



THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF DAV AND AUXILIARY

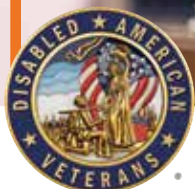
MAY | JUNE 2018

MAGAZINE

STANDING TALL on Capitol Hill

National commander
urges Congress to
strengthen and reform
VA health care system,
expand caregiver benefits
to veterans of all eras

Page 8



DAV.ORG



FACEBOOK.COM/DAV



@DAVHQ



DAVHQ

AVAILABLE FOR MOBILE DEVICES

2018 Mid-Winter Conference highlights



DAV Department of Wisconsin members, along with National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster and Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine, presented Sen. Tammy Baldwin with DAV's Outstanding Senate Legislator of the Year Award. Sen. Baldwin has made critical contributions in the areas of veterans health care, benefits, policy and legislation.



Commander Metcalf-Foster (left) and (retired) Army Maj. Gen. James Jackson presented a Vietnam veteran with a pin commemorating his service. Jackson is the director for the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, a national effort to thank Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice.



During the conference, DAV and Auxiliary members met with Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby.



Conference attendees and DAV leadership listened intently to the then-VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin as he delivered the key note address regarding improvements in the VA health care system and planning efforts in place across the entire department.



Commander Metcalf-Foster presented VA Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas J. Murphy with DAV's Outstanding Federal Executive of the Year Award for his efforts to ensure veterans receive earned benefits including disability compensation and vocational rehabilitation.

From the NATIONAL COMMANDER DELPHINE METCALF-FOSTER



Making lemonade of life's most serious challenges

For more than a quarter of a century, I have advocated for my fellow disabled veterans as a member of DAV. Over the years, I have encountered too many who questioned the validity of their own military service and the severity of their service-connected conditions. I have encouraged veterans to submit a claim for illness and injury sustained as a result of service, only to have them hesitate and tell me that “it wasn’t that bad” or “others had it worse.”

It’s a noble and very “military” mentality—to care for others before oneself and convey strength over adversity. But it has been a personal mission of mine to ensure those who sustained an illness or injury as a result of their time in the military are aware of the resources and support they earned through their service and sacrifice.

For veterans who have invisible wounds, such as post-traumatic stress, the reluctance to seek assistance is sometimes amplified. I understand, because I have been there, too.

While I was medevaced out of the Middle East during the Persian Gulf War because of physical injuries, the invisible wounds impacted me most following my retirement from the Army in 1996. Dealing firsthand with war casualties was a frequent occurrence during my deployment, and I didn’t realize how long those experiences would stay with me.

It took quite some time, but through VA mental health services, and of course the support of all my DAV brothers and sisters, my invisible wounds have

become more manageable. Like my physical injuries, I still experience residual effects and setbacks, but I am surviving and thriving. My military service changed me. So did the war. But at a point, I stopped allowing myself to believe that all of these changes are for the worse. They made me who I am today, and I’ve learned to grow and utilize my strengths.

The biggest step in that process was asking for help. If you are suffering from invisible wounds, seek care as soon as possible. Don’t let it linger and continue to negatively impact your life. The VA offers a variety of mental health services that can cater to your needs.

Also consider getting involved in an organization that helps other veterans. My service through DAV has helped me immensely. I have had the opportunity to support my fellow veterans on their road to recovery, and it has meant a lot to help people overcome some of the same obstacles I experienced.

I look at my wounds from service as lemons—and I chose to make lemonade. It has not always been an easy journey, and it certainly isn’t one I traveled alone, but it has helped define who I am as a leader and provided me with an opportunity to serve others.

As DAV members, it is of the utmost importance we remember that not all wounds are visible. Ask your fellow veterans how they are doing, because although they may appear to be fine on the outside, that doesn’t mean they are on the inside. They may need your help making lemonade.

CONTENTS

- 1** National commander reflects on the lingering effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and the importance of finding ways to cope.
- 3** National adjutant recaps another successful meeting of members at DAV's Mid-Winter Conference.
- 12** Ahead of DAV's national convention, candidates for national office throw their hats in the ring to lead the organization.
- 16** DAV serves student veterans by bringing claims services to campus.
- 22** The family that serves together: three generations of women tell of their service to the nation.
- 24** DAV, Independent Budget partners push Congress for full funding of VA.
- 27** Country music star Brantley Gilbert lends a "helping paw" to veterans with the help of companion animals.



DAV MAGAZINE • May/June 2018
Contact us: dav.org • Toll Free 877-426-2838 • 3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076 • feedback@dav.org. Volume 60, Issue 3, *DAV Magazine* (ISSN 0885-6400). Editorial Office: DAV Magazine, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301. Telephone 859-441-7300 or toll free (877) I AM A VET. Published and circulated bimonthly bulletin by the Disabled American Veterans, a Congressionally chartered, nonprofit organization, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301. DAV Home Page is dav.org. Available on recording for the blind and those with physical handicaps that preclude reading printed material. The magazine is mailed free to DAV and Auxiliary members who are paid subscribers. Nonmembers may subscribe for \$15 per year. Periodical postage paid at office of publication, Newport, KY 41071, and at additional offices. Printed in U.S.A. Change of Address: When notifying a change of address, send former as well as new address, including ZIP code, to: DAV Magazine, DAV National Headquarters, P.O. Box 145550, Cincinnati, OH 45250-5550. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to DAV Magazine, DAV National Headquarters, P.O. Box 145550, Cincinnati, OH 45250-5550.



FEATURES

6



A clerical error on a claim nearly caused a widow to go homeless. Then a DAV service officer stepped in.

8



In case you missed it: highlights from this year's annual Mid-Winter conference in the nation's capital.

18



Miracles on the mountainside: as the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic helps veterans challenge perceived limitations.

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, Ed.D. 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
Austin Shaffner Associate National Communications Director
Doreen Briones Production Manager
Shannan Archer Senior Graphic Designer

From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS



Taking up the torch at the mid-winter conference

The 2018 Commanders and Adjutants Association Mid-Winter Conference is always one of my favorite events.

It's where we see some extraordinarily passionate members flourish and take the fight directly to lawmakers on some of the most critical issues we in the veterans community face.

If you weren't able to join us, rest assured that your brothers- and sisters-in-arms did us proud, standing up for all veterans, their families and caregivers. When you see members of your chapter or department, be sure to thank them for their efforts and ask them to share with you the valuable information they brought home.

Once again, our members did a fantastic job representing the organization in visits with lawmakers throughout the week, meeting with influential leaders throughout

Congress and sharing DAV's legislative agenda. In addition, I thank all our members at the conference and at home who helped light up the Capitol Hill switchboards calling for inclusion of caregiver expansion in the omnibus spending bill passed in March. Though the provision was not included in the final bill, your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and we continue to gain support for this important legislation.

I commend National Commander

Delphine Metcalf-Foster for another expertly delivered, high-impact testimony before the joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees, highlighting the urgent need to expand the program to pre-9/11 veterans. Having intimately conveyed her experiences as a caregiver to her late husband Jimmy—a disabled Army veteran—her words truly struck a chord as the future of this legislation hangs in limbo.

We can't afford to underestimate the influence our members have in promoting legislation that protects and supports veterans and their families.

The mid-winter conference is a great reminder of this, especially when we think back to the days after World War I, when veterans had no national groups advocating on their behalf. Nearly a century later, it's an incredible legacy that we're carrying forward.

This is our fight—this is your fight. We have been

fortunate to have so many involved members working hard to protect what veterans have earned, and we owe them a great deal of gratitude for taking up the torch.

Even if you weren't with us at the conference, you can still get involved through DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network). Please visit davcan.org to keep up to date on the latest advocacy campaigns and join the effort to protect what veterans have earned.

Your brothers-
and sisters-
in-arms
did us proud,
standing up
for all veterans,
their families
and caregivers.



LETTERS

Caregivers

I just read the article about caregivers by Delphine Metcalf-Foster in the January/February 2018 *DAV Magazine*. Believe me, it was like reading the way I have felt and lived for the past five years. My husband was 100 percent disabled and got all his compensation, but when it came to his home care, all we were eligible for was three days a week for assistance and a nurse twice a month. Sadly, I had to put him into a nursing home. Delphine's experience was exactly my experience. I wish her luck with her fight for caregivers.

Wanda Downing, Arlington, Texas

Choice

[In response to a letter to the editor, January/February issue] As a provider of mental health service under the Choice Program, I can assure Michael Mantegna of Georgia that we are prohibited from balance billing. If Mr. Mantegna has a Choice provider billing him for the difference between what they billed and what the VA paid, then he needs to contact his local Choice administrator and report the offender. Also, as a veteran using Choice services here in San Diego, I have never been billed. The handbook for Choice providers specifically states that balance billing is not allowed. Same policy as TRICARE.

William O. Shaw, Poway, Calif.

Editor's Response: *The Veterans Choice Program Provider Agreement states, "Provider agrees not to bill; charge; collect a deposit from; seek compensation, remuneration or reimbursement from; or have any recourse against veterans or persons acting on their behalf, other than HNFS or other health insurance for covered services authorized by HNFS. This provision shall not prohibit collection of*

copayments, coinsurance or deductibles of the veteran's other health insurance." Any veteran who feels they have been wrongly billed by a Choice Program provider should contact Health Net Federal Services at 866-606-8198.

Blue Water Veterans Act

Thank you for the article on the Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017 (H.R. 299) in the January/February magazine. As a Blue Water Vietnam veteran, having cancer for the past nine years, finally there may be a chance. I will be contacting my senators and congressmen to fully fund this bill. All of us veterans need to stand together and contact our elected representatives.

Larry L. Winans, Mission, Texas

Paying it forward

Your article "Paying It Forward" in the January/February issue was a perfect example of how a good service officer turns out to be a great one. Most articles mention how many veterans are helped, which can be a dry statistic. This article brings life to a veteran and his claim. The national service officer and his skill are perfect in describing the NSO who helped me and my claim, and no doubt his help and skill brought me peace of mind and, ultimately, a 100 percent disability rating.

Perry Betts, Lake Wales, Fla.

VA health care

I have been in the VA health care system for 48 years, beginning in April 1970, and have always received

the same timely and high-quality medical care. I have received VA health care, on average twice a year, since 1970 at a number of VA hospitals. This includes a recent experience at the VA Urgent Care Clinic at the VA Boston Healthcare System campus in Brockton, Mass. I do not want to seek health care from providers not familiar with unique military health issues and a profit incentive with a voucher in hand.

Jim Gibbons, Quincy, Mass.

Thank you

Having thoroughly read the January/February edition of *DAV Magazine*, I wanted to drop you a line and let you know how much I appreciate it. Back in 2013, DAV helped me get my 100 percent rating and compensation after having been retired on disability for almost 25 years. Thanks!

Chad Hudson, Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Facebook

facebook.com/DAV

DAV, we appreciate your advocacy for our veterans and your support in everything we are doing to bring positive reforms to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

The DAV office in Washington, D.C., was completely professional and walked me through the entire VA claims process. I'm 100 percent sure that my claim would not have been finalized so smoothly without their help.

