



THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF DAV AND AUXILIARY

MARCH | APRIL 2022

# MAGAZINE

## WE ARE DAV



How women veterans are  
leading, shaping and advancing  
the organization | Page 18



2022 Department Conventions				
Department	City	Convention Headquarters	Dates	Banquet
Alabama	Montgomery	Embassy Suites	June 2–4	June 4
Alaska	Wasilla	Best Western Lake Lucille Inn	April 1–2	TBD
Arizona	Tucson	Sheraton Tucson Hotel	June 8–11	June 10
Arkansas	North Little Rock	Wyndham Riverfront Little Rock	June 10–11	June 11
California	Indian Wells	Miramonte Resort & Spa	May 11–15	May 14
Colorado	Aurora	Radisson Hotel Denver–Aurora	May 11–13	May 13
Connecticut	Cromwell	Courtyard by Marriott Hartford Cromwell	May 5–7	May 7
Delaware	Camden	Comfort Suites	May 13–14	May 14
District of Columbia	Washington	National Service and Legislative Headquarters	May 21	TBD
Florida	Lake Mary	Lake Mary Marriott	June 16–18	June 18
Georgia	Macon	Macon Marriott City Center	June 2–5	June 4
Hawaii		TBD		
Idaho	Boise	Riverside Hotel	April 26–30	April 29
Illinois	Springfield	Northfield Inn Suites	June 9–12	June 11
Indiana	Indianapolis	Indianapolis Marriott East	June 10–11	June 11
Iowa	Dubuque	Grand Harbor Resort	June 3–5	June 4
Kansas	Lawrence	DoubleTree by Hilton Lawrence	June 17–19	June 18
Kentucky	Lexington	Embassy Suites	June 22–26	June 25
Louisiana	Alexandria	Hotel Bentley of Alexandria	May 12–15	May 14
Maine	Waterville	Best Western Plus Waterville Grand Hotel	April 28–May 1	April 30
Maryland	Ocean City	The Grand Hotel	May 16–20	May 19
Massachusetts	Leominster	DoubleTree by Hilton Leominster Hotel	June 16–19	June 17
Michigan	Mount Pleasant	Soaring Eagle Hotel & Resort	June 27–July 1	June 28
Minnesota	St. Cloud	Best Western Kelly Inn	April 28–30	April 29
Mississippi	Gulfport	Courtyard by Marriott Gulfport Beachfront	April 29–May 3	April 30
Missouri	Jefferson City	Courtyard Jefferson City	June 3–5	June 4
Montana	Great Falls	Holiday Inn	June 2–4	June 3
Nebraska	Kearney	Holiday Inn Convention Center	May 6–8	May 7
Nevada	Sparks	Nugget Casino Resort	May 14–17	May 17
New Hampshire	Nashua	DoubleTree by Hilton Nashua	June 10–12	June 11
New Jersey	Wildwood	Bolero Resort & Conference Center	June 12–15	June 14
New Mexico	Albuquerque	Ramada by Wyndham Albuquerque Midtown	June 9–11	June 10
New York	Callicoon	Villa Roma Resort & Conference Center	June 26–29	June 29
North Carolina	Greensboro	Sheraton Greensboro Four Seasons Hotel	June 9–12	June 11
North Dakota	Fargo	Ramada by Wyndham	April 8–10	April 8
Ohio	Dublin	Embassy Suites Dublin	June 23–26	June 25
Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	Embassy Suites Oklahoma City NW	June 7–9	June 8
Oregon	Portland	Shilo Inn Suites Hotel	May 14–15	May 14
Pennsylvania	Harrisburg	Best Western Premier The Central Hotel & Conf. Center	June 23–25	June 24
Puerto Rico	Guaynabo	Holiday Inn Express on Fort Buchanan & Hyatt Place Hotel in Bayamon	April 22–24	TBD
Rhode Island	Warwick	Crowne Plaza Providence–Warwick	March 31–April 2	April 2
South Carolina	Columbia	DoubleTree by Hilton Columbia	May 20–21	May 21
South Dakota	Rapid City	Rushmore Hotel & Suites	April 8–10	April 10
Tennessee	Chattanooga	Embassy Suites by Hilton Chattanooga Hamilton Place	June 12–17	June 16
Texas	San Marcos	Embassy Suites	June 17–19	June 18
Utah	Layton	Comfort Suites by Marriott	June 2–4	June 4
Vermont	West Dover	Mount Snow Resort	May 20–21	TBD
Virginia	Roanoke	Holiday Inn Tanglewood–Roanoke	June 16–19	June 18
Washington	Wenatchee	Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel	June 14–19	June 17
West Virginia	Sutton	Days Inn & Suites by Wyndham Sutton Flatwoods	June 3–4	June 4
Wisconsin	Green Bay	Radisson Hotel & Conference Center	June 9–11	June 11
Wyoming	Sheridan	Best Western Sheridan Center	April 29–May 1	April 30

## From the NATIONAL COMMANDER ANDY MARSHALL



### Beware of spring darkness

**F**or many, spring is a welcome time of year. Snowdrifts are disappearing, flowers are blooming, and wildlife is returning to our backyards and bird feeders. But for others, the season brings a perilousness that many of us may not be aware of. And it's a situation we should all work to address once it enters our consciousness.

I was extraordinarily surprised earlier this year to learn that the national suicide rate spikes during the spring months. It's confusing, because spring marks the end of the darkness of winter and represents new hope and life. Puzzled by this new information, I began researching to try to find the reason why this is, but could not find a definitive answer. That is, until I reached out to some of our brothers- and sisters-in-arms.

Some posited that the end of the holiday season leaves people in a rut, while others opined that the answer may lie in biochemistry. While there is truth in both answers, one statement stood out to me the most: Even though the weather gets better, the problems people faced ahead of the holidays are still there.

That simple explanation hit me like a ton of bricks and saddened me because our country, our organization, the Department of Veterans Affairs and communities nationwide all have the resources to help improve the plights that lead to the suicide of our nation's veterans.

Depression, substance abuse, unemployment, financial hardships and relationship problems are contributing factors to suicide. And all of them can be addressed with proper recognition and intervention, which are especially consequential given that nearly three-quarters of veterans who die by suicide are not enrolled in VA care.

Fortunately, the VA has recently initiated efforts to eliminate copayments for outpatient appointments and to decrease medication copays for veterans considered at high risk for suicide. The VA says this is being done to help encourage veterans to seek mental health treatment, because research shows that frequent medical visits can decrease the risk for suicide.

I applaud the VA for taking this step. I also humbly ask you to pay special attention during these coming months and for your assistance in helping identify veterans at risk for suicide. Please encourage them to get the treatment and assistance they may need.

No one knows veterans better than other veterans. We all share an unbreakable bond that was forged when each of us raised our right hands and swore an oath to defend this country. It's a bond that continues even after we take our uniforms off for the final time. And it's a bond that can turn someone's dark spring into a season of sunshine.



## CONTENTS

- 1** As the season changes, National Commander Andy Marshall turns his focus to mental health and how veterans can be there for each other in challenging times.
- 3** National Adjutant Marc Burgess looks to a line from the 1930s to guide local DAV operations and encourage membership growth.
- 12** DAV's partnership with NFL Hall of Famer LaDainian Tomlinson's Team America is introducing a new generation to volunteering and promoting leadership through service.
- 15** New DAV-backed legislation looks to improve the VA claims process and enhance mental health resources for veterans who have experienced military sexual trauma.
- 16** When violent tornadoes touched down across Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee and Missouri, DAV's Disaster Relief Program was there to assist veterans affected by the devastation.
- 26** Take to the skies: DAV Charitable Service Trust is helping support veterans' mental health and resilience thousands of feet above the ground through skydiving.

DAV MAGAZINE • March/April 2022

Contact us: [dav.org](http://dav.org) • Toll-Free 877-426-2838 • 860 Dolwick Drive, Erlanger, KY 41018 • [feedback@dav.org](mailto:feedback@dav.org). Volume 64, Issue 2, *DAV Magazine* (ISSN 0885-6400). Editorial Office: DAV Magazine, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301. Telephone 859-441-7300 or toll-free (877) I AM A VET. Published and circulated bimonthly bulletin by the Disabled American Veterans, a congressionally chartered, nonprofit organization, P.O. Box 14301, Cincinnati, OH 45250-0301. DAV homepage is [dav.org](http://dav.org). Available on recording for the blind and those with physical handicaps that preclude reading printed material. The magazine is mailed free to DAV and Auxiliary members who are paid subscribers. Nonmembers may subscribe for \$15 per year. Periodical postage paid at office of publication, Newport, KY 41071, and at additional offices. Printed in the U.S.A. Change of Address: When notifying of a change of address, send former as well as new address, including ZIP code, to: DAV Magazine, DAV National Headquarters, P.O. Box 145550, Cincinnati, OH 45250-5550. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to DAV Magazine, DAV National Headquarters, P.O. Box 145550, Cincinnati, OH 45250-5550.



## FEATURES

**8**



**Patriot Boot Camp:** A new DAV acquisition aims to put veteran entrepreneurs on the path to greater success.

*Photo by MX/Hilary Harmon, Dan Herbas, Cameron Bullock*

**18**



In communities across the nation, women veterans are stepping into leadership roles with DAV and changing the way the organization serves this growing population.

**22**



Marine veteran and DAV volunteer recounts his harrowing experience in Vietnam and how it inspired his life of service.

**Andy Marshall** National Commander

**J. Marc Burgess** National Adjutant/Publisher

**Barry A. Jesinoski** National Headquarters Executive Director

**Daniel J. Clare** Chief Communications and Outreach Officer

**Rob Lewis** National Communications Director

**Ashleigh Byrnes** Deputy National Communications Director

**M. Todd Hunter** Deputy National Communications Director-Outreach and Media

**Matt Saintsing** Assistant National Communications Director

**Brian Buckwalter** Senior Communications Associate

**Chris Mayhew** Communications Writer

**Elizabeth DePompei** Communications Writer

**Doreen Briones** Production Manager

**Marissa Coffenberry** Senior Graphic Designer

**Michelle Bradburn** Graphic Production Assistant



## From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS



### Give a vet a job

**W**e're ages past the old black-and-white newsreels and ads played in movie theaters. These days, most of us are content to kick back on the couch and stream the latest news and entertainment right into our homes.

But I happened to catch a glimpse of a Jimmy Durante clip from 1933 the other day. It was the old classic, "Give a Man a Job" bit, where the comical celebrity huffed out a few bars in support of the now-defunct National Recovery Administration in his well-known, gravelly voice.

The message, of course, was intended to bolster job creation during the Great Depression, when—at the time of this film—unemployment had peaked at 25.6%.

Times now are much different, with a wealth of jobs and a national worker shortage, flipping Durante's song on its head. Employers must now look to creative hiring initiatives to attract staff to fill vacancies, and talented individuals can take their pick.

While I believe this new dynamic gives our veterans and transitioning service members a distinct advantage in the workforce, this song makes me think just as much about our chapter and department operations as it does about veteran hiring.

One question I hear every year at our mid-winter and national convention events is "How do we attract new members?"

While there's no single answer, and there's certainly no magic formula, I think one of the most important aspects of recruiting can be found within Durante's song. We aren't recruiting people just to boost our numbers. We're doing it to strengthen our reach and our ability to serve our community's veterans and their families.

To do that, we must be willing to give our new members a sense of purpose right from the get-go. We have to find a way to give them a job to do.

I appreciate seeing so many creative new approaches to recruiting members at the local level. Highlighting your varied skills and offering unique programs is a great way to diversify your appeal to potential new DAV members. And while everyone has a different desired level of engagement, we run the risk of losing people if we can't find ways to put their talents to good use.

The vast majority of veterans don't surrender their passion for service when they hang up their uniform for the last time. It's up to us to find ways to inspire our newest members and help them discover ways they can lead, grow and continue to serve.



### Learn More Online

For access to resources to engage and orient new veterans and effectively function as a DAV member leader, visit the Members Only section of [dav.org](http://dav.org).



