



These are some of our valued Member Benefit partners:



Have peace of mind through emergency and paratransit services for mobility challenged people, their passengers, vehicle and equipment.



Special discounts on professional interstate moving services, storage in-transit, personal property protection coverage plans and moving supplies.



To take advantage of these special offers and more, visit:
dav.org/membership/membership-benefits

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From the NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR DOUGLAS K. WELLS JR.

Put on your recruiting hat

All Americans who raised their right hands and joined our nation's military have their own personal reasons to do so. Motivation to serve can be as varied as the individual personalities that make up the all-volunteer force.

What they have in common is a willingness to serve, and our job as DAV members—and recruiters—is to help veterans discover the reasons why joining a veterans service organization like ours can be a great way to continue serving one's country.

In the military, duty came with myriad benefits, such as the ability to travel, free health care and the chance to pursue a higher education. But for many, one of the most important benefits was being part of something greater than themselves.


At DAV, I see the benefit of introducing veterans and their families to the multitude of free programs we offer. So perhaps instead of asking potential members simply to attend a meeting or pay to join, why not ask them some questions: Have you ever filed a VA claim? How is the claim going? Has the situation worsened? Did you know you could file again if it has gotten worse? Do you currently have a job? Do you feel that you are properly employed? Have you ever needed a ride to a VA appointment?

If we can explain and demonstrate the tangible benefits of membership that stretch beyond lending their voice to our legislative initiatives or attending a meeting, I believe we can “hook” more potential members.

Many veterans are unemployed or feel that they are underemployed, and they may find the right career fit through one of DAV's job fairs. Many veterans may need help with their claims or understanding their benefits, and our trained and professional service officers are on hand to help. Some veterans may need assistance getting to their medical appointments, and the DAV Transportation Network can help meet those needs. If advocacy interests prospective members, we can and always will want them to strengthen our voice on Capitol Hill. Maybe some veterans only want to volunteer and help their fellow veterans, and through DAV's numerous volunteer opportunities—especially our Local Veterans Assistance Program—we can help.

We understand the challenges veterans face, and that is why, when speaking with a potential member, we must illustrate the whole picture of DAV's mission and services. From securing earned benefits and providing transportation to operating an employment program and supporting volunteer initiatives, DAV helps veterans and gives us the opportunity to serve in meaningful ways.

And as you're out there recruiting, don't forget to work smarter and not harder. Be sure to leverage the online membership tool from your smartphone.

 For instructions on how to download the membership icon, please visit dav.org/learn-more/news/2016/working-smarter-not-harder.



Alternative solutions

VA continues to introduce new pain management therapies to curb the opioid epidemic among veterans

By Steven Wilson

According to a 2017 Department of Veterans Affairs inspector general (IG) report, in fiscal year 2016 the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) treated 190,381 patients with a diagnosis of a drug use disorder.

Thirty-five percent of those patients were abusing opioids.

But the opioid crisis seen in the VA—and throughout the country—did not happen overnight. According to the VHA Pain Management office, since the publication of the VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guideline for Management of Opioid Therapy for Chronic Pain in 2010, opioid misuse and opioid disorder have steadily grown across the nation.

Combating a new enemy: the opioid epidemic

According to a 2014 VA IG report, in fiscal year 2012 the VA provided nearly 2 million take-home opioid prescriptions to more than 450,000 patients. About one-third were classified as chronic users, based on the investigation findings. Almost 94 percent of those patients were diagnosed with either pain or mental health issues, and almost 60 percent were being treated for both.

The IG found that patients with six or more prescriptions were the majority of chronic opioid users and patients requesting early refills were not

uncommon. Refills of opioids at least a week early occurred in 23 percent of the population studied in the report, and 14 percent of the prescriptions were refilled at least 11 days earlier than intended by the provider. The IG report determined this was an indicator of “high-risk opioid behavior.”

“Since the VA started aggressively tackling the opioid problem in 2014, we’ve been concerned with the rapid reduction in the VA’s prescribing of painkillers without

“[Battlefield acupuncture] has become the **most popular employed ear pain modality** in the armed forces.”

—Dr. Richard Niemtzw

clinicians first properly educating veterans about the dangers of long-term opioid use and talking about alternative treatment options to address chronic pain,” said DAV National Legislative Director Joy Ilem.

The 2014 investigation further determined that 71 percent of patients who were prescribed take-home benzodiazepines were also given concurrent prescriptions of opioids—a potentially deadly combination.

“The concurrent use of benzodiazepines and opioids can be dangerous because opioids and benzodiazepines can depress the central nervous system and thereby affect heart rhythm, slow respiration and even lead to death,” the report states.

Monitoring the patients who were prescribed opioid therapy was also an issue, the IG found. Only 37 percent of opioid patients were administered a urinalysis for drug abuse coupled with a six-month follow-up with their physician.

According to Psychology Today’s Eric Newhouse, citing a 2016 VA IG report, between 2010 and 2015, the number of veterans addicted to opioids rose by more than half.

“Millions of veterans enrolled in VA health care have been aided by the VA’s efforts to better manage pain through alternative therapies; however, a number of veterans with chronic pain who have been prescribed pain medication over long periods reported they were abruptly denied further access to prescription medications for pain with little explanation,” Ilem said.

Ilem said that without appropriate education, psychological counseling and transition to suitable alternatives to control chronic pain, as recommended by VA policy, veterans can needlessly suffer physical and mental anguish.

“While we support the VA’s efforts to increase alternative nonpharmacological approaches to pain management, these therapies are not consistently available at all VA facilities. Additionally, we urge continued research efforts to ensure the efficacy of these interventions in managing severe, often debilitating chronic pain—especially for war-related trauma and injuries,” said Ilem.

Changing how we treat pain

In February 2017, the VA published version 3.0 of the VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guideline for Opioid Therapy for Chronic Pain, which was prepared by the Opioid Therapy for Chronic Pain Work Group and based on evidence gathered through the end of last year.