Ed Furst

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



Deputy National Legislative Director Adrian Atizado delivers testimony to the House Veterans' Affairs Committee regarding the need for extended caregiver benefits for veterans of all eras. In attendance (seated behind) were Past National Commanders Dave Riley and Dennis Joyner, alongside their spouses and caregivers, Yvonne and Donna.

Momentum building for caregiver expansion

By Mary Dever

The push to expand the VA's comprehensive caregiver assistance program to veterans severely injured prior to Sept. 11, 2001, has picked up serious momentum in the past year; however, it remains unclear whether the House, Senate and White House will be able to finalize a deal to include caregiver provisions as part of a larger veterans health care reform bill expected to be passed by Congress later this year.

Last June, DAV launched the Unsung Heroes Initiative to focus national attention on the unfairness of the current caregiver assistance program and build support in Congress to correct the inequity. Currently, comprehensive caregiver benefits—including respite care, health insurance and monthly stipends—are only available to caregivers of veterans injured on or after 9/11.

In December, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee voted affirmatively to expand the VA's comprehensive caregiver program to veterans from earlier eras as part of the Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017 (S. 2193), legislation designed to reform the VA's community care programs and strengthen the VA health care system.

DAV testified in February in support of the caregiver expansion at a House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing and participated in March in a committee roundtable focused on reaching an agreement on how to expand eligibility to pre-9/11 veterans and their caregivers.

DAV Deputy National Legislative Director Adrian Atizado told the committee that "there is no issue more important today than finally correcting the gross

unfairness and inequity that discriminates against veterans ill and injured prior to Sept. 11, 2001, as well as their family caregivers."

Subsequently, in late March, DAV and other veterans service organizations (VSOs) pushed Congress to attach a package of veterans legislation that included provisions for caregiver expansion, as well as VA health care reform, to an omnibus spending bill. Unfortunately, despite significant support from VSOs and a number of key congressional leaders, this effort fell just short, as the veterans provisions were left out of the final omnibus bill.

"Although we are disappointed that the veterans provisions were not part of the final omnibus bill, we are encouraged and energized that so many congressional leaders are now on record in support of this much-needed, long-awaited fix for caregivers," said DAV Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine.

DAV and others continue to work with Congress to reach an agreement on caregiver expansion, but the fate of the legislation remains uncertain.

"It's important to keep in mind that time is not on the side of many of the veterans and caregivers who would benefit from expanded eligibility," said Augustine. "Every day that passes without a resolution is another day they go without adequate support." ■



Learn More Online

Find out more about the Unsung Heroes Initiative and what you can do to support veteran family caregivers at unsungheroesinitiative.org.

Serving a **SURVIVOR**

Veteran fights to keep widow off the street after her husband succumbed to Agent Orange-related illness

By Charity Edgar

It was just one single digit, but a simple clerical error nearly determined whether Jane Miranda, the widow of a disabled Vietnam-era Navy veteran, would end up homeless.

After her husband, Jose, passed away in May 2017, Miranda found herself struggling to make ends meet. While overcome with grief and forced to come to terms with losing her spouse, Miranda realized that the annuity from his job would only cover half of her mortgage.

As she and her husband believed his illness had resulted from his time in service, Miranda filed for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits from the VA. She felt momentary relief when she received a letter in the mail announcing the VA had approved the claim, but upon reviewing the details she realized there had been an error.

While the last name was the same, the first name was not. And the Social Security number was off by one digit.

"I said, 'Wait a minute—that is not my husband's name or his Social Security number. What's going on?'" said Miranda. Meanwhile, the widow was facing an increasingly dire situation. Her water had been shut off, and while she had received compensation from the VA,



Jane Miranda poses with her late husband, Jose, a Navy veteran. Miranda was facing financial hardship after his passing, and a clerical error stood in the way of accessing benefits earned through her husband's military service.

she knew those benefits were not hers to spend. Now she worried about paying the money back.

What's more, she learned the actual claim for her husband had been denied.

"I was devastated; I didn't know what to do. I cried constantly, and my health declined [due to stress]," she explained. "I couldn't believe this happened to me. Jose was in the Navy for years. He worked with asbestos as a chief engineman, and then he served in Vietnam. It didn't make any sense to me."

The frustrated widow had many questions but was receiving few answers—until she was connected with Charles Burns.

An Army National Guard veteran of the Iraq War, Burns joined DAV as a national service officer in 2012 in Fort Snelling, Minn., wanting to serve his fellow veterans.

Burns' office is responsible for all DIC claims in the western part of the country, and ultimately, Miranda's case made it across his desk.

“It was difficult to watch her frustrations due to the situation,” said Burns. “It was important for me to be able to address, advise and solve the problem.”

Burns determined that Jose Miranda had not been rated as service connected and was therefore not receiving benefits before he passed, resulting in the denial of his surviving wife’s claim.

“I advised Jane to work with her late husband’s physician to determine if there was a relationship between Jose’s injuries and illnesses listed on the death certificate and Agent Orange exposure,” explained Burns. “She did that and asked for reconsideration of her claim.”

Toward the end of January, Miranda finally received good—and this time accurate—news. Her claim had been approved, finally alleviating the financial burden thrust upon her following her husband’s passing.

“I was so grateful I could assist Jane in accessing the benefits her husband earned through service,” said Burns. “It’s rewarding to help not only veterans navigate the benefits process but also their dependents.”

“At DAV, we understand that military families sacrifice right alongside their loved ones,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “It’s why we are committed to serving not only veterans but their dependents and survivors. We understand how life-changing benefits can be for families struggling following the loss of a loved one. The last thing a family needs on top of grief is financial instability.”

In 2017, DAV attained more than \$4.3 billion in benefits on behalf veterans and their families, like Miranda.

“Thank God for Charles helping me. If he hadn’t been there, I probably would have been homeless,” said Miranda.

She said other dependents should seek assistance if they find themselves struggling to navigate the VA benefits system while facing financial insecurity—all compounded by the loss of a loved one.

“Go find someone you can trust that can help, like Charles did for me, and keep at it,” Miranda added. “Don’t let it go; fight for what you know is right.” ■

**“I was devastated;
I didn’t know
what to do. I cried
constantly, and
my health declined.
... Thank God for
Charles helping me.
If he hadn’t been
there, I probably
would have been
homeless.”**

*—Jane Miranda, widow of a
Vietnam-era disabled Navy veteran*



A veteran of the Iraq War, DAV benefits specialist Charles Burns worked tirelessly to ensure a widow could access Dependency and Indemnity Compensation after the loss of her husband, a Vietnam-era veteran.

VETERANS' FUTURE IS NOW

Advocates converge in Washington to safeguard veterans benefits for current and future generations

By M. Todd Hunter

On any given day, the halls of congressional office buildings in our nation's capital are abuzz with leading advocates of the many complex issues within American society. By design, this groundswell of civic participation makes it difficult for legislators and other policymakers to ignore the issues at hand. This is why hundreds of DAV's most dedicated advocates from across the nation converged on Washington at the end of February—to press for needed change.

At the 2018 Commanders and Adjutants Association Mid-Winter Conference, DAV and Auxiliary members held dozens of meetings focusing on the organization's numerous legislative priorities and advocacy efforts, including service improvements for women veterans and support for veteran caregivers of all eras, before taking DAV's message to Capitol Hill and speaking directly with members of Congress and their staffs.

"At DAV, we talk a lot about keeping the promise to our nation's veterans," National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster reminded conference attendees at the opening session, held Feb. 25 in Arlington, Va. "This



DAV Department of Alabama advocates presented DAV's legislative agenda to staffers on Capitol Hill. As members from across the country visited with their respective officials, they worked to ensure critical DAV goals were made clear.

week is our opportunity to educate Congress and the administration on a smart approach to funding a strong VA that those of us in this room rely on."

Metcalf-Foster pointed to the federal government shutdown that had already occurred just two months into 2018, largely due to partisan disagreements, as a cautionary tale before stressing to conference-goers that the organization's advocacy efforts play an integral role in helping ensure veterans of all generations—past, present and future—have a system accountable to them for the injuries and illnesses sustained in service to the nation.

“We should be proud that, based largely on our efforts to ensure advance funding for the VA, most VA employees and services were exempt during shutdowns,” she said. “But the instability and rancor that seems to politicize every issue is a serious threat to the future of veterans care and benefits.”

National Adjutant Marc Burgess also noted the importance of DAV advocacy efforts.

“Your presence here helps put a face on veterans issues and shows lawmakers that their actions affect real people—real veterans—and their families each and every day. That personalization is extremely powerful, and you have always carried that message to the Hill, and your local communities, with passion and dedication. For that, DAV and your fellow veterans are profoundly grateful.”

Then-VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin also addressed the conference at the opening session, updating members on reform efforts made at the VA since he took the department helm a year prior. Such efforts include improving timeliness of health care, extending mental health benefits to all veterans, preventing suicide, improving the VA’s disability

benefits questionnaire, improving caregiver benefits, modernizing VA infrastructure and technology, speeding up veterans’ disability claims, reducing the claims backlog and fixing the appeals process.

Shulkin also noted the impact that DAV volunteers have made on VA Voluntary Service efforts, citing the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic as a shining example of how volunteerism makes a difference in the lives of injured and ill veterans. The annual event, held in Snowmass, Colo., and co-hosted by DAV and the VA, is a world leader in adaptive winter sports instruction for veterans with disabilities.

“We just couldn’t be doing the work, helping the veterans around the country, if it wasn’t for all the volunteers that come out of your organization,” Shulkin said.

To further infuse excitement into the organization’s volunteer efforts, National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst unveiled a new web-based tool at the conference. VolunteerForVeterans.org links veterans from across the country with volunteers of all ages regardless of their connection to the veteran community. Nothing like it currently exists among other veterans

“Some say our nation just can’t afford the rising costs of veterans benefits. We say that **a great nation can’t afford not to pay for veterans benefits**. These benefits have already been paid in full by the blood, sweat and sacrifice of men and women who served.”

—National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster





House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Phil Roe (left) met with his constituents and DAV members from Tennessee to discuss progress on multiple legislative issues affecting veterans.

service organizations, illustrating how DAV is innovating in the area of volunteerism in local communities.

“Opportunities are limitless,” Kleindienst explained. “Some examples are lawn care, raking leaves, going to the grocery store, sitting with a veteran who needs caregiver respite, reading a book, or just talking and interacting with someone—basically anything that can make a difference in the life of a veteran in need.”

“Volunteering and standing up for your fellow veterans, family members and survivors is a particularly meaningful commitment for we who have benefited from DAV’s services and those who have benefited from the joy that comes from giving a brother or sister hope,” Burgess added.

DAV also honored several dedicated veterans advocates throughout the conference for their outstanding efforts and achievements on behalf of the men and women who served.

