



# BACK FROM THE BRINK

FROM THE

Veteran of the year defies odds  
after nearly losing his life.

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A Century of  
Service to Veterans



# 2020 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention

# CANCELED

Out of an abundance of caution for the health, safety and well-being of veterans, their families and guests, DAV's National Executive Committee (NEC) canceled the 2020 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention scheduled to begin Aug. 1 in Dallas. The decision was made as a result of concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We conduct a lot of our most important business at the event, and we delayed making the decision in the hopes that the situation would have changed," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "We put the health and safety of our veteran members, their families and our volunteers first. In the end, based on the guidance we received, we wouldn't be able to effectively host an event that was accessible to our members."

The cancellation is the second in the 100-year history of the organization. In 1942, as the nation ramped up involvement in World War II, the event was also halted. As a result, there is a template in place for governance. DAV's National Bylaws run from convention to convention. That means a second year in the top seat for National Commander Stephen "Butch" Whitehead and longer terms for national line officers until members convene in 2021.

Because DAV members elect leaders and determine the organization's legislative agenda at the national convention, mandates and resolutions adopted by delegates in 2019 will remain in effect (unless enacted) through 2021. The Bylaws mandate DAV protect benefits already in place for veterans and their dependents. As such, the National Executive Committee may adopt new resolutions specific to federal legislation.

NEC members who currently represent even-numbered districts will be asked to serve a third year. Next year at convention, all districts will elect a new NEC member. Those in even-numbered districts will choose representatives for one-year terms. Odd-numbered districts will elect representatives for two-year terms.

Other appointments made by the national commander or adjutant will remain in place. Vacancies that arise in this period will be handled as they would if they occurred any other time, in accordance with DAV governing documents.

"We are fortunate to have great leaders in our ranks to help us weather this storm," said Whitehead. "Most importantly, we should be proud of what we've overcome to continue serving veterans and their families with unemployment relief, employment resources and benefits advocacy."

"I believe we're going to come out of this a stronger, more connected community because we've been able to adjust to and overcome these challenges as a team."

A virtual event to recognize volunteers, honor outstanding leaders and provide educational resources for those who carry out DAV's mission will be hosted digitally.

The organization still plans to host a centennial celebration in Cincinnati in September. Updates on those events can be found at [www.dav.org/centennial](http://www.dav.org/centennial).

DAV and the Auxiliary are scheduled to host the next national convention July 24-27, 2021, in Reno, Nev. ■

## Don't miss the 2020 virtual event!

Updates to online activities and plans surrounding the 2020 convention will be posted on DAV's website and social networks, so check back often.

-  [dav.org/events/2020-national-convention](http://dav.org/events/2020-national-convention)
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-  [youtube.com/DisabledVeterans](https://youtube.com/DisabledVeterans)

## From the NATIONAL COMMANDER

### STEPHEN “BUTCH” WHITEHEAD



#### We've done this before

When Laurence R. Melton was elected national commander at the 1941 DAV National Convention, he likely had little indication at the time that he'd end up serving in the position for the longest term in DAV history. That's because after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor thrust the United States into World War II later that year, DAV leaders called off the convention to save resources as part of the nationwide war effort.

It was the only time in DAV history that a national convention was not held—until now—as we announce the cancellation of the 2020 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Dallas.

Though the reasons for the respective cancellations are different, both were necessary to ensure the welfare of our country. In 1942, we faced Nazis and imperialists, and we prevailed. In 2020, our enemy is COVID-19, a vexing virus that makes a weakness of what is typically one of our strengths—our unity and ability to gather together for a shared purpose.

Though I know many of you look forward to our national convention each year, this sacrifice is ultimately in the interest of safety for our members and staff.

During the war, Past National Commander Melton was called back to active duty, on which he served for most of his time in office. Last November, I rejoined the military and accepted the

responsibility to serve as the command sergeant major of the Army National Guard's 34th Infantry Division. In doing so, he was and I have been afforded the opportunity to keep our fingers on the pulse of emerging veterans issues.

This coming year, DAV will continue focusing our legislative efforts on securing benefits for veterans made ill as a result of toxic exposures to burn pits and Agent Orange, addressing gaps and inequities in programs and services for women veterans, improving benefits for spouses and survivors of disabled veterans, and strengthening veterans mental health care and suicide prevention programs.

The cancellation of this year's convention makes our work throughout the year that much more consequential for the veterans we serve. I humbly ask you to maintain the same tenacity you have shown during my tenure as national commander as you advocate for our brothers- and sisters-in-arms.

As we continue through this unique chapter of DAV history, my pledge to you remains the same: I will keep fighting to ensure America's veterans get the benefits they've earned and deserve while working with DAV leaders on emerging issues so our great organization can continue to improve, grow and adapt.

It may seem like uncharted territory, but DAV has been here before. And once again, with your unwavering resolve and support, we will come out stronger on the other end.

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## From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT

### J. MARC BURGESS



### Take care of yourself, and each other

**D**AV was founded in the wake of the 1918 Spanish Flu, which infected more than a third of the global population and killed an estimated 50 million during the outbreak. A century later, we are battling another pandemic—one that has radically altered our lives and plans.

The world has changed drastically in the past few months, and each of us has changed along with it. The outbreak of COVID-19 sent our nation into crisis, claiming lives and putting Americans through a terrifying ordeal.

The disease has rolled through the country like nothing in recent memory, heightening anxiety, fear and isolation—not to mention unemployment and economic uncertainty. We have all been living on edge for months, afraid of making choices that could potentially do devastating harm to ourselves, our families, our friends and our neighbors.

As we begin to emerge from this crisis, I urge you to remember one thing: Your mental health matters, now and always.

So many veterans have already lived through traumatic, life-altering events, and we know those traumas are not so easily forgotten. For some, those events remain with them for a lifetime. None of us are likely to forget what this crisis has wrought for us. Perhaps you've lost a loved one or battled the virus yourself. Maybe you were forced to close your business, lost your job or suffered another major financial loss. It could

be that you've been strained by the isolation, you were unable to get the care you needed, or your edges have simply frayed from the incredible amount of stress we've all been under. Every storm leaves wreckage in its wake, and this one is no different.

No matter the case, your mental health is critical. Be kind to yourself, and if you feel you are in need of help, please take the time to get it. Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. Make an appointment at your local VA Vet Center or talk to your physician. Reach out to a friend. Ask for help.

I'm exceptionally proud of the work of our members, volunteers and staff during this time. My sincere thanks go out to you—most especially to the entire medical community, the first responders and the incredible staff at VA medical centers across the nation for their absolutely tireless dedication to treating patients and rising to this occasion, far beyond what any of us could have envisioned.

Your exceptional and creative efforts to continue caring for one another were beacons of hope in foreboding seas. We know that we are not out of the woods yet, but you have led the way through these dark times as examples of strength, compassion and fortitude for us all to emulate as we move forward together and begin to restore the nation.



## LETTERS

### Mefloquine miscues (March/April issue)

I took mefloquine like clockwork every week over three deployments. Later, the VA diagnosed me with Gulf War syndrome. I thought then, as I do now, that mefloquine caused it. Thanks for bringing this to more people's attention. I hope more studies are done on the toxicity it builds up in your body. Keep us posted! **Eric Miller, via email**

I just finished reading "Mefloquine miscues." I can't help being upset. The Department of Defense knew this stuff was bad. They still used it! They say it was developed in the '60s and '70s, but where did they test it? Just another way to turn a good warrior into a raging psycho, not to mention all of the lingering side effects. WHY!? **Harry White, via email**

A close reading of the article reveals that the exposure of our troops to a drug known to cause psychological disorders was anything but "unintentional." It was a decision made despite the known dangers, and the harm was compounded when the military "systemically ignored and undermined the critical safety warnings in the package insert." To deny presumptive service-connection benefits to those troops who took mefloquine and are now exhibiting symptoms is outrageous. **Steve Clark, Belfast, Maine, via Facebook**

### COVID-19

I pray all Americans stay safe during this time. Additionally, I urge all Americans not to forget our most seriously injured veterans. **Tommy Adkins, Dayton, Ohio, via Facebook**

Our veteran population has very complex health issues that aren't even seen on the outside among our civilian peers. Their immune systems can be extremely compromised. Let's do all we can to protect our veterans, their families and their caregivers.

**Terri Odom, via Facebook**

Physical distancing is good, but social distancing is not good for mental health. Stay socially connected, just physically distant.

**Philip Powell, via Facebook**

### VA MISSION Act

I'm a Vietnam veteran, and I can see the writing on the wall with regard to how the MISSION Act will kill the VA as we know it. The devil's in the details, and he's hard at work. I get 100% of my health care from the VA, and I wouldn't be around if it weren't for the VA. The "choice" we are being given will eventually exclude the VA, and we all know how much choice the average insured American has. Just ask his insurance company. We need to work together to prevent this from happening.

**Bob Suberi, St. Louis, Mo.**

### National Vietnam War Veterans Day

My husband was there in 1969 and 1970. He's just come to terms with everything these last few years. That's because people are acknowledging the wrong that's been done to these brave

soldiers. And it means a lot to each and every one of them.

Thank you. **Susan Markel, Carlsbad, N.M., via Facebook**

Vietnam veterans, thank you for your service and sacrifice for all of our families and to our country. You got a bum rap coming home to some people who called you all kinds of names. They weren't there; they didn't know what it was like. I was too young to remember some of the things, but I do remember how you were treated, and I think it's a shame! I salute everyone who had to endure these hardships.

God be with you all. **Jeffrey Jenkins Sr., via Facebook**

A big thank-you to my brothers-in-arms. RIP to those who didn't make it back home. Never in our history was an American soldier hated like we were during Vietnam. God bless all the men and women serving today. Let freedom ring! **Tommy Barber, Phoenix, Ariz., via Facebook**

### Hope through technology (March/April issue)

I am happy to see the VA and DAV addressing the issue of spinal cord injuries. As the article points out, the SCI is only the beginning for the over 40,000 veterans suffering from the side effects. I sincerely hope the powered exoskeleton can help these veterans improve their quality of life. **Dennis Jones, St. Paul, Minn.**

**WRITE TO US** Please send feedback to DAV Magazine, 3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076, or via email to [feedback@dav.org](mailto:feedback@dav.org). We also welcome feedback on our Facebook ([facebook.com/DAV](https://facebook.com/DAV)) and Twitter ([twitter.com/davhq](https://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.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

# DAV urges administration to move forward with presumptive diseases linked to Agent Orange

By Mary Dever

**S**ince the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the Department of Veterans Affairs has established a presumption of service connection for 14 diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure, based on National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine reports.

However, in a report required by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations bill, the VA called into question the scientific evidence put forth by the academies, noting “significant concerns and limitations” in the findings related to adding four new presumptive conditions. The VA also cited additional requirements in the department’s standards for presumptive conditions, delaying the consideration of care and compensation for thousands of veterans.