According to the guide, today the VA recommends strongly against using long-term opioid therapy for chronic pain, advocating instead for alternatives to opioid therapy that include nonpharmacological treatments and—if pharmacological treatments are used—prescribing non-opioid medications rather than opioids. If a medical provider does determine opioids should be prescribed for chronic pain, the guidelines strongly advocate for short-term treatment.

“The accumulation of evidence of harms and the absence of evidence of long-term benefits has warranted a newly cautious approach to [long-term opioid therapy] that prioritizes safety,” according to the VA’s guidelines.

Battlefield acupuncture—one alternative to opioids

Dr. Richard Niemtzow said he designed a treatment he calls “battlefield acupuncture” (BFA) in August 2001 while at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego.

Niemtzow said the Air Force has been teaching physicians BFA prior to deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan since 2009.

“In battle, special forces have used BFA in circumstances not requiring morphine,” Niemtzow said. “BFA does not reduce the respiratory rate as does morphine, [which] requires an observer to prevent respiratory deficiency. Also, BFA reduces the acute pain



The Battlefield Acupuncture technique was designed by Dr. Richard Niemtzow at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego. By placing semi-permanent needles in five specific points on the ear, Niemtzow has been able to reduce chronic pain for 70 percent of his patients.

from tourniquets and substitutes for morphine.”

He said this nonpharmacologic form of therapy is easy to learn and can produce rapid pain relief. He also said it has been prescribed to help patients break the opioid habit.

“I designed it to entail the placement of semi-permanent needles into five specific ear points on the exterior surface of both ears,” Niemtzw said. “In many cases it reduces pain when standard therapies have failed.”

Niemtzow said the favorable response rate for patients using BFA to combat pain is 70 percent.

But this technique is not without its naysayers. In a 2011 article in *Forbes*, Dr. Steven Salzberg called BFA “pseudoscience” and “the worst quackery of the year.”

“Multiple scientific studies have shown clearly that acupuncture doesn’t work,” reported Salzberg,

Without appropriate education, psychological counseling and transition to suitable alternatives to control chronic pain, as recommended by VA policy, veterans can needlessly suffer physical and mental anguish.

a professor of biomedical engineering, computer science and biostatistics at Johns Hopkins University. “The benefit is the same no matter where you place the needles, or even if you use toothpicks that don’t pierce the skin. Acupuncture points and meridians—the pathways that acupuncturists claim to manipulate with their needles—don’t even exist.”

While Niemtzw acknowledges BFA is not a “cure-all” for pain relief, it has been used successfully in many scenarios.

“Patients achieve either a short- or long-term benefit based on their pathology,” he said. “BFA has become the most popular employed ear pain modality in the armed forces. In order to minimize the use of

opioids as an initial treatment, BFA is offered as a safer alternative medicine.”

Battlefield acupuncture and veterans

“Over the course of a 30-year career in neurology, I had lost enthusiasm for seeing patients in pain, particularly those with headache, as I had little to offer than yet another manipulation of medication,” said Dr. Michael Freedman, a neurologist with the Durham Veterans Affairs Medical Center Greenville Health Care Center.

While there may be debate over the efficacy of alternative therapies, clinicians within the VA are working to find the best, safest combination of solutions to help their patients manage chronic pain. And Freedman, among other doctors, has reported notable successes for patients.

“The VA has steadily introduced complementary and alternative medicine options for patients, and acupuncture is just one of the methods that—in a closely monitored clinical care setting—has been showing some promise,” Ilem said.

In 2016, Freedman performed nearly 600 acupuncture treatments, with 345 using BFA or BFA in conjunction with other acupuncture techniques. Freedman said less than 10 patients reported no relief in pain after undergoing acupuncture treatment.

“It’s a way of relieving pain without taking opiates,” said Freedman. “Battlefield acupuncture reduces pain, so it’s intuitive that you’ll need less pain medication. There’s a huge area of opportunity here in training VA [doctors] in BFA and acupuncture techniques.”

Freedman said he hopes the VA will increase funding and credential providers to deliver acupuncture treatments as these methods are simple, safe, inexpensive and—according to his findings—effective. And while he says acupuncture should be only one of many tools to combat the opiate epidemic among veterans, he strongly advocates acupuncture as an adjunctive treatment to combat the opioid problem.

“There’s a lot of talk about dealing with the opioid crisis and not a lot of talk on how to do that,” Freedman said. “Acupuncture is just sitting there.”

“VA needs to explore nonpharmacological alternatives like acupuncture for managing pain and continue research efforts to ensure they are effective. We need to give injured and ill veterans the best possible chance at a higher quality of life, free of pain,” said Ilem. ■



Rehab on the green

DAV joins VA as co-host for
national adaptive golf clinic

DAV Past National Commander Dave Riley returned to the TEE Tournament for a second year. A near-fatal bacterial infection resulted in the loss of the former Coast Guard rescue swimmer's limbs 20 years ago; however, he maintains an active lifestyle through adaptive sports.

By Charity Edgar

Always make a total effort, even when the odds are against you,” said famed golfer and Coast Guard veteran Arnold Palmer.

Palmer is arguably one of the greatest golfers in American history, but even he experienced losses in his beloved game. But the failures on the course didn't prevent him from picking up his clubs and trying again—in a career that spanned more than half a century.

In September, a fellow Coast Guard veteran displayed that same grit on the green during the National Disabled Veterans TEE (Training, Exposure, Experience) Tournament in Iowa City, Iowa. The five-day event began in 1994 as a rehabilitative clinic for blind veterans at the Iowa City VA Health Care System, and its success led to expansion as a national VA adaptive sporting event. This year, DAV joined together with the VA to co-host the tournament.

Twenty years ago, DAV Past National Commander Dave Riley, a former Coast Guard rescue swimmer, believed his life of adrenaline and adventure was over when he woke from a medically induced coma to find both his arms and legs had been amputated, the result of a near-fatal bacterial infection.

Riley was first introduced to adaptive sports at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic near

Aspen, Colo. There, he found what was missing from his life. At the VA and DAV co-hosted clinic, Riley rediscovered skiing and other adaptive sports like sled hockey, scuba diving, curling, kayaking and rock climbing. The self-proclaimed adrenaline junkie was hooked. So when DAV joined the TEE Tournament last year as a host-level sponsor, Riley jumped at the chance to try golfing.

