



THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF DAV AND AUXILIARY

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MAGAZINE

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Advocate in command

Career service officer, Army veteran
Andy Marshall elected to lead DAV

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A Century of
Service to Veterans

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Above: The law firm Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick donated \$100,000 to support DAV's free programs and services in honor of DAV's centennial celebration.



From the NATIONAL COMMANDER ANDY MARSHALL



Honored to serve with you

I learned something the hard way in Vietnam back in 1970: “Friendly fire” isn’t friendly at all.

Fortunately, I was able to walk away from the wounds I sustained rather quickly. The next Purple Heart I earned—the result of a Viet Cong booby trap—sidelined me for much longer. My battle that day was over, but I knew there was a long road ahead.

While rehabilitating at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, I was introduced to DAV by some veterans who had been down a similar path. Their unexpected presence changed my life.

This great organization showed me that there were others who had been in my shoes, and through their help and camaraderie, disabled veterans like me were able to lead fulfilling lives with respect and dignity.

I became a full life member. I also decided to dedicate my life to DAV as a national service officer, a calling that lasted more than four decades on a full-time basis and continues today. It has given me the opportunity to help my fellow veterans on their long roads ahead as others had done for me.

Just as it has been an honor to spend more than 40 years fighting for our fellow veterans, it’s truly an honor to have been elected to serve beside you as our organization’s national commander. Serving the disabled veteran community is a sacred obligation to our members and future generations of veterans, and I don’t take it lightly.

Whether for women veterans,

caregivers, those who have been negatively affected by toxic exposures or any other veteran in need, I share your commitment to ensuring veterans and their families receive the benefits they’ve earned.

But we cannot accomplish this without you on our side, because you are the ones carrying forth our important mission throughout the country.

Many of us have dealt with illness and injuries that changed us decades ago. Many of us know all too well about the cost of war. All of us were changed forever, and the last two years have been burdensome on our community in particular.

Like many of you, I joined the military to become a part of something bigger than myself. I wanted a mission.

Every day, I remain incredibly thankful that DAV came into my life, because it gave me the mission I was looking for—making sure my fellow veterans weren’t left behind.

Your membership and leadership in DAV and our great Auxiliary make you a leader in the veteran community. We are bound to our mission of service to veterans and their families.

I ask you, as leaders, to inspire your fellow veterans and stay current on the issues that affect our community.

Thank you for leading the charge for our organization and fellow disabled veterans. Thank you for bestowing me with this incredible honor and responsibility. I look forward to continuing to serve beside you.

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Photos by Steve Poissall/TheGalleryStudios.com

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From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS



You are not alone

It's difficult to believe we are marking the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. For so many, myself included, the memories of that day are so vivid that it simply does not feel so far removed in the timeline of our lives.

But in the two decades that have now passed, much has changed—especially as we have all watched the situation over the past several weeks unfold in Afghanistan, including the tragic loss of military personnel and civilians during the evacuation efforts.

In the wake of 9/11, we sent our sons and daughters to war. Those who have served know all too well that war doesn't just last the six months or year spent on the ground. Its impact can last years or even a lifetime. As an organization founded and led by those who bear the scars of battle, we can empathize with our veterans of Afghanistan. Having spoken with many veterans of this war who form our ranks, I have a better understanding of the vast range of emotions they have been experiencing and how those feelings can negatively affect their well-being.

There may be anger, hurt, sadness, even relief in some cases. The emotions are complex and deeply personal to each individual veteran. There is no "wrong way" to feel. And coupled with the past year and all the difficulties

brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, some veterans may be at risk of experiencing serious mental health crises. That's especially true for those who have sacrificed so much over the past two decades.

Please know that you are not alone. DAV, its members and service officers—many of whom are Afghanistan veterans themselves—are here for you and ready to provide assistance should you need it.

The VA has made a push to highlight resources for those in need, including:

- The Veterans Crisis Line—available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 1-800-273-8255 and pressing 1; texting 838255; or visiting veteranscrisisline.net.
- VA emergency mental health care services—available at VA facilities, regardless of discharge or enrollment status.
- Local VA Vet Centers for care in your own community.
- [MakeTheConnection.net](https://www.maketheconnection.net) to identify available mental health, suicide prevention and substance use disorder resources.

I am proud of our nation's veterans and the incredible contributions they have made over the past 20 years. DAV recognizes the many sacrifices you have made and the scars you bear as a result. We are here for you, and we will continue to stand at the ready to help.



LETTERS

Veterans exposed to toxic hazards

I am 61 years old and did tours in Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. I was exposed to open-air burn pits on all four tours. Some of us even coughed up blood during our deployments. I've registered with the burn pit list. Unfortunately, the VA denied the claim, even with the documentation from the contracted doctors in Saudi Arabia. **Jeff Stivason, Longview, Washington**

Deputy Legislative Director Shane Liermann crushed it in his recent testimony on burn pit exposure legislation. Please let your senator know that S. 437 [the Veterans Burn Pit Exposure Recognition Act] is critical to ensuring our deployed veterans receive access to the health care and services they need. **Coleman Nee, Boston, Massachusetts**

Battling for benefits

I am a disabled Vietnam combat veteran with physical wounds and disease from Agent Orange exposure. My wife served in the Women's Army Corp between 1961 and 1971. She was stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama. Unfortunately, the VA has yet to establish a registry for those who served at Fort McClellan, where there was potential exposure to toxic chemicals. My wife has developed "triple-negative" breast cancer, a benign bladder tumor and Type 2 diabetes. Yet the VA will not even establish a registry, let alone a medical study, for female veterans who served at Fort McClellan. **Stephen Hemmert, Tacoma, Washington**

Merrill's Marauders

Recognition of these heroes is long overdue (*DAV Magazine*, May/June 2021 issue). Equally

absent is the mention of the 42nd Portable Surgical Hospital. The hospital provided direct support to the Marauders. A 100% portable medical unit, it often served under direct fire throughout the campaign. Soldiers suffered the same deprivations as the Marauders they treated. Despite their contributions, they received no unit recognition for the effort serving the 5307th Composite Unit. **David Pattillo, Lake Waccamaw, North Carolina**

Retired Pay Restoration Act

As a retired senior chief with 20 years in the U.S. Navy, I was awarded a low disability rating. Because I am retired [from the military], the amount I receive for my disability is deducted from my retirement pay. This is grossly unfair. Currently, H.R. 303 [the Retired Pay Restoration Act] is being introduced to eliminate this unfair practice. I strongly suggest that DAV as an organization support this legislation. **James Masterson, Swansea, Massachusetts**

Editor Note: DAV supports H.R. 303, which would allow receipt of both military retired pay and veterans disability compensation for service-connected disabilities rated at 50%, without offset. Individuals who were retired or separated after at least 20 years of military service due to a service-connected disability would be eligible for full concurrent receipt of both VA disability compensation and either military retired pay or combat-related special pay.

Compensation rates

For most of us Vietnam veterans, our candle is about burned out. But for the heroes of the last 20 years, their candles still burn bright. Veterans rated with a 100% service-connected disability live on poverty wages due to the complete stagnation of compensation rates. It's a national disgrace. It's time for us to bring this issue to light. We need to end the poverty rate for disabled veterans. **Thomas Lane, Beaufort, South Carolina**

Ensuring Survivor Benefits During COVID-19 Act of 2021

This bill is helpful information for survivors. But current rules already recognize any veteran's death having a direct nexus to an existing service-connected disability-rated illness or injury. Possible veteran survivors benefits are not limited to a COVID-19 diagnosis or death. **Clark D. Hitchcock, Honolulu, Hawaii**

Editor's Note: DAV supports H.R. 746, the Ensuring Survivor Benefits During COVID-19 Act of 2021, which requires the VA to obtain medical opinions for service-connected veterans who die from COVID-19 to determine if their service-connected conditions were principal or contributing causes of death, thus enabling survivors to access Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) if the disabilities were indeed a factor.

WRITE TO US Please send feedback to DAV Magazine, 860 Dolwick Drive, Erlanger, KY 41018, 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.

Getting military sexual trauma claims right

DAV national service officer offers personal testimony as an advocate and survivor



PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. ALEXANDRE MONTES/AIR FORCE

By Matt Saintsing

The Department of Veterans Affairs will assign five regional offices to decide veterans' claims for conditions due to military sexual trauma (MST), the agency announced at a congressional hearing in May.

Previously, these claims were processed through the Veterans Benefits Administration's National Work Queue, but due to the highly specialized nature of these cases, VA employees in these five locations will receive focused training to help adjudicate these claims correctly.

"Disabled veterans must have confidence that their claims will be fairly and accurately decided," said Sen. John Tester, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. "Veterans bearing invisible wounds from military sexual trauma are held to an impossibly high evidence standard."

Acting VA Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy told the Senate panel that not all claims are equal, and those related to MST "require additional focus and handling in an accurate and compassionate manner."

National Service Officer Carmen McGinnis said she is keenly aware of just what it takes to get a claim related to MST across the finish line—both as a DAV benefits advocate and an MST survivor.

"I am proud to have served—incredibly proud to be a Marine," she told lawmakers at the hearing. "But my service was marred by the actions of another. I am here before you today because I am a survivor."

McGinnis, who served in Afghanistan after enlisting on 9/11, identified the inconsistencies veterans face when seeking benefits related to MST. Specifically, she pointed to the high evidentiary standards the VA

requires of MST survivors, noting that veterans who served in combat are not subject to the same burden—the VA accepts the accounts of these veterans as long as their records reflect they served in a combat zone.

"It is enough for them to claim that they feared for their life," explained McGinnis, who is a national area supervisor operating out of DAV's office in Denver. "I expect, if asked, many MST survivors would report they feared for their lives—I certainly did."

"Our trauma is no less significant, and our pain and suffering is just as real," she added.

McGinnis noted in her testimony that VA policy requires employees who arbitrate claims associated with MST to look for specific "markers," or signs of the trauma—such as fluctuations in weight or behavioral episodes that corroborate incidents—even though in many cases, these may not exist in the veteran's records. However, this is not happening in many cases.

A VA inspector general report released this year found that this issue persists, causing the department to incorrectly deny benefits to thousands of veterans.

While DAV commends the steps taken by the VA to send these cases to experienced and trained employees—a process the VA expects to complete by the end of September—there is more work to be done. DAV has called on Congress in the past to enact legislation that brings evidentiary standards for post-traumatic stress disorder claims related to MST in line with those established for veterans who served in a combat zone.

"I am fortunate, because my assault was reported and well documented, and I had very little burden in proving my claim," said McGinnis. "Sadly, many other veterans are not in my situation." ■

Going BEYOND

DAV benefits advocate finds 13-year-old error; veteran receives earned benefits

By Mary Dever

Mere days before her 12th birthday in 1993, Jamesina Cote's mother went missing from a ride-share parking lot near an interstate in Montpelier, Vermont. Audrey Groat is still listed as a missing person today.

Cote and four of her sisters entered the foster care system. When she turned 18, she enlisted in the Navy and trained to be an operations specialist. In 1999, she began her first assignment on the dock landing ship USS Fort McHenry, stationed near Sasebo, Japan. She said her initial excitement led her to believe she'd spend her next two decades serving in uniform.