“Vietnam veterans have been coping with substantial health concerns that can be attributed to Agent Orange exposure for decades,” said Deputy National Legislative Director for Benefits Shane Liermann. “Thousands have died and many have been left to endure diseases that have been scientifically linked to the herbicide, and the VA’s continued delays are causing additional suffering for Vietnam veterans and their families.”

The VA released its reasons for delaying presumption on four illnesses connected to Agent

Orange. Those conditions—bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson-like symptoms and high blood pressure—affect an estimated 83,000 veterans.

In its report, the VA announced plans to delay coverage pending the results of additional research, even though the academy reports have offered sufficient evidence for the VA to add these four presumptive illnesses to the list of veterans’ diseases associated with Agent Orange.

“Many of the men and women who served in Vietnam, and their families, have been waiting for three years or more to receive a positive decision, one that could finally get them the justice and benefits they deserve,” said Liermann. “DAV rallied our fellow veterans service organizations and drafted a letter to call on the president to intervene and end their wait by adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, Parkinson-like symptoms and hypertension to the list of Agent Orange presumptive conditions for disability benefits immediately. We will keep up the fight for as long as it takes.” ■



## Learn More Online

You can follow along with updates to this and other legislation affecting veterans and their families by joining DAV CAN (Commander’s Action Network) at [davcan.org](http://davcan.org).



# Offering a hand up

## DAV helps disabled Army veteran access VA benefits and keep a roof over his head

By Matt Saintsing

**A**ndre Williams can trace his current health woes back nearly four decades to headaches, stiff joints and difficulty with balance while serving in the Army. Although he was unaware at the time, the 62-year-old veteran now recognizes those ailments as the beginning of his battle with multiple sclerosis.

MS, a disease of the nervous system, is known to cause problems with vision, equilibrium and muscle control and often progresses gradually over many years. For Williams, decades passed before he thought anything of those lingering aches and pains. But in 2010, he received the life-changing diagnosis that threatened not only his health but also his ability to earn a living.

“Those early signs were nothing that would concern me at the time, especially when you’re in your late teens or early 20s,” he said. “Now that I’ve learned more about MS, I was definitely having symptoms a long time ago, even on active duty.”

After service, Williams had been employed as a furniture salesman at a large department store. However, the disease eventually impacted his capacity to stand on the showroom floor for hours. In 2014,

Williams lost his home in Rancho Cordova, Calif., after he was no longer able to work. Two years later, he walked into the DAV national service office in Sacramento in search of benefits.

“His claim was denied, and he was looking for help with an appeal,” said National Service Officer Dianna Camac, who supervises the office in Sacramento. “As I looked at the case, I thought it would be best to present it before a veterans law judge.”

Camac and Williams stated his case to a VA judge in July 2019. Since the onset of his MS symptoms occurred when he was still in service, Camac argued, Williams should receive service connection, which would unlock VA benefits and compensation.

“Veterans diagnosed with MS within seven years of leaving military service are entitled to receive such benefits,” she added. “Of course, his diagnosis was much later, but the testimony that Mr. Williams provided was key, and that’s what the judge was really interested in.”

Williams also told the judge that he was facing eviction from his apartment after falling behind on his rent because the debilitating illness keeps him from working. While that was previously unknown to Camac, she quickly gathered the relevant information and applied for emergency financial assistance with the PenFed Foundation, the nonprofit arm of PenFed Credit Union and a DAV partner.

DAV and the PenFed Foundation’s ongoing collaboration has helped more than 1,130 veterans access more than \$1.57 million in emergency assistance since 2016. The partnership has existed since 2015, and

the DAV Charitable Trust has donated more than \$1.2 million to support the PenFed Foundation's Military Heroes Fund, which provides short-term emergency assistance to veterans like Williams.

"Our DAV partnership program is successful because of our shared mission to improve the quality of veterans' lives," said Daria Teutonico, director of programs for the PenFed Foundation. "Our close working relationship with DAV national service officers ensures a smooth and efficient process to assist veterans as quickly as possible."

The PenFed Foundation provided Williams' landlord with two months' worth of back rent in August 2019, which was enough of a bridge to keep a roof over his head.



**"Veterans diagnosed with MS within seven years of leaving military service are entitled to receive [VA] benefits."**

*—Dianna Camac,  
national service officer*

"I was ecstatic," said Williams. "I don't have any close relatives or anyone that I could stay with, and I would've been out there on my own."

"The process was quick," Camac added, "because all that's required is a short application from the veteran and to agree to some financial counseling."

Williams' claim for MS was approved in December and backdated to 2015. The VA compensation he received more than prevented homelessness; Williams is also looking forward to closing on his new home, located in the same neighborhood where he previously lived. He also stresses the importance of having an advocate, like DAV, in your corner and staying positive.

"For other veterans out there, your claim may take a while," said Williams. "But you have to be patient." ■

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



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\*Budget will provide 5% of annually reported base rate and mileage revenue at participating locations in the U.S. and District of Columbia (excluding Alaska) to DAV. In order to qualify for payment for the minimum base rate and mileage, revenue must exceed \$5,000. The agreement between Budget and DAV runs through Dec. 31, 2020. \$1.50 is donated to DAV for every qualifying prescription filled. The prescription program is managed by United Networks of America, and DAV is not responsible for negotiating prescription rates. The agreement between DAV and UNA Rx Card runs through June 4, 2021. <sup>1</sup>DAV receives \$10 for every new service line activated with Business Mobility Partners. This agreement between DAV and Business Mobility Partners runs through Nov. 8, 2020. <sup>2</sup>DAV receives \$225 up front for each eligible customer acquisition with a minimum total guaranteed annual royalty of \$5,000. The agreement between DAV and Medical Guardian runs through May 13, 2021.

# Assisting veterans through COVID-19

**DAV and VA services available to help disabled veterans navigate employment and financial hardships brought on by coronavirus pandemic**

By M. Todd Hunter

**F**or many Americans, the nationwide response to the coronavirus pandemic has been unlike anything in recent memory. From social distancing and isolation to a significant economic downturn, our nation's 4.7 million disabled veterans have not been spared from COVID-19's adverse effects.

As the pandemic has changed personal interactions, organizations like DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs have shifted to ensure essential services are available to those who need them most.



## Unemployment relief grants

In response, DAV established a COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Fund to provide financial aid to service-connected disabled veterans who lost employment or income in the wake of the virus's outbreak.

Since April, more than \$1.5 million in grants have been distributed to veterans in need. The relief, which is made possible through generous donations from the American public and corporate sponsors, has helped our nation's veterans pay bills, obtain food and provide for their families during these difficult and uncertain times.

"I wanted to sincerely thank you for the COVID-19 Relief Fund check," Marine Corps veteran Robert Lenfesty, a recipient, wrote in a letter to DAV. "The future looks grim at times, but gestures of care such as this instill hope in me. God bless you all."

To apply for a COVID-19 Unemployment Relief grant, visit [dav.org/covidrelief](http://dav.org/covidrelief).

## Virtual financial town hall

In May, DAV partnered with Comcast NBCUniversal Military and Veteran Affairs, CNBC + Acorns "Invest in You: Ready. Set. Grow." for a virtual town hall event where veterans across America heard from a team of some of the country's most knowledgeable financial experts and small business advisers on how to navigate through the pandemic.

One of the event's panelists was DAV ambassador Greg Gadson, a retired Army colonel who lost both legs above the knees in 2007 as a result of a roadside bomb in Iraq. Gadson implored viewers to take things one day at a time when things feel overwhelming or uncertain, such as navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Sometimes we can be looking over the horizon and not see what is in front of us and miss opportunities that are right there," he said.





“While we don’t know when this crisis will end, we do know that **we can make a lifesaving difference** for our fellow veterans and their families.”

—National Commander Butch Whitehead



### Virtual job fairs

The organization’s services and assistance have extended beyond financial relief during the pandemic. While fears of

layoffs and the spike in unemployment have been daily headlines, many companies are still actively looking to hire veterans.

In that vein, and to help limit the spread of COVID-19, DAV and RecruitMilitary converted all scheduled in-person career fairs to virtual events through the end of the year. Offering virtual events to job seekers and employers during this unprecedented time is critical to ensuring that there is no lapse in the availability of career resources, opportunities and support for veterans and their spouses.

“Providing for yourself and your family is among the most fundamental of human desires,” said National Employment Director Jeff Hall. “DAV will continue to do all we can to work with our partners and employers to ensure that every veteran has this opportunity.

“Whether you’re transitioning out of the military and looking for a new career or you’ve been out of the military and are looking for something new, it’s always a very daunting and stressful task,” Hall added. “This mission is made much, much more difficult in the face of a pandemic. It’s now more important than ever to leave the door to opportunity open.”

 The new virtual career fair schedule can be found at [davjobfairs.org](http://davjobfairs.org).

### VA resources

For its part in addressing financial hardships brought on by the pandemic, the VA has offered temporary financial relief to veterans affected by COVID-19 who have a Veterans Benefits Administration debt. This includes suspending all actions on veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department and suspending collection action or extending repayment terms on preexisting VA debts, as the veteran prefers, until further notice.



Veterans who fit these criteria can contact VA’s Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648 to request assistance.



Veterans can also go to [benefitsquestions.org](http://benefitsquestions.org) to digitally reach out to DAV’s benefits advocates for any other sort of assistance.



# FIGHTING TO SERVE OTHERS



*Adam Greathouse poses with an M-16 during a field exercise at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif. He fell in love with military life before being exposed to toxins while deployed to Kosovo in 2001.*

DAV's Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year honored for overcoming incredible odds and serving as an inspiration for others

By Matt Saintsing

**A**dam Greathouse enlisted in the Army in 1999 and, for him, the military proved to be more than a job. It provided a worthy career and lifestyle that meshed well with his personality. Being part of a team, working to accomplish a mission, and excelling at physical fitness contributed to the fulfillment he couldn't find as a civilian.

"I was built for it," he said. "As soon as I joined, I knew I was a lifer."

But fate had other plans. According to Greathouse, when he deployed to Kosovo in 2001, he suffered a chemical burn that ate holes in his lungs. The toxins, which he suspects were left from the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, mixed with the sand and dust, forming billowing clouds that engulfed the tank Greathouse was riding in, filling the air—and his lungs—with a deadly substance.

His symptoms began with tightness in his chest. Next came hallucinations and labored breathing. Within hours, Greathouse woke up in his barracks room, unable to stand.

A medic rushed Greathouse to the Camp Bondsteel medical tent, where his breathing stopped entirely. He was flown to Germany. His last memory of that time was of a nurse instructing him to count back from 10 as anesthesia took hold.

He woke up two months later, attached to a ventilator with staples stretching from the left side of his chest around to his back. Greathouse, a mighty soldier weighing a solid 215 pounds before the medical emergency, was by then 100 pounds lighter, unable to move his arms or feel anything below his hips. He had suffered a brain injury due to the lack of oxygen, and the exposure had caused organ failure and extensive damage to his lungs.

