DAV® MAGAZINE
NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2026



CURTAIN UP

How veterans are building community on, and off, the stage | Page 17

2027 Mid-Winter Conference

Leading advocates to gather in Washington, D.C., Feb. 21–24

One of the most visible demonstrations of DAV's dedicated advocacy in action takes place in February at the annual mid-winter conference. Each year, hundreds of DAV members and leaders come together to put a face to the most pressing issues affecting veterans and bring our advocacy directly to elected leaders and policymakers in Washington, D.C.

We invite you to lend your voice to the cause and join us at DAV's annual mid-winter conference at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia, as we tackle the major issues facing veterans today.

You'll stand alongside National Commander John Donovan as he presents DAV's legislative agenda to Congress. You'll also have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with your lawmakers to make it clear DAV is fighting to:

1. Protect veterans' earned benefits and oppose PAYGO offsets to veterans benefits.
2. Improve access to benefits and protect veterans from exploitation.
3. Ensure comprehensive care and benefits for toxic-exposed veterans.
4. Modernize care and benefits for women veterans.
5. Expand access to wellness pathways and alternative mental health options.
6. Strengthen long-term care, caregiver support and services for aging and severely disabled veterans.

Join your fellow DAV leaders as we work to ensure policymakers in Washington hear the voices of America's ill and injured veterans and their families, caregivers and survivors. Together, we will achieve victory and ensure veterans receive the benefits they need and have earned. ■

For more information, visit
dav.org/events/2027-mid-winter-conference





From the NATIONAL COMMANDER
JOHN DONOVAN

Make room at your table

One of the things I look forward to most is my family's weekly tradition of dinner at my daughter's house. It's nothing fancy, but those meals with my wife, daughter and son are some of my favorite moments.

We use that time as an opportunity to reflect, reset and remind ourselves to be thankful for what we have. Like many of you, our family has faced our share of trials and difficulties, so the very fact we're all sitting around the same table is a blessing we hold close.

There's something special and intimate about sharing a meal with others. In this fast-paced world we live in—drive-thru burgers eaten in the car or leftovers eaten over the kitchen counter—intentional meals in community with people we care about feel increasingly rare. Yet, when they happen, we often find these moments nourish our souls as much as our bodies.

I'd like us all to think about that as we enter this holiday season. Many of us will gather around dinner tables with our friends and loved ones. And these moments will be joyous and memorable.

Do you have room for one more?

It doesn't have to be a grand gesture. All it takes is a chair, a plate and a couple of hours of conversation.

For some of our fellow veterans, the holidays come with sadness and loneliness. They may have lost someone they served with or loved. They may not be near family or have family to celebrate with. They may be struggling with invisible wounds or moral injury. But we can remind them they don't have to face any of this alone.

DAV is more than a community. It's a family. And we stick with family even when it's messy.

This holiday season, I ask that you take a moment to reach out to a veteran near you. Invite them into your home. Share a meal. Remind them they aren't alone.

What I've found is that these moments when we gather at a table can change people. They can forge and strengthen bonds even among people who disagree. They allow us to be vulnerable and can break down barriers.

When that happens, we become more invested in each other. We become more compassionate, and we're all a little less lonely. The challenges we face become less daunting, and the family becomes closer as we strengthen our bonds.

So make room for one more at the table.

Gather. Eat. Talk. Enjoy. It's good for the soul. ■

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DAV MAGAZINE

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From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT/CEO
BARRY A. JESINOSKI

Built around veterans

Whether it's healthcare, educational benefits or disability compensation, any veteran will tell you about the mountain of bureaucracy they encounter. The systems meant to provide veterans with their earned benefits can feel insurmountable. The problems can leave veterans confused and doubtful. At its most extreme, it causes veterans to give up on what they earned through sacrifice for our nation.

But it helps to start with what a veteran should know going in.

VA care and benefits start with understanding the rules of the game. Eligibility requirements, disability ratings, presumptive conditions and community care bring complexity. Every veteran has a different military background, injuries and circumstances that are impossible to generalize.

The problem arises when administrative red tape prevents a veteran from accessing earned benefits or needed care.

DAV national service officers see this daily. They're the best in the business and are accredited through the Department of Veterans Affairs. Their assistance through DAV is always free and carries no cost or obligation. They are proficient at gathering evidence and interpreting cryptic VA correspondence. If needed, they'll represent veterans during appeals if the VA's decision comes back unfavorable.

However, that frontline experience also shows where the system needs improvement.

DAV fights every day to ensure the VA is designed around veterans, rather than asking them to adapt to the system charged with their care. Many veterans receive healthcare and other benefits involving different parts of the second-largest government agency. But they shouldn't be the only ones responsible for connecting those pieces.

Any system treating millions of individuals needs consistency, but that doesn't mean treating everyone the same.

The PACT Act is one example of what it looks like when the system does more of the work for veterans. By expanding presumptive conditions associated with toxic exposures, the law removed some of the burden from veterans who otherwise could have faced the difficult task of proving a connection between their military service and illnesses that may emerge years later. DAV fought for those changes because veterans shouldn't have to overcome unnecessary barriers to receive the benefits and care they've earned. That same principle should guide us as we consider what the future of veterans healthcare and benefits should look like.

Throughout our history, DAV has worked to remove barriers between veterans and their earned benefits, from advocating for recognition of service-connected toxic exposures to helping shape a modernized VA appeals process.

Veterans have spent too long adapting themselves to the systems meant to serve them. The future should be the opposite: a system that can adjust to them. ■

LETTERS

Ibogaine panel at national convention

The ibogaine seminar at this year's DAV national convention was invigorating and inspiring. It left me in awe. Thanks to Robert Gallery, Dr. Jim Hancock, Sam Juan and Bryan Hubbard for being so brave, transparent and honest. This was exactly what we need to continue paving the way toward safe and effective exploration of plant-based medicines and their effective healing properties in the veteran community. ***Jennifer Alvarado, New Jersey***

Educational and entertaining history

Thank you, DAV, for your article "250 Years." It's been said that you never stop learning, and at 80 years old, I can say this to be very true. Featured in the July/August magazine, this entertaining article was an interesting and very educational look at America's history. I can't wait to read Part 2. ***Dennis DiBon, Cheswick, Pennsylvania***

Editor's Note: *Part 2 is available in the September/October issue of* DAV Magazine *and at dav.org.*

Menopause awareness

It was an honor to be part of the Women Veterans Health Forum on menopause during the 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention. Thank you for making space to have this important conversation. I hope we get to continue it in the future. Also, special thanks to all the men who showed up to learn about menopause. Menopause affects everyone, not just the person going through it. Family, friends, co-workers, all benefit from learning and can help be part of the support system. ***Maria Luque, Austin, Texas***

Suicide prevention

If we know that veterans who are more likely to die by suicide do not seek care in their last year of life, then there should be some sort of notification for providers when a veteran has not been seen in 12 months or longer and they should be actively reaching out to them. When veterans are in a dark place and feel that they have nowhere to turn to, having someone actively reaching out shows that someone cares about them. The person could ask the veteran if they know about some of these programs and can offer to schedule them an appointment. We need to be more proactive about helping our nation's warriors. ***Kameron Wilson, Cincinnati***

Long-term health outcomes

The "VA research reveals findings on chronic pain, toxic exposure and opioid risks" (July/August 2026) article was interesting. As a veteran from the late 1990s–early 2000s era, I sometimes wonder whether future studies will continue looking at the cumulative effects of vaccinations, deployments, environmental exposures, operational stress and military culture together rather than separately. Many of us experienced all of those simultaneously, and understanding the long-term health picture of that generation of service members remains important. ***Steve Denbo, Surprise, Arizona***

Volunteerism

As a disabled Korean War veteran, I want to thank you for your commentary "Impact your community through volunteerism" in the March/April issue of *DAV Magazine*. In the past several years, I have helped several combat-disabled and homeless veterans to get their VA 100% disability rating and move to more stable and healthy lives. My own story as a 100% disabled veteran is someone who grew up in poverty, enlisted in the Air Force, flew 42 bombing missions in Korea, crashed once, survived, and here I am at 95 years old. I am a retired professor and dean at five different universities in the Southwest, after obtaining two master's degrees and a Ph.D. using my GI Bill benefits. ***Ismael Dieppa, Albuquerque, New Mexico***

National convention participation

Attending the 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Orlando, Florida, provided me with an opportunity to experience DAV beyond the chapter and department levels and to gain a greater understanding of how our organization conducts its business nationally. A significant part of my convention experience was serving on the National Convention Credentials Committee. Being selected to serve on the committee gave me the opportunity to participate directly in an important part of the convention process. The experience provided a perspective that simply attending the convention would not have offered. The real value comes from bringing that knowledge home and using it to strengthen the work we do for veterans in our own communities. ***Ross Havrick, Greentown, Indiana***

DAV gaming partnership

I enjoy the simplicity that DAV offers the veterans of REGIMENT. Whether it's through VA claims assistance, education, benefits or anything else, DAV makes it incredibly simple for veterans. DAV was able to help me through a rather complicated claims process, and they made it incredibly easy. I couldn't be more thankful for DAV and their partnership with REGIMENT. ***Chris Henderson, Pickens, South Carolina***

WRITE TO US Please send feedback to DAV Magazine, 860 Dolwick Drive, Erlanger, KY 41018, or via email to feedback@dav.org. We also welcome feedback on our social media 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.

Safe, stable housing

New law strengthens protections and opens doors to affordable, accessible homes for disabled veterans

By M. Todd Hunter



A sweeping new federal housing law that took effect on July 11 includes several important provisions designed to help disabled veterans access affordable, stable and accessible housing.

The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act (H.R. 6644) is a bipartisan package addressing the nation's housing crisis through measures intended to increase housing supply, streamline regulations, protect affordable housing and provide communities with additional resources to address their specific housing needs.

Among the law's most significant provisions for veterans is the Housing Unhoused Disabled Veterans Act, included in Section 602. The provision permanently excludes veterans disability compensation from annual income calculations used to determine eligibility for the Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. The income issue has been particularly consequential for Native American veterans, who often navigate a patchwork of tribal and federal housing programs with differing eligibility rules.