## Medal of Honor recipient

It's about time Sgt. 1st Class Alwyn Cashe be recognized [with the Medal of Honor] for his selfless service and giving his life for his soldiers. God bless Cashe and his family! **Tom Christie, Junction City, Kansas**

**Editor's note:** For more on Sgt. 1st Class Cashe, check out the March/April 2021 edition of DAV Magazine.

## National Family Caregivers Month

Personally, I will never be able to thank my beautiful, caring wife enough for her tireless support as a caregiver each and every day. Not only for me but for our sons as well. She is the absolute best and without a doubt the strongest person I have ever met in my life. She doesn't know the meaning of the word quit. She continuously lives by example the words love and devotion.

**Brian Gagnon, via LinkedIn**

## Service dog dilemma

Here's the problem: The VA says that "service" dogs are for those veterans with physical disabilities. For those of us with PTSD, support dogs are "therapy" dogs. Congress needs to set national certification for both "service" and "therapy" dogs and put teeth into enforcement rules. DAV Magazine featured an eye-opening article on this subject in 2019.

**Francis Carroll, via Facebook**

## 30-Year Achievement: Army veteran becomes first woman to reach three decades as a DAV national service officer

Congratulations, Tori Joyner [first female 30-year DAV national service officer]! It is awesome helping veterans achieve a great life after serving the nation so proudly! **Thomas McKinney, Canandaigua, New York**

## Mefloquine

I was wondering if DAV has been doing any investigation into Lariam (mefloquine). I've been suffering from its effects since 1997. I have buddies who have problems, but doctors know nothing about it, including VA doctors. **Name withheld by request, via Facebook**

**Editor's note:** At the 2021 DAV National Convention, DAV Resolution No. 315 was passed to support the enactment of legislation to establish presumptive service connection for the long-term health effects caused by anti-malarial drugs, including mefloquine.

## Positive acknowledgment

I received my November/December 2021 DAV Magazine and wanted to comment on a letter from Gary Luken. I think most veterans appreciate any kind of positive acknowledgment, even though he believes he doesn't need it. I am disappointed that you would even put his letter in your magazine. I see it as somewhat negative, and that's the last thing any veteran needs, especially combat veterans.

**Gary Schuler, via Facebook**

## DAV Honor Garden

I am so very grateful to be able to honor Dennis Phillips, my father, by purchasing a permanent brick in DAV's Honor Garden. It is a great

way for me to show my appreciation and gratitude for the life of sacrifices that veterans lived, and I know that the money used to purchase it will be used to help other veterans in need. **Dennis Phillips, Miamisburg, Ohio**

**Editor's note:** If you would like to purchase a brick in DAV's Honor Garden to recognize a veteran in your life, visit [ihelpveterans.org/content/bricks](http://ihelpveterans.org/content/bricks).

## Agent Orange claim assistance

I write to commend [DAV National Service Office Supervisor] David Bennett for his service to disabled veterans in general but specifically for serving as advocate for a dear friend of mine. [My friend] has developed an aggressive case of Parkinson's disease that includes Lewy body dementia. Both of these disorders have been linked to Agent Orange exposure, and David was able to develop a VA claim based on my friend's service records and the nature of his disease. The VA recently recognized the validity of the claim with a finding of 100% disability. This finding will make a huge difference in the kind of care that my friend is able to receive, and it will enable his wife to provide better support as well as to devote more of her time to research at the National Cancer Institute. In my estimation, David Bennett is a miracle worker.

**William Ranger, Washington, D.C.**

**WRITE TO US** Please send feedback to DAV Magazine, 860 Dolwick Drive, Erlanger, KY 41018, or via email to [feedback@dav.org](mailto:feedback@dav.org). We also welcome feedback on our Facebook ([facebook.com/DAV](https://facebook.com/DAV)), Twitter ([twitter.com/davhq](https://twitter.com/davhq)) and LinkedIn ([linkedin.com/company/davhq](https://linkedin.com/company/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.



# Veterans legislation— what's new in 2022

Updating VA burn pit registry,  
Global War on Terrorism Memorial,  
and transitioning veterans  
employment program part of  
defense spending bill

By Matt Saintsing

**A**fter Congress enacted sweeping legislation late last year, veterans can expect the expansion of the Department of Veterans Affairs' burn pit registry to two additional countries, a new memorial dedicated to those who served in conflicts since 9/11 and the restart of a program aimed at getting transitioning veterans teaching in classrooms across America.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022, signed into law on Dec. 27, outlines \$768 billion in spending and sets policy for the Pentagon. The legislation also contains multiple provisions that will directly affect veterans.

While the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are over, the long-lasting adverse health effects from burn pits will continue to manifest for decades to come. The new law expands the VA's Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry to include pits operated in Egypt and Syria.

Veterans are eligible to participate in the registry if they deployed to various countries in the Middle East after Aug. 2, 1990, or Afghanistan or Djibouti on or after Sept. 11, 2001. Veterans who served in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom and New Dawn are already eligible.

In 2008, DAV was the first major veterans organization to bring up in the media the issue of the toxic and ubiquitous practice of open-air burn pits. DAV also initiated a pilot program for the burn pit registry, signed into law in 2014, and continues its advocacy on this critical veterans issue.

Another NDAA provision with post-9/11 veterans in mind is the authorization of the National Global

War on Terrorism Memorial. The memorial will be located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to honor those who have served in the ongoing international military campaigns since 9/11.

Additionally, the Pentagon is now required under the NDAA to relaunch its Troops to Teachers program. Since 1993, the program has helped guide transitioning service members into meaningful civilian employment in education. The program briefly ended in October of last year but will now be extended into 2025.

Also included in the annual defense authorization bill is a requirement for the Defense Department to conduct a study on the prevalence of breast cancer among troops. The provision directs the Pentagon to assess current mammography screening policies, including for women veterans who served in proximity to burn pits, which could aid in the earlier detection of the disease for women veterans in the future.

“Inclusion of these veterans provisions in the annual defense authorization bill was a great way to end 2021,” said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. “As we look at the year ahead, DAV will continue to advocate for those who have bravely worn our nation’s uniform and will continue advancing additional key veterans legislation during the second session of the 117th Congress.” ■



**Learn More Online**

Find updates to other major veteran legislation by joining DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at [DAVCAN.org](http://DAVCAN.org).



# This dentistry started with HEART

## Dentist gives back after DAV helped with Agent Orange claim

By Chris Mayhew

**U**.S. Navy veteran John Macdonald's work to improve the smiles of hundreds of veterans started four years ago, all because of his heart. No, not because of an overwhelming compassion or affection for veterans—although that is certainly part of it—but because of his actual heart.

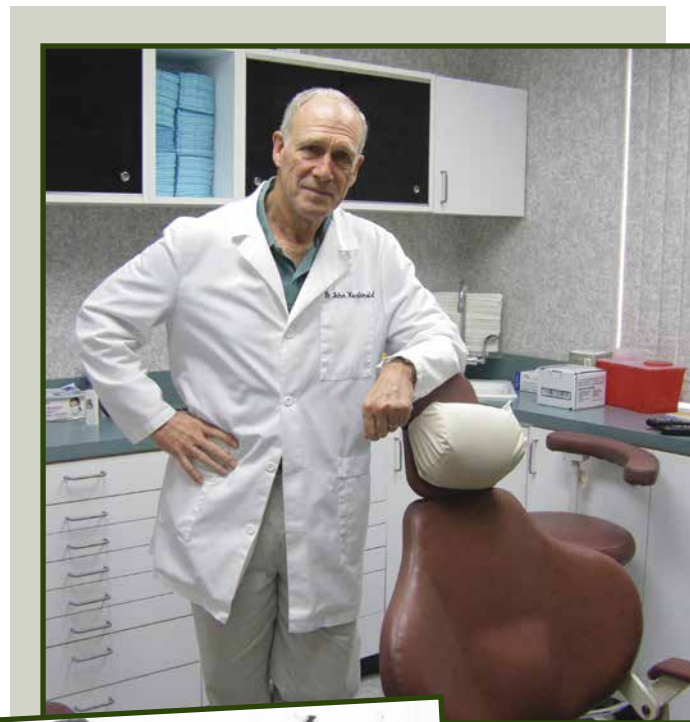
Macdonald enlisted in the Navy in 1966, and later joined Underwater Demolition Team 11. He served multiple tours in Vietnam before being honorably discharged in 1970, going on to earn his doctorate in kinesiology and managing a Naval Research Office research dive study.

Between racing in triathlons, raising kids and managing his studies, Macdonald moved home to Missouri with his family in the 1990s and ultimately became a dentist. It was there that, after suffering a heart attack, he first came to DAV for information about Agent Orange exposure. Benefits advocate Thomas Becker in DAV's office in St. Louis filed a successful claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs on Macdonald's behalf in 2018 for coronary artery disease.

"I would have never been able to do it on my own," Macdonald said of DAV's assistance navigating the claims process.

He became a DAV life member and started attending meetings, where he got to know other veterans and listened to their concerns. One thing in particular struck him: frequent stories about his fellow veterans' difficulties accessing dental care.

Although DAV supports the expansion of the VA dental care benefit under Resolution No. 018, only veterans with a service-connected disability rating



**Top:** John Macdonald at his dentist office in Frontenac, Missouri.

**Middle and bottom:** Macdonald in 1970 near Hoi An in Vietnam.

of 100%, veterans with a service-connected dental condition, former prisoners of war and homeless veterans are currently eligible.

"I just thought it was something disabled veterans should have, and I thought, I can do it," Macdonald said.

He asked DAV Chapter 1 in St. Louis to help offset the costs of the dental work, and in turn, he donated his

services, including full or partial dentures, routine teeth cleanings, crowns and dental bridges to veterans.

Macdonald has been running a free dental clinic for service-disabled veterans out of his office in Frontenac, Missouri, for three years. To date, he has provided more than \$80,000 in free services to 150 veterans who wouldn't have been able to get any dental care.

Macdonald said he remembers one veteran who was distraught, having lost all of his teeth before he came for free dentistry work. Having proper dental care can make a difference in someone's life, he said.

"DAV believes that dental care is an important part of overall preventive health care, and we'll continue to advocate for that benefit to be expanded," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "But until such time as we're successful in doing that, it's amazing to see how our services have helped to inspire Mr. Macdonald to give back in such a meaningful way."

The path to service is not always straightforward. In this case, it was Macdonald's heart attack and DAV's



Macdonald (left) and benefits advocate Thomas Becker at a meeting for DAV Chapter 1 in St. Louis in December.

subsequent assistance that ignited a fire in him to want to give back, Becker said.

"He's extremely dedicated to helping out people," Becker said. "It's humbling to see him doing something like this—it's awesome." ■



## Honor Garden

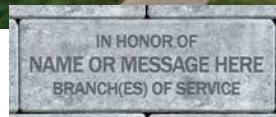
A living monument to our nation's heroes

### Purchase a Commemorative Brick

Honor a veteran and be part of the historic DAV Honor Garden monument at the National Headquarters in Erlanger, Kentucky.



Courtesy of Wls Bettelotte



### WAYS TO RESERVE YOUR BRICK TODAY!

- Call 877-647-VETS (8387).
- Visit [dav.org/bricks](http://dav.org/bricks).
- Scan the QR code.



# Unlocking 'POWER and POTENTIAL'



## How a 'new' DAV program will foster mission-driven entrepreneurs in veteran, military community

By Elizabeth DePompei

**A**rmy Special Forces veteran Nick Culbertson had no initial interest in becoming a business owner, but when he struggled to secure grant funding for a research project while in medical school, he discovered the world of venture capital.

"I was working on a research project that spun out of control and turned into a company," Culbertson said.

That project became Protenus, a business using artificial intelligence to track hospital compliance with patient privacy laws and detect fraud, such as data theft or drug diversion. The company now employs 115 people, is in more than 1,000 hospitals across the country and has raised \$15 million in capital.