“For nearly a quarter century, the TEE Tournament has helped transform veterans' lives on and off the green—including mine. It's a feeling unlike any other to be able to reclaim a skill you thought was gone forever after an injury or illness. It's empowering and downright inspirational,” said Riley, who golfs with specially adapted clubs that insert directly into his prosthesis. Through the GIVE Program, which has a long association with the tournament, the clubs were provided to him at no cost.

The rehabilitative and instructional event provides veterans with education in adaptive golf, as well as opportunities to develop new skills and confidence through other activities, including kayaking, horseback riding, disc golf, fly-fishing, cycling and adaptive sports workshops.

“This event is about empowering our nation's veterans to lead active, healthy lives,” said Dr. David J. Shulkin, secretary of the Department of Veterans

Affairs. “Being in the great outdoors, navigating the golf course is therapeutic, and the men and women here this week are examples that having a physical or visual disability is not an obstacle to a full and rewarding life.”

Navy veterans Jon and Eileen Vasquez returned to the TEE Tournament for a seventh year. The DAV life members are both combat veterans and served during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The sailors first met in training as nuclear machinist mates and then reconnected after serving aboard the USS Enterprise. It was during that time Eileen first began struggling with her eyesight, and medical testing revealed she had reduced visual feel as a result of service-connected radiation damage. She was discharged from the Navy in 2004, and the following year she and Jon were married.

A year after their wedding, Jon was medically retired after sustaining a brain injury, among other injuries. While some people might see the couple’s collective injuries as insurmountable obstacles, incompatible with an active lifestyle, they were committed to finding a way to stay active together.

“This event reminds me that, no matter what you’ve been through, you can find a way to help others—regardless of the situation you have found yourself in,” said Jon. “The TEE Tournament embodies what we fought for and continue to fight for; we aren’t alone out there on the green, and we can get through it together.”

Eileen first took part in the event in 2010, and the following year both she and Jon returned as participants.

“It’s great to see friends and take in their attitude here. We look forward to it; everyone is so nice,” said Eileen, who was part of the first all-women veteran golf team at this year’s event. “There isn’t a lot of pressure, but you are able to push yourself as much as you want. The camaraderie of being surrounded by fellow veterans motivates us physically.”

More than 400 volunteers came together to make this year’s event a success.

“We volunteer every year at the TEE Tournament because we believe in what it does,” said Al Rowell, commander of DAV Chapter 6 in Dubuque, Iowa. “This event shows veterans that they can get out and go. It’s amazing to watch people’s faces there; you can get hooked easily.”

In addition to volunteering their time, the chapter provides each participant with a token of appreciation to take home as a reminder of accomplishments at the event.

“I have PTSD, and helping other veterans is my therapy,” added Rowell, a Vietnam veteran.

The DAV Auxiliary Department of Iowa is a sponsor of the event and donates countless hours annually to the TEE Tournament. This year, Outstanding Auxiliary Member of the Year Melissa Pierce was recognized with the Vonnie Gould Volunteer Award. Auxiliary National Commander Craig Johniken attended the TEE Tournament and was able to see a fellow member honored firsthand.

“At the local and state levels, DAV members have been proudly supporting the TEE Tournament for years,” said DAV National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. “DAV is honored to join VA as a co-host and continue growing this life-changing event so as many veterans as possible can drive through obstacles, on and off the green.”

According to Kleindienst, the DAV Department of Missouri, the DAV Auxiliary Department of Iowa and DAV Chapter 2 in Davenport, Iowa, were among the sponsors who supported the event.

“Arnold Palmer once said, ‘The most rewarding things you do in life are often the ones that look like they cannot be done.’ I think that sums up the spirit of the TEE Tournament—veterans breaking down barriers of what they once thought was impossible.” ■



Joined by event sponsors, DAV Past National Commander Dave Riley (third from right) presents Navy veterans Jon and Eileen Vasquez their participant medals at the TEE Tournament. The couple, both combat veterans who served during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, returned to the TEE Tournament for a seventh year.



Rising from the ashes

More than a decade after Hurricane Katrina, a new VA facility helps heal old scars

By James Killen

If the history of natural disasters in the United States has taught us anything, it's that we must prepare for the worst in order to withstand the brutal forces unleashed by Mother Nature.

More than a decade after Hurricane Katrina destroyed the New Orleans Veterans Affairs Medical Center, the newly built 1.7 million-square-foot Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System is, itself, a structural force to be reckoned with.

"We learned a lot from Hurricane Katrina and worked really hard to mitigate issues," said Fernando Rivera, the facility's director. "Our exteriors have been weather tested to withstand wind speeds from a Category 3 hurricane, and we've designed the facility so that all critical features are on the second floor or above."

The long-awaited facility, designed to accommodate 70,000 veterans, officially began accepting patients in November 2016. In addition to its capacity, the center is designed to maintain operations without outside assistance for five days in the event of a natural disaster, all the site's critical components were built 19 feet above flood stage, and the hospital's helicopter landings and boat ramps can serve as emergency evacuation points for patients and staff.

The hospital is estimated to see more than 550,000 appointments annually, but the center is already well on its way to that number. "Since we opened the doors on Nov. 18, we have already surpassed over 300,000 appointments," said Rivera.

Pictured above: A wall in front of the main entrance to the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System facility states, "The Price of Freedom Can Be Seen Within These Walls."

The DAV Transportation Network will be essential for veterans in the southeast Louisiana region going to those medical appointments. The region has over 75,000 veterans, many of whom live in rural areas and have difficulty with transportation.

“At our national convention in New Orleans, we presented two brand-new Ford Flex vehicles for use at the new hospital,” said National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. “This facility has been hailed as a model for both patient centeredness and emergency preparedness, and we’re excited to be a part of getting veterans to this new, state-of-the art facility by way of our Transportation Network.”

DAV services will be particularly important as more specialized branches of the facility open throughout the remainder of 2017. Army veteran Terry Waite is stepping up as the first hospital service coordinator to manage transportation in the area since Hurricane Katrina destroyed the previous facility. Prior to his arrival, the area’s voluntary service coordinator was managing the additional task of routing transportation to many of the state’s various outpatient clinics.