"It was definitely a huge change for me, because I grew up in Vermont where there's not a lot of diversity," said Cote. "So in the beginning, it was like just a whole new experience. I was very excited, and I did very well. I increased pay grades quickly. I wanted to learn everything I could about my job. And then it took a turn for the worse."

One of only a few women on the ship, and the only woman on her shift, Cote started experiencing harassment from her fellow sailors. After the verbal threats escalated to unwanted physical contact, she reported the issue to her chain of command.

Soon after, two of her shipmates dragged her into a supply closet and raped her. Cote said she believes the sexual assault was retaliation for her complaint.

"I was stuck on the ship because we were out to sea," Cote recalled. "There was nowhere I could go; I was petrified. My only goal was to survive."

Once the ship docked, Cote immediately requested to

see a psychiatrist. She was given a choice to go to another duty station or to be medically discharged from the military.

She chose to be separated, ending her dream of having a career in the Navy.

Cote said she blocked out the trauma and refused to talk about it or deal with the aftereffects for years. She struggled with panic attacks and suicidal ideation. There were times when her trauma caused her to stay in bed for days at a time.

"[My post-traumatic stress] has affected a lot of things, like my ability to go out or feeling paranoid or hypervigilant," Cote said. "I can't recall information easily, and it has affected my short-term memory. It got to the point where I could no longer work; I wasn't able to focus on the moment at all. I would get irritable—short with people—and very, very overwhelmed."

In 2007, she decided to seek treatment. Her VA doctor recommended she file for service connection for her PTSD, but her claim was denied since the Department of Veterans Affairs determined her PTSD was preexisting due to her childhood trauma.

It wasn't until 2020 when Cote—based on the advice of her new doctor—decided to reach out to DAV for help.



Navy veteran Jamesina Cote continues to get care through her local VA and advocates for fellow veterans who went through similar experiences.

“When she first came in to my office, I did a record review and found that she had buddy statements and a medical opinion that her condition was at least aggravated by the sexual assault,” said National Service Office Supervisor William “Bill” Cvelbar.

Ultimately, Cvelbar was able to get Cote service-connected based on the evidence they presented. But he didn’t stop there.

“[After the decision], I was looking back through her file to see if I could understand why she had been denied 13 years beforehand,” Cvelbar said. “I noted her appeal from the 2007 PTSD claim was closed for her Form 9 not being timely.”

That didn’t sit right with Cvelbar. So after some more digging, he discovered there was a discrepancy on the dates for the cover letter and on the statement of the case itself. He consulted with Cote about his findings, and together they decided to submit a higher-level review.

“I told Jamesina I would fight this through appeal



DAV benefits expert Bill Cvelbar noticed a discrepancy in Cote’s earlier case that led to retroactive benefits for her and her daughter.

if she was on board,” he said. “I warned her we could have a battle on our hands, but if she was willing, I would do whatever it takes because I found a clear and unmistakable error.”

The VA decision review officer agreed there was an error on the original claim, granting an earlier effective date of 2007. This provided Cote and her daughter retroactive benefits and peace of mind.

“I’m able to move closer for treatment and to my family now,” Cote said. “I’ve worked really hard in therapy and trying different things to help [with PTSD symptoms], but it’s so time-consuming; I wasn’t sure how I was going to pay for a quality life for my daughter. Now I don’t have to worry as much—my daughter will be taken care of.”

Cvelbar said he was happy Cote was finally going to be awarded the benefits she had earned, but even more so because he thought she was finally shown the support she needed to continue her recovery.

“Not only does this case show us how getting the right documentation can help with a veteran’s appeal, but it shows us attention to detail can literally change a person’s life,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “Bill went back 13 years and found an error that resulted in a life-altering decision.”

“[Eventually] I want to help veterans who are in the same boat. I could be their support system,” said Cote. “Bill was such a great help to me, especially when I probably couldn’t mentally keep fighting. He is truly amazing.” ■



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From the NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

JOY J. ILEM

The winds of change

Although the Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for caring for all veterans enrolled in VA health care, the agency was designed, built and realized with men—the warfighters of the day—in mind. That’s not to lob any unfair criticism at the VA, but as women continue to join the military in record numbers and seek VA care following their service, it is incumbent on the department to offer the best, most inclusive care for everyone who has selflessly worn our nation’s uniform.

Women represent the fastest-growing veteran demographic. According to the VA, there are more than 2 million women veterans in the United States today, and women are expected to make up 18% of all veterans by 2040. To put that into perspective, women made up just 4% of veterans in 2000.

Yet in a 2018 VA survey, a quarter of women veterans reported harassment from other veterans when visiting VA health care facilities. To make matters worse, a 2020 Government Accountability Office report found the VA lacked proper practices to effectively address these cases.

To his credit, VA Secretary Denis McDonough has pledged to end gender-based harassment at VA facilities and to make them a safe and welcoming environment for veterans and staff alike. One crucial component for achieving this change is forming the Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Working

Group. That requirement was included in the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020. That DAV-backed legislation became Public Law 116-315 this past January.

Specifically, the law requires the VA secretary to develop “an action plan for addressing changes at the local level to reduce instances of harassment and sexual assault.” It also instructs the department to conduct bystander intervention training, which will teach veterans and VA employees how to identify and step in if they witness harassment of veteran patients or staff.

The legislation also requires the establishment of the Office of Women’s Health within the VA and authorizes \$20 million for retrofitting VA medical facilities to improve care standards for women veterans. We know women’s service carries the same risks and can have the same impact on their health as it does on men, which is why we will continue our fight to ensure VA programs and services reflect the reality of women serving in today’s military.

As women continue to serve our nation, DAV will continue to advocate on their behalf to ensure they have equal access to VA benefits and effective health care services they need and deserve to recover from injuries and illnesses sustained during their military service and an opportunity to successfully transition to civilian life.



THE DAY WE'LL

NEVER

FORGET

Two decades later, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 remain the defining moment of a generation of American heroes

By M. Todd Hunter

Like the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the assassination of President Kennedy, nearly everyone alive on Sept. 11, 2001, remembers in vivid detail exactly where they were and what they were doing when they first heard the news.

The initial shock at the sight of the black smoke billowing against the blue sky of lower Manhattan was followed by senses of confusion and uncertainty for millions of Americans. How did it happen? Was it an accident? Are the people above the smoke going to be OK?

Their questions came into focus when United Airlines Flight 175 flew into view on their television screens and exploded into a massive fireball as it tore between the 77th and 85th floors of the South Tower of the World Trade Center.

The United States was under attack, and as the day progressed, countless people around the globe helplessly witnessed the unfolding tragedy that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, at the Pentagon and in a rural Pennsylvania field.

Days later, President George W. Bush visited ground zero and gave a speech that still echoes 20 years later. As he stood atop the smoldering rubble of the Twin Towers, rescue workers yelled out that they couldn't hear him.

"I can hear you!" Bush replied through his bullhorn. "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you. And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!"

Within hours of the attack, a DAV Transportation Network vehicle delivered 250 pints of much-needed blood from the VA medical center in Orlando, Florida, to a nearby Air Force base to be flown to New York.

Within days, DAV national service officers were near ground zero in New York and the Pentagon, providing clothing, health and comfort items and emergency relief.

WE REMEMBER 9/11

It was a call to arms that encapsulated the unyielding anger and patriotism that swept an entire nation—one that was answered by millions of young Americans eager to defend their families, friends and neighbors in the days, months and years thereafter.

“9/11 happened three days after my 12th birthday, and I knew then that I wanted to make a difference in the world,” said Sara McGaffee, a Marine Corps veteran of Afghanistan. “I knew I was more than capable.”

“I was 17 when 9/11 happened,” said David Bennett, a DAV member who deployed to Iraq in 2007. “I was in biology when the first plane struck the Twin Towers. I had already decided I wanted to be a Marine prior to all of this, but it solidified there was no other choice.”

“After Sept. 11, I felt obligated to rejoin the military and do my part,” said Bobby Body, DAV’s 2016 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year. A Marine Corps veteran, Body joined the Army as an infantryman and was severely injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2006.

“There was a dramatic shift in the way our country viewed the military and first responders in the aftermath of 9/11,” said National Commander

Andy Marshall, who was midcareer as a DAV national service officer at the time. “Today’s veterans and service members have generally been held in higher regard in the eyes of the public than those of us who served during Vietnam—the events of that day bolstered support and gratitude for our troops.

“Of course, Vietnam veterans received a different reception. So we were just excited that history wasn’t repeating itself,” he said. “We spent decades building up the veteran community and wanted desperately to make sure newly returning veterans got the care, support and services they deserve. We wanted to take advantage of the momentum in the hopes we could get it right this time.”

The resulting groundswell of public support for the military in the aftermath of 9/11 brought significant nationwide increases in donations to nonprofit veterans service organizations such as DAV—allowing them to expand their programs and services as their need increased amid the continuation of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan into the following two decades.

In a 2016 special report, the Department of Veterans Affairs estimated that just under 5.1 million people were expected to have served in the U.S. military since 9/11. And according to a 2018 RAND Corp. report, there were 5.4 million deployments among them—a figure that has likely increased since the report was published.

The significant growth of the VA’s budget also illustrates how the federal government reacted to its responsibility to care for those who have borne the battle. In fiscal year 2001, the department’s budget was \$40 billion. For fiscal year 2021, the VA’s budget is \$243 billion—a more than 500% increase since 9/11.

“As the Global War on Terrorism progressed, our nation certainly recognized the need for increased services for veterans,” said Randy Reese, executive director of DAV’s Washington Headquarters. “From VA health care to education and transition services, there has hardly been any facet of the veteran community that hasn’t been improved over the past 20 years.”

One major change for veterans was the enactment of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, officially known as the



Standing atop rubble with retired New York City firefighter Bob Beckwith Friday, Sept. 14, 2001, President George W. Bush rallies firefighters and rescue workers at the site of the collapsed World Trade Center in New York City. (Photo by Eric Draper, courtesy of the George W. Bush Presidential Library)

“Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they **cannot touch the foundation of America**. These acts shattered steel, but they **cannot dent the steel of American resolve**.”

—President George W. Bush

Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (P.L. 110–252), which DAV supported when it was originally introduced by then-Sen. Jim Webb in 2007.

This landmark legislation expanded the educational benefits of the previous G.I. Bill to include funding 100% of a public four-year undergraduate education to veterans who served three years on active duty after 9/11, providing the ability for veterans to transfer their benefits to a spouse or child, and providing veterans with a living stipend based on local housing costs. As of 2019, the VA provided Post-9/11 G.I. Bill educational benefits to nearly 800,000 veterans and their families, totaling more than \$12 billion.

Additionally, in 2011, the VA developed its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers to provide caregivers of certain severely injured veterans with resources, education, support, a financial stipend and health insurance. DAV vigorously supported these benefits, though they were only made available to family caregivers of those injured after 9/11. After the victory, DAV fought steadfastly for years to expand those benefits. As of October 2020, the benefit is now available to veterans who became disabled before May 7, 1975. In October 2022, it will be expanded to include eligible caregivers of all eras.