Doctors estimated Greathouse had a somber 2% chance of survival. His mother was sent an emergency message warning of her son's impending death, along with an American flag to be draped over his coffin.

"On paper, I shouldn't be here," said Greathouse.

He survived, but as he relearned to walk, write and use the bathroom, one thing became clear: His days of being a soldier in the U.S. Army were numbered.

"I don't know if I cried so hard in my entire life," he added. "Everything I knew was ripped away from me."

The decade that followed included struggles with alcohol abuse, thoughts of suicide and unbearable guilt that he had somehow let his country, his unit and himself down. But that changed in 2011, when staff at the Hershel "Woody" Williams VA Medical Center in Huntington, W.Va., introduced him to recreational therapy on a whitewater rafting excursion down the Gauley River.

At first, he was skeptical that help was possible.

"I figured I'd go there, piss somebody off and never go again," said Greathouse, who was then contemplating suicide. "I wasn't planning on being here much longer."

But something unexpected happened. As the raft shot down the rapids, with water splashing his face, Greathouse gained back a glimpse of what he found in the Army that he'd lost as a disabled veteran—comradery.

An instructor's voice shouted commands to everyone in the watercraft, and something clicked with Greathouse.

"I was part of a team again," he said. "That lit my pilot light; it brings a smile to my face every time I think about it."

The renewed sense of purpose and belonging was short-lived, however, until he participated in his first

National Disabled Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass, Colo., in 2012.

"I took in everything DAV has to offer in Colorado," said Greathouse, who was the recipient of the event's 2017 DAV Freedom Award for his remarkable spirit in the face of injury. "Miracle on the mountainside—that's an understatement."

"You get a group of vets together trying to do the same thing, and something magical happens," said Brent Sturm, a recreational therapist who's worked with Greathouse extensively. "They communicate, they support each other, and they become friends."

But not only did Greathouse conquer seemingly unbeatable odds to survive, he also remains an inspiration and something of a local celebrity to

On paper,  
I shouldn't be here.



Greathouse recovering in Germany after waking up from a coma that lasted two months, following what he was told was exposure to unidentified chemical weapons. It was the beginning of a long, arduous journey that nearly claimed his life.

the patients and staff at the Williams VAMC, where he's volunteered more than 5,100 hours since 2015—3,400 as a DAV volunteer.

In addition to the thousands of volunteer hours Greathouse has under his belt as a peer mentor, he's also spoken to over 1,700 veterans and VA staff



“ Adam’s **fighting spirit** and contagious **positive outlook** have undoubtedly helped countless veterans get their recoveries on the right track. ”

—Paul DeBerry, DAV Department of West Virginia Commander

members, providing valuable insight into what disabled veterans experience in their recovery.

“Adam fills a lot of roles here,” said Teresa Boyes, the facility’s chief of voluntary services. “He works with our recreation therapist and helps quite a bit with our disabled veterans.

“There usually isn’t a dry eye after he speaks,” added Boyes. “It touches the hearts of people to get a small glimpse of what he’s gone through.”

“It’s imperative that veterans come to us for their care, especially for those who may be in crisis,” said Brian Nimmo, a Navy veteran of the Persian Gulf War and director of the center. “Adam’s story helps us potentially reach veterans and encourage them to come here.”

Last year, DAV honored Greathouse again with the Victories for Veterans Award, reserved for veterans who overcome tremendous challenges and serve as an inspiration for others, during the Carolina Country Music Fest in Myrtle Beach, S.C. This year, he received DAV’s top annual honor when he was named its Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year.

“Adam’s fighting spirit and contagious positive outlook have undoubtedly helped countless veterans get their recoveries on the right track,” said Department of West Virginia Commander Paul DeBerry. “West Virginia is incredibly proud and thankful to have someone like Adam dedicate so much of his time to his fellow veterans.”

“Time and again, Adam has shown that, no matter how hard the fight, you can always come out stronger with the right attitude and support system,” added fellow Army veteran and DAV National Commander Butch Whitehead. “We are blessed to have Adam within our ranks. He is an inspiration to all veterans, from ones just now stepping off the battlefield to those currently battling in their recovery and beyond.” ■



*Greathouse speaks to VA staff about his story of recovery and redemption at the Hershel “Woody” Williams VA Medical Center in Huntington, W.Va. In volunteering and being open about his healing, he serves as an inspiration to other disabled veterans.*

# Fast-tracked

## VA Board of Veterans' Appeals introduces virtual hearing option early to keep decisions moving during COVID-19 crisis

By Mary Dever

In March, the Department of Veterans Affairs Board of Veterans' Appeals suspended all in-person hearings in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. To keep cases moving, the Board launched a new virtual hearing option, providing veterans with the flexibility and convenience of attending Board hearings with veterans law judges and veterans representatives, like DAV, from the safety of their own homes.

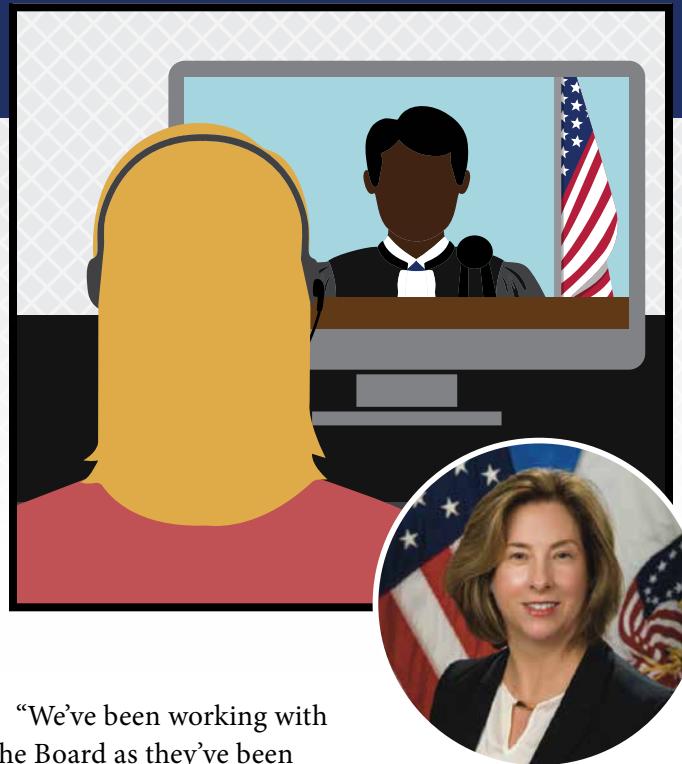
"The Board has been testing virtual hearing capabilities since July [2019], and we know veterans have been waiting for these hearings, so veterans do have the opportunity to switch over to virtual hearings," said Board of Veterans' Appeals Chairman Cheryl Mason. "We have the capability and the capacity to do that."

Virtual hearings allow veterans to participate in their hearings on a personal laptop or mobile device through a safe and secure connection to the VA network.

"Just like a live hearing room, this is a virtual hearing room on the computer," said Mason. "The veteran and their representative are given an access code via email to enter the room, and a judge is there to verify that that is the correct people. The judge then locks down the virtual hearing room, and we conduct the hearing online, allowing the veteran to tell their story."

Mason said the virtual hearings are built on the same network as the Veterans Health Administration's telemedicine program, ensuring the same safety and security veterans depend on during telehealth appointments.

The Board has held nearly 300 hearings since last July, according to Mason. "We planned to phase the virtual hearing program in later this year, but with this [national emergency], we didn't want to delay veterans hearings. So we needed to get it fully operational now," she added.



"We've been working with the Board as they've been executing the virtual option for veterans and providing feedback along the way to improve the program," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "Now, when the nation faces a national emergency that could potentially delay thousands of veterans appeals, the Board fast-tracked full implementation of the program to ensure veterans have the opportunity to have their cases heard in a timely manner."

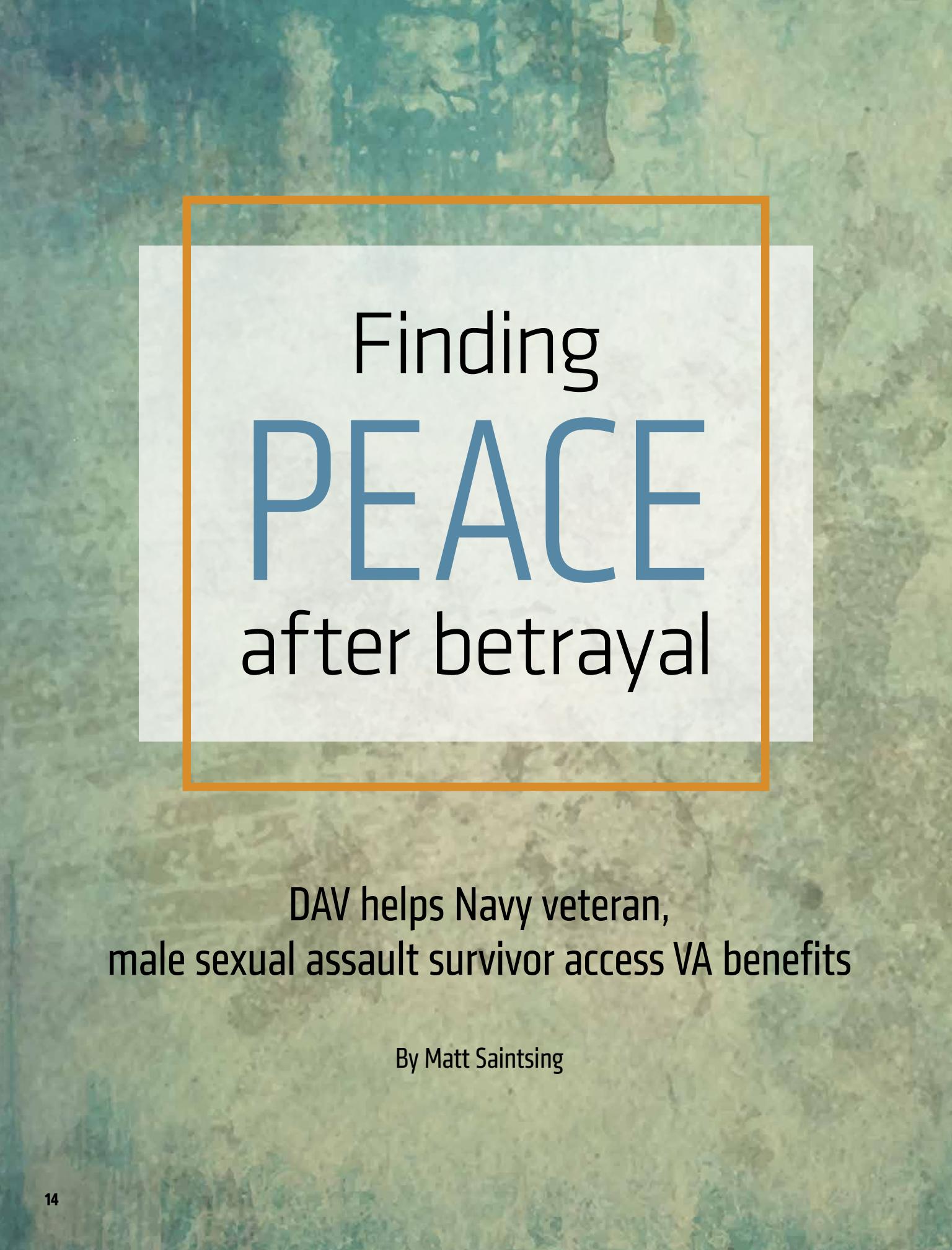
According to Mason, Board employees across the country are experienced and comfortable in the telework environment, allowing them to continue to be operational during such an unprecedented crisis.