“The recipients of this year’s DAV Advocacy Awards have demonstrated what it means to keep the promise to the men and women who served,” said Metcalf-Foster. “They each possess an unmatched dedication to fighting for the best interests of veterans and their families. It is a great honor to present these awards that recognize their critical contributions in the areas of

veterans health care, benefits, policy and legislation.”

Sen. Johnny Isakson, chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, received the Veterans’ Champion award; Sen. Tammy Baldwin received the Outstanding Senate Legislator of the Year award; Rep. Tim Walz received the Outstanding House Legislator of the Year award; and Thomas Murphy of the VA’s Veterans Benefits Administration received the Outstanding Federal Executive of the Year award.

Special recognition awards were also bestowed upon Dr. Elizabeth M. Yano, of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, a career research scientist focused on women veterans

health; Dahlia M. Melendrez, general counsel for the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs; Raymond Kelley, minority staff director; Dr. Frances Murphy, who provides invaluable counsel on several DAV legislative campaigns and special initiatives; and Tom Philpott, a syndicated columnist, journalist and freelance writer.

The conference peaked on Feb. 27 when Metcalf-Foster testified before a special joint session of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans’ Affairs. Veterans and supporters packed the caucus room to maximum capacity in the Dirksen Senate Office Building for the hearing.

“I am grateful and humbled to be here in front of you as the first, but I am confident not the last, woman elected as national commander of our organization,” Metcalf-Foster stated at the beginning of her remarks before the joint committee.

The statement elicited a standing ovation from the audience and encapsulated one of DAV’s most dominant issues—women veterans.

“I’m inspired to lead again,” Dr. Lisa Kirk, a 22-year Air Force veteran and life member of Chapter 133 in Pompano Beach, Fla., said of her experience at the conference. “I feel like this organization allows us to have a level playing field to be leaders—not only to

lead by example but to lead with empathy, because we understand what's going on with each other.”

Metcalf-Foster noted the progress the VA has made in relation to women veterans over the course of the past few years but said more is still needed, including passage of the Deborah Sampson Act (S. 681/H.R. 2452), which would ensure all women using the VA have timely access to comprehensive, quality care that meets their unique health care needs.

The commander also spoke about a number of other issues during her testimony, including timely access to an integrated network of high-quality health care, and she called on Congress to fully fund veterans health care and other benefits.

“Some say our nation just can’t afford the rising costs of veterans benefits,” she explained. “We say that a great nation can’t afford not to pay for veterans benefits. These benefits have already been paid in full by the blood, sweat and sacrifice of men and women who served.”

Perhaps the most poignant element of her testimony, however, was the topic of family caregiver and support services, which Metcalf-Foster called “DAV’s highest legislative priority for 2018.”

“I personally know the sacrifice caregivers make,” she asserted before telling the story of her late husband, Jimmy, a fellow Army veteran who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

“I was suddenly thrust into the role of a caregiver,” Metcalf-Foster explained. “I did my best to give him the support that he needed, but I also had to work, because we had limited income.”

“As much as I wanted to keep my soldier home, his condition worsened, I grew older, and soon it

was too much for me to handle. Sadly, my story is not unique. That’s why DAV launched its Unsung Heroes Initiative—to ensure all caregivers to severely disabled veterans have access to comprehensive caregiver benefits.”

She noted that while DAV is pleased the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs voted to phase in caregiver assistance to severely injured veterans of all eras as part of the Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017, our organization urges the full Senate and House “pass caregiver legislation for our most severely injured or ill veterans of all eras.”

In closing her testimony, Metcalf-Foster quoted Robert F. Kennedy, a Navy veteran and former senator and attorney general, who once said, “Every generation inherits a world it never made; and as it does so, it automatically becomes the trustee of that world for those who come after.”

“We are now the trustees,” Metcalf-Foster followed.

Kirk echoed this sentiment, reflecting on the significant contributions made to DAV by veterans of previous generations.

“I look at these Vietnam veterans, and I know I wouldn’t have any benefits if they hadn’t gone to Congress and actually changed the laws to protect disabled veterans,” she said. “So, if we don’t do it for the next generation, who will? We have to do it.” ■

Rep. Tim Walz (center), ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, receives the DAV Outstanding House Legislator of the Year award from Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine (left) and National Legislative Director Joy Ilem (right). Walz, the highest-ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in congress, earned the award for his two decades of service in the Army National Guard and leadership on critical legislation impacting his fellow veterans, including the Clay Hunt SAV Act, a law that works to eliminate veteran suicide.



Candidates for National Office

2018–2019

The following information is intended to inform membership on the announced candidates for national office. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement or approval by DAV National Headquarters of any candidate to the exclusion of others who may stand for election. DAV members may announce their candidacy at any time, up to and including the time of election at our 2018 DAV National Convention July 14–17 in Reno, Nev.



Dennis R. Nixon

National Senior Vice Commander Dennis Nixon, of China Spring, Texas, is a combat-wounded veteran of the Vietnam War. After medical retirement from the Marine Corps in 1970, Nixon became a DAV national service officer—also one of

DAV's first national area supervisors—and dedicated 36 years to helping his fellow veterans obtain the benefits they earned.

Since retirement, Nixon has continued to serve as a volunteer, assisting in the certification training of department and chapter service officers, as well as

mentoring service officer apprentices in the national service office in Waco, Texas.

Nixon has served in various leadership capacities at both the chapter and department levels, including adjutant. He currently serves as the vice chairman for DAV's board of directors. He is also the judge advocate for the Department of Texas. He has served on the National Executive Committee and was a member of the DAV Charitable Service Trust board of directors.

A life member of Chapter 20 in Fort Worth, Texas, Nixon has been active in DAV for 44 years.

He is seeking election to higher office.



Stephen "Butch" Whitehead

Stephen Whitehead is DAV's national 1st junior vice commander. He is a service-connected disabled veteran who retired this year from the Minnesota Army National Guard at the rank of command sergeant major.

He is a DAV life member of Chapter 10 in Mankato, Minn., and is an active leader in his chapter. Whitehead is currently serving as adjutant for the Department of Minnesota as well as chair on multiple department-level committees.

Whitehead is seeking election to higher office.



Donald Day

Donald Day is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who served during the Vietnam era. During his time on active duty, he had tours in Europe and Southeast Asia. He currently serves as DAV's national 2nd junior vice commander.

Day is a life member of DAV Chapter 28 in Brooklyn, N.Y. He has been active with DAV at the chapter, department and national levels. Presently, he is chapter

adjutant and serves as treasurer for the Department of New York. Day is the past department commander and served as chairman of the National Convention Credentials Committee. He is an inductee of the New York Senate Veterans Hall of Fame and has served as chief street marshal of the Kings County Memorial Day Parade. He is also a certified court mentor at the Brooklyn Veterans Court and earned a bachelor's degree from the College of New Rochelle in New York.

Day is seeking election to higher office.



Andy Marshall

Andy Marshall, a combat-disabled Army veteran of the Vietnam War, is currently DAV's national 3rd junior vice commander and the DAV Department of Florida adjutant. He has been a life member of DAV Chapter 4 in Tampa, Fla., since 1975.

Marshall, who retired from DAV as a national service office supervisor in St. Petersburg, Fla., was one of DAV's first national area supervisors and has held multiple leadership positions during his 41 years with the organization, including

judge advocate for the Department of Maryland. He was on the DAV Department of Florida's finance committee before becoming department commander.

One of only a few non-attorney practitioners to argue before the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims while assigned to the DAV Judicial Appeals Office, Marshall argued the case that resulted in the VA's duty to assist requirements, a landmark decision positively affecting and protecting all veterans trying to obtain benefits from the VA.

Marshall is seeking election to higher office.



Joseph Parsetich

Joe Parsetich is an Air Force combat veteran of the Vietnam War. He represented DAV's National Executive Committee for the 14th District from 2014 to 2016. He is currently the national 4th junior vice commander for DAV. He has been a chapter

service officer since 2009 and is the past DAV Department of Montana commander. He was named Volunteer of the Quarter by the VA in 2010 and still serves on many

committees pertaining to veterans' issues.

He serves as the coordinator as well as mentor for the Veterans Treatment Court; 15 of his veterans have graduated the 18-month program and reintegrated back into society.

In addition to his various duties, he has also served as a DAV volunteer van driver; a member of the Military Funeral Honor Guard in Great Falls, Mont.; and a member of the VA secretary's Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee.

Parsetich is seeking election to higher office.



Nancy Espinosa

Nancy Espinosa is a service-connected disabled veteran of the U.S. Army. Espinosa joined the U.S. Army Reserve in 1975, where she served until joining the active duty Army in 1985. After four years of active duty, she joined the

New Mexico Army National Guard until her honorable discharge in 1990.

Upon leaving military service, Espinosa became a life

member of DAV. Currently a member of Chapter 14 in Layton, Utah, she is the state's department commander and a member of the Benefits Protection Team.

She is also an active member of DAV's Commanders and Adjutants Association, a member of the Veterans Advisory Council for the state of Utah and a commissioner on the Utah Legislative Veterans and Military Affairs Commission. Espinosa currently serves as a member of DAV's Charitable Service Trust board of directors.

Espinosa is seeking election to national office.



Idalis Marquez

Idalis Marquez is a service-connected disabled veteran who served in the Army National Guard during the Persian Gulf War.

Marquez graduated from Brooklyn College with a degree in business management. She joined

DAV in 2008 and has served in multiple leadership roles at the chapter, department and national levels. Marquez was the DAV Department of Puerto Rico commander from 2014 to 2016. She also currently serves on DAV's board of directors and as the National Executive Committee representative for District 6.

Marquez is seeking election to national office.



John Polk

John J. Polk, a combat-disabled Army veteran of the Vietnam War, retired in 1992 after a 20-year career.

Polk graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1973 and worked in the technology field in the Milwaukee area for 25 years. A life member since

1982, he has been heavily involved with DAV since 2005,

holding many leadership roles at the local, state and national levels. Polk is the immediate past department commander for the Department of Wisconsin and is currently chairman of the DAV Department of Wisconsin Foundation and is adjutant and treasurer of chapter 19. He also serves as a volunteer driver. He is currently a national deputy chief of staff for the national commander, representing the Department of Wisconsin.

Polk is seeking election to national office.



Join us in Reno! Find out more about this year's convention:
dav.org/events/2018-national-convention



Michael E. Dobmeier | For National Judge Advocate

Michael Dobmeier has served as national judge advocate, advising the National Executive Committee (NEC) and board of directors since 2002. He served as DAV national commander in 1999 and as the 14th District NEC representative in 1994.

Dobmeier enlisted in the Navy in 1969 after graduating from high school. He trained as an engineman; attended the Naval Submarine School in New London, Conn.; and completed Navy Dive School in San Diego.

In April 1972, Dobmeier suffered severe burns on more than 30 percent of his body after an oil heater exploded aboard the submarine USS Trigger. He was discharged later that year and became a life member of DAV Chapter 2 in Grand Forks, N.D. He has since been appointed or elected to nearly every chapter and department office and position and was named the 1985 DAV Outstanding Member of the Department of North Dakota.