“I heard about the need for a hospital service coordinator back at DAV’s last mid-winter conference, and I had some free time to volunteer, so I thought I’d take a chance and lend my services,” said Waite. “It’s quite an undertaking, but I know it means the world to a veteran who has no other way to get to the hospital to see a doctor.”

“We could not open our doors without the support

of the DAV across the country,” Rivera said about the Transportation Network. “We are grateful to DAV and look forward to using the new vehicles right away.”

In addition to the facility’s new vehicles and enhanced safety measures, it boasts some of the most patient-friendly features within the VA. For example, each single-bed inpatient room has floor-to-ceiling windows allowing abundant natural light and an unrestricted view. For wheelchair patients, restrooms are located at least every 100 yards within the facility and the furniture is selected for comfort and usability for those with mobility impairments and disabilities. The hospital also features a 2,000-car, covered parking garage, abundant help desks, and track systems in each patient room to carry veterans between their bed to the restroom without needing to be lifted by a nurse or attendant.

“It took 12 years to get it, but when I see what I see, the facility I know, the wait was worth it,” said Department of Louisiana Adjutant Paul Hermann, who was a national service office supervisor in New Orleans at the time of Hurricane Katrina and has been a patient at both the old and new VA facilities. “It’s absolutely incredible—you have to see it to believe it.”

Hermann said he gives a great deal of the credit to Rivera’s proactive approach to incorporating veteran feedback into the design of the new facility.

“Mr. Rivera went to all the veterans groups in the area and asked local veterans what they wanted at the new hospital,” Hermann said. “Obviously they couldn’t do everything, but the fact that he even took the time to do that, and then actually implemented as many of those suggestions as he could, means a lot.”

“If you fight for our country, you should never have to fight for first-class health care,” said Rivera. “Having started my career in the old VA medical center 30 years ago, I saw so many veterans who came to it not only for their health care but for the camaraderie with their peers. So one of my favorite things about the new medical center is being able to deliver for our veterans a place of their own.” ■

(From left) Former Washington Headquarters Executive Director Dave Gorman, newly appointed Washington Headquarters Assistant Executive Director Randy Reese, Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine, Past National Commander and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Disability Assistance at the Veterans Benefits Administration Rob Reynolds, and New Orleans VA Health Care System Director Fernando Rivera tour the new facility’s patient rooms.



2017 DAV Auxiliary FALL CONFERENCE

First male commander focuses on caregiver legislation, junior membership

By Bryan Lett | Photos by Jim Hall

The importance of continued growth and strengthening of the partnership with DAV brought roughly 350 Auxiliary members to Lexington, Ky., for the 69th annual DAV Auxiliary Fall Conference, held Sept. 28–30.

“With the increasing number of conference attendees, particularly first-time attendees, we are witnessing firsthand the strength and commitment of those whose goal is to continue the organization’s mission of service to others,” said Auxiliary National Adjutant Pat Kemper, “most importantly, for the men and women who have served our country in the armed forces.”

This was the first conference for Auxiliary National Commander Craig Johniken since his election to lead the organization at the 96th DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in New Orleans. His election marked the first time a male took the helm of the Auxiliary since its establishment in 1922.

“The Auxiliary continues to evolve, and there are many ways women, men and young people can become involved in our organization and honor the service and sacrifices of veterans and their families. If there’s any significance paid to my election to this office, I hope it’s focused on how there is room for anyone of any age or gender to help,” said Johniken. “Over the course of

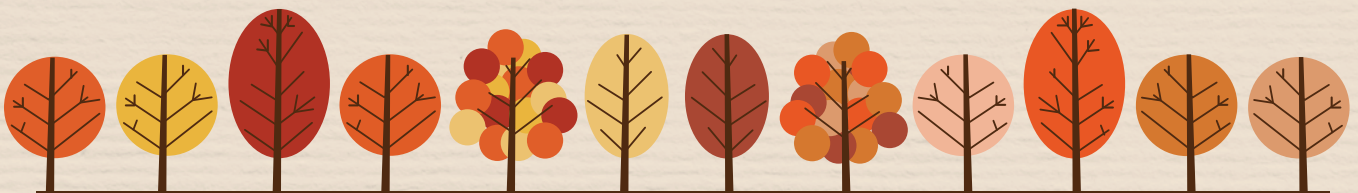


DAV and Auxiliary national adjutants Marc Burgess (left) and Pat Kemper (right) flank national commanders Delphine Metcalf-Foster and Craig Johniken. Both commanders are the first nationally elected leaders of their genders in their respective organizations.

the next year, we will be making a concentrated effort on moving our caregiver initiative forward in hopes of securing caregiver benefits for veterans from every era, while continuing to encourage junior membership and participation within the organization.”

During the conference, Auxiliary leaders spoke in depth about their respective programs in order to educate and train members in attendance about what can be done to spread awareness of the DAV Auxiliary and its programs. National campaigns include Americanism, community service, junior activities, legislative initiatives and the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service.

“The programs and workshops presented during the conference encourage audience participation, which initiates discussion and cultivates an atmosphere





Left: DAV and Auxiliary member Rolly Lee (left), joins his comrades, Auxiliary members Carol Lee (center) and Kim Olinger (right) in sharing their patriotic spirit during the 69th annual DAV Auxiliary Fall Conference.

Below: Auxiliary members and their families traveled from across the country to attend the conference in Lexington, Ky.,

of networking, idea sharing and relationship development,” said Kemper.

“The DAV Auxiliary fall conference is important on many levels, but I think among the most important is that we can demonstrate how we are in lockstep with each other regarding our mission of service to veterans and their families,” said National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster, who spoke at the event.

“Commander Metcalf-Foster and I have already had many opportunities to talk this year, and we’re in absolute agreement that two strong entities are better than one,” said Johniken. “She’s very aware of how families are heroes in their own right and has given the DAV Auxiliary her full support. DAV and DAV Auxiliary are partners working together. I couldn’t ask for a better partner than Commander Metcalf-Foster as we go forward, and I tremendously look forward to working hand in hand on some of our initiatives.” ■



Learn More Online

For more of the latest Auxiliary news and updates, follow the newsletter at auxiliary.dav.org/news/News.aspx.