“The increase in benefits and services afforded to



Firefighters watch Friday, Sept. 14, 2001, as President Bush surveys the destruction in New York City. (Photo by Paul Morse, courtesy of the George W. Bush Presidential Library)

our veterans and their families since 9/11 has been nothing short of remarkable,” said Commander Marshall. “I just wish it didn’t take a tragedy like 9/11 for all of it to happen.”

For those who remember it in such vivid detail, it seems nearly incomprehensible that it has been 20 years since that terrible day. For many, the tragic memories seem like they were created yesterday. And for those who served in the aftermath, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 remain the defining moment of a generation of American heroes who were called to service by the words of President Bush that very evening.

“A great people has been moved to defend a great nation,” he said. “Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.” ■

An inspiring convention

2021 DAV National Convention included awe-inspiring speakers, election of new national commander

By Matt Saintsing

Photos by Steve Poisall/TheGalleryStudios.com

For the first time in two years, DAV and its Auxiliary came together for their national convention. More than 2,200 members and guests gathered in Tampa, Florida, to elect new leadership, including a new national commander; vote on hundreds of resolutions that will touch the lives of veterans nationwide; and enjoy some first-class entertainment with friends, old and new.

One of the principal duties of delegates is the selection of a new national commander. At the convention's final business session, outgoing Commander Stephen "Butch" Whitehead passed the torch to Andy Marshall, a combat-disabled Army veteran of the Vietnam War.

"I'm truly honored to have been elected to serve beside you as our organization's national commander," said Marshall, a two-time Purple Heart recipient. "Serving the disabled veteran community is undoubtedly a sacred obligation to our members and future generations of veterans that I don't take lightly."

Marshall also thanked his predecessor, who served a nearly unprecedented two-year term—the first for any DAV national commander since World War II—for his dedication and willingness to provide some stability in the face of COVID-19.

"Butch, it has truly been an honor watching you maneuver the challenging last two years with the grace and poise of a true leader," added Marshall. "DAV could not have hoped for a more capable frontman during such uncertain times."



During the 99th DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Tampa, Florida, delegates elected Vietnam veteran Andy Marshall to serve as national commander.



Left: Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough addresses convention attendees, touching on the continued and critical work of DAV throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. **Right:** President Joe Biden sent well-wishes to DAV members via video, noting the need to ensure veterans have access to the care and benefits they have earned.

Marshall also recalled how DAV had helped him personally as a disabled veteran.

“This great organization showed me that there were others who have been in my shoes, and through their help and camaraderie, disabled veterans like myself were able to lead fulfilling lives with respect and dignity,” he said.

While delivering the commander’s report, Whitehead lauded the commitment shown by DAV throughout the pandemic.

“DAV’s mission is rooted in service, and when veterans needed us most—as many lost their jobs, fell ill or became isolated in their homes—DAV members, volunteers and staff quickly pivoted to provide the resources necessary to help those in need,” said Whitehead.

In one of his last acts as DAV’s national commander, Whitehead mentioned the Department of Veterans Affairs’ prominence and responsibility to care for our nation’s veterans, particularly during the ongoing pandemic.

“Although the full and lasting impact of this pandemic

is not yet clear, we do know there are many issues our nation must stand ready to address,” he said. “Health care is chief among them.”

In addition to Marshall’s election, convention delegates selected other national officers, including Senior Vice Commander Joseph Parsetich, 1st Junior Vice Commander Nancy Espinosa, 2nd Junior Vice Commander Dan Contreras, 3rd Junior Vice Commander Coleman Nee, 4th Junior Vice Commander John Donovan, Judge Advocate Michael Dobmeier and Chaplain Debra Varner.

The DAV Auxiliary elected Lynn Helms Prosser as national commander. Other newly elected leaders include Darlene Spence as senior vice commander, AnnMarie Hurley as 1st junior vice commander, Christopher J. Easley as 2nd junior vice commander, Melissa Pierce as 3rd junior vice commander, Terry Grabowski as 4th junior vice commander, Paula Raymond as judge advocate and Aura-Lee Nicodemus as chaplain.

Although he could not attend, President Joe Biden



DAV's Day of Inspiration

A first at this year's convention was DAV's Day of Inspiration, which included stories of valor from retired Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Aubrey McDade Jr., who received the Navy Cross, and former Army Staff Sgt. Sal Giunta—the first living Medal of Honor recipient from the war in Afghanistan.

The duo stressed the importance of teamwork and a sense of accountability the military instilled in them.

"I like weak links," said Giunta. "You have to find them and address them, and if you can't find the weak link in the room, it's you—that's inspiring."

McDade recalled what he considers the reasons he "shouldn't be here." Both of his parents were drug addicts, he was a victim of abuse, and his father was killed when McDade was just 11 years old.

"We used to have to wash our clothes in the bathtub, we lived in houses without plumbing, and I was in the streets," he said.

Although he found stability and purpose in the Marine Corps, McDade was slated to leave military service when his unit found out they would deploy to Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004. "Everyone was telling us about how hard the fight was going to be," added McDade, "and the best part of me wouldn't allow me to [leave]."

Four days after receiving the Navy Cross, he was the guest of first lady Laura Bush at the State of the Union in 2007.

Other Day of Inspiration speakers were retired Air Force Maj. Brian Shul, who is one of just 85 pilots to fly the secretive spy plane and fastest jet aircraft ever built, the SR-71 Blackbird, and author, entrepreneur and former Army Green Beret Larry Broughton.

Day of Inspiration speakers Navy Cross recipient Aubrey McDade Jr. (left) and Medal of Honor recipient Sal Giunta (center) join in a Q&A session after delivering their remarks.



Former Green Beret Larry Broughton fires up the audience with lessons he has learned as an entrepreneur.



Retired Air Force Major Brian Shul shares his unique experiences as a pilot of the legendary SR-71 Blackbird.

delivered remarks to convention attendees via video. He recognized the century of service DAV has provided to veterans of all generations.

“I know you missed celebrating your centennial last year, but you never once stopped advocating for our veterans or helping with their service-connected claims during the entire pandemic,” said Biden. “That was critically important.”

Biden also mentioned the personal connection his family has to the United States military.

“Our son, Beau, deployed to Iraq for a year, and we prayed for his safe return every single day,” he said. “We as a nation must always care for those brave Americans who risk everything and sacrifice so much for our country as well as their families, survivors and caregivers.”

He said his administration would ensure that all veterans have “timely access to world-class health care and the benefits that go with that.”

“Serving the disabled veteran community is undoubtedly a **sacred obligation to our members and future generations of veterans** that I don’t take lightly.”

—National Commander Andy Marshall

VA Secretary Denis McDonough was in attendance and praised his department’s joint ventures with DAV, including the DAV Transportation Network, which takes veterans to and from VA medical appointments. McDonough spoke of William Eferkahn, a DAV member and Army veteran, who benefits from the charity of volunteer drivers, as he has a condition that makes it harder for blood to pump to his brain.

“He had safe transportation to VA for a while, but then the service he had been using ended—meaning that he had no way to get to his appointments during the pandemic,” said McDonough. “That’s when he found out about DAV—and began getting rides from your volunteer drivers.”

McDonough commended DAV’s pandemic assistance, which veterans could call upon for emergency financial aid when they hit financial roadblocks due to the pandemic.

“Even as your own families struggled with the economic hardship of the pandemic, you invested your hard-earned dollars in an unemployment relief fund that helped veterans feed their families, pay their bills and stay above water when they feared they might



The VA’s Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits Michael Frueh (left) and Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Discovery, Education and Affiliate Networks Dr. Carolyn Clancy (right) share insights with members during the Service and Legislative Seminar.



Presented, in part, with Camp Corral, DAV's children's caregivers seminar featured experts in caregiver wellness, veteran parents of children caregivers, and caregiver kids of military veterans who discussed their roles, responsibilities, resiliency, and the unique circumstances and challenges facing today's military children caregivers. This seminar also premiered the "15 Things Military Children Want You To Know" video, created in partnership with Camp Corral and PsychArmor.

be drowning," McDonough added, referring to the more than \$2 million DAV provided to veterans and their families throughout the life of the COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Program.

During the joint opening session, DAV presented former Army Green Beret Mike McElhiney with the 2021 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year award. One of the first Special Forces soldiers to enter Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, McElhiney lost his right arm when a piece of equipment mistakenly sent his location to an American bomber, which dropped ordnance on his position.

Since then, McElhiney has dedicated his life to advocating for his fellow veterans and currently serves as chief of staff of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.

The convention also included an epic performance from the legendary rock band Jefferson Starship during Fun Night, which was sponsored by TriWest. Energy

in the room was invigorating, with DAV and Auxiliary members, staff and their families enjoying the rocking tunes that culminated a successful convention.

Other events included seminars to inform and educate veterans on DAV's wide-ranging areas of focus and activities, including legislation, volunteering and women veterans.

Additionally, members sat for a screening of DAV's centennial documentary, "The Battle Never Ends," highlighting organization's origins and century of service to America's veterans.

Dennis Joyner, in his capacity as convention chair, helped put the difficulties of the past two years into perspective.

He remembered his close friends Jim Sursely and Chad Colley. All had served in the Army in Vietnam and were injured in the same year. They were all past disabled veterans of the year and national commanders. He cataloged their experiences and

Supporting victories for veterans

Many companies and organizations around the country raise funds in support of DAV's programs and services. Through their generosity and the kindness of their employees and customers, they raise millions of dollars to support and help our injured and ill veterans gain access to the benefits they earned.



The sponsor of both the DAV Day of Inspiration and convention was Humana, one of the nation's leading health and well-being companies and DAV's exclusive national Medicare Advantage PDP and Medicare Supplement sponsor. Humana also provided custom airbrushed T-shirts, which were a hit with members.



David Grandon (right), community outreach coordinator for DAV's corporate partner Harvest, presents a check for \$38,884 to Chief Development Officer Brian Cowart (left) and Director of Corporate Partnerships Amanda Brown. Harvest has hosted roundup campaigns at cash registers to raise funds for DAV; another roundup campaign will take place throughout November.

remarked upon the loss he, like so many others, had experienced.

"Until the pandemic, we were three; three soldiers, three triple amputees injured in the same war, in the same year. Three with many of the same challenges and a shared desire to make life better for our fellow veterans and their families," he said.

"We were a community within the DAV community. We were never alone because, even though we lived apart, we knew we had one another."

Both passed during the pandemic. To make the point that veterans are not alone, he invited Dewey "Doc" Hayes, the medic who saved his life in Vietnam, to the stage.

"If Jim and Chad were with us today, they'd be proud to see us gathered and getting back to the important work that calls us here," he said.

"And they'd want us to get as much done, and have as much fun as possible, with our time together."

"I am immensely proud with how our 99th national convention turned out in Tampa," said DAV National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "This past year has been challenging, to say the least, but everyone at DAV is so thankful for everyone who came out to support their fellow veterans."

The 100th national convention is scheduled to be held Aug. 6-9, 2022, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel Orlando in Orlando, Florida. ■



Learn More Online

Download speeches, reports and other information from the 2021 DAV National Convention by going to www.dav.org/events/2021-national-convention. You can also view all of DAV's convention videos on the DAV YouTube Channel at youtube.com/disabledamericanveterans. Photos are available at flickr.com/thedav.