Veterans can ask for a virtual hearing the same way they would normally request other Board hearing options. They only need to reach out to their representative or local VA regional office to make the request. Veterans who prefer not to participate in virtual hearings, but to wait for operations to return to normal, will receive top priority in hearing rescheduling, Mason said. ■



### Learn More Online

Contact your DAV representative or local VA regional office to find out more about the virtual hearing option, or visit [www.bva.va.gov](http://www.bva.va.gov) for the latest updates.



# Finding PEACE after betrayal

DAV helps Navy veteran,  
male sexual assault survivor access VA benefits

By Matt Saintsing

**I**t was supposed to be a celebratory weekend. Navy veteran Michael Stern had returned from an exhausting surge deployment to Somalia a few months prior and was looking forward to ringing in his 25th birthday on a three-day liberty pass.

What unfolded, however, changed Stern's life forever. A man he had met that Friday night persuaded Stern to go to his house, a captivating home in an upscale neighborhood of Norfolk, Va. By the next morning, that man, a Navy ensign, had sexually assaulted Stern, setting in motion a cascade of events that ended his time in the military.

While military sexual trauma is often more commonly associated with women, up until 2018, more men reported experiencing MST than their female counterparts, according to advocates. Stern was just one of the nearly 81,000 male veterans who reported experiencing MST when seeking VA care last year.

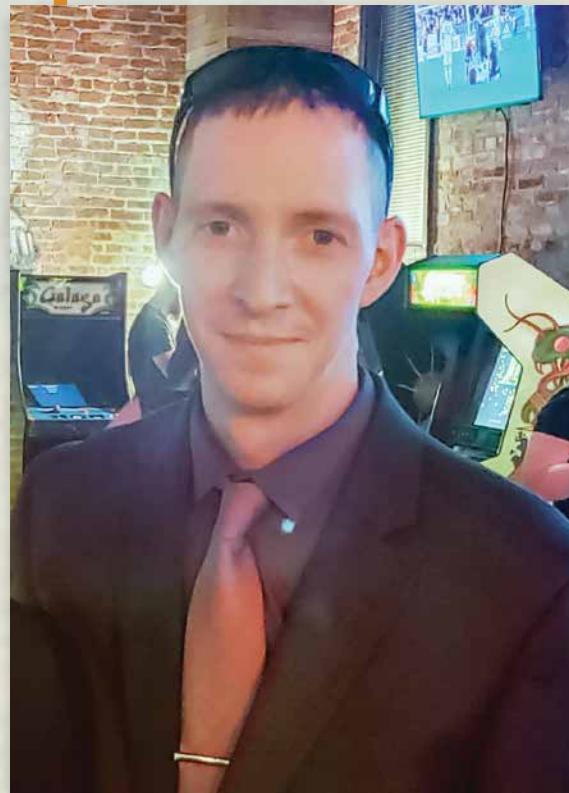
The morning following the assault, Stern was unsure if he had been drugged—a question he has to this day—in addition to drinking. He said the attack was like having an out-of-body experience.

“I didn’t have any control, and it was almost like I was watching it on TV,” he said. “The last thing I remember is him telling me that if I told anyone about this, he would report me and have me kicked out.”

That was in 2008, when the military adhered to the now-ended “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, which barred homosexuals and bisexuals from openly serving in the armed forces. Despite being a survivor, Stern was worried about potential punishment under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

To help process the assault, he walked along the beach, wrestling with two possible paths forward—reporting it to his command or ending his own life.

Ultimately, Stern chose to report. After his chain of command was notified, he underwent a medical examination, but by then, any substances he may have unintentionally consumed had likely been flushed out of his body and any DNA left by his assailant had already been washed away.



*In the years that followed his assault, Navy veteran Michael Stern’s endeavor to receive VA care seemed out of his grasp. After the Navy ultimately separated Stern, his mental health took a toll, which culminated in his suicide attempt.*

Before receiving mental health care for the assault, according to Stern, he was required to enroll in a 30-day inpatient alcohol treatment program on base. To Stern’s outrage, the civilian staff facilitating the treatment program told him it was his fault since he had been drinking.

“Yeah, I was drinking, but it’s my fault because of that?” he said. “That’s not right.”

He plunged into a steep decline. To add insult to injury, the day he reported back to the USS Whidbey



**“You can recover from [military sexual trauma]. It’s work, and it’s difficult, but **there are people out there who will help you.”****

*—Michael Stern, Navy veteran*

Island, a dock landing ship, Stern found gay pornography placed in his rack as a joke by other sailors. He sank even deeper into depression and anxiety, which wreaked havoc on his conduct.

Over the course of the next few months, he had fought a noncommissioned officer and was reassigned to another department. But the final blow to his military career was an arrest for driving under the influence. In 2009, after four years of service, including deployments to the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, the Navy separated Stern—officially—for failing alcohol rehabilitation.

Stern suspects, however, it was also retaliation for reporting his assault.

Such retribution is not uncommon, according to retired Col. Don Christensen, former chief prosecutor in the Air Force’s Judge Advocate General’s Corps and current president of Protect Our Defenders, a nonprofit working to eradicate sexual assault in the military.

“There’s a culture of disbelief and culture of shaming in the military surrounding sexual assault,” said Christensen. “And they’re just not changing it.”

Christensen, who has experience prosecuting dozens of sexual assault cases in the Air Force, points to the Pentagon’s track record of providing justice.

Despite a more than 20% increase in sexual assault reports since 2015, convictions have taken an almost 60% nosedive. According to the Defense Department’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office, between 2016 and 2019, 64% of women survivors reported some retaliation after reporting an assault. When retribution was reported, two-thirds of alleged retaliators were in the affected service members’ chain of command.

Survivors of MST also tend to skew young. They are often lower in rank and feel powerless to battle against their chain of command, which is sacrosanct in the military. This leaves the most vulnerable exposed to some of the most significant flaws in the entire military justice system, according to some advocates.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, on the other hand, gets a passing grade from Christensen in its ability to provide resources for survivors.

“The services VA provides [for MST survivors] are getting better, but we definitely see, with male survivors especially, there’s a long way to go,” he added.

There are signs that the VA is improving. The grant rate for men claiming post-traumatic stress disorder from MST was just 27% in 2011, advocates told lawmakers earlier this year. The figure has risen

to nearly 47% but is still trailing that of women, who receive a favorable claim about 58% of the time.

“We know as advocates that MST is not gender-specific, but it can be difficult to see that from the outside,” said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. “That’s why it’s so incredibly important to shed light on the facts so the people responsible for facilitating health care, making claims decisions, and allocating resources for treatment and programs can adequately meet the unique needs of those who have been affected.”

Stern began to seek VA benefits and care in recent years but found it difficult to join a male MST group at a nearby VA medical center, even with the assistance of a VA counselor. One program at the VA medical

DAV National Service Officer Derek Norman, who supervises the office in Salt Lake City, has become Stern’s friend and confidant, in addition to his benefits advocate. He is seeking a rating increase for Stern’s already-approved VA claim for military sexual assault.



center in Palo Alto, Calif., only accepts patients who are enrolled at that specific facility. Another in Bay Pines, Fla., had a six-month waiting list, and Stern needed something more immediate.

He received treatment through a general PTSD program at the VA hospital in Cincinnati, completing

treatment in January. He ultimately entered the Road Home Program at Rush University in Chicago. The intense 21-day group and individual program allows prospective veterans to self-refer, meaning a doctor’s recommendation isn’t necessary.

“If you’re not currently being seen or treated, it can be really hard to get into one of these programs without the chance to self-refer,” Stern added.

While Stern said he’s now on a much better track thanks to treatment, the 11 years since he left the Navy has been marred by chaos, isolation and struggles with mental health—including attempted suicide.

Years passed before he could utter a word about his assault, and Stern felt like a VA claim was out of the question. He had a common misconception within the veteran community that if he were to file for benefits he had earned in service, he would be taking them away from another, more deserving veteran. But that belief changed in 2017 when he moved to Utah and met DAV National Service Officer Derek Norman.

“A buddy said he had a friend out this way who was in a really dark place,” said Norman. “He was suffering from PTSD and needed somebody to reach out to him.”

The two met for the first time the next day and quickly became friends.

Stern finally thought the time was right to submit a VA claim for PTSD due to MST. The claim was approved, but not to the degree that reflected the level of his trauma. He turned to DAV, and now his friend and confidant, Norman, is seeking a rating increase.

“He’s still in a tough spot, but I’ll always be there for him,” added Norman, “not only as a friend but to guide him through his VA benefits and health care.”

Stern remains optimistic about the future. He currently lives in Ogden, Utah, and is looking forward to using the experience he gained as a Navy hull technician for a machinist job he plans to start soon.

“It’s not the end of your life; there are still good things to come,” explained Stern. “You can recover from MST. It’s work, and it’s difficult, but there are people out there who will help you.” ■

# JUSTICE

## decades in the making

Blue Water Navy Vietnam  
veteran exposed to Agent  
Orange turns to DAV for  
help accessing VA benefits

By Matt Saintsing

It's impossible to understand the American experience of Vietnam veterans without considering the noxious chemical Agent Orange.

Many of those who returned from war bearing the physical, emotional and mental scars of war—and even those who returned seemingly unscathed—were unaware that the harmful defoliant used to clear dense jungles would stealthily wage war on their bodies in the decades to follow.

One distinct group of veterans who served in the war—Blue Water Navy veterans—has been fighting for years for the same recognition and benefits the Department of Veterans Affairs extends to U.S. service members who were exposed to Agent Orange with boots on the ground. Daniel McGrath, a DAV life member of Chapter 18 in Manchester, N.H., is one of the roughly 90,000 Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans who stood to achieve justice because of recent DAV-championed legislation that unlocked VA health care and other benefits.

McGrath enlisted in the Navy in 1964 as a way to help pay for college.

"I had a scholarship to the University of New Hampshire, but it was only good for six months," he said. "I figured I could go into the service, and after I got out,



I could go back to school by using the GI Bill."