For disabled veterans living on fixed incomes, the change could make a significant difference. Previously, counting disability compensation as income could affect a veteran's eligibility for housing assistance. Under the new law, VA disability compensation and pension benefits will no longer be counted when determining whether a veteran meets HUD-VASH income-eligibility requirements, helping ensure those who need assistance can continue to access vital housing resources.

"Veterans should never have to choose between the disability compensation they earned and the housing assistance they need," said DAV National Legislative Director Jon Retzer. "This legislation recognizes that disability compensation is an earned benefit, not a reason to deny a veteran access to a safe and stable home. DAV is proud to support these commonsense reforms."

The legislation also includes provisions to help veterans make more informed decisions when purchasing a home. Sections 601 and 603 incorporate the VA Home Loan Awareness Act and the Veterans Affairs Loan Informed Disclosure (VALID) Act. These provisions require standard loan application forms and Federal Housing Administration mortgage disclosures to provide clear information about VA home loan benefits. They also require side-by-side comparisons of loan options, giving veterans more information to determine which financing option best meets their needs and offers the greatest value.

The law's broader housing reforms could also benefit veterans and other homeowners with disabilities. The Whole-Home Repairs Act, included in Section 202, establishes a five-year pilot program providing grants and forgivable loans to homeowners and eligible landlords for essential health, safety and accessibility improvements. Improvements may include ramps, widened doorways and modified bathrooms, helping make homes safer and more accessible for people with disabilities.

Together, these provisions represent meaningful progress toward addressing the housing challenges facing disabled veterans. By protecting earned disability benefits, improving access to information about VA home loans and supporting accessibility modifications, the law provides veterans with additional tools to find and maintain housing that meets their needs.

DAV will continue monitoring implementation of these reforms and advocating for policies that ensure veterans and their families have access to secure, affordable and accessible homes. ■

Stay Informed Join DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at **davcan.org**.

FINALLY SEEN

After years of health problems and frustration with his VA claim, Navy veteran Daniel Kerr had nearly given up. Then, he found hope.

By Matt Saintsing



Daniel Kerr, with his wife, Janice, in Sandbridge, Virginia. The Navy veteran receives crucial VA healthcare and benefits for his service and sacrifice.

By the time Navy veteran Daniel Kerr turned to DAV for help with his Department of Veterans Affairs disability claim, he had spent years navigating a system that seemed to raise more questions than it answered.

He began to wonder whether anything would change.

"I actually gave up," Kerr said.

DAV National Service Officer Amber Borders wasn't ready to.

Kerr served in the Navy for just over four years during the Vietnam War. He began his career aboard the USS Yorktown, an anti-submarine warfare aircraft carrier that helped recover the Apollo 8 astronauts. He later served aboard an attack carrier that made multiple cruises to the waters off Vietnam.

As a sailor working on the flight deck, Kerr spent long days around fast-moving aircraft, jet fuel and exhaust. He said the work was dangerous every day.

Despite the hazards, Kerr remembers that time fondly.

"I would never work anywhere else in the Navy except on the flight deck," he said. "I loved it."

Decades later, however, Kerr's health deteriorated significantly.

At the time, he knew nothing about Agent Orange or the health problems that would later be associated with exposure to the herbicide. He was eventually diagnosed with coronary artery disease, a condition the VA presumes is connected to Agent Orange exposure for eligible Vietnam veterans.

His heart problems became increasingly serious. Kerr experienced shortness of breath and an irregular heartbeat, and his condition eventually required a pacemaker. Today, he's completely dependent on it. Several months ago, after one of the leads in Kerr's heart failed, doctors replaced the entire system.

Meanwhile, he and his wife of 57 years, Janice, struggled to navigate his VA disability claim.

That changed when they met Borders, an assistant supervisor in DAV's Pittsburgh National Service Office.

Borders was relatively new to DAV when she began reviewing Kerr's case. But something stood out immediately. His heart disability wasn't being evaluated in a way that made sense.

Borders began researching the regulations and reviewing the medical evidence to uncover the truth.

"I had to do a whole bunch of digging," Borders said. "It just didn't look right to me."

What followed was a lengthy back-and-forth with the VA.

At one point, Kerr's heart claim had been deferred while the VA sought additional information. But the VA erroneously closed the claim without issuing a decision.

Borders caught the error.

She contacted the regional VA office, explained that Kerr's claim had been improperly closed and provided the information needed to reopen it. Borders said it's the type of mistake a veteran pursuing a claim alone might not recognize.



Kerr (center) aboard the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany, which he served on during multiple tours off the coast of Vietnam. Little did he know that he and his shipmates were being exposed to Agent Orange.

> "Finally, they're seeing everything that's going on with him. Finally, he's getting what he's owed."
>
> —Janice Kerr

"Most people don't know this happens," she said. "If they don't have the representation to have somebody help them figure it out, it doesn't go very well for them."

Borders continued pursuing the claim and pushing for the VA to properly account for Kerr's coronary artery disease and the severity of his heart problems. After the condition was recognized and a subsequent examination documented the extent of his disability, Kerr received a sizable increase in his disability compensation.



Borders

For Kerr, the news was difficult to believe.

"I was jumping for joy," he said.

Janice had watched her husband grow increasingly anxious and discouraged as the process dragged on.

"Finally, they're seeing everything that's going on with him," she remembered thinking when Borders called with the good news. "Finally, he's getting what he's owed."

The compensation and benefits provide life-changing support for the Kerrs, but Daniel quickly puts them into perspective.

"I would give everything up to get my heart back together again," he said. "I would give that all up if I could just get back to normal again."

Over the course of the claim, the relationship between the Kerrs and Borders became about more than the paperwork.

Daniel and Janice always came to the DAV office together. They brought Borders coffee when they visited and sent her cards. A Valentine's Day card from the couple still hangs on her office wall.

"You got those people that you'll always remember," Borders said. "They're one of them."

The feeling is mutual.

Janice said she would "absolutely" recommend DAV to other veterans struggling with the benefits process. But when she talks about the person who helped her husband finally reach the end of his long fight, she is even more emphatic.

"I think DAV is great, but I think Amber is the angel," Janice said. "She pursued it, and she just made it work, and we can't be thankful enough to her." ■

THE ROAD TO CARE

How one region transformed its Transportation Network to help more veterans reach the care they need

By Brian Buckwalter



Army veteran Gracie Priester relies on DAV Transportation Network volunteers for rides to her specialized medical appointments in Durham, North Carolina. From her home outside Columbia, South Carolina, it's a nearly eight-hour round trip.

For Army veteran Gracie Priester, the vehicle that regularly pulls up to her home near Columbia, South Carolina, is more than a ride—it's a lifeline.

Behind the wheel is a DAV Transportation Network volunteer driver who will take Priester up to Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina, for specialized glaucoma treatments. Glaucoma can damage the eye's optic nerve, often because of increased pressure inside the eye. If left untreated, it can cause vision loss and blindness.

It's an almost eight-hour round trip and one she can't make alone. Family members aren't often available to take her.

Priester's doctor at the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Columbia referred her to Duke for care, but without the Transportation Network, she said her chances of making those appointments would be slim.

"I don't know what I would have done," Priester said.

For Priester, the no-cost rides remove what the VA identifies as one of the biggest barriers to veterans accessing healthcare: transportation.

The DAV Transportation Network was established in 1987 in response to the federal government cutting certain reimbursements that helped veterans pay for travel to their VA medical appointments.

Today, the program provides more than 230,000 rides annually to ill and injured veterans in need.

But local efforts keep it running. DAV representatives from departments and chapters work closely with each VA medical facility's Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) to manage the program. CDCE offices coordinate VA volunteer efforts in their hospitals and clinics.

In Columbia, the Transportation Network has undergone a transformation over the past year after Yolaunda Mincey, CDCE chief of the Columbia VA Health Care System, learned that some veterans in her region were having trouble scheduling rides through their county veterans offices.

When she tried calling one of those offices using the number listed on its website, the number was disconnected. In a separate instance, a county service officer told her their office was no longer able to schedule rides. Transportation wasn't necessarily their primary responsibility; they were also handling VA claims and other duties.

"It was an emergency for me," Mincey said.

The Columbia VA handles over 3,500 appointments a day. A veteran who misses one might have to wait 30 to 45 days to get rescheduled. Mincey decided the Columbia VA shouldn't depend on outside offices to ensure veterans get to their appointments.

"What we're talking about really is life or death," Mincey said. "I run a summer student [volunteer] program, a food pantry and a whole bunch of other stuff, but the veteran is the reason that I'm here. And if they're not even getting here to the hospital, then they can't use the food pantry anyway."

So Mincey worked closely with Willard Cunningham, a DAV VA Voluntary Service representative, to rebuild the program's infrastructure, centralize ride requests through



As of August, the Columbia VA has 24 volunteer Transportation Network drivers covering 36 of South Carolina's 46 counties.

a single phone number and get the right people in place to support the program.

Jeffrey Soots, the acting executive director of the Columbia VA Health Care System, said restructuring the network offered the opportunity to look at transportation from a veteran's perspective rather than from an organizational perspective.

"Access to healthcare begins with the ability to get through the front door," Soots said. "We can provide world-class healthcare, but if a veteran cannot get to their appointment, we have not fully met our mission."

Cunningham said they located all the Transportation Network vehicles in their region, determined their condition and found a volunteer to oversee keeping them operational. Next, they identified available volunteer drivers and backups to ensure someone was available every weekday. They also put a DAV hospital service coordinator in place to take ride requests from veterans and assign volunteers.

The results followed. In the third quarter of fiscal year 2026, Transportation Network ridership more than doubled compared with 2024 and 2025 levels, when fewer than 300 veterans were transported in any given quarter.

Cunningham credited this success to a close working relationship between DAV and the CDCE. He said he shares Mincey's passion for helping veterans.

"Every now and then, you've got to find your purpose or your why," Cunningham said. "My why now is to make sure that the veterans get where they need to go and get the care that they deserve."

As of August, the Columbia VA has 24 volunteer drivers who cover 36 of the 46 counties in South Carolina, while the other 10 counties are handled by the Transportation Network run out of the VA medical facility in Charleston.

DAV National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst said that while administration of the program varies across the country based on local needs, the changes in Columbia are a strong example of how to build an effective program.