Dobmeier is seeking election to another term as national judge advocate.



Michael P. Dover | For National Chaplain

National Chaplain Michael Dover is a service-connected disabled veteran and DAV life member who has served in a variety of capacities for Chapter 7 in Columbus, Ga., including senior vice commander, adjutant, treasurer, judge advocate

and service officer. At the department level, Dover has served as commander and chaplain.

He retired from the Army after 20 years of service.

Since then, he has worked as a civilian military trainer and analyst while simultaneously serving as a counselor and chaplain. He recently was inducted into the Georgia Military Veterans Hall of Fame for assisting over 10,000 homeless veterans.

An ordained minister and certified chaplain, Dover received his Bachelor of Theology from Christian Life School Seminary and a Bachelor of Science in business management from Liberty University.

Dover is seeking re-election as national chaplain.

Convention registration

■ You can pre-register for the convention via DAV's website. There is a \$25 registration fee for each delegate, alternate delegate and guest registered who is 18 years of age or older.

Registration badges are required to gain admission to the many activities and functions of the convention. If you plan to attend the line officer dinner, you must make a reservation at the designated booth inside the convention registration room no later than Sunday, July 15, at 4 p.m. Table assignments will be coordinated by DAV

for the dinner, and tickets showing your assigned table number may be picked up after the business sessions on Tuesday, July 17, near the entrance of the Summit Pavilion located on the casino level.

Attendees who pre-register will be able to pick up credentials at will call, which will be located in Carson 4 on the casino level of the hotel beginning at 10 a.m., Thursday, July 12. On-site convention registration will be open at the same time and location as will call.



Please visit www.dav.org/events/2018-national-convention for more information.



Claims on campus

DAV mobile office visits are underway in communities, colleges nationwide

By Charity Edgar

Since 2001, DAV's Mobile Service Office (MSO) program has traveled throughout the country to underserved small towns and rural communities to counsel, assist and educate veterans and their families on the benefits they are eligible for through their service.

And with more than a million veterans using education benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs, finding veterans on college campuses is increasingly common. That's why DAV has extended its reach of MSOs over the past few years to also cover a number of colleges and universities. In 2017, MSOs visited 665 sites—including 37 college campuses—facilitating 6,335 interviews with veterans, their families and survivors that resulted in 3,507 claims for benefits. In total, the fleet covered 56,318 miles.

Navy veteran and benefits advocate Raymond Countryman traveled from his office at the VA regional office in Los Angeles to four stops throughout California in March aboard a DAV mobile office. His first destination was Long Beach

City College to assist student veterans.

"The MSO enables veterans to come see us and get assistance when they normally might not be able," explained Countryman. "Some people prefer the face-to-face interactions, and the MSO provides that throughout California and across the country."

The Afghanistan veteran welcomes the opportunity to bring DAV services to college campuses.

"Too often, student veterans don't know about their benefits beyond the GI Bill—if they even know about that," said Countryman. "They may not know about Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, for example, which I have personally benefited from."

Marine Corps veteran Aaron McCrae, one of the students Countryman met with on campus, said he was grateful for the assistance.

"Sometimes you might put [claims assistance] off because it takes time. That's what I did, because I got out and got a job. But now I'm back to school and refocused on taking care of myself," said McCrae, a communications major. "I learned about my benefits, and now, I can take advantage of them."

In 2017, our
mobile service offices
traveled



56,318 miles

to **665** locations

including
37 colleges & universities

“Some of us need help after getting out—our service could be impacting our life,” added Army veteran and computer science major Adam Chavez. “VA benefits could help, but student veterans might not be aware of them or seek it out.”

Dietetics major and Army Reserve veteran Betty Gonzalez also talked to Countryman about benefits.

“Raymond printed out the paperwork I needed so I can get the benefits I earned,” said Gonzalez, who encourages other student veterans to seek out assistance for help with claims. “I think the most important thing is to not be afraid to ask questions. I’ve noticed from my personal experience that there were so many things I was initially misinformed about after getting out [of the military]. Don’t be afraid to

ask questions—as many as you can.”

“Our goal is to reach veterans of all generations, but it’s particularly gratifying to help students, knowing the impact we can have in their lives at a time when they are striving to reach their full potential,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “The sooner we’re able to reach a veteran after their service has ended, the more of an impact we can have on their and their family’s quality of life.” ■



Learn More Online

The DAV MSO fleet continues to travel cross-country this summer making hundreds of stops, including several college campuses. The full schedule is available at dav.la/3g.



Student veteran Betty Gonzalez receives free counseling by DAV claims expert Raymond Countryman during a visit to Long Beach City College. With more than a million veterans using VA education benefits, DAV has extended its reach of MSOs to include a number of colleges and universities.



Going further *together*

Fellow veterans, volunteers
key to individual successes
at National Disabled Veterans
Winter Sports Clinic

By M. Todd Hunter

Standing behind the lectern during the opening ceremony of this year's National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst asked clinic participants to keep an old African proverb in mind during the course of their upcoming adventure.

"If you want to go fast, go alone," he said. "If you want to go far, go together."

That adage, along with the clinic's rightfully earned reputation for delivering miracles on a mountainside, served as a rallying cry for the approximately 400 participants who descended upon Snowmass, Colo., from across the country for the annual five-day event.

Co-hosted by DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the clinic has served as a world leader in adaptive sports for 32 years. It provides veterans with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, neurological disabilities, blindness and amputations the opportunity to participate in Nordic and alpine skiing and snowboarding, rock climbing, scuba diving, sled hockey, snowmobiling and a wide range of other activities.

"I usually get forced into [rehabilitative activities for veterans], but then once I'm doing it, I am competitive and glad I got into it," said Shealynn Casserly, a former Army combat medic who was injured in 2013 by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

"I broke my jaw, sustained a traumatic brain injury, a collapsed lung, broken femurs and a lot of internal damage," said Casserly. "Head to toe, I felt demolished."

Yet through more than 60 surgeries in the past five years, the Minnesota native said she appreciates any opportunity to take part in winter sports, which is why she focused on snowboarding while in Snowmass.

"I'd like to come back and get more time on the slopes," she said, before admitting she's sometimes apprehensive to attend large events

with lots of other people—a common sentiment for many of the clinic's participants.

Regardless, Casserly believes the camaraderie adaptive sporting events has brought into her life has helped her forge bonds with her fellow ill and injured veterans.

"You connect on a totally different level that most people would not understand," she asserted. "I meet genuine people who become lifelong friends, and that makes it worth it."

"We want the participants to be impacted by this event for a lifetime," explained Kleindienst. "We want to plant a seed by introducing them to new opportunities and giving them a chance to prove to themselves that their injuries do not have to limit their quality of life."

Such opportunities can sometimes be hard to come by for disabled veterans, because not everyone has the same disabilities.

"We strive to make this the best rehabilitative event



Mono-skiers head down the mountain (top left) during the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Colorado. Alternate activities at the clinic include rock climbing (above), sled hockey (left), archery, snowmobiling, scuba diving, and more.



“The purpose is to remove any obstacle that stands in their way, because **we want veterans to achieve their highest possible potential**. If a severely injured veteran has problems standing, we have adaptive equipment that can hold them up.”

— Teresa Parks,
VA event director

in the world,” said Teresa Parks, the VA director for the event. “The purpose is to remove any obstacle that stands in their way, because we want veterans to achieve their highest possible potential. If a severely injured veteran has problems standing, we have adaptive equipment that can hold them up. If they need to be seated while they ski, we have the proper equipment for them. If they want to snowboard, we can accommodate that, too.”

Kleindienst and Parks both credit the nearly 650 volunteers and 200 ski instructors with ensuring the clinic’s success.

“None of this could happen without the selfless service of all these amazing people,” Kleindienst said. “It’s truly humbling to come back year after year and see the same smiling faces giving their time so that others can regain a sense of normalcy. There’s a saying that nothing is stronger than the heart of a volunteer. This clinic proves that.”

“We’re truly lucky to have such an outpouring of support from our volunteers and our sponsors,” Parks

added. “And one of these best things about it is that their efforts don’t go unnoticed by the participants. They constantly come up to me to let me know how much they appreciate everyone’s efforts, and I think that goes a long way in contributing to the community atmosphere of this event.”

“What makes the clinic so unique is the teamwork you see all around, all day, every day,” said National Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski. “Volunteers helping participants in every way imaginable, veterans and caregivers sharing their experiences and encouraging each other, and sponsors providing the means for all of it to happen. Whether you’re a participant, volunteer or spectator, you’re going to head home inspired by this one-of-a-kind event.”

And that is what DAV and VA organizers aim for at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.

“I witnessed veteran after veteran wanting to go far and bringing their fellow veterans with them,” Kleindienst told participants at the event’s close.

“Don’t let that end when we leave this mountain.” ■

Jatáya Taylor earns DAV Freedom Award

Marine Corps veteran, amputee embodies rehabilitative mission, spirit of event

By M. Todd Hunter

Surfing was just one of the many activities Jatáya Taylor enjoyed growing up. Her competitive disposition and active lifestyle made the Marine Corps a natural fit when she decided to enlist. Unfortunately, Taylor's service was suddenly cut short in 2005 after a training accident severely injured her shoulder and knee, confining her to a wheelchair.

"When I found out I wasn't going to be physically active how I used to be, it took a big toll on my mental health—depression set in, anxiety—and it just became a world that I really didn't want to live in until I found adaptive sports," Taylor explained. "And that gave me the motivation to say, 'I can still be who I was. I just have to do it differently.'"

That determination and spirit is what earned Taylor the 2018 DAV Freedom Award at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass, Colo. The award is presented each year to the veteran who proves to the world that an injury or disability does not bar the doors to freedom.

Though Taylor has participated in a dozen other adaptive sporting events since being introduced to kayaking in 2012, this year was her first time attending the clinic.

"What stands out about Jay is that she's gone through many of the same things these participants, including myself, have gone through," said Past National Commander Dave Riley, a quadruple amputee and



Marine Corps veteran Jatáya Taylor and her service dog, Kahara, focus on fly fishing at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass, Colo. This was Taylor's first time at the clinic. "The opportunity to try new activities is what really caught my eye," said Taylor. She credits adaptive sports with saving her life in the aftermath of her injuries.

clinic chairman. "They're wrestling with depression, not knowing what they're capable of. That's what's good about this clinic; you get them out there and show them what they can do."

"The opportunity to try new activities is what really caught my eye," explained Taylor, whose leg was eventually amputated above the knee in 2017. "I just learned how to snowboard, and this is a good chance to improve my skills."

It was the camaraderie found at adaptive sporting events that had the most influence on Taylor's decision to attend the clinic. She said it helps her connect with her fellow ill and injured veterans.