From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER WILLIAM CRAIG JOHNIKEN

He may be a caregiver, too

We've often heard that women are the fastest-growing population of military recruits and veterans, but we may sometimes lose sight of what that means to husbands, fathers and brothers who comprise their support system.

This is obviously an issue that hits home for me. In my immediate family, the paradigm or stereotypical "norm" associated with military caregiving is reversed.

My wife served in the armed forces and is a disabled veteran. The responsibility of supporting my veteran inevitably falls to me, and I'm far from alone.

The 2017 DAV Veteran Family Caregiver Survey found that about 25 percent of total military caregivers are male. It's not hard to imagine that this number will increase as the number of women in the armed forces continues to rise and their roles expand into other jobs previously open only to men.

DAV's recently published *America's Unsung Heroes: Challenges and Inequities Facing Veteran Caregivers* includes the story of Alexis and Jason Courneen. Alexis was severely injured in the Coast Guard, suffering a traumatic brain injury. She experiences ongoing symptoms such as headaches, memory loss, difficulty concentrating, blurred

vision and angry outbursts that make life challenging. Jason said his wife takes care of herself as best she can, and he "fills in the blanks."

But like many caregivers, Jason does not qualify for benefits such as training, government stipends or respite care,

because Alexis was injured prior to 9/11.

There have been times when Jason has had to choose whether to stay home and care for Alexis or go to work. The majority of caregivers in the DAV survey reported their careers were impacted or limited because of their caregiving, and a study conducted by the

Leaving
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National Alliance for Caregiving reported 69 percent of military caregivers had to take unpaid time off from work or stop working temporarily. Another 62 percent had to cut their regular work hours, and 47 percent had to retire early or stop working entirely.

Leaving pre-9/11 caregivers behind is nothing short of an injustice, and caregivers of all generations and genders deserve our support. I hope fellow Auxiliary members will join me in visiting DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) to tell elected leaders where we stand on this issue. It's more than just the right thing to do—it's plain common sense.

Staff announcements

National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster and National Adjutant Marc Burgess announced in October staff changes at DAV National Headquarters and National Service and Legislative Headquarters.



Reese

Assistant Executive Director, National Service and Legislative Headquarters

Edward R. "Randy" Reese, Jr. has been appointed Assistant Executive Director of DAV National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

In his new capacity, the former National Human Resources Director will assist in overseeing DAV's legislative advocacy and service initiatives. He will serve as one of the organization's principle spokespersons before Congress, the White House and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

A disabled Army veteran of the Persian Gulf War, Reese is a 1995 graduate of the National Service Officer Training Academy in Denver. He worked his way from apprentice in Washington, D.C., to supervisor of national service offices in Reno, Nev., and Oakland, Calif.

He was appointed associate national service director in May 1999 and rose in appointments to national service director in June 2002. He was appointed deputy human resources director in 2010 and to national human resources director in 2011.

Reese is a life member of Chapter 19 in Cold Spring, Ky., Chapter 10 in Fairfax, Va. and Chapter 6 in Sacramento, Calif.

Human Resources Director

Appointed national human resources director, Bryan "Cody" VanBoxel will lead development and oversight of programs, policies and procedures to recruit, train, develop, compensate and retain employees, as well as overseeing employee benefits and workplace guidelines.



VanBoxel

A disabled Marine Corps veteran of the Iraq War, VanBoxel began his career as a national service officer apprentice at the DAV National Service Office in Washington, D.C., in 2011.

Following successful completion of the 16-month national service officer training program, VanBoxel laterally transferred to the Philadelphia National Service Office as an associate national service officer. There, he was promoted to assistant supervisor prior to his advancement to national service office supervisor. In 2015, VanBoxel was named assistant national human resources director.

He earned his bachelor's degree in business management from Western Governors University.

VanBoxel is a life member of DAV Chapter 19 in Cold Spring, Ky. ■



DAV's voice on the Hill.....

National Commander Metcalf-Foster met with Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson to discuss several critical veterans issues and DAV's legislative priorities during a Capitol Hill visit in mid-September. Among the key topics were the future of veterans health care and VA's new CARE plan, expanding eligibility for caregiver benefits to severely injured veterans of all eras and enhancing access and programs for women veterans.



Help America's heroes

Leave a legacy gift to DAV

We would love the opportunity to thank you and to welcome you to the DAV Guardian Society now for remembering America's disabled veterans.

By leaving DAV in your will or estate plan, you will become a member of the DAV Guardian Society and have the satisfaction of knowing that you are standing beside special men and women like retired Army Maj. Thomas Spencer, helping to ensure DAV continues to be here to meet the ever-growing needs of the ill and injured veterans we serve.

As a member, you will also receive:

- A distinctive lapel pin.
- A personalized Certificate of Appreciation.
- A window decal.
- Recognition in the DAV Guardian Society Newsletter.
(unless anonymity is preferred)

TO LEARN MORE

- Call Stephanie Vorhees at **800-216-9802**, ext. 1.
- Email giftplanning@dav.org.
- Return the attached **postcard**.



GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

A legacy of hope for tomorrow's disabled veterans

So many of us naturally desire that our lives continue to count for good after we are gone. We don't want our values and influence to just evaporate into thin air.

DAV is preparing for the future, because we expect to be serving disabled veterans for generations to come. We plan to be here well beyond today, carrying forth the same mission and values your forebears knew and loved, and that you now appreciate and support.

And that is why some of our supporters, like retired Army Maj. Thomas Spencer, decide to name DAV in their estate plans. "I look around and see a lot of veterans that are not as well off as me, and I don't think the government does enough to help them. I go down to the VA, and I see how hard it is to get it all done and done right. I want to do anything I can do to help. After all, they didn't get disabled of their own volition—they did it fighting for our country."

Spencer honors his late wife Beverly, who served in the Air Force, through his legacy gift. "I think we've got to leave the country better than when we started."