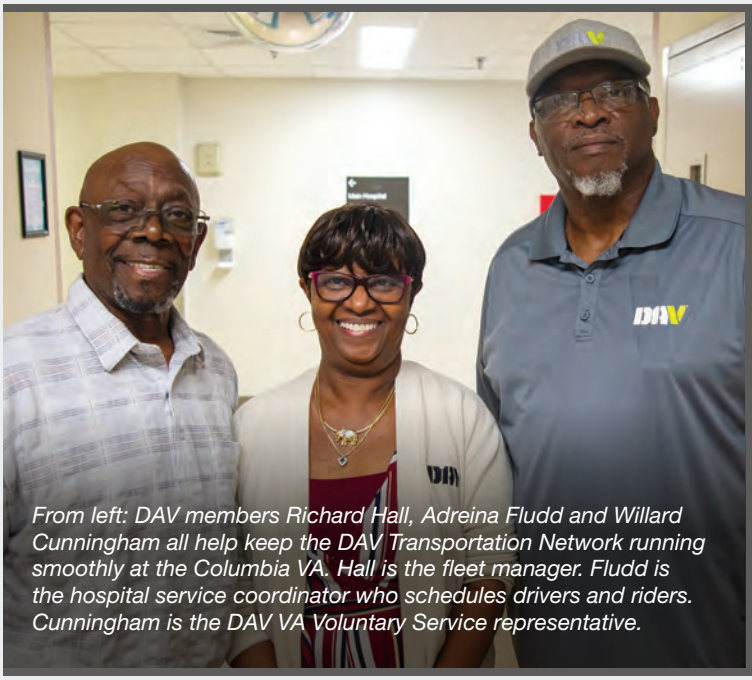
"Yolaunda and Willard recognized how critical reliable transportation is to a veteran's care journey and understood the challenges in their region," Kleindienst said. "By not accepting the status quo, working together and putting the right people into the right positions, they built a program that prioritizes veterans' needs."

"This doesn't take [the VA under secretary for health] to do this, and it doesn't take a national director to do this," Mincey said. "It just takes us being here every day, taking care of the veteran that's in front of us."

Priester, who's a member of DAV Chapter 4 in West Columbia, said she hopes the program continues to grow—both in the number of veterans who use it and in the number of people who become volunteer drivers.

And if one of those volunteers happens to have Priester on their schedule, the job often comes with a bonus token of appreciation: a plate of her homemade chocolate cookies.

"I try for it to be a surprise for them, but it doesn't work all the time," Priester said. "I feel very safe with them. It's just a wonderful experience." ■



From left: DAV members Richard Hall, Adreina Fludd and Willard Cunningham all help keep the DAV Transportation Network running smoothly at the Columbia VA. Hall is the fleet manager. Fludd is the hospital service coordinator who schedules drivers and riders. Cunningham is the DAV VA Voluntary Service representative.

HOW TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER DRIVER

Since its inception, the DAV Transportation Network has provided millions of rides to veterans. Behind each of those rides is a volunteer willing to offer as little as a few hours of time one day a month.

There's always a need for more drivers.

Each VA medical facility handles onboarding, training and scheduling, but the minimum requirement is for volunteers to be at least 21 years old, have a valid driver's license, and be able to pass a VA background check and physical exam.

To learn more, visit driveforveterans.org.

From the NATIONAL SERVICE DIRECTOR
SCOTT HOPE



Leave no stone unturned

When veterans reach out for help with their claims, it's easy for them to get tunnel vision. Whether experiencing recurring nightmares, severe back pain or constant ringing in the ears, veterans often come to DAV with a specific condition in mind and a clear idea of what they believe is—and isn't—relevant to their claim. But something they consider unrelated or too minor or that they think occurred too long ago can be turned on its head once an experienced DAV benefits advocate starts asking questions.

Veterans are the experts on their service and experiences. They know what happened and how it impacts them today. On the other hand, our national service officers know the Department of Veterans Affairs benefits system like the back of their hands. By listening and asking questions, an NSO may uncover illnesses, injuries and diseases a veteran didn't realize could be caused or worsened by their military service or an existing service-connected condition.

That's why the conversation matters. It allows NSOs to look beyond the condition that brought a veteran through the door and consider their service and health history as a whole. What seems like an insignificant detail to a veteran can stand out to us and be the key to unlocking an earned benefit.

It isn't about finding something to claim. It's about making sure nothing in a veteran's history is overlooked. That broader perspective is one of the most valuable aspects an experienced advocate can bring to the claims process.

Equally important is telling our expert service officers about previous claims and denials—even if they happened years or decades ago. I can't tell you how many times we've heard from veterans that they were denied a previous claim.

A denial can seem permanent, like the VA closes the door on a veteran. But even if the claim was denied years or decades ago, DAV may still be able to secure those earned benefits. Circumstances can change. Laws and regulations are constantly passed and updated. New presumptions are established and new evidence can become available.

Not every past denial was wrong or should be challenged. But veterans shouldn't make that determination alone based on a decision they received years ago.

An accredited DAV representative can review what happened, consider what has changed and help determine whether there's a legitimate reason to take another look.

When meeting one of our national service officers, veterans need not worry about knowing exactly what should and shouldn't be included. That's why DAV is here. Tell us about your service. Talk to us about your health. And tell us what the VA decided, perhaps years ago. Tell us the whole story and help us determine what's worth revisiting. Scan the code or visit **benefitsquestions.org**. ■

FINDING A LIFELONG TEAM





Top: *Sam Allen (center) played left field for the Kansas City Monarchs as part of the Negro Leagues from 1955 to 1959.* ***Above:*** *Allen served with the 82nd Airborne after being drafted into the Army in 1960.*

Vietnam veteran and Negro Leagues player Samuel Allen is a living part of American history—and a DAV member

By Liz Stetler

In 2024, Samuel Allen came to DAV Chapter 21 in Norfolk, Virginia, looking for help with his disability claim. Seeking benefits assistance brought him to the chapter, but the relationships he built there kept him coming back.

"The first time I met Mr. Allen, he brought his baseball cards," said DAV Department of Virginia Commander and Chapter 21 Adjutant Dr. Marcia Stewart. "That's when I learned about his history, not only as a Vietnam veteran but as a member of the Negro Leagues."

From 1955 to 1959, Allen played professional baseball for the Kansas City Monarchs, a team in the historic Negro Leagues. Established in 1920, the Negro Leagues provided opportunities for Black athletes to compete at the highest levels of the sport when they were otherwise excluded from white baseball leagues due to segregation and discriminatory laws.

With a relentless travel schedule and a modest budget, the team slept on the bus many nights rather than pay for a hotel room, Allen recalls. They also frequented "hash houses," small diners that provided an affordable place to eat along the road. "A bowl of beans or rice cost 10 cents," Allen said. "Sometimes for 25 cents, you could get a bowl of beef stew."

But as the country prepared for war in Vietnam, Allen was drafted into the Army's 82nd Airborne Division in 1960. After the nonstop travel and hash house meals during his baseball career, Allen was surprised to find the stability of military service a welcome change.

While stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, he was able to keep playing the sport he adored. This time, he didn't need to rely on a cheap bowl of rice or beans to get him through the day. "They feed you good and they treat you good when you're an athlete and special service," Allen said.

Following two years of military service, Allen returned home to Norfolk. He had aged out of professional baseball but remained connected to the game, working as a coach.

Though 90-year-old Allen is a "living part of American history," Stewart said it's his humility that shines

brightest. "Mr. Allen is inspirational," Stewart said. "He's always positive. He's always friendly. He's always looking to give."

After receiving help with his earned Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, Allen joined Chapter 21 and immediately began looking for ways to give back. He offered to secure free tickets for chapter members to attend local professional baseball games, where he remains a regular fixture.

"Giving back gives me something to look forward to," Allen said.

That spirit of service, along with his ability to connect with anyone he meets, has made him a beloved member of both Chapter 21 and the broader Norfolk community.

In recent years, Stewart and her fellow chapter members have attended baseball games together, hosted outreach events and partnered with other organizations to share Allen's story while raising awareness about DAV's mission. At many of those events, Allen brings along a unique conversation starter.

"When we do an event, he gives out veteran baseball cards, which include his baseball stats as well as his military history," Stewart said.

Those interactions have helped strengthen connections within Chapter 21 and beyond. Through DAV, Allen transformed the support he received into opportunities to uplift fellow veterans and the community around him.

"His actions truly exemplify volunteerism, awareness and humility," Stewart said. "He is someone that any young person, athlete or veteran can emulate."

"Members like Sam Allen and leaders like Dr. Marcia Stewart at Chapter 21 are great examples of DAV's mission and values in action," said DAV National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski.

"DAV is more than the services we provide to veterans and their families. It's about finding people who understand your experiences and care about your success. Our membership ranks are filled with veterans who want to give back in one way or another."

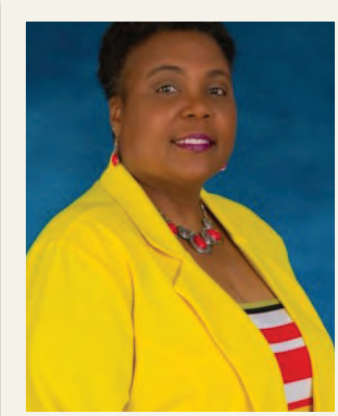
Decades after his days on the field, Allen is still bringing people together. The veteran who first came to Chapter 21 seeking support now helps other veterans find connection, purpose and community. Allen is once again part of a team—and this time, that team is made up of fellow veterans. ■

Watch Video Online

Learn more about Sam Allen. Watch the video on Youtube at **bit.ly/3VnPdoK**.







Top: *Allen is honored as a special guest at a baseball event in Norfolk, Virginia.* ***Middle:*** *Allen was interviewed at a Norfolk Tides game in Richmond, Virginia.* ***Bottom:*** *Dr. Marcia Stewart is a service-connected disabled Navy veteran who serves as the department commander for DAV Department of Virginia.*

NATIONAL DISABLED VETERANS
GOLF CLINIC

WHAT'S STILL POSSIBLE



Army veteran Justin Hall tees off at the Blue Top Ridge Golf Course in Riverside, Iowa.

Adaptive golf helps veterans rediscover independence while showing therapists how recreation can expand life beyond limitations

By Brian Buckwalter

The first time Thomas Severns picked up a golf club was on a chilly and rainy Monday morning in Riverside, Iowa.

