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THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF DAV AND AUXILIARY

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MAGAZINE

DAV Turns **100**

The lasting legacy of
Judge Robert S. Marx

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A Century of
Service to Veterans

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Participants in the virtual town hall event included, from left, Marine Corps veteran Jacquelyn Camper, financial planner Tara Falcone, retired Army Col. Greg Gadson and CNBC correspondent Contessa Brewer.

Investing in yourself

DAV partners with CNBC, financial experts to inform veterans how best to adapt to the pandemic's economic fallout

By Matt Saintsing

With veterans nationwide continuing to face health and economic impacts of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, DAV recently partnered with Comcast NBCUniversal Military and Veteran Affairs and CNBC+Acorns Invest in You: Ready. Set. Grow. for an online forum where specialists provided actionable advice on how veterans can best react to recent financial distress.

The hourlong event, “The Financial Path Forward: A Virtual Town Hall for America’s Veterans,” featured questions from 17 veterans answered by a panel of financial experts, who included DAV National Commander Stephen “Butch” Whitehead and DAV ambassador and retired Army Col. Greg Gadson. CNBC correspondent Contessa Brewer, the daughter of Air Force veterans, hosted the event, which was broadcast online June 3.

During the town hall meeting, Jim Sursely, a past DAV national commander who lost his legs and left arm in Vietnam, asked Gadson, a fellow amputee, which coping strategies veterans can adopt as they face mounting economic uncertainty.

“For me, the most important thing is staying in the present. You can’t get ahead of yourself, and you can’t hold on to the past,” said Gadson, the founder of a service-disabled veteran-owned small business, Patriot Strategies LLC. “Focus on the things you can

control versus the things that you can’t.”

Centra Mazyck, an Army veteran who became paralyzed following a parachuting accident, questioned whether veterans benefits could be on the chopping block to help balance enormous government spending to fight the pandemic, and Marine Corps veteran Jacquelyn Camper asked how veterans should “prepare for another financially draining event like the current one.”

According to financial planner Tara Falcone, a Navy spouse, the fiscal fundamentals are key.

“It’s so important to recognize that cash is king in times of turbulence,” she said. “Americans are cash-strapped—we aren’t very good savers, unfortunately. It’s really about making sure you have an emergency fund for life’s unexpected events.”

Air Force veteran Lisa Todero dipped into retirement savings to help pay for her son’s education and now finds herself, like others, in the challenging position of rebuilding her nest egg.

“It’s still possible to retire, but it’s going to require you to take action today,” said Falcone. Regarding investments, no matter how small, veterans should look into tax-advantaged accounts, such as IRAs, she said. ■



Learn More Online

A link to the town hall can be found at [DAV.org/covidrelief](https://dov.org/covidrelief) or dav.la/1ye.

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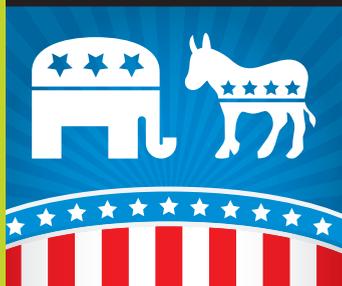
- 1** National Commander Butch Whitehead touches on DAV's continued efforts to serve veterans throughout the pandemic, and reminds us that our civic duties lie just around the corner.
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A century ago, Judge Robert S. Marx set in motion a legacy to care for his fellow disabled veterans returning home from war—a legacy carried out today by the men and women of DAV.

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Though COVID-19 has forced the cancellation of many events this year, members still enjoyed a taste of the national convention online through the DAV & Auxiliary Virtual Salute.

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From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS



Well-deserved honors

Each year, at our national convention, we spend time honoring those among us who have shown exemplary service to disabled veterans. We've been so fortunate to have many members, volunteers and even those outside our organization who choose to spend hours upon hours—and, in some cases, decades—performing noble work that improves the lives of our nation's heroes.

Normally, we are able to give them a warm reception, welcoming them among us at our annual gathering to reflect on their contributions. But this year—due to the cancellation of our national convention—we've had to rethink our approach to showing these individuals how grateful we are for all they do.

We have a few pages dedicated to our awardees, beginning on Page 22, and we will, of course, honor them across our social media channels. But I want to specifically call them out here and ask all of you to take the time to read through their inspiring citations to learn more about why they were selected.

The men and women we honor this year truly shone among their peers and are worthy of recognition and thanks. Whether driving DAV Transportation Network vehicles to get veterans to medical appointments, working in a VA hospital and spending time with patients, caring for families of departed veterans as

they are laid to rest, providing meaningful employment, assisting veterans and their families in securing earned benefits, or opening the doors to DAV membership and all it has to offer, our awardees have gone above and beyond, turning work into passion.

Thank you to all of this year's winners. Your generous spirits are shining examples of what it takes to lift

up injured and ill veterans in gratitude for their service, and I hope it helps inspire others to begin their own journeys to give back.



Learn More Online

Help us honor this year's award winners by viewing and sharing the DAV & Auxiliary Virtual Salute at dav.org/virtualsalute.

We've been so fortunate to have many members, volunteers, employees and even those outside our organization who choose to spend hours upon hours ... performing the **noble work that improves the lives of our nation's heroes.**



DAV's COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Fund

This grant helped my family tremendously. With a newborn in the home and loss of wages, DAV was there for me in a critical time of need. Thanks, DAV!
Dan Owen, Durham, N.C.

Agent Orange exposure along the Korean DMZ

The Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 recognizes that veterans from the Korean War who can show that they served on the Korean DMZ between 1967 and 1971 were exposed to Agent Orange. The VA and military minimize the exposure and extensive spraying program that went on. Almost every motor pool had an OD green barrel in the corner, with an orange stripe, with a hand pump attached. In the DMZ and elsewhere, it was mixed with diesel fuel and sprayed on the dirt roads to keep the dust down and weeds controlled. **Jim Ennis, via email, Clarksville, Md.**

'PTSD breakthrough' July/August DAV Magazine

My husband has PTSD from Operation Desert Storm. He has nightmares, panic attacks and anger outbursts! He went to therapy and was told he can deal with it. He got his disability cut and still sees a therapist, but he's handling it. I wish they could see how he still struggles.
Fran Bookwalter, Newark, Ohio

I have been pushing on the VA to learn more about MDMA. If it can keep a veteran happy for a day and keep them from committing suicide, I am all for it. **Mike Philip, via Facebook**

As for the new research on MDMA, I wager it will work better than

"trauma-focused psychotherapies," a perfect example of something the VA would rely on. Controversial drugs, yoga, meditation and natural healing through the passage of time—I hope some of it works for you, for all of you. You certainly deserve it. **Scott Hartley, via email**

Women Veterans Appreciation Day 2020

As a female veteran, I feel Veterans Day in November is enough to cover ALL of us who served. When I was serving, I never asked for a pass or special treatment. When I was assigned to my first permanent party unit as a private, I was the only female in my Launcher Dawg platoon and did not want to be different. **Christiana Allen-Thompson, Roanoke, Texas**

Best soldiers I ever encountered were usually women. Squared away and motivated. Thank you all! **Darryl Vintinner II, Augusta, Maine**

VA recognizes Juneteenth

It's so upsetting to see so many veterans going against each other because they have different opinions. We celebrate and/or recognize Vietnam veterans, women veterans, veterans who fought on D-Day, Gulf War veterans and our fallen. The one time DAV shares a post from the VA honoring all veterans who fought for freedom and equality and shares facts about why some celebrate

Juneteenth, people are upset. Some of these same people were upset when DAV recognized LGBT veterans [in June]. Thank you, DAV, for supporting and recognizing ALL veterans. **Heather Durant McEady, Columbia, S.C.**

FDA revokes emergency hydroxychloroquine approval over side effect concerns

DAV, with this new evidence coming out, will the VA recognize the harmful effects of having veterans taking these medications for a prolonged period of time during their service? Could veterans claim disability due to these side effects?
Lisa Hendrickson, Phoenix, Ariz.

Editor's note: Yes, a veteran can apply if they believe they have been made ill related to this or to any other exposure incurred in service. Visit benefitsquestions.org for no-cost claims assistance.

I spent 42 years with the Navy, 21 active and 21 as a civilian mariner. They made us take these pills every time we were deployed overseas.
Fely Higgins, Silverdale, Wash.

White House unveils roadmap to address veteran suicide

I suffer from chronic depression, and I never had to go through what these men and women did. My heart utterly breaks from them. God give them peace, please. **Janet Pullicin, St. Petersburg, Fla.**

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

Strength in numbers

A team of DAV service officers come together to assist Korean War Army veteran increase VA rating

By Matt Saintsing

The bitter, relentless Korean winter of 1951 never left Army veteran Robert Willett. In the nearly seven decades since returning home from the Korean War, he has continued to live with nerve damage from his wartime frostbite and hearing loss due to proximity to the thundering booms of 155 mm artillery cannons.

After facing combat on the shores of the peninsula at the end of January, he was part of an advanced group of soldiers heading north to scout a location for a headquarters. By the time they began their trek from the coastal city of Pusan, much of the country's infrastructure had been destroyed, obstructed or otherwise impassable.

"There were no roads or bridges. They were all gone," said Willett. "If you were crossing a river, you got wet one way or the other, and there was no real place to dry out at night."

After negotiating piercingly cold waters, frostbite took hold of his toes and feet.

"I couldn't feel anything there," he added. "It was enough to knock me out for a while."

Willett's tour in Korea wasn't the first time he had worn an Army uniform. While enrolled in college in his home state of Illinois, he and a friend enlisted in the summer of 1944 to serve in World War II, and at age 18, he was selected to attend officer candidate school.

Instructors told Willett they were beefing up officer ranks in preparation to invade the Japanese mainland. However, rumors of the war's end began to swirl, and within a few weeks, the U.S. was celebrating victory over Japan.



Left: Robert Willett is pictured at the Hwachcheon Dam in Korea in 1951.

Above: Despite receiving benefits for his cold-weather injuries in 2004, many other conditions went overlooked until DAV began helping Willett with his claim.

"I was 18 years old, and they were going to let me take 44 guys into combat," he said. "In retrospect, I thought that was probably not the best idea the Army had."

Candidates were offered a choice: serve two years after completing officer training or serve one year as an enlisted soldier, said Willett. He opted to take the latter, serving in postwar France, where he and six other soldiers guarded a chemical weapons depot and German prisoners of war.

When he returned home, Willett went to college but remained in the Army Reserve after learning soldiers received \$18 for drill weekends. He was just one course short of earning a college degree when he was activated to support the Korean War in 1950 and assigned to an artillery unit. In Korea, his primary duty was running communication wire to forward observers close to the front lines and subordinate battalions.