As a fire control technician assigned to the USS Floyd B. Parks, a Gearing-class destroyer, McGrath served three six-month tours off the coast of Vietnam. The ship's guns fired a few times, according to McGrath, but their primary mission was to recover Air Force and Navy pilots shot down by the enemy.

"They'd go in and drop their bombs, and if surface-to-air missiles hit them, they'd ditch in the ocean, and we'd try to extract them," said McGrath.

McGrath—far from the reaches of ground combat—was oblivious to the fact that he was regularly exposed to Agent Orange, likely through the ship's drinking water.

DAV advocated strongly for these veterans, resulting in last year's passage of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (P.L. 116-23). The legislation corrected



**Top:** Blue Water Navy veteran Daniel McGrath stands next to the USS Floyd B. Parks (DD-884) in dry dock at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard, Calif., in 1967. He served three tours aboard the Parks off the coast of Vietnam.

**Bottom:** McGrath and his wife, Ann, pose for a picture at the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, N.H.

“ Blue Water Navy veterans exposed to Agent Orange, like Mr. McGrath, have sought nothing more than the **benefits they earned during wartime service decades ago.** ”

—National Legislative Director Joy Ilem

an injustice by requiring the VA to presume Agent Orange exposure for veterans who served in eligible offshore waters between Jan. 6, 1962, and May 7, 1975. The president signed the long-awaited bill on June 25, 2019, and the VA began approving related claims in January 2020. Veterans, like McGrath, who can verify their service, are now considered eligible for disability compensation and other benefits if they have developed any of the diseases linked to Agent Orange exposure.

In McGrath's case, those ailments include a decadeslong battle with diabetes and prostate cancer, a diagnosis he received in 2010. He first applied for Agent Orange benefits in 2014 but was denied the following year based on his status as a Blue Water Navy veteran.

Years passed before McGrath felt the full consequences of the toxic herbicide. A 2013 study conducted by the Oregon Health & Science University and the VA in Portland, Ore., found that veterans exposed to Agent Orange not only are at a higher risk for prostate cancer but are also more likely to have a more threatening form of the disease.

Following the implementation of the new law, McGrath applied a second time in July of last year to receive service connection for diabetes and prostate cancer. In fall 2019, he met with Jesse Welch, a DAV national service officer and supervisor in Manchester, N.H.

“He used the wrong form, so a few months later, he came to us to get it refiled,” said Welch. “When we filed it correctly, it was granted.”

McGrath received the good news in February 2020, but to his surprise, the grant for service connection was backdated to the date of his original claim from 2014. According to Welch, the application was approved thanks to the legislation pushed by DAV.

“Blue Water Navy veterans exposed to Agent Orange, like Mr. McGrath, have sought nothing more than the benefits they earned during wartime service decades ago,” said National Legislative

Director Joy Ilem. “The historic passage of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act means that tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans who served off the coast of Vietnam are able to receive VA health care, compensation and other benefits for diseases that stem from Agent Orange exposure.”

“The DAV really helped me out after all these years; that was tremendous,” McGrath added. “They're fantastic. Especially Jesse, he's really good.”

Under the new legislation, Blue Water Navy veterans and their survivors who submitted claims in January and February 2020 have received \$140 million in retroactive benefits, according to the VA. ■



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# UNSPOKEN WOUNDS

Genital injuries are having lasting impacts on veterans and their families—and many are suffering in silence

By M. Todd Hunter

**T**he explosion underneath the Humvee ahead of Jeremy Yost was known as a “toe popper” to the Marines of 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment—not powerful enough to cause significant injuries to anyone inside but strong enough to immobilize the vehicle.

Spared from potentially catastrophic results and needing to continue its security mission, Yost’s vehicle attempted to drive around the incapacitated Humvee. That’s when the severely weakened soil gave way, sending Yost’s vehicle more than 30 feet down the side of a dry Afghan riverbed in 2010.

Yost was hit in the face by heavy communications gear and knocked unconscious during the treacherous rollover. He was also left with perhaps one of the least talked about wounds of war.

“I found out afterward that [the gear] also hit my groin and damaged my left testicle,” said Yost, supervisor at DAV’s national service office in Washington, D.C. “I had no clue until years later of the damage it caused.”

After the bruising subsided, Yost figured he was in the clear. That was, until the recurring pain began. Sometimes it was sporadic, but it was like clockwork after physical exertion such as running or sexual activity.

While Yost was transitioning to civilian life, the Department of Veterans Affairs diagnosed him with a varicocele—an enlargement of the veins within the scrotum—which can cause infertility.

Beyond the physical pain, the condition started taking a mental and emotional toll when Yost and his



*Jeremy Yost, then a Marine Corps infantryman, in Marjah, Afghanistan, in March 2011. Yost suffered a genital injury and traumatic brain injury during his deployment with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment.*

wife began trying to have children in 2014.

"I could really see the toll that [my infertility] took on [my wife] because she's not the problem," said Yost. "She has no issues, and it's unfortunately [because of] me."

Yost and his wife are not alone in their experience with a genital injury.

A 2017 report in *The Journal of Urology* found that he is among more than 1,300 men who suffered genitourinary injuries in Iraq or Afghanistan between 2001 and 2013. Beyond infertility, such injuries can impair the ability to urinate and have sex.

Of the injuries reported in the study, 73% involved the external genitals, and more than a third of the injuries were considered severe, including the loss of one or more testicles or complete loss of the penis. Additionally, 94% of the wounded men were 35 or younger, the peak age group for sexual development and reproduction.

Another study, conducted by the VA and published in *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, found that male veterans who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, like Yost, were four times more likely to suffer from erectile dysfunction.

To make matters worse, according to researchers, these men are at a high risk for suicide—an epidemic that is already too prevalent within the veteran community.

"We had to go through a lot of marriage counseling, because this was a huge thing that ultimately almost caused us to split," said Yost. "But we were able to work through it."

"These are serious issues that most young men and women aren't very forthcoming about, so that in itself presents a unique challenge for medical professionals in getting these veterans the physical, mental and emotional health care they need," said National Commander Butch Whitehead. "But the resilience, strength and courage these service members and veterans display in the aftermath of such life-altering injuries is inspiring."

"That's why I'm OK with telling my story," said Yost. "Even though it's embarrassing to an extent, it'll still help other people." ■



**Top:** Yost and his wife, Tiffany, at a family outing in summer 2017. Yost supervises DAV's Washington, D.C., service office. **Bottom:** As a service officer, Yost (left) counsels veterans about benefits they have earned through their military service and helps them navigate the VA claims system.



# Online career fairs thrive in pandemic

## DAV sees an influx of participants, needs in virtual events

By Bryan Lett

**W**hile fears of layoffs and the spike in unemployment have been daily headlines as the nation responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies are still actively looking to hire veterans.

The need to practice safe social distancing measures can make this a challenging time for employers, but DAV has experienced an increase in attendance at its recent virtual job fairs. DAV's co-sponsored national job fair on May 19 saw participation from 77 companies and nearly 2,000 veterans, service members and spouses.

The number of job seekers represented a new all-time high, marking an attendance increase of nearly 50% when compared to previous national online job fairs over the last two years.

The COVID-19 outbreak has forced employers and job seekers alike into new territory, but adaptability has always been one of the hallmarks of veterans—something that makes them particularly attractive to companies.

“People are hiring, and they want veterans on their teams. We've seen where start dates may be adjusted and other processes are different, but we have veterans who are being onboarded and advancing their careers,”

said National Employment Director Jeff Hall. “It's a strange time, and unemployment is surging, but there are opportunities, and veterans need to aggressively pursue them to help our nation rebuild.”

Mike Francomb, an Army veteran and chief technology officer for RecruitMilitary, the DAV partner who facilitates events, said most job seekers have found the virtual hiring events to be just as engaging and interactive as the in-person events.

**“We have employers ready to hire, we have industries that need to increase the workforce, and we're actively working to make that happen through our virtual events and digital resources.”**

—Mike Francomb,  
Chief Technology Officer, RecruitMilitary

“Several formats are available for meeting employers,” Francomb said, “including large groups, small groups and one-on-one discussions or interviews.”

“Whether you've lost your job because of the pandemic, are transitioning out of the military, or are looking for a new career, it can bring a lot of anxiety in an already anxious time. But our events are seeing an uptick online, for sure,” said Hall. “We can't predict how long it will take for our economy to recover. But, we know that veterans have a zero percent chance of landing any opportunity that they don't pursue.”

Hall said many virtual hiring events held in the wake of the pandemic have experienced an increase in attendance over in-person career fairs the previous year.

All traditional career fairs will be held virtually



through at least the end of the year.

In addition to increased online participation, Hall said more veterans are seeking DAV's assistance with benefits. "I suppose it's inevitable that veterans who've put off filing a claim—particularly those who have lost employment—see the value in our core advocacy services, and we welcome the opportunity to help them. Now is as good a time as any to ensure you're getting the support you earned for your sacrifices in the military."

From June 2014 through December 2019, DAV sponsored 607 traditional and virtual career fairs that nearly 210,000 active service members, Guard and Reserve personnel, veterans and spouses attended, resulting in more than 146,000 job offers. Many attendees from DAV's virtual job fairs have seen nearly instant responses from employers.

"I received an interview the same day," said Indira Green, who attended a recent hiring event.

Under social distancing, the importance of technology and flexibility have become even more critical for those looking for a job or a new career.

"One of the positive things was that I did not have to waste my gas or my time going in person," said veteran Michele King.

"We know that unemployment is looming for many Americans," Francomb said. "It's our mission to ensure that the veteran population is minimally impacted by that trend. We have employers ready to hire, we have industries that need to increase the workforce, and we're actively working to make that happen through our virtual events and digital resources." ■



**Learn More Online**

For more information on DAV's career fairs and a complete listing of future events, visit [jobs.dav.org](http://jobs.dav.org).

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## From the NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT DIRECTOR

### JEFFREY C. HALL

#### Weathering the storm

In a relatively short period of time, our nation's economy and employment rates have been turned upside down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For many of our veterans, steady jobs have been replaced by slashed hours, layoffs, unemployment checks and uncertainty about the future.

At the onset of the outbreak, and as social distancing quickly became the new normal, all in-person career fairs were converted to online virtual events to ensure our nation's heroes still have access to employment opportunities.

It's hard to predict the full impact of this pandemic on our country, but we owe it to the veterans we serve to honor their resilience and help them get back on their feet as quickly as possible.

DAV's in-person and virtual events are always free to veterans, their spouses, active-duty military personnel, and members of the National Guard and Reserve, and they are a great platform to help make connections with employers.

Whether you're currently transitioning out of the military, recently out of work or simply looking for a new start, job hunting can be a stressful task. This mission is made more difficult in the face of a national health crisis, but not any less important.

The pandemic has had an immediate impact on event participation. The first national virtual event in the era of "shelter in place" did extremely well. We hope that, in spite of the anxiety we all face, companies are still looking to hire veterans to fill their ranks.