Culbertson attributes his company's speedy success in part to Patriot Boot Camp, a program that since 2012 has helped veterans, service members and military spouses become entrepreneurs through multiday workshops with business experts and a community of mentors.

In January, after years of support for the organization's mission, DAV took the unprecedented step of acquiring Patriot Boot Camp, formerly an independent charity, as a DAV program. The move allows Patriot Boot Camp to grow in terms of the number of events it facilitates and the scope of services and reach it provides veteran entrepreneurs.

"It's unusual for the board of a charity to transfer its assets to another charity, but we did this knowing it was the best possible thing for the community we serve and the initiative we started," said Taylor McLemore, who founded the program along with David Cohen, David Calone and Jared Polis.

The four founders leveraged their experiences supporting technology companies to help veteran and military community entrepreneurs build companies of





*Army Special Forces veteran Nick Culbertson co-founded Protenus, a business that uses artificial intelligence to track hospital compliance with patient privacy laws and detect fraud. Culbertson credits his company's success in part to his experience with Patriot Boot Camp.*

overcoming obstacles to build companies,” said National Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski. “And when they succeed, they light a path for others and become employers who are going to hire more veterans and spouses, creating more opportunities for growth and independence.”

### ‘LIMITLESS POTENTIAL’

Jen Pilcher, who led the initiative as its chief executive officer and now serves as the national director of DAV

impact and scale. Calone, who led the transition as board chair; McLemore; and previous board members remain involved as members of the newly established DAV National Veterans Entrepreneurship Council.

McLemore said DAV’s strong reputation, extensive reach and influence in the veteran community will take Patriot Boot Camp to the next level.

“When we bring those things together to unlock the power and potential of veteran and military spouse entrepreneurs, we’re only going to see that community grow,” McLemore said. “And those people do great things.”

Since 2012, Patriot Boot Camp has held 23 boot camps for 1,000 entrepreneurs. Its alumni have raised more than \$150 million in venture capital and employ nearly 2,000 people. Four business owners supported by Patriot Boot Camp have appeared on ABC’s “Shark Tank” reality show—with one receiving a \$1.5 million venture capital offer from Mark Cuban.

“Disabled veterans and their families face a lot of challenges. Entrepreneurship can level the playing field and allow them to leverage the creativity they show in

Patriot Boot Camp, said the organization’s “secret sauce” has been its mentorship program and support network. Cohorts have intentionally been limited to 50 people, allowing for more one-on-one opportunities. Culbertson, a disabled veteran and member of Chapter 33 in Fort Meade, Maryland, said the experience helped his budding company go “from zero to 60 really fast.”

“A big part of the benefit from Patriot Boot Camp was the connections that we made in the industry and finding good partners to be able to figure out how to market in health care,” Culbertson said.

Pilcher said she hopes to carry forth the recipe that made Patriot Boot Camp a success.

“I’m excited about the scaling opportunity, while still keeping the core mentorship aspect. If we can figure that out, we have something that no one else has,” Pilcher said. “Under DAV, Patriot Boot Camp truly has limitless potential.”

As a military spouse and entrepreneur, Pilcher reaped the rewards of Patriot Boot Camp as a participant after starting her first company. In 2012, she founded MilitaryOneClick, a digital media



*Patriot Boot Camp co-founder Taylor McLemore speaks to the organization’s 2019 class in Utah. DAV acquired Patriot Boot Camp in January. McLemore will serve on DAV’s National Veterans Entrepreneurship Council. (Photo by MX/Hilary Harmon, Dan Herbas, Cameron Bullock)*

I think the biggest thing for anybody who's serving is just to remember that there's another world out there after our service. And there's so much we can give and that we can do to help others.

—Carolyn Nice, founder of Nice Move mobile app

resource, and its subsidiary brand, MilSpouseFest, a nationwide program supporting military and veteran spouses.

Pilcher said members of the military community choose entrepreneurship for different reasons, but they all have one thing in common: They're mission-driven.

"The missions these companies have are as inspiring as they are impactful," Pilcher said. "It's like they took their service and found a new calling."

Career Army logistics officer Carolyn Nice stumbled into a new purpose three years ago during a meeting at the Pentagon. A two-star general was discussing how to make household moves easier on service members and their families. When he asked Nice for her input, a light went on.

"I was like, 'It would be so cool to have an app to be able to track the truck and the packages and to have expectation management on when things show up,'" Nice recalled.

After that meeting, she threw her energy into the vision that would become the Nice Move mobile app, a QR code-based tracking system for household goods on the move.

"I built it to help my brothers- and sisters-in-arms move and have a better experience than the ones we were having," Nice said.

In October, she attended a virtual Patriot Boot Camp.

"I could not believe the talent that was invited to come," Nice said. "Not only invited to come, but those



*Army logistics officer Carolyn Nice participated in Patriot Boot Camp's October 2021 virtual boot camp. Nice is the founder of Nice Move, a QR code-based mobile app that allows people to track household goods in transit.*

professionals and those leaders of industry who actually wanted to come and be a part of helping veterans to grow and build our businesses."

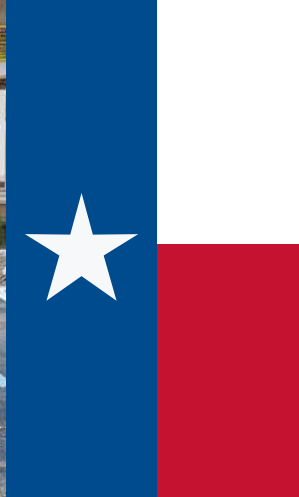
Nice, who was inspired to join Chapter 10 in Arlington, Virginia and is seeking DAV's other free services, said she's excited to wake up every day and figure out what's next. She continues to build partnerships and hopes to eventually offer the Nice Move app for free.

"I think the biggest thing for anybody who's serving is just to remember that there's another world out there after our service," Nice said. "And there's so much we can give and that we can do to help others."

According to Jesinoski, the addition of Patriot Boot Camp is one major step in an evolution DAV is making to empower members of the veteran and military community.

"We've taken a deep dive into the processes and contracting associated with Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses and we've been involved with the Department of Labor and Small Business

Administration's efforts to assist and support those who've served," he said. "Our employment department continues to be a leader in connecting veterans, military members and spouses with meaningful jobs. We know how important it is for veterans to have a mission, and we're blessed with supporters who appreciate the return they see in their investment by contributing to these efforts." ■



DAV members and volunteers of Chapter 114 in Helotes, Texas, stand with San Antonio Metropolitan Health District officials for their joint COVID-19 vaccination clinic.

# Taking the fight to COVID-19

## Texas DAV chapter springs into action to combat pandemic in community

By Matt Saintsing

**A**s COVID-19 cases were climbing around the country at the end of summer 2021, a DAV chapter in Texas partnered with its local health department to offer COVID-19 vaccinations.

DAV Chapter 114 in Helotes supported the effort to provide nearly 100 shots to area veterans, their families and community members over two days in August and September. Luis Cortes, the chapter commander, said that the event was a success and important to veterans and their families in the San Antonio area.

“Our chapter is always quite active,” said Cortes. “So I presented it to our members and we decided, yes, we’re going to go forward and do this clinic.”

The event was made possible by partnering with the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, which provided both the vaccine and nurses to administer it. Cortes said the clinic was a more convenient way to offer vaccination to those who wanted to be inoculated against COVID-19 but had difficulty traveling to where vaccines were delivered.

“Either they didn’t have transportation or couldn’t stand in the humongous line,” added Cortes. “So it was better for them to come to our facility to be able to get the shots.”

Volunteers were crucial for the event’s success, according to chapter leadership. Cortes’ daughter, Kayla Cortes, a local college student, was one of the dozen people who volunteered their time to help their community.

But volunteering with DAV is nothing new for Kayla, who has participated in DAV Forget-Me-Not campaigns and helped out during chapter meetings.

“I grew up volunteering with DAV basically my whole life,” she said.

She added that the clinic was a way to bring in veterans unaware of the range of services and support DAV provides to veterans of all eras.

“My dad gave them all of the information as to what DAV does, telling them to come to the new [chapter] building to get their claims done there,” said Kayla.

Edward Salinas, the chapter’s first junior vice commander, said the community reaction was overwhelmingly positive.

“A lot of people were very excited about the clinic, and they were happy that it was at this location,” said Salinas. “They didn’t have to go far.”

Chapter Adjutant Noraliz Maysonet-Carvajal not only helped to support the logistics of the clinic but also received both vaccine doses during the event.

“I was apprehensive,” she said. “But when you’re around people, and you see that this is for the betterment of the community; that made me feel more at ease.”

Vaccination remains the best defense against COVID-19 infection, severe illness and death. Both Cortes and Maysonet-Carvajal said they are discussing another clinic for boosters. ■





*Student volunteers from Godley Independent School District in Godley, Texas, load boxes filled with nearly 50 pounds of food into vehicles during a mobile food pantry at the Fort Worth VA Outpatient Clinic. The event served veterans in the area facing food insecurity.*

## Texas high school students volunteer with veteran mobile food pantry as part of DAV-supported leadership development program

By Brian Buckwalter

**W**ith the support of DAV and nonprofit Team America, a group of high school students from Godley Independent School District (ISD) in Godley, Texas, have partnered with the Fort Worth VA Outpatient Clinic and the Tarrant Area Food Bank to help distribute meals during a mobile food pantry event for area veterans facing food insecurity.

RC Shields, a specialist with the VA North Texas Healthcare System Center for Development and Civic Engagement, organized the event—the first of its kind in the region for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“The more that we collaborate with other organizations, the more that we collaborate with community, the greater that we can serve the vets,” said Shields. “Without the collaboration, we can’t serve vets to the fullest.”

Jason Hill, a coach with Godley High School, said his school’s students were invited to participate because of their involvement with the Tomlinson Center for Leadership, a development program founded by former NFL football player and Hall of Fame running back LaDainian Tomlinson as part of his Team America organization. DAV is a supporting partner of Team America.

“Partnerships like the one DAV has with Team America are an effective way to introduce volunteering to a younger generation,” said National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. “The opportunity Godley’s students had to serve veterans in their community hopefully inspires them to seek out



*Students from Godley Independent School District in Godley, Texas, had a chance to eat lunch and talk with veterans at the Fort Worth VA Outpatient Clinic after participating in a mobile food drive for food-insecure veterans. The students are part of the nonprofit Team America's Tomlinson Center for Leadership program that partners with DAV for volunteer opportunities. Other organizations involved were the Tarrant Area Food Bank and the VA North Texas Healthcare System. (Photos by Aubrey McDade)*

more ways to help veterans.”

Kleindienst said there are plans to offer more schools participating in the Tomlinson Center for Leadership program opportunities to volunteer with veterans through DAV.

For Hill, the hours the students spent volunteering that early Monday morning, which was a day off for the school district, are part of the push to develop them into elite citizens.

“Leadership is about serving others,” said Hill.  
“And what better way to typify that than going and  
serving at the VA and being able to serve veterans.”

Before the cars started lining up, the group of students worked together to fill boxes with nearly 50 pounds of food. Each box contained an assortment of fresh produce, eggs, dairy and dry goods, and the students handed out the boxes to recipients as they arrived.

Organizers, including Shields and Team America representative Aubrey McDade, encouraged the students to not just hand food out but engage with the veterans as well.

“A lot of the stories they had just in that short 30 to 45 seconds of them driving through ... showed us how much they appreciated us being there,” said Nathan Wisely, a senior at Godley.

Wisely said the appreciation veterans showed also helped keep the students' energy up throughout the morning that, for them, started before sunrise.

After food distribution ended, the students had time to eat lunch and talk with some of the veterans at the center. One veteran in particular was so impressed with the students' genuine engagement and effort that he wrote an email to Hill.

“In this day and age, it does not seem like young people really have the time or interest, but I saw your group working early in the parking lot and then going around talking to different veterans,” wrote Steve Mix, who was at the VA that morning for a checkup.

Sophomore Payton DeFoor said the day made her more thankful for what she has and helped her gain a better understanding of what some veterans have been through.