"To have organizations like the VA and DAV put on an event like this is liberating for veterans," Taylor said. "You understand what we go through, and without this, a lot of people probably wouldn't get out there."

Taylor offered the hundreds of fellow ill and injured veteran participants an important reminder after accepting the award.

"We're not necessarily disabled," she said. "We're just differently abled." ■



Navy veterans Olif Staley (left) and Linda Staley Blake (right) celebrate Jennifer Blake's graduation from Navy basic training in 2005. Blake—now a chief petty officer—followed her mother's and grandmother's legacy of service as the third generation of women veterans in their family.

In her shoes

Three generations of women create a family legacy of service

By Mary Dever

When Navy Chief Petty Officer Jennifer Blake was growing up on military bases around the world, she knew her family was special. But it wasn't until she joined the military herself that she recognized how truly special her family's legacy of service was.

Blake—a DAV life member, currently stationed in Norfolk, Va.—is the third generation in her family to serve in the Navy. But while that in itself is not uncommon, what's unique is that all three generations included women.

Her grandmother, Olif Staley, was a communications officer in World War II, serving at a time when the entire country—male and female—was called to serve in some manner. Blake's mother, Linda Staley Blake, joined in 1969, during the Vietnam era.

"I loved growing up in a military family," said Blake. "Everyone was quietly proud of their service, and the family legacy, really. It was just sort of seen as 'what we do.'"

Blake joined after she graduated from college, when the world was still recovering from the events of Sept. 11, 2001. Her mother and grandmother never pressured her to join the military, she said. They had both been to college, and they wanted that for her as well.

"After my graduation from nursing school, I decided I was going to join the Navy, and I did," said Staley Blake. "I'm thankful that my mother was in the Navy too, so that I had no fear of going into the Navy. I mean, she did it; I could do it."

Staley Blake's husband, Robert, also served, retiring as a lieutenant colonel from the Marine Corps, so her children had the benefit of being raised in a military family—and she thinks her own service had a little bit to do with that.

"I felt that the military experience helped me raise my children, because I had a broader base of experiences to share with them. I could help them see a wider world," she said.

Blake said the example she had from both her mother and her grandmother showed her how to serve effectively and take on all the challenges of military service.

"I think what guides me the most is just how they approach life in general," she said. "We do what we have to do. Period. When things are difficult, there's no crying. No hysterics. No complaining. When the [commanding officer] tells you this is the mission, and it's going to be difficult, you don't get to have a tantrum about it. You put your head down and get to work."

"We're all different in our military occupations, but we each provided service to our country, whether it be for two years or four years or a lifetime," said Staley Blake. "I hope that future generations of our family will look back on our service and be as proud as we are of doing it." ■

From the NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR DOUGLAS K. WELLS JR.



The value of membership

Many times when meeting transitioning military members or fellow veterans who may qualify for membership in our organization, I'm asked, "Why should I join?"

My response is simple: "Can you afford not to?"

Every DAV member is a voice fighting for fellow veterans, their caregivers and their families. Membership ensures you are still very much in the fight. That fight involves pushing lawmakers to enact positive legislation for veterans, making sure veteran health care and VA reform is a national priority, fighting for support for caregivers of all generations, and making sure the benefits we earned through service are not taken away or siphoned off.

Your membership is a critical component in each of these areas, which affect quality of life for veterans and their families. You are still in the fight regarding these issues, and I'm

grateful you are with us.

Additionally, many members enjoy the familial bonds unique to the veteran community. For many of us, myself included, it mirrors what we experienced in the military. Our members typically look out for one another in times of need. DAV members support fellow veterans in their communities and, just as our organization is in the fight in Washington, D.C., we're in the fight to take care of our own.

There are, of course, more tangible benefits like member discounts and *DAV Magazine*, but foremost, joining is the fulfillment of our sacred promise to never leave our own behind.

Thank you for your membership and for staying in the fight with me. I hope you'll rally fellow veterans to our cause and invite them to join us as we continue the fight on behalf of every man and woman who has served. It's an honor to continue to serve beside all of you.



Life Membership requires a minimum down payment of \$40. The remaining balance is paid in interest-free quarterly payments. All dues payments received are applied to your life membership account. Apply online for as little as \$10 at dav.org/membership/join-dav.

Membership Application

Date _____

Last Name _____ First Name _____ M.I. _____ Spouse's Name _____

Address _____ Member Code No. _____

City/Town _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Date of Birth _____ / _____ / _____ Date Enlisted _____ / _____ / _____ Branch _____ Date Discharged _____ / _____ / _____

Rank _____ Service-Connected Disability _____ % Receiving ☐ VA Comp. ☐ VA Pension ☐ Service Retirement

Eligibilities: ☐ Amputee ☐ Visually Impaired ☐ Hearing Impaired ☐ POW ☐ Purple Heart ☐ Other

Chapter Preference _____ Department Preference _____ Sponsor's Code No. _____

Sponsor's Name _____ Sponsor's Phone No. (_____) _____ Sponsor's ZIP _____

Applicant's Phone No. (_____) _____ Email _____

Applicant's Signature _____ Amt. Paid \$ _____ ☐ New ☐ Payment

Payment Type: ☐ Check # _____ ☐ Cash ☐ MO ☐ Visa ☐ MC ☐ Discover ☐ AmEx Name on Card _____

Credit Card No. _____ - _____ - _____ Exp. Date _____

Billing Address _____

Eligibility

The full cost for DAV Life Membership is based on the applicant's age at the time of application. Life membership payments are non-refundable and are not tax deductible.

Age	Life Amount
Up to 40	\$250
41 thru 60	\$230
61 thru 70	\$180
71 thru 79	\$140
Over 80	FREE

DAV urges sufficient funding for veterans benefits and health care

Independent Budget members release annual VA funding recommendations

By Mary Dever

DAV is once again pushing Congress to immediately address the shortfalls in the Department of Veterans Affairs budget and ensure appropriate levels of funding so wartime service-disabled veterans get the care and benefits they need and deserve.

Unfortunately, the VA has been forced to operate for most of the 2018 fiscal year under 2017 funding levels, \$3.4 billion less than what the department says it needs for medical care.

In February, the members of the Independent Budget (DAV, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars) released budget recommendations for fiscal years 2019 and 2020, on the heels of the administration's own budget proposal.

"We commend the president's proposed \$1.8 billion increase over fiscal year 2018, as it includes much-needed funding boosts for VA health care, construction and information technology modernization," said Deputy National Legislative Director Adrian Atizado. "However, there are still some questions over the availability of existing and proposed funding, as neither the House nor Senate has passed legislation establishing a path forward on the Choice Program."

The VA plans to change how community care obligations are recorded, which will result in a one-time funding availability of \$1.8 billion. An additional \$1.9 billion is expected to be carried forward into fiscal year 2019 from the VA's Veterans Choice Program funding, but the funds are due to run out this June. Due to these funding uncertainties and the future of the program, it remains unclear whether the VA will actually have that \$3.7 billion of requested resources available in fiscal year 2019.

Proposed funding recommendations for all VA discretionary programs for fiscal year 2019 and

advance appropriations recommendations for VA medical care accounts for fiscal year 2020 are particularly important because of significant efforts underway to reform and modernize the department—specifically, veterans health care.

Highlights from the fiscal year 2019 *Independent Budget* recommendations include:

- \$82.8 billion for total medical care, an increase of \$6.8 billion over the VA's request (to include increases for prosthetics, improved access for women veterans and preparation for the VA's caregiver support program to expand benefits to pre-9/11 veterans).
- \$758 million for medical and prosthetics research, and \$65 million to fund deeper, more accurate sequencing of samples collected for the Million Veteran Program.
- \$1.6 billion to modernize the VA's electronic health record, and \$2.5 billion for major and minor construction.
- \$3.1 billion to fund the Veterans Benefit Administration's ability to keep pace with the current and future appeals workload, to include additional hiring.

Moving forward, Congress must ensure the VA's budgets are sufficient to execute any new requirements imposed on the department, make needed system upgrades, and meet existing demand for care and benefits.

"For more than 30 years, DAV has collaborated with our IB partners to present a single, powerful voice of veterans to Congress," said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. "While we continue to stay focused on urging Congress to meet the demands for our current year, we are also looking ahead to ensure they are aware of the rising demand to provide veterans and their families with the quality services they deserve." ■



Learn More Online

To learn more about the report and to see the full *Independent Budget* recommendations, visit www.independentbudget.org.

VA Accounts for FY 2019 and FY 2020 Advance Appropriations

(Dollars in Thousands)	FY 2018* Appropriation	FY 2019 Admin. Revised	FY 2019 Independent Budget (IB)	FY 2020 Admin. Request	FY 2020 Independent Budget (IB)
Veterans Health Administration					
Medical Services	46,849,538	49,161,165	53,701,841	63,167,774	54,728,707
Medical Community Care	9,828,294	8,384,704	14,920,020		15,143,696
Veterans Choice Program**	2,100,000	1,900,000			
Subtotal Medical Services	58,777,832	59,445,869	68,621,861	63,167,774	69,872,403
Medical Support and Compliance	6,754,480	7,239,156	6,838,244	7,106,150	7,367,749
Medical Facilities	6,141,880	5,914,288	7,389,736	5,276,676	7,506,132
Subtotal Medical Care, Discretionary	71,674,192	72,599,313	82,849,841	75,550,600	84,746,284
Medical Care Collections	3,290,958	3,443,133		3,580,999	
Total, Medical Care Budget Authority (including Collections)	74,965,150	76,042,446	82,849,841	79,131,599	84,746,284
Medical and Prosthetic Research	722,262	727,369	758,000		
Million Veteran Program			65,000		
Total, Veterans Health Administration	75,687,412	76,769,815	83,672,841		
General Operating Expenses					
Veterans Benefits Administration	2,910,000	2,868,909	3,103,711		
General Administration	335,891	367,629	354,639		
Board of Veterans' Appeals	161,048	174,748	167,624		
Total, General Operating Expenses	3,406,939	3,411,286	3,625,974		
Departmental Admin. and Misc. Programs					
Information Technology	4,055,500	4,184,571	4,103,698		
IT Modernization	782,000	1,207,000	1,600,000		
National Cemetery Administration	306,193	315,836	310,811		
Office of Inspector General	164,000	172,054	167,806		
Total, Dept. Admin. and Misc. Programs	5,307,693	5,879,461	6,182,315		
Construction Programs					
Construction, Major	512,430	1,127,486	1,730,000		
Construction, Minor	342,570	706,889	761,000		
Grants for State Extended Care Facilities	110,000	150,000	200,000		
Grants for State Veterans Cemeteries	45,000	45,000	51,000		
Total, Construction Programs	1,010,000	2,029,375	2,742,000		
Other Discretionary	180,215	202,196	184,000		
Total, Discretionary Budget Authority (including Medical Collections)	85,592,259	88,292,133	96,407,130		

* Based on P.L. 115-141, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018. Does not include the \$2 billion negotiated under P.L. 115-123 and as allocated by P.L. 115-141, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, of \$1 billion for Medical Facilities for nonrecurring maintenance, \$425 million for Minor Construction, and \$575 million for Grants for Construction of State Extended Care Facilities.