You can register for and find a complete listing of DAV career fairs at [davjobfairs.org](http://davjobfairs.org). For those of you interested in attending a virtual event, here are four quick tips:

- 1. Test your equipment.** At least a few days before the fair, test your internet connection to ensure it's reliable. And, although a camera and microphone are not necessary, it never hurts to ensure they are functioning properly for a potential video call with a prospective employer.
- 2. Find employers and job openings that fit.** It's extremely important that you research employers who will be attending the virtual career fair. Many employers will also list the openings they are hoping to fill.
- 3. Develop tailored resumes.** Develop a list of keywords and phrases from each employer and job listing that you can use on your resume to help you succeed.
- 4. Prepare responses.** You should prepare short accomplishment stories to answer typical screening interview questions. Practice your responses, even write out an outline of what you want to say, but do not memorize responses. Keep them concise. When possible, include some keywords you found.

DAV's employment department will continue to do all we can to assist veterans, their spouses and transitioning service members during this hard time. Together, we can weather the storm.

# Exceptional support

## National Service Foundation recognizes Missouri chapter's 40 years of giving



From left: Ernestine Schumann-Heink Chapter 2 Commander Gerald Caldwell, Senior Vice Commander Ralph Travis and Adjutant David Gerke

**W**hen DAV was birthed nearly 100 years ago, founder and decorated World War I veteran Judge Robert Marx planted a stake in the ground that would forever change the way the nation viewed care for disabled veterans. So, too, did it alter the conscience of the American public, bringing into focus the need to support organizations helping to fill the gaps in care for those injured or made ill by military service and ensure promises are kept.

DAV's National Service Foundation, originally incorporated in 1931 as the Disabled American Veterans Service Foundation, helps to support DAV services at the local, state and national levels, all supported by generous donors.

This year, the foundation is introducing a new donor recognition milestone—the Silver Level award—to recognize exceptional lifetime giving achievements in excess of \$500,000. The first recipient of this award is Ernestine Schumann-Heink Chapter 2 in Kansas City, Mo. The chapter has given a cumulative total of \$657,020 since its first donation in 1979. The award will also feature two stars that represent giving at the \$575,000 and \$650,000 milestones.

A Navy veteran of the Vietnam War, Chapter Adjutant David Gerke joined DAV nearly 40 years ago, after his uncle introduced him to a national service officer to assist him in receiving the benefits he'd earned. Gerke is also the board president for the DAV Thrift Store in Missouri, and the success of those stores has helped to fuel the chapter's annual giving to the foundation.

"I'm not sure how it got started, but ever since I've been involved, it's been something they've always told us they needed to do, to give to the National Service Foundation," said Gerke. "I think it's near and dear to

everybody's heart in the chapter, so we just continue to support it year after year."

The chapter is about 3,000 members strong and occupies a new building, which, in addition to facilitating regular chapter business, operates a restaurant that funds local veterans programs. The chapter has also been a consistent supporter of the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. But despite the continuous giving, recognition hadn't been on anyone's radar.

"I was quite surprised about the award. I didn't know the dollar amount, but I knew it had to be getting up there," said Gerke, who has been working to disseminate the good news to fellow members. "They all think it's a great honor."

Throughout 2019, the foundation disbursed more than \$4.1 million to assist the national organization in providing essential services to veterans and their families, thanks to generous and committed supporters like the members of Chapter 2.

"We offer our deepest thanks to all the members of the chapter who have helped to reach this milestone and who have been such staunch supporters of the foundation," said National Service Foundation President Art Wilson. "They should be extremely proud of the work they have done, the impact they have had and the victories they have helped their fellow veterans achieve through their contributions."

"There are other donors who are also making incredible headway toward reaching the Silver Level award," added Wilson. "We are grateful for their contributions and for all that their generosity makes possible for the nation's veterans."

"DAV helped me," said Gerke. "This is paying it forward and helping other people." ■

# VA expands virtual services in response to COVID-19

In March, the Department of Veterans Affairs temporarily closed its 56 regional offices in an attempt to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus while increasing virtual capabilities.

“The decision to close our offices to the general public is part of the VA’s effort to limit exposure to vulnerable populations like our older veterans and those with underlying medical conditions, as identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

Virtual options such as VA Video Connect were already in place to allow veterans to quickly and easily meet with VA health care providers through live video on any computer, tablet or mobile device with an internet connection. In response to the office closures, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) expanded its own virtual services to ensure the safety and well-being of its clients and staff. For example, VBA was able to provide:

- Uninterrupted GI Bill payments so students continued to receive their benefits unaffected by any change from in-person to online learning.
- Educational counseling support for students through online and telephone services.

- Connections to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services through teleconferencing, as well as case management and general counseling through VA Video Connect.
- Informal hearings by telephone or video conferencing when needed.
- Information collection via telephone to process fiduciary claims.
- Remote information collection via phone or teleconference, when possible, to process Specially Adapted Housing grant requests.
- Examinations for disability benefits using tele-compensation and pension (tele-C&P) exams.



The VA also provided virtual briefings and individualized counseling for transitioning service members where possible.



Visit the VA’s website, <http://dav.la/1yd>, for information and updates regarding virtual services available in response to COVID-19.

## DAV backs bill to improve survivor benefits

In May, DAV hosted a virtual forum for the introduction of the Caring for Survivors Act of 2020 in the House. The bill, H.R. 6933, introduced by Reps. TJ Cox, Gil Cisneros, Ted Yoho and Jefferson Van Drew, aims to increase Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for veterans’ surviving dependents and lower the threshold of eligibility to allow certain survivors to receive this benefit who currently do not meet the requirements.

Specifically, the legislation aims to:

- Increase the DIC rate to make it more equitable with rates provided to federal civilian employee survivors. This bill increases DIC so that the base rate is equal to 55% of the rate of compensation paid to a totally disabled veteran.
- Ease the 10-year rule for eligibility and replace it with a graduated scale of benefits that begins after five years and increases by percentage until reaching the full amount at the 10-year mark. If a veteran is rated as totally disabled for five years and dies as a result of a non-service-connected cause,

a survivor would receive 50% of total DIC benefits, continuing until the 10-year threshold and maximum DIC benefit is awarded.

- Reduce the age at which a surviving spouse can remarry yet maintain benefits from 57 to 55, consistent with other federal survivor programs.

“When a veteran has served this nation honorably and was disabled as a result of that service, the last thing they should have to worry about is what will happen to their surviving family members should they pass away,” said National Commander Butch Whitehead.

# From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER

## DIANE J. FRANZ



### What a year!

My, oh my, what an extraordinary first year serving as your Auxiliary national commander. It truly was a rewarding and life-changing experience that I will use to my advantage in these unusual times that have led to a second year of service in this extraordinary post. As Albert Einstein once said, “the only source of knowledge is experience.”

Midway through my term as commander, the COVID-19 outbreak began to show its ugly head. Sadly, along with numerous other events, meetings and gatherings, our very own national convention was canceled. As some

of you know, per our constitution and bylaws, this means I will serve a second year as commander of our Auxiliary.

This horrible pandemic has affected more lives than we know and has changed lives all throughout the world. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with those who are still being impacted today.

One of the silver linings to come out of the disastrous coronavirus was DAV and Auxiliary leaders everywhere stepping up and doing all they could to limit its impact on our mission. Every effort was made—

and continues to be made—to put our volunteers, veterans and their families first in the wake of this crisis.

It has certainly been an emotional year, but it was easy to see the traits of a great and long-lasting organization. It became clear to me why DAV is celebrating a centennial of service and our Auxiliary is not far behind. The compassion, the leadership, the will to go on, and the love for our fellow human beings was on full display.

Veterans and their families have always been guiding lights when it comes to tough times. The way they pick up the pieces and move

forward with courage and conviction could be a lesson for us all. This most recent experience has been no different.

I also want to thank every member of our Auxiliary for your help in guiding our organization through a tough few months. But stay diligent, as the fight is not over.

I look forward to serving all of you for another year, as I do not take this privilege and responsibility lightly. I genuinely look forward to continuing to serve all of you and getting through this as we started it—together.

One of the silver linings to come out of the disastrous coronavirus was **DAV and Auxiliary leaders everywhere stepping up** and doing all they could to limit its impact on our mission.



## Increase your income while helping your fellow veterans!

### Charitable gift annuity benefits

- Generous fixed payments for life, largely tax-free.
- Optional survivor payments.
- Charitable income-tax deduction.
- DAV Guardian Society recognition.

### How to participate

- \$10,000 (or higher) contribution to the DAV Charitable Service Trust.
- Minimum age(s) 60; no maximum age.

### For more information

- Call Judie List Sweeney at **1-800-216-9802**, ext. 1.
- Email [giftplanning@dav.org](mailto:giftplanning@dav.org).
- Return the attached **postcard**.

### SAMPLE ONE-LIFE RATES

Age	Rate	Age	Rate
60	3.9%	80	6.5%
65	4.2%	85	7.6%
70	4.7%	90+	8.6%
75	5.4%		

Please call or write for all one- and two-life rates.

# 'I had to take care of my buddies'

Veteran funds gift annuity, receives generous income for life and unexpectedly learns about disability benefits he may have earned



Charles Burke of Lexington, Ky.

Charles Burke was not yet a DAV member when an article in a Fidelity newsletter about the income and tax benefits of charitable gift annuities caught his eye. The article also explained how gift annuities help charities. As a longtime DAV donor, he asked if DAV had such a program. Within weeks, he had funded a gift annuity with the DAV Charitable Service Trust.

"I had to take care of my buddies!" said Burke. "I reached a point in my life where I could do this, so I did. The income I receive from the annuity is icing on the cake."

Burke's story doesn't end with his generosity. After deciding to become a life member, he learned about new Agent Orange-related benefits for Blue Water Navy veterans like him. As an A-4 Skyhawk plane captain aboard the USS Intrepid, Burke likely had contact with Agent Orange. The Department of Veterans Affairs later diagnosed him with conditions linked to the chemical. On Jan. 1, 2020, the Blue Water Navy Act of 2019 went into effect after years of tireless advocacy by DAV. This act extends the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to Blue Water Navy veterans like Burke who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of Vietnam.

"Little did I know that I'd also be helping myself," said Burke. "If it weren't for connecting more with DAV, I wouldn't have known that the conditions could be service-connected." DAV has since helped him file a claim.