DAV & Auxiliary National Convention Award Highlights



Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year

Then-National Commander Butch Whitehead presents Army veteran and Green Beret **Michael McElhiney** (center) with the 2021 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year award. A disabled veteran of the war in Afghanistan, McElhiney has championed veterans issues before the Minnesota legislature. He was injured in December 2001 when a 2,000-pound bomb was mistakenly dropped on his position by friendly forces after an equipment malfunction. Three American Green Berets and five friendly Afghan fighters were killed in the accidental strike, which injured 20 Americans, including McElhiney. He lost his right arm and suffered severe chest injuries and shrapnel wounds in his legs, torso and left arm. The award is reserved for veterans who overcome tremendous challenges and serve as an inspiration for others.



George H. Seal Memorial Trophy, DAV

D S Davis (second from right) is the 2021 recipient of the DAV George H. Seal Memorial Trophy. Each year, the prestigious George H. Seal Memorial Trophy honors DAV's top volunteers through the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program. As a VA volunteer, Davis has dedicated 15 years to volunteer work, accumulating over 12,000 service hours. She currently serves at the Dorn VA Medical Center as a driver for the DAV Transportation Network and as chair of the Mental Health Veterans Advisory Committee.



Outstanding Auxiliary Member of the Year

Edna Bonita Mitchell (right) has been named the DAV Auxiliary Outstanding Member of the Year for 2021. The award recognizes her contributions and dedication to ill and injured veterans and their families. A life member of 37 years, Mitchell has devoted her time to advocating for veterans and ensuring they and their families receive the benefits they deserve. She also served as a caregiver to her husband, Leroy, for more than 40 years. She remains a fierce advocate for veteran caregivers to this day.



George H. Seal Memorial Trophy, Auxiliary

Each year, the DAV Auxiliary honors its top volunteer through the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program. **Bonnie Wilkins** (center) is the 2021 DAV Auxiliary George H. Seal Memorial Trophy recipient. Wilkins has devoted more than 1,300 hours of her time to veterans in her community. She helps coordinate DAV's Transportation Network and the volunteer drivers in her community, as well as coordinates meal deliveries to food-insecure veterans.

DAV & Auxiliary National Convention Award Highlights

Membership Recruitment Awards



Judge Robert S. Marx Award

On behalf of the **Department of South Dakota**, Department Commander Dick Turnwall accepts the Judge Robert S. Marx Award. The award is presented to the department with the highest percentage increase over goal in fully paid life members.



Top Recruiters of the Year

DAV's top recruiting service officer of the year is **Carlo Melone** (above), from the Chicago office. He recruited 308 new members.

DAV's top recruiting member of the year is **Keith Pelusi**, from Chapter 57 in Dallas. He recruited 118 new members.



Membership Recruiters Hall of Fame

DAV recognizes the success of its members who have signed 100 or more new members for three consecutive membership years with a gold lapel pin and by entering their names into the Membership Recruiters Hall of Fame.

- **Daniel Knabe**, 123 members
- **Keith Pelusi**, 118 members
- **Thomas Herrington**, 109 members
- **Andrew Edwards**, 104 members



Division I: Past Department Commander Debra Olson accepts the award on behalf of the **Department of Massachusetts**.



Division II: Past Department Commander Keith Newell accepts the award on behalf of the **Department of Missouri**.



Division III: Past Department Commander Carlos Perez-Cabrera accepts the award on behalf of the **Department of Puerto Rico**.



To view or download photos from the 2021 national convention, visit [flickr.com/theDAV](https://www.flickr.com/photos/theDAV/).

Division IV: Department Adjutant Joyce Gaddis accepts the award on behalf of the **Department of Maine**.



Division V: Department Commander Dick Turnwall accepts the award on behalf of the **Department of South Dakota**.

DAV & Auxiliary National Convention Award Highlights

Outstanding Department of Veterans Affairs Employees of the Year



Navy veteran **Ciena Faeth** (center left) receives the 2021 National Commander's Award for **Outstanding Veterans Benefits Administration Employee of the Year**. Faeth, a change management agent at the VBA regional office in St. Petersburg, Florida, reviews, analyzes and evaluates data to create best practices and provide recommendations related to the effectiveness and efficiency of field office operations. She also personally assists veterans utilizing the VA's Veteran Readiness and Employment Service. Faeth has proven herself a versatile and stellar VA employee since joining the department in 2014.



The **Outstanding National Cemetery Administration Employee of the Year** award is presented to Army veteran **Greg Smith** (left), grounds maintenance supervisor for the newly opened Cheyenne National Cemetery in Wyoming. He has been recognized for his ability to plan, organize, direct, review and improve the hallowed ground. Since November 2020, Smith has completed 33 burials, including one in which the veteran's body was unaccompanied, prompting Smith to reach out to local veterans organizations to ensure the veteran would not be laid to rest alone.

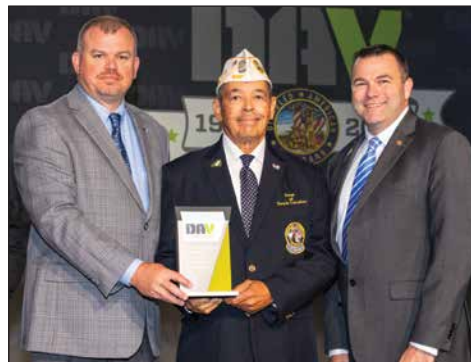


Dr. Ronald Triolo is the 2021 **Outstanding Veterans Health Administration Employee of the Year**. A researcher with 25 years of experience, Triolo's work focuses on technology that restores or improves function for individuals with limb trauma, dysfunction or amputation.

Local Veterans Assistance Program Awards



Division I: Department Adjutant Robert Cox accepts on behalf of the **Department of Virginia**, 189,979 hours.



Division II: Department Adjutant Jaime Lleras accepts on behalf of the **Department of South Carolina**, 169,449 hours.



Division III: Department Adjutant Larry Hill accepts on behalf of the **Department of Wisconsin**, 48,471 hours.

Division IV: Department Adjutant Chris Salladay accepts on behalf of the **Department of Iowa**, 28,486 hours.



Division V: Department Adjutant Martin Pennock accepts on behalf of the **Department of South Dakota**, 16,600 hours.

DAV & Auxiliary National Convention Award Highlights



DAV Scholarships

Daniel Finney (center left), of Rock Hill, South Carolina, receives the 2021 Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship's top prize of \$20,000. DAV's scholarship program honors outstanding young people for their volunteer support of veterans through the VA's Voluntary Service Program and through DAV's Local Veterans Assistance Program. Finney has worked with the Rock Hill VA Medical Center for seven years, spending time working in multiple departments throughout the center. He plans to use his scholarship to become a physician assistant.

Additional 2021 Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Recipients

- \$15,000** Brooke L. Jackowski, Pennsylvania
- \$10,000** Kayla Nguyen, Texas
- \$7,500** Jason David Mellon, Virginia
- \$7,500** Anit Tyagi, Colorado
- \$5,000** TyDasia Davis, North Carolina
- \$5,000** Taylor Flanagan, Iowa
- \$5,000** Celine Maharaj, Virginia



Outstanding Employers of the Year Awards



Melissa Seixas, state president of Florida with **Duke Energy Corp.**, accepts the **DAV Outstanding Large Employer of the Year** award. As a part of Duke Energy's commitment to hiring veterans, the company has a dedicated military and veteran recruiting team to support hiring veterans. Duke Energy is committed to building and maintaining long-term relationships with transitioning service members and veteran job seekers, hiring managers and external veterans organizations. Duke Energy has prioritized creating improved employment opportunities for people with disabilities, currently employing 226 veterans with disabilities.



Steve O'Keefe (center right), CEO of **Virtual Service Operations**, accepts the **DAV Outstanding Small Employer of the Year** award. The Virginia-based company takes a veterans-first mentality to recruiting and hiring employees. It has developed a methodology to train and deploy a veteran-based workforce to provide architecture, migration and managed services. More than one-quarter of its workforce is veterans.

The **DAV Outstanding Midsize Employer of the Year** is **GeoStabilization International**, which focuses on hiring veterans, knowing the value they bring to the workforce. With 25% of its employees having served in the military, the company has exceeded its own goals for hiring veterans.



Waiting to come HOME

Army veteran, DAV member honors brother still missing from Vietnam

By Matt Saintsing

Arry Pfc. David Lovegren was killed just 20 days shy of his 20th birthday in March 1969, when the UH-1 Iroquois helicopter he was riding in crashed in Vietnam. A recovery team quickly found his remains, but as they hoisted him aboard the extraction aircraft, there was an equipment malfunction and his body fell back to the ground.

Although additional efforts were made to re-locate and recover his remains, enemy movement on the ground made searching treacherous, and the gut-wrenching decision was made to cease recovery operations. Today, David Lovegren is listed as KIA-BNR—killed in action, body not recovered. He's just one of the more than 1,500 American service members considered still missing from the Vietnam War.

His brother and fellow soldier, Dick Lovegren, pieced together the final moments of his late brother's life, and the ill-fated recovery mission, after receiving firsthand accounts from those with David.

"I've talked to all of the guys that were there the day this accident happened," said Lovegren, a DAV life member of Chapter 10 in Oregon and former member

of DAV's Interim POW/MIA Committee. "I have the maps, and I even have photos of the helicopter that dropped David."

According to Lovegren, the aircraft was heading toward the Laotian border, where intelligence reports indicated Viet Cong troops would traverse. David's unit was sent to block a nearby mountaintop when the chopper began tumbling down. All of the soldiers, except for the pilots, were thrown from the aircraft.

"I'd talked to the guy who found my brother, and [David] had some minor burning on his legs," said Lovegren. "[David] was thrown against a boulder, which instantly broke his neck. They found David face down, chest up."

The youngest of five brothers, Dick remembers David, the eldest, coming home after graduating from military training at Fort Lewis, Washington.

"I was so young—seventh grade," recalls Lovegren. "I didn't really keep up with conversations that were going around. It was just good to see him."

David came home to Oregon to visit one last time before going to Vietnam.

Lovegren, who served in the Army for 12 years following David's death, has been an active advocate

for others with a relative missing from the battlefield. His unique perspective was valuable when he sat on DAV's Interim POW/MIA Committee.

The United States is unique as the only country in the world that does everything possible to bring all of our missing and fallen troops back home. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA)—the arm of the Pentagon that searches for, identifies and repatriates remains of Americans from conflicts stretching back to World War II—has agreements with 46 nations.

"It's truly a global mission," said Johnnie Webb, deputy director of outreach and communications at DPAA.

Recovery options have been restricted globally due to COVID-19, said Webb. But because of the close partnerships the United States has with nations where American service members are still missing, such as South Korea and Vietnam, recoveries didn't wholly cease.

"Interestingly enough, with South Korea, there is a sister organization that's developed on the model of our agency to recover," added Webb. "And we've worked with Vietnam, going back to 1985, so they've become very good, very proficient at doing these recovery operations themselves."