**Veterans Choice Program funding is currently scored as a mandatory cost for the VA. On Dec. 22, 2017, Division D of P.L. 115-96 appropriated an additional \$2.1 billion for the Veterans Choice Fund to remain available until expended.



From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER WILLIAM CRAIG JOHNIKEN

The power of membership

Summer is rapidly approaching, and many of us are thinking ahead to the DAV and DAV Auxiliary conventions.

These are opportunities for fellowship with those we hold dearest—those who've served, fellow family members of veterans and caregivers. These events show the DAV Auxiliary in action and highlight the important work we do. Consider bringing along a potentially eligible member to show them what we're all about.

Auxiliary members are often the driving force behind veterans getting involved with DAV. This provides an opportunity to ensure family involvement in both organizations. It makes for success at the local Auxiliary while allowing family members to make a positive impact on their community as they work within the unit and beside the DAV chapter.

Getting families involved in our cause also introduces America's youth to the veteran community. In my travels on behalf of the Auxiliary, I continue to be amazed by the power and enthusiasm

of young volunteers. Many times, these future leaders are simply waiting for their parents or guardians to empower them to get involved. When they do, they approach making a difference with a passion that's simply contagious.

Membership in the Auxiliary strengthens our promise to support veterans, caregivers and their families, all while making a difference in our communities. Your membership, participation in unit meetings and events, and attendance at conventions positively affect the lives of thousands.

We can't tackle this alone. It takes all of us working together to make it happen. Future success will depend on membership, empowering youth volunteers and bringing caregivers into our ranks. New members will fuel our efforts and impact how we work toward our goals.

I hope you will stay involved and encourage potential members, their children and caregivers to join our ranks.

It's an honor to serve as your Auxiliary commander.



National Headquarters
3725 Alexandria Pike
Cold Spring, KY 41076

Toll Free 877-426-2838, Opt. 8
davauxiliary.org
dava@dav.org

Membership Application

Date _____

MEMBERSHIP CODE NUMBER (FOR PAYMENTS ONLY)

Membership Application in Unit No. _____ State _____

☐ Ms. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Mr. Name _____ DOB _____ / _____ / _____
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY REQUIRED

Address _____ City _____

State _____ ZIP _____ Phone (____) _____ Email _____

☐ NEW LIFE ☐ LIFE PAYMENT ☐ NEW JUNIOR ☐ NEW JUNIOR LIFE ☐ JUNIOR LIFE PAYMENT
(\$20 Down Payment) (Complimentary) (\$20 Down Payment)

AMT PAID \$ _____

Eligibility through _____ Relationship _____

SEND TO AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Eligibility

Life membership is based on the applicant's age as of the current membership year

AGE	LIFE AMOUNT
80 or older	Free
71-79	\$140
61-70	\$180
46-60	\$200
31-45	\$230
Birth-30	\$250



Lending a helping 'paw'

Custom Canine Unlimited's Samuel Allen (left) and Emon Baker (right) stand along side Brantley Gilbert, Amanda Hensley and Marine Corps veteran Jason Hassinger backstage at Gilbert's concert held Feb. 3 in Albany, N.Y. Hassinger, a Silver Star and Purple Heart recipient and veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, was selected to receive companion dog Charlie.

Veterans gifted companion dogs through country star Brantley Gilbert

By Steven Wilson

They say a dog is man's best friend—and through the generosity of country music star Brantley Gilbert and several partners, eight deserving veterans are being paired with new canine companions.

"There is nothing like the loyalty, love and companionship of a dog," said Gilbert. "For some people, a dog can connect, unlike even a best friend, for those who gave beyond the call of duty to our nation."

Gilbert partnered with DAV to identify veterans who would benefit from the addition of a four-legged friend in their lives, to be gifted as part of his 2018 U.S. tour. Each dog was professionally trained by Custom Canine Unlimited and paired with a veteran and his or her family. Pedigree also joined the partnership and will provide a year's supply of dog food for each veteran's dog.

"I love the idea of matching them up with dogs specially trained for the task of getting their lives to a better place," Gilbert said.

DAV life member Jason Hassinger, of Chapter 15 in Philadelphia, was paired with his dog, Charlie, backstage at Gilbert's Albany, N.Y., concert in February.

"Brantley was amazingly humble, and you could tell his care for veterans is very genuine," said Hassinger, who earned a Silver Star for gallantry in Afghanistan. "Charlie has become a friend and an incredible addition to our family."

Crystall Keiser-Plunkett, a member of DAV Chapter 38, in Tifton, Ga., said the experience of receiving her canine companion, Athena, was life-changing for her and her family.

"Bringing Athena into our lives has brought joy, happiness and has even decreased my anxiety," she said. "Athena ensures I don't lie around all day. She wakes me with kisses in the morning, my kids and I spend the days playing with her, and she's right beside me at night. I'm so glad someone like Brantley thinks about us veterans."

"This partnership illustrates how DAV transforms the lives of veterans and their families," said National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster. "I'm very thankful Brantley partnered with us and used his platform to amplify our mission of service." ■




Study shows New York private care physicians not equipped to treat veterans

■ A recent study by the Rand Corporation shows doctors outside the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system might not be able to provide acceptable care to veterans.

Whereas timeliness of care was not an issue, the new report—which focused only on the state of New York—showed many doctors in the private sector weren't prepared to care for veterans when it came to such qualities as familiarity with military culture and screenings for military affiliation or for conditions common among veterans.

“This report echoes recommendations made together last year by veterans groups, Congress, VA leaders and an independent commission to create an integrated health care network of VA and community providers, with VA remaining the primary provider and coordinator of care,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. “Community partners are critical to make this plan work, but we cannot overlook that VA specializes in the unique care many veterans require.”

The study—based on 746 New York health care providers—determined that while 92 percent of providers were accepting new patients, only 2.3 percent met all criteria for effectively serving the veteran population.

 To see the full Rand study, visit www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2298.html.

VA aims to eliminate hepatitis C infections by end of 2018

■ In February, then-Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin announced that the department was on track to eliminate hepatitis C infections in the next 12 months for veterans willing and able to be treated.

The largest provider of hepatitis C infection care in the country, the VA provided treatment to more than 170,000 veterans in 2013. The department estimates that by next October, the number will be roughly 20,000, thanks to lower negotiated costs and higher cure rates in new treatments.


According to the VA's 2018 Budget in Brief, the department has successfully worked with manufacturers of the highly effective hepatitis C drugs Sofosbuvir and Simeprevir to receive a reduced price for their use to treat veterans.

The VA wants to ensure that all veterans eligible for these new drugs, based on their clinician's recommendation, receive the medication, the report states.

Historically, hepatitis C has been expensive to treat, with low rates of success. With newer treatment options, the cure rate for veterans with hepatitis C is higher and has significantly less side effects. Cure of hepatitis C significantly decreases the risk of progression of the disease to cirrhosis, liver failure, liver cancer and death.

Veterans with a history of alcohol or substance abuse disorders, veterans with psychiatric conditions or who are homeless, and veterans who served during the Vietnam era are more prone than others to be affected by the hepatitis C virus. The symptoms of hepatitis C aren't always obvious. Most people can carry the virus for years without noticing any symptoms. The most common symptoms are vague abdominal discomfort, fatigue and joint pains.

The hepatitis C test is available to all veterans enrolled in VA health care, and all veterans at risk for the condition are encouraged to get tested.

 Find out if you're at risk at www.hepatitis.va.gov/patient/hcv/testing/should-you-get-tested.asp.

Big Ten Tournaments spotlight disabled veterans



The Big Ten Conference recently partnered with DAV to recognize the sacrifices of our nation's heroes and help raise awareness of the free services DAV provides veterans of all generations. Ten veterans were recognized on the court at both the women's and men's Big Ten Tournament games.

"We're very grateful and excited to have such a quality partner like the Big Ten supporting our mission of service to America's veterans," said Marc Burgess, national adjutant. "Their continued involvement connects student veterans with DAV and makes their fan base aware of ways they can volunteer and support those who've served."



All hands on deck...

"The All Hands on Deck! Show" a patriotic-themed 1942 style big band musical written by Broadway actor Jody Madaras (second from left), partnered with DAV Chapter 68 in Branson, Mo., to raise funds for the chapter by performing daily shows at the Dutton Family Theater. Local DAV members also contributed to the effort by volunteering as greeters, ushers and support staff. Chapter 68 Past Commander Darryl Ostrom said that because of Madaras' show, the chapter has received over \$3,000 in donations.



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 plans, 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 Ellie Gerhardt, 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**.



Doing what she believes is right

Ensuring DAV will be here to help tomorrow's veterans

Now 90, Ellie Gerhardt has lived through a lot. She grew up in a time and place where patriotism ran high, and caring for our veterans was part of what made her who she is today. She simply does not recall a time in her life when the needs of our veterans and military weren't a priority.

Gerhardt remembers spending a lot of time volunteering during her younger years and going home feeling humbled by the sacrifices so many had made.

"I just have a great passion for DAV, and I don't think we have enough people wanting to help. I knew 10 to 12 veterans who came home from World War II who were disabled," said Gerhardt. "They had it so hard, and I'm just grateful they got to see home again, even though they weren't the same. These men and women need our help."

As a young woman during World War II, she married Bill, the love of her life and an Air Force veteran with whom she spent nearly 60 years. Bill has passed on now, but Gerhardt still proudly boasts of her husband's accomplishments during the war and recalls the injuries he sustained during his service. She remembers how thankful they were that his injuries weren't worse and credits the desire to honor her late husband's memory as the reason why she named DAV in her estate plans.

When asked why she is supporting DAV in such a meaningful way, Gerhardt explained, "People are often so caught up with themselves and what's wrong in their lives that they don't realize how rough most people really have it. We can't just focus on ourselves."

By naming DAV in her estate plans, Gerhardt is ensuring that we will be here to continue serving veterans who need our help, now and for years to come. DAV is 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.

You can leave a legacy gift to DAV by naming us in your will or trust, or by naming us as a beneficiary on your insurance or pay-on-death accounts. If you've already named DAV in your estate plans, please let us know. We'd love to thank you and honor you in the DAV Guardian Society, as well as discuss anything you may need to know to ensure that your wishes are carried out the way that you intended. Even if you prefer anonymity, notifying us of your plans can ensure that your future wishes are carried out. ■



Ellie Gerhardt celebrates her 90th birthday during a DAV visit in October.



B - I - N - G - O !

Members of DAV Chapter 45 and Auxiliary Unit 45 in Goldsboro, N.C., host bingo night for the residents at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center. Front row, from left: VA recreational assistant James Williams, VA recreational therapist Andrea Jones, volunteer Jacqueline Rogers, Kathryn Winstead from Chapter 45, Unit 45 1st Junior Vice Commander Justine Body and Unit 45 Commander Sharon Brown. Back row, from left: Chapter 45 members La Faith Artis, Donald Wooten, Norman Moore, William Wooten, Mark Matthew and William Davis.

