



THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF DAV AND AUXILIARY

MARCH | APRIL 2014

MAGAZINE

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**Special courts help
veterans avoid jail time**

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2014 Department Conventions

DATE	STATE	CITY	HEADQUARTERS	BANQUET DATE
April 10-13	Alaska	Fairbanks	Westmark Fairbanks Hotel & Conf. Ctr.	April 12
April 24-27	R.I.	Warwick	Crowne Plaza Hotel	April 26
April 25-27	N.D.	Jamestown	Quality Inn	April 26
April 25-27	Puerto Rico	Carolina	Embassy Suites Hotel & Casino	April 26
April 30-May 3	Idaho	Burley	Burley Best Western	May 2
May 1-3	Minn.	Rochester	Ramada	May 2
May 1-4	Conn.	Cromwell	Courtyard by Marriott	May 3
May 1-4	S.C.	Columbia	Double Tree by Hilton	May 3
May 2-3	Wyo.	Powell	The Lamplighter Inn	May 3
May 2-4	Maine	Bangor	Four Points Sheraton	May 3
May 2-4	S.D.	Aberdeen	Best Western Ramkota Hotel	May 3
May 4-6	Nev.	Mesquite	Casa Blanca Hotel & Casino	May 6
May 8-10	Iowa	Dubuque	Grand Harbor Resort & Waterpark	May 9
May 8-11	Vt.	Jay	Jay Peak Resort	May 10
May 14-16	Colo.	Denver	Double Tree by Hilton	May 16
May 14-17	Ore.	Springfield	Holiday Inn	May 16
May 15-18	La.	Alexandria	Best Western Conference Center	May 17
May 23-24	Del.	Dover	Comfort Suites	May 24
May 29-31	Utah	Ogden	Summit Hotel & Conference Center	May 30
May 29-June 1	Ga.	North Macon	Holiday Inn – North Macon	May 31
May 29-June 1	Md.	Ocean City	Princess Royale Hotel	May 31
May 29-June 1	Miss.	Meridian	Drury Inn & Suites	May 31
May 30-June 1	Mo.	Jefferson City	Capitol Plaza Hotel	May 31
June 4-7	Ariz.	Prescott	Prescott Resort	June 6
June 5-7	Mont.	Billings	Billings Hotel & Conv. Center	June 7
June 5-7	Wash.	Yakima	Howard Johnson Plaza	June 6
June 5-8	Ala.	Montgomery	Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa	June 7
June 5-8	Va.	Chesapeake	Marriott Chesapeake	June 7
June 6-7	Hawaii	Honolulu	Pagoda Honolulu Hotel	June 7
June 6-8	Kan.	Wichita	Courtyard by Marriott Old Town	June 7
June 6-8	Mich.	Sault Ste. Marie	Kewadin Casino & Hotel	June 7
June 6-8	N.H.	Shelburne	Town and Country Inn	June 7
June 6-8	Texas	Austin	Double Tree North	June 7
June 6-8	W.Va.	Martinsburg	Rodeway Inn	June 7
June 10-12	N.J.	Atlantic City	Resorts Casino	June 11
June 11-14	Calif.	San Diego	Crowne Plaza Hotel	June 14
June 12-14	N.M.	Albuquerque	MCM Eleganté Hotel & Event Center	June 13
June 12-14	Wis.	Appleton	Radisson Paper Valley Hotel	June 14
June 13-14	Ind.	Indianapolis	The Marten House	June 14
June 13-15	Neb.	Kearney	Holiday Inn	June 14
June 17-21	Pa.	Plymouth Meeting	Double Tree Suites	June 20
June 18-22	Mass.	Leominster	Double Tree by Hilton	June 21
June 19-21	District of Columbia	Washington	Washington Marriott Hotel	June 21
June 19-22	Ill.	Springfield	Northfield Inn & Suites	June 21
June 19-22	N.C.	Raleigh	Raleigh North Hilton	June 21
June 19-22	Tenn.	Murfreesboro	Double Tree by Hilton	June 21
June 20-21	Ark.	Springdale	Northwest Arkansas Holiday Inn	June 21
June 22-25	N.Y.	Kerhonkson	Hudson Valley Resort	June 24
June 25-28	Fla.	Lake Mary	Orlando Marriott – Lake Mary	June 28
June 26-29	Ky.	Lexington	Embassy Suites	June 28
June 26-29	Ohio	Dublin	The Crowne Plaza	June 28
June 27-29	Okla.	Oklahoma City	Best Western PLUS Saddleback Inn	June 28

From the NATIONAL COMMANDER JOSEPH W. JOHNSTON



Veterans Helping Veterans

It should come as no surprise, following the major announcements and upheavals concerning veterans and our military during the past year, that we now find ourselves with many new challenges and opportunities in the areas of service, advocacy and volunteerism.

We are walking through a rapidly changing landscape. Budget concerns constantly brew beneath the surface, increasingly bubbling over into the veterans' community. Uncertainties within the Defense Department have given way to an "everything-on-the-table" approach to modernization, and many service members have already found themselves making the transition to civilian life much sooner than anticipated. Joblessness still plagues our men and women coming home, and many still are not getting access to their earned services and benefits.

Every DAV member has a critical role to play in this dynamic climate, and we can all identify ways to be more personally effective in fulfilling this organization's mission by giving our time and expertise.

Our membership base and national leaders once again made a tremendous showing of solidarity on Capitol Hill during the 2014 Mid-Winter Conference, and the momentum should by no means

stop there. I am always heartened by our activities during the conference. They provide a great surge of attention toward critical veterans' issues, but I know we all have so much more to give of our time, compassion and ingenuity throughout the year.

By staying active at the local community level, we keep an important focus on the fact that veterans do not have to take on transition alone. Don't let people wonder what DAV is all about. Go out into the community and tell them.

Earlier this year, the VA announced that the suicide rate has decreased among male veterans ages 35 to 64. But for those ages 18 to 29, the rate rose 44 percent between 2009 and 2011. Our youngest veterans are desperately in need of engagement, purpose and fulfillment. More seasoned veterans, some for whom this year will mark the 70th anniversary of the World War II Normandy landings and the liberation of Europe, may now require additional care or assistance from a fellow veteran.

We know how difficult the road home can be, for we have walked it before. At any time and at any age, we are here to serve each other. Among so much uncertainty for our veterans today, let's continue to make DAV the constant.

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FEATURES

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Women veterans population and their need for service are growing rapidly.

***On the cover:** U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Chandra Francisco with the Female Engagement Team in support of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 8, in Sangin, Afghanistan Aug. 25, 2011. (Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kowshon Ye)*

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DAV Chapter and Home Depot Foundation partnership to improve widowed veteran's home sets a good example for others.

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Slain SEAL's family honors his memory and service.

Joseph W. Johnston National Commander
J. Marc Burgess National Adjutant/Publisher

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From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS



The Spirit of Teamwork

Having spent nearly 20 years with DAV, I've had a lot of time to observe the strengths of this great organization. As I see it, one of the most remarkable things about DAV is the size and scope of our mission compared to the number of people we have dedicated to fulfilling it.

While we currently have the largest pool of highly qualified, well-trained National Service Officers in our history, the need for these services grows daily. We are fortunate to have our Department and Chapter Service Officers on hand to step in and care for veterans and their families at times or in locations where an NSO may not be available.

This seamless teamwork is what has made DAV the leader among VSOs in claims representation, and it's what gives us the solid reputation of being the best in the field.

Looking back at the past year, no example of this teamwork could shine brighter to me than when our government fell under a partial shutdown in October. Amid the uncertainty and the political gridlock, injured and ill veterans found a number of their earned benefits threatened.

Without the VA's discretionary budget funded through advance appropriations, payment of disability

compensation and education benefits nearly came to a halt. Many VA facilities, while remaining open for scheduled medical appointments, closed their doors to veterans during the shutdown, thereby preventing them from meeting with DAV representatives to discuss or file disability claims.

I was immeasurably proud to see our NSOs, DSOs and CSOs, undeterred, rally together to ensure DAV remained open for business during the shutdown. Across the country, our teams mobilized to set up temporary offices in alternative locations, mobile service units and even on the front lawn of the VA facilities.

Our mission continued, thanks to the teamwork of these men and women. This effort speaks volumes to the dedication our service officers, at all levels of the organization, have to the mission and to their fellow veterans.

For these efforts and for what you do on a daily basis to serve, thank you. We expect a great deal from our service officers, and you never fail to deliver, especially in times of great need. It is this spirit that will continue to carry DAV forward in fulfilling our promise to our nation's injured and ill veterans and their families.



LETTERS

Thanks, DAV

By way of thanks, your Pittsburgh National Service Office has been a Godsend for me. **George Tiuch, Monroeville, Pa.**

Thank you for the public service announcements that we will use to promote membership more effectively. I distributed it to the officers and our Chapter legislative representative, and I think it will allow us to get our message out in our local markets and increase awareness hopefully increase membership within our Chapters. The guidelines and format will keep all of us within the scope of our mission and maintain a common similar message people will recognize. The information gives us the tools to start planning.

Kevin Coley, Jr. Vice Commander, Department of Indiana

Family Honors Former Assistant National Adjutant's Commitment to Country, Fellow Veterans

A note of remembrance for Thomas G. Dehne, who served as DAV's Assistant National Adjutant from 1984–1989 and passed away on Dec. 5, 2013. As a Marine veteran of the Korean War who received two Purple Hearts as a result of combat action, Tom was proud to represent all veterans when he served on the committee to construct the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. His family wants to thank DAV leadership and membership for their support.