Whether it's through your will, trust, or a beneficiary designation of your financial accounts or life insurance policy, you can also make a tremendous impact on the lives of many. If, like Maj. Spencer, you want to ensure the next generation of injured and ill veterans is cared for through your estate plans, please contact the Gift Planning team in the DAV Personal Philanthropy Programs office today. They will help you determine how to make the biggest impact for tomorrow's disabled veterans while still ensuring your loved ones enjoy the security made possible by your life's work. The beauty of bequest giving is that anyone can do it. You can make a huge difference by just naming DAV as a contingent beneficiary or even a recipient of a small percentage of your estate.

We are so very grateful for every bequest that comes in, and we never forget why we're able to do all the great things that we do for veterans. If you've already named DAV (P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250) in your estate plans, please let us know. We'd love to thank you for your generous contributions and honor you through the DAV Guardian Society. Even if you prefer anonymity, notifying us of your plans is a great way to ensure that your future wishes are carried out.

Together, we can make a difference.



Retired Army Maj. Thomas Spencer honors his late wife, Air Force veteran Beverly Spencer, with a legacy gift to DAV.

From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MICHAEL P. DOVER



How will you be remembered?

As the holidays approach, we are inundated daily with the spirit of consumerism. From billboards to magazine ads to TV commercials, we receive a constant flood of voices that tell us, "You need this, and you need it now!" This very quickly leads us down the road of materialism and a focus on possessions. We begin to lust for "things," and eventually we give less and less away for the sake of feeding our own appetites.

How often do we let temporary things, which have no long-term or sometimes even short-term value, control our lives? Nothing lasts forever.

Have you ever heard the saying, "Money is the root of all evil"? Well, that's not necessarily true. After all, for some people in certain situations, money can be a true blessing.

My faith teaches me that the love of money is the root of all evil, not wealth itself. Having things is not wrong, and even having an abundance of things is not wrong. Instead, it's the condition of one's heart that brings the offense.

This longing desire for possessions can cause us to do unthinkable things. Materialism has become the biggest competitor with one's faith. People love their money and enjoy spending it on temporary things. We live in a country

whose government has laws on the books that allow compensation for our sacrifices in military service. What a blessing! And you have the right to spend your money the way you wish, don't you?

Of course, we all have the free will to spend as we choose, but let us enter the holidays with a charitable heart. DAV and Auxiliary members are some of the greatest givers America has in assisting veterans and their families, both monetarily and through gifts of time. But we must also be careful that we do not feed others who have an insatiable appetite of having possessions for the sake of having possessions. Material goods are only temporary when we consider the

bigger scheme in life.

If we want to find eternal life, if we would find happiness, joy, satisfaction, peace of mind and serenity of heart, it will not be piling up credit with our Creator through keeping commandments and observing rules and regulations. Instead, it will be by reproducing his attitude of love and caring for our fellow man.


This holiday season, be good stewards of the blessings you receive, and in time your generosity in helping others will result in a greater reward. Take a look at your possessions and ask yourself what story they tell. How do you want to be remembered?

In His Service to You.

This holiday season, **be good stewards of the blessings you receive**, and in time your generosity in helping others will result in a greater reward.

Coming changes to TRICARE

New fees, structure for health care system



Vice Adm. Raquel Bono, Defense Health Agency director, hosted a veterans and military service organization roundtable in August to discuss upcoming changes to TRICARE and solicit feedback about beneficiaries' concerns. "This is their health care plan, and part of my responsibility is to make it responsive and meaningful to their needs," said Bono.

Changes are coming in the new year for those using TRICARE for their health care needs.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2018, the Military Health System will implement changes to modernize TRICARE in response to updates in law and policy. The following information outlines how the changes will impact TRICARE beneficiaries.

What are the key changes to note?

TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra will merge into one single plan, known as TRICARE Select. Certain enrollees will be able to obtain care from any TRICARE-authorized provider without a referral, and enrollees who obtain services from TRICARE network providers will pay lower cost-share amounts for in-network care.

All current TRICARE beneficiaries will be automatically enrolled in their respective health care plans on Jan. 1, 2018. Users of TRICARE Prime will be enrolled automatically in TRICARE Prime, and those currently enrolled in either Standard or Extra will be automatically enrolled in TRICARE Select. No action is required by beneficiaries, and enrollees are able to

disenroll from any TRICARE plan at any time.

It is important to note that failure to enroll in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select (unless users are allowing existing coverage to automatically remain in force) will result in termination of coverage for civilian care. Those beneficiaries choosing not to enroll may only receive care at a military clinic or hospital on base, as available.

Beneficiaries can opt to enroll or change their plan during a yearly open enrollment period from November to December 2018, or following a qualifying life event.

Additionally, TRICARE will continue to provide a range of health care plans to meet beneficiaries' needs, including premium-based plans like the Continued Health Care Benefits Program, TRICARE For Life, TRICARE Retired Reserve, TRICARE Reserve Select and TRICARE Young Adult.

Will current beneficiaries be grandfathered?

All enrollees whose sponsors' military affiliation began before Jan. 1, 2018 (all current beneficiaries) will fall under Category A and are considered grandfathered

for new enrollment fees and out-of-pocket costs, in accordance with the current law. Those whose sponsor's military affiliation begins after Jan. 1, 2018, are in Group B and are considered not grandfathered.

Tables 1 and 2 list anticipated changes to enrollment fees and other cost-sharing expenses for current active-duty families (Table 1) and retiree families (Table 2).

What changes will occur during transition from fiscal year to calendar year administration?

TRICARE will also change from a fiscal year (October to September) period to a calendar year (January to December) period, aligning with open enrollment. To protect beneficiaries from incurring additional costs, enrollment fees will be prorated for the three-month period between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, 2017.

Payments that would normally count toward catastrophic caps and deductibles until Oct. 1 will continue to count until Jan. 1, 2018. Enrollees who reach their fiscal year 2017 catastrophic caps will not

What can you do to prepare?