Neither the weather nor his inexperience stopped the Army veteran from almost immediately sinking long putts on the practice green during the 2026 National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic.

"I was born with that gift that all sports come easy," Severns said, laughing.

He said he's always lived an active lifestyle full of sports and outdoor activities. Golf is his latest endeavor. His son plays, and Severns' goal is to play with him.

But getting on the course has been a significant challenge. Severns, a left-leg above-the-knee amputee, said he also sustained multiple traumatic brain injuries, underwent brain surgery, broke his back and has limited mobility in his hips. By attending the golf clinic, he learned how adaptive equipment can make participation easier and more sustainable.

Joining him for the weeklong clinic was Jacqueline Cismowski, his recreation therapist from the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane, Washington.

Cismowski volunteered to come as his golf buddy to help him navigate the course, tee up the ball and work through adaptations. She said she also came to expand the services she can provide to other veterans. While she's helped veterans with blindness and low vision play golf, adapting the sport for veterans with mobility restrictions is a newer experience for her.

To accommodate his mobility limitations, Severns uses a device Cismowski hadn't worked with before—an adaptive golf cart called a SoloRider, which secures him in place and can lift and support him in a standing position.





This year's clinic was the first time Army veteran Thomas Severns ever swung a golf club. His VA recreation therapist Jacqueline Cismowski (left) encouraged him to attend after learning one of his goals is to golf with his son.

> "It's all about what I want to do, and I dang sure don't want to sit in a chair."
>
> *–Thomas Severns*

For any veteran Cismowski works with, she said the evaluation process is the same: find out what activities are important to them; determine what they're able to do on their own; then find comfortable, safe adaptations that increase their independence in what they want to do.

"Because if it's not comfortable, then they're not going to continue to engage," she said.

Severns, who shows a bit of a rebellious spirit, pushed back a little.

"We'd find a way to do it whether we had the equipment or not," he said. But he conceded that adaptations have helped. The equipment has allowed his disabilities to become less central to the experience.

"It makes it easier to do without as much pain," Severns said. "You can last longer."

Severns was one of more than 220 veterans who came to the clinic, which is co-presented annually by DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs. More than 400 volunteers supported the event as medical staff, instructors, golf buddies, therapists, transportation drivers and course coordinators.

To accommodate all the participants, the clinic was spread across four local courses. At each location, veterans received professional instruction adapted to their individual limitations.

They also had the opportunity to participate in alternative activities including disc golf, audio rifles, kayaking and virtual reality golf.

Through DAV Caregivers Support, caregivers who also traveled to Iowa with their veterans were offered dedicated training and activities throughout the week. This included seminars and a visit to a local equine therapy facility.

"This is an incredible event," DAV National Commander John Donovan said. "The impact is that it's making the veterans feel that they aren't disabled; they're better abled. It's helping them refresh their life."

More than half the veterans were first-time participants.

Army veteran Mark Minopoli was reluctant to attend at first. He used to play golf regularly and said it was one of the few things that gave him serenity and calmness. But he stopped because of his disabilities.

In his mind, he kept telling himself he couldn't do it. "I was going to sell my clubs," he said.

But his wife persuaded him to sign up for the clinic, and after some instruction and work with his golf buddy, Andra Smith, he started finding success.

"Wow, I can actually hit this thing!" he said.

Smith, who works as a VA recreation therapist, said what helped Minopoli most was receiving encouragement.

"I think that's the biggest thing: holding on to the positive aspect of it because it's easy to be discouraged," she said. "We're going to hang in there. We're going to push through it."

"Oh yes!" Minopoli said.

The experience had him reconsidering other adaptive sports opportunities he'd previously written off. His wife



Army veteran Mark Minopoli stands next to his volunteer golf buddy, Andra Smith. Minopoli said he was close to getting rid of his clubs, but coming to clinic has given him hope that he can still play and enjoy golf.

2026 FREEDOM AWARD WINNER



JUSTIN HALL

After Army veteran Justin Hall woke up from a two-week coma, he couldn't move.

He was paralyzed by a service-connected rare autoimmune disease that attacked the support cells in his brain and spinal cord. At first, he thought the diagnosis was a death sentence and that he wouldn't live past five years.

But when he was introduced to adaptive sports, his mindset shifted.

"I think adaptive sports isn't what changes your life; it changes your perspective," Hall said. "And you can apply being able to do hard things to daily life."

The 2026 National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic was Hall's second golf clinic.

"When I get out on the golf course, I feel free," he said.

He also enjoys the camaraderie of the clinic, which puts veterans into groups of four on the course. Hall said he draws inspiration from watching other veterans navigate through their own limitations.

"You're each going through a different challenge and overcoming it, and you're cheering each other on," he said.

Back home in Augusta, Georgia, Hall encourages other veterans to get involved in adaptive sports. He regularly participates in a weekly adaptive pickleball group and plays at a local golf course called The Patch.

"Doing adaptive sports has gotten me off the couch and back into society," he said.

Hall received the 2026 DAV Freedom Award at the golf clinic's closing ceremony for being the participant who most embodies the spirit of the clinic.

You can learn more about Justin Hall's story at **veteransgolfclinic.org**.

had also mentioned to him the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, another clinic co-presented by DAV and the VA.

"OK. Maybe I'll go," he said.

As the golf clinic creates an environment for veterans to realize new possibilities, it's doing the same for some of the volunteers, too. For the past two years, several recreation therapy students at the University of Iowa have observed and helped at the clinic.

Their inclusive recreation course instructor, Gayle Dombroski, said it's provided a different perspective on recreation therapy they otherwise may not have gotten because they don't often work with the veteran population.

She said, in her experience, disabled veterans were typically more active before their illness or injury than other patient populations, so they're often eager to find ways to reengage in activities they once enjoyed. Her students heard multiple times throughout the week how much recreation therapy has changed a veteran's life—something they don't often hear in other environments.

"For us to hear—especially for the students to hear—that we can have such an impact and provide these opportunities that might not be readily available is certainly very cool," Dombroski said.

Brooklyn Haller, one of Dombroski's students, said one of her biggest takeaways was better understanding how recreation therapy can help someone regain independence. "We as professionals can create these opportunities," she said.

For Cismowski, seeing what veterans do with those opportunities is one of the most rewarding parts of the work.

"Sometimes it brings a tear," Cismowski said, "because you see their progression and their increase in independence and their perspective of 'yes, I can do this.'"

She has seen that progression in Severns. Golf is simply his latest pursuit in his determination to remain active.

"It's all about what I want to do, and I dang sure don't want to sit in a chair," Severns said. ■



University of Iowa inclusive recreation course instructor Gayle Dombroski (right) has brought students like Brooklyn Haller (left) to the clinic to volunteer for the past two years.



PHOTO BY FRANNY KOVACS/ARMED SERVICES ARTS PARTNERSHIP

Participants in the spring 2025 ASAP improv show in San Diego.

'The most fun ever'

They came to learn an art. They found confidence, connection and a community.

By Matt Saintsing | Photos courtesy of Armed Services Arts Program

The stage lights above Umit Ozyildiz caused a brief moment of panic. Torn between social anxiety and an audience barking out suggestions, he reacted in the moment. Then, something came over the Army veteran: a roar of laughter from the crowd.

"That was one of the best moments in my life," he said.

Typically, one-on-one conversations could be enough to spark anxiety. However, the nonprofit organization that helped Ozyildiz refine his improvisational comedy skills surrounded him with fellow veterans who understood what he experiences and encouraged him through it.

That evolution is what the Armed Service Arts Partnership (ASAP) creates. Founded in 2015, the DAV Charitable Service Trust grantee brings together community-based arts for the military-connected community—something research has shown can improve veterans' well-being. Through comedy, improv, music, writing, visual arts and other media, ASAP provides veterans, service members and military families a place to create and, perhaps more importantly, belong.

The unique model combines classes and performances with local arts organizations.

"At ASAP, we see the arts as an undeniably powerful set of tools for veterans and their loved ones to move through questions of identity, community, tragedy, purpose, loss and war," said CEO Brian Jenkins. "This is real, transformative impact."

Ozyildiz's path to the Army was anything but conventional. He served in the Turkish military, including time in Iraq working with Americans. After returning to Turkey, he received a piece of mail indicating he could serve in the American military. He took up the opportunity. However, he sustained a career-ending injury while stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas.

(Continued on Page 18)



Army veteran Umit Ozyildiz greets audience members after an improv comedy performance. He said the class gave him confidence and connections he didn't know he needed.

While he was unloading a truck, another soldier dropped a crate of MREs on Ozyildiz's neck, cracking his spine. Doctors told him he wouldn't walk again.

"I said, 'We'll see about that,'" he recalled.

He's able to walk today.

The transition that followed was difficult. Ozyildiz dealt with physical pain and mental health challenges while adapting to civilian life in a country far from where he grew up. After leaving the Army, he struggled with isolation. Without the structure of school or an ASAP course, he spent days at home sitting on his couch, "just watching the walls."

ASAP was what he was missing.

Since finding the program, he's been all in. Learning to hit the drums and strum the guitar was healing for him. He also found courses in keyboard, songwriting, improv and photography. The real benefit, he said, wasn't artistic proficiency; it was being around veterans.

"Whenever I'm with the veterans, I feel like I'm understood," said Ozyildiz.

Researchers studying ASAP found similar patterns across the program and the nation. A 2018 report found its programs greatly impacted veterans' well-being. Participants experienced significant increases in confidence and self-esteem. The report also found that students engaging in ASAP's classes enhanced their resilience.

Research suggests those benefits extend beyond the stage. A peer-reviewed study of ASAP's Comedy Bootcamp, published in the international research journal HUMOR, examined 72 veterans participating in ASAP's class or a waitlist control group. Researchers were particularly interested in whether learning stand-up could change how participants used humor in their everyday lives. They found that Comedy Bootcamp participants increased their use of what researchers call "self-enhancing humor"—using humor to regulate emotions and reframe difficult experiences. That increase was associated with improvements in self-esteem and resilience and reductions in depression and stress. Many of the benefits persisted at three- and six-month follow-ups.

"That study shows this is about much more than sharing a few laughs," said DAV National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski, who also serves on ASAP's board of directors. "It's about



"Laughing at the funny things around me doesn't make the bad stuff go away, but it sure does give me more capacity to be able to deal with it."