Two veterans serving veterans...

National Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster visits with the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims Chief Judge Robert N. Davis in Washington, D.C. The court has exclusive jurisdiction to provide judicial review of final decisions by the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Davis presides over the veterans court as a decorated Navy veteran. He and Metcalf-Foster discussed various ways to improve and modernize the appeals process for veterans.



New South Dakota cemetery...

South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard signed Senate Bill 91 to establish a new state veterans cemetery while surrounded by DAV Department of South Dakota members and other veteran advocates. The state appropriated \$450,000 from the general fund and \$6 million in federal funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide a final resting place honoring Mount Rushmore State heroes.





Grand Sierra Resort and Casino

For the first time since 2004, this year's national convention returns to the Biggest Little City in the World. The 97th DAV and Auxiliary National Convention will convene July 14–17, 2018, at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino in Reno, Nev.

The convention is an opportunity to advocate for ill and injured veterans, enjoy the camaraderie of fellow members, and help shape the DAV and Auxiliary agenda for the coming year. It also allows for a hearty dose of fun in this premier vacation destination for attendees.

After spending time working alongside fellow veterans and members to help shape our organizations' future, you can experience a multitude of one-of-a-kind experiences in the city. Reno offers something for everyone. Downtown's National Automobile Museum showcases more than 200 vintage cars; the Midtown District is lined with shops and restaurants; and north of downtown, the Animal Ark sanctuary is home to rescued bears, cheetahs and other wildlife. Also, Lake Tahoe is just 22 miles away. With seemingly endless shopping, dining and recreational activities, Reno has attractions for all to enjoy.

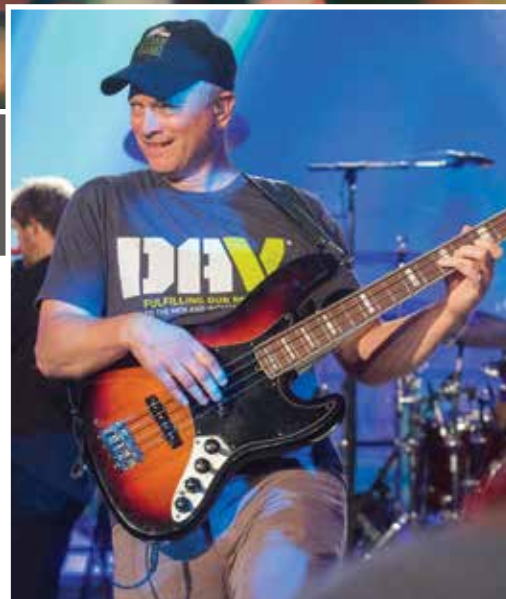
The convention is again on the traditional Saturday through Tuesday schedule. Additionally, mark your calendars as Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band are slated to play Monday night.

Attendees may receive special room rates of \$84 per night for a Grand Sierra Resort basic single or double room, and \$104 per night for a Summit single or double room. Reservations can be made online through the DAV convention website or by calling 800-648-5080. Be sure to say you are reserving under the Disabled American Veterans room block when making reservations. ■



Learn More Online

Visit dav.org/events/2018-national-convention for more information.



Gary Sinise and the Lt. Dan Band are on tap to perform yet again during Fun Night.



TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

The Transportation Security Administration can facilitate the screening of injured or wounded veterans. After making flight reservations, veterans (or their care coordinators) should contact a TSA Cares representative by calling toll-free 855-787-2227 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time. A representative will either provide screening information relevant to the veteran's disability, or the veteran may be referred to experts at TSA for help through the screening process.

From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MICHAEL P. DOVER



Pre-approved

Greetings, everyone! I have received more than enough mail solicitations in my lifetime that state I have been pre-approved for some kind of financial loan. However, when I open these mailings, I find that I'm not really pre-approved at all, and I must submit more personal information for the financial institution to determine my eligibility.

We can apply this experience to applying for benefits through the VA: We know that approval is not automatic and can be quite a process, sometimes requiring the submission of additional information. And for some other veterans—up until now—the process was a total dead end.

Recently, the VA has approved assistance for those who were discharged with an other than honorable status. It's important that we understand what an opportunity this brings to those who could not get VA help before. Consider it a gift, so to speak, in our ability to reach out to a greater number of veterans and help many who have a genuine need.

If veterans with other than honorable discharges are now considered eligible for certain assistance, then let's be glad to pass on this valuable gift to those who need it. After all, haven't many of us been helped by DAV's services? It's very important that we compassionately

consider the many factors that can lead to other than honorable discharges, in particular service-connected trauma.

Many of these veterans were discharged due to mental health issues, and now they are in desperate need of appropriate care and treatment. Can we afford to abandon our brothers and sisters in their time of need? Are we going to pick and choose who we help?

If that is the case, then what is the point in pursuing DAV's mission, or even

caring about veterans, their families and dependents, since veterans' futures are already determined by their discharge status?

I believe that people are moral free agents, able to choose their own path. Free will is a product of the intrinsic human soul and is closely linked with the concept of reward

and punishment. Yes, we reap what we sow. But all of us have done something in our past we regret, haven't we? Aren't we glad someone gave us a break?

Let's keep in mind the times we have been given assistance and the feeling of gratitude we had—perhaps even the life-changing effects it had on our lives and futures. Approach the work we do with a generous spirit and do what you can for your fellow veterans. That, after all, is what DAV is all about—veterans helping veterans.

In His Service for You.

Can we afford
to abandon our
brothers and
sisters in their
time of need?

Are we going to
pick and choose
who we help?

Past National Commander Andrew Kistler

■ Past National Commander Andrew A. Kistler died March 9. He was elected to the organization's highest office at the 1998 national convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Kistler was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean War in 1951. Following basic training at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, he was assigned to the Army's 45th Division Signal Company in Korea.

While serving as a wire construction team chief in Korea in 1952, a land mine ripped apart Kistler's lower body, right hand and arm. As a result, both of his legs were amputated below knee. Following extensive treatment at Walter Reed Army Hospital, Kistler was medically



Kistler

discharged from the Army in 1953.

Kistler joined DAV in 1977 and was a life member of DAV Chapter 67 in Franklin, Pennsylvania. He was also a life member of the DAV National Amputation Chapter 76 in New York.

Kistler served as a member of the National POW-MIA Committee, prior to his election to the national line officers. Additionally, he was named 1993-94

Pennsylvania Disabled Veteran of the Year, and was a member of several other veteran and fraternal organizations.

"Commander Kistler was dedicated to his fellow veterans and their families, and his commitment to our organization shined through in everything he did," said DAV National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "We are saddened by his loss, but we will be sure to honor his memory and be grateful for all he did to improve the lives of the men and women who served."

Past National Commander, Judge Advocate Stan Pealer

■ Past National Commander and Past National Judge Advocate Stan Pealer died March 22. He was elected to the organization's highest office at the 1980 national convention in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Pealer served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War from 1961-66, when he retired due to service-connected disability.

A life member of Chapter 1 in St. Louis, Missouri, Pealer worked his way up through the ranks in DAV. He held all elected positions on the chapter level, and he played a leading role in the 1984



Pealer

formation of the DAV's Department of Missouri, which he served as adjutant from 1984 to 1988.

In 1987, after many years as an executive with a structural steel manufacturing company, Pealer decided to devote the balance of his career to assisting his fellow disabled veterans on a full-time basis. Soon after, he was elected to national judge advocate at the

organization's 1988 national convention in Dallas. He served in that position for four years.

"Our hearts and thoughts are with Commander Pealer's wife, Yvonne, and for his family and friends who are mourning a true American patriot," said DAV National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "He served our organization for many decades, and we are forever indebted to his service."

Auxiliary Past National Commander Carol Gray

■ DAV Auxiliary Past National Commander Carol Gray died April 12. She was elected to the organization's highest office at the 2000 national convention in Reno, Nevada.

A native of Michigan, Gray was an active member of DAV Auxiliary Unit 11 in Muskegon. She served in a number of capacities before her election to national commander.

Among her many accomplishments, she served as the Auxiliary Department of Michigan's commander and several years as its adjutant. For eight years, she held the position of national judge advocate, where the organization benefited from



Gray

her expertise and guidance.

Gray began her service with the Auxiliary as a junior member. She exemplified the commitment of service to veterans and their families that was instilled in her at a very young age and continued throughout her life, according to Auxiliary National Adjutant Pat Kemper.

"Carol once described herself as 'an ordinary member who has had extraordinary opportunities come her way,'" Kemper said. "She was a caring and devoted member whose love for the organization and its mission was evident in everything she did. She possessed an abundant wealth of bylaw and protocol knowledge which she was always eager to share to help others. Her dedication was inspirational. She will be missed."

Retired National Service Officer Bill Stockell

■ William "Bill" Stockell, who served 26 years as a DAV national service officer and retired from the Pittsburgh office in 1996, passed away Feb. 20.

A Connecticut native, Stockell enlisted in the Army in August 1967 as an infantry operations and intelligence specialist. He was injured by an improvised explosive device in Vietnam, which resulted in his medical retirement at the rank of sergeant in 1969.

Stockell later served as adjutant of the Department of Pennsylvania from 1997 to 1998,



Stockell

supervising activities for the state's 52,000 members and coordinating DAV's Transportation Network at 10 VA medical centers there.

He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Ernestine, and his children Crystal and James Blakely, John and Brigit Wilgus, Sherry Wilgus, and Robert and Angela Wilgus.

He will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va.

"Bill dedicated much of his life to ensuring promises were kept to his veterans," said DAV National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "He contributed to DAV's legacy, and his good work lives on in the lives he touched as an advocate and leader."

REUNION STORIES DAV is interested in stories about veterans who have connected via the "Reunions" section of *DAV Magazine*. If you have a story you would like to share, please email feedback@dav.org.