- Check and update your current information in DEERS, to include your contact information and any significant life events such as military activation, separation or retirement, marriage, divorce, or the birth or adoption of a child.
- Sign up for benefit updates at tricare.mil/changes.
- Update your payment information if you are using electronic payments.

incur additional out-of-pocket costs for authorized TRICARE-covered services during the last three months of 2017. ■



Learn More Online

For the latest information on these and all TRICARE changes, visit tricare.mil/changes.

TABLE 1:
TRICARE Select and TRICARE Prime cost sharing for active-duty family members (2018)

Category	Select Group A	Select Group B	Prime Group A	Prime Group B
Annual Enrollment	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Annual Deductible	E1-E4: \$50/\$100 E5 and above: \$150/\$300	E1-E4: \$50/\$100 E5 and above: \$150/\$300	\$0	\$0
Annual Catastrophic Cap	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000

Group A = "grandfathered" enrollees (initial military affiliation before Jan. 1, 2018)

Group B = "non-grandfathered" enrollees (initial military affiliation after Jan. 1, 2018)

TABLE 2:
TRICARE Select and TRICARE Prime cost sharing for retiree families (2018)

Category	Select Group A	Select Group B	Prime Group A	Prime Group B
Annual Enrollment	\$0 until 2021; \$150/\$300 in 2021	\$450/\$900	FY17 amount (\$282.60/565.20) + COLA	\$350/\$700
Annual Deductible	\$150/\$300	Network: \$150/\$300 Out of Network: \$300/\$600	\$0	\$0
Annual Catastrophic Cap	\$3,000 until 2021; \$3,500 in 2021	\$3,500	\$3,000	\$3,500

COLA = Cost of Living Adjustment (applied to retired pay)

Investing in our veterans...

(From left) Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine, National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Ranking Member Jon Tester and National Legislative Director Joy Ilem met during a visit to Capitol Hill to discuss DAV's legislative agenda and to thank him for his role in helping to pass provisions to replenish the Veterans Choice fund and make other key investments in VA functions.



Strong showing at national convention...

DAV Department of Florida members came in droves to the 96th DAV National Convention in New Orleans. Among them were current DAV National 3rd Junior Vice Commander Andy Marshall (far left) and members of Florida's Chapter 7, including Past Commander Sheila Sanders, Chapter Service Officers Doris Coats and Gary Townsend, Commander Darwin Driscoll, Senior Vice Commander George Brown, Cherlyn Gause and Treasurer Alphonso McCall.

Soldiers reunite 75 years after OCS...

The U.S. Army Officer Candidate School (OCS) celebrated 75 years of service at its annual reunion in Columbus, Ga. Among the alumni present were DAV members Lt. Col. Harold A. Fritz (back row, fifth from left) and Lt. Col. Michael J. McCarson (back row, second from right). The reunion included inducting new Hall of Fame honorees, including retired Lt. Col. Charles (Chuck) Kettles, who was, at the time, the last Medal of Honor recipient from the Vietnam War.





Not forgotten...

In honor of National POW/MIA Recognition Day, DAV members from Chapter 9 in Dayton, Ohio, paid tribute by organizing a missing man honor table at the Dayton VA Medical Center, manned by DAV member and hospital representative Vincent Dec (pictured), Michael Frantz and Jerry Hays. This annual event honors missing service members and their families, and highlights the government's commitment to account for them. Held on the third Friday of September each year, Congress passed the resolution authorizing National POW/MIA Recognition Day in 1979.

Donate Your Car Today

and make a difference for a veteran.



DAV.org/cars

or call toll-free
877-999-8322

DAV SALUTES OUR PARTNERS

DAV thanks its partners for their commitment to our nation's veterans. Through their generous support, DAV is able to make life-changing differences in the lives of disabled veterans and their families. Together, we make a huge impact!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY





Registration is open

By Bryan Lett

The participant application process for the 32nd National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic will be open until Nov. 30, 2017.

The event, co-hosted by DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs, has changed the lives of more than 10,000 of America's most severely injured and ill veterans since its inception. The clinic—the largest adaptive rehabilitative sporting event of its kind in the world—will again take place in Snowmass Village, Colo., near Aspen and run April 1–6, 2018.

“We strive to make this the best rehabilitative event in the world. We want veterans to achieve their highest possible potential, and that’s a little bit different for everyone who attends,” said Teresa Parks, VA director for the event. “If a veteran can stand, even if he or she has a severe injury, we have frames that can hold them up. If they want to ski, we have equipment for them. If they want to snowboard, we can accommodate that. The purpose of the event is to remove any obstacle that stands in their way.”

Often referred to as “Miracles on a Mountainside,” the clinic helps injured veterans rebuild confidence by regaining balance in their lives and by making connections with other veterans who have had similar experiences.

“One thing that has always stood out to me is seeing

the participants feed off of each other’s energy and sharing their secrets of perseverance and success,” said National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. “Perhaps most importantly, they enjoy the camaraderie this week offers, but they also know it doesn’t have to end when they leave the mountain. I’ve never seen an expiration date on camaraderie.”

The clinic is open to U.S. military veterans with traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, orthopedic amputations, visual impairments, certain neurological problems and other disabilities who receive care at a VA medical facility or military treatment center. Some active-duty military members are also eligible to participate.

Studies show adaptive sports alleviate stress, reduce reliance on pain and depression medication, and result in higher achievement in education and employment while also leading to greater independence.

“Seeing the profound impact this clinic has had on so many thousands of veterans and their family members over the years has been a great honor for DAV,” said Barry Jesinoski, national headquarters executive director. “We certainly hope to be a part of this for many more years—and many more veterans—to come.” ■



Learn More Online

To learn more about the clinic and to register for participation, please visit wintersportsclinic.org.