Thomas Dehne Jr, Naples, Florida

Facebook

www.facebook.com/the.DAV

I finally became a member today!!! Looking forward to getting more involved with my fellow Vets. God Bless America! **Belinda Small, Douglasville, Calif.**

If you are or you know a veteran in need, call the Veterans Crisis line at

1-800-273-8255 and Press 1. Let's stop the suicides of Veterans and our active-duty members. Check on your buddies. **Mike Phillips, Roanoke, Va.**

I've just received my 2014 Commander's Club membership card. It is my pleasure and honor to support your organization, that honors our GREATEST AMERICANS! Thank you all! God Bless the United States Military!! **Bob Kehler, Folcroft, Pa.**

Twitter

[Twitter.com/DAVHQ](https://twitter.com/DAVHQ)

Jan 31 Just spoke with @USMCWWR and hopefully my medical care can get on track with the @DeptVetAffairs @USMC take care of their own @DAVHQ. **@SBUX75DEVILDOG**

Jan 31 Major props to @DAVHQ Chapter 44 for the work they're doing in #capemay Thankful to have them as a community partner. #cvac #saf #vets **@Its_Jess_ (Jessica Richardson)**

Feb 9 My Marine #RobertGlasner RT @DAVHQ: Name or tag a #veteran who you are willing to stand up for! #KeepThePromise **@DVStrategies (Dana Vickers Shelley)**

Feb 9 #JosephCamacho #Johnathen McKinney #JamesLyons "@DAVHQ: Name or tag a #veteran who you are willing to stand up for! #KeepThePromise" **@jcamacho510 (Joseph Camacho)**

Feb 4 @DAVHQ Service: is nominated for a New York Emmy Award for

Best Military Program. Thanks to DAV for underwriting the broadcasts. **@ServicetheFilm (Service)**

Jan 30 @DAVHQ This says it all! Thanks for such an EMPOWERING FB Post! pic.twitter.com/b4KhpKA4hX



@SHANDAT4MVA2014 (Shanda Taylor-Boyd)

Correction

In the Jan./Feb. DAV Magazine, the article entitled "Blue Button Provides Easy, Secure Access to VA Medical Records" incorrectly identified George Mahler as Senior Program Manager for Coordinated Care Services Inc. Mr. Mahler is employed at Creative Computing Solutions Inc., a company which helped VA develop Blue Button. DAV regrets this error and thanks Creative Computing Solutions Inc. for helping make veteran healthcare more accessible.

WRITE TO US We welcome letters from our readers. Please mail them to **DAV Magazine, 3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076**, or submit them via email to feedback@dav.org. We regret we are unable to acknowledge every letter, due to the volume received. Letters used are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety. Messages involving individual claims are referred to the DAV Service Department.



NSO Expedites Claim, Veteran Pays it Forward

By Charity A. Edgar

As a research psychologist, Paul Bartone deployed all around the world during his time in the Army. After honorably serving his country for 25 years, Bartone looked forward to enjoying a relaxing retirement with his family. His plans abruptly changed during a routine dental visit at his local VA medical center when irregularities were discovered in his throat. Further tests confirmed what doctors feared—Bartone had Stage IV throat cancer.

During Bartone's long career, he traveled extensively—going anywhere soldiers were located, including Grenada, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bosnia. His military doctors determined that the throat cancer was most likely connected to the frequent deployments and repeat exposure to carcinogens, diesel fumes and coal dust. Bartone received written confirmation of the doctors' conclusions, which were included in his initial claim made to the VA in September 2010.

"I waited, like many service members, for the VA to make a decision. Of course it is a busy time for them with lots of disability claims. I understand that," said Bartone. "VA did their best and kept requesting more



Serving as a research psychologist in the Army, DAV life member Paul Bartone deployed all around the world to anywhere soldiers were stationed, including Grenada, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bosnia.

examinations and more information. They wanted me to bring in active-duty medical records that chronicled a history of sore throats. But I didn't have that. I wasn't sick before, but that's how a lot of cancers present themselves."

While Bartone waited, his condition worsened, and he underwent radiation and chemotherapy treatments. "It was a long, drawn-out process," he said. "I didn't know when or if it would ever be resolved."

Bartone's brother, a retired Marine, had recently contacted DAV and received help filing his own claim. His brother praised the work of the National Service Officers, and Bartone decided he should give them a call.

After reviewing Bartone's documents, NSO Supervisor Phil Surace and then-Assistant Supervisor Domonique

Maestas sprang into action. "I hand-carried his files to the rating team coach," said Surace. "I prepared a brief to the VA on why Paul should be granted that benefit and why it should not be deferred." The VA requested another examination, but the Baltimore National Service Office worked to have the duplicative request waived.

"Thank God for DAV and their Baltimore office. They advised me and followed up with the VA. It was

the Baltimore office that identified the VA regulation stipulating that within a certain period of time after leaving the service, certain conditions are presumptive,” said Bartone. “That was the key that seemed to break the logjam. Eventually, I had a resolution and was granted the disability from the VA.”

According to 38 CFR Part 3.309 (a), Bartone’s throat cancer is subject to presumptive service connection because it manifested to a compensable degree of 10 percent or more within one year of date of separation.

“Without the help of DAV and their expertise, I think I’d still be waiting today...They know their regulations. They know how the system works.”

—Paul Bartone, retired Army veteran



The VA expedited the decision and granted the condition with an effective date that reflected the date of the diagnosis.

“Without the help of DAV and their expertise, I think I’d still be waiting today,” said Bartone. “They are veterans helping veterans. They know their regulations. They know how the system works.”

Now that Bartone does not have to wait and wonder when, or if, his claim will be reviewed, he wants to make sure that other former service members know there is assistance out there. “DAV is helping with the nuts and bolts—the administrative process—and they provide emotional support that may not be in their job description. Encouragement, an arm around the shoulder—that means a lot, coming from a veteran who has been there. It is so valuable.”

“As our members know, NSOs have gone through the VA claims process themselves,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “They know firsthand the difficulties encountered in the transition from service member to civilian.”

Bartone has advice for veterans struggling with the claims process. “First off, don’t give up. The waiting is difficult, but stay the course and keep in touch with your

DAV NSO and provide anything that they need and let them be your guide. Be willing to wait. It does take time. It’s frustrating, but it will be resolved.”

Despite his ongoing recovery, Bartone supports fellow veterans through DAV. He encourages others who have been helped to do the same. “I am thankful for DAV, and, as much as I’m able, my goal is to try to help them in what they’re doing and to serve other veterans.”

“In terms of giving back, if you’re not a member, you should be, and participate in DAV activities as much

as you can,” said Bartone. “If you’re able, volunteer as much as you can. Once I can, I’d like to drive the DAV Transportation Network van and help out anywhere else they need me.

“My wife is a DAV Auxiliary Life Member,” continued Bartone. “Becoming a member and telling your veteran friends about DAV is a great way to pay it back. And if you are able, you can support DAV with charitable contributions. If they have more funds, they can help more veterans.”

Surace is not surprised by Bartone’s continued service since receiving help with his claim. “Paul is a wonderful, patient person. He did exactly what we needed him to do in order to get him the benefits he earned,” said Surace. “When we shut off the lights and walk out of the office at the end of each day, we feel good about helping people like Paul.”

“I’m fortunate because I got through it. I have side effects of my treatment to live with, and of course with cancer, you never know how much time you’ll have,” said Bartone. “Right now I’m blessed, and I thank God every day for DAV helping me navigate the VA claims process. My family and I are forever grateful to DAV.” ■

VA Funding Again Falls Short of Need

By Dave Autry

President Obama has signed a \$1.1 trillion omnibus bill that will keep the government funded through the end of September, preventing a potential shutdown. It calls for \$63.2 billion, plus more than \$3 billion in collections, in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is \$2.3 billion more than the level enacted in 2013.

Although the amount of funding has increased, it is not sufficient to meet veterans health care and benefit needs, said National Legislative Director Joseph A. Violante. “That includes \$58.8 billion for health care and \$2.4 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration for fiscal year 2014.”

The measure provides funding levels that virtually mirror the Administration’s April 2013 budget request. In addition to funding the VA for fiscal year 2014, the omnibus includes \$55.6 billion, plus \$3.2 billion in collections, in advance funding for veterans medical care for fiscal year 2015. DAV’s advance funding recommendation was \$61.6 billion.

“Unfortunately, this budget agreement contains the same inadequate funding levels proposed by the Administration for infrastructure and medical and prosthetic research,” said National Commander Joseph W. Johnston. “Congress needs to dramatically increase annual appropriations required to repair, renovate and replace essential VA medical facilities as well as boost funding for life-saving and life-changing biomedical research programs.”

Particularly worrisome is the reduction in funding for major construction. The measure provides \$342 million for major construction, nearly \$800 million less than DAV recommended, and billions less than what’s truly needed. Additionally, the omnibus slashes nearly \$500

million in funding for medical facilities.

“Funding to maintain the VA’s critical infrastructure has not kept pace with the growing needs,” said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. “For years, construction and repairs have been put on hold because of funding shortfalls. Not only does that hinder the VA’s ability to modernize its aging infrastructure, but it also puts veterans at risk.”

The omnibus provides \$585.6 million for medical and prosthetic research, which is \$3.5 million above the 2013 enacted level but \$25 million below DAV’s recommendation.

The measure provides new tools and resources for

“Unfortunately, this budget agreement contains the same inadequate funding levels proposed by the Administration for infrastructure and medical and prosthetic research.”

Joseph W. Johnston, National Commander



the Veterans Benefits Administration to address the backlog of disability claims by increasing personnel, strengthening accountability and enhancing training and quality oversight.

“The VA’s efforts to streamline the claims process and eliminate the backlog are encouraging,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. “We look forward to continued progress in improved accuracy and timeliness.”

Other highlights of the measure include \$3.7 billion for information technology systems, which is \$378.7 million more than the 2013 enacted level. However, those funds are restricted until the VA reports detailed plans on budgets, timelines and testing, to ensure reliable interoperability between the current and future electronic health records systems of the VA and the Department of Defense. ■

DAV and Women Veterans

By Ashleigh Bryant

As the most rapidly shifting demographic within the veterans' community, women are projected to make up close to 18 percent of the total U.S. veteran population by 2040. That estimation from the Department of Veterans Affairs pinpoints what DAV knows is a key component of future operations: women veterans must have ample, dedicated support from advocates who know how to address the unique needs of this demographic.

For decades, DAV has been actively participating in congressional hearings, testifying on behalf of legislative changes that improve the equality and availability of the care and benefits earned by those who served.