REUNIONS

ARMY

1ST BATTALION 40TH FIELD ARTILLERY AND RADAR DETACHMENT VIETNAM REUNION June 18–22, Lawton, OK, Contact: James Bishop, Ph: 209-952-0535, Email: jabisphop12@comcast.net.com

1ST BATTALION 83RD ARTILLERY (VIETNAM 1966–1971) Sept. 23–26, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Bill Taggart, Ph: 856-228-5614, Email: artillery_83rd@yahoo.com, Web: 1stbn83rdartilleryvietnam.com

11TH ARMORED CAVALRY VETERANS OF VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA Sept. 5–9, Grand Rapids, MI, Contact: Frank Church, Ph: 386-365-0487, Email: fchurch4@aol.com, Web: 11thcavnam.com

11TH PATHFINDER COMPANY (BLACKHATS) 11TH AAD/1ST CAV. DIV. (AIR) 1964–1972 May 21–24, Fort Benning, GA, Contact: Rob Wolaver, Email: r.wolaver@gmail.com

13TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION ASSOCIATION Sept. 25–28, Branson, MO, Contact: Arlie Ellis, Ph: 817-500-6816, Email: 456arcyn@gmail.com

19TH COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION ASSOCIATION Sept. 6–8, St. Roberts, MO, Contact: Tom Ebrite, Ph: 765-286-4906, Email: s2snoopy@comcast.net, Web: 19engvrn.org

25TH INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION Oct. 8–13, Providence, RI, Contact: Sarah Krause, Email: TropicLn@aol.com, Web: www.25thida.org

27TH INFANTRY REGIMENT (THE WOLFHOUNDS) HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. Aug. 18–27, Davenport, IA, Contact: Tom Harlan, Ph: 309-586-4111, Email: tomharlan@frontiernet.net, Web: wolfhoundpack.org

77TH ARMOR REGIMENT (THE STEEL TIGERS) June 21–24, Tucson, AZ, Contact: Robert L. Basner, Ph: 989-624-4593, Email: bobnconnie2@aol.com, Web: www.steeltigers.org/home.php

87TH INFANTRY DIVISION Oct. 17–21, St. Louis, MO, Contact: Thomas R. Hewlett, Jr., Ph: 618-655-1555, Email: thewlett@charter.net Web: 87thininfantrydivision.com

101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION VIETNAM VETERANS Aug. 22–26, Columbus, GA, Contact: Ron Long, Ph: 310-977-4253, Web: 101namveteran.com

107TH SIGNAL COMPANY–50TH VIETNAM REUNION Aug. 9–11, Warwick, RI, Contact: Julian Angelone, Ph: 401-487-5368, Email: jpangelone1@gmail.com

ALPHA COMPANY 2/501ST 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION VIETNAM (1967–1972) June 4–7, Gettysburg, PA, Contact: Jim Sims, Ph: 502-510-3921, Email: misims76@yahoo.com

WWII 83RD INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION Aug. 1–5, Natick, MA, Contact: Judy Breen, Ph: 603-569-3263, Email: walkgirl250@yahoo.com

MARINES

26TH MARINES ASSOCIATION Sept. 20–23, Savannah, GA, Contact: Sonny Hollub, Ph: 512-825-4730, Email: sonnyusmc@gmail.com, Web: 26thmarines.com

USMC 1/5 1986–1992 REUNION Sept. 7–9, Macomb, IL, Contact: Scott Hainline, Ph: 309-351-2050, Email: ptimfi@yahoo.com

NAVY

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF NAVY HOSPITAL CORPSMEN Sept. 19–23, Buffalo/Niagara Falls, NY, Contact: Chuck Kraut, Ph: 817-229-5194, Email: chuckkat@swbell.net, Web: AAoNHC.org

MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION (MCB7-NMCB7) Sept. 13–16, Louisville, KY, Contact: Denny Blaisdell, Ph: 419-867-9371, Email: dennybee@yahoo.com

NAVY NURSE CORPS ASSOCIATION May 12–18, Seattle, WA, Contact: Matt Caplinger, Ph: 800-544-2469, Web: nnca.org

USS ABNAKI (ATF-96) Sept. 19–23, Henderson, NV, Contact: Frank Cardoza, Ph: 916-893-3198, Email: fcardoza76@yahoo.com

USS BOSTON (CA-69, CAG-1, SSN-703) July 19–22, Warwick, RI, Contact: Barry Probst, Ph: 508-580-3803, Email: president@ussboston.org, Web: ussboston.org

USS CANBERRA (CA-70/CAG-2) Oct. 10–14, St. Louis, MO, Contact: Ken Minick, Ph: 740-423-8976, Email: usscanberra@gmail.com

USS CHARLES P. CECIL (DD/DDR-35) ASSOCIATION Sept. 16–22, Buffalo, NY, Contact: Greg Wells, Ph: 405-265-1926, Email: glw513@yahoo.com

USS CONCORD (AFS-5) Sept. 12–16, Charleston, SC, Contact: Sherry or Carly, Ph: 719-380-1412, Email: sherry.a.completeunion@gmail.com, Web: ussconcord.org

USS HENRY L. STIMSON (SSBN-655) Oct. 11–14, Oklahoma City, OK, Contact: Chuck Hladik, Ph: 405-793-1420, Email: chkjoy1@sbcglobal.net, Web: ssbn655.org

USS HORNET (CV-8, CV, CVA, CVS-12) Sept. 19–23, Mobile, AL, Contact: Sandy Burket, Ph: 251-476-6400, Email: hornetcva@aol.com, Web: www.uss-hornet.org

USS HOUSTON (CL-81) Oct. 10–13, Billerica, MA, Contact: Joe Carabbio, Ph: 978-362-1779

USS INGRAHAM (DD-694) Sept. 26–30, Norfolk, VA, Contact: Gregg Miller, Ph: 814-695-3246, Email: gmamflyer@gmail.com

USS IWO JIMA (LPH-2/LHD-7) Oct. 10–13, Jacksonville, FL, Contact: Robert G. McAnally, Ph: 757-723-0317, Email: yujack6709@gmail.com, Web: ussiwojimashipmates.cfrs.net

USS JOHN R. CRAIG (DD-885) Sept. 5–9, Bloomington, MN, Contact: Jerry Chwalek, Ph: 734-525-1469, Email: jermail@ameritech.net, Web: ussjohnrcraig.com

USS JUNEAU (LPD-10) July 12–14, Colorado Springs, CO, Contact: Joe Jones, Ph: 913-486-9132, Email: jj21510@prodigy.net

USS NEW JERSEY (BB-62) Sept. 26–29, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Steve Sheehan, Ph: 215-887-7583

USS ROCHESTER (CA-124) Sept. 27–Oct. 1, Kansas City, MO, Contact: Joe Hill, Ph: 931-432-4848, Email: nitecrawl@twlakes.net

USS SILVERSTEIN (DE-534); USS WALTON (DE-361); USS WHITEHURST (DE-634); USS FOSS (DE-59)

Sept. 14–17, Jacksonville, FL, Contact: Mary Jane Hudson, Ph: 573-291-1922, Email: marjer67@centurylink.net
USS TAYLOR (DD/DDE-468) Oct. 7–11, Colorado Springs, CO, Contact: James G. O'Neill, Ph: 804-212-8911, Email: oneillfarm@aol.com

USS THREADFIN ASSOCIATION Oct. 4–7, Pensacola, FL, Contact: Steve Kolb, Ph: 904-646-3814, Email: snrkolb@comcast.net

USS WILHOITE (DE/DER-397) Oct. 8–11, Albuquerque, NM, Contact: Bob Gray, Ph: 601-595-2415, Email: DAVdisabled@att.net

USS ZELLARS (DD-777) Sept. 17–20, Buffalo, NY, Contact: Lester Sinton, Ph: 561-732-5167, Email: notnis1@comcast.net, Web: usszellars.com

AIR FORCE

485 TACTICAL MISSAL WING (FLORENNES, BELGIUM) June 7–10, Louisville, KY, Contact: Phillip Smith, Ph: 502-544-2566, Email: Phillipsmith@bellsouth.net

USAF 555TH RED HORSE Aug. 14–16, Carlisle, PA, Contact: Mike Peters, Ph: 717-243-7617, Email: gmrpeters@comcast.net

INQUIRIES

- Searching for anyone who served with me at Léopoldville International Airport during Belgian Congo crises. I served with 1607th FL MS. (Mfts-6-124's) Dover AFB Delaware, April 1961 to July 1961. Contact Earl Sickinger, 4205 Falling Leaf Drive, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168, Ph: 386-316-3783.
- Searching for Joann Nelson or Mattie Rozelle, who served with me in Hanau, Germany, in early 1980s, part of 3rd Armored Division. Contact Daniel Barton, Ph: 910-487-0908, Email: djbarton3@gmail.com.
- Searching for anyone who was assigned to the 110th Military Police, Stuttgart, Germany, on April 29, 1968. I am trying to get in touch with Larry N. Apple, Thomas R. McNutt or John H. Perce Field. Contact Bob Shuptar, Ph: 718-383-8898, Email: bshuptar65@gmail.com.
- Searching for a roster of all aircraft that flew from Vietnam to Torrejon AFB between 1965 and 1969 (jets, fighters, cargo, helicopter, etc.). Contact Thomas Patrick, 9 Elm Court, Hatfield, MA 01038, Ph: 413-247-9456.
- Searching for Floyd Davis and Henry Alexander who served with me at Bolling AFB, Washington, DC, 1966–70. Contact Vivien Robinson, 57 S. Munn Avenue, Newark, NJ 07106.

USNS Woodrow "Woody" Williams...

Marine veteran and Medal of Honor recipient Woodrow "Woody" Williams, a DAV member of Chapter 2 in West Virginia, was honored by having a U.S. Navy Expeditionary Sea Base ship named in his honor in San Diego. Williams' daughters Tracie and Tracie christened the ship. Williams was accompanied by fellow Marine veteran Michael Emerson, a member of Chapter 7 in Oakland, Calif.





DAV is proud to partner with
1-800-Flowers.com

**Special discount to
DAV members all year long**

Promo Code DAV

Visit www.1800flowers.com/dav
or call 1-800-FLOWERS (356-9377)
to find flowers and gifts for every spring celebration!

Plus, DAV Members receive a special discount across the entire 1-800-Flowers.com Family of Brands



DAV receives 3% of total Product Value of member purchases from 1-800-FLOWERS and their Family of Brands when using the promotional code provided. This offer between DAV and 1-800-FLOWERS runs through 2/21/19.

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

**When you take advantage of these offers, you are helping
to keep the promise to more ill and injured veterans.**



These are some of our valued Member Benefit partners:



DAV members get exclusive discounts on professional interstate packing, moving, and storage services. Up to \$100,000 of property protection at no charge (\$1,000 savings). Members must qualify through the DAV website for savings.



DAV members get free access to classified home listings, trusted reviews on neighborhoods and schools, rebates on REALTORS® commissions, and mortgage lender discounts.



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

DAV receives a royalty payment from North American of 1% of the net line-haul of a DAV member's household goods move. The agreement between North American and DAV runs through December 31, 2018. DAV receives a royalty payment from DOD Services, LLC, doing business as PCSgrades, of \$50 per successful connection (defined as a newly registered PCSgrades member who is referred to PCSgrades.com through a DAV web link, and signs up to work with a REALTOR featured on PCSgrades.com). The agreement between PCSgrades and DAV is effective through March 21, 2019.



GET FIT



Flex Fit Hat | \$14 each
White, Navy or Silver



\$10

**Short Sleeve
Performance Tee**

Men's: S-4XL
Ladies' V-Neck: S-3XL
Youth: S-XL



**Long Sleeve
Performance
Hooded Tee**

Adult: S-4XL
Youth: S-XL

\$18



Tech Shorts | \$15

Size: S-4XL



Place your order now at DAVSTORE.org