—*Pamela Crane*

building a community where veterans feel connected, supported and understood by one another."

Six months after graduation, 85% of participants reported maintaining relationships with people they'd met through the program

DAV has seen the role creative expression can play in veterans' lives through members and honorees who have turned to art after service. Army veteran Sam Juan, DAV's 2026 Disabled American Veteran of the Year, found purpose and healing through painting, while Michael Naranjo has used sculpture to explore his experiences and identity. Their work, like the performing arts programs offered by ASAP, demonstrates the many forms creativity can take as veterans navigate life after military service.



Marine Corps spouse Pamela Crane performs stand-up comedy. A lifelong performer, Crane quickly became immersed in ASAP and became a mentor and instructor.

For Pamela Crane, a military spouse in San Diego, that combination of humor and community is a major factor in what keeps her involved. Crane, whose husband is an active-duty Marine, had spent much of her life performing. She began dancing at age 6 and later worked in musical theater and film. When she decided she wanted to try stand-up, an online search led her to ASAP.

"I just fell in love," she said. "I fell in love with ASAP, and I fell in love with comedy."

It's more than learning to tell jokes; participants are learning to find them. Part of the reason it helps, said Crane, was because she's always on the lookout for new material.

"Laughing at the funny things around me doesn't make the bad stuff go away, but it sure does give me more capacity to be able to deal with it," she said.

That observation closely resembles the self-enhancing humor described in the HUMOR study.

Now, she has a front-row seat to watch that process unfold on the other side of the classroom. Shortly after completing the Comedy Bootcamp, Crane began mentoring and moved into teaching ASAP comedy classes.

She added that her graduation show for comedy was "the most fun ever."

Before ASAP, Ozyildiz had never heard of improv. During one of his earliest classes, he sometimes retreated—a "protection mechanism," he said. When that happened, another veteran encouraged him.

"Yeah, you can do it, bro," he recalled being told. "Let's do it together."

His message to other veterans is simple: Veterans don't need to think of themselves as an artist before applying. They don't need any experience. All they need is to give it a shot.

Sometimes, picking up an instrument, writing a joke or stepping onto a stage is about more than learning an art form. Sometimes it's about discovering what's still possible and finding people willing to do it alongside you. ■



Meeting veterans where they are

Inside DAV's gaming program, where volunteers meet veterans in a 100,000-member Discord server

By Benjamin Aulick

PHOTO BY: AIRMAN 1ST CLASS QUION LOWE/U.S. AIR FORCE

For over a century, DAV has found veterans through service offices, chapter halls and word of mouth passed from one generation to the next. Today, some of that same work is happening in a place that no one would likely have predicted a decade ago: online gaming communities where veterans gather to play, talk and connect.

Through its partnership with REGIMENT, DAV has a presence in a 100,000-member Discord community where veterans already spend their time. But the opportunity is bigger than any one platform: using gaming to build community, reach veterans who may not walk into a chapter hall and connect them with the same services DAV has provided for generations.

At the 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Orlando, Florida, DAV members Bri Wheeler and Ricky Barker, along with REGIMENT Chief Community Officer Chris Henderson, talked about what that outreach looks like from the inside. Their stories show how a gaming community can become a doorway to DAV membership, volunteerism, friendship and the help veterans need.

THE PARTNERSHIP: Bringing DAV's mission into a digital community

Since its founding in 1920, DAV has fought for veterans benefits on Capitol Hill; helped veterans navigate claims; and connected veterans to transportation, education and employment resources. Gaming gives DAV another way to bring that mission to veterans where they already are.

The organizations formally joined forces in October 2025, creating an opportunity for DAV to engage a growing online veteran community while continuing to build its own gaming and livestreaming presence.

The goal is straightforward: Make sure no veteran is left behind in the digital age. Gaming can reduce isolation, create friendships and give veterans a place to connect, while DAV can provide a path to the free services it has always offered. Younger veterans and separating service members may be less likely to walk into the chapter halls that their grandparents did, but many are already logging on to game, talk and build community.

GAMING: Where veterans already are

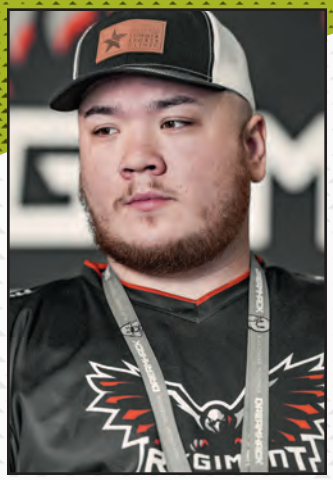
A large gaming Discord server can function like any other online community, with channels for hanging out, organizing matches and sharing games. For DAV, it also creates an opportunity to bring its mission into those conversations. DAV members volunteer their time to answer veterans' questions, share information about Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and help point veterans toward the resources they need—all on a platform where they are already comfortable asking for help.

The distance between "I have a question about my disability rating" and "someone from DAV can help" can be as short as a typed message. For veterans who have grown up online, that accessibility can make it easier to ask a question, learn about a benefit or take the first step toward filing a claim.

(Continued on Page 22)



DAV Members including Bri Wheeler (fourth from right), Ricky Barker (back row, second from left), and Chris Henderson (back row, fifth from left) pose in front of the REGIMENT booth at the 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Orlando, Florida.



CHRIS HENDERSON: Discovering what DAV has to offer

Henderson (known online as Mango) wasn't always familiar with DAV, and he's candid about the assumptions some younger veterans have about traditional veterans organizations.

"It actually happened because of the partnership with REGIMENT," Henderson said of joining DAV. "Up until that point, honestly, I kind of believed the stigma that American Legion, DAV and VFW were just for a bunch of older guys drinking in a club somewhere. It wasn't until REGIMENT partnered with [DAV] that I actually said, 'Oh, they can help me with a lot.'"

That shift in perception is one of the opportunities created by meeting veterans in gaming communities: showing veterans who may not see themselves in traditional outreach that DAV is ready to help. Attending his first DAV national convention this year, Henderson said he expected it to be filled with a certain generation of warriors but found something entirely different.

"I honestly thought it would be an older crowd, but I see a lot of younger veterans coming in here and getting help," he said. "The fact that [DAV] has people here ready to help with claims is amazing. We have one of our guys who waited six years to do his claims. Yesterday, he got in, and an hour later he was doing his C&P exam. I think that's amazing."

Six years to one hour is the kind of gap DAV's digital outreach can help close. Henderson's advice to veterans currently transitioning out of the military reflects the same theme. The problem was never a lack of benefits but a lack of knowledge about how to access them.

"When you get out of the military, you severely lack knowledge about what is available to you, whether it's benefits, claims, education or housing," Henderson said. "Nobody really teaches you any of that. My biggest piece of advice is to connect with someone from DAV who can help you navigate, whether it's your claims, buying a home, getting a job or going to school. DAV has someone for everything."



BRI WHEELER: Paying it forward through service

Wheeler, a DAV member and volunteer from Florida, came to DAV the way many of its advocates do—as someone who was helped first.

"I joined DAV because when I first went through the claims process, the gentleman who helped me was a chapter service officer here in Florida," Wheeler said. "I felt like my way to pay that back was A) to become a member of DAV and B) to start doing [volunteer] work."

A little over two years into her membership, Wheeler is now on the other side of that same process, volunteering her time to help other veterans navigate programs and pointing to a particular vulnerability in the system that DAV exists to catch.

Wheeler believes the most important part of DAV's mission is "the work that we do for veterans and the way we're able to advocate for them through claims assistance," she said.

Wheeler is also direct about where DAV's outreach lands hardest, not just with veterans who have already separated but with service members who are actively transitioning to civilian life. Her advice is to connect with DAV as early as possible, including through a transition service officer on base or by using the DAV office locator on dav.org to find a local DAV national service office, which can help set up a Benefits Delivery at Discharge claim before separation is even final.

For Wheeler, the value of gathering with other DAV members—whether at a national convention, in a chapter or inside an online gaming community—is that it gives veterans opportunities to connect beyond their individual states and chapters.

"Modern problems require modern solutions," Wheeler said. "The more collaborative effort we can have, whether through conventions like these or by connecting online with REGIMENT, the more of a difference we can make."



RICKY BARKER: From crisis to purpose

An Army veteran and colon cancer survivor, Barker was medically retired from the Army in 2015 after a battle with bacterial meningitis. But he said his breaking point came when he was in the depths of a mental health crisis, having received a notice of nonrenewal on his home. When he created a social media post asking for help, a DAV member reached out.

"The best way I can explain it is that it's not that I feel indebted to DAV," Barker said. "It's that, after they helped me, I didn't want anybody else to ever go through what I went through."

Barker had never heard of DAV before the organization found him. Today, less than two years after becoming a member, he is first junior vice commander of DAV Chapter 25 in Cleveland, Tennessee, and has logged more than 500 volunteer hours along the way.

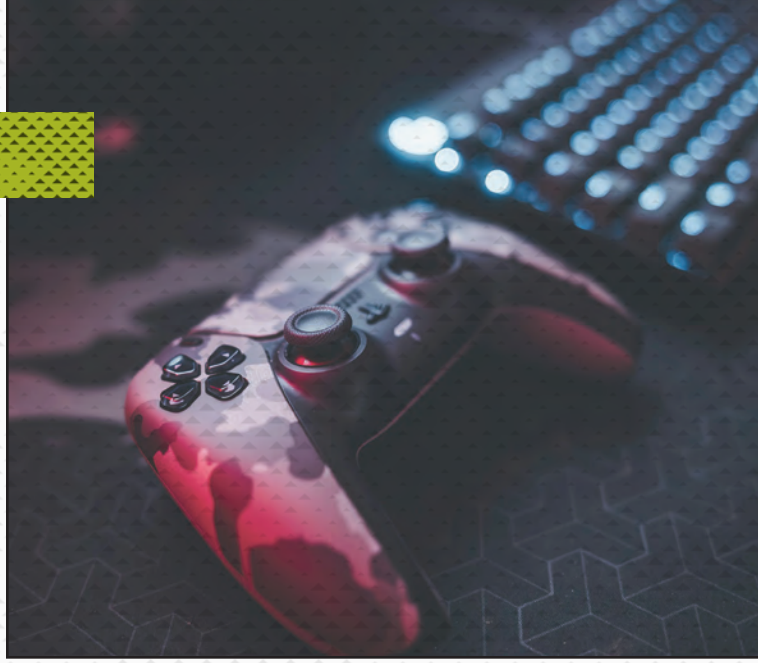
"DAV gave me a purpose," Barker said. "At this point, I just want to do everything I can to help other veterans, because it's therapeutic."