REUNIONS

MARINES

2ND BATTALION, 4TH MARINES ASSOCIATION

April 30–May 3, Quantico, VA, Contact: Becky or Frank Valdez, Ph: 714-306-2329, Email: fxala@hotmail.com

NAVY

USS SAILFISH (SS/SSR-572) April 13–15, Branson, MO, Contact: Ron Bowlin, Ph: 406-600-0953, Email: rsbowlin@3rivers.net

USS SATYR (ARL-23 BROWN WATER NAVY) May 17–21, Chattanooga, TN, Contact: Jerry Toney, Ph: 904-641-5354, Email: toney@ussatyr-arl23.com, Web: ussatyr-arl23.com

ALL SERVICES

COUNTERPARTS REUNION April 11–15, Pensacola, FL, Contact: Lewis Grissaffi, Ph: 619-922-8682, Email: luisaffi@yahoo.com, Web: counterparts.net

INQUIRIES

- Searching for four brothers I dragged in a hail of grenades at Chu Lai. We were under the command of Lt. John Groose and E-7 Sgt. Hernandez. We served with D Company, 3rd BN, 21st Infantry Division, 196 BDE. Also searching for my two wingmen, Phill Scott from Ann Arbor, MI, and Mr. Rodriguez from El Paso, TX. Contact Point Man/Tunnel Rat Eddie Varela, 1941 McKinley Avenue, San Antonio, TX 78210.
- Searching for Jack Pope, B Team, Delta Force, Fort Bragg, NC, in the early '80s from the Murphy, NC, area. Contact SMSgt (Ret) Thomas (Tom) Segars at fredricasegars@sbcglobal.net or 214-316-6240.
- Searching for Jack Rollins, stationed in Sculthorpe, England. Last seen in Norwich, England, April 1956. Contact Wanda Gray Hunter at 614-920-2587.

- Searching for Johnny F. Nelton, Robert G. Weber and Edward James who were stationed with 110th MP Plt. Corps, Germany, April 1968. Contact Bob Shuptr at 718-383-8898.
- Searching for members of my boot camp from Parris Island, SC, Sept. 24, 1975, to Dec. 16, 1975, especially Tony G. Rak. Contact Joe Pajonk Jr., Email: joeypjrp57@yahoo.com.
- Searching for my friend, Mark Lynch, from Newark, NJ, who served with me in B Co., 3rd Eng. Bn., 3rd Mar Div, FMF in 1975–76 and in Operations Eagle Pull, Frequent Wind and Mayaguez in 1975. Contact Steven Berger at Email: stevenberger5383@yahoo.com or 563-554-0604.
- Searching for the company commander of the Marine detachment stationed at Fort Huachuca, time frame of April, May, June and July of 1979. Contact Retired SFC Rollyn Miller, 3920 N. Santa Cruz Drive, Florence, AZ 85132, Ph: 520-868-0939, Email: Ron3920@gmail.com.
- Searching for the platoon leader assigned to the 2nd/8th Inf., 3rd BDE, 1st Air Cav Div. Vietnam in 1972 who served with Sgt. Mariano Salas (Platoon Sgt). Contact Peter Nauta via email at pete_nauta@yahoo.com.
- Searching for William L. Wells Jr. In 1958, his address was Company C, 11th Battle Group, 3rd Brigade, Fort Ord, CA. I have his Bible and would like to return it. Contact Virginia Phillips at 469-363-4162.
- Searching for anyone involved in the Operation Eagle Wing airborne exercise held on April 23, 1958 at Fort Campbell, KY. Of particular interest would be anyone who jumped from the 502nd, possibly spending time in the post hospital. Contact William Short at 770-607-0823.
- Searching for 32 members from 1963 Navy OCS, Section Juliet 2 Newport, Rhode Island, graduated March 1963. Contact Tony Siegle, 6938 E. Exeter Boulevard, Scottsdale, AZ 85251, Ph: 415-994-0062, Email: rockytony@aol.com.
- Searching for all who served at Maxwell Air Force Base or Gunter Air Force Station (Alabama) between 1975 and 1985. Contact Elnora Seabrooks-Flullen or Veda Evans at vevans.maxwellgunterafb@gmail.com or facebook.com/groups/266554150412710.

- Searching for anyone who served with me at 2nd 61st AdA Battalion, Camp Mosier Korea, during 1975 and 1976. Sgt. Green, of whom I had a wreck on MSR3 from Camp Casey to Camp Mosier, or anyone that has knowledge of it. Contact Robert Moss, 12711 Bexley Drive, Houston, TX 77099, Ph: 903-278-4447.
- Searching for S/Sgt. Ivan Preston Richardson, USAF. Our last duty station was Showa Annex, Tachikawa, Japan. Contact SMSgt. Milton Ray Norton, USAF, 1775 Colgate Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80918, Ph: 719-592-9666.
- Searching for any 2/7 Easy Co. Marines who were in North Korea, Aug./Sept. 1951. Contact Dan Silvers at Email: p10th@comcast.net.
- Searching for anyone who served in Song Ong Doc, Vietnam, in 1970, with emphasis on those there during October when the base was hit. Contact James F. Snyder at 251-666-7643, 251-554-0087 or Email: jfsr4729@att.net.
- Searching for any of the men who served with me in Vietnam 1968–69, HHCO RTO for Artillery Foreword Observer Co. C 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry 9th Infantry Division. Contact Fred Salsgiver, 183 Forbes Road, Bedford, OH 44146, Ph: 440-804-4922.
- Searching for anyone that served with me in the Seabees from 1957 to 1967. Especially in Gitmo, MCB 8, in 1961. I was attached to MCB 1, 3 and 8 during my service in the Navy. Contact Don Murphy at smurphy0262@yahoo.com.
- Searching for anyone knowing Garry Jeffrey. Garry and I enlisted together and served in separate units with 7th Marines in Vietnam from 1968–69. Contact David Robidoux at djobidoux@comcast.net.
- Searching for anyone who served with me in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, 1950–51, stationed at Shaw Air Force Base, Sumter, SC. Contact "Pat" Dolores Onorato at 760-248-6461.
- Searching for Jim Roegg or anyone who served with me in 1967 Vietnam A 2/5 First Cavalry. Contact Geary Ingle at Gertolter@aol.com
- Searching for members who were assigned to the 631 Material Squadron at Don Muang RTAFB, Thailand, between Sept. 1967 and Sept. 1968. Contact MSgt. USAF (Ret) Tommie L. Byford, Ph: 214-471-3671, Email: tommiebyford@hotmail.com.



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