DAV's Interim POW/MIA Committee members regularly attend teleconferences with DPAA officials and offer input on critical decisions involving POW/MIA search and identification. One area where DAV offered insight in recent years was encouraging DPAA to disinter all of the unknown graves at Honolulu's National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific—also known as the Punchbowl Cemetery—which has held the remains of the USS Oklahoma, a battleship that sank during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

"We felt like it was important to stick to the fullest accounting possible—whether that's Pfc. Lovegren or the remains in the Tomb of the Unknown," said Vincent Darcangelo, the committee chairman. "The Punchbowl will remain hallowed ground, but from our perspective, the mission isn't complete until each of our fallen is recovered."

The remains of those 394 sailors and Marines who died during the opening hours of World War II were too damaged to be identified and were ultimately buried in 1950 at Punchbowl. Thanks to modern identification techniques, DPAA recently announced the identification of 338 individuals from the USS



Top left: Pfc. David Lovegren pictured in his Army uniform shortly before being sent to Vietnam in 1969.

Center: Official map of Hill 508 (left) in Vietnam showing the helicopter crash site. Incident map (right) indicating the last known location of David's body. **Bottom:** Army Chinook helicopter photo, provided to Dick Lovegren from soldiers in David's unit.

Oklahoma. In a news release in June, the agency said the accounting "represents the first successful completion of a project of such scope and complexity."

For many, this mission is about the closure—though Lovegren said that some in his family would never find closure after more than 50 years since David's death.

"Some don't really want to express their feelings about it," he said. "My mom has had enough of it over the last 50 years, but I know the guy that found him, and I know the guy that put him in the body bag, and I know they dropped his body in the jungle."

"That's enough closure for me," said Lovegren. ■



TOGETHER AGAIN

Annual gathering of state leaders held one last time at Cold Spring

By Rob Lewis

The old adage about great leaders being made, not born, implies a need for an ongoing commitment to sharing, renewal and education among those whose decisions and influence will be key to mission success.

Those three commitments are the cornerstones upon which the annual Commanders and Adjutants Association orientation was built. This year's event—which took place June 28–29 and included dozens of state-level leaders from around the country—was the 23rd time the gathering was held and the final time at DAV's previous national headquarters building in Cold Spring, Kentucky.

The format of the event was simple: two days of intense education about DAV's many evolving services through presentations from DAV's national staff interspersed with opportunities for the leaders to exchange their best practices with one another in less-formal gatherings. The event is scheduled in early summer to welcome and educate newly elected commanders and newly appointed leaders in other positions.

The gathering was canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic, which meant the one-year term of Commanders and Adjutants Association President John Donovan of Arkansas was extended to two years.

"It was an incredible time and a real networking opportunity for DAV's state leaders," Donovan said. "We reduced the event by a day and squeezed everything into a day and a half, but we learned just as much as ever."

Sessions were structured to help answer questions about the myriad organizational functions.

While the information provided at these annual events by both national- and state-level leaders is critical for all attendees, it is especially important for those leaders who are newer to DAV and don't have the depth of experience of many of the hosts and attendees.

"It was a blessing to get this opportunity because this is my first year as the department adjutant," said Adjutant Charise Washington of the Department of Nevada, who was appointed to her leadership role in March. "I learned new techniques for newsletters and increasing attendance at our events. There was just so much useful information."

The Commanders and Adjutants Association orientation is yet another example of the strength of DAV resting in the dynamic balance between the capable and effective leaders dispersed throughout the country and the unifying vision and strategies presented by the national organization.

"It is crucial that DAV leaders at every level are familiar with the organization's core mission and essential functions," said National Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski. "We hope they are able to take back the mountain of information we have shared here and implement it at the state and local levels. While we realize much of this information is new to some of these leaders—especially the newer ones—it's critical that we are rowing in the same direction, using the same language and working toward the same goals at all levels of DAV." ■

From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER LYNN HELMS PROSSER



Building community

After more than a year of isolated living, it was an incredible experience to once again join forces with so many of you at our national convention in Tampa. We had a fantastic response for this year's event, which I think demonstrates just how important connectedness is for veterans.

This year, many Auxiliary members were on hand for a very special event leading up to our traditional convention activities—the DAV Day of Inspiration, which featured an exciting lineup of speakers who made for a truly moving and uplifting occasion.

The event featured former Army Staff Sgt. Sal Giunta, the first living post-9/11 Medal of Honor recipient; retired Marine Gunnery Sgt. Aubrey McDade Jr., a Navy Cross recipient; former Army Staff Sgt. Larry Broughton, famed author and entrepreneur; and retired Air Force Maj. Brian Shul, who was shot down in Vietnam after flying more than 200 combat missions and, remarkably, returned to flying in the wake of the crash.

The speakers all had tremendous stories to tell about their service, their lives and their resilience, and I am grateful they took the time to share their experiences and time with DAV and Auxiliary members, as well as local veterans and their family members and

caregivers in the Tampa area.

You can read more about the event on Page 14, but I will say the event was an incredible way to connect veterans to DAV's mission in a unique and powerful way. And through media partner Military Times, the Day of Inspiration reached many more veterans across the country.

It's important that every veteran knows we have their backs. As members of veteran families, we know the importance of community among those who honor

It's important
that every
veteran knows
**we have
their backs.**

service. By inviting new veterans and their families and caregivers to experience the Day of Inspiration, introducing them to DAV and sharing stories that may encourage them to pursue their dreams and make the most of every opportunity

in front of them, we hope to help them reach new heights in their own lives.

For those of you who were able to experience the event either in person or online, I hope it will help you consider how you can reach out to new groups of veterans and family members to share DAV's sense of community and kinship.

After the past year, it's incredibly important that we begin to reach out to veterans and let them know we are here for them and their families. The DAV Day of Inspiration doesn't have to be a one-time event. You can inspire veterans and their supporters right in your own community.

FROM HOMELESS TO HERO



DAV volunteers with the Department of New Jersey leaned on creative solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic, offering mobile stand downs to help address community needs and maintain safety standards.

DAV member makes it his mission to help homeless, at-risk veterans in New Jersey

By Tom Jenkins

After serving in the Army from 2000 to 2005, Jordan Carlson struggled with his transition to civilian life. Bouncing between homelessness and a steady home life, Carlson—now the commander of DAV Chapter 80 in Glassboro, New Jersey—found it difficult to land on his feet.

“I’ve been through some challenging times,” said Carlson. “I’m sure most veterans know, when you’re

dealing with the VA, sometimes they don’t give you the correct rating or give you a lower rating on your claim. And because of that, you obtain fewer benefits than you should. For me, that was a challenging period of my life.”

So when he was tasked with leading the Department of New Jersey’s new homeless committee, Carlson immediately felt a deep connection to the mission.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, New Jersey has nearly 600 homeless veterans—though many more are likely at risk. Out of the roughly 371,000 veterans in the state, 86,921 veterans live with housing problems, such as quality, crowding or cost.

Partnered with other veterans organizations, Department Adjutant Johnnie Walker began working

“I’ve been through some **challenging times.**”

—Commander Jordan Carlson, Chapter 80, Glassboro, New Jersey

on a campaign that would offer multiple Homeless Veteran Stand Downs throughout the state.

“We actually began by having one giant stand down in Atlantic City,” said Walker. “We did that for two years, and it was very successful. However, by the third year, the pandemic had taken over and everything was shut down.”

Unsure of how to keep the momentum going, DAV agreed with other local veterans service organizations to host “mobile” or “mini” stand downs that would go on throughout the state.

As part of the campaign, DAV members made their primary focus helping homeless veterans properly submit their claims to the VA to ensure they would receive their full benefits. While assisting veterans with submitting claims, DAV provided them with hygiene kits and clothing as well.

“We aimed to start in Southern New Jersey first,” said Walker. “That’s when the state commander and I came up with the idea to start a homeless committee within the DAV Department of New Jersey, and we reached out to Jordan Carlson.”

Carlson was a new commander and had just reorganized Chapter 80. He was able to get new and current members involved and enthusiastic about working with DAV.

“The fact that Jordan was homeless himself made it an easy selection for the department to ask him to chair our homeless committee,” said Walker.

Carlson has proved a staunch advocate and has turned his focus to getting these veterans the benefits and health care they need.

“Between mental health resources and getting



Though veterans make up only about 6% of New Jersey’s homeless population, DAV Chapter 80 Commander Jordan Carlson—who experienced similar circumstances—remains committed to assisting in as many cases as possible.

them into the VA health care system, they need to be enrolled,” said Carlson. “Whether they’re homeless or at risk, we want to get them housing, employment resources and health care to get them up off the streets.”

Since beginning this mobile program, Carlson and the department have held four stand downs throughout southern New Jersey. At their most recent event, DAV filed VA paperwork for all 27 veterans staying at a shelter in Camden, New Jersey. Three of those veterans are now members of DAV, sponsored by local chapters.

This is just the beginning, Carlson and Walker said. They soon hope to cover the entire state, holding stand downs in each community to make sure veterans are able to attain self-sufficiency, employment and health care.

“We hope that Jordan is going to be around for a long time with DAV,” said Walker. “He has been a real asset to this department. With him, we think this program can last for years to come.” ■

FIGHTING CYBERCRIME

DAV teams up to arm veterans, families against online criminals

By Tom Jenkins

With just two weeks left in Army Sgt. 1st Class Collin J. Bowen's 2007–2008 deployment to Afghanistan, his patrol vehicle struck an improvised explosive device (IED). While he was hospitalized at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, his wife, Ursula Palmer, took to the internet to update family and friends on Bowen's condition as he underwent multiple surgeries.

Several months after the explosion, Bowen died due to complications from his injuries. Soon after, the website became a permanent memorial to the late soldier—and a target for cybercriminals.

"That following year, four different women contacted me," said Palmer. "They asked me, 'Is this person on this website real?' They then asked if he indeed was a soldier who had died."

These four women had all been contacted by an account using Bowen's photo—the same image used on the website just one year earlier.

They were all victims of someone posing as Bowen on different dating sites. The scammer had defrauded the women of cash, valuables and their sense of security. Just as quickly as Palmer could get one fake profile taken down, she would see her husband's photo appear on another site.

"There was nothing I could do," said Palmer. "I didn't even know I was a victim of cybercrime."

The cyberattack set Palmer down a path to help keep others from being victimized. Over a decade

later, Palmer serves as executive director of Military and Veteran Programs for Cybercrime Support Network (CSN), Partnership to FightCybercrime initiative. Palmer, a DAV HillVets Fellow, worked closely with DAV's legislative team and knew where she could turn for help.

In 2021, DAV became the first veterans service organization to join the Partnership to FightCybercrime, which has grown to include other prominent military

and veterans service organizations, corporations, foundations and federal agencies.

"DAV is proud to be partnering with a program like FightCybercrime," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "We want to be there for veterans as we educate ourselves on how to fight back against

"We don't have time to waste with **cybercrime growing exponentially**. Working with partners who have earned the trust of the veteran community will allow us to **reach those who need help faster**."

—Kristin Judge, CSN CEO and founder



PROTECT YOURSELF

Ways to safeguard against scams

There are three golden rules that can help safeguard against potential scammers.