McDade, a Marine veteran and Navy Cross recipient, said that Team America encourages volunteer events for students in its leadership development program because they have a transformational impact on students, help them learn that leadership means service and that they should strive to be people of character. He also said volunteer service ties into the organization's hallmarks of inclusiveness, tolerance and character development.

“They did an amazing job,” said McDade.

For Shields, partnerships like the one between the VA and DAV are critical because they introduce new groups of people to the needs of veterans and fuel a passion for volunteerism. It's DAV's partnership with Team America that paved the way for Godley ISD's participation during this mobile food pantry.

“If we’re going to be successful for veterans, we’ve got to have everybody involved,” said Shields. “It takes a whole team to really serve veterans like they need to be served.” ■



## Learn More Online

**Learn More Online** For more information about Team America, visit [teamamerica.org](http://teamamerica.org). To learn about volunteer opportunities with DAV, visit [VolunteerforVeterans.org](http://VolunteerforVeterans.org).



## From the NATIONAL SERVICE DIRECTOR JAMES T. MARSZALEK

### Whatever it takes

**D**espite the challenges we faced, our national service officers and other DAV benefits advocates adapted and overcame throughout the pandemic to ensure veterans and their families received assistance—and they continue to do an incredible job meeting the needs of our clients.

Early in 2020, when nationwide shutdowns included VA regional offices, DAV was quick to respond by starting a main voice over internet toll-free phone number. Working in a new capacity, these benefits advocates answered the calls from across the country from wherever they were working.

They used internet phone technology to connect with people seeking assistance without any disruptions and often leveraged their own personal technology when offices closed, rising to meet the challenges of remote work.

Our commitment to disabled veterans and their families never wavered, thanks to our many teams of dedicated service officers. I'm proud to recognize the work they've continued to do.

DAV's Rhode Island office supervisor Mike Zibrida stepped up, leading by example when offices closed. He set the tone for how DAV connected with people seeking assistance—even when we couldn't meet with veterans face to face. Zibrida took it as a personal goal to ensure a human voice, not a recording, greeted as many callers as possible. Our benefits advocates showed they could work remotely

when required to do so without a lag in service. And Kevin Noel, the assistant supervisor in Pittsburgh, also deserves recognition for doing a fine job making and taking a heavy volume of calls.

Since April 2020, there have been 287,385 veterans and their family members assisted using the 100 voice over internet phone lines. This has been a truly difficult time, and while our service officers have been back in the office for several months, the situation has been—and continues to be—evolving, which requires teamwork, innovation and flexibility.

Another example of our benefits advocates adjusting on the fly was the creation of a portal that streamlined the process so that all field offices could process requests more quickly for COVID-19 unemployment relief. The COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Fund, established in April 2020, provided financial aid to service-connected disabled veterans who lost employment or income in the wake of the virus's outbreak. From April 2020 to April 2021, over \$2.1 million in COVID-19 unemployment relief was distributed to disabled veterans in need.

DAV's dedicated professional benefits advocates know how to be flexible. They have found new ways to stay in touch with veterans and their families in their times of need. No matter what the future holds or how veterans need change, I am confident in our team's ability to rise to the challenge.



# Support for survivors

## DAV backs bills to revamp MST claims process

By Ashleigh Byrnes

**R**oughly a quarter of women in the military report that they have experienced some form of sexual harassment during their service, and 1 in 16 report that they have experienced sexual assault, according to a 2021 RAND research report.

Beyond the immediate physical and psychological impacts of military sexual trauma (MST), a new joint study conducted by researchers at the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Dell Medical School at the University of Texas is also pointing to the long-term effects on women veterans who go on to become mothers. In many cases, a history of MST appears to be leading to higher rates of depression during pregnancy and after birth, as well as poorer bonding between mother and child.

“The spotlight on MST and its downstream impacts on veterans and their families is crucial,” said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. “Coupled with a number of other reports, it’s also bringing into sharp focus the fact that the system for addressing MST within the VA claims process is in dire need of reform so veterans can get the help they need at every stage.”

Over the past several years, the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Government Accountability Office (GAO) have issued a series of reports detailing mishandling of veterans’ MST claims that have resulted in improper denials for related conditions. In a 2021 report, the OIG estimated that, based on a sample from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 2019, about 57% of denied claims related to MST were not processed correctly—which was even higher than the 49% rate noted in an August 2018 report. The 2021 report also noted a series of recommendations made to the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to improve the accuracy and timeliness of MST-related claims processing, which the department has failed to implement.

DAV testified at three hearings in 2021 that either focused specifically on the claims process

for MST-related conditions or highlighted legislation to reform it, including the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment Act introduced in both the Senate (S. 3025) and House (H.R. 5666) in October.

The bipartisan legislation is a compilation of provisions to help ensure veterans do not face unnecessary hardships in filing claims and that they have adequate awareness of and access to the care and services they need for conditions related to trauma.

“A number of the recommendations DAV made at hearings over the past year we see reflected in the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment Act,” said Ilem. “We appreciate that Congress is really paying attention to veterans advocates and those impacted by MST and incorporating that feedback into legislation.”

Among other changes, the legislation would codify evidentiary standards within the review process, improve outreach and communication with veterans regarding the claims process and available health resources for MST, require studies on the VBA’s training and procedures for MST-related claims, and authorize the study and expansion of access to counseling and treatment services.

A second bill, H.R. 2724—the VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act—would ensure that veterans who file claims related to military sexual assault would be assigned a peer support specialist throughout the duration of the claims process, should they want one.

“Peer support specialists have proven to be a valuable asset to veteran patients in various applications across VA’s health care system, but no comparable system exists within VBA,” said Ilem. “We believe employing this support assistance to MST survivors during the claims process could serve to create a less stressful and more personalized experience for veterans in these extremely difficult circumstances.”

In accordance with the 2018 GAO report that cited a lack of specialization as one reason for improper denials, the VBA centralized MST-related claims processing in May 2021 by limiting the number of regional offices handling these cases. Now, all MST cases route through five locations, with an aim to enhance efficiency, accuracy and timeliness and to increase the expertise of employees handling these unique claims. ■



# ‘ALL I SAW WAS SKY’

Army veteran recounts the day his ‘dream life’ was uprooted and how DAV helped him find relief



*The kitchen wall of Ray and Darlene Coffey's Western Kentucky home was all that remained after a tornado devastated the couple's neighborhood in December.*

By Elizabeth DePompei

**W**hen Ray Coffey emerged from the safety of his basement the night of Dec. 10, he couldn't believe what he saw.

"Never in my wildest dreams would I expect to come out of that basement and see nothing but destruction," the Army veteran said.

An EF4 tornado had just ripped through his Cambridge Shores neighborhood, a small community about 30 miles away from Mayfield in Western Kentucky. The only thing left of the place Coffey and his wife, Darlene, had called home for 20 years was a wall of kitchen cabinets. The rest had been wiped off the foundation.

"All I saw was sky," Coffey recalled.

The Coffeys were one of countless families to lose their homes to a system of tornadoes that ravaged Western Kentucky and parts of Arkansas, Tennessee and Missouri that night. More than 75 people died.

For veterans like Coffey who were grateful to survive but suddenly without the most basic needs, DAV was there to provide assistance. In addition to distributing hundreds of hygiene kits with toiletries and blankets, the DAV Disaster Relief Program provided over 449 grants totaling more than \$334,000 to veterans in need.

Coffey visited the site that DAV set up in Mayfield in the days and weeks after the tornadoes. When he talked about the \$1,000 check a DAV benefits advocate handed him, his voice cracked.

“That was a good experience,” Coffey said. “You know that there’s good people in the world, and it restores your faith in humanity.”

In 2021, the DAV Disaster Relief Program issued 2,135 grants totaling nearly \$1.4 million to recipients in 22 states. DAV benefits advocates administer the program.

Within days after the tornadoes devastated Western Kentucky, DAV sites in Mayfield and Bowling Green had benefits advocates ready to help those who had lost so much. The grants they provided, which ranged from \$500 to \$1,000, were intended for food, clothing or temporary lodging.

“It just helps with the day-to-day getting your life started back and headed in, hopefully, the right direction,” Coffey said.

“I think it has a tremendous impact due to the fact that they have nothing other than the clothes on their back. Every little bit is helping,” said Nashville-based National Service Office Assistant Supervisor Al Hughes, who was stationed at the Mayfield site.

In addition to disaster relief, benefits counseling and outreach about other services, DAV advocates were there to lend an ear or shoulder to cry on. “There were quite a few hugs and cries shared,” said National Service Office Supervisor Gerry Propst, who helped in Bowling Green.

Propst said he remembers one veteran who had been found unconscious after he was thrown 50 feet from his mobile home by the tornado. Propst was able to give the veteran \$1,000 on the spot.

“He came in with a good spirit,” Propst said. “He felt very lucky.”

Coffey feels similarly fortunate. He walked away with the most important thing: his wife.

“We’re not replaceable,” he said. “She’s not replaceable.”

Still, the couple has a long way to go to reconstruct what they considered “the dream life.” In the weeks after the tornado, they spent their days fielding calls from insurance adjusters and figuring out if and how they could rebuild their home. Friends opened up their homes and offered the couple vehicles, warm meals, gift cards and clothing.

“There is a tremendous sense of community in the wake of a disaster, and everyone wants to offer up help,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “We are proud DAV can be part of those efforts in ways that help meet the most immediate needs of the veterans.”



*Ray Coffey and his wife, Darlene, in a photo that was found over 200 miles away from their home. The photo was mailed to them along with a \$100 check.*

When a man over 200 miles away in Eastern Kentucky found an old weather-worn photo of a couple later identified as Ray and Darlene, he mailed the couple their photo along with a \$100 check.

“We’ve had a lot of good people come forward. People that we don’t know, people we know, family,” Coffey said. “And without them all, I don’t think we could have survived this.”

Hughes, the benefits advocate, said he’s honored to be that person for others.

“To be able to provide assistance to a fellow comrade, that just drives me, period,” Hughes said.

Now Coffey is determined to show the same generosity when others are in need. More than just empathizing with someone, he wants to be the kind of person who jumps into action.

“I wasn’t the guy that got in my truck and drove” to wherever disaster struck, he said. “But I will become that guy.” ■

### How to get help:

If you are a veteran, or know of a veteran, in need of emergency assistance, visit [dav.org/disaster](https://dav.org/disaster). If you’d like to support the DAV Disaster Relief Program, visit the same link and click “Help Now.”



# WALKING A PAVED ROAD

Women veterans continue in prominent DAV leadership roles in the years since first female national commander was elected

By M. Todd Hunter

In summer 2017, a distinct sound reverberated throughout New Orleans that muffled the raucous nightlife on Bourbon Street and unique acoustics of the city's famed zydeco music. It was the sound of a glass ceiling shattering and crashing to the floor, as Delphine Metcalf-Foster became the first woman elected DAV national commander.

Since then, the pile of broken glass has been swept away and replaced with a road paved for DAV's female leaders to continue marching along.



**Top:** Members of the DAV Department of Maryland Women Veterans Committee hosted Her Military Story in February. The event highlighted the service of women in the military and featured free claims assistance and remarks from women veteran leaders at the Department of Veterans Affairs and Military Women's Memorial. **Opposite, standing:** Nancy Espinoza, national first junior vice commander





National 1st Junior Vice Commander Nancy Espinosa is one such veteran charging ahead following Metcalf-Foster's example. While DAV membership spans generations within her family, Espinosa credits a conversation she had at a department convention as her inspiration to take on the mantle of leadership.

"[Metcalf-Foster] talked to me about [the organization] and the leadership at that level and how there was a need there for women veterans," recalled Espinosa, who also serves as adjutant of the Department of Utah. "She was looking behind her and I needed to step up."

Espinosa isn't alone in considering Metcalf-Foster a DAV trailblazer, and their respective success in the organization's leadership ranks didn't happen overnight. Like others, their road to national leadership began locally.