Willett received service connection for his cold-weather injuries in 2004, but other ailments had gone unchecked for decades. This year, he reached out to DAV hoping to increase his Department of Veterans Affairs disability rating.

Liza Perez and Jackie Graham, both DAV service officers in Bay Pines, Fla., submitted his claims for



Despite working in different states, benefits advocates (from left) Liza Perez, Jackie Graham and Michael Rhilinger advocated for Willett to ensure he received the VA compensation and Individual Unemployability he earned for injuries sustained during the Korean War.

hearing loss and ringing in his ears, both of which were approved this past spring.

“Jackie was looking to make sure I got all of the benefits I’m entitled to,” added Willett. “She was a jewel.”

But the VA overlooked one claim that would push his overall rating even higher.

“Somehow, the VA missed the Individual

Unemployability,” Graham said. “We reviewed his case and concluded that was a mistake.”

As the coronavirus outbreak intensified in the United States, much of daily life began to slow or, in some cases, grind to a halt. In May, Willett reached out to DAV via a temporary new hotline set up in the wake of the pandemic so that veterans can speak directly to service officers regarding claims assistance.

Michael Rhilinger, a DAV benefits advocate in Boston, picked up the line and was able to get Willett’s claim across the finish line.

“The fact that we’re working from home and DAV implemented the phone system, I was lucky enough to be next in the rotation when Mr. Willett called,” said Rhilinger. “After speaking to him, I put in a claim for individual unemployability and reached out to the VA to expedite it.”

In a matter of days, Willett received the Individual Unemployability benefit he’d earned. Rhilinger credits the lightning-fast approval to the fantastic working relationship between the VA and DAV.

The rating increase helped ease some financial pressure, and Willett—who has authored six books—wrote to his local newspaper in May praising DAV’s efforts.

“I have recently been helped by Disabled American Veterans (DAV) through several of the service offices, and the results have been remarkable,” he wrote in his letter to the editor published in Florida Today. “I know other veterans’ organizations have similar service officers available, but I have to take my hat off to those at DAV.” ■

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DAV’s new Spare Change program lets you round up your credit or debit card charges to the nearest dollar and donate the difference directly to DAV. Every time you swipe your card, you will give hope to disabled veterans.

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DAV Disabled American Veterans



Marine Corps veteran Tyler Main (left) and his partner, Molly Hampton, embark on a new chapter in their lives as they rebuild after a devastating loss. Their new dream home is a cabin in the woods of Arkansas.

Out of the ashes

Veteran who lost his home to a devastating fire finds comfort through DAV's Disaster Relief Program

By Mary Dever

After years of planning and saving, Marine Corps veteran Tyler Main and his partner, Molly Hampton, were ready to invest in their dream—a cabin in the woods near Main's hometown in Arkansas. Everything was set, all the boxes packed and utilities canceled, for the couple to leave Maryland and start their next chapter on 10 acres in America's heartland.

Unfortunately, life had other plans. Just days before the move, Main and Hampton were saying goodbye to friends when their neighbor called. A fire had started in the couple's second-floor apartment.

"We were only away from the apartment for maybe 40 minutes when we got a call from our neighbor who said that the fire department busted in our door,

saved our dog and evacuated our building," said Main. "We didn't know what to expect, so we drove home in a panic."

According to the fire department, the fire started in the kitchen, where most of Main and Hampton's belongings were stored in boxes, waiting for moving day. The sprinkler system was activated and the fire department used a hose to put out the flames, resulting in extensive water damage to Main's apartment and several adjacent units.

In preparation for the move, the couple had already canceled their renters insurance policy. Without that protection in place, they faced a devastating financial blow.

"We lost a lot of our stuff, and then we found out we might have a very, very large bill on top of it. It was really scary; it was really stressful," Main recalled.

After some of the immediate shock wore off, Main told the story to his friends and family on social media, letting them know he and Hampton were physically unharmed and thanking them for their love and support.

“I saw Tyler’s post about the fire in his apartment, and I immediately thought of DAV’s Disaster Relief Program,” said Assistant National Communications Director Todd Hunter—a fellow Marine who had also experienced a fire that devastated his home. “You feel so helpless at times like this. I wanted Tyler and Molly to know they weren’t alone.”

Hunter got Main in touch with Assistant National Service Director Scott Trimarchi, who oversees the DAV Disaster Relief Program.

When devastation strikes—from large-scale disasters to isolated incidents—the program provides support through financial assistance as well as supply kits to veterans and their families so they can obtain basic necessities such as food, warm clothes and shelter.

“Todd reached out to me and let me know about the fire at Tyler’s apartment and asked if we could help,” said Trimarchi. “I spoke with Tyler, got the necessary documentation, and we were able to offer him some assistance in the aftermath of their devastating loss.”

Since the program’s inception in 1968, more than \$13 million has been disbursed to qualified applicants who were victims of disaster. In the past five years alone, DAV has awarded 9,671 grants totaling nearly \$3.7 million.

“[The grant] has been a huge help, and I was super excited to have an opportunity to receive this support during this time of turmoil and a lot of stress,” said Main. “It all basically came from Todd reaching out to me and asking if the DAV could help me. I didn’t even have to ask.”

“When you see a friend facing tragedy, all you can think about is ‘how can I help?’” Hunter said. “I was happy there was this small thing I could do for a fellow Marine in his time of need, because that’s what DAV is about—veterans looking out for veterans.”

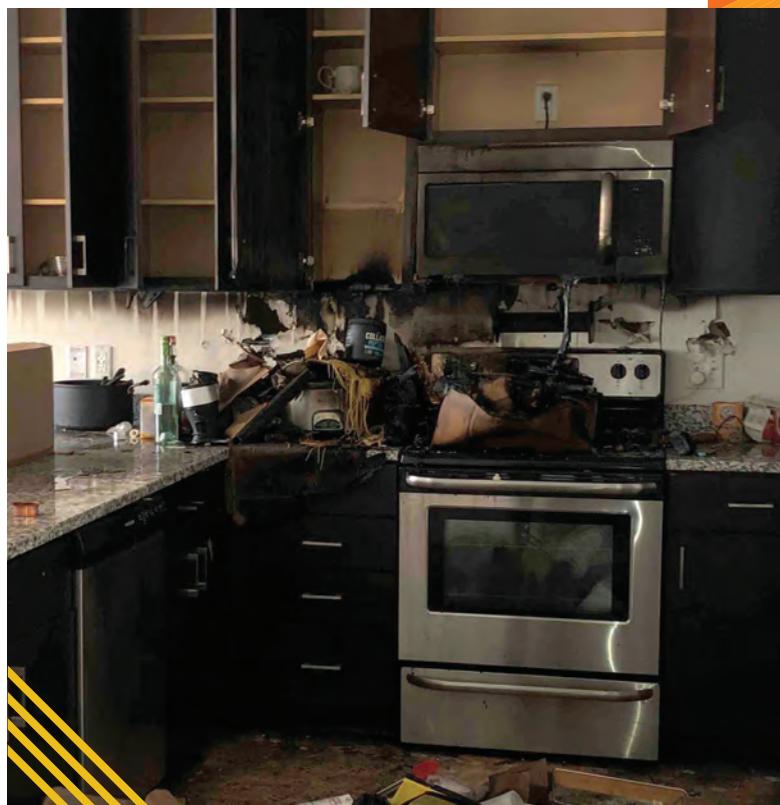
Main said this experience has opened his eyes to the camaraderie and generosity of those around him, and it allowed him to see that the connections he’s

made through his time in service are invaluable.

“It’s not always just the dollar amount or whatever’s being given to you; it’s just knowing that you’re not alone in the turmoil or in the grief of a situation,” said Main. “I think that’s the biggest takeaway from this: When you go through things, there are other people there to share the burden. It was awesome that DAV found a way to be a part of that.”

While Main and Hampton still don’t know the results of the fire department’s investigation, or if or how much they’ll have to pay, Main said they’re taking things one day at a time and trying their hardest to continue living for the future. They still made it to Arkansas.

“I found this awesome cabin on 10 acres in the woods,” Main said. “It’s a dream, literally a dream of mine to own this here. So despite a lot of bad news that has happened, there’s still some good news.” ■



On June 3, a fire started in the kitchen of Main and Hampton’s Maryland apartment. The destruction was extensive, with adjacent units being affected by the water used to put out the flames.



UNSHAKABLE COMMUNITY

Army veteran Angel Quiñones assesses the damage of a home in Yauco, Puerto Rico, with a local official.

DAV Department of Puerto Rico springs into action to assist veterans after powerful earthquakes rock the island

By Matt Saintsing

Carlos Perez-Cabrera was at a concert with his 5-year-old grandson when the ground beneath Ponce, Puerto Rico, began to lightly rumble. But that earthquake—gentle enough not to cause any injuries or damage—pales in comparison to the mighty 6.4-magnitude tremor that struck the following morning.

The Jan. 7 temblor, which caused parts of city hall to come tumbling down, was the latest quake in a string of intense tectonic shifts felt throughout the island. It left hundreds of homes in ruins and displaced thousands. In addition to Ponce, four other towns—Guánica, Guayanilla, Peñuelas and Yauco—endured some of the worst destruction.

“Most of the southwest area of the island was damaged,” said Perez-Cabrera, commander of the

Department of Puerto Rico. “In Ponce, more than 150 houses were destroyed.”

Gov. Wanda Vázquez Garced issued a state of emergency and activated the National Guard to assist in recovery efforts as most Puerto Rico homes lost power.

While the tragic events wreaked havoc on countless citizens, DAV members and officials across the island mobilized to help hundreds of affected veterans mere hours after the quake.

Angel Quiñones, treasurer of Chapter 4 in Ponce, was sitting at home with his wife in Yauco when the “big one” hit. Dozens of houses were damaged, including his, but that didn’t stop him from quickly organizing to bring 90 other residents to a nearby abandoned school, which became one of five makeshift camps for earthquake victims seeking refuge.

In addition to shepherding his neighbors to safety, Quiñones began coordinating efforts with other DAV chapters across the island to distribute canned food, personal hygiene items and other supplies.

“DAV chapters were always calling, asking if anybody needed anything and making sure we were safe,” he said. “It was incredible work.”

To help assess and track veterans in need, Perez-Cabrera and Department Adjutant Delvis Collazo-Rivera

traveled around the southwestern area visiting the various temporary camps. Unable to take the main roads, the duo split up to cover more ground. However, a few days after the Ponce earthquake, another hit.

“Carlos said he had to call me back because the ground was shaking,” Collazo-Rivera said of Perez-Cabrera, who luckily was not harmed. “When he did, he told me his car jumped from one lane to another.”

Collazo-Rivera continued to survey the camps, identifying veterans who needed assistance.

“We made a list of veterans who were there because we wanted to help them with DAV funds,” added Collazo-Rivera.