1. **Slow it down.** Scammers often create a sense of urgency so they can bypass our better instincts.
2. **Do your research.** If someone claims to be calling from the bank or VA, then call them back on an official number. Do not call the number they used to contact you.
3. **Stop. Do not send.** Many scammers ask for money orders or gift cards. No reputable agency or company will take these forms of payment.

Common online scams



Charity Imposter Scams

Fraudulent charities target service members, veterans or their families asking for financial support.



Family/Friend Imposter Scams

Someone claiming to be from the military calls and says your loved one needs money immediately.



Fake Military Job Scams

Many job scams seem ideal for veterans or military family members who are constantly moving.



Education/Scholarship Scams

Scammers will impersonate organizations in order to take advantage of the GI Bill and other education benefits.



Rental/Real Estate Scams

People posing as landlords will request money or ask for deposits on nonexistent properties.

cybercrime, as we know our community is one that is heavily targeted for this type of crime.”

Many scammers will access online government records such as benefit programs and private information about veterans. These vulnerabilities are used for extortion, identity fraud, real estate frauds, charity fraud and personal data phishing.

Reports made to the Federal Trade Commission show that U.S. military personnel, veterans and their families lost \$822.1 million to cybercrime between 2017 and 2021, with a median financial loss due to fraud that is 44% higher for veterans than other civilians. According to the FBI, cybercrimes are one of the fastest-growing crimes in America, with synthetic identity theft—the same crime that Palmer found herself targeted by—being the highest.

The initiative’s Military and Veteran Programs group educates and mobilizes the community to recognize, report and recover from cybercrime, through the help of organizations where these populations are already engaged.

“The veteran community respects DAV,” said Kristin Judge, CSN CEO and founder. “The CSN team has expertise in cybercrime and cybersafety. We know that having partners who are experts in those we aim to serve will be the best messengers of our content. We don’t have time to waste with cybercrime growing exponentially. Working with partners who have earned the trust of the veteran community will allow us to reach those who need help faster.” ■



Learn More Online

For more information on cybercrimes and how to combat them, visit www.dav.org/veterans/resources/veteran-scams.

Keep your cash, save on taxes



Smart ways to give to DAV

Do you know about these smart ways to support DAV without writing a check? Would you like to reduce your tax bill and help veterans at the same time? Many individuals often overlook these ways to save their checking account and make their donations stretch further.

Giving appreciated stock

Why pay capital gains taxes on selling stock, leaving you just a portion of its value to spend?

- For outright stock gifts, transferred directly to DAV, all of the capital gains taxes are eliminated. Those who itemize can also claim the stock's full value as a charitable deduction. In turn, DAV pays no taxes to sell it, and our programs then benefit from its full value.
- Please contact us for stock transfer instructions, or get started using this link: freewill.com/stocks/dav.
- Stocks can also fund a life income gift, such as a charitable gift annuity. Please contact us for an illustration of the benefits you could receive and for special transfer instructions.

IRA rollover gifts

Thanks to legislation enacted in 2015, you may be able to transfer a charitable distribution from your individual retirement account (IRA) to charity. Now that so few Americans can itemize to claim charitable gifts, this is one of your few opportunities to give and still save on taxes.

- You must be 70 1/2 years or older.
- Your gift counts toward your required minimum distribution but is not included in your taxable income.
- Your IRA administrator must make the distribution directly to the charity, or if you have an IRA checkbook, you may write a check to the DAV Charitable Service Trust.
- For more instructions, and to ensure we receive your full name and address for an IRA gift coming from your fiduciary, please contact us or get started using this link: freewill.com/qcd/dav.
- You can also name IRA funds to DAV through a simple change of beneficiary form. IRA funds left to nonspouse heirs are heavily taxed.

Real estate gifts: New giving opportunity

- Visit dav.org/real-estate-donation to initiate a real estate gift, such as a second home, or contact us to learn more. You can also leave real estate to DAV through your estate plan. ■



Jay and Robyn Jaffin saved on taxes and extended their deep gratitude to veterans by transferring stock to DAV.



For more information about giving to DAV

- Call 800-216-9802, press 1
- Email giftplanning@dav.org
- Visit davplanmygift.org

As always, consult with your tax adviser to discuss your situation and any impact of your state's laws.

Toxic exposure legislation gains steam

■ A pair of bills addressing the long-lasting and lethal health effects of toxic exposures are making progress in Congress. Both DAV-supported pieces of legislation would extend some much-needed relief to multiple generations of veterans.

The Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act of 2021 would address a wide range of exposures, including Agent Orange, burn pits, radiation, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) water contamination and the toxins at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base. The sweeping bill would expand health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs and establish a working group and review commission to advise the VA secretary on presumptive diseases related to toxic exposure.

Additionally, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs voted to send the Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act to a full floor vote in the House of Representatives. The bipartisan package, H.R. 3967, includes provisions that would help millions of veterans exposed to burn pits while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

DAV was the first charity to raise the issue of burn



U.S. Air Force fire protection specialists from the New Jersey Air National Guard douse a fire with foam during a training exercise at the Military Sealift Command Training Center East in Freehold. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, firefighting foams can be a major source of groundwater contamination at military bases where firefighting training occurs. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Air National Guard)

pits in 2007. Since then, DAV has continued to lead on legislative efforts and, in 2014, initiated a pilot for VA's Burn Pit Registry, which is now law.

VA reviewing 'Blue Water' Navy claims

■ To right past wrongs, thousands of rejected Blue Water Navy benefits claims are under review by the Department of Veterans Affairs after being compelled by a court order.

The 60,000 sailors who served on ships in eligible waters off the coast of Vietnam and claim Agent Orange exposure stand to benefit from the reevaluation. DAV was instrumental in the passage of critical legislation in 2019 that entitled these sailors, known as Blue Water Navy veterans, to

overdue veterans benefits, including compensation and health care.

Affected veterans whose claims were rejected because they didn't serve with boots on the ground in Vietnam will be automatically reevaluated.

"Veterans don't need to do anything to have their once-rejected claim reviewed," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "The U.S. District Court in Northern California rightly realizes that many Blue Water Navy veterans have

waited decades for justice, and time is running out."

Since 2019, the agency has distributed nearly \$1 billion in retroactive benefits based on more than 45,000 Blue Water veterans' claims.



Stay informed. Get updates on legislation affecting veterans and their families by joining DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at davic.org.

Hearing our HEROES

VA launches new ways to manage tinnitus among veterans

By Tom Jenkins

Tinnitus and hearing loss are among the most common service-connected disabilities suffered by veterans. While there is no cure or perfect solution, there are proven methods of treatment that help patients manage the persisting symptoms of tinnitus.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has forced physicians to develop new ways of reaching out to patients suffering from the disability.

“That’s when Tele-PTM becomes relevant,” said Dr. Tara Zaugg, a research audiologist for the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research with the Department of Veterans Affairs Portland Health Care System.

Progressive Tinnitus Management (PTM) is a structured format for providing evidence-based care to those suffering from tinnitus. The process begins with an in-person meeting and physician’s referral. Patients will then undergo audiological evaluation—much of which is traditionally done in person—to determine their needs for further assistance in taming their symptoms.

“It’s at this point of the patient’s care where we start teaching coping strategies to improve quality of life with tinnitus,” said Zaugg. “That’s done collaboratively between an audiologist and behavioral health. That can be done in person and, before the pandemic, was done in person. But now, it can also be provided



through telehealth. We have research-based evidence that shows this can be done effectively both in person and over telehealth.”

Most veterans with tinnitus do well with a basic level of care and counseling. There is, however, a subset of veterans who will continue to experience ongoing sleep disruptions, difficulty relaxing or concentrating in quiet places, and intense emotional reactions to their tinnitus that reduces the quality of life.

“That noise is my whole life,” said one patient of Zaugg. “It blows me out of bed in the morning, and it keeps me from sleeping at night. It affects everything. It’s got me by the nose, and it’s dragging me in the dirt. That’s where it’s at. It’s the most debilitating thing I’ve ever come across.”

In 2009, the VA endorsed the use of PTM for patients continually suffering from tinnitus. Since then, research has shown the coping strategies improve the quality of life with tinnitus for veterans who need assistance.

“Before PTM, I felt there was no medical solution to my problem,” said another patient. “I spent a lot more time stressing over it. The sessions helped me understand the condition better and ways of how to cope with it. With practice, I was able to not just cope with it but to dismiss it from most of my daily activities.”

Throughout the past year, in-person PTM has made the transition to remote services. Since the implementation of tele-PTM, clinicians have been able to reach veterans on a much broader scale.

“There are too many barriers when it comes to clinicians implementing this on their own,” said Zaugg. “This has resulted in veterans just not having

access to PTM. Often it’s not offered in their communities and not offered at their VA, so the potential for the tele-PTM program allows for a highly trained workforce that specializes in this, who then can reach out to patients over a broader geographic area.”

Tele-PTM is in the early stages of implementation across VA facilities around the country, even as veterans are able to access regular in-facility services.

“We’ve certainly seen a great need for telehealth services over the past year,” said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. “While we’re glad to see in-person services make a return, leveraging remote health capabilities can help serve veterans and allow them to manage their conditions in ways that are convenient and aligned with their needs.”

A study in 2019 done by the University of Texas at

San Antonio showed that incidence rates of tinnitus in active-duty military service members between 2001 and 2015 ranged between 1.84% and 6.33%. That steady incline of cases has forced VA health care systems to reassess their ability to help veterans cope with these issues.

“I know how ringing in the ear

affects PTSD and makes you think of some crazy things,” said another patient.

“Disabilities related to hearing have significant and substantial negative implications on veterans’ quality of life, employment and relationships,” Ilem said. “It’s one of the most isolating disabilities and is extremely widespread among veterans. Anything we can do to extend services to veterans in need of assistance is sincerely appreciated.” ■



“We have research-based evidence that shows [Progressive Tinnitus Management] can be done effectively both in person and over telehealth.”

—Dr. Tara Zaugg, research audiologist for the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research with the VA Portland Health Care System

Bryan ‘Cody’ VanBoxel

National Headquarters Assistant Executive Director

National Commander Andy Marshall and National Adjutant Marc Burgess announced the appointment of Bryan “Cody” VanBoxel as assistant executive director for the DAV National Headquarters in Erlanger, Kentucky, effective Aug. 3, 2021.

As assistant executive director, VanBoxel assists in overseeing employment initiatives, voluntary services, fundraising, accounting, membership activities, administration, information technology, communications, outreach and logistics critical to disabled veterans and their families.

In 2017, VanBoxel was appointed to the position of national human resources director, where his responsibilities included advising the executive director and providing executive oversight for DAV’s human resource initiatives. He also served as chairman of the organization’s National Headquarters Health and Safety Committee and continues to provide direct oversight of all facility construction and maintenance operations.

A native of Hambden, Ohio, VanBoxel enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in June 2003, serving as a Marine security guard in West Africa, Eastern Europe and

Asia. He spent nearly all of 2007 on duty in Iraq. He was honorably discharged as a sergeant in January 2009.

VanBoxel attended Western Governors University, earning a Bachelor of Science in business management. He is also a Society of Human Resources Management Senior Certified Professional.

VanBoxel began his career in 2011 as a national service officer apprentice at the DAV national service office in Washington, D.C. Following successful completion of the training program, he laterally transferred to the national service office in Philadelphia as an associate national service officer. In 2013, he was promoted to assistant supervisor prior to his advancement to national service office supervisor.