Today, Burke is thankful that his own Navy service dovetailed into a long civilian career as an aviation mechanic, including maintenance of private planes for horse farm owners around Lexington, Ky. Now, in his retirement years, the fixed payments he is receiving for life from his gift annuity are boosting his security. Best of all, he is honored to "help his buddies." ■

*Our charitable gift annuity program is one of many special ways to make a lasting difference in the lives of veterans and, in so doing, "live beyond your years." Call, write or visit [dav.giftplans.org](http://dav.giftplans.org) and click "Calculate Your Gift" to learn how you can fund a gift annuity and boost your own retirement income.*



### Pause to remember...

In honor of Purple Heart Day, members of Chapter 108 of Cape Coral, Fla., took part in a ceremony by the Coconut Creek Seminole Casino to pay their respects to the nation's combat wounded. Purple Heart Day is observed on Aug. 7 each year and is a time for Americans to pause to remember and honor the brave men and women who were either wounded on the battlefield or paid the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. Pictured, from left: Chapter 108 Senior Vice Commander Ron Price, Jack Wagner, Carol Culliton, Purple Heart recipient Neil O'Connor, Joe Coviello and Chapter 108 Commander Larry Tiller.



**Spread the news!** Send photos of your DAV or Auxiliary news to [production@dav.org](mailto:production@dav.org).

Photos should be at least 3 x 5 inches at 300 dpi. Please include a description of the event and names of those pictured, when applicable. In most cases, submissions are published in the order in which they are received but are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety.



### Growing with the mission...

National 3rd Junior Vice Commander Nancy Espinosa (left) attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new Wasatch Adaptive Sports building in Murray, Utah. The new building provides the Wasatch Adaptive Sports organization—a DAV Charitable Service Trust grant recipient—office space and sufficient storage for the adaptive sports equipment they use to help disabled veterans participate in sports such as skiing and cycling. Pictured (from left): Espinosa, Steve Mersereau, Stephanie Medlin, Marianne Ryan, Elizabeth Japh, Abbie Rice and Derek Norman.



### DAV is calling on YOU to act!

Help us reach **100 Acts of Honor** in the name of veterans. No act is too big or too small to help the men and women who served our nation. Share your act online with the hashtag **#100ActsofHonor**.

To find volunteer opportunities in your community, sign up at [VolunteerforVeterans.org](http://VolunteerforVeterans.org).



## From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

### MICHAEL P. DOVER

#### Finding peace in the uncertainties of life

**A** portion of Psalm 23 states, “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.”

This psalm is about a shepherd, and to understand the peace a shepherd brings, you have to first understand sheep. It is almost impossible for sheep to relax and lie down unless four basic requirements are met.

First, owing to their timidity, sheep refuse to lie down unless they are free of all fear. Second, because of their social behavior within a flock, sheep will not lie down unless they are free from friction with others of their kind. Third, if tormented by flies or parasites, sheep will not lie down. Only when free of these pests can they relax. Lastly, sheep will not lie down as long as they feel in need of finding food. They must be free from hunger.

It is significant that, to be at rest, there must be a definite sense of freedom from fear, tension, aggravations and hunger. A flock that is restless, discontented, always agitated and disturbed never does well. The same is true of people.

We live a most uncertain life. Any hour can bring disaster, danger and distress from unknown quarters. Life is full of hazards. No one can tell what new

trouble a day will produce. We live either in a sense of anxiety, fear and foreboding or in a sense of quiet rest. Which is it?

It is in the grip of fear that most of us are unable to cope with the cruel circumstances and harsh complexities of life. As I grow older, my knowledge of my faith makes all the difference in the world as to whether I flee and remain fearful or stay and weather the storm. Through my faith, I choose the latter.

No, I have not mastered fear in my life, but I can fall back on something tangible that anchors me. Whether it's your faith or military training, you, too, have something to fall back on. Face the enemy, in spite of fear—sound familiar? This type of attitude makes America great. This type of attitude makes you, the warfighter—and your dependents who are supportive of you—great and unique.

In the midst of misfortunes, the shepherd is there. There is nothing so quieting and reassuring to the sheep as the presence of their shepherd. It puts them at ease. In my life, there is no substitute for the keen awareness that my shepherd is nearby. He gives me assurances that I can rest and relax in spite of what this crazy world dishes out. Find your shepherd.

In His Service to You.

## Retired National Service Officer Richard L. Richards

■ Retired National Service Officer Richard L. Richards died April 22, 2020. He was 74.

Richards enlisted in the Marine Corps in October 1964. On May 8, 1968, while serving in Vietnam with the 3rd Battalion, 27th Marine Regiment, he was injured by a landmine, with severe wounds to his leg and arm. He ultimately lost his leg due to the injury. He retired honorably in December 1968 after being awarded the Purple Heart.

In 1972, Richards was hired as a national service officer apprentice in the Houston office. He retired from DAV as a national service officer supervisor in 1995. It



Richards

was his goal to make sure his fellow disabled veterans received their rightful benefits.

"Richard dedicated his life to the service of others, starting with his enlistment in the Marine Corps in 1964," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "After his medical retirement and rehabilitation, he continued his life of service, as evidenced by his 23 years with DAV, helping his fellow

veterans and their families live their lives with respect and dignity. He will be greatly missed by his DAV family and all those who knew and loved him."

Richards is survived by his wife, Sarah, his children and grandchildren, and numerous other family and friends.

## DAV Auxiliary Past National Commander Donna Tanner

■ A fierce advocate for disabled veterans and their families, DAV Auxiliary Past National Commander Donna Tanner died May 2, 2020. She was elected to the organization's highest office at the national convention in Chicago in 2006.

A life member since 1983, Tanner joined DAV Auxiliary when she married her husband, Jim, a disabled U.S. Navy veteran. Throughout the years, she served in a number of capacities. In 2002, she was elected national 3rd junior vice commander and advanced through the national leadership roles until her election as national commander.



Tanner

She was instrumental in the development of the DAV Auxiliary's Strategic Plan and recently served on the Caregiver Initiative Exploratory Committee. After her retirement, she took on the role of hospital service coordinator for the DAV Department of Massachusetts, a job she held until her death.

"For the better part of four decades, Donna's commitment to improving the lives of disabled veterans and their families was immeasurable," said Auxiliary National Adjutant Pat Kemper. "Donna was a staunch advocate for veterans' rights and a supporter of their unsung heroes, the caregivers. She will be missed by her family and friends and the veteran families she has so steadfastly served."



### Never stop giving...

Chapter 41 of Wichita Falls, Texas, Commander Joel Jimenez (center right) and Junior Vice Commander Larry Main (center left) donated items to the Reynolds Army Health Clinic in conjunction with the American Red Cross and Marine Corps detachment on behalf of DAV. Collected items, such as women's clothes, patriotic attire and lap blankets, will go directly to active-duty service members, family members and veterans.

## REUNIONS

### ARMY

#### 3RD BRIGADE 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION (VIETNAM)

Sept. 9–13, Pittsburgh, PA, Contact: Richard O'Hare, Email: gbc82abnvn@aol.com, Web: goldenbrigade.org

#### 4TH BATTALION, 9TH INFANTRY REGIMENT (MANCHUS)

Sept. 16–19, Minneapolis, MN, Contact: Bob Lannon, Ph: 317-745-4287, Email: bobl99@hotmail.com

#### 7/13TH ARTILLERY VIETNAM ALL BATTERIES

Sept. 20–24, Biloxi, MS, Contact: Robert Adams, Ph: 859-806-5199, Email: cavnam67@gmail.com

#### 7TH SQUADRON 17TH AIR CAVALRY ASSOCIATION

RUTHLESS RIDERS, PALEHORSE REUNION Sept. 9–13, Gatlinburg, TN, Contact: Joe, Ph: 201-390-5350, Web: ruthlessriders.co

#### 34TH ENGINEER BATTALION (VIETNAM)

Sept. 9–13, Branson, MO, Contact: Bryan Livengood, Ph: 513-753-3396, Email: blivengood1@fiptics.com

#### 62ND AVIATION COMPANY, COMPANY A, 502ND

AVIATION BATTALION, 175TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY Sept. 17–21, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Bert Rice, Ph: 410-507-3366, Email: bert07@comcast.net, Web: vinhlongoutlaws.com

#### 76TH ENGINEERS

Aug. 27–29 Lebanon, TN, Contact: Richard Cerone, Email: rfcerone@gmail.com or Bruce Fonnest, Email: brucefonnest@gmail.com

#### 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION VIETNAM VETERANS

ORGANIZATION Aug. 26–30, Fayetteville/Fort Bragg, NC, Contact: Ron Long, Ph: 310-977-4253, Email: ronlong71@msn.com, Web: 101namveteran.com

#### 106TH INFANTRY DIVISION

Sept. 9–13, Kansas City, MO, Contact: Wayne Dunn, Ph: 410-409-1141, Email: waynedunn@comcast.net, Web: 106thinfdivassn.org/reunion2020.html

#### 249TH ENGINEER BATTALION ASSOCIATION

Sept. 17–20, Springfield, VA, Contact: Robin Wandell, Ph: 660-815-1166, Email: firewoodfriends@hotmail.com

#### B COMPANY /327TH 101ST AIRBORNE (1967–1970)

Sept. 16–20, Branson, MO, Contact: Bill Spielman, Ph: 402-432-0635, Email: bspiel7607@aol.com

#### COMPANY D, 1/6 INFANTRY, 198TH LIGHT INFANTRY BRIGADE, AMERICAN DIVISION, CHU LAI, VIETNAM

Sept. 14–18, Chattanooga, TN, Contact: Lynn Baker, Ph: 870-253-1591, Email: 1dbhistory@yahoo.com

#### OV-1 MOHAWK ASSOCIATION

Sept. 16–19, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Paul Jacobsen, Ph: 612-244-7267, Email: pej@reagan.com

## MARINES

#### FORCE LOGISTICS COMMAND/FLSG-A&B

Sept. 26–Oct. 1, Tucson, AZ, Contact: Frank Evica, Email: frkfish@aol.com or Contact: Mike Fishbaugh, Email: smfishbaugh@mikrotec.com

#### GOLF COMPANY, 2ND BATTALION, 7TH REGIMENT, 1ST MARINE DIVISION RVN 65–70

Sept. 2–6, Carson City, NV, Contact: Travis Skaggs, Ph: 775-291-6813, Email: tskaggs6@gmail.com

#### MARINE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL ASSOCIATION (MATCA)

Sept. 23–27, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Stephen (Steve) Harris, Ph: 509-499-8137, Email: sandkh2@gmail.com

#### MARINE VMGR/VMR

Sept. 3–6, Chicago, IL, Contact: Dave Harshbarger, Ph: 630-394-2568, Email: reunion@mcata.com, Web: mcata.com

## NAVY

#### LST SAILORS—ALL SHIPS, CLASSES AND YEARS

Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Angela D'Aloisio, Ph: 803-865-5665, Email: support@nehemiahcommunications.com

#### USS ABNAKI (ATF-96)

Sept. 27–30, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Steven Andersland, Ph: 210-410-1820, Email: sandersland@outlook.com

#### USS ALFRED A. CUNNINGHAM (DD-752)

Sept. 20–24, Long Beach, CA, Contact: John Johnstone, Ph: 414-762-7587, Email: johnstone752@att.net