Those funds included more than 150 disaster relief vouchers for veterans and their families who lost their homes, said DAV Service Officer Alex Martinez.

“The way national headquarters, the Department of Puerto Rico and the chapters came together to assist needy veterans and their families in the southeast area is an example of DAV’s human spirit,” said Martinez. “Individuals at the camps were uplifted despite the traumatizing events that occurred.”

But help didn’t stop there.

Perez-Cabrera, Collazo-Rivera and others shared data with Department of Veterans Affairs officials in Puerto Rico, who deployed a VA team to evaluate and provide lifesaving services to veterans in the areas affected by the earthquakes. As hundreds received care, Carlos Escobar, director of the VA Caribbean Healthcare System in San Juan, wrote to Collazo-Rivera, thanking him for DAV’s rapid response in assisting ill and injured veterans.

“More than 370 persons were impacted by the missions,” the letter says. “Services provided included health screenings, mental health counseling, and medication refills, among others.”

“The way national headquarters, the Department of Puerto Rico and the chapters **came together to assist needy veterans and their families** in the southeast area is an example of DAV’s human spirit.”

—Alex Martinez, national service officer



Left: DAV service officer Alex Martinez assists a veteran at a temporary camp established after powerful earthquakes strike the island. **Right:** DAV Department of Puerto Rico Adjutant Delvis Collazo-Rivera and Commander Carlos Perez-Cabrera present a veteran with a DAV coin.

While hundreds of lives were helped and changed in the course of DAV springing into action, earthquakes continue to persist across the island and some areas are still recovering.

The city center in Guánica is completely shut down, said Perez-Cabrera. And the historic Iglesia Inmaculada Concepción—the Catholic church built in 1841 in Guayanilla—remains in ruins.

Perez said he wouldn’t forget the destruction anytime soon.

“It’s heartbreaking to see a nice two-story house crumble to the ground,” he said. “It hurts you because you see somebody spent their retirement money to make a nice house, and then in 10 seconds, it’s not there anymore.

“It’s certainly not easy.” ■

Giving back, one purchase at a time

Veterans Canteen Service offers food and merchandise for the convenience of disabled veterans while supporting veteran programs

By Mary Dever

When you're at a Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility and a cup of coffee is calling your name, you're likely going to find what you're looking for—and then some—at one of the more than 200 Veterans Canteen Service (VCS) stores located across the country. For 74 years, VCS has provided retail and food services to veterans enrolled in the VA health care system, as well as their caregivers and visitors. Similar to the post exchange on most military bases, all purchases are tax-free. There are no user fees associated with these benefits.

Although a part of the VA, VCS is self-sustaining, meaning it receives no annual appropriations. This allows them to operate their Give Back program, which uses money from each purchase to sponsor veterans programs such as homelessness initiatives, voluntary services and rehabilitation events. In the past, these events included those co-presented by DAV and the VA, such as the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic and the National Disabled Veterans TEE (Training, Exposure, Experience) Tournament.

“When veterans shop with VCS, they can take pride in knowing they, too, will have contributed to enhancing the quality of life for their fellow veterans and those who provide for their care,” said VCS Director Ray Tober.

At the 2018 TEE Tournament, VCS donated accessible golf carts that provided hand controls and swivel seats to accommodate golfers with disabilities.

According to Tober, the relationship between veterans service organizations and VCS is an integral one.



Top: A veteran orders food at the Lake Nona Patriot Cafe inside the Orlando VA Medical Center. The Patriot Cafe—part of the VCS system—serves hot and cold entrees, snacks and beverages. **Bottom:** VCS Director Ray Tober (center) helped deliver adaptive golf carts to participants at the National Disabled Veterans TEE Tournament in Iowa. VCS was able to purchase the equipment with help from its Give Back program.

“These relationships serve to enhance an understanding of VCS’ mission and the role [veterans service organizations] can play in helping to give back to our veterans and support VA programs,” he said. “We’d like to facilitate greater interaction and engagement with DAV-affiliated veterans, ensuring they take advantage of the benefits provided by VCS. Enhancing our communication and interaction, with local affiliates especially, can be a win-win for us all.”

“We know that our members and our volunteers spend a lot of their time at the VA, and most of us probably pop into a Veterans Canteen Service shop for a quick snack or to peruse the merchandise,” said National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. “But what we want them to realize is every purchase made goes right back to veteran service programs. We are thankful for the support Veterans Canteen Service has shown at adaptive sporting events and through voluntary services.” ■

From the NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR JOY J. ILEM



Get out and vote

We're getting close to election season, the time to exercise our right to vote—our most precious right granted by the U.S. Constitution. Throughout our history, men and women have suffered and died to protect this right. While DAV is a nonpartisan organization, we strongly encourage our members and their families to vote for the candidates of their choice as expressions of our freedom as responsible citizens.

Candidates for office—from local governments to the office of the president of the United States of America—should be aware that the votes of DAV members and those who support us cannot be taken for granted. Debates, town hall meetings and other election-season events provide valuable opportunities to reach and educate elected officials and candidates for office about the veterans issues that are most important to us.

However, it's important to remember that, in accordance with the DAV National Constitution and Bylaws, DAV cannot endorse or oppose any particular party or candidate for office. When speaking as a DAV member or leader, be sure to separate your personal opinion from the organization and not indicate your support or opposition to any particular party or candidate. Please review the comprehensive list of election do's and don'ts and watch an informative video at dav.org/veterans/resources/election-year-dos-and-donts.

This year, in order to help presidential and congressional candidates and current lawmakers understand the critical challenges facing the veteran community, DAV launched its Vision for Veterans legislative priorities campaign. The initiative establishes seven priorities that reflect both the most urgent needs of veterans and the issues that will have serious, long-lasting impacts on those who served.

The Vision for Veterans offers a roadmap for every candidate seeking federal office, and all those currently in office, to help guide their decision-making process with the best interest of our nation's heroes in mind. Please read and share the Vision for Veterans at dav.la/117.

We encourage you to be active in the political process and help to ensure candidates are well informed about the sacrifices veterans and their families have made in service to our country. But it's also your duty when speaking on behalf of the organization (which includes speaking while wearing a hat or clothing with the DAV logo) to avoid even the appearance of favoring or opposing a particular candidate or party. During this and every campaign season, DAV members should be focused on achieving our key goal—ensuring lawmakers keep their promises to those who have served.

In the months ahead, I urge you to stay informed, stay engaged and exercise your right to vote. Sign up through davcan.org for important updates and stand ready to take action.

Where they stand

As Election Day approaches, see how the 2020 presidential candidates view the issues most important to you



Trump



Biden

EDITOR'S NOTE

DAV—which is a nonpartisan organization—believes its members deserve to know where incumbent President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, stand on key veterans issues ahead of the general election Nov. 3. DAV asked both candidates to discuss specific policies they would propose regarding particular issues. Their responses are presented below as a way for our members to compare the candidates' positions on issues affecting America's veterans and their families. Responses have been edited for space, with full responses available online at www.dav.org/learn-more/news/2020/where-they-stand. The cooperation of both candidates and their campaign staffs is greatly appreciated.

DAV: *What would be your top priorities as president next year to address the many challenges facing veterans, particularly those who have become injured or ill as a result of their service?*

Trump: From day one, my administration has been on a mission of historic scope and scale to deliver results for our great veterans. After years of shameful scandal and neglect under the Obama-Biden administration, we have fundamentally reorganized the VA from top to bottom and reestablished a crucial principle: American veterans deserve the highest standard of care anywhere in the world, and that's what they're getting.

The number of veterans who say they trust VA services has increased 19% under this administration, the highest in the history of service. That's a tremendous increase, but there's more work to do.

In addition to our bold actions that reformed the VA, established permanent veteran choice, and hold bad VA employees accountable, we are committed to ending the tragedy of veteran suicide which demands audacious action at every level of society.

Twenty veterans and service members take their own lives every single day. They fought our battles overseas, and now we must join them in winning this

new battle at home. We're expanding our partnerships with military and veteran organizations, universities, faith-based leaders, businesses, nonprofits at all levels of government to establish specialized support systems for our veterans.

These partnerships will allow veterans flexibility in their care and treatment. We know that some veterans want to go to the VA and some don't—by empowering civil society groups already doing impactful work, we will bridge that deadly gap.

The President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End the National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) task force has already partnered with 30 large corporations to help them prioritize the mental health of their employees, and we will continue adding to that number.

We're also launching a national research strategy. The PREVENTS Office will work with the greatest scientific minds across our nation to evaluate research to better understand the trauma service members face; identify effective treatments; and communicate their findings to the public.

My administration is marshaling every resource to improve VA health care, evaluate and address emerging critical issues like toxic exposure, and stop the crisis of veteran suicide.



No one is more committed to protecting our nation's most treasured heroes and keeping faith with them than my administration and me.

To see the full list of our accomplishments for our great veterans, I encourage you to visit promiseskept.com/achievement/overview/veterans.

Biden: While in the Senate, I fought to improve prosthetics programs for our wounded veterans, expand mammogram coverage for our female veterans, and advocate for Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and other toxins to have access to the care and benefits they deserve. Then, during the Obama-Biden administration, we led efforts to expand coverage for exposure to Agent Orange, cut veteran unemployment by half and reduced veteran homelessness by almost 50%. We cut the VA claims backlog by nearly 90% in just over three years, increased funding for veterans mental health by more than 70%, and saw the number of veterans accessing mental health services through the VA increase by 80%.

But more needs to be done. My priorities going forward are:

- **Providing Veterans World-Class Health Care to Meet Their Specific Needs:** In a Biden administration, ALL veterans will receive the care they have earned, and I will ensure that providers in VA facilities and community care settings are prepared and equipped to provide high-quality, culturally competent care to women veterans and LGBTQ veterans.
- **Driving Progress to Eliminate Veterans' Homelessness and Bring Down Suicide Rates:** Within my first 200 days in office, I will publish a plan to improve access to care, lower veteran homelessness and bring down the rate of veteran suicides.
- **Creating Meaningful Employment and Educational Opportunities:** I will focus on creating tangible economic opportunities for veterans and their families by strengthening the Transition Assistance Program, improving access to job training and ensuring proper implementation of the Forever GI Bill.
- **Improving VA Management and Accountability:** Outdated tools and management processes have hindered the VA's ability to fulfill its mission to our

veterans. A Biden administration will increase the VA's capacity and oversee a generational upgrade of systems, using best practices and modern technology.

- **Addressing the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic:** COVID-19 has exposed critical weaknesses in the VA health care system. I will ensure that our veterans have access to COVID-19 tests and that our VA health care workers have the necessary [personal protective equipment] to administer care to our veterans safely.