Marine Corps veteran Shamala Capizzi was initially hesitant to take on a local leadership role but was swayed by the example set by other women veterans and the support of her chapter's adjutant.

"There were already a lot of women on the line already as executives," said Capizzi, who is now first junior vice commander of Chapter 10 in Virginia. "So that made me feel more comfortable in taking the role, because there were other women veterans that paved the way for me."

Navy veteran Katina Barnes' situation differed. Her local chapter didn't have any other women veterans attending meetings, leaving her with questions her male counterparts didn't have answers to.

"I felt as though there was no voice [for women veterans], so I had to make one," said Barnes, who sits on DAV's national Women Veterans Interim Committee and is also the women's committee chair for the Department

of Maryland. "They allowed me to do whatever I felt was a need for female veterans to be represented."

"Representation matters," said Capizzi. "As the veteran population has changed and society has changed, DAV has changed, too, to meet the needs of our veterans."

Many women veterans acknowledge that uphill battles still exist when it comes to gaining the confidence of their male counterparts. Barnes believes the best way to counter that is to get their peers to understand why women veterans look to DAV.

"It's so important that male veterans understand that we are women, we are wives, we are sisters, we are mothers," she said. "And we've earned everything we're asking for, just like they've earned it."

"Women veteran leaders in DAV are a twofold benefit to the organization," explained Metcalf-Foster. "It enhances the perspectives on how disabilities are viewed from a woman veteran's viewpoint, and it allows for new viewpoints to be illuminated while simultaneously recognizing the historical strong points this organization already knows about."

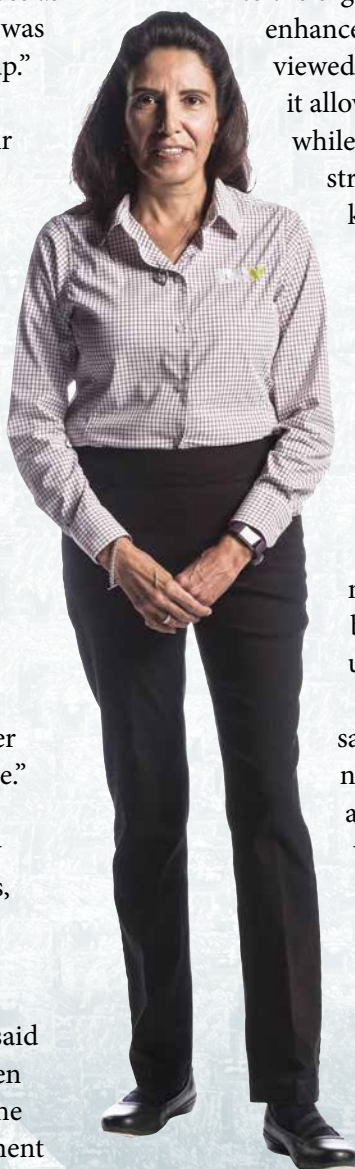
"We're not trying to create a new organization," said Valerie Taylor, a former commander of an Air Force aeromedical evacuation unit who is now the director of the women veterans program for the Department of Tennessee. "We're trying to bridge the gap for medical services and homeless female veterans."

But as each of the women interviewed noted separately, that gap cannot be bridged without other women stepping up to lead at all levels.

"There's always someone to call," said Espinosa. "If you need help, you're not alone. We're not throwing you into a position we're not going to help you with or let you fail."

"Let us help you, and help us help others," added Taylor.

"Women veterans have proven themselves to be a special population of strength and resilience," said Metcalf-Foster. "I was the first [female DAV national commander], but I do not want to be the last." ■





# GOING PLACES



**Left to right:** Virginia Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw, Chris Bishop of Wells Fargo, Krystal Koons of Jim Koons Automotive Group and DAV Washington Headquarters Executive Director Randy Reese in front of the 2021 Ford Explorer donated to DAV by Wells Fargo.

## Wells Fargo donates vehicle to DAV Washington Headquarters for use in organization's Transportation Network

By M. Todd Hunter

**T**he DAV Transportation Network got a generous boost from corporate partners in early December when Wells Fargo and the Northern Virginia-based Jim Koons Automotive Group teamed up to provide a brand-new, payment-free vehicle to the organization.

Washington Headquarters Executive Director Randy Reese accepted the 2021 Ford Explorer on DAV's behalf during a key ceremony at Koons Falls Church Ford, outside the nation's capital. He was joined by representatives from Wells Fargo Auto and Jim Koons Automotive Group as well as by Virginia Senate Majority Leader Dick Saslaw.

"This vehicle will allow us to carry out our mission and serve veterans in the Washington, D.C., area," said Reese. "We are grateful for Wells Fargo's dedication to the veteran community and appreciative for all they do for our organization."

The donation was part of Wells Fargo's Sponsored Vehicle Donation Program, which was started in 2015 to support combat-wounded veterans, Gold Star families and military- and veteran-related nonprofit organizations such as DAV. Since then, the company has worked with auto dealerships across the country to

donate over 60 vehicles, along with financial mentoring for veterans and their families, valued at over \$2 million.

The vehicle will enter the DAV Transportation Network—a fleet of vehicles the organization operates nationwide to provide ill and injured veterans with free transportation to Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities for their medical appointments. The vehicles are driven by volunteers, and the rides are coordinated by more than 155 hospital service coordinators around the country.

"Those veterans are taking care of other veterans—to the tune of 1.2 million hours donated every year—making sure injured and sick veterans can get to their appointments," Reese said. "Because what's the point of having a great health care system if you can't get there to use it?"

The new vehicle will connect the dots in that process, he continued.

"We're talking about 20 million miles annually driven," said Reese. "During the pandemic, a quarter of a million veterans were safely transported. It enriched their lives, made them healthier and, in some cases, saved their lives."

Since the Transportation Network began in 1987, DAV departments and chapters, along with the National Service Foundation's Columbia Trust, have donated 3,558 vehicles and Ford Motor Co. has donated 239 vehicles, at a value of nearly \$89 million. ■



JOHN KLEINDIENST



**V**olunteers are the muscle of DAV. Their time and effort donated in our organization's name make a positive difference in the lives of disabled veterans.

Each year, this heart for repaying veterans for their sacrifices translates into nearly 2 million hours of service in local communities and 600,000 no-cost rides to get veterans to their medical appointments.

We highlight a Marine veteran in Medina, Ohio, who has overcome incredible challenges to be one of the most committed volunteers in his community for the past two decades. We share what some high school students are doing for food-insecure veterans in their Texas community. And we share details about the expansion of our youth scholarship program as we offer more money for college to students who've devoted time in DAV's name.

community that you'd like to share, we want to hear about it! Please let us know by sending us a note to [VAVS@dav.org](mailto:VAVS@dav.org).

National Volunteer Week also serves to remind people that our veterans need our help the other 51 weeks of the year, too. Every day, DAV relies on volunteers to drive veterans to their medical appointments. VA hospital staffs look to volunteer help for a wide range of services, including escorting patients, facilitating recreational programs and providing companionship to veteran patients. Right in your community are veterans who may need a helping hand with something as simple as picking up groceries or having their lawn mowed.

Your efforts don't need to be extravagant or time-consuming. Even if you can only manage one hour a month, that seemingly small gesture can have an immeasurable impact on veterans' lives. And I can promise you, it'll have a positive impact on your life, too.



## Learn More Online

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, check out [VolunteerforVeterans.org](http://VolunteerforVeterans.org).

# SEEING THE NEED

## Marine veteran devotes life to serving others in his community

By Brian Buckwalter

If there's a volunteer event in Medina, Ohio, Marine Corps veteran Randy Schmidt is almost certainly there. In the more than two decades since moving there with his family, he's been a reliable, consistent presence in the community.

DAV was the first organization he started volunteering with in Medina, selling Forget-Me-Nots and helping with Chapter 72's mobile service office. On Veterans Day, he's always at the Golden Corral representing DAV, collecting donations as veterans come in for free meals. He's also a past commander of his chapter.

He's marched the American flag in nearly every parade in the county, has participated in honors details at the veterans cemetery, is involved with numerous other civic groups and served on the advisory board for the county's home for older adults. He's sat with lonely patients during their final hours in hospice. And until recently, he was the Medina County Veterans Service Commission's DAV representative, a role he held beginning in 2001.

He is active outside the Medina community, too. He's played softball; golfed at charity events; gone on missions and whitewater rafting trips with his church; and skied at the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, co-presented by DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

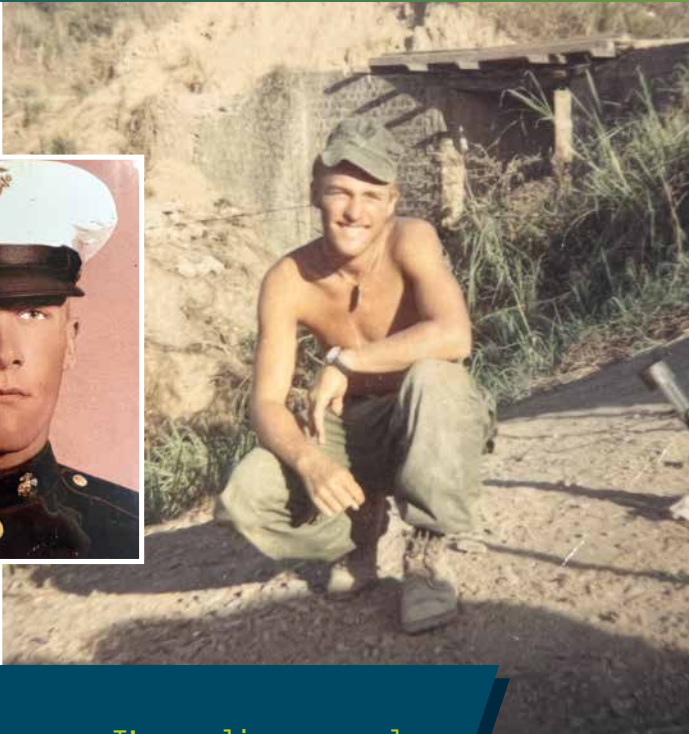
"Randy is the example of what you want to be and not let a disability keep you from participating in life to the fullest," said David Bilinovich, a fellow DAV member and former commander of the Department of Ohio. "It's sometimes hard to remember that he's blind."



*Randy Schmidt laughs during a conversation with friend Edward Zackery over a cup of coffee. Since moving to Medina, Ohio, in 1999 after retiring from his career in the California juvenile justice system, Schmidt has been a constant volunteer presence in the community. He devotes his time to DAV and several other local service organizations.*

Schmidt lost his vision after sustaining injuries in two separate events in Vietnam. First, he was shot in the head by an enemy bullet that pierced his helmet. Miraculously, instead of killing him, the bullet spun around the inside of his helmet, grazing his head and knocking him out.

Six weeks later, the bunker he was in collapsed, nearly killing him. Schmidt said he remembers being pinned to the wall, unable to breathe or move. He was rescued and transported to the USS Valley Forge, badly bruised but alive. After 10 days, he returned to the battalion, not revealing to leadership that his vision was becoming blurry.



**Far left:** Randy Schmidt graduated from recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in October 1967. He began his training on Aug. 17, 1967, two days before his 18th birthday. Following that training, he became an anti-tank missileman in the infantry and served in Vietnam with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. **Left:** Schmidt at a bridge position on Route 9 in Vietnam in May 1968. Schmidt served 12 months in Vietnam. He was nearly killed twice during the deployment—first after being shot in the head by an enemy round and second after the bunker he was inside caved in on him. Because of these incidents, he began gradually losing his vision before going blind. (Photos courtesy of Randy Schmidt)

**“As long as I’m alive and breathing, I’m going to do what I can to help.”**

—Randy Schmidt

instead of Schmidt. Schmidt said Gallagher’s sacrifice is what gave him the opportunity to live.

“He really was the motivation behind pushing myself to do the best I could to help others that were in need or needed someone to help them in whatever crisis they were dealing with,” said Schmidt.