That sense of purpose runs directly against a message Barker said he heard repeatedly after leaving the service, as he searched for work outside the manual labor jobs he'd always known, that a service-connected injury made him a liability, not an asset. Hearing it enough times, he said, he started to believe it. DAV is what convinced him otherwise.

"DAV made me realize that I'm not broken," he said. "I can still help people."

Barker's advice to transitioning service members lands with the weight of someone who has been on the other side of it. Family in the room doesn't guarantee you won't feel completely alone, and DAV's community includes people who have occupied that same headspace and can help find a way forward.

"They can help you find the light at the end of the tunnel," he said. "You might not be the way you were before, but it's something. Going from having no purpose to having a purpose again is great."



What this means for DAV's future

Henderson's, Wheeler's and Barker's stories show what can happen when DAV meets veterans in the communities where they already spend time. A veteran who assumed DAV wasn't for him became a member after discovering what the organization could offer. A veteran who once received help now spends her time volunteering to help others. And a veteran who felt listless found a reason to keep going—and then a way to give back.

That is the real promise of DAV's gaming and livestreaming program, not simply placing information in a new digital space but building community and creating more ways for veterans to find one another, find purpose and find DAV. Gaming provides the entry point. The larger goal is connection—to the benefits and services DAV provides, to other veterans, and to a community built around service.

For an organization built on the idea of keeping a promise to America's veterans, meeting them inside a gaming lobby instead of waiting for them to find a chapter hall is another way DAV can make that promise real. As its gaming community grows, so does the opportunity to turn online connections into lasting relationships, volunteerism and service. ■

For More Information For more information on DAV's gaming and livestreaming programs, go to the DAV Gaming page at **dav.org/gaming** or contact us at **feedback@dav.org**.

No job more important

A devoted son recalls the challenges and joys of caring for his veteran mother through her incurable illness

By Jennifer Kovalich

Karen Dennison loved to learn, whether earning certificates for crafting classes or adult-education programs. An Air Force veteran, she obtained her bachelor's degree in 2007 through online courses while receiving home-hospice care for an incurable autoimmune disease. In April, Karen died at age 61, leaving her youngest son, Corey Dennison, a legacy of life lessons shaped by a mother's love.

Corey, 32, who was his mother's primary caregiver since 2018, has been taking time to heal. DAV Caregivers Support has been part of that process. With the support of friends and mentors, he also worked this summer to determine when he will reenroll in school and return to work.

"I think there is a big expectation of 'What are you doing for work?' And in my mind, I feel like I've done the most important job that I'll ever do, so work, in that sense, is not super top of mind in terms of validation," he said.

Corey, who will return to school in the spring, began helping his grandfather, Julius, care for Karen when he was 13. She lived for more than 20 years with systemic scleroderma, a rare, chronic autoimmune disorder that affects connective tissue and internal organs. She endured numerous hospitalizations; used a feeding tube at times; and, in the last few years, needed supplemental oxygen and mobility aids. During her adult life, Karen also experienced significant mental health issues, Corey said.

"She was a woman, and a woman of color during a certain time period, and I think for me, I didn't realize how that intersected with the mental health piece," Corey said at his mother's service. "There's a way in which women's experiences in the military kind of do get either lumped together or glossed over."



Karen Dennison served for 15 years in the Air Force, working in finance. She deployed several times, including to the Philippines, Korea, Iceland and Germany. A mother of three sons, she died in April following a lengthy illness.

Karen enlisted in high school and served for 15 years as a financial counselor and Air Force aid officer. She was paired as a pen pal with another Air Force member. They met while stationed in the Philippines, Corey said, eventually marrying and having three sons. His parents' marriage ended when Corey was in high school, and he went on to live with his mother. During his adolescence, Karen was in hospice care multiple times.

"In my mind as a teenager, I think I was deeply worried about my mom dying throughout the years and what that would look like for me," Corey said. "I definitely did some growing up in those years, having to do some of the caregiving or grocery shopping."

During his first semester of college in Florida, Corey moved back near Philadelphia following a "pretty dangerous" mental health episode his mother experienced. He took classes locally, earning his bachelor's degree over seven years while caregiving. Medical anthropology, gender studies and medical humanities courses helped him better understand his mother's illnesses and his role in her life, he said. They also helped him identify that the large fluctuations in his grades were a result of caregiver stress and burnout.

Corey was part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' caregiver program when he learned about DAV Caregivers Support. He said he jumped at the chance to enroll in 2025 and complete its online risk screening.

"They were able to really help support me in developing different strategies of where I was in caregiving at the moment," Corey said. "Loss of identity was very high for me."

He felt that their mother–son relationship was deteriorating and credited the assessment and support with helping to rebalance their relationship.

"The risk screening assessment is one of the most important tools we provide for caregivers," said DAV National Caregiver Support Program Director Ron Minter. "It helps to inform us of how we can provide the best support for a caregiver and how we can develop their personalized care plan to best support their loved one."

DAV Caregivers Support assigned Corey to a trained caregiver specialist who helped him advocate for in-home nursing and home health support. Having a specialist who understood the unique aspects of caring for a veteran helped too, he said.

Through the toughest hospitalizations, Corey said he and his mother found ways to laugh, talk and distract themselves. Karen was sweet-natured and had deep faith and a determined will to live. Because of their closeness and the length of time he cared for her, his grief looks different than it may for others, he said.

"It's a big loss in the sense of what she meant to different people in her life and for me. I can really, thankfully, say I don't have any regrets," Corey said. "I made sure I made the last four to five years count, made them special, even through in and out of hospitalizations and things, so I have a big piece of freedom even in the sadness and the loss." ■

Learn More Online

Learn more at **davcaregivers.org**.



Left: *Dennison dreamed of being a nurse. Her son described her as sweet-natured and someone who was always in everyone's corner.* ***Middle:*** *Dennison loved arts and crafts and planning events for friends and family. Even through illness, she always thought of others. One year, she sent 50 Valentine's Day cards to veterans. She also volunteered with the National Scleroderma Foundation.* ***Right:*** *Dennison and her son Corey rang in 2024 together. Despite experiencing significant mental health issues and an incurable disease, she was always determined to be a mother.*











A place to belong

Three veterans describe how DAV job fairs connected them with opportunities, confidence and a path forward

By Liz Stetler

Veterans, members of the military community and their families attend DAV job fairs for many reasons. Some need a job immediately. Others are searching for a new career path, better benefits or opportunities to grow. Beneath those practical goals, many are looking for something deeper.

DAV's job fairs are more than hiring events. For many in the military community, these events are opportunities to build confidence, expand their professional networks and discover what meaningful employment looks like for them.

Navy veteran Madelynn Dowdy was drawn to a DAV job fair because it was tailored to the military community. She registered online and used the resources provided before the event to prepare.

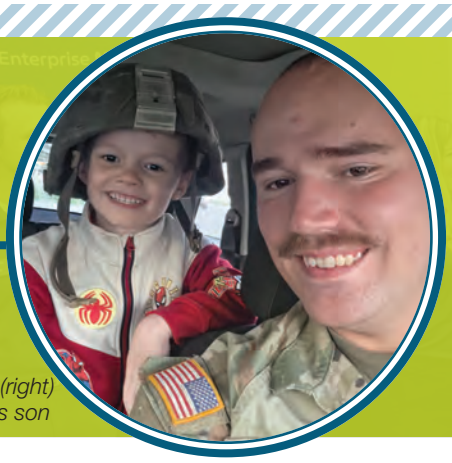
Stopping by as many booths as she could, she met recruiters who were eager to talk to her.

> "Meaningful employment **should be fulfilling**. If I provide a service for the company or a client, I want to be fulfilled in what I am doing. I want to find something where I can give into it and then get something back in return."
>
> — *Madelynn Dowdy, Navy veteran*

"I was pleasantly surprised," Dowdy said. "The employers here don't just show up and give you information. They engage with you."

Dowdy's conversations were productive, with multiple recruiters setting up follow-up meetings. For her, those conversations were an important step toward meaningful employment. "It's been excellent," she said.

Army National Guard veteran Jaden Fewell attended the job fair under mounting pressure. He knew that whatever



Fewell (right) and his son

"Meaningful employment means **a good starting wage and room for progression**. Something that won't take me away from my family too much but allows me to grow into the company–that's what makes a job meaningful to me."

— *Jaden Fewell, Army National Guard veteran*



Edwards

"Meaningful employment means **finding my place**. I think a lot of veterans want to find where we belong in this world again, because when we were in the military, we had a purpose and we knew what we were doing every day."

— *Constance Edwards, Marine veteran*

civilian job he landed, he'd need training. He also needed to support his family of four, so going unemployed was not an option for long.

"I was kind of nervous to come to the job fair," Fewell said. "I didn't think there would be anything that would interest me or that would be a good fit."

As he talked to the recruiters there, he learned about opportunities he hadn't even considered. "A lot of the companies are willing to train," he said. "Even if you don't know anything about the field, many have apprenticeships."

Within days of the event, Fewell was invited to multiple follow-up meetings and was scheduled to interview for at least one position.

Marine veteran Constance Edwards traveled for years after her service, working at different jobs. The available work didn't offer much long-term stability, and Edwards missed the structure and predictability of being a military police officer.

"The civilian world can be very unorganized. For veterans, that lack of structure can be overwhelming," said Edwards.

When she learned about an upcoming DAV job fair, she decided to attend. At the event, she was impressed with the variety of opportunities available. "There were more employers there than I anticipated," she said.

It was a chance to take charge of her future. "These events are a great way for veterans to reevaluate our lives and careers," said Edwards. "I never had the opportunity to develop my career. Now I'm ready to get out there and build something. I want to find new opportunities, meet new people and find my place again."

But more than the promise of career growth, the job fair reminded her of a feeling she had in the military. "The event gave me a sense of belonging," she said.

Edwards encourages job seekers from the military and veteran community to look for an upcoming DAV job fair: "Just be open to looking into different opportunities. You never know which company will be the perfect fit for you."