DAV: *What is your vision for strengthening veterans health care and the VA health care system over the next decade, particularly in light of the national health emergency we are currently experiencing?*

Trump: The VA played an absolutely pivotal role in responding to this pandemic, and we want it to be strong and capable. Unfortunately, much of the VA's infrastructure was built decades ago and it doesn't capture the current laydown of where veterans are in the nation.

This is why the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission is critical. My administration remains focused on reducing waste, cutting bureaucracy and streamlining access. We must ensure our incredible resources are brought to bear where they are needed most, understanding that reallocation of resources does not mean a reduction of care for those who need and deserve it.

Tragically, the share of our population with military experience is declining and the veteran population is decreasing as our older generation of veterans enter their twilight years. We have the dignified responsibility to care for them and be agile for the future and ensure the VA is where it needs to be.

This is why community care is imperative and has been a cornerstone of our approach to veteran care and veteran choice. Our veterans in rural areas and away from VA hospitals have not been forgotten, and we recognize they must have ready access to quality care that does not burden them.

Our dramatic expansion of VA telehealth early in my presidency established a growing solution, proved its efficacy and served us well during the pandemic. This service significantly expanded access to care and simplified patient access.

Satisfaction with the VA outpatient care has reached 89%, and we're not going to rest until we have it at 100%. We will continue to build on our success, and by the end of this fiscal year, all primary care and mental health providers will be able to deliver care to patients, both in-person and via a mobile web-based device.

Biden: More than 85% of the VA's discretionary budget goes to health care. As president, I will fight for the budget resources that the VA needs to fund safe, effective health care for our veterans. I will also make sure that VA leadership knows that they will be accountable to the American people, to veterans and to me. This starts by making sure that we have a VA management team that understands and delivers on our veterans' policy priorities. When I am president, the measure of our success will be veterans in their local communities seeing and feeling on-the-ground services that meet or exceed the highest professional health care standards.

The VA's most valuable asset is its people. I promise to invest in the people and systems that provide VA services—about 250,000 of which are union members and over 100,000 of whom are veterans themselves. It is essential that we also complete a comprehensive and timely assessment of staffing to ensure that we are incentivizing, recruiting and retaining talented health care professionals. With this assessment in hand, we will be able to build new and innovative programs to attract the staff we need to provide the highest quality care possible.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown how much we depend on the VA to have the capacity to deliver care under challenging conditions. I will always ensure that our VA employees and patients have the necessary personal protective equipment to provide safe services and care.

Undoubtedly, the VA capacity for direct care has been weakened over the past several years as the current administration has worked to aggressively outsource health care services. I will find the right balance between care delivered in the VA system and the convenience of accessing care in our communities closer to home.

DAV: *What is your vision for ensuring veterans receive all the benefits they have earned, including those based on exposure to Agent Orange, burn pits and other toxic substances?*

Trump: All veterans who are injured because of their service merit our nation's honor and care. We are looking carefully at multiple legislative proposals surrounding toxic exposures to ensure the solutions are guided by science and in the best interest of our impacted veterans. Just as we have examined other veteran issues and attacked them with vigor and dedication, we are doing the same here.

We do not want and will not have another Agent Orange scenario where our wonderful Vietnam veterans suffered for years without options or recourse. My administration has never abandoned our veterans and I don't intend to on this important issue. We've made a promise to the men and women who have courageously fought for our nation and we will keep it.

Biden: For decades, I have supported concurrent retirement and disability pay, and a Biden administration will expand the list of presumptive conditions to make sure that veterans who experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or were exposed to burn pits or other toxins are able to access care. I will also increase research funding for burn pit exposure and TBIs.

We simply cannot experience another Agent Orange-like crisis. We cannot ask veterans who have been exposed to toxic substances in the line of duty to wait for vital health care. Veterans deserve better.

Veterans seeking treatment for conditions related to toxic exposures have encountered far too many barriers to care, despite legislation designed to ease these challenges in the past several years. The Caregiver Support Program has suffered the same fate: a clear legislative requirement but a flawed implementation by the VA. These programs have lacked the leadership, transparency and necessary collaboration with VSOs to get the job done. In a Biden administration, I will ensure that VA leadership is open, inclusive and focused on delivering concrete results in these critical areas. ★



Find out more about the candidates' responses to our questions regarding DAV's legislative priorities at www.dav.org/learn-more/news/2020/where-they-stand.

TOP MARKS

Charitable Service Trust receives perfect score from Charity Navigator, Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar

By M. Todd Hunter

DAV's Charitable Service Trust received a perfect score from Charity Navigator for "sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency" in 2019, marking the 15th time the Trust has received the coveted 4-star rating from America's largest independent charity evaluator since first being evaluated in 2002.

The Trust uses more than 95 cents out of every donated dollar to support physical and psychological rehabilitation programs that provide direct services to disabled veterans. Programs supported by the Trust typically include providing food, shelter and other necessary items to homeless or at-risk veterans; accessibility or mobility items for veterans with vision or hearing impairments; therapeutic activities; and other forms of services for veterans, caregivers and their families.

"Attaining a 4-star rating verifies that DAV Charitable Service Trust exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in your area of work," Charity Navigator President and CEO Michael Thatcher wrote in a letter commending the Trust for its efficient, open and ethical stewardship. "Only 14% of the charities we evaluate have received at least five consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that DAV Charitable Service Trust outperforms most other charities in America. This exceptional designation from Charity Navigator sets DAV Charitable Service Trust apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness."

"We are truly honored by this distinction," said Trust President Richard E. Marbes. "What makes this

"DAV Charitable Service Trust outperforms most other charities in America."

*—Michael Thatcher,
Charity Navigator President and CEO*

achievement so remarkable is that the Trust scored a perfect 100 points on a comprehensive scorecard tracking financial strength and transparency, as

well as charitable impact. I am humbled to lead an organization that is at the pinnacle of veterans charities."

The Trust also earned GuideStar's 2020 Platinum Seal of Transparency—the highest level of recognition offered by the company. This recognition allows the Trust to share its

information with more than 200 philanthropic websites and applications powered by GuideStar data, such as AmazonSmile, Facebook and Network for Good.

"We have a long-held belief in being transparent about our work, and this recognition will allow the Trust to easily share a wealth of up-to-date organizational metrics with our supporters, as well as GuideStar's immense online audience of 13 million people, which include donors, grant-makers, our peers and the media," said Marbes. ■

 [Learn More Online](#)

To learn more about DAV's Charitable Service Trust, go to cst.dav.org.





JUDGE ROBERT S. MARX

The enduring story of DAV

By Tom Jenkins

Above left: Judge Robert S. Marx founded the Disabled American Veterans of the World War in Cincinnati in 1920. **Above right:** The organization's first national convention was held at Detroit's Tuller Hotel in 1921. Marx (right) was elected by delegates to serve as the first national commander. Featured in the photo is future U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt (third from left), then an attorney in New York. **Right:** Marx during his service in World War I, 1917.



In 1919, Marine veteran Albert Rindsberg was staying at the Harrison Club hotel in Cincinnati when he wandered into a heated conversation. A group of veterans were talking about how little was being done for disabled veterans in America. Rindsberg had been discharged the previous year—changed through his service in World War I—so the conversation caught his interest.

The Great War had ended, and although a sense of victory and patriotism should have swept the nation, those feelings were overshadowed by a global influenza pandemic and a brutal postwar economy. Over 200,000 American injured servicemen returned home to a country that was not prepared to help them, resulting in thousands of veterans without jobs or proper medical care.

As Rindsberg listened, he was enthralled by the charismatic and thought-provoking points made by

a fellow disabled veteran. That young man, Robert S. Marx, was the newly elected judge for the Cincinnati Superior Court.

That meeting would plant the seed for what would become Disabled American Veterans of the World War, and alongside Marx, Rindsberg would go on to become a founding member.

“We had a common experience which bound us together,” Marx said about his idea to form a group to protect the interests of disabled veterans. “And we ought to continue through an organization of our own—an organization of us, by us and for us.”

“The issues that disabled veterans were facing then are not entirely dissimilar from those which they face today,” said National Commander Butch Whitehead. “The difference, of course,

was that the resources available to them were far fewer. This is what Judge Marx set out to change.”

Marx had spent the better part of two years in combat tending to the needs of his men, often in dismal conditions and through unrelenting

hardship. His own experiences and injuries during the war helped him develop a deep commitment to the care of his fellow soldiers and ultimately his fellow veterans.

In 1918, on a long and winding road from the regimental headquarters to Baàlon, France, Marx and his battalion came across several German prisoners being escorted behind the lines. He questioned them as he and his men were approaching unknown territory as part of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

“I could get little information out of them except that the Germans had retreated during the night and occupied the hill behind Baàlon and not the town itself,” Marx documented.

The hill overlooked the town, which could not be entered and occupied until Marx and his men had driven the Germans off the ridge. From atop the hill, German forces rained fire down upon Marx and his battalion as they tucked away in the brush and tall grass.

Marx knew that he had to take the village. He ordered part of the battalion to lay down fire as he would lead the rest of the unit, low-crawling to the town.

“The barrage was intense, and the shells began to drop with alarming accuracy near our battalion group,” Marx recorded in his account. “It seemed to us as if the range was lengthening, so we continued to advance. Then a shell struck almost in our midst. I did not hear it coming, and I seemed to be hit before I knew it or heard the noise. I only knew that I was hit in the head.”

According to his men, before slipping out of consciousness, Marx urged them on, repeating the words, “Give ‘em hell.”

One of the men in Marx’s battalion crawled over to Marx and shouted over the gunfire, asking if he could walk. Marx awoke and helped lay down fire and direct his troops for as long as he could.

Ten minutes later, stretcher bearers in gas masks picked him up. As they carried him to safety and he faded in and out of

consciousness, he saw shells sweeping the area.

“The number of gas shells used was so large that the stretcher bearers had to put my gas mask on in spite of all my head wounds,” Marx later said. “I did not suffer so much, but that I could not help marveling even in that state, at the courage of the men who persisted in carrying me back three long kilometers without regard to the peril or danger to them.”

That day was Nov. 10, and doctors would begin surgery on Marx around midnight. “I hovered between life and death in this hospital,” Marx recounted, unaware that the following morning, the Allies and German forces would sign the armistice, ending the war.

“In the morning, the surgeon, Captain J.P. Wall, answered my first question,” Marx recalled in his writings. “I wanted to know how soon I could rejoin my outfit. He said, ‘I guess there is no hurry, boy, the war is all over.’”

“When we say ‘**keeping promises,**’ it harkens back to Judge Marx and the ideas our founders espoused. The idea is that **our nation makes a promise to make whole the veterans who are changed** as a result of military service.”

—Marc Burgess, DAV national adjutant

The so-called “war to end all wars,” even in its last hours, had proved deadly for many—2,738 men perished in that final day, right up until the bugle call sounded the start of the armistice. Historians estimate another 8,100 more were wounded or went missing, adding to the millions of casualties suffered during the course of the four-year conflict.