The history between DAV and women veterans has grown, and DAV will continue to enhance its support of this unique group to ensure that all veterans receive the care and benefits they have earned through service.

As part of that continued commitment, DAV's Women Veterans Interim Committee meets during National Conventions and the Mid-Winter Conferences to discuss ways to meet the needs of this unique group to ensure that all veterans receive the care and benefits they have earned through service.



Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

In 1983, the VA established the first Advisory Committee on Women Veterans. Even before its inception, DAV supported the idea of electing a panel of well-versed advocates who could identify critical issues and play an active role in changing policies and procedures to better suit the needs of women veterans. Two of DAV's most recent members who served on the committee were Army veterans Latoya Lucas and Delphine Metcalf-Foster, DAV's 3rd Jr. Vice Commander.

Center for Women Veterans

In the 1990s, DAV was among the veterans service organizations urging Congress to elevate the national women's program to the secretarial level, resulting in the creation of the Center for Women Veterans in 1994. DAV backed the nomination of Vietnam veteran Joan Furey as the new office's first director.

"This was the first, and to my recollection, only time in recent history DAV officially endorsed a specific nominee for a confirmable position," said former Washington Headquarters Executive Director Dave Gorman. "We did so in recognition of the emerging importance of women veterans and the role they would play, particularly in the VA health care arena."

Women Veterans Summits

DAV has co-hosted the national Women Veterans Summit with the VA for several years, focusing nationwide attention on women veterans' physical and mental health care, homelessness concerns and resources to help them with claims and benefits.

"We were probably the first major VSO to hold a women's summit in D.C.," said Gorman. "In 1994, when Art [Wilson] took over, I approached him, and he gave the go-ahead. I would like to think that his willingness back then really set the stage for our sustained efforts and, to a large extent, the advances VA has made in women's health care."

Additionally, DAV has co-sponsored both Service Women's Action Network Summits on military sexual trauma (MST), bringing further attention to the need for policy reform that protects male and female survivors of these crimes.

"The last year has brought about a great deal of change concerning the way MST cases are handled both in the military and in developing disability claims," said Deputy National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. "I absolutely believe it is because we have all come together in this united front to push for the rights of those affected by these crimes."

Stand Up for Women Veterans Campaign

Independently, DAV launched the Stand Up for Women Veterans advocacy campaign in 2010, which helped achieve the passage of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act. This legislation authorized a study of the barriers to health care for women veterans, started a pilot program for counseling women veterans in retreat settings, established a child care pilot program for veterans receiving health care services at VA and authorized the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish health care services to newborns of women who receive VA maternity care. In 2013, DAV updated content to the “Stand Up for Women Veterans” special publication, which was distributed to VA regional offices as well as numerous women veterans’ conferences, seminars and other events.

DAV has long been on the front lines of women veterans’ issues, thanks in large part to the course of

action set by past National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson, who, during his nearly 20-year leadership as National Adjutant, strongly supported the investment of time and resources necessary to understand the needs of this growing population. Current National Adjutant Marc Burgess continues this legacy, guiding the development of DAV’s services and endeavors to best accommodate all those who served.

“I’m proud to say we are the leader in advocacy and providing service to women veterans,” National Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski said. “DAV is continually working to ensure that gender-specific programs are implemented throughout the VA health care system, that wellness needs are being met and that women veterans are able to access the full range of care and benefits they have earned.”

Documentary Films

Another way DAV has educated the public on women veterans’ issues was through its support for documentaries highlighting this critical subject matter. DAV sponsored Capitol Hill screenings of the films “Lioness” and “SERVICE: When Women Come Marching Home” before members of Congress and their staffs.

In 2013, the DAV National Service Foundation funded the PBS broadcast of “SERVICE,” documenting the transitions of eight service women following devastating physical and emotional injuries.

“We have been fortunate to have a number of unique opportunities to get the message out about DAV’s services, and we are always looking for ways to enhance our outreach abilities,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine.

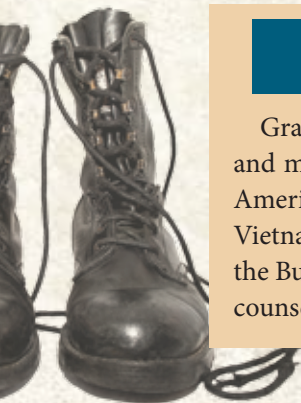
National Service Officers

DAV has long recognized the unique experiences and expertise that women veterans bring to the workplace. Following the establishment of the National Service Academy in the mid-1990s, more women veterans began filling DAV’s service and leadership roles. Today, of more than 300 national and transition service officers in the field, more than 60 are women veterans.

“DAV recognizes, as an organization of veterans serving veterans, that the face of this community has changed,” said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. “We actively seek out and recruit women veterans to continue to expand their presence in our National Service Officer corps.”

Charitable Service Trust Grants

Grants through the DAV Charitable Service Trust have helped women veterans programs, services and memorials to flourish. “This includes support for the founding of the Women in Military Service to America Memorial at the entrance of Arlington National Cemetery and its related activities, as well as the Vietnam Women’s Memorial,” said Richard E. Marbes, Chairman of the Trust. The Trust has also supported the Business and Professional Women’s Foundation mentoring program and a number of women’s retreats, counseling programs and services that address the needs of homeless women veterans and their families.



DAV, Others Urge \$72.9 Billion Investment in Health Care, Benefits

By Joseph R. Chenelly

For the 28th consecutive year, DAV has joined with other organizations to create the veteran community's most comprehensive budget and policy document: *The Independent Budget* (IB).

While the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to face growing demand on its health care and benefits systems, Congress and the Administration must ensure that the VA has all the tools necessary to effectively meet those demands.

The IB provides, in great detail, what those tools need to be in the 2015 budget. The four co-authors, DAV, AMVETS, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, lay out a set of funding and policy recommendations to meet veterans' needs.

"The VA is responsible for providing competent, compassionate and consistently high-quality health care to all eligible veterans and to their eligible families and survivors," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "Sufficient resources are needed to provide timely and accurate delivery of all earned benefits, including disability compensation, pensions, education, housing assistance and other necessary supports. VA must provide dignified memorial services to all eligible veterans, preserving national cemeteries as shrines to those lost in or following military service."

This year's IB calls for increases in health care, information technology, benefits administration, research and construction spending, totaling \$72.9 billion in funding for the VA in 2015. Just \$66.5 billion was allocated to VA in the actual budget for 2014.

"This commitment must be accomplished in the face of continued pressure to control federal spending," said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. "That said, it cannot be emphasized enough that meeting the needs of veterans of every generation is a solemn obligation that cannot be minimized."

The IB shows a need for \$61.1 billion total for health

care for fiscal year 2015, which is \$2.3 billion more than the Administration recommended (\$58.8 billion) in the fiscal year 2015 advance appropriation last year. There is a need for \$62.4 billion total advance appropriation for health care for 2016, according to the IB.

The IB states \$611 million is needed for medical and prosthetics research in 2015, which is approximately \$25 million more than the 2014 appropriated level.

About \$44 million more than appropriated for 2014 is needed in 2015 for the Veterans Benefits Administration. That would total at \$2.5 billion for VBA.

"We applaud VA's progress during the past year in reducing the benefits claims backlog and putting in place a new organizational paperless claims process model, and we hope the Administration and Congress remain committed to providing the resources needed to continue this vital transformation," said National Commander Joseph W. Johnston. "That means funding the proper staffing levels and providing sufficient training. Additionally, it is crucial that appropriate funding is provided to continue building and maintaining the VA's information technology infrastructure."

"Although there is measurable progress in reducing the backlog of veterans' claims," the IB reads, "the Veterans Benefits Administration must increase its openness, transparency, cooperation and collaboration with Congress and veterans service organizations to successfully complete this transformation."

The VA construction account, which upgrades rapidly aging facilities, is severely underfunded. From fiscal year 2002 through 2014, the IB has recommended a total of \$23.5 billion for VA construction, but the federal government during that period has appropriated less than \$13.5 billion. Through 13 years of war, VA construction accounts have only received 57 percent of what's required. The IB projects VA will need to invest \$31 billion over the next decade to close its major and minor construction gaps.



This year's IB stresses the importance of changing the way VA is funded, calling for the House and Senate to immediately consider and approve legislation that would extend advance appropriations to all VA discretionary and mandatory appropriations accounts. About 86 percent of VA's funding, primarily in health care, is already funded a year in advance.

"The entire VA budget needs to be funded in advance so we don't have to worry about another government shutdown negatively impacting veterans, their families and survivors again," said National Legislative Director Joseph A. Violante. "Veterans should not be forced to

suffer because of political budget showdowns."

The IB, which began circulating in its entirety Feb. 7, has been received well in Congress this year.






"The counsel of America's many veterans service organizations is crucial to ensuring America provides our veterans the benefits they have earned. *The Independent Budget* is a key part of this process," said Rep. Jeff Miller (R., Fla.), chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. ■



Learn More Online

The entire IB, along with a report of critical issues, is available online at www.independentbudget.org.

VA Accounts FY 2015 (Dollars in Thousands)

	FY 2014* Appropriation	FY 2015** Administration	FY 2015 <i>Independent Budget (IB)**</i>	FY 2016 <i>IB Advance Approp.</i>
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)				
 Medical Services	43,597,000	45,015,527	49,287,449	50,777,292
Medical Support and Compliance	6,033,000	5,879,000	6,107,179	5,951,504
Medical Facilities	4,957,000	4,739,000	5,715,072	5,739,709
Subtotal Medical Care, Discretionary	54,587,000	55,633,527	61,109,700	62,468,505
 Medical Care Collections	3,064,000	3,174,000		
Total, Medical Care Budget Authority (including Collections)	57,651,000	58,807,527	61,109,700	62,468,505
Medical and Prosthetic Research	585,664		611,000	
Total, Veterans Health Administration	58,236,664		61,720,700	
General Operating Expenses (GOE)				
 Veterans Benefits Administration	2,465,490		2,509,112	
General Administration	415,885		426,526	
Total, General Operating Expenses (GOE)	2,881,375		2,935,638	
Departmental Admin. and Misc. Programs				
 Information Technology	3,703,344		3,785,923	
National Cemetery Administration	250,000		260,000	
Office of Inspector General	121,411		123,011	
Total, Dept. Admin. and Misc. Programs	4,074,755		4,168,934	
Construction Programs				
 Construction, Major	342,130		2,800,000	
Construction, Minor	714,870		831,000	
Grants for State Extended-Care Facilities	85,000		250,000	
Grants for State Vets Cemeteries	46,000		48,000	
Total, Construction Programs	1,188,000		3,929,000	
Other Discretionary	158,784		161,166	
Total, Discretionary Budget Authority (including Medical Collections)	66,539,578		72,915,438	

* Amounts for health care for FY 2014 were included in the FY 2013 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act approved in March 2013.