While each veteran has a different path, a common thread emerges. Meaningful employment isn't just about finding work. It's about finding purpose, stability, growth and a sense of belonging after military service.

"Veterans often tell us they're looking for more than a job," said DAV National Employment Director Jeremy Yost. "They're looking for an opportunity to continue serving in a different way, support their families and build a future they can be proud of."

For Dowdy, Fewell and Edwards, meaningful employment could be defined in a few ways, but by attending a DAV job fair, each veteran found the confidence and direction for what comes next. ■

Learn More Online

Learn more about DAV's employment services at **jobs.dav.org**.



From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER
KATHLEEN WENTHE

Hope, healing and community for every veteran

As we enter the holiday season and approach the end of another impactful year, my thoughts naturally turn to the families, caregivers and extended networks that form the backbone of the veteran community. November and December offer us a meaningful pause, a time to express gratitude for our blessings while renewing our dedication to those who need our support most.

This past year has demonstrated the unmatched strength of our DAV Auxiliary members. From local grassroots initiatives to national advocacy efforts, your unwavering commitment ensures that no veteran or military family feels forgotten. Whether organizing care packages, providing crucial assistance to caregivers or offering a compassionate listening ear, your work embodies the true heart of our organization.

That shared dedication was on full display when we gathered for our annual fall conference. It was a fantastic opportunity for members to dive deeper into the Auxiliary's core mission and explore the wide array of programs and services dedicated to supporting veterans and their families. Hearing directly from DAV leadership and program directors provided invaluable insights into caregiver support, voluntary services, legislative advocacy efforts and critical resources that directly benefit our loved ones. Beyond the updates and training, the conference was a wonderful space for networking, sharing fresh ideas, supporting one another and building lasting friendships with fellow Auxiliary members from across the nation.

As we look toward the winter months, let's stay mindful of the unique challenges this season can bring. For many veterans and families, the holidays can amplify feelings of isolation, financial strain or physical hardship. I encourage each of you to reach out within your communities. Simple acts of kindness—providing a home-cooked meal, making a check-in call or helping a family navigate benefits—can restore hope and transform a life.

Our partnership with DAV remains our strongest asset. Together, we amplify our collective voice, ensuring that legislative priorities, healthcare resources and support systems remain robust and accessible. Looking ahead to the new year, we'll continue expanding our reach, supporting caregiver programs and welcoming new generations into the Auxiliary family.

Looking ahead to 2027, keeping our mission growing strong requires a clear path forward through a simple new framework: DAV Auxiliary CARES. Built on five core pillars, it reminds us to communicate regularly to keep members united, advocate fiercely to ensure promises to veterans are kept, recruit through warm personal invitations, educate ourselves to better guide families, and serve our community through hands-on volunteering and caregiver check-ins. Together, these pillars define who we are and drive everything we do.

Thank you for your tireless service, your generosity and your boundless compassion. May this holiday season bring peace, warmth and joy to you and your loved ones.

Fun, focus and the future of veteran advocacy

DAV Auxiliary members gather in Indiana, combining games, education and shared purpose to strengthen support for veterans

By Jonathan Kaupanger







Laughter ringing down the halls, coffee in hand and old friends catching up: The 2026 DAV Auxiliary Fall Conference in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, kicked off with the kind of comfortable warmth that makes hard work look easy. Beneath the easygoing atmosphere was the quiet strength that comes from a true community. The Auxiliary knows how to share a laugh, but when it comes to advocating for our nation's veterans, everyone gets straight to work.

"When we come together, whether across a conference table or across the country, we're family, plain and simple," said Auxiliary National Commander Kathleen Wenthe. "This weekend is really the heart of what we do. We dive into our programs, share ideas, and make sure everyone leaves equipped to support our veterans and their families back home. The better educated we are, the more impact we make in our communities."

Since 1922, the Auxiliary has shared a mission of service alongside DAV. Today, its members drive impact through community service, youth leadership, legislative advocacy and voluntary service with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Translating that mission into local impact requires preparation—and a lot of fun. The Auxiliary delivers training through friendly competition, interactive skits, and a relaxed and welcoming style.

For Lucy Garza and Becky Roberts of Unit 14 in Sierra Vista, Arizona, that lighthearted energy is the magic formula.

"We keep coming back because of the knowledge we gain," said Garza, noting how smoothly material lands when presented through lively speakers and engaging skits.

DAV National Commander John Donovan praised the vibrant partnership between both arms of the organization.

"We aren't just two separate organizations that happen to share a name," Donovan said. "We are one team, one family, driven by the shared sacred responsibility to fulfill the promises made to those who served and to the families who served alongside them. DAV may often be on the front lines, but the Auxiliary is our absolute bedrock. You are the engine that keeps us moving forward."

That spirit was immediately clear to first-time attendees Dorothy Judson and Leela Malone from Unit 39 in Bristol, Tennessee. Back home, their unit channels that energy into food pantries, backpack drives and a growing Junior Auxiliary program.

"We have teenagers getting excited about working with veterans and understanding what it's all about," Judson shared. "To us, it's not about numbers—it's about building relationships and keeping this mission alive."

Will Judson and Malone return for 2027?

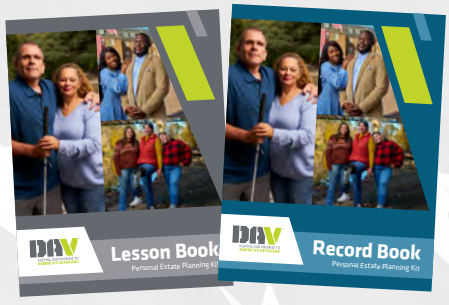
"Absolutely," Judson said, laughing. "We'll do a bake sale or wash cars—whatever it takes to get back here." ■

Learn More Online

To learn more or to join the mission, visit **mydav.org/aux-membership**.

Creating a legacy that protects you, your family and DAV

Whether you call it gift planning, estate planning, legacy planning or any other term, please know that DAV has resources available to help you create a plan that protects your family and loved ones, lessens your tax burdens, and builds an impactful legacy that will help ensure the future of your family and our nation's veterans.



LEGACY PLANNING KIT

The Lesson Book shows you the steps to get started creating a plan to protect you and your family. The Record Book helps you keep all your important information in one place.



STOCK GIVING

By donating appreciated assets that you've held for more than a year, you can save on capital gains taxes and get a charitable deduction for the full value of your gift.



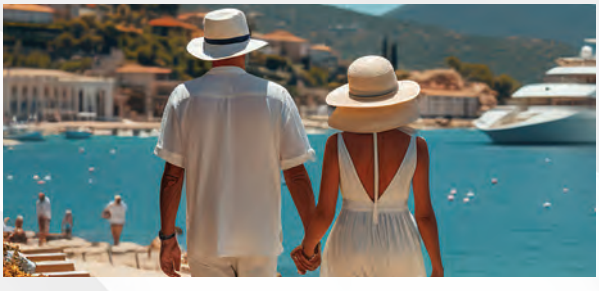
FREEWILL.COM/DAV

You can use this no-cost online platform to create a legally binding last will and testament specific to the requirements of the state you live in.



BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS

Each institution has a specific process for naming beneficiaries (primary and secondary). You could also consider naming DAV as a beneficiary as a potential tax savings.



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By making this type of donation directly to DAV, at age 70 1/2 or older, you remain in a tax bracket you're comfortable with and avoid adding any ordinary income.



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Contact a gift planning expert at **800-216-9802, press 1**, or email **giftplanning@dav.org**.

DAV®

To learn about more ways to give, scan the QR code or visit **davplanmygift.org**.

Protections extended for legacy caregivers



■ Legacy participants in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) will retain their benefits through Sept. 30, 2028, following a final rule published by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The extension, which applies to veterans and caregivers who enrolled in or applied for PCAFC under pre-October 2020 criteria, protects against stipend reductions or discharge based solely on reassessments under newer eligibility standards.

"This policy shift brings vital peace of mind to thousands of caregiving families who faced potential drops in financial support," said DAV National Legislative Director Jon Retzer. "Maintaining these safeguards allows veterans to remain safely in their homes while receiving care from those who know them best."

Human oversight required in automated claims processing



■ As the Department of Veterans Affairs expands its use of Automated Decision Support (ADS) systems—technology that helps prepare claim summaries and gather evidence for service-connected disability claims—federal regulations still require human oversight of AI use cases.

A trained Veterans Benefits Administration claims processor must evaluate the evidence and review the ADS-generated summary before the VA issues an approval, rating or denial. Although automation is intended to reduce administrative delays in gathering private medical records, ongoing human feedback and corrections remain necessary to protect adjudicative accuracy and due process rights.

Veterans filing new or supplemental claims should work directly with an accredited DAV service officer to ensure all necessary medical records and nexus documents are complete before submission.

If you have questions about expanding home-based primary care funding or need assistance applying for caregiver or VA benefits, contact your nearest DAV service office at **benefitsquestions.org**.

Corporate sponsors making a difference

Humana's support is helping DAV provide resources and meaningful experiences to veterans and their families



Cara Brown, director of key relationships at Humana, takes part in a pickleball activity during the 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Orlando, Florida. Humana was among the organizations supporting DAV's mission and engaging with convention attendees throughout the event.

By Nikki Herrmann

"It's nice to have somebody that's like, 'You are a caregiver. We do have your back,'" said Stacy Greathouse, caregiver for her husband, Army veteran and DAV 3rd Jr. Vice Commander Adam Greathouse.

Adam lives with post-traumatic stress disorder and a traumatic brain injury, among other injuries sustained during service. Across the country, many caregivers like Stacy dedicate their time and energy to caring for a loved one who served. Ensuring they have access to the support and resources they need is one of the many ways DAV works to improve the lives of veterans and their families. Contributions and sponsorships from organizations that support DAV help make that work possible.

The impact of those corporate sponsorships can be seen across DAV, from sponsoring DAV events that bring veterans and their families together to sponsoring DAV programs that provide support during some of life's most challenging moments.

Humana is one example of an organization that has supported several DAV programs and services through generous contributions. For the past six years, Humana has provided financial support for DAV initiatives that help veterans, their families and their caregivers.