By all accounts, Marx was a hero; he received the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation’s second highest honor for valor, for his actions. But he still came home and faced the same reality as every other disabled veteran—the nation was not prepared to provide them the care and support they needed in the aftermath of the war.

When Marx returned home to Cincinnati, he was quickly elected the youngest judge to the Cincinnati Superior Court. He would also go on to have a storied law career as a skilled trial attorney as well as teach at his alma mater, the University of Cincinnati Law School. (Its library would eventually bear his name.) He even created a course, simply called “Facts,” that went on to be taught at law universities around the country.

With everything Marx had done for his country, his community and his professional field, it never would come close to the lasting effect he would have on millions of Americans for the next 100 years.

On that Christmas Day in 1919, when Marx gathered a group of disabled veterans together for dinner and camaraderie, he may not have realized the full magnitude of what he was setting in motion. But it was to be a pivotal moment for generations to come.

Marx spent the remainder of his life in the pursuit of justice—both for veterans and his fellow Americans. A friend and adviser to Franklin D. Roosevelt, he gave voice to those who could not speak up for themselves.

“When we say ‘keeping promises,’ it harkens back to Judge Marx and the ideas our founders espoused. The idea is that our nation makes a promise to make whole the veterans who are changed as a result of



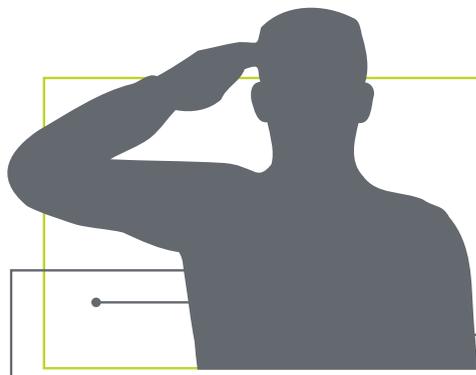
DAV founder and disabled World War I veteran Judge Robert Marx (front row, fourth from left) at the second national convention of the Disabled American Veterans of the World War, held in San Francisco in 1922.

military service,” said Marc Burgess, DAV national adjutant. “It’s a unique social contract. It’s why, when we talk about veterans care and benefits, we say they are earned. They are part of a sacred promise.

“We think Judge Marx would be proud of the organization he and his fellow veterans started. He’d appreciate how inclusive we are and the progress we’ve made over these many years,” Burgess continued. “Even now, 60 years after his death, his legacy lives on to help veterans of all generations get the health care, education and disability benefits they earned.”

With more than 1 million members currently filling the ranks of the organization Marx created a century ago, DAV continues to help the men and women who have served our country, as well as their families—all in the footsteps of the man who believed to his core in the cause of caring for the nation’s veterans. ■

As part of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), a “Review of World War I Valor Medals” initiative provides a pathway for medals, including the Navy Cross, Distinguished Service Cross and Air Force Cross, to be upgraded to the Medal of Honor. The program includes review of the service records of African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Jewish American, and Native American war veterans. DAV has worked with the Department of the Army to submit an application for past National Commander Robert Marx’s Distinguished Service Cross to be considered for an upgrade to the Medal of Honor. The results of the application will be available by 2023.



VIRTUAL SALUTE

DAV honors annual awardees in online event

By M. Todd Hunter

When World War II forced the cancellation of the 1942 DAV National Convention, our organization pushed forward without any trace of the event's significant footprint, as the nation focused on the fight ahead. Nearly 80 years later, as the COVID-19 pandemic halted this year's convention in Dallas, leadership saw the opportunity to leverage modern technology for an organizational first.

In late August, DAV hosted a special virtual gathering on its website to update members on the organization's accomplishments throughout the past year and recognize various National Commander's Award recipients for their dedication to America's disabled veterans.

"Though we can't be together in person, we wanted to properly recognize those that fuel and inspire our mission," said National Commander Butch Whitehead.

The event was broken into two parts. The first featured remarks from Whitehead, Auxiliary National Commander Diane Franz and National Adjutant Marc Burgess, who issued his annual report in the DAV 2019–2020 Year in Review video.

DAV also paid tribute to Army veteran Adam Greathouse, who was named DAV's 2020 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year for his work on behalf of his fellow veterans in the wake of a his injuries.

While deployed to Kosovo in 2001, Greathouse

suffered a chemical burn in his lungs that led to the removal of one of his lungs, a traumatic brain injury and a two-month-long coma. After struggling with suicidal thoughts and alcohol abuse for a decade, he once again found purpose through DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. Since 2015, he's volunteered more than 5,100 hours through DAV and served as a peer mentor at his local VA medical center.

The online event also featured the Outstanding DAV Auxiliary Member of the Year, Clyrissa Brown of Unit 44 in North Augusta, S.C., and special messages from Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie, actor and longtime DAV supporter Gary Sinise and famed Hollywood actor, director and military adviser Dale Dye.

The second part of the Virtual Salute focused on the recipients of the National Commander's Awards. The award winners are celebrated on the pages that follow.

"We look forward to honoring such incredible volunteers and advocates at our national convention every year, because their unwavering dedication to our nation's disabled veterans deserves recognition," said Burgess. "We all recognize and accept that it couldn't be done by traditional means this year, but that doesn't mean it couldn't be done. The people and companies we honored serve veterans because it's the right thing to do. But the least we can do is offer our thanks and appreciation."





Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year

DAV life member and retired Army veteran **Adam Greathouse**, of Huntington, W.Va., enlisted in 1999 and joined the 3rd Infantry Division, 1-41 Field Artillery unit. While Greathouse was deployed to Kosovo in 2001, he suffered a chemical burn that damaged his lungs. He was medically evacuated to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center with unstable vital signs and went into acute respiratory distress, suffering a traumatic brain injury from lack of oxygen. Greathouse—not expected to survive his injuries—went into a coma and woke up two months later 100 pounds lighter and missing one of his lungs. He fell into depression after being mentally and physically broken. Greathouse pulled through, however, and found new purpose through adaptive sports, like those offered at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Colorado. He has touched the lives of many veterans as a DAV volunteer, giving thousands of volunteer hours as a peer mentor at the Hershel “Woody” Williams VA Medical Center in Huntington. He has also spoken to over 1,700 veterans and Department of Veterans Affairs staff members, providing valuable insight into what disabled veterans experience in their recovery.

Outstanding Auxiliary Member of the Year



Clyrissa Brown, of DAV Auxiliary Unit 44 of North Augusta, S.C., was named the 2020 Outstanding Auxiliary Member of the Year. Brown is a dedicated DAV and Auxiliary volunteer with more than 750 hours, leading numerous programs to aid local veterans, including monthly social events, baby showers and caregiver support lectures at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center in Augusta, Ga. She has also donated and helped facilitate the donation of many magazines, books, household items and clothes to local hospitals for homeless veterans.

George H. Seal Memorial Trophy

Presented for exemplary service through the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) Program



Eugene Onofrio, a DAV life member of Chapter 15 in Milford, Conn., was recognized as **DAV's top volunteer**. Onofrio has donated more than 15,000 hours of his time to serving veterans and sets an example to other volunteers with his willingness to step in anytime he is needed. Over the last 26 years, he has volunteered in the director's office, in recreation therapy, for the chaplain, in voluntary service, and in acquisition and material management at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, Conn.



Army veteran **Gretchen Davies**, who is a member of Unit 19 in Milwaukee, received the **Auxiliary's top volunteer** award. Over the last eight years, Davies has volunteered nearly 4,000 hours, including work with the DAV Transportation Network office, nursing duties, voluntary services and escorting patients. While she was working full time, Davies was an active volunteer, helping out at assisted-living facilities and walking dogs at The Humane Society. Davies also assists the VA's chief at the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee with special projects and serves as a knowledgeable and reliable volunteer who motivates those with whom she interacts.

Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship



Each year—with the continued support of the Ford Motor Company Fund—DAV honors youth volunteers with scholarships for higher education in recognition and appreciation of their voluntary service to America's heroes. This year's top recipient is **Tanner Johnson**, of Cheyenne, Wyo. Johnson earned the **\$20,000 scholarship** for donating more than 1,400 hours spanning a two-year period volunteering at the Cheyenne VA Medical Center. Johnson, who has volunteered since he was 10 years old, always has a positive attitude, and the veterans enjoy his sense of humor.

2020 Scholarship Recipients

Tanner Johnson , Wyoming	\$20,000
Daniel Finney , South Carolina	\$15,000
Will Johniken , Texas	\$10,000
Brooke Lynn Jackowski , Pennsylvania	\$7,500
Myriah Calder , New Mexico	\$7,500
Luke Lilly , West Virginia	\$5,000
Bhavika Sethi , New York	\$5,000
Jean You , Pennsylvania	\$5,000

Membership Recruitment Awards

Top Recruiter of the Year: **Keith Pelusi**, from DAV Chapter 57 in Dallas, enlisted 102 new DAV members.

Top NSO Recruiter of the Year: DAV's top recruiter from the NSO ranks was **Carlo Melone** of DAV's Chicago National Service Office, who remarkably recruited 316 veterans to join our ranks.



Melone

Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright Award

Awarded to the DAV department with the largest increase in new members

Department Commander Keith Newell and Adjutant Michael Elmore grew the **Department of Missouri** by 964 new members.

Judge Robert S. Marx Award

Awarded to the DAV department with the highest percent increase of fully paid life members

The **Department of Minnesota**, led by Department Commander Scott Berndt and Adjutant Trent Dilks, represented National Commander Whitehead's home state well by increasing the number of fully paid life members by more than 100%.

Local Veterans Assistance Program Awards

In recognition of leading volunteer efforts to serve the interests of veterans and their families

Division I: The **Department of Virginia** received top honors for Division I, under the leadership of Commander John Simmons and Adjutant Robert Cox, with an impressive total of 397,847 volunteer hours.

Division II: Through the leadership of Commander Jerietta Halford-Pandos and Adjutant Danny Oliver, the **Department of Oklahoma** amassed 249,874 volunteer hours to receive top honors in Division II.

Division III: The **Department of South Carolina** completed 113,665 volunteer hours to receive Division III top honors. Overseeing the successful year were Commander Willard Cunningham and Adjutant NaTisha Adams.

Division IV: Commander James Jakub and Adjutant Jamie Jakub led the **Department of Nebraska** to 61,445 volunteer hours, topping Division IV.

Division V: Receiving top honors in Division V was the **Department of North Dakota**, led by Commander Keli Berglund and Adjutant Joseph Hall, with 69,697 volunteer hours.

Membership Recruitment Awards (by Division)

Awarded for fully paid membership increases from 2019 to 2020

Division I: The **Department of Massachusetts** took home top honors in Division I with an increase of 99.82%. Overseeing the successful year was Commander Debora Olson and Adjutant Dan Stack.