VanBoxel is a life member of DAV Chapter 19 in Highland Heights, Kentucky. He and his family reside in Union, Kentucky.

“Cody has progressed rapidly in DAV’s ranks because of his thoughtful leadership and commitment to our cause,” said Burgess. “We wish him the very best in this important role and know he will do an outstanding job in continued service to his fellow veterans, their families and survivors.” ■



VanBoxel



Blankets of love...

Volunteer youth group Girls in Action, from Lamar Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Texas, donated blankets for veterans using wheelchairs at the Oklahoma City VA Health Care System. Pictured, from left: volunteers Stacie Martin and Anna Powell, Commander Joel Jimenez of Chapter 41 of Wichita Falls, and Denise Boyd, Lamar Baptist Church Sunday School teacher.

From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DEBRA VARNER



A new hope

The term “follow your heart” might seem like a bit of a cliché, but each of us have unique gifts and unique callings. When we follow them in service to others, some amazing things can happen. We are encouraged to have hope and not give up. We are one people, with one voice, having the sound of unity. The gifts and callings to serve others are an honor and privilege when we do it together.

Our assignment is found at the intersection of having a purpose and a plan to achieve what seems impossible. What gives you a sense of satisfaction? What brings you joy? The desire to serve others is the passion of seeing others achieve their lifelong dreams and their desire to be the best that they can be in this life.

Through the expressions of love and service, our gifts are demonstrated clearly and unmistakably by allowing ourselves to be our “brother’s keeper.” Apart from the gift of love, we have nothing to give, and apart from serving, there is little else to offer. If you have not traveled this way of life before, in this season of a new beginning, allow the outflowing of love to spread from your heart.

A new heart,
a new mindset,
a new purpose—
with intent, “the
former things
are come to
pass” and **a new
outlook on life**
will begin.

After 20 years of war in Afghanistan, many of us are watching with heavy hearts as the Taliban return to power. We have a sacred duty to care for all veterans who were injured or made ill as a result of their military service. Right now, Afghanistan veterans need us to come together as a community and as an organization to support the complex emotions so many of them are processing.

I encourage you to reach out to one another. Whether you are personally feeling overwhelmed or if you know a fellow veteran or loved one who sacrificed so much in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, please make that connection. Be an instrument of camaraderie and love.

There is hope. Resources are available to help us all navigate these murky waters. But no one can do it alone. We need each other to continue the fight for the best services our country has to offer, as we have done for the past 100 years.

A new heart, a new mindset, a new purpose—with intent, “the former things are come to pass” and a new outlook on life will begin. I challenge you to not only follow your heart but to follow the path of life that was designed with you in mind.

In His Service.

DAV National Officers 2021-2022

National Commander

Andy Marshall, Florida

Senior Vice Commander

Joseph Parsetich, Montana

1st Junior Vice Commander

Nancy Espinosa, Utah

2nd Junior Vice Commander

Daniel Contreras, California

3rd Junior Vice Commander

Coleman Nee, Massachusetts

4th Junior Vice Commander

John Donovan, Arkansas

National Judge Advocate

Michael Dobmeier, North Dakota

National Chaplain

Debra Varner, Alabama

Past National Commander

Butch Whitehead, Minnesota



Front row, from left: Coleman Nee, John Donovan, Nancy Espinosa, Joseph Parsetich. **Back row, from left:** Michael Dobmeier, Andy Marshall, Daniel Contreras, Butch Whitehead, Debra Varner.

DAV NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

District 1

James Follis, Massachusetts

Alt: Francis Whitty, Massachusetts

District 2

Thomas Ingram, New York

Alt: N/A

District 3

Robert Guldner, New Hampshire

Alt: Joyce Gaddis, Maine

District 4

Ronald Werlich, Connecticut

Alt: Walter Applegate, New Jersey

District 5

Philip Arnold, Pennsylvania

Alt: Leonard Johnson, Pennsylvania

District 6

Michael Dawson, West Virginia

Alt: Nachee Miller, Washington, D.C.

District 7

Frank Chicollo, Florida

Alt: Mary Keckler, Florida

District 8

William Baker, Alabama

Alt: Charles Waugh, Alabama

District 9

Gregory Keesee, North Carolina

Alt: Jacqueline Tyes, North Carolina

District 10

James Dempsey, Michigan

Alt: Ricky Barenbrugge, Michigan

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Michael Stith, Ohio

Alt: Dennis Hanneman, Ohio

District 12

Eric Huckaby, Illinois

Alt: Kenneth Couture, Illinois

District 13

George Hall, Kentucky

Alt: Lee Ewing, Indiana

District 14

Robert Hill, South Dakota

Alt: Gaylord Helmbrecht, South Dakota

District 15

Karin Hansen, Kansas

Alt: David Gerke, Missouri

District 16

Clyde Maddox, California

Alt: Gerald Wilson, California

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Floyd Watson, Wyoming

Alt: Jerry Estes, Utah

District 18

Glenn Hohman, Arizona

Alt: Ronald Cox, Arizona

District 19

JoAnn Gavin, Washington

Alt: Stanley Gunno, Washington

District 20

Charles Edwards, Texas

Alt: Teresa Johniken, Texas

District 21

Danny Oliver, Oklahoma

Alt: John Donovan, Arkansas

Auxiliary National Officers 2021-2022



Front row, from left: Darlene Spence, AnnMarie Hurley, Melissa Pierce, Paula Raymond. **Back row, from left:** Linda Gerke, Diane Franz, Christopher J. Easley, Lynn Helms Prosser, Aura-Lee Nicodemus.

National Commander
Lynn Helms Prosser, South Carolina

Senior Vice Commander
Darlene Spence, Texas

1st Junior Vice Commander
AnnMarie Hurley, Massachusetts

2nd Junior Vice Commander
Christopher J. Easley, Oklahoma

3rd Junior Vice Commander
Melissa L. Pierce, Iowa

4th Junior Vice Commander
Terry Grabowski, New York *(not pictured)*

National Judge Advocate
Paula K. Raymond, Illinois

National Chaplain
Aura-Lee Nicodemus, New Hampshire

Past National Commander
Diane Franz, Florida

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Diane Sullivan, Massachusetts
Alt: Janet M. Pratt, Massachusetts

District 2

Linda A. Trulio, New Jersey
Alt: Janice Bailey, New York

District 3

Karen Rediker, Vermont
Alt: Erin P. O'Brien, Maine

District 4

Linda S. Applegate, New Jersey
Alt: Juliette Y. Velez, Delaware

District 5

Laurie A. Stopyra, Pennsylvania
Alt: N/A

District 6

Amy Bowser, Virginia
Alt: Jacqueline R. DuBose, Maryland

District 7

Maria Holloway, Florida
Alt: Amie Raber, Florida

District 8

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Alt: Shelia Stephens, Louisiana

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Alt: Theresa S. Brewer, North Carolina

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Alt: Linda G. Walters, Michigan

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Alt: Carol S. Parker-Park, Ohio

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Alt: Bonnie G. Wilkins, Illinois

District 13

Tawnya Kingsley, Kentucky
Alt: Ethan Kingsley, Kentucky

District 14

Karen Bolton, Minnesota
Alt: LeeAnn Karg, Minnesota

District 15

Robin Ballhagen, Missouri
Alt: Danny Pierce, Iowa

District 16

June McJunkin, California
Alt: Mary Lou Caldwell, California

District 17

Nancy G. Coffey, Texas
Alt: June Schow, Utah

District 18

Sharon L. Linton, Arizona
Alt: Holly M. Mulnix, Arizona

District 19

Kathy L. Clampitt, Oregon
Alt: N/A

District 20

Sharon K. Thornton, Texas
Alt: Kathy Dunham, Texas

District 21

Jennifer M. Hammons, Oklahoma
Alt: Linda Oliver, Oklahoma

REUNIONS

ARMY

1ST SIGNAL BRIGADE, VIETNAM, THAILAND & KOREA Sept. 15–19, Crystal City, VA. Contact: Bob Van Pelt, Ph: 518-210-2868, Email: bvpccsm@aol.com
25TH INFANTRY DIVISION ASSOCIATION Oct. 3–10, Honolulu, HI. Contact: Email: TropicLtn@aol.com
COMPANY B, 504TH MP BATTALION, PLEIKU MP ASSOCIATION Oct. 14–18, Washington, D.C., Contact: Harry Yates, Ph: 505-865-7359
RECON 3RD BATTALION, 47TH INFANTRY, 9TH DIVISION Oct. 29–30, Phoenix, AZ. Contact: JR Johnson, Email: rj68ss396@aol.com

MARINES

1ST BATTALION, 1ST MARINE REGIMENT, VIETNAM Oct. 6–10, San Antonio, TX. Contact: Samuel Verdja, Ph: 952-303-1534, Email: SamuelVerdja@yahoo.com
3RD RECON ASSOCIATION Oct. 5–10, Tucson, AZ. Contact: Floyd Nagler, Ph: 952-440-1553, Email: floydagler@yahoo.com
26TH MARINES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REUNION—REGIMENT, MEU & SUPPORTING UNITS (ALL ERAS) Sept. 30–Oct. 4, San Diego, CA. Contact: Sonny Hollub, Ph: 512-825-4730, Email: sonnyusmc@gmail.com, Web: 26thMarines.com
ANGLICO ASSOCIATION Oct. 7–10, San Diego, CA. Contact: Jack Olson, Email: olson79@gmail.com, or Reginald Owens, Ph: 760-212-1520, Email: owens.reginald33@gmail.com
THE BASIC SCHOOL (TBS) 3-72, COMPANY C Oct. 8–12, Quantico, VA. Contact: Joe Mueller, Ph: 818-815-8331, Email: jnm21213@yahoo.com

NAVY

TRADEVMAN (TD) Nov. 28–Dec. 2, Orlando, FL. Contact: Michael LeBlanc, Ph: 919-368-8793
USS ARNOLD J. ISBELL (DD-869) Nov. 12–15, Jacksonville, FL. Contact: Mickey Lawrence, Ph: 704-985-8724, Email: mickeylawrence869@gmail.com
USS BEALE (DD/DDE-471) Oct. 3–6, New Orleans, LA. Contact: Paul Barry, Ph: 321-338-5753, Email: ussbealeinc@gmail.com, Web: ussbealedd-dde471.org
USS CANBERRA (CA-70/CAG-2) NAVY AND MARINE SHIPMATES Oct. 13–17, Pittsburgh, PA. Contact: Ken Minick, Ph: 740-423-8976, Email: usscanberra@gmail.com, Web: usscanberra.com
USS HOLLISTER (DD-788) Oct. 6–10, Albuquerque, NM. Contact: Casey Orr, Ph: 319-377-4759, Email: cworr78@gmail.com, Web: usshollister.org

REUNION STORIES

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

PLANNING A REUNION?

We welcome submissions from our readers for reunions and inquiries. Email the details to feedback@dav.org. Submissions must be received at least six months prior to the event date and are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety.