** Amounts for health care for FY 2015 were included in the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Act approved in January 2014.

Home Memorial

DAV and the Home Depot Foundation help a family honor a wife, mother, Army veteran.

By Charity A. Edgar

Erasmo and Maria Flores learned in the Army to never give up, and both took that tenet to heart when they fought the battle of their lives.

Erasmus, who joined the Army as a combat engineer on his 19th birthday, served in Iraq twice. On his second deployment, he met Maria, a chemical specialist, whom he would later marry. "The universe was telling me I wanted to be around her and make her happy," said Erasmo.

Maria was honorably discharged from the Army in 2010 to focus on their children. She also began pursuing a degree in nursing. Erasmo was medically discharged a year later, derailing plans for a lifetime military career. He then worked as a personal trainer while pursuing a degree in architecture.

"We were on our way as civilians," said Erasmo. "We were enjoying life, reaching for our goals."

That all changed with Maria's diagnosis of cervical cancer in 2012.

When Maria began chemotherapy, medical bills began to mount, so the Flores family moved to a more affordable area. When Lisa Roybal, the manager of the Women Veterans Clinic, delivered some items to the new home, she saw it did not have a dryer. She also noticed a lack of landscaping and thought that colorful plants around the house might aid Maria's healing. Roybal wasted no time contacting the Home Depot in Victorville, Calif.

The Home Depot Foundation provides home-improvement grants so that the volunteers of registered

nonprofit organizations can improve the physical health of their communities. Because of their past successes coordinating home-improvement projects, DAV San Bernardino Chapter 12 was approached to help.

"Our Chapter has been able to identify ill and injured veteran homeowners in need of assistance to improve their quality of life," said Richard Valdez, Commander of the Department of California and Chapter 12 member. "We had just turned in two applications, so after hearing Maria and Erasmo's story, I turned their application in the very next day, and it was approved later that week."

"Our volunteer efforts are successful because of the creative initiatives of our Departments and Chapters," said National Director of Voluntary Services Ron Minter. "San Bernardino Chapter 12's partnership with the Home Depot Foundation underscores how out-of-the-box thinking can result in local programs that make a big difference for our nation's veterans."

Maria was in remission during the project and was slated to start a new job when severe pain rerouted her to the emergency room instead.

On Oct. 2, 2013, after a year-long battle with cancer, Maria passed away at age 28.

The home now serves as a memorial to Maria that her family will enjoy for years to come.

San Bernardino Chapter 12 transformed the landscaping plans into a memorial garden and made a play area with a swing set for the Flores children.

Volunteers from DAV and Home Depot erected a flag pole with an inscribed memorial granite stone donated by one of the store's vendors.



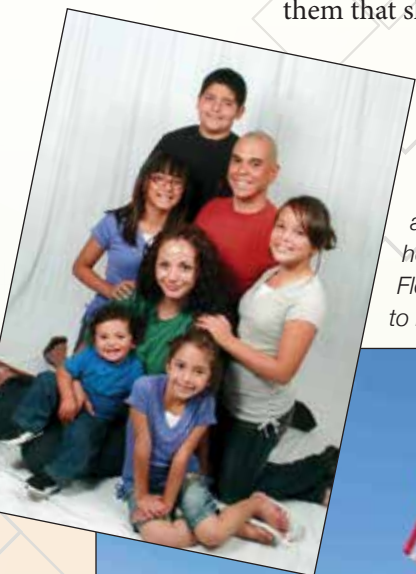
Volunteers from San Bernardino Chapter 12 and the Victorville Home Depot stand with Erasmo Flores III and his son Erasmo Flores IV in their freshly landscaped yard. San Bernardino Chapter 12 partners with the Home Depot Foundation to improve the quality of life for disabled veterans by beautifying and enhancing their homes.

“The impressive contributions that Chapter 12 gave the Flores family—and other veterans in need—highlight DAV’s focus on veterans helping veterans,” said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. “We are committed to the service of those who sacrificed in our defense.”

“We have the same goal—doing our part in taking care of vets,” said Team Depot Captain Jennifer Lamb. “Home Depot has a foundation that wants to give back to the community, and this is our way of thanking veterans for their sacrifice.”

Countless hours of work by volunteers have given Maria’s husband and children Mary, 15; Marisela, 13; Sergio, 12; Marisa, 10 and Erasmo IV, 4, a tribute visible to the entire community.

“The house now serves as an inspiration and gives our family hope. The children all stressed the importance of being successful and making Maria proud,” said Erasmo. “They know that she was there for them, and it reminds them that she continues to be.” ■



***Left:** Erasmo and Maria Flores smile with their children Mary, Marisela, Sergio, Marisa and Erasmo IV. **Below:** The flag pole and granite stone memorial honoring Army Veteran Maria Flores serve as a visible tribute to her husband and children.*



Get Involved

The Home Depot Foundation is on a mission to ensure every veteran has a safe place to call home, and your Chapter can help.

- STEP 1** **Identify** a disabled veteran whose home needs sprucing up. Prepare a description of the scope of the project.
- STEP 2** **Contact** your local Home Depot. Arrange to meet with the Team Depot captain or a store manager. Home Depot will contact the veteran, perform a site survey and provide the Chapter with a price quote.
- STEP 3** **Complete** the “Partner Request” and “Grant Request” forms provided by Home Depot. The grant request can be completed online at www.homedepotfoundation.org/page/teamdepotapplication. You will need to attach the following documents:
- Proof of your Chapter’s nonprofit status
 - Certificate of liability insurance
 - Partner Request Form
 - Home Depot’s price quote
- STEP 4** **Sign and return** the grant agreement after the application is approved.
- STEP 5** **Finalize** the work schedule and contact the Team Depot captain to purchase the materials using the gift cards provided by Home Depot.

NOTE

- Your Chapter’s contact person must have signature authority to commit the Chapter, as these are legal documents.
- The application and all correspondence is done online and by email.
- Limit the scope of work to tasks that won’t require permits or specialized workers.

MORE

For more information, contact National Director of Voluntary Services Ron Minter at 859-442-2347 or rminter@dav.org. You can also visit www.homedepotfoundation.org.



Pension Scams Bilk Veterans and the VA

Veterans are being warned about fraudulent offers of help in qualifying for benefits through the Veterans Pension Program. This type of scam is often directed toward veterans and family members who do not actually qualify for a VA pension.

The New York Times has reported that the VA has been bilked out of billions of dollars through these schemes, which are designed by lawyers, financial advisors and insurance brokers, often in league with retirement communities and assisted-living facilities.

The legitimate Veterans Pension Program helps veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing a tax-free supplemental income benefit to low-income wartime veterans. The monthly benefit is paid to war veterans who are either totally disabled, living in a nursing home, receiving skilled nursing care or are over age 65 and meet income requirements set by Congress. Additional money is available for certain veterans who are housebound or unable to care for themselves.

“DAV National Service Officers are well-versed in all VA benefits programs and provide counseling and claims assistance free of charge,” said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. “So, I highly recommend that anyone with questions about VA pensions should seek this free, expert assistance.”

In determining eligibility, the VA takes into account total family earnings, disability and retirement payments, interest and dividends from annuities and net income from farming or a business, as well as assets such as bank accounts, stocks, bonds, mutual funds and any property other than your residence and a reasonable lot area. Veterans need to be on guard against anyone who offers to move assets around to qualify for a VA pension. Veterans and family members who do not actually qualify for a VA pension could be required to repay those benefits to the government.

Examples of possible pension poaching scams include:

- Organizations that cold-call veterans, charge money for assisting with a VA pension claim and take credit card information from veterans over the telephone.
- People who charge as much as \$6,000 up front to represent claimants before the VA, with a percentage of any eventual back payment from VA as a portion of the ultimate fee. ■



Learn More Online

For more information about VA pension eligibility requirements and assistance with a claim, contact your nearest DAV National Service Office or go to www.dav.org/veterans/find-your-local-office.

From the NATIONAL SERVICE DIRECTOR JAMES T. MARSZALEK



Certification for Better Service

It cannot be overstated just how vital our Chapter and Department service programs are to the fulfillment of DAV's overall mission of service to veterans. So many veterans, family members and survivors rely on our Chapter and Department Service Officers for help with claims and benefits.

No one has more impact on our organization's ability to meet our primary mission. No one has more impact on our organization's stellar reputation. I believe no one has a tougher task than those of you representing veterans and their families with claims for benefits from the government.

In addition to the long hours, often frustrating circumstances and tedious tasks, a service officer must have a solid understanding of the claims process in its complex entirety. The National Service Program wants to help ensure every service officer has the knowledge and resources necessary to fulfill that.

In the face of dramatically increasing workloads, a growing inventory, and a backlog that affects veterans of all eras—and both first-time filers and veterans coming back to VA for a supplementary claim—it is as important as ever that we assist veterans in filing first-rate, timely claims.

To achieve the goals for improving the delivery of benefits to veterans, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Benefits Administration built a "Transformation Plan" that includes

initiatives to streamline its business processes and build and implement new technology solutions. VBA included DAV in developing that plan, so we are knowledgeable of the new system's intricacies.

From the new Veterans Benefits Management System, to the expanded use of eBenefits, to Disability Benefits Questionnaires, to Fully Developed Claims, there is much to learn and master within the VA's new system.