Division II: Under the leadership of Past Commander Lonnie Howard and Adjutant Michael Elmore, the **Department of Missouri** won Division II with an increase of 102.58%.

Division III: Winning Division III under Commander David Ashe and Adjutant William Coley was the **Department of Indiana**, with an increase of over 100.84%.

Division IV: Pacing Division IV was the **Department of Puerto Rico**, led by Commander Carlos Perez-Cabrera and Adjutant Delvis Collazo-Rivera, with an increase of 101.53%.

Division V: The top spot in Division V is held by the **Department of Idaho**, with Commander Lynn Payne and Adjutant Gregory Bacon, who both helped see an increase of 101.55%.

Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative

Michael James, a member of Chapter 44 in Milwaukee, received the National Commander's Award as 2020 Local Veterans Employment Representative. James, who works with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, assists veterans in gaining meaningful and permanent employment by networking with employers and connecting Wisconsin veterans with hundreds of career opportunities throughout the year. James has worked hard to develop and foster a relationship with a local veteran-owned waste disposal company that has become an employment pipeline for veterans. Within the past six months, James has had seven veterans referred, interviewed and working in 48 hours or less.



James

Outstanding Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist

Air Force and Navy veteran **Mary Ann Bowersock**, of the Virginia Career Workforce Center, was named DAV's 2020 Outstanding Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist for her work helping veterans find employment. In 2019, Mary Ann's level of commitment to veterans in the employment arena resulted in a 50% hiring rate for her Veteran Readiness and Employment veterans and a 55% rate for her Significant Barrier to Employment veterans. Mary is also a proud life member of Chapter 7 in Fredericksburg, Va.



Bowersock

The Richard J. Cosgriff Pacesetter Performance Awards

National service officers should all be extremely proud of the impact they have on the lives of the nation's disabled veterans and their families. This impact is reflected through gifts made in honor of benefits advocates and the work they do for disabled veterans.

The award recognizes the national service office in each division with the largest combined total contributions made in its name.

Division I: The **Wilmington, Del.**, office takes home the top prize for Division I. Overseeing the award-winning office was National Area Supervisor Oscar Olguin.

Division II: The office in **Togus, Maine**, led by NSO Supervisor D. Brandon McKinney, won top honors in Division II.

Division III: The **Chicago** office received the Division III top spot, with NSO Supervisor Bennie Fugate in charge.

Division IV: National Area Supervisor Andrew Edwards helped elevate the **St. Louis** office to the top of Division IV.

Outstanding VA Employee of Year Awards

Veterans Health Administration:

Lisamarie Laskero, a social worker at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago, was named Veterans Health Administration Employee of the Year. Currently a captain in the Illinois National Guard, Laskero has spent much of her time helping veterans fight homelessness and receive compensation and other benefits to ensure the veterans have high-quality lives.



Laskero

Veterans Benefits Administration:

Edward Hofnagle, a Marine Corps veteran based in Virginia who was recently promoted to be the Roanoke regional office's Blue Water Navy team coach, one of only a handful in the country, was named Outstanding Veterans Benefits Administration Employee of the Year. Hofnagle is a dedicated and passionate advocate for the veterans he serves, understanding the importance of veterans benefits and prioritizing those veterans with the greatest need.



Hofnagle

National Cemetery Administration:

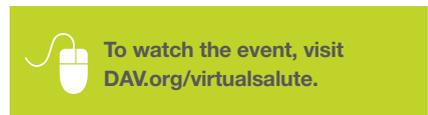
Michael Brophy, a retired Army veteran, was named the Outstanding National Cemetery Administration Employee of the Year. Brophy oversees 83 acres and a geographic footprint of more than 100 miles that must be maintained. Leadership within the Baltimore National Cemetery complex has recognized Brophy as creating a "cultural change" by successfully returning a previously struggling complex to one that now reflects the level of respect, honor and service that interred veterans deserve. On April 2, 2017, Brophy was named director of the Baltimore National Cemetery and took over all responsibility for burials, maintenance and administrative operations. Prior to his appointment, Brophy served for 24 years as an aviation officer before retiring in 2015. He has devoted himself to honoring our nation's veterans and ensuring their families are cared for in life's most difficult times.



Brophy

Division V: Led by NSO Supervisor Matthew Jahn, the **Fort Snelling, Minn.**, office won Division V top honors.

Division VI: **Cleveland** landed on top in Division VI and was led by NSO Supervisor Jacob Drost.



“We are so **grateful** for the **commitment** our honorees have made **to veterans**, for the work they’ve done and for what they continue to do.”

—National Commander Butch Whitehead

Outstanding Employer of the Year Awards

Large: David MacLennan, chairman and CEO of Minnesota-based global food company Cargill Inc., accepted the DAV Outstanding Large Employer of the Year award on behalf of the company. Cargill has been a Minnesota Yellow Ribbon Company since 2014. The Yellow Ribbon program honors companies with a demonstrated, public business commitment to supporting members of the military and veterans. Cargill also has a strong presence in the fight against veteran homelessness in the Twin Cities. The company helped raise \$375,000 for the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans to address homelessness.



David MacLennan,
Cargill Inc.

Midsize: Stan Finch, president of Berry Aviation Inc., received the DAV Outstanding Midsize Employer of the Year award on behalf of the company. A charter airline based in San Marcos, Texas, Berry Aviation has prioritized veteran hiring. Due to the company’s efforts, 31% of its more than 280 employees are veterans, and the organization hired 33 veterans over the last year alone.



Stan Finch,
Berry Aviation Inc.

Small: Air Force veteran Anthony Closson, CEO of Colossal Contracting LLC, accepted the DAV Outstanding Small Employer of the Year award on behalf of his company. Based in Annapolis, Md., Colossal Contracting makes it part of its business strategy to hire veterans. Due to the company’s efforts, 10% of its workforce is veterans, and the company has actively supported veterans through the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic.



Anthony Closson,
Colossal Contracting LLC



David Raad,
Six & Twenty Distillery

Top Venture Impacting Veterans

Recognizing excellence in the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities program’s business plan competition

David Raad, founder and owner of **Six & Twenty Distillery** in Powdersville, S.C., received \$10,000 to support business development as part of the Arthur H. and Mary E. Wilson Award

for Top Venture Impacting Veterans. Raad is an Army veteran who served as a fire team leader in the 1st Ranger Battalion from 1989 to 1993, during which time he served in Operation Just Cause. Since its beginning in 2011, Six & Twenty has been an industry leader in the region’s craft spirits business. Raad also serves as vice president of the South Carolina Craft Distillers Guild.

Healing words

DAV Share My Story platform offers veterans a space to use their experiences to help themselves—and others

By Ashleigh Byrnes

Growing up in Puerto Rico, Migdalia Griswold wasn't raised speaking English. Fresh out of high school and teeming with big dreams, in 1980, she enlisted in the Army and set off to begin a new chapter of her life.

"I just wanted to be all I could be," said Griswold. "I dreamed of being in the military, serving my country and just being somebody."

She proved to be a model soldier, quickly picking up a new language and adapting to life in the military, earning commendations and promotions along the way. But in 1983, while stationed at Fort Dix in New Jersey, events unfolded that would cut Griswold's career short and change the trajectory of her life.

"I was up late in bed studying for a test the next day and I heard a noise," recalled Griswold. "I got up to see where the noise was coming from, and there was a man standing there with a knife."

The man taped Griswold's hands behind her back and bound her feet, and after rifling through her purse, he brutally raped her at knifepoint.

Migdalia Griswold, pictured above during her first year in the Army in 1980 and below in her home today, was discharged from service after being brutally sexually assaulted. Later, her attacker was apprehended and jailed, but little was done to address the unjust treatment she received or the impact her discharge had on her ability to attain VA benefits.



When the attack was over and the man fled, Griswold was able to call for a neighbor and summoned the police. She was taken to the hospital, alone and terrified, to receive care and file her report. Shaken up and medicated for pain, she encountered a captain who offered to take her home. Instead, he took advantage of Griswold's subdued, medicated state and sexually assaulted her.

The next day, she reported the incident to her command. But as was and—often still is—all too common, Griswold was met with suspicion and accusations despite her exemplary record of service. Ultimately, she was forced out of the Army with an other than honorable discharge.

With the trauma of the assault and the effects of a military career unfairly cut short, Griswold's mental health suffered.

"Her anxiety was increased by unsympathetic supervisors and the implication from the Criminal Investigation Division that she was lying about the details of the rape," wrote the Army social worker who evaluated her immediately following the attack, and again one month later, in his official report. "It appears she was presented with all of the negative stereotypic responses that women receive after being raped."

Adding insult to injury, Griswold received a phone call from the Federal Bureau of Investigation several months after her discharge asking her to return to New Jersey to identify her attacker out of a lineup and testify against him in court, threatening to subpoena her if she did not willingly comply. An Army reservist named Anthony Shelton had been arrested for her rape, and police reports obtained by DAV—which include Shelton's own confession of the attack—detail a string of violent sexual assaults and rapes on base, throughout southern New Jersey and as far away as Camp Casey in Korea.

Shelton was convicted and imprisoned for 20 years, though the captain Griswold had accused of the latter assault was never investigated or punished, leaving her to feel as if her experience was never validated.

For years Griswold tamped down the pain, never sharing

this dark part of her history even with those closest to her. But in 2019, she received a letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs informing her that, as a survivor of military sexual trauma (MST), she was eligible to have her claim reexamined.

The letter tore open old, unhealed wounds, bringing a flood of emotion to the surface. Griswold immediately contacted DAV, and National Service Officer Naomi Mathis and local service officers in Florida assisted her. Though she has ample official evidence to support her claim, her discharge status has prevented her from receiving the full scope of VA benefits and she must go through the process of fighting for an upgrade.

"The military environment can be an 'all boys' club at times, and unfortunately, MST survivors have not always been treated fairly," said Mathis. "Although the military services and VA are working to change that, the climate hasn't changed fast enough to properly address many sexual assaults or their aftermath."

The process is difficult for veterans like Griswold, who are forced to relive trauma in order to gain access to needed health care and benefits. But as part of her ongoing therapy, Griswold chose to speak out and share her story with DAV in order to help herself—and others like her—heal.

"I couldn't do it alone," she said. "My DAV officer is by my side through this horrible experience. They are helping me to stay focused, stay strong, and they are doing it with compassion and discretion."

"DAV will be there with her," said Mathis. "She won't have to fight this by herself." ■



[Learn More Online](#)

Have a story you'd like to share? Visit mystory.dav.org.