His vision continued to deteriorate, and he was medically discharged from the Marine Corps in 1970. After that, Schmidt lived in California, working in San Mateo County’s juvenile court system, where he retired as a juvenile traffic hearing officer in 1998. He met his wife, Liz, who is also blind, at the VA Western Blind Rehabilitation Center in Palo Alto. She was an instructor there.

After retiring and settling down in Medina, Schmidt devoted his time to volunteering.

“All his energy is on bettering something for someone,” said close friend Edward Zackery, director of the Medina County Veterans Service Office.

Schmidt said his driving force to serve others was Daniel Gallagher, a good friend who was killed during a patrol in Vietnam. Because Gallagher knew the extent of Schmidt’s vision loss, he had petitioned their lieutenant to keep his fellow Marine back on one of the final operations of their tour and asked to be sent

Randy Schmidt marches with the American Flag with the color guard of the Marine Corps League from Medina, Ohio, during a Loyalty Day parade in the county May 3, 2009. Although blind, Schmidt can often be seen carrying the flag in parades around the area. (Photo courtesy of Edward Zackery)





“You can’t  
focus on what  
you can’t do.  
You have to  
find what  
you can do.”

—Edward Zackery,  
close friend of Randy  
Schmidt and director  
of the Medina County  
Veterans Service Office



**Above:** Randy Schmidt tells stories as Edward Zackery flips through a scrapbook containing Schmidt's photos and newspaper clippings. **Left:** Randy Schmidt poses with Navy veteran and DAV member Victoria Olson. Olson recently replaced Schmidt as the DAV representative on the Medina County Veterans Service Commission. (Photo courtesy of Edward Zackery)

Zackery said Schmidt isn't bitter about his disability but serves as an example for others to follow.

"I see so many people ... that have a disability and they never see their ability again," he said. "You can't focus on what you can't do. You have to find what you can do."

Zackery said this perspective has shaped his personal views on how to live a good life and what parts of life are important to focus on.

"Randy sees better than most people that have their sight," said Zackery. "The blindness is really just kind of like a short speed bump that he's gone over in his life."

For Schmidt, now in his 70s, it's becoming more difficult to be as active as he once was. Symptoms of Parkinson's disease, believed to be caused by his exposure to Agent Orange, are becoming more prevalent. He needs assistance walking and can't stand for long periods of time.

He said his hope is that more younger veterans volunteer and join DAV.

Schmidt said that if they don't step up and take over, the culture of veterans taking care of veterans will go away.

Medina is starting to see the younger veteran generation step up. Schmidt's replacement on the Medina County Veterans Service Commission is DAV member and post-9/11 Navy veteran Victoria Olson. When she was sworn in, she became the first woman to serve on the commission.

Schmidt's step back from leadership roles doesn't mean he's done serving his community. No one, not even Schmidt, believes that's the case.

"I hope I've done Danny Gallagher good; that I kept my promise for him," said Schmidt. "As long as I'm alive and breathing, I'm going to do what I can to help." ■

# DAV expands, enhances scholarship offerings

## Student volunteers can now earn up to \$30,000 for higher learning

By Brian Buckwalter

**D**AV is expanding its scholarship program to offer more opportunities—and more money—for its youth volunteers pursuing higher learning.

The DAV Scholarships Program expanded the number of scholarships it offers and the amount top recipients will receive. Available funds per year grew by \$35,000. First- and second-place awards increased, with the top award now \$30,000.

National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst said the changes speak to the value DAV places on student volunteerism that helps veterans.

“We want to give young people every incentive to support and build relationships with America’s veterans,” said Kleindienst. “By increasing our already robust scholarship offerings, we hope to see more future leaders participating and do more to help them achieve their educational goals.”

Kleindienst said DAV has streamlined the scholarship application process and widened its eligibility criteria. Volunteers 21 years old and younger can complete the entire application online, including its 750- to 1,000-word essay. Students can accumulate the required 100 DAV-credited volunteer hours over a lifetime instead of just a calendar year. Also, DAV will now accept applications from the beginning of April through the end of February.

Students, even those already pursuing higher education, have a wide range of options to meet the volunteer-hour requirement, such as volunteering at a VA hospital, assisting veterans around their homes or helping maintain a community veterans memorial.



“Really, the only obstacle is your imagination,” said Kleindienst. “Anything that can be done for the good of veterans. And if they’re giving those hours on behalf of DAV, we want to find a way to honor that.”

Local DAV chapters have volunteer coordinators who can assist with properly crediting students’ hours. Recipients of DAV scholarships can use the money toward any accredited college, technical school or trade school program.

DAV’s scholarship program originated in 2007 and, despite the pandemic, saw its highest number of nominations ever in 2020. Kleindienst said he’s excited to see more applications come across his desk and for the program’s expansion.

“To be able to reward a young man or woman for giving us their most precious commodity is the most rewarding thing in the world,” he said. ■



**Learn More Online**

Read more at [davscholarships.org](https://davscholarships.org).



# Sky

is no limit

## DAV supports skydiving charity that gives combat veterans an emotional lift

By Chris Mayhew

**F**or Army veteran John Looker, the sense of freedom was as much about finally opening up with his fellow veterans as it was the freefall from thousands of feet above the ground during a skydiving weekend event in 2021.

The Blue Skies For The Good Guys and Gals Warrior Foundation offers a rare chance to really connect with other veterans, said Looker, who served during Vietnam and is now a DAV life member and adjutant of Chapter 59 in Mason, Ohio.

“It completely allowed me to open up for the first time,” he said.

For more than 12 years, Blue Skies has brought small groups of combat-injured veterans and Gold

Star families to participate in the nonprofit’s signature weekend event to heal and connect.

Participants can also take it easy and go fishing, visit a firing range or relax around a campfire. The foundation has received a \$25,000 grant from the DAV Charitable

Service Trust to support the Warrior Weekend to Remember and various reunion events.

“DAV is pleased to support a community working to show disabled veterans the care, support and devotion they have earned from our beloved country,” said Trust President Richard Marbes. “Blue Skies fulfills a Trust goal of working with groups that improve veterans’ quality of life and prevent suicides.”

Looker said that until he was surrounded by other veterans at Blue Skies, he had never felt comfortable talking about how his life changed after being shot during a firefight in Vietnam. Event participants all have experiences that, while different, can be hard for others to truly understand.





DAV member Richard Schroeder (above) and retired Army Col. Gregory Gadson (left), a double-amputee and DAV member, tandem-jump during a 2021 Warrior Weekend to Remember event in Middletown, Ohio. (Photos by Start Skydiving)

“When you get there, you’re leery about it. But by the time Friday night or Saturday night comes along, it’s like you’ve known them all their lives,” he said.

Blue Skies grew out of co-founder and former Army Ranger David Hart’s Ohio-based skydiving company, which began offering tandem jumps for veterans.

Warrior Weekend to Remember was established to support veterans year-round. Volunteers make sure veterans have someone to call when things are not going well, and there are monthly meetings and other chances to check in. The four-day weekend event is often a first experience with the group, and Hart said Blue Skies seeks out veterans who are struggling with mental health concerns.

“It’s pretty incredible what happens by just having fun,” Hart said. “There’s no forced agenda; you’re not going to have to relive your trauma. We’re just here to show that we care about you.”

Myles Smith, an Army veteran of the Iraq War, said he was apprehensive about going to Warrior Weekend. He opened up when he realized he was surrounded by

veterans who could relate to his experience of being wounded by a roadside bomb.

Smith said he was in a dark place before Blue Skies. The father of four credits the nonprofit with providing him the support network he needed whenever things get tough.

“We are like family,” Smith said.

Marine Corps Vietnam veteran Richard Schroeder said he had never gone skydiving before a friend talked him into going to Blue Skies in August 2021.

“I was like a bird in the sky, that’s what it felt like. Just peaceful and floating around,” said Schroeder, a DAV life member in Chapter 19 in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. “Of course, I wore my DAV shirt. I’m very proud of that.”

For retired Army Col. Gregory Gadson, Blue Skies is a community that quietly takes care of its fellow Americans.

“They’re trying to take care of the veterans and the first responders,” said Gadson, “those who protect our way of life.”

It is, according to Hart, a safe place for veterans to let their guard down.

“We don’t provide therapy,” Hart said. “We provide love.” ■



## From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER

### LYNN HELMS PROSSER

#### Count our blessings

**A**s we roll through 2022, I am optimistic that together we will continue to make this a great year by continuing to make a difference in the lives of disabled veterans and their families.

Take a deep breath as you reflect on blessings and let go of the hardships we've endured.

Showing you care for our wounded and injured veterans and assisting their families and caregivers takes effort. Please take some time to assess how you spend your time, energy, friendship and love.

Who have you worked with this past year? Who can you reach out to to make a connection that will positively improve the lives of veterans and their families?

This is the time to ensure you have recorded how we are fulfilling our mission as a nonprofit service organization. I ask that you continue to document your service—including donations, hours and miles traveled—for our annual reports.

Yes, please count our blessings.

Units should take the time to fill out the Mae Holmes Outstanding Unit annual report form. This is a way to showcase your unit's achievement and how our organization is fulfilling the mission to help veterans and their families.

Each unit should complete all annual report forms and send them to your respective state departments by the due date. These reports cover Americanism, Community Service, Junior Activities, Legislation, and VA Voluntary Services.

Filing annual reports helps veterans and their families. Recommit to showing veterans we care this year.

And remember to keep reaching out to veterans. This may be a one-time act but could be the necessary bridge to DAV for a veteran and their family. Let's keep our foot on the gas, and I think you will find that this year there will be no shortage of achievements and victories to count.

Who can you reach out to to make a connection that will positively improve the lives of veterans and their families?

# VA highlights department policy on assault and harassment

■ As part of its approach to combat harassment and assault within its facilities, the Department of Veterans Affairs has begun outreach efforts to clarify its policies and share resources with all enrollees.

Beginning in January, the VA sent 1.5 million copies of the policy to enrolled veterans, with plans to reach all 9 million enrollees by physical or email addresses on file.

VA Secretary Denis McDonough also issued a statement along with the department's statement of policy and rollout of its bystander intervention training.

"VA has a zero-tolerance policy for harassing, disruptive, abusive or violent behavior," McDonough wrote in the statement. "Harassment and sexual assault, including sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, is inappropriate conduct and will not be tolerated."

The statement also reinforces the department's commitment to investigating reports of inappropriate conduct and holding offending parties accountable

if warranted, noting that veterans who are found to be engaging in such conduct could be "restricted as to the manner and location at which they can receive treatment."

Veterans may access bystander intervention training, review policies and access resources at [va.gov/stop-harassment/policy](http://va.gov/stop-harassment/policy).



## If you need more help

Those who have experienced harassment or assault, or have witnessed such behavior, are advised to contact the VA Police or a VA management official. Those wishing to make a confidential report of sexual assault or sexual harassment can contact the VA Office of Inspector General Hotline at 1-800-488-8244.



## Tax filing for veterans

■ Tax Day is April 18, and certain veterans with disabilities may be able to access free assistance in filing their income tax returns through Internal Revenue Service programs.

The IRS and the Department of Veterans Affairs entered into an agreement in 2015 to provide these no-cost services to eligible veterans and their families. Since then, more than 1.3 million free tax returns have been filed for qualifying participants.

Three primary programs exist, and veterans can visit the IRS's Information for Veterans website to determine if they meet the criteria.

The IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers no-cost tax preparation services for those who are unable to file their own returns and whose income falls below \$58,000. And the Tax

Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) Program provides free tax guidance and basic returns to those age 60 or older. Veterans can use the online search tool at [irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep](http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep) to identify participating VITA and TCE locations.

Additionally, free online guided tax preparation and filing at IRS partner locations is available through the IRS Free File Program for those whose adjusted gross income is below \$73,000.

Veterans may be able to claim a federal tax refund if they have had an increase in their VA disability rating or if they are a combat-disabled veteran who has been granted Combat-Related Special Compensation after an award for Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay.