The National Service Program is prepared to assist service officers at every level through our revamped Department & Chapter Service Officer Certification Program. The program is designed to enhance the knowledge and professionalism of the non-accredited Department and Chapter Service Officer. Claims work is covered in detail, explaining the adjudication process from start to finish, providing the knowledge necessary to creating a successful and quick claim. It also covers benefits, entitlements, compensation, pensions, and several other imperative topics. In short, it will make you an effective service officer and an asset to your community.

I feel strongly that every single service officer in the entire organization should complete this annual certification program.

Clearly, we are in a rapidly transforming time. You need to be up to date if you want to uphold DAV's traditions of providing the finest claims assistance available anywhere.

Reports of MST Spike in 2013

By Ashleigh Bryant

Last year ended with a significant uptick—more than 50 percent—in the number of sexual assaults reported in the military. Defense Department officials suggest the increased willingness of military sexual trauma, or MST, survivors to come forward reflects the change in the department's handling of assault investigations. Regardless of the reason, this shift in numbers potentially means a higher volume of VA disability claims filed for MST-related injuries and illnesses.

"This spike in reporting, in conjunction with the changes to evidentiary requirements for claiming disabilities resulting from such trauma, gives MST survivors a better chance of establishing service-connection for their condition and, ultimately, to receive the care they need to begin recovery," said Deputy National Legislative Director Joy Ilem.

From September 2012 to September 2013, there were more than 5,000 reports of sexual assault, compared to 3,374 reported the previous fiscal year. While the numbers

"This spike in reporting...gives MST survivors a better chance of establishing service-connection for their condition"

Joy Ilem, Deputy National Legislative Director

may also reflect an enhanced understanding among service members as to what constitutes sexual assault or harassment, the bottom line is that crimes that have been historically difficult to track are generating a more visible paper trail. For veterans, this reporting only enhances their ability to have successful disability claim outcomes



Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III speaks at a town hall at Fort Belvoir, Va., Feb. 3, 2014, about the responsibilities soldiers have in protecting one another from sexual assault, helping a battle buddy at risk for suicide, and creating a safe environment for all members. (Lisa Ferdinando/ARNEWS)

for MST-related physical and emotional ailments.

The VA issued letters late in 2013 regarding changes to the evidentiary standards for MST-related post-traumatic stress disorder for veterans whose claims had been denied after 2010. Those veterans were encouraged to have their claims re-evaluated by the VA.

"Since those changes were made, we have provided our National Service Officers additional training on the new rating guidelines," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek.

All NSOs and trainees underwent training on how to conduct interviews with survivors of MST.

"Our NSOs are expertly trained and prepared to meet the needs of current and future veterans," said Marszalek. "I have the utmost confidence in our team to respectfully and diligently pursue due compensation and care for MST survivors."

Based on a confidential, anonymous survey, Pentagon officials estimated there were 26,000 sexual assaults in the military in 2012, compared to the 3,374 that were reported. Even accounting for the spike in 2013, reports are still just a fraction of the actual crimes committed, meaning congressional work is on the horizon in 2014 concerning MST. And more likely than not, more veterans will need DAV's services. ■

Success Is VITAL

New collaborative program helps veteran students succeed in higher education



Veterans who interrupted or delayed their education to serve in the military often find it difficult to transition to college life, but a new program from the Veterans Health Administration is helping these veterans succeed. Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) is a collaboration among universities, student veterans groups and the VA. The program connects these students with their local VA medical centers, where they can get the services they need while in school.

VITAL coordinators link student veterans to mental health counseling, VA health care and other benefits, as well as campus and community services and resources.

“Programs and services that help veterans successfully transition from the military to college can open the door to success,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. “DAV has been working with student veterans groups on college campuses to ensure veterans have access to all their earned benefits. That has helped relieve the financial and emotional burden for so many of these students and their dependents.”

The VITAL program served more than 50 colleges in 2012 and expanded to 64 schools in 2013. Some schools have lounges for veterans where they can study, relax, spend time with friends or meet with a VITAL counselor.

According to the VA, student veterans are growing in number. More than 660,000 undergraduate students in the United States are veterans, who tend to be older than their classmates and have vastly different life experiences. According to the VA, only 15 percent of student veterans are 18 to 23, the traditional ages of college students.

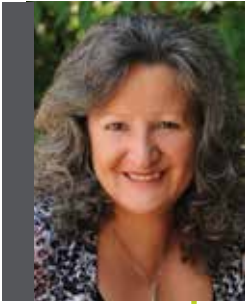
As of last April, the VITAL program provided face-to-face support to nearly 6,000 student veterans, helped more than 900 enroll in the VA health care system and held 300 training and education events for campus leadership, faculty, staff and nonveteran students. ■



“Programs and services that help veterans successfully transition from the military to college can open the door to success.”

*Garry Augustine,
Washington Headquarters Executive Director*

For campus leadership, faculty, staff and nonveteran students, the VITAL program provides education about military culture and specific mental health issues as a way to remove the stigma often associated with veterans returning to civilian life.



From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER SUSAN K. MILLER

United in Service

No one knows more about service than DAV and the DAV Auxiliary. In support of DAV's mission of "Fulfilling Our Promises to the Men and Women Who Served," the DAV Auxiliary's mission is "Making a Difference" in the lives of disabled veterans and their families.

I don't see those as two separate missions, but as one being an extension of the other. Together, we offer services for veterans and their families that address their overall health and well-being, from their physical and emotional needs to their financial health. Working in concert with one another has a far greater impact than acting alone.

That has proven true time and again, especially in fighting for veterans' rights and in supporting programs that benefit injured and ill veterans as well as their families and survivors. The tremendous impact that our two organizations have through the Transportation Network and the VA Voluntary Service program are just a couple of examples of our joint successes.

The DAV Auxiliary's services through our Americanism, Community Service, Hospital and Junior activities bring our organization closer to our local communities.

DAV National Commander Joe Johnston and I believe strongly in being "United in Service." We agree that we must act in harmony with each other if we are to continue to fulfill our missions.

Throughout my travels for the past five years, I have learned quite a lot about local and state DAV and DAV Auxiliaries working together.

I know that in the legislative arena, the Auxiliary has always been very good at writing, calling, emailing and talking to our elected officials. DAV made it very easy for us to unite with them through DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network). This computerized service is a wonderful way to contact your elected officials with just a click of the mouse.

DAV, on the national level, is also helping the Auxiliary with its membership efforts. A huge membership mailing drive went out in November. And every new member that joins is one more than we had before.

It is my hope that, this year, DAV and DAV Auxiliary, on all levels, can reach new heights in meeting the needs of those we serve. That together, we will be ready and willing to be of service, no matter what, because we are "United in Service."

DAV Auxiliary Membership Application

Membership year is July 1 to June 30.

Date _____

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION IN UNIT NO. _____ STATE _____

☐ MS. ☐ MRS. ☐ MR. PHONE NO. _____

NAME (please print) _____ MEMBERSHIP CODE NO. _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

If this is a renewal or Life Membership payment skip to the signature line.

ELIGIBILITY THROUGH:

NAME _____ CODE # (if applicable) _____

RELATIONSHIP (please check) ☐ SPOUSE ☐ GRANDFATHER ☐ BROTHER ☐ MOTHER ☐ DAUGHTER

☐ FATHER ☐ SISTER ☐ GRANDMOTHER ☐ SON ☐ SELF

SPONSOR'S SIGNATURE (to verify eligibility)

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE

SPONSOR'S CODE NUMBER

NAME OF SPOUSE

Type of Membership

☐ NEW LIFE \$20 down payment

☐ NEW ANNUAL

☐ NEW JUNIOR \$3.00

☐ LIFE PAYMENT

☐ ANNUAL RENEWAL

☐ JUNIOR RENEWAL \$3.00

AMOUNT PAID

\$

For Annual Junior Payment

DATE OF BIRTH (required)

SPECIFY YEAR:

JULY 1, 20____ TO JUNE 30, 20____

DAV Partnership Connects Vets with Technology Careers

By Charity A. Edgar

DAV is partnering with U.S. technology trade associations in an online community that helps veterans transition to civilian careers. The initiative, U.S. Tech Vets, connects veterans to employment in the technology sector.

“The U.S. tech industry understands that hiring veterans is more than just the right thing to do—it’s a smart business investment,” said DAV National Adjutant Marc Burgess. “U.S. Tech Vets offers a platform to connect meaningful employment opportunities with the skilled and dedicated men and women who served. This service will greatly benefit veterans across the country.”

The website, www.USTechVets.org, features a military skills translator that matches a veteran’s skills to civilian jobs. Veterans can also access a searchable database of positions open at participating technology associations and tap into educational resources to help them develop skills to thrive in a private-sector career.

U.S. Tech Vets is sponsored by the Consumer Electronics Association, the Northern Virginia Technology Council and Monster.com. Participating professional associations include the Custom Electronic Design and Installation Association, the Central Station Alarm Association,

CompTIA, the Electronic Security Association, the National Association of Broadcasters, the Professional Services Council, the Security Industry Association, the Telecommunications Industry Association and the Wireless Infrastructure Association.

Besides posting available jobs, member companies of these associations will be actively looking for potential employees by searching resumes uploaded by veterans. By combining Monster’s technology and audience reach with the support of these technology associations and employers, the site will create the largest collection of veteran job candidates and technology industry jobs available anywhere.

“The technology industry is one of America’s fastest growing industries and is hungry for high-quality talent.”

Gary Shapiro, President and CEO, Consumer Electronics Association

“The technology industry is one of America’s fastest-growing industries and is hungry for high-quality talent,” said Gary Shapiro, president and CEO of the Consumer Electronics Association. “Veterans bring valuable skills and experience to the job, such as leadership, team building, motivation, work ethic and quick thinking, as well as experience working in a mission-focused environment. These qualities are highly prized in the technology sector. We understand that a workforce with these outstanding qualities can be an incredible competitive advantage in the marketplace. More, veterans have served our nation. It’s our duty to give back to them.”

U.S. Tech Vets was unveiled Jan. 8 during the International Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. In its commitment to improving employment opportunities for veterans, DAV will be developing additional initiatives. ■



Learn More Online

Visit www.dav.org/veterans/veterans-job-search for updates.