“

The military environment can be an 'all boys' club at times, and unfortunately, **MST survivors have not always been treated fairly.**”

—Naomi Mathis, national service officer

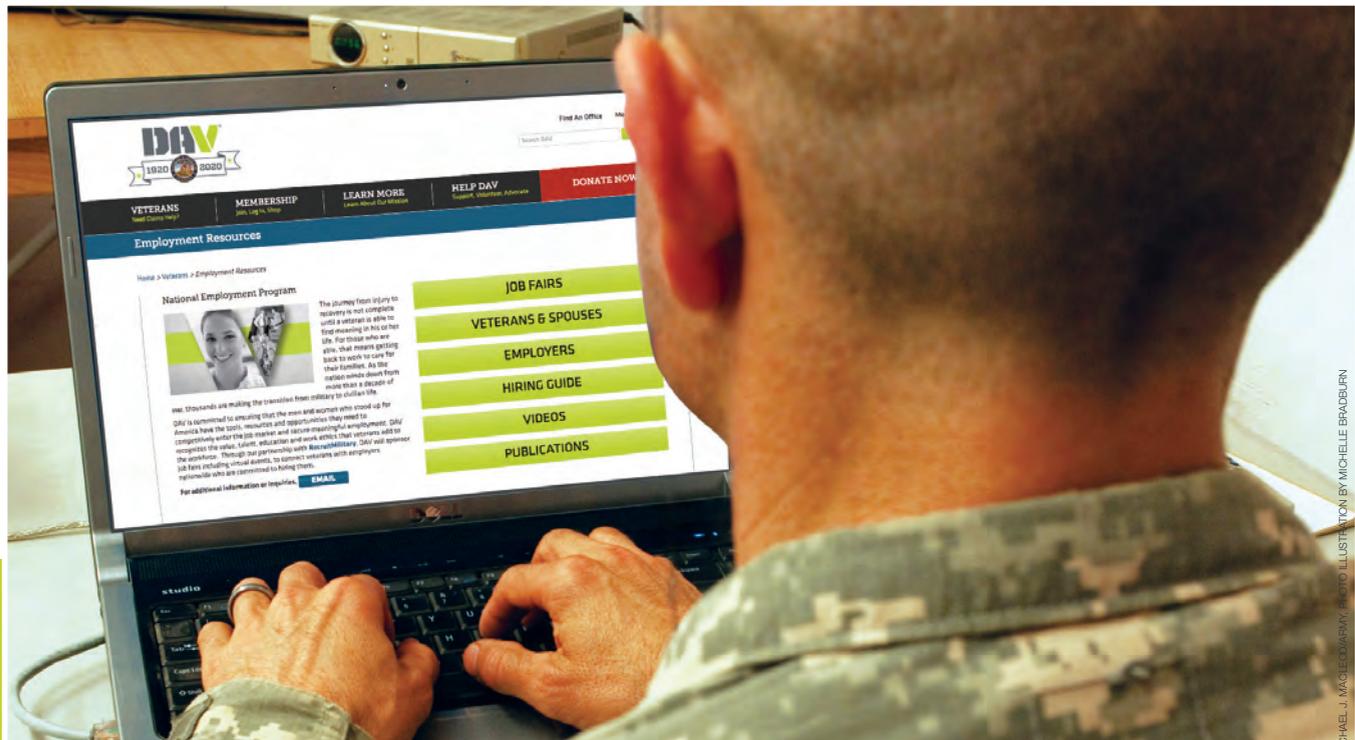


PHOTO BY SFC MICHAEL J. MACLEOD/ARMY. PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MICHELLE BRADBURN

Soldier for Life

Army, RecruitMilitary partnership to connect soldiers with DAV services

By Bryan Lett

The transition from military to civilian life is a multilayered and often challenging process, but now, soldiers exiting service will have additional resources to help them along the way.

Longtime DAV partner RecruitMilitary, a Bradley-Morris company, was recently enlisted by the Army to provide employment services and resources through the Army's Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program to help active, Guard and Reserve soldiers and their spouses. As a result, DAV will have a unique avenue to extend its no-cost services to families in need.

According to a 2018 Department of Veterans Affairs report, "The Military to Civilian Transition," roughly 100,000 men and women transition out of the Army each year. Annually, this accounts for half of all transitioning service members.

"We all know how important it is for veterans to get their civilian lives started on the right foot," said National Employment Director Jeff Hall, a combat-wounded Army veteran. "This partnership just about guarantees that our nation's soldiers and their spouses will have an opportunity to connect with DAV's services through exclusive Soldier for Life career fairs. That means we will have a chance to help them in finding a meaningful career and ensuring they receive the benefits they earned."

DAV's Veterans Pulse Survey found that 47% of veterans thought finding employment was their toughest transition obstacle, so being able to link exiting soldiers directly to DAV and RecruitMilitary's co-hosted career fairs, which are now all virtual hiring events due to the COVID-19 outbreak, is a critical component to streamlining the process.

"This is a game-changer," said Chris Newsome, senior vice president at RecruitMilitary. "We are accustomed to capturing the attention of transitioning personnel once they have already transitioned, but getting the opportunity to support them as they are still in the on-base transition process makes this far more seamless."

A transitioning service member can get hit with so much vital information at once that some important material can get lost in the shuffle, which makes the timing and these resources so important.

DAV's Pulse Survey also discovered that only 38% of veterans thought they had the support they needed when leaving the military. Furthermore, just 35% of veterans thought their benefits were clearly explained to them and only 37% said they were aware of what benefits they qualified for and how to take advantage of them.

"Another vitally important connection these individuals will have are DAV benefits and claims experts, which have been the leader in their field for the past century," Hall said. "Being able to introduce these tools to them early in their transition process is critical to setting them up for success in the next phase of their life."

Another important factor of this partnership is its national reach.

"We are now able to help these men and women get connected with opportunities regardless of where they will reside next," Newsome said. "Roughly 60% to 70% of transitioning personnel go somewhere other than the

installation they are transitioning from. Some go back to their home of record, while others follow significant others, friends or opportunities.

"The trouble is that many aren't able to truly explore the opportunities in alternative markets until they're already there," added Newsome. "It puts them behind the curve."

There are many helpful resources available to those transitioning from military service; however, this can lead to confusion and leads many into an abyss of inactivity.

"DAV and RecruitMilitary complement each other, as we both have unique core competencies," Newsome said. "DAV enhances our services while also tying in services that steward soldiers in a more holistic manner, such as access to benefits, claims processing, legal advocacy and representation on Capitol Hill."

Transitioning soldiers can begin their exploration of the program at recruitmilitary.com/army. Once there, soldiers can create their professional profile, build their resume, access resources and review how-to content that covers everything from resume writing to best practices for interviewing. ■

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TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED

¹Budget 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. ^{**}DAV receives a royalty payment of 20% of the monthly price of service selected. The agreement between Intersections Inc. (D.B.A.—Identity Guard) and DAV runs through Dec. 22, 2020. [®]DAV receives an annual fee from Quicken Loans in the amount of \$5,000. This offer between DAV and Quicken Loans runs through January 18, 2021. ^{*}DAV receives a royalty payment from northAmerican of 1% of the after discount line-haul transportation for a DAV member's household goods move. The agreement between northAmerican and DAV runs through Dec. 31, 2020.



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TO LEARN MORE

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- Email giftplanning@dav.org.
- Visit dav.giftplans.org.
- Return the attached **postcard**.



Leaving her home to DAV



Changing veterans' lives

While planning her legacy, Marge Barron, the widow of a wounded World War II veteran, was looking for “a good home” for her home. She then realized the answer was obvious: leave it to DAV through her will. She remembers the many times her husband spoke of the importance of the charity’s services.

Barron, whose husband Albert was a wounded World War II veteran, is creating a legacy of honor by donating her home to DAV through her will.

“He was always speaking so highly of DAV,” said Barron. “I know he would have been all for this. I think most veterans know that DAV does a lot of good things.”

When we told Barron that she would “live beyond her years” through her future gift, and improve the lives of more veterans than she could imagine, it brought a beautiful smile to her face. Plus, she loved our suggestion that the DAV Guardian Society appreciation package could include a memorial designation for her husband, Albert.

Barron used this sample bequest language with DAV’s legal name, address and tax ID:

“I give, devise, and bequeath to DAV (Disabled American Veterans), P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250, Tax ID: 31-0263158, ___% of my estate, or the sum of \$_____; or the following described property _____; or ___% of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate.”

DAV is offering a new resource for members and supporters. You can now create a no-cost will at freewill.com/DAV.

Want another easy option? Name DAV as a percentage beneficiary of a retirement account, financial account or insurance policy. Simply update your beneficiaries using DAV’s legal name, address and tax ID, listed above. ■

To request more information, or to inform us that you have already included DAV as a beneficiary of your will, trust or financial asset, please call Judie List Sweeney at 800-216-9802, ext. 1; email giftplanning@dav.org; visit dav.giftplans.org; or return the attached postcard. We’d love to thank you by welcoming you to our Guardian Society. We look forward to hearing from you!

President releases plan for veteran suicide prevention

■ In June, the Trump administration released a comprehensive plan to prevent suicide throughout the nation. The President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) is a result of collaborative efforts of the departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Health and Human Services; veterans service organizations; and several other organizations to develop a comprehensive strategy for ending the national tragedy of suicide.

PREVENTS will focus on a holistic public health approach to suicide prevention by changing the culture surrounding mental health and suicide prevention through enhanced community integration, prioritized research activities and implementation strategies that emphasize improved overall health and well-being.

“Suicide prevention is the VA’s highest clinical priority, and the department is taking significant steps to address the issue,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “But just as there is no single cause of suicide, no single organization can end veteran suicide alone.”

Secretary Wilkie said PREVENTS aims to bring together stakeholders across all levels of government

and in the private sector to work side by side to provide veterans with the mental health and suicide prevention services they need.

According to the VA, an average of 20 veterans die each day by suicide, and veterans have a suicide rate 1.5 times higher than nonveterans.



“Just as there is no single cause of suicide, no single organization can end veteran suicide alone.”

— VA Secretary Robert Wilkie

“The PREVENTS mission involves changing the culture around emotional well-being, mental health and suicide, actions that will take strength and commitment,” said National Commander Butch Whitehead, who was selected as a PREVENTS Ambassador. “DAV is proud to partner with PREVENTS, especially now, as the COVID-19 pandemic has created an even more urgent need for action to prevent veteran suicide.”

VA’s VR&E service gets a new name, services remain the same

■ The VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) service—often referred to as “voc rehab”—has undergone a name change intended to better reflect the needs of veterans. VR&E now stands for Veteran Readiness and Employment.

According to the VA, the new name, which includes readiness, is more in line with what service members and veterans already understand from their military service.

“The new name puts an emphasis on the veteran and the department’s mission to help them reach their employment goals,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The service will also maintain the VR&E abbreviation, allowing it to remain identifiable.”