#### USS BOSTON (CA-69/CAG-1 AND SSN-703)

SHIPMATES AND CREW July 9–12, King of Prussia, PA, Contact: Barry Probst, Ph: 508-580-3808, Email: president@ussboston.org, Web: ussboston.org

#### USS CANBERRA (CA-70/CAG-2), 1943–1971

Sept. 30–Oct. 4, Pittsburgh, PA, Contact: Ken Minick, Ph: 740-423-8976, Email: usscanberra@gmail.com

#### USS ESSEX

Aug. 9–16, Charleston, SC, Contact: Tom Firrelli, Ph: 602-882-0375

#### USS HOLDER (DD/DDE-819 AND DE-401)

Sept. 23–27, Warwick, CT, Contact: James De Barrios, Ph: 831-458-9062, Email: ussholder\_dde819@hotmail.com, Web: ussholder.com

#### USS HOLLAND (AS-32)

Sept. 27–Oct. 2, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Gary Stowe, Ph: 573-769-3996, Email: ussholland@socket.net

#### USS HOLLISTER (DD-788)

Sept. 27–30, Branson, MO, Contact: Casey Orr, Ph: 319-377-4759, Email: cworr78@gmail.com, Web: usshollister.org

#### USS LITCHFIELD COUNTY (LST-901)

Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Don Lerche, Ph: 309-530-8710, Email: donlerche@yahoo.com

#### USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) ASSOCIATION

Aug. 31–Sept. 3, Las Vegas, NV, Contact: John Wilder, Email: jfwilder@outlook.com, Web: ussnimitzassociation.org

#### USS OAK HILL (LSD-7), USS CARTER HALL (LSD-3) AND

USS CATA MOUNT (LSD-17) Sept. 24–27, Oklahoma City, OK, Contact: Raylah Holm, Ph: 509-607-9021, Email: raylah@aol.com, Web: ussoakhilllsd7.myevent.com

#### USS OGDEN (LPD-5) NFZV

Sept. 10–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Mark Stephens, Ph: 570-640-1094, Email: ussogdenlpd5@gmail.com, Web: ussogdenreunion.com

#### USS PARK COUNTY (LST-1077)

Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Mike Kempf, Ph: 317-490-4229, Email: m.w.kempf@sbcglobal.net

#### USS RASHER (SS/SSR/AGSS-269)

Sept. 16–20, LaPorte, TX, Contact: Richard Moore, Ph: 804-815-0730, Email: drifterpilot@cox.net

#### USS RANGER (CV/CVA-61)

Sept. 30–Oct. 3, Norfolk, VA, Contact: Tom Ballinger, Ph: 210-403-3302

#### USS RATON (SS/SSR/AGSS-270)

Aug. 24–28, Tucson, AZ, Contact: Larry Kramer, Ph: 360-697-2842, Email: ldkramer43@hotmail.com

#### USS ROCHESTER (CA-124)

Aug. 17–21, Rapid City, SD, Contact: Joe Hill, Ph: 931-432-4848, Email: nitcraw@twinkles.net

#### USS SAVANNAH (AOR-4)

July 19–22, Charleston SC, Contact: John Oboikovitz, Ph: 630-291-7044, Email: j2301971@gmail.com

#### USS SUTTER COUNTY (LST-1150)

Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Guy Simmons, Ph: 978-476-3895, Email: guysimmons@aol.com

#### USS TOLOVANA (AO-64)

Sept. 21–23, Tulsa, OK, Contact: Randy "Okie" Baughman, Ph: 321-795-3940, Email: okie\_baughman@yahoo.com or jerryandmardelle@cox.net

#### USS WEXFORD COUNTY (LST-1168)

Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Larry Condra, Ph: 314-604-5221, Email: larrygee@netscape.net

#### USS YELLOWSTONE (AD-27)

Sept. 21–23, Branson, MO, Contact: Karen Bowen, Ph: 603-948-2821, Email: pkbowen@atlanticbb.net

#### USS ZELLARS (DD-777)

Sept. 10–14, Milwaukee, WI, Contact: 847-468-1003, Email: bnbsrose@gmail.com

#### VP-6 PATRON SIX BLUE SHARKS ASSOCIATION

Aug. 19–22, Whidbey Island, WA, Contact: Jim Lamers, Ph: 703-727-7944, Email: JimIPV6@comcast.net, Web: vp-6.org

## AIR FORCE

#### 555 RED HORSE

July 29–31, Austin, TX, Contact: Sam Elizondo, Ph: 956-224-0558, Email: minombreemas@gmail.com

#### 6950 USAFSS (1974–1978) RAF CHICKSANDS, ENGLAND

Sept. 24–27, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Richard Robert, Email: chicksandreunion@gmail.com

## ALL SERVICES

#### CHARLIE ROCK AND 4/5 FIELD ARTILLERY—DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

July 9–12, Orlando, FL, Contact: Michael Manigo, Ph: 706-464-2808, Email:

manigo40@yahoo.com or Contact: Robert Gaines, Ph: 317-698-3876, Email: vorogaines@comcast.net

#### NEBRASKA VIETNAM VETERANS

Aug. 13–16, Lincoln, NE, Contact: Web: vetsreunion.com

## INQUIRIES

- Searching for someone that was in 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, MCRD San Diego, May 25, 1964, Platoon 240, E Company, and went to L Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Training Regiment, MCB Camp Pendleton, CA. Contact: David Mancha, Ph: 512-963-0338
- Searching for anyone who served in the Air Force at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, in 1966 in the A/C sheet metal shop. Contact: Edwin Graf, Email: edwingraf191@gmail.com
- Searching for anyone 1st Engineer Support Company, 1st Engineer Battalion, Camp Tulega, Camp Pendleton, CA. Boarded ship Oct. 10 1965, USS Calvert (APA-32), San Diego, CA; went to Okinawa then to Chu Lai. Contact: David Mancha, Ph: 512-963-0338
- Searching for "Woody," "Smitty," "Chris" or "Dick" who were U.S. Air Force enlisted men and veterans stationed at Toul-Rosières AB in France around 1962–64 and who were members of the rock 'n' roll band The Checkmates on base. Contact: Michael Hicks, Email: michaelinboise@aol.com
- Searching for E03 Harry Morrel, A Company, Mobile Construction Battalion 10, Camp Wilkinson (Gia Lé), Vietnam. Originally from Key Biscayne, FL; last known address Dallas. Contact: Larry Capes, Email: rodeopediediesel@gmail.com
- Searching for Marines Skip Johnson from Philadelphia; Charles "Snake" Watkin from Louisiana; and other comrades who played basketball at Cherry Point, NC, with Ike. Contact: Ike, Ph: 989-971-4227
- Searching for the following former Marines: James Thompson from Spokane, WA, who later moved to Seattle; Lance Wood from Seattle, who has a cat tattoo; Paul Albause from New York, but settled in California and married a general's daughter; Tim Dolan from Chicago, whose dad possibly worked for the newspaper; Don Mouda from the Tri-Cities area in Washington; Martinez who had a no shaving order; and Bey the radioman who was from Georgia. Contact: Gus, Ph: 360-951-1340, Email: greggerrits@gmail.com
- Searching for soldiers who served in Korea at Camp Irwin and others who served in Chicago, including but not limited to Tim Sullivan and Joe McVey. Contact: Dick "Frenchy" La Chapelle, Email: dlachap@sbglobal.net
- Searching for Paul Schobel, from 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, Vietnam 1968–69. Contact: LCO Guzman, Ph: 860-232-0279
- Searching for Yeoman Larry Lee Woolfolk, Long Beach Naval Shipyard, 1978–79. Last known to reside in San Diego. Contact: Denise Tuck, Email: Denisetuck7@hotmail.com
- Searching for former students and graduates of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville who were killed in Vietnam, with the goal of memorializing them on campus. To date, those identified are Dean Krueger, Vasilios Demetris, Daniel Gallagher, Ronald Blohm, John Imrie and Francis Mulvey. Contact: Mac Kolar, Email: mackolar@verizon.net
- Searching for Christopher Reed, who served in 1st Platoon, 501st Military Police Company, Bamberg Germany, 1990–93. Contact: Robert Howard, Ph: 407-412-1443, Email: rehoward305@yahoo.com
- Searching for Tom Warborg, Brian Taranto and Jim Watson, who served with me in the 535th Engineer Company (Light Equipment) in Mannheim, Germany, 1965–66. Contact: Rick Anderschat, Ph: 513-474-2831, Email: rwshot@msn.com
- Searching for the "Byrdman" from 193rd Infantry Brigade, Panama 1987–89, "Scout Out." I have your Zippo lighter found in Germany or Korea. Contact: Mike Spilotro, Ph: 805-478-3730

**PLANNING A REUNION?** We welcome submissions from our readers for reunions and inquiries. Email the details to [feedback@dav.org](mailto:feedback@dav.org). Submissions must be received at least six months prior to the event date and are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety.



**Restoring the fleet...**

Members from Chapter 144 of Castle Point, N.Y., embarked two years ago on a fundraising campaign to address the need for new vans at the local Hudson Valley VA Medical Center. Since that time, the chapter has raised enough money to replace all five vans with new vehicles, allowing more veterans to be safely transported to their VA medical appointments. Pictured, from left: Rich Turco, John Masselli, Director of VA Hudson Valley Medical Center Dawn Schaal, Director of Voluntary Services Eyvette Rodriguez-Cacho, Chapter 144 Commander Thomas Wohlrab, Jeff Dunay and Elliott Hammond.

DAV 5K  
Walk, Roll, Run and Ride & 1-Mile Hero to  
HONOR AMERICA'S VETERANS  
PRESENTED BY DAV (DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS)

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 ★ CINCINNATI**

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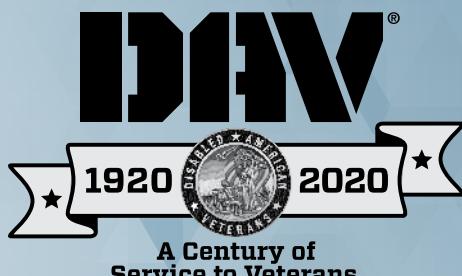
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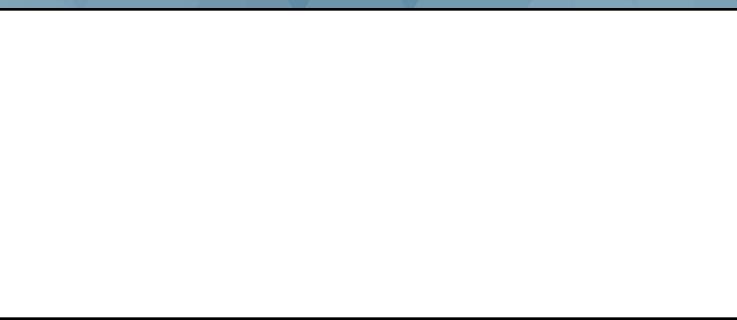
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