Honoring the Fallen

The family of fallen SEAL portrayed
in *Lone Survivor* remembers their son.

By Steve Wilson

Danny Dietz was one of four Navy SEALs on Operation Red Wings, a mission to eliminate a high-ranking member of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. They were ambushed, and he and two other comrades did not survive.

The major motion picture and book, *Lone Survivor*, are based on retellings of the story by fellow SEAL Marcus Luttrell. Dietz's family has seen the heroic ending of his life portrayed in writing and on the big screen, and they are using the occasion to bring awareness to his values and celebrate his life and the service of his fellow sailors.

Danny's parents describe their son as an intelligent, curious and energetic young man who was always

"I don't think I will ever understand my son being gone, but my purpose is to tell his story and ensure people never forget."

placed in the gifted and talented programs throughout his school years.

"He had so much energy and curiosity, even at a young age," said his father, Dan Dietz. "As a young child, he wanted to be a ninja, but when he was 9, he learned that wasn't real and right then decided being a Navy SEAL was the next best thing."



Danny Dietz, 19

"Then around eighth grade he decided he was bored with the normal routine and wanted to have a sort of 'bad-boy' image," said his mother, Cindy Dietz-Marsh. "He started hanging out with some bad kids."

Danny's luck ran out when he started skipping school. "The court sent him to a military-style boot camp for young people," said Dietz-Marsh. "He came out of that and came home as the son I wanted."

"He decided to get school done and got into a program where he did four years of high school in just one year," she said.

After taking a few months off, Danny joined the Navy with the intent of fulfilling his lifelong dream of becoming a SEAL.

"I was a Navy corpsman with the 1st Force Recon Marines," the elder Dietz said. "We trained with all of the military's special forces, and I knew what kind of attitude it took. I told Danny he'd never make it, and he just kept saying, 'Oh yes, I will.' When he finally did become a SEAL, we were so proud of him."

But he never bragged about being part of an elite unit. "When he came home on leave, he told people he drove an ice cream truck," Dietz said.

The book and film portraying his life give his parents mixed feelings, calling their emotions "nervous yet excited."

"Marcus could've walked away, blocked those memories from his mind and never told this story," said Dietz-Marsh. "But he didn't. He didn't stop until this story was told."

Dietz-Marsh said that when the movie came out, she was petrified of having to sit through the scene of her

“As a young child, he **wanted to be a ninja**, but when he was 9, he learned that wasn’t real and right then decided being a **Navy SEAL was the next best thing**.”

son’s final moments on a mountain in Afghanistan.

“I have so many mixed emotions,” she said. “But the world needs to see what the military does for our freedom. This is a film that is much needed.”

Because of his selfless actions in the mountains of Afghanistan, Gunner’s Mate 2nd Class Danny Dietz was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, the United States’ second highest medal awarded for valor.

Danny’s parents dedicate their free time to causes that honor his contributions. Dietz-Marsh is a board member of the Danny Dietz Memorial Fund, which helps qualifying students obtain money for a college education. Dietz works with the Danny Dietz Training Institute, which helps at-risk youth, something his son was once considered.

They now have published their own book, *Danny: The Virtues Within—What America Can Learn from Navy SEAL Danny Dietz*. Rather than a military book, this is a story about overcoming adversity and building character.

In April 2009, Colorado lawmakers voted to name a 10-mile stretch of Santa Fe Highway the “Navy SEAL Danny Phillip Dietz Jr. Memorial Highway.”

“Danny would’ve never wanted all of this publicity,” Dietz said. “But Danny belongs to the nation now. This is the message people need to hear—the message that young people like Danny protect America.”

“I don’t think I will ever understand my son being gone,” said Dietz-Marsh. “But my purpose is to tell his story and ensure people never forget.”

“That Gunner’s Mate Dietz had a drive to overcome the roadblocks he had in front of him is very much indicative of the tenacity of America’s veterans,” said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. “I want to personally thank the Dietz family for sharing their brave son’s story with us and the nation.”

“Danny was doing what he was born to do,” Dietz said. “He was being a Navy SEAL. If I leave a fraction of that heritage behind for America, I’ll be happy.” ■



Top: Dietz in Afghanistan, 2005; Middle: Dietz, center, with his parents, Dan and Cindy, Summer 1998; Bottom: Dietz, right, with younger siblings, Eric and Tiffany, Christmas 2004

Veterans Courts

The VA and justice system team up to rehabilitate veterans across the nation.

By Charity A. Edgar

Since the Revolutionary War, brave men and women have raised their right hands and taken an oath to protect and defend their country—often at great personal expense. DAV knows the cost of commitment to one's country and how veterans face great odds as they try to regain a sense of normalcy after injury.

In the past few years, the public has begun to recognize what the veterans' community has known for a while—that physical wounds are not the only injuries from service. Mental and emotional illnesses are invisible scars of battle that also inflict damage. Even with the recent focus on increased understanding of mental health issues, these illnesses are not always identified and diagnosed until much later on.

Veterans courts serve veterans facing judicial action due to substance abuse, mental illness or trauma. These specialized courts strive to keep veterans out of jail and connect them to the benefits and treatment they have earned, all while saving the American public tax dollars.

“DAV fights to help veterans with all illnesses and injuries—visible or not,” said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. “These specialized courts rehabilitate veterans and ensure they receive the services they have earned to help them on their road to recovery.”

A study by the RAND Corp. estimates 25 percent to 30 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have reported symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive condition, but only half seek treatment. The study attributes the increasing numbers to multiple deployments and extended tours during the two conflicts.

The study recognized that post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and traumatic brain injury are



Beloit, Wisc., resident Casey Johnson, 25, is given a certificate by Circuit Court Judge James P. Daley. Johnson is the first graduate of Rock County's Veterans Treatment Court, in Janesville, Wisc. (AP Photo/Beloit Daily News, Hilary Dickinson)

some of the most common post-combat illnesses diagnosed in veterans. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports 1 in 6 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans suffer from substance abuse, which is often linked to combat-related mental illness.

A Government Accountability Office report concluded that due to stigma, lack of understanding of mental health care, logistical challenges and concerns about the VA, many veterans do not seek treatment for mental health. These are all issues the VA has recognized and works to address. Additionally, some may not realize they require health care. The same report indicated that from fiscal years 2006 through 2010, the number of veterans requiring mental health care increased steadily.

During that period Robert Russell, a judge in Buffalo, N.Y., noticed a steady rise in veterans appearing in his Drug Court and Mental Health Court.

Russell recognized that more could be done to connect veterans to the benefits and services they earned, so he joined forces with the local VA medical center to create a new court docket that would focus exclusively on veterans in the justice system.

In 2008, Russell founded the first veterans court. Now there are more than 100 courts serving veterans across the nation, and countless more are in the planning stages.

The veterans' court models vary throughout the

(Continued on pg. 31)



Historic Hall to Host DAV Commander's Testimonial

One of the most beautiful historic locations in the city where DAV was born will be the site of a testimonial honoring the leadership of National Commander Joseph Johnston.

The event will be held in the Hall of Mirrors at the Hilton Cincinnati Netherland Plaza, Saturday, April 12, beginning with cocktails at 6 p.m. and followed by dinner at 7 p.m.

This stunning hall is modeled after the world-famous Palace of Versailles in France. Like the rest of the Netherland Plaza, it is filled with artistic masterworks.

The cost for the event is \$50. Checks should be made out and mailed to the DAV Department of Ohio, P.O. Box

15099, Columbus, OH 43215-0099, no later than March 10. Please indicate a meal choice of New York strip steak or roasted salmon. For additional information, please call Sherry Williamson at 614-221-3582.

Room reservations, \$149 plus tax for a single or double, should be made directly with the Netherland Plaza. Call 800-445-8667 and provide Code DCT to get the special rate.

The hotel is located in the heart of downtown Cincinnati at 35 W. Fifth St. Arrangements are being made for tours of DAV National Headquarters, located a little less than 8 miles south of Cincinnati, in Cold Spring, Ky., on Friday, April 11. ■

Auxiliary National Commander To Be Honored at Testimonial

■ A testimonial dinner to honor Auxiliary National Commander Susan K. Miller will be held April 5 at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel in Denver. The hotel address is 3203 Quebec St.

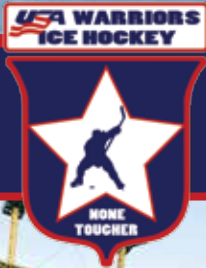
The event begins at 6 p.m. with a cash bar reception, followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Menu choices include slow-roasted prime rib au jus, herb-crusted Atlantic salmon or vegetable ratatouille. Cost of the dinner is \$50. Checks should be made out to Susan Miller and mailed to Olive Tomlin, 31164 State Highway 183, Las Animas, CO

81054. The cutoff date for dinner reservations is March 31.

For attendees who choose to stay over, a special hotel room rate, \$89 plus tax for a single or double, is available but must be booked by March 6. To make reservations online, go to http://doubletree.hilton.com/en/dt/groups/personalized/R/RLDV-DT-DAA-20140405/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG or by phone at 303-321-3333. The group code is DAA.



Cross-Border Comrades Take to the Ice



DAV and partner USA Warriors invited the Canadian Soldier On team to Detroit for the first-ever Veterans Winter Classic, giving many of those who had served together and been injured overseas the chance to reunite and play together, side by side.



U.S. and Canadian brothers-in-arms Mark Little, left, and Grant Greenall, right, took to the ice at the outdoor rink at Detroit's Comerica Park. The DAV-partnered USA Warriors faced off against their Canadian counterparts, Soldier On, as part of the lead up to the 2014 NHL Winter Classic.



Rachel Francis, left, and brother Zachary Francis, members of the Chapter 114 DAV Junior Auxiliary in Livonia, Mich., braved single-digit temperatures to help support the American and Canadian veteran athletes.

From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN CHAPPY RON RINGO, Ph.D.