The IRS site also notes that "e-filing is the safest, most accurate way to file your tax return" and reminds taxpayers that returns are generally delivered faster by combining E-file with direct deposit.



# A grateful gift

Giving to DAV through your will or trust doesn't cost anything



**"As a 35-year member of DAV, I have included a gift to DAV in my estate plans."**

*—Herta Weber, Army and Navy veteran*

## For more information about giving to DAV:

- Call 800-216-9802, press 1.
- Email [giftplanning@dav.org](mailto:giftplanning@dav.org).
- Return the attached postcard.
- Visit [davplanmygift.org](http://davplanmygift.org).

Did you know you can create a free will by visiting [freewill.com/dav](http://freewill.com/dav)?

## When completing your legacy gift to DAV, please provide the following to your adviser:

- **Legal name:**  
Disabled American Veterans
- **Address:** P.O. Box 14301,  
Cincinnati, OH 45250
- **Federal tax ID number:**  
31-0263158

**DAV**® Guardian Society

Throughout her 23 years in service to our nation, Herta Weber developed a love and appreciation for those who sacrifice while serving in uniform.

An immigrant from Germany, her military career included enlistment in the Army as well as commissions in both the Army and the Navy. Her service included work as a physical therapist, which showed her firsthand that overcoming physical challenges can be a grueling process.

"Many veterans that I worked with during my career were disabled, and they hold a special place in my heart," she said.

Getting to the point where she could see this sacrifice wasn't easy for Weber. Her family fled Germany at the outbreak of World War II and sought refuge in Asia. Her formative years were spent mostly in India. As a teenager, Weber attended schools in Europe, graduating from high school in England.

At the age of 21, she immigrated to the United States and enlisted in the Army. After three years of honorable service, she became a U.S. citizen.

"Since I had no country to call my home, America with its vastness and its many populations—from many cultures—seemed a fascinating place to live."

Upon completion of her training as a laboratory technician at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, she was stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco. While there, she completed a Bachelor of Science and applied to the Army Officer Physical Therapy Program. Weber was sworn in as a second lieutenant and received orders to Fort Carson, Colorado. After serving there and later at the U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps in Norfolk, Virginia, Weber received a grant from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obtain her master's degree in public health administration.

Weber then reentered the military, this time joining the U.S. Navy, just as the Vietnam War was heating up. She was stationed at U.S. Naval Hospital Portsmouth, Virginia, followed by a two-year tour at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, Japan. She returned to the states, serving at U.S. Naval Hospital Quantico, Virginia, and from there at Naval Medical Center San Diego. Her final duty station before retirement was U.S. Naval Hospital Long Beach, California.

After a lengthy, multiservice career serving across the globe, Weber settled into the next phase of her life—but she didn't forget the organization that helped her make the leap to civilian life.

"As a 35-year member of DAV, I have included a gift to DAV in my estate plans," said Weber. "I am forever grateful to the military for giving me a home; an education; and, last but not least, a wonderful career.

"This gift is a small measure of my gratitude." ■



# Orlando to host 2022 National Convention

Aug. 6–9, 2022

Hyatt Regency Orlando



**T**his year, the DAV national convention returns to sunny Orlando, Florida. A city known for its attractions and entertainment, the City Beautiful ensures visitors of all ages have an experience they'll never forget.

The convention is an opportunity to advocate for ill and injured veterans, to enjoy the camaraderie of fellow DAV members, and to take ownership of this organization and its yearly agenda—while allowing for a hearty dose of fun in this premier vacation destination.

Orlando offers something for everyone: family-friendly attractions; world-class dining and entertainment; top-notch golf courses and other recreational activities; and, of course, beautiful weather.

After spending time working alongside fellow veterans to help shape DAV's future, an array of one-of-a-kind experiences awaits you. Convention-goers can experience the magic of Walt Disney World, the sights and sounds of Universal Orlando, the wonders of the marine life at SeaWorld, the world-class shopping at Pointe Orlando or the breathtaking views atop the 400-foot Wheel at ICON Park, just to name a few. Florida's world-famous beaches and Kennedy Space Center are also only an hour away.

Attendees enjoy a special room rate at the Hyatt Regency Orlando of \$149 per single or double. Additional hotel reservation information is available at [bit.ly/3kqZR8X](https://bit.ly/3kqZR8X) or by calling 1-800-233-1234. Be sure to tell them you are reserving under the Disabled American Veterans room block if making reservations by phone. ■



## Learn More Online

To learn more, visit [dav.org/events/2022-national-convention](https://dav.org/events/2022-national-convention).



## TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

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



## From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DEBRA VARNER

### A day to honor and support our Vietnam veterans

In his March 1973 address to the nation, President Richard Nixon said, “Never have men served with greater devotion abroad with less apparent support at home. Let us provide these men with the veterans benefits and the job opportunities they have earned and let us honor them with the respect they deserve.”

It’s been nearly 50 years since Nixon spoke those words, but the need to live up to them is as great today as it was then.

We can never fully repay our debt of gratitude to the more than 650,000 American service members who have died in battle. We can, however, support the more than 19 million veterans still living today. March 29 is a day specially designated to recognize those who served in Vietnam.

Established by Congress in 2017, National Vietnam War Veterans Day is a way to honor Vietnam veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice and to let them know they are not forgotten. It marks the day in 1973 when the last combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam and the last prisoners of war held in North Vietnam were turned over to American allies.

At the time, I was stationed in San Antonio, and my unit was on standby orders to go to Vietnam as medics. We were to be deployed after a 30-day leave home. I felt honored that my unit

was selected. After learning that some of my friends had been wounded or had not returned home, I felt the need to serve in whatever capacity I could.

I was ready to go to Vietnam.

When we returned to San Antonio, our deployment and orders had been canceled. Nixon had decided to withdraw American soldiers from Vietnam. I was disappointed that I was not going to serve alongside my comrades, but I celebrated their return home to their families and mourned the more than 58,000 service members who gave their lives.

The Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that today, more than 6 million veterans of the Vietnam era live in America and abroad, along with the families of the nearly 9 million who served during this time. Decades after their return home, we must continue to answer the call to serve them.

Any day that celebrates our veterans should be more than just parades, music and free food. It is an opportunity to extend a helping hand and show a kind face to the men and women who put everything on the line for their country. It is an opportunity to teach others the history of our country, the battles men and women had to fight and the battles that many continue to fight.

Let us show up for them this National Vietnam War Veterans Day, and every day, as they showed up for us.



# Death of former senior graphic designer

■ Shannan Archer, DAV's former senior graphic designer, died on Feb. 3 at her home in Hebron, Kentucky, after a six-year battle with breast cancer. She was 43 years old.

Archer joined DAV's staff in 2013, where she played a critical role in the execution of the new DAV logo and brand guidelines. She was the primary graphic designer of *DAV Magazine*, helping to modernize and evolve the publication, and she was heavily involved in developing visual elements for all DAV communication products.

During the planning and construction of DAV's new national headquarters in Erlanger, Archer played a critical role in incorporating the branded design elements seen throughout the facility. She also designed the DAV Centennial Bell featured in the building's museum.



Archer

"We were incredibly fortunate to have had such a creative, talented and dedicated individual at our side for these past nine years, and our hearts are heavy with this loss," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "Anywhere you see DAV, you will see Shannan, and that's an amazing legacy she has left behind."

er Archer, whose parents served in the military, was a member of DAV Auxiliary Unit 19 in Cold Spring, Kentucky. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in photojournalism and sociology from Western Kentucky University and a Master of Arts in journalism from the University of Missouri-Columbia, with a focus on magazine design. She was an accomplished photographer, as well as a teacher and mentor, having lent her skills as a graphic design instructor and academic director at the Art Institute of Ohio-Cincinnati.

Archer is survived by her husband, Jonathan (J.D.), and their son, Preston.

The image features a large American flag as a background. In the top right corner is the DAV logo, which consists of the letters 'DAV' in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol. Below the logo, the text 'YOUR VEHICLE DONATION SUPPORTS VETERANS' is displayed in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The word 'VEHICLE' is highlighted in yellow. In the center of the image is a white tow truck with a black flatbed, carrying a red SUV. The truck is facing left. At the bottom of the image, there is a red banner with the text 'Offering free, no-contact pickup' in white. Below the banner, the phone number '1-855-510-5437' and the website 'dav.org/car' are displayed in a large, bold, black font, separated by a vertical line.

NOW ACCEPTING

REAL ESTATE DONATIONS

TO SUPPORT VETERANS

A photograph of a middle-aged couple standing outdoors in front of a two-story white house with red shutters. The woman, on the left, has blonde hair and is wearing a light-colored sweater with cut-out shoulders. She is smiling and has her arm around the man's shoulder. The man, on the right, is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and also has his arms crossed and is smiling. An American flag is visible on a pole to the left of the couple. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

If you have a real estate asset costing you money, not being utilized, or want to put the equity to good use, donating it is a great way to support disabled veterans. You may even claim a significant tax deduction!

Learn more:  
**DAV.ORG/REAL-ESTATE-DONATION**  
or call 844-277-HOME (4663)



Cagle

## National human resources director

**N**ational Commander Andy Marshall and National Adjutant Marc Burgess announced the appointment of Robert Cagle as national human resources director for DAV. Cagle assumed the role on Feb. 14.

In his new position, Cagle is responsible for leading the organization's human resource initiatives and processes, participating in strategic planning, and overseeing talent acquisition and performance development. He replaces Cody VanBoxel, who was appointed assistant executive director in August 2021.

Cagle, a Missouri native, served in the U.S. Army as a vehicle system mechanic from 1984 to 1998. He went on to become an Army recruiting manager from 1998 to 2007. He is a recipient of numerous medals, including the Army Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal and the Army Achievement Medal.

Before his appointment, Cagle worked in various roles for the Department of Veterans Affairs. In March 2021, after serving as director of human resources management at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center, he was promoted to associate director at the Chillicothe VA Medical Center.

"Rob brings to DAV more than 15 years of experience in human resources and a record of service to the military and veteran communities," said Burgess. "We are excited to welcome him to the team and confident he will be an asset to the leadership of the DAV staff working to support our nation's veterans every day."

Cagle earned a Master of Arts in human resource management from Webster University and a Master of Business Administration from McKendree University. He is also a Society of Human Resources Management Senior Certified Professional and an adjunct professor of operations management and organizational behavior at McKendree University.

Cagle is a life member of DAV Chapter 1 in Cincinnati. He and his wife, Michelle, have four children and eight grandchildren and live in Batavia, Ohio. ■



Burgos

## Assistant national employment director

**N**ational Commander Andy Marshall and National Adjutant Marc Burgess announced the appointment of Ryan Burgos as assistant national employment director at DAV National Headquarters.

Burgos, who previously served as the national service office supervisor in Waco, Texas, will assume his new role on March 14. As assistant national employment director, he will support DAV's efforts to connect veterans with meaningful careers by assisting with job fairs, promoting the hiring of veterans among employers, and making sure veterans have access to life-changing

resources and benefits.

Burgos is a Texas native and a disabled veteran who served in the U.S. Air Force from 2005 to 2007 and the U.S. Army from 2007 to 2011. He joined DAV as a national service officer in Hawaii in 2011.

He is currently the commander for DAV Chapter 3 in Whitney, Texas. He and his spouse, Bonnie-Lee, have three children.

"We are thrilled to have Ryan join our team at DAV headquarters in Erlanger, Kentucky," said Burgess. "He has a proven track record of serving veterans and their families, and we are confident he will continue that legacy of expert advocacy in the employment arena."

Burgos holds Bachelor of Science and Business Management degrees from University of Phoenix—Hawaii in Kapolei. ■

# Chief development officer

**D**AV has named Tracey Burgoon as the organization's chief development officer. She has been with DAV since 1997 and previously held the position of director of direct marketing.

A native of Cincinnati, Burgoon is the daughter of a disabled Army National Guard veteran, an Army spouse, mother of a wartime disabled Air Force veteran—all DAV members—and is an active member of DAV Auxiliary Unit 1.