USS OAK HILL (LSD-7), USS CARTER HALL (LSD-3) & USS CATAMOUNT (LSD-17) Oct. 28–31, Oklahoma City, OK. Contact: Raylah Holm, Ph: 509-607-9021, Email: raylah@aol.com, Web: ussoakhillsd7.myevent.com
USS PATRICK HENRY (SSBN-599) Nov. 4–7, Kings Bay, GA. Contact: Ron Pelletier, Ph: 508-769-2360, Email: rpelle9011@aol.com
USS PAUL (DE/FF-1080) Oct. 8–10, Norfolk, VA. Contact: Kim Atkins, Ph: 843-359-0354, Email: seadragon1080@gmail.com
USS ROBERT A. OWENS (DDK/DDE/DD-827) Oct. 4–7, Pittsburgh, PA. Contact: Bill Miller, Ph: 412-622-4154, Email: billmiller15644@gmail.com
USS SARATOGA (CV-3 & CVA/CV-60), ALL SQUADRONS & SHIPS COMPANY Oct. 19–24, Mobile, AL. Contact: Bill Lack, Ph: 513-315-2251, Email: willamlack@gmail.com, Web: uss-saratoga.com
USS VANCE (DE/DER-387 & WDE-487) Sept. 19–24, Norfolk, VA. Contact: Jim Ensey, Ph: 410-442-9839, Email: nununz@verizon.net, Web: ussvance.com

AIR FORCE

55TH & 58TH WEATHER RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRONS Sept. 15–17, Branson, MO. Contact: Joe Devenport, Ph: 228-222-2434, Email: joe.devenport@sbcglobal.net
612TH, 613TH & 614TH F-4 PHANTOM TACTICAL FIGHTER SQUADRONS, TORREJÓN AB, SPAIN Oct. 28–31, Orlando, FL. Contact: Jim “Babymac” McCormick, Email: jimccor284@gmail.com
AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION Oct. 6–10, Fort Walton Beach, FL. Contact: Jim Dunn, Email: ac119JimD@aol.com, Web: ac119gunships.com
MAXWELL-GUNTER ALUMNI REUNION Oct. 6–11, Las Vegas, NV. Contact: Laura Wilson-Leonard, Email: lewileonard@yahoo.com; Elnora Seabrooks-Fluellen, Email: elnorafuellen@gmail.com; or Janet “JJ” Hawkins, Email: jdhawk60@gmail.com
TYNDALL SECURITY POLICE-FORCES ASSOCIATION (325 AP/SP/SF) Nov. 12–13, Panama City Beach, FL. Contact: Joey Williams, Ph: 334-797-3612, Email: ford65pu@yahoo.com

ALL SERVICES

PLEIKU AIR BASE, VIETNAM, AND SURROUNDING AREA Sept. 12–15, Harrisburg, PA. Contact: Ron Chromulak, Ph: 412-515-7247, Web: pleikuab.com

INQUIRIES

- Searching for anyone who remembers this incident: Seven-man recon team needed an immediate extraction. In a running firefight with approximately 30 NVA in North Vietnam, two men were wounded: one shot in the shoulder and the team leader shot in the leg. My seven-man team, 1st Team, 1st Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, flew over 10 minutes full speed on a CH-53 due north from the DMZ in 1969. Contact: Jeff Campbell, Ph: 216-939-9484, Email: scjc123@att.net
- Searching for anyone who witnessed the events of May 20, 1968, concerning Spc. 4 Paul Parramatta of Troop D, 1st Squad, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, in Thừa Thiên Huế Province, Vietnam. He was killed in action by hostile small arms enemy fire while attempting to save a downed helicopter crew. Contact: Felix DiPaolo, Email: fdipaolo1@verizon.net
- Searching for Richard Guidry. We served together at The II Field Force, near Long Binh, in 1968 and 1969. At that time his address was Breaux Bridge, LA. Contact: Gary Blankenhorn, Ph: 317-902-3340 (cell) or 317-535-1095 (home), Email: gblhorn77@yahoo.com
- Searching for Bobby Byrd from Valdosta, GA, who was stationed with me with Marine Aircraft Group 12 in Chu Lai in 1967. Contact: Ellison Davison, Email: eldavison@bellsouth.net
- Searching for Air Force medical personnel who served at the hospital at Westover ARB from 1971 to 1974. Contact: Howard Clapper, Email: hobie_fifty@hotmail.com
- Searching for Ed Hepler from Breckenridge, PA. I served in the Marines with him in Vietnam in 1964 and 1965. Contact: Denis May, Ph: 914-588-6679, Email: denismay@comcast.net

- Searching for any members of Naval Air Squadron VP-2 who served at NAS Whidbey Island from April 1966 to December 1967. Contact: Bob Nielsen, Email: rsoren47@gmail.com
- Searching for anyone who deployed from Seymour-Johnson AFB, NC, to Ubon AB in Thailand in April 1972 then deployed from Ubon to Biên Hòa AB in Vietnam for a short period. We were sent to Biên Hòa to load munitions and turn F-4 aircraft rapidly. Contact: Charles (Chuck) Meyer, Email: cdmeyer49@yahoo.com
- Searching for another Marine that was medevaced from Chu Lai to B-MED or Da Nang by an old H-34D helicopter. I flew YP-13 for the first night and the next day. Contact: Lee Vanlue (DAV service officer), Email: vanlue@optonline.net
- Searching for anyone who was in the 11th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS), 11th TDS, 22th TRS, 38th TRS or 62nd TRS and worked in a photo processing & interpretation facility (PIPIF), processing film off RF-101C Voodoo, RF-4C Phantom II, RC-130A, RC-135A and drones. Looking for old friends. Contact: Daniel Edwards, Email: logical@gwtc.net
- Searching for anyone who was in Airborne Graduating Class 27 of Feb. 15, 1974. Contact: Ricardo Alonso, Ph: 614-325-0431, Email: ric071@columbus.rr.com
- Searching for members of the 72nd Engineer Company, 197th Infantry Brigade, Fort Benning, GA (31509) with knowledge of Spc. 4 Stephen J. Ritzel who disappeared in October 1978. He was declared AWOL by the U.S. Army. Contact: Charles Ritzel, Ph: 407-56-9727, Email: cjritz1961@yahoo.com
- Searching for Paul Junior Schnabel, corpsman in Company K, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division. Contact: Leonardo Guzman, Ph: 860-246-2491
- Searching for an Army medic from the Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade, from 1965 to 1967. The medic's wife was also the captain of nurses. Contact: Donald Test, Ph: 901-497-1827
- Searching for Donald Silva from California, who was with the 372nd Radio Research Company attached to the 25th Infantry Division, Cu Chi, Vietnam, 1966–67. Contact: Danny Lorton, Email: lortonr@bellsouth.net
- Searching for Ranger John Howard whom I served with in Vietnam in 1968 with Company A, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, Army. Contact: Thomas Robinson, Email: thomastrobinson@verizon.net
- Searching for Steve Christenson who served in Vietnam in the 442nd Transportation Company, Cam Ranh Bay, 1970. I was injured and in a coma when I left in November 1970. Contact: Robert Quattlebaum, Ph: 334-596-6299, Email: rbquatt@centurylink.net
- Searching for anyone who served in the 9th Organizational Maintenance Squadron at Beale AFB, CA, in 1967 and 1968. Contact: Freddy Nail, Ph: 501-794-0591 or 501-249-5591
- Searching for anyone who was in Butzbach, Germany, from December 1955 until August 1958. We were in Battery C, 54th Field Artillery Battalion, 3rd Armored Division. Contact: John Smith, Email: avsjts@hotmail.com
- Searching for anyone who served with U.S. Army Pfc. James A. Green, Company D, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. He was killed in action June 18, 1970, while on patrol near Srae Khtum, Mondulkiri Province, Cambodia. I am his first cousin and looking for anyone who served with James on that fateful day who could share stories or photos of him during his time in Vietnam. Information to be used for a family history project. Contact: Richelle Kemnow, Email: desertfox1a@q.com
- Searching for Army members who may have known my brother Joseph Hopp. He was at Camp Joseph T. Robinson in North Little Rock, AR. He was shot and killed by a sniper in Germany on Nov. 5, 1944. He is buried in the Netherlands American Cemetery. Contact: Henry Hopp, Ph: 410-200-7931
- Searching for anyone who served in Platoon 2124 beginning November 1971 at MCRD San Diego, CA. The drill instructors were Sgt. Blea, Sgt. Messoner, Sgt. Friedersdorf and Sgt. Thrasher. Looking for Pvts. Carter, Cardinale, Wilson, Garcia, La Voie, Hull, Simmons, Bishop, Reynolds, Raymond and others. Contact: E. Mike Tarver, Ph: 409-673-9893



2022

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Participation is open to U.S. military veterans with qualifying disabilities such as spinal cord injuries, orthopedic amputation, visual impairments and certain neurological problems. Veterans who currently have inpatient or outpatient status at VA medical facilities will have first priority. Due to the challenges presented by the ongoing pandemic, all participants will be required to provide COVID-19 vaccination status in order to attend. ■



Quilt of Valor...

Ron Fowler (left) of Chapter 1 in Caldwell, Idaho, presents to 97-year-old World War II Army veteran Thomas L. Prall a Quilt of Valor, which was crafted by Fowler's wife, Connie. The Quilt of Valor is awarded to a veteran who has been touched by war. A DAV life member since 1961, Prall was wounded in the Battle of Okinawa.

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Thank you for your service

Golden Corral and DAV are proud to relaunch the annual Military Appreciation Night on **Thursday, Nov. 11, 2021**, between 5 and 9 p.m. Participating Golden Corral restaurants nationwide will welcome our nation's veterans and active-duty military men and women to a free buffet dinner and drink and tons of camaraderie.

Over the past 20 years, DAV departments and chapters have raised nearly \$17 million in donations as a result of the annual tradition. That's not all, as nearly 6 million free meals have also been served. Military Appreciation Night is Golden Corral's way of saying "Thank You" to our nation's veterans and active-duty military. Be sure to visit the DAV information table.

Due to the ongoing and ever-evolving coronavirus pandemic, please be sure to visit the Members Only section of [DAV.org](https://www.dav.org) for the most recent updates pertaining to this year's Military Appreciation Night activities.

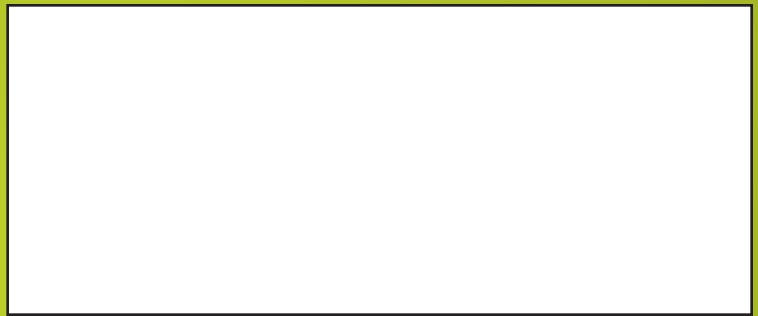


Share your evening! Send photos of your chapter or department at a Military Appreciation Night event to production@dav.org by Nov. 19, and your photo could be selected for the January/February edition of *DAV Magazine*.

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