Life's Parachutes

Pondering lately on the blessings in my life, I started wondering why we often don't see the little things all around us, or those who make them happen. If you were to take just a moment to reflect on the many people who impact your life on a daily basis, I know you would be amazed.

Almost all aspects of our life, if we really think about it, are filled with people giving similar aid. A story you may have heard expresses this point in a very meaningful way. It is entitled, "Packing Your Parachute."

Charles Plumb, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp. He survived that ordeal and now lectures about the lessons learned from that experience.

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb. You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk*. You were shot down."

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.

"I packed your parachute," the man replied.

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked." Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving

the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, each time holding in his hands the fate of someone he didn't know.

After relaying this story, Plumb asked his audience, "Who's packing your parachute?" Everyone has someone who provides what he or she needs to make it through the day. Plumb also pointed out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory. He needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety. His experience reminds us all to prepare ourselves to weather whatever storms lie ahead.

A couple years ago, I met Plumb, and to this day, he is appreciative of those who serve and bless the lives of others.

Let's not wait to have life-threatening, life-changing experiences before we start enjoying and being grateful for our blessings—especially those people who touch our lives in so many ways. Be kinder to the motorist next to you, the waitress who is doing her best with six tables alone, the child who is noisy because he is just a child. Look around and see the good all around, then take the time to express appreciation to those who make it happen.

As always, it is my hope that this message will help you to "mount up as on eagle's wings" and renew a little of your strength to keep moving forward and find joy (*Isaiah 40:31*).

Until next time, may God bless you, and may God continue to bless our great nation. SEMPER FI.



NEA Grant Supports Veterans Writing Contest

■ A grant of \$15,000 to support the creative writing efforts of U.S. veterans has been awarded by the National Endowment for the Arts to *The Iowa Review*. The literary magazine is one of 895 nonprofit organizations nationwide to receive an Art Works Grant.

The Iowa Review held its first veterans writing contest in 2012, with winners published in the Spring 2013 issue. The next contest deadline is May 15, 2014.

Anthony Swofford, author of *Jarhead*, will be the final judge. The contest is open to U.S. military veterans and active-duty personnel writing in any genre about any subject matter.

The Iowa Review is published by the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Iowa. It publishes three issues a year featuring poetry, fiction and literary nonfiction.

■ For more information about *The Iowa Review*, including how to enter the contest, click on the “Contest” link at iowareview.org.



Nonprofits Get VA Homeless Aid Grants

■ Nonprofit organizations and consumer groups that serve very-low-income veteran families will receive up to \$600 million in grants through the VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families program.

The program employs a housing-first approach that centers on providing homeless veterans with permanent housing quickly and then providing VA health care, benefits and services as needed.

Those services include outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits, and providing or coordinating efforts to obtain other community services. The grantees will link veterans to a broad range of other services, including legal assistance, credit counseling, housing counseling, and assisting participants in understanding leases and securing utilities. Grantees also offer temporary financial help

that provides short-term assistance with rent, moving expenses, security and utility deposits, child care, transportation, utility costs and emergency expenses.

■ More information about the program can be found at www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp.

DAV Urges Greater Support for Veterans Medical Research

■ In an op-ed piece published on Dec. 25 by *The Hill* (www.thehill.com), Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine argued for increased support of the VA's medical and prosthetic research programs. “Without additional funds,” he said, “VA will not be able to aggressively pursue urgently needed research to help veterans suffering from grievous injuries and diseases, many that are endemic to war.”

Augustine pointed out that, although the VA's medical research is recognized “among the world's leaders in areas such as PTSD, TBI, prosthetics, spinal cord injury, blindness and hearing loss,” few people know that VA researchers also “developed the original nicotine patch” or “proved that an aspirin a day will keep your heart attack away.”

“In an age when basic scientific and medical research holds more promise than at any time in history, it is hard to explain the lack of serious funding for VA research,” he said.

Survey Studies Civilian Employment

■ The fact that many veterans ultimately leave their initial post-military job is well known, but the reasons behind this attrition, and the ways employers can best increase retention, have yet to be quantified. That's why VetAdvisor® and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University have launched a nationwide Veterans Job Retention Survey with the aim of recruiting 5,000 participants.

The survey is the first of its kind to focus on the reasons veterans leave these jobs. Because this data has not been previously compiled, the survey will provide new insight into how organizations can best structure their veteran-centric employee programs.

■ The survey is part of a continuing effort by VetAdvisor® to develop programs to support veterans as they transition to civilian life.

For more information, visit myvetadvisor.com.

DAV Flight Team 2014 Schedule



Date	Show Name	Location	B-25
March 22–23	MacDill Airfest	MacDill AFB Tampa, Fla.	Panchito
March 29–30	Wings Over South Texas Airshow	Kingsville, Texas	Special Delivery
April 12–13	Thunder and Lightning Over Arizona	Davis–Monthan AFB Tucson, Ariz.	TBD
May 17–18	Cape Girardeau Regional Air Fest	Cape Girardeau, Mo.	TBD
June 6–8	Westmoreland County Air Show	Latrobe, Pa.	TBD
June 28–29	Dayton Air Show	Dayton, Ohio	Panchito
July 28–Aug. 3	EAA AirVenture	Oshkosh, Wisc.	Panchito
Aug. 16–17	Rochester Air Show	Rochester, N.Y.	Panchito
Sept. 27–28	Redding Air Show	Redding, Calif.	TBD
Oct. 3–5	MCAS Miramar Air Show	San Diego, Calif.	TBD
Oct. 18–19	Memphis Air Show	Millington, Tenn.	TBD

DAV Flight Team schedule is subject to change.

Number of Homeless Veterans Declines

The number of homeless veterans has decreased by 24 percent since 2010. That's according to the Point-in-Time Estimate of Homelessness, a national report released annually by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Data for homeless vets living in shelters or on the streets is collected by volunteers over the course of a single night every January. According to the 2013 report prepared by HUD, 57,849 homeless veterans were counted on a single night. That shows an 8-percent reduction from January 2012 to January 2013. The decline keeps the VA on track to meet the goal of eradicating homelessness among veterans in 2015. (Results from the 2014 survey were not available in time for this issue of *DAV Magazine*.)

"That is very good news regarding a very tough problem," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "No one who served our country should be huddled under a bridge, in shelters or camped out in the woods, and I applaud the government's efforts, as well as our Departments, Chapters and individual members who work so hard to end this national tragedy." Participating in stand downs, collecting and distributing winter coats and serving meals in shelters are just a few ways that DAV members contribute in their neighborhoods every day.

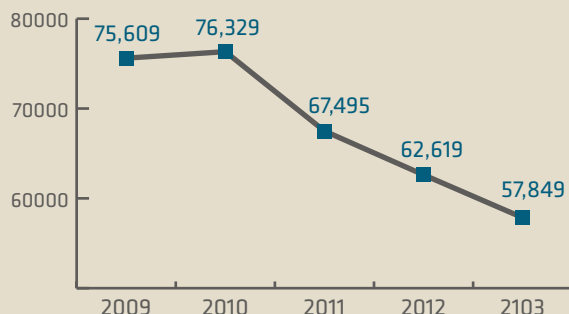
As they walked through communities around the country, the volunteers used the new Point-in-Time



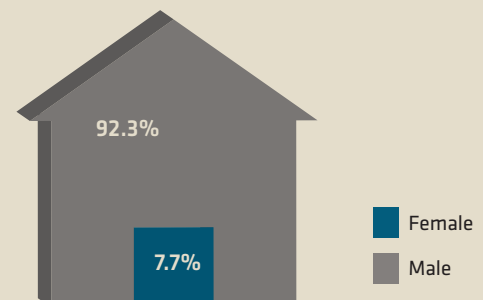
mobile application for iPad and iPhone, developed by the VA's Office of Information Technology. With it, the volunteers were able to collect basic demographic information about the homeless veterans and log their locations using the Apple geo-locator. The new app did more than demonstrate the VA's readiness to innovate with mobile computing. It also helped the VA break through major hurdles to create a path for future mobile development.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said in a statement that the VA is "not going to rest until every veteran who has fought for America has a home in America. The results in the latest report are a credit to the effort given by our dedicated staff, and our federal, state and community partners who are committed to ending veterans' homelessness." ■

**Estimates of Homeless Veterans
2009-2013**



**Percentage of Homeless Veterans by Gender
2013**



VA Regulation Expands Benefits for Traumatic Brain Injury


■ A new VA regulation will give veterans with a service-connected traumatic brain injury (TBI) diagnosed with 1 of 5 other ailments the ability to receive additional compensation.

A National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine, report found "sufficient evidence" to link moderate and severe levels of TBI with Parkinson's disease, certain types of dementia, depression, unprovoked seizures or certain diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands. Access the report at <http://bit.ly/198QceD>.

"Advancements in medical science continuously make great strides in helping treat our ill and injured veterans," said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Garry Augustine. "We are pleased when this research is recognized by VA, so our nation's heroes can receive the care and benefits they deserve."

The regulation states that severity of the TBI and time between the injury and the onset of the secondary illness will be taken into account when determining eligibility. Veterans are encouraged to file a claim to establish direct service-connection for these ailments regardless of whether or not they meet the time and severity standards in the new regulation, which took effect Jan. 15.

"Any veteran who believes they may be affected by this new regulation should contact their local National Service Office as soon as possible," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "DAV NSOs are standing by to assist veterans with new claims related to this rule."

 Find your National Service Office at www.dav.org/veterans/find-your-local-office/.

PTSD Therapy for Veterans Helps Teens Recover After Rape

■ A news story that was run by the Associated Press in December detailed how "exposure therapy that helps combat veterans haunted by flashbacks and nightmares also works for traumatized sexually abused teens with similar symptoms." The story gives credit to the VA medical researchers who developed exposure therapy for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from combat incidents or other similar circumstances. That same type of therapy is now being successfully used to help victims of sexual assault who also suffer from PTSD.



New Tool Helps with Education Benefits

■ A new online GI Bill® Comparison Tool makes it easier for veterans, service members and dependents to calculate their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and learn more about the VA's approved colleges, universities and other education and training programs across the country.