Veterans may receive VR&E services to help with job training, employment accommodations, resume development and job-seeking-skills coaching. Other services may be provided to assist veterans who are starting their own businesses or who are severely disabled and unable to work in traditional employment.

The VA said the new name reemphasizes their mission to encourage, promote and support transitioning and service-connected disabled veterans’ employment goals.

Find out more about the VA’s VR&E services—and more about the name change—at benefits.va.gov/vocrehab.



From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER DIANE J. FRANZ

We need to be there for each other

This pandemic has all of us feeling our way forward through uncertainty. It is an unexpected honor to be serving a second term as your Auxiliary national commander due to these unprecedented circumstances, and it is a responsibility I do not take lightly.

My first year as your commander was as unorthodox as they come and came with some frustrating setbacks and unavoidable road bumps, so I could not be more excited to have the opportunity to be your DAV Auxiliary national commander for another year!

In my second term, I hope to focus once again on helping the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much for this country. It is imperative that we continue to fight for the promises made by our country to the men and women who signed up to protect our freedoms.

This year, DAV marks 100 years of giving back. In the span of a century, so many dedicated men and women have helped millions of Americans and their families. The services you provide today are essential—maybe now more than ever.

One way I would encourage you to mark DAV's centennial is by continuing to look for ways to give back as your

individual circumstances allow.

These gestures can be both big and small acts of honor: Provide veterans and their families with groceries, by either picking them up for them so they do not have to leave their homes or paying for a week's supply so they may have one less hurdle to jump over. Cook a meal or pick one up and deliver it to a veteran who

may rely on food delivery services. Help do lawn maintenance or other yard work. Offer rides to veterans who may not have anyone to provide them with a safe form of transportation.

Something all of these gestures have in common is the simple act of calling to check in on a veteran. This may be the most important act we can do right now to make sure

veterans are doing all right or to check if they have an unmet need. That is how we are going to get through this difficult time, by being there for one another.

I am still hopeful and optimistic for the future. We have gotten through difficult times, and I believe as a nation, we will come out of this stronger and more unified. We must make the best of this situation, otherwise we cannot move forward with our purpose, to help those brave men and women who fought for our nation.

It is imperative that we continue to **fight for the promises made by our country** to the men and women who signed up to protect our freedoms.

Staff changes announced

Two new staff appointments at DAV National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, D.C.



Liermann

Deputy National Legislative Director

National Adjutant Marc Burgess announced the appointment of Shane Liermann as the deputy national legislative director. In this role, he will oversee DAV's advocacy efforts regarding benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs

and work to advance legislation and policies critical to disabled veterans and their families.

In 2019, Liermann was appointed as deputy national legislative director for benefits. Prior to that, he served as an assistant national legislative director beginning in 2017. He is a native of Nebraska who joined DAV's professional staff as a national service officer apprentice in 1998. He served as a national service officer supervisor in multiple offices before heading to Washington, D.C., in 2011 to accept the role of assistant supervisor of the National Appeals Office at the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

A disabled Marine Corps veteran of the Persian Gulf era, Liermann is a life member of Chapter 10 in Fairfax, Va., where he serves as adjutant.



Saintsing

Assistant National Communications Director

Taking on the role of assistant national communications director is Matt Saintsing. His responsibilities include assisting in the management and coordination of DAV's outreach support to meet the organization's strategic goals.

Saintsing was hired at DAV in 2019 as an associate national communications director, serving as a writer and instrumental leader on several high-profile projects.

An Army veteran of the Iraq War, Saintsing enlisted in the Army in 2003 and served as a signals intelligence analyst with the 101st Airborne Division. He was honorably discharged in 2009. His military honors include several Army Commendation Medals, the Combat Action Badge and Air Assault Badge.

Saintsing, a member of DAV Chapter 10 in Fairfax, Va., is a graduate of the University of Tampa in Florida, where he earned a bachelor's degree in government and world affairs. He also holds a master's degree in political science from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.



Masks for veterans...

National Commander Butch Whitehead (right) and his mother-in-law, Shirley Frazee (center), donated 500 handmade masks to veterans at the Minneapolis VA Health Care System. Whitehead provided the materials for Frazee, who sewed all 500 masks for veterans to protect against COVID-19. VA Volunteer Director Ron Devoll (left) accepted the masks on behalf of the VA.



From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MICHAEL P. DOVER

Is tolerance intolerant?



I wish I could say to you that when you begin a subject such as this, you're quite optimistic that you can find some ready solutions, but it's unlikely that we will all be able to agree on everything that is written here.

I doubt also whether it will change the course for some.

We all have our opinions and our convictions, and though they may seem similar or even overlap, they're not the same.

I'll stop here and explain. An opinion is something you have a preference for,

a hierarchy of options by which you make choices one way while others may make choices another way. But a conviction is that which, in many ways, is rooted in your soul. Changing a conviction involves changing who you are as a person and reforming your beliefs.

But I am not writing about preferences or opinions, *per se*. When two worldviews collide, the best that one can hope for is a degree of civility with which we can interact in the midst of that disagreement.

Why are we in the United States talking about tolerance? When convictions are strong, divisions run deep, and that usually heightens our sensitivity. It is so easy to offend others, and when you do something like that, it is never done with impunity.

When two worldviews collide, the best that one can hope for is a degree of **civility** with which we can interact **in the midst of that disagreement**.

In this day and age, consequences can be quite serious. The personal cost can be very heavy when words or actions are driven by the wrong motives or attitudes. So I'm not writing to you about disconnecting from the pursuit of a meaningful life. I'm writing about finding a way through which we can accept our diversity and learn to live with our disagreements.

Social analyst Daniel Yankelovich wrote a very insightful article in *Psychology Today* analyzing how Americans were thinking about life and where we were headed should such ideas go uncriticized. He quotes sociologist Daniel Bell, who said, "Culture is the effort to provide a coherent set of answers to the existential situations that confront all human beings in the passage of their lives."

I had the pleasure of sitting in on a lecture when a young student made this statement to the guest speaker: "Who told you culture is a search for coherence? Where do you get that idea from? This idea of coherence is a Western idea." The guest speaker responded: "Do you want my answer to be coherent?"

There was some laughter in the lecture hall. If we are seeking an answer that must be coherent, but culture itself does not have to be, from whence do we get this lack of consistency?

In His Service to You.

DAV Past National Commander Larry Polzin

■ DAV Past National Commander Larry Polzin died June 22, 2020. He was elected to the organization's highest office at the national convention in Las Vegas in 2012.

A native of Flagler, Colo., Polzin enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1961 and served until his medical retirement at the rank of corporal in 1966.

Polzin became a life member of DAV in 1971 and was an active member of Chapter 73 in Woodland Hills, Calif. Over the decades, he served in numerous leadership roles within his chapter and at the state and national levels.

In 1972, Polzin joined DAV's professional staff as a



Polzin

national service officer at the Los Angeles National Service Office. His career spanned more than 25 years of service to disabled veterans and their families before his retirement in 1998.

He served as commander of the DAV Department of California in 1996, and in 2007, he was elected to DAV's national line.

"Larry was a truly dedicated individual who never stopped working for the betterment of disabled veterans and their families," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "He worked passionately during his 25 years on DAV's professional staff and continued to serve on behalf of his fellow veterans until the day he died. He was a good friend to many, myself included. Our hearts go out to his family and friends. He will be missed."

DAV Auxiliary Past National Commander Lucille McCarthy

■ DAV Auxiliary Past National Commander Lucille McCarthy died in August at the age of 99. A resident of Inglis, Fla., McCarthy was elected Auxiliary national commander at the 1960 DAV & Auxiliary National Convention in Seattle.

McCarthy's relentless passion served to mold and evolve the Auxiliary during her 74 years as a leader and member. She served in numerous capacities within the organization at the local, state and national levels, including 20 years as national judge advocate. She also chaired the Interim Constitution & Bylaw committee, advocating for changes that have shaped



McCarthy

the organization for generations.

McCarthy's late husband, John, retired from DAV as a national service officer. Highly respected by all leadership levels of DAV and DAV Auxiliary for decades, she will be remembered for her professionalism and mentorship as she guided and educated members in an effort to better aid ill and injured veterans and their families.

"Lucille was a dedicated leader that left a lasting impression on our organization," said Auxiliary National Commander Diane Franz. "For many years, she lent her passion to serving veterans and their families, and while she will be deeply missed, we remain grateful that the legacy of this remarkable woman will remain far beyond her lifetime."



All aboard...

Throughout the summer, members of Chapter 14 in Holland, Mich., provide local disabled veterans and their families cruises along Lake Michigan. During the 2019 season, they were able to host 196 veterans and family members on the six-mile river and lake cruise, honoring them for their service. Pictured, from left: Chapter 14 Adjutant David DeRidder, Senior Vice Commander Fred Troost, Mel Surdel and Commander Robert Kraai.

DAV

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35TH ANNUAL



NATIONAL DISABLED
VETERANS
WINTER SPORTS CLINIC

2021



VA | U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



APPLY NOW

The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is scheduled to return to the mountains of Colorado next year, and interested veterans can now submit their application for the event.

Presented by DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the clinic serves as a leader in adaptive winter sports instruction for disabled veterans, promoting world-class health care and rehabilitation. Known as “Miracles on a Mountainside,” the event allows veterans to experience opportunities for self-development and challenge through sports therapy and rehabilitative activities such as adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing, rock climbing, sled hockey, scuba diving and other adaptive activities.

Participation is open to U.S. military veterans with qualifying disabilities such as spinal cord injuries,

orthopedic amputation, visual impairments, certain neurological problems and other disabilities. Veterans who currently have inpatient or outpatient status at VA medical facilities will have first priority.

The application can be downloaded at wintersportsclinic.org. Once completely filled out and properly signed, scan and email all applications and forms to Teresa.Parks@va.gov or mail them to:

VA Western Colorado HCS
Attn: Teresa Parks/WSC
2121 North Ave.
Grand Junction, CO 81501

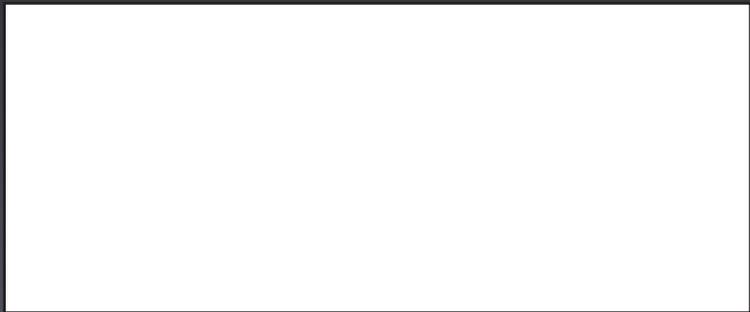
March 28–April 2, 2021

Application deadline Nov. 30 | wintersportsclinic.org

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