Before joining DAV, she served as senior account executive of national sales for Harte Hanks Direct Marketing.

Burgoon has been recognized for her achievements in the nonprofit sector and honored as the 2016 Envisionary by Envision Ohio for her commitment to providing opportunities for people with disabilities.

"I do not doubt that Tracey will bring a wealth of expertise in leading our fundraising team that will

certainly pay off for DAV and the veterans we serve," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "She is the right person for the job, and we are thrilled to have her aboard in this crucial role."

Burgoon is a board member, treasurer and member of the executive committee of the Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers.

Burgoon attended Cincinnati's Mount St. Joseph University and the University of Cincinnati. She served as the advisory council chair of the ANA Nonprofit Federation and president of the Cincinnati Direct Marketing Association. She is a member of the Alliance of Nonprofit Mailers, ANA, DMA Washington and ANA Nonprofit Federation. ■



*Burgoon*

## DAV members have access to even more discounts to eat, play, shop and travel.



To learn more about these special offers, visit [dav.org/membership/member-advantages](https://dav.org/membership/member-advantages) and check your emails for more info.

We've recently expanded our Member Advantages program to give you more access to special discounts and savings on national and regional brands! These are some of our valued partners.



No one enjoys the experience of "sticker shock," especially at the pharmacy. Save this prescription discount card and keep it with you to access discounts<sup>1</sup> on brand and generic medications at over 68,000 pharmacies nationwide.



Moving? Save on your next move with northAmerican Van Lines. DAV families receive discounts<sup>2</sup> on professional interstate moving, packing and storage-in-transit services with free personal property protection coverage of up to \$100,000 with a \$0 deductible. To qualify for your discounts, call 1-800-928-0599 or submit online at [Movingnavl.com/DAV](https://Movingnavl.com/DAV).

<sup>1</sup>\$1.50 is donated to DAV for every qualifying prescription filled. The prescription program is managed by United Networks of America, and DAV is not responsible for negotiating prescription rates. The agreement between DAV and UNA Rx Card runs through June 4, 2022. <sup>2</sup>DAV receives a royalty payment from northAmerican of 1% of the after-discount line-haul transportation for a DAV member's household goods move. The agreement between northAmerican and DAV runs through Dec. 31, 2022.



## REUNIONS

### ARMY

**2ND SQUADRON, 1ST CAVALRY REGIMENT** May 12–15, Columbus, GA, Contact: Tom Fey, Ph: 303-619-7571, Email: tofefey@gmail.com, Web: 2-1cavalry.com  
**COMPANY C, 2ND BATTALION, 12TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, VIETNAM** June 22–26, Gatlinburg, TN, Contact: Danny Breeding, Email: hawkinscounty.va@gmail.com, Web: 212warriors.com/reunions.html  
**UNITED STATES ARMY SUPPORT THAILAND ASSOCIATION "OPERATION HOMECOMING"** June 30–July 3, Colorado Springs, CO, Contact: Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Joe Wilson, Text: 719-310-3558, Email: jwilsonjr@yahoo.com, Web: usarsupthaiaassociation.com

### MARINES

**1ST BATTALION, 5TH MARINE REGIMENT, 1986–1992** Sept. 9–11, Macomb, IL, Contact: Scott Hainline, Ph: 309-351-2050, Email: ptimfi@yahoo.com, Web: facebook.com/groups/1075222769273892  
**COMPANY G, 2ND BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT, VIETNAM** Sept. 14–18, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Lamont Taylor, Ph: 518-249-7009, Email: cinemscreenad@yahoo.com  
**COMPANY K, 3RD BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT, VIETNAM** Sept. 29–Oct. 3, Myrtle Beach, SC, Contact: Bill Gerke, Ph: 631-433-8575, Email: msggerke@aol.com

### NAVY

**SEABEE 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION** March 19, Manheim, PA, Contact: Joe DeFranco, Ph: 717-284-7082  
**USS JAMES MADISON (SSBN-627)** March 23–27, Galveston, TX, Contact: Gil Raynor, Ph: 409-750-9192, Email: g.raynor@raynorassoc.com  
**USS RICH (DD/DDE-820)** April 25–29, Covington, KY, Email: reunion2022@ussrich.org, Web: ussrich.org  
**USS KEARSARGE (CV/CVA/CVS-33, LHD-3)** May 23–28, Branson, MO, Contact: C.V. Lindley, 850-712-4664, Email: cvjan78@gmail.com, Web: kearsargeassociation.com  
**USS RASHER (SS/SSR/AGSS-269)** June 8–12, Mobile, AL, Contact: Richard Moore, Ph: 804 815-0730, Email:

driperpilot2@gmail.com

**USS FORREST B. ROYAL (DD-872)** June 23–26, Savannah, GA, Contact: Ron Laresen, Ph: 715-423-8905, Email: mosbyusn@wctc.net, Web: forrestroyaldd872.org  
**USS MANITOWOC (LST-1180)** Sept. 12–16, Rapid City, SD, Contact: Ken Bohanon, Email: uss\_manitowoc@gmail.com, Pat Owens, Email: pmowens57@live.com or Angela Schadt, Email: aschadt322@gmail.com, Web: i23048.wixsite.com/ussmanitowoc  
**USS WILHOITE (DE/DER-397)** Sept. 21–24, Branson, MO, Contact: Elisabeth Rider, Ph: 479 280-2776, Email: sailingaway1987@gmail.com, Web: usswilhoite.org  
**USS TAYLOR (DD/DDE-468)** Oct. 2–6, Norfolk, VA, Contact: James G. O'Neill, Ph: 804 212-8911, Email: oneillfalm@aol.com, Web: sailors.usstaylor468.org

### AIR FORCE

**C-123S IN SOUTH EAST ASIA** April 25–29, Dayton, OH, Contact: Sue Rice, Ph: 417-872-9750, Web: ricepad13.wixsite.com/mysite  
**VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION** April 18–20, San Antonio, TX, Web: vdha.us  
**55TH & 58TH WEATHER RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRONS** Sept 14–16, Branson, MO, Email: joe.devenport@sbcglobal.net

### ALL SERVICES

**VIETNAM VETERANS LINE HAUL** April 26–May 1, Pigeon Forge, TN, Contact: Wesley (Hoss) Taylor, Ph: 904-335-7402, Email: vietnam566th@yahoo.com  
**4TH INFANTRY (IVY) DIVISION ASSOCIATION** July 26–29, Kansas City, MO, Web: 4thininfantry.org  
**KHE SANH ASSOCIATION** Oct. 23–30, Sparks, NV, Contact: Russell Turner, Ph: 636-282-2263, Email: rkt88@prodigy.net

### INQUIRIES

- Searching for Air Force enlisted Paul Myer (aka Pablo), liaison member for Araxos Air Base, Greece, 1980. Contact: Shelley Neal, Ph: 480-294-1222
- Searching for anyone who served with Ron Baltierra, Tiny and Turner Taylor, and Companies B and C, 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry Division, during a search-and-destroy mission that was ambushed in late summer 1968 near Bien Phuc, Long An Province, Vietnam. Contact: Ron Balti, Email:

Ronbalti@yahoo.com, Ph: 773-407-2035

- Searching for Chief Warrant Officer 2 Willard Dunn (Washington state), Staff Sgt. Andy Plumlee (Texas), Sgt. Randy Miller (Michigan) and any other member who served in the 6th Battalion, 29th Field Artillery, Strassburg Kaserne, Idar Oberstein, Germany, 1986–87. Contact: Sgt. Andrew Panday, Ph: 504-722-2248, Email: panday\_andrew@yahoo.com
- Searching for GIs who served during the Korean War at Camp Crawford, Japan, September 1951–February 1953. Contact: Cpl. Jerome Jassenoff, Email: jassenoff@gmail.com
- Searching for anyone who may have helped transport wounded soldiers and Marines on details augmenting the 19th Casualty Staging Flight (Air Evac) during 1967–68 (Tet Offensive) at Clark Air Base, Philippines. Contact: Jim Kerrigan, Email: jameskerrigan@comcast.net
- Searching for anyone who was recruited by Marine Corps Sgt. Mack in Baltimore and surrounding areas, January 1975–78. Contact: Email: ssst.mcfadyen@yahoo.com
- Searching for anyone who was on temporary duty assignment from Langley AFB in February 1968 to Tachikawa Airfield, Japan, and Vietnam. Contact: Vito, Email: vitof@bellsouth.net
- Searching for members of engineer firefighting platoons based in Europe during World War II for a possible reunion. Contact: James Davis, Ph: 808-242-1192
- Searching for Ronnie Martin, who graduated from the dental assistant class in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in 1982. Contact: Laura Frazier, Email: goldcitycorral@yahoo.com
- Searching for Steve Banks and others from the "Motor Pigs" who served in the Dusters unit, 4th Battalion, 60th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, in An Khê, Vietnam, 1968–69. Contact: Ron Ledbetter, Email: ledbetterfamily5@yahoo.com
- Searching for USAF from February 1956, San Antonio, Texas, to Lackland AFB, along with any other alert crew members who made parachute jumps, 1958–66. Contact: Tech Sgt. Paul Lewis, Ph: 803-716-4478
- Searching for Capt. Reed, 1st Sgt. Fenton and all who served with the 111th Engineer (WS) in Vietnam, 1966–72. Contact: Joe Sousa, Ph: 860-989-8683, Email: usasgm92@comcast.net
- Searching for David L. Reed (E-4), a radioman who served with Company C, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, in Vietnam in 1967. He was wounded on Dec. 14, 1967. Contact: Thomas J. Dubiel, Ph: 586-268-6744, Email: tjubiel@aol.com

## CHAPTER & DEPARTMENT



### Check presentation ...

Support for a new van to help veterans in southern Indiana get to and from medical appointments has come in the form of a large check for more than \$5,214 from the German American Bank Employee Foundation. Department of Indiana Commander Norm Nelson and Commander Ken Schuetter, Chapter 77 Jasper, Indiana, were there to receive the check from the bank employees on behalf of all veterans in Dubois County. Also in attendance were Chapter 77 DAV Auxiliary Unit Commander Donna Brittingham and DAV members Richard Mangel, Dave Hostetter, Steve Bartels, Otis Cravens and Charlie Parker. German American Bank employees pictured included Channing Ziegler, Katie Margarida, Robin Bougher and Brent Pfister.

Sept. 11-16, 2022  
Iowa City, Iowa

All activities offered at the clinic will give veterans an opportunity to develop new skills, strengthen their self-esteem, and expand fellowship and camaraderie among the participants.



“The past two years have been difficult on all of us,” he added. “That’s why we, and our VA partners, are so excited to once again be able to hold this wonderful event in person. Our veterans deserve that, and we’re really looking forward to it.” ■

Veterans must apply to participate in the event. Applications are available through the clinic office as well as on the clinic website at [veteransgolfclinic.org](http://veteransgolfclinic.org).





KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO  
AMERICA'S VETERANS

## Heavyweight Cotton Pique Pocket Polo

Colors: Gray and Navy

S-XL \$30 | 2XL-4XL \$35



1 Dozen Warbird  
2.0 Golf Balls | \$27.50

Waffle Microfiber  
Golf Towel | \$13

Set | \$38



Pacific 26 oz.  
Bottle | \$8

Includes No  
Contact Tool.



**DAV**  
KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO  
AMERICA'S VETERANS

**Ladies' V-Neck**

S-XL \$15 | 2XL-3XL \$19

**Sportsman**

**Tri-Color Cap | \$16**



**Sport Wave  
Baseball  
Cap | \$16**



**Tommy Hilfiger  
Classic Fit Pique Polo**

S-XL \$42 | 2XL-3XL \$46



Place your order now at **DAVSTORE.org**



davstore.org



sales@dav.org



877-426-2838, press 7



860 Dolwick Drive, Erlanger KY 41018



M-F, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. ET

For mail orders, please make checks payable to Trophy Awards. Call for shipping and tax rates. Tax is only collected on orders shipping to OH, KY, IN and FL.