DAV Caregivers Support provides no-cost concierge resources to friends,

> "We want veterans to achieve their best health, and oftentimes that means that somebody else is helping to take care of them."
>
> —*Cara Brown, Director of Key Relationships, Humana*

family members and other loved ones who provide care to those who served, as well as veterans who are caregivers themselves.

"We want veterans to achieve their best health, and oftentimes that means that somebody else is helping to take care of them," said Cara Brown, Humana's director of key relationships. "Caregivers are under a significant amount of stress, and if they're not taking care of themselves, there's no way they can take care of our veterans who have earned and deserve the best care."



From left: DAV National Adjutant and CEO Barry Jesinoski, Humana's Brown and Barbara Wagner, and DAV Past National Commander Coleman Nee pose with Humana's Champions for Heroes Award during the Dinner of Gratitude at the 2026 national convention.

DAV gives corporate sponsors the opportunity to participate in educational seminars during the DAV and Auxiliary national convention. For instance, at the 2026 convention, Humana presented "Leave Memories, Not Bills: Understanding Final Expense Insurance & VETECARE–The Fusion of Military and Medicare Benefits," a seminar focused on helping veterans better understand end-of-life planning, insurance options, and the intersection of military and Medicare benefits.

For veterans and their families, topics like healthcare, insurance and future planning can be complicated. The informational seminar gave attendees an opportunity to learn about available resources and ask questions that can help them make informed decisions.

"We were excited to have the opportunity to share information that can help veterans and their families better understand their options and feel more confident planning for the future," Brown said.

But supporting veterans isn't limited to providing information and resources. Sometimes, it means creating opportunities for veterans and their families and supporters to simply come together.

For several years, Humana has sponsored the DAV 5K, an event designed to bring people together to honor and support ill and injured veterans. Humana continued that support this year as the DAV 5K's 2026 Energy Sponsor.

That welcoming environment our corporate sponsors create is an important part of what makes the DAV 5K special. For some participants, it's a chance to challenge themselves. For others, it's an opportunity to honor a loved one or reconnect with the veteran community. And for many, simply being surrounded by people who understand and appreciate military service creates a meaningful sense of belonging.

"The DAV 5K is a special opportunity to bring veterans, their families and supporters together while promoting health, wellness and connection," said DAV National Adjutant and CEO Barry Jesinoski. "We appreciate their support of an event that celebrates the veteran community and creates an experience where everyone can participate."

DAV is grateful to Humana for the many ways it has supported DAV and our mission. ■



From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

DEBRA VARNER DANCER

Finding purpose on a new path

Life is a journey, not a straight path, and being open to a new direction can be seen as a sign of growth, adaptability and courage.

As we come to the close of another year, many of us spend time reflecting. We remember those we've lost. We honor our fellow veterans. We take stock of what we've accomplished.

There's also room to consider meaningful change. How are we going to spend our time moving forward?

We're meant to live our lives with purpose. It doesn't have to feel like an impossible journey that only a few can complete—even with all the twists and turns. If life feels overwhelming, adjusting your approach can lead to living more intentionally, serving more effectively and expressing gratitude more fully.

Change can mean taking your life in a new direction. It can also mean a shift in mindset. The question isn't simply where the road will lead but how we'll grow along the way.

We can't let our past hold us back or define our future. We can't control every internal or external force around us. Yes, setbacks and mistakes can sting. However, we can choose how to respond, establish a positive mindset and adjust our approach.

Practically, changing direction could mean volunteering. We can organize informational meetings, feed people experiencing food insecurity or lend a hand to another person in need. The opportunities are all around us, and we each possess gifts and talents that we can tap into. By working with others, we can make those efforts even more effective and easier to accomplish.

Heading on a new path often requires self-reflection and deliberate action. Even small, practical steps can lead to meaningful transformations, such as replacing unhelpful habits with positive ones.

For some, a new path may involve seeking support. This is not weakness. Many veterans adjusting to life after service can benefit from mental health support. Other resources, such as benefits advocates, employment assistance and a community of support, can make the transition to civilian life smoother—and can be found within DAV.

Purposeful change doesn't have to happen all at once. Small changes can build momentum. Make sure those changes reflect your personal, professional or spiritual priorities.

Embracing the uncertainties of change can be daunting, but it often leads to growth and fulfillment. By combining practical strategies, professional support and spiritual insight, changing directions can be a process of discovery that leads to meaningful life improvements.

Changing direction isn't about abandoning your goals. It's about adjusting your course when necessary. It can open doors to new opportunities, relationships and personal growth. ■

SAVE THE DATE **Sept. 12–17, 2027**



2027 National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic

Next Sept. 12–17, the Riverside Hotel & Golf Resort in Riverside, Iowa, will once again become the epicenter for adaptive sports as the National Disabled Veterans Golf Clinic returns.

Veterans with blindness or low vision, traumatic brain injuries, amputations, spinal cord injuries, and other disabilities will experience the therapeutic benefits of golf and other athletic activities such as kayaking, biking and rock climbing during the weeklong event.

Dozens of coaches and hundreds of volunteers will ensure each participant has an experience tailored to their needs. The resource-rich program fosters opportunities for fellowship and camaraderie among the veterans—both returning participants and those discovering the benefits of adaptive sports for the first time. ■

Veterans must apply to participate. **The application period begins Jan. 25, 2027**. Visit **veteransgolfclinic.org**.

DAV KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO AMERICA'S VETERANS

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

REUNIONS

ARMY

101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION SNOWBIRDS Jan. 13–16, 2027, Tampa, FL, Contact: Command Sgt. Maj. (retired) Colón-Meléndez, Ph: 405-590-2053, Email: osvaldo.colon1959@gmail.com, Web: screamingeaglefl.org

INQUIRIES

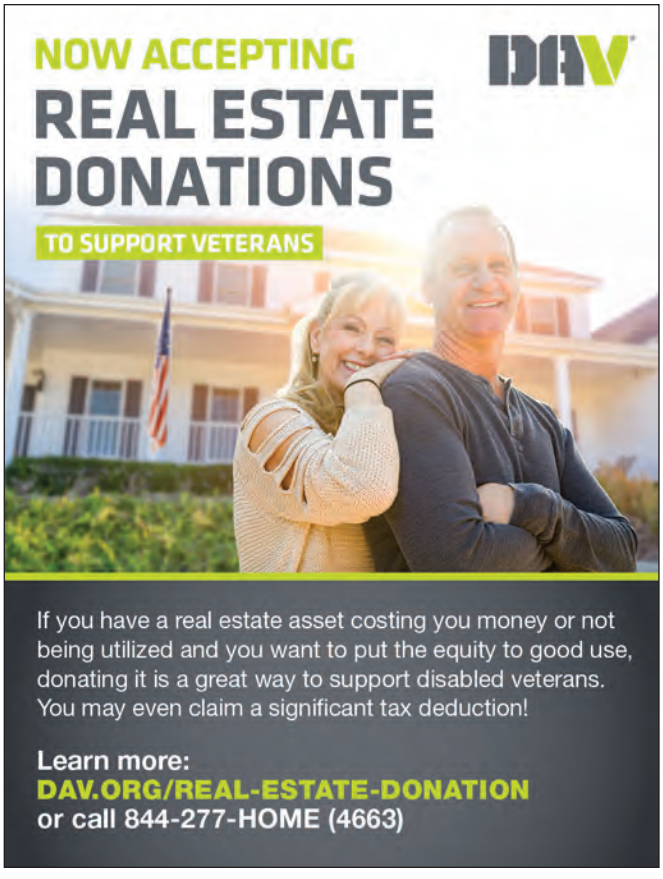
- Searching for anyone involved in Operation Sky. Scope: March 27, 1969, Vietnam coast, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, assigned to 173rd Airborne Brigade, out of LZ English. Contact: Dennis Draper, Email: dbld48@yahoo.com
- Searching for surviving family members, relatives and descendants of the crew of the B-24 Liberator "Harmful Lil' Armful" (448th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force), shot down over the Médoc region (France) on Dec. 31, 1943. The purpose of this search is to share local historical discoveries, honor their sacrifice and connect with their families ahead of an upcoming commemorative memorial tribute in France. Contact: Véronique Seguin-Gaillard, Email: gaillard.seguin@orange.fr
- Searching for Gibbs Amigo, Foreman Newton and Lancaster, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, Vietnam, 1968–69. Contact: Dwayne Bridgette Bourdo, Ph: 401-255-4052
- Searching for Carl O'Connor, who was an E-4 in MOS 81150, Security Police, at Osan Air Base, Korea, between May 1971 and June 1972. Contact: Chuck Shipkosky, Email: cship06@windstream.net
- Looking for anyone who served in the 385th Signal Company at Fort Gordon, GA, 1974–76, and also the Headquarters, 67th Signal Company, at Fort Gordon, 1975–77. Contact: Chris Washington, Email cc.washingtton20@gmail.com

REUNION STORIES

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

Spread the news! Send photos of your DAV or Auxiliary news to production@dav.org. To be considered for publication, photographs should be at least 3 x 5 inches at a resolution of 300 dpi. Submissions should also include a description of the event, along with the names of those pictured, when applicable. In most cases, submissions are published in the order in which they are received but are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety.

Stay informed. Follow along with updates to legislation affecting veterans and their families by joining DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at davcan.org.







APPLY NOW

Applications are available at **wintersportsclinic.org** and must be completely filled out and properly signed.

Mail applications to:
VA Western Colorado HCS
Alex Maitre/WSC
2121 North Ave.
Grand Junction, CO 81501

They can also be scanned and submitted to **alexandre.maitre@va.gov**.

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS NOV. 30.

The National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is set to return to the mountains of Colorado in 2027, and interested veterans can now submit an application to participate.

The annual event, co-presented by DAV and the Department of Veterans Affairs, will take place March 27–April 3, 2027. The clinic is a leader in adaptive winter sports instruction for disabled veterans, promoting world-class healthcare at a one-of-a-kind rehabilitative event. Known as "Miracles on a Mountainside," the clinic offers veterans opportunities for self-development and challenge through sports therapy and rehabilitative adaptive activities, including Alpine and Nordic skiing, rock climbing, sled hockey, and scuba diving.

Participation is open to U.S. military veterans with qualifying disabilities such as spinal cord injuries, orthopedic amputation, blindness or limited vision, and certain neurological conditions. Veterans who currently have inpatient or outpatient status at VA medical facilities will have first priority. ■

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