The comparison tool provides key information about college affordability and brings together information from more than 17 different online sources and three federal agencies, including the number of students receiving VA education benefits at each school.


The VA also has instituted a GI Bill online complaint system designed to collect feedback from those who are experiencing problems with educational institutions that receive funding from federal military and veterans educational benefits programs, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Department of Defense Military Tuition Assistance Program.

 The GI Bill Comparison Tool can be found at <http://benefits.va.gov/gibill/comparison>.

National Cemeteries Continue to Lead in Satisfaction Survey

■ For the fifth consecutive time, the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration has bested the nation's top corporations and other federal agencies in a prestigious, independent survey of customer satisfaction.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index is the only national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States. Beginning in 1999, the federal government selected ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction.

 Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at www.cem.va.gov or by contacting your nearest DAV National Service Office, which can be found at www.dav.org/veterans/find-your-local-office.



Do you have a legacy to share?

If you have created an estate gift for DAV, please let us know. We want to show our appreciation for your future gift by enrolling you in the Guardian Society. Members receive an engraved certificate, a society lapel pin and are named in the society's newsletter, unless anonymity is preferred.

For more information, please

- return the attached postcard,
- call 1-800-216-9802 (ext. 1),
- email giftplanning@dav.org or
- visit www.dav.giftplans.org.

At DAV, we cherish the story of every veteran's service and what inspires them to give back to their fellow veterans. We look forward to hearing from you!



PROTECTING THOSE WHO SERVED

Legal address for estate gifts:
Disabled American Veterans
P.O. Box 14301
Cincinnati, OH 45250
Tax identification number:
31-0263158

This is what I want my greatest legacy to be!

Veteran Names DAV in Her Will

After 28 years of service, Orie Frazer knew to turn to DAV for assistance with her claim for disability benefits.

"I chose DAV because it's known as the leader in veteran advocacy," said Orie.

Orie's commitment to DAV was spurred by her concern for injured veterans and a determination that they receive the support they have earned.

"Seeing how hard older veterans from the Vietnam War had to fight to gain benefits they deserved turned my attention to our disabled men and women," she said.

Orie knew she could immediately impact veterans by donating through the Combined Federal Campaign.

"I wanted to do something to improve the lives of seniors who had served."

Orie cares, gives and volunteers. Her broad scope of support to DAV includes her commitment as a DAV Life Member, a generous annual donation and remembrance of DAV in her will.

She enlisted in the Air Force in 1978, then served in the Navy and the Army National Guard. She was later commissioned, retiring as a Navy lieutenant commander. Throughout her career, Orie admired how military members took care of their own. She sees this care continue with veterans helping veterans through DAV.

"The nature of entering the service is to willingly risk your life for the ideals of our country, and I believe the country in turn should properly recognize and care for the few who bear the torch for America around the globe. The world knows America can back up what we believe, and that backup plan is our military."

For Orie, DAV provides the means to ensure that the promises made to our military are kept. Explaining why she put DAV in her will, she said, "There's no greater way to give long after you're gone than by leaving a gift that will further the efforts of organizations that work for the betterment of those in need. My heart for the wounded veteran continues to grow, and this is what I want my greatest legacy to be." ■



Orie Frazer
Guardian Society member



Annual VA Arts Competition...

DAV life member from Chapter 90, Ripley, Ohio, Gerald Holton wins 1st place in the ceramics category in the annual creative arts competition February 4th at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center. Mr. Holton's creation was a buffalo, wolf and grizzly bear featured as a totem pole. The piece took approximately one week to make, which included pouring the mold, chipping away the rough edges, the kiln process and finally painting the artwork. Half of the 1st place prize money goes to the winner and the other half goes to the VA Arts Program.



All Sewn Up...

Ladies of the Fords Colony Craft Club in Williamsburg, Va., donated their time and talent in preparing a beautiful patriotic quilt to be used in a fundraising activity for Patrick Henry Chapter 34. President Annie Sheppard presented the quilt to Commander Gary Farmer and Adjutant John Yakshe.



Share Your News! Send your DAV or Auxiliary news to feedback@dav.org. Please provide a JPEG image (minimum 300 dpi), a description of the photo and the names of those pictured. Submissions are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety.

Veterans Courts

(Continued from pg. 22)

country, but they all include a judge who is knowledgeable about the VA and well-versed in veterans' issues, benefits and treatment. In addition, representatives from VBA are often present in the courtrooms to provide medical records and other documentation to assist the judge in determining treatment options.

"In order to make a veterans court successful, partnerships are essential," said Augustine. "Many times, district attorneys and public defenders are involved, as well as the VA and volunteer mentors. Veterans courts illustrate that collaborative efforts help veterans get back on their feet."

The courts revolve around treatment versus incarceration, allowing veterans facing criminal charges to learn life skills and participate in mental health and drug and alcohol treatment. The treatments occur in a group setting with fellow veterans, encouraging them to find the same camaraderie in recovery as they did in the military.

To qualify for this option, veterans must have been diagnosed with a mental health illness and have not been charged with violent or sex crimes.

"The veterans court system recognizes that the transition from service member to civilian can be very difficult," said Augustine. "Treatment for mental illness incurred in military service rehabilitates veterans. The programs have proven to be more cost-effective than incarceration and are successful in keeping veterans from becoming repeat offenders."

The nonprofit organization Justice for Vets has created a nationwide network of veterans courts that are transforming the way former service members are handled in the criminal justice system. ■



Learn More Online

To learn more about the veterans court system, visit their website at <http://justiceforvets.org>.



Grand Marshal...

Alfonso Santillan, Past Chaplain of Chapter 16, Prescott, Ariz., was honored by serving as the "Heroes at Home" Grand Marshal for the 2013 Prescott Veterans Day Parade. He was medically retired from the U.S. Marine Corps at the rank of sergeant. As Chaplain, he established an outreach program for homeless veterans and their families in the forests of Prescott. He has received the President's Outstanding Alumni Award from Yavapai College for the Commitment to Excellence. He is a recipient of two Purple Hearts and an inductee of the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Society Class of 2009.



Women Veterans Luncheon...

Delphine Metcalf-Foster, back row center, along with three other DAV members, spoke on a panel at a luncheon honoring women veterans.



Feeding Homeless Veterans...

George Garland (left), Commander of Chapter 113 in Burlington, Mass., assisted by Chapter Treasurer Ed Tedesco (right), presents a plaque to Lester's Roadside BBQ owner Ted Menounos. The Chapter recognized Menounos for providing lunches to homeless veterans, which he plans to do for as long as he's in business.

Disabled American Veterans National Headquarters

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position • December 31, 2013

Unrestricted Assets		Unrestricted Liabilities	
Current Assets	\$39,943,753	Current Liabilities	\$115,269,223
Investments, at Market	358,811,513	Total Liabilities	115,269,223
Land, Buildings and Equipment,			
Net of Depreciation	7,162,306		
Other Assets	554,346		
		Unrestricted Net Assets	
		General and Net Assets Designated	
		by the Board of Directors	291,202,695
		Total Unrestricted Net Assets	291,202,695
Total Unrestricted Assets	\$406,471,918	Total Liabilities and Unrestricted	\$406,471,918
		Net Assets	
Life Membership Assets		Life Membership Liabilities	
Current Assets	\$2,914,754	Current Liabilities	\$367,452
Investments, at Market	59,372,648	Reserve for Future Distribution	
		of Life Membership Dues	61,919,950
Total Life Membership Assets	\$62,287,402	Total Life Membership Liabilities	
		and Reserve for Future Distribution	
		of Life Membership Dues	\$62,287,402



Share Your News! Send photos of your DAV or Auxiliary news to feedback@dav.org. Please provide JPEG images, a description of the photo and the names of those pictured.



Operation Veteran Holiday Cheer...

Members of A.G. Tricentennial Chapter 84 deliver gift-filled stockings to the Inpatient veterans at Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Hospital. The stockings, filled with games, puzzles, Christmas cards and canteen bucks were also delivered to veterans in the Residential Care Facility, Extended Care Center, and Hospice. From left, Sr. Vice Commander/ Membership Chairman James Wright, Bob Guilfoyle, Ed Soltis, Adjutant/Treasurer Charles Luhan Jr., Chaplain Dave Van Duren, 1st Jr. Vice Commander Eugene Kasper, and Commander Alexander Pechar.



Operation Veteran Holiday Cheer...

A.G. Tricentennial Chapter 84 Adjutant/Treasurer Charles Luhan Jr. serving as Santa Claus for 1244th Transportation Company, Illinois National Guard at Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Hospital.



Women Veterans Sunday...

3rd. Jr. Vice Commander Delphine Metcalf-Foster, left, presents a Department of California challenge coin to Tara L. Lampkins, president of the Eta Gamma Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Metcalf-Foster participated in the America's Sunday Supper Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Women Veterans Sunday, Jan. 19 in Sacramento, Calif.



Four Chaplains Honored...

The picture is taken at the Chapel at Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Hospital in Hines, Illinois on Feb. 2, 2014, for the 75th Anniversary of the Remembrance of the Four Chaplains of the Dorchester. Pictured are members and the officers of A.G. Tricentennial Chapter 84 of Illinois, and centered in the picture are the chaplains of Edward Hines Jr. Veterans Hospital.

DAV National Convention Returns to

Las Vegas



Bally's Hotel and Casino is in the middle of everything the City of Lights has to offer.

The 93rd National Convention takes members back to the ever-popular Las Vegas strip for our yearly assembly for veterans advocacy and service camaraderie. The annual meeting of DAV's national body is slated for Aug. 9–12 at the newly renovated Bally's Las Vegas Hotel and Casino.

As always, this event gives DAV and Auxiliary members the chance to address the needs of injured and ill veterans and their families and survivors. It serves as one of the premier opportunities to be an active part of DAV and to help steer the legislative direction of this great organization.

“Convention attendees will hear directly from subject-matter experts on the most pressing issues our community faces today,” said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. “If you want to be part of the conversation and the solution, this is the place to do it.”

During the convention, national officers will be elected, and national leadership will brief members on the organization's progress throughout the past year.

Family and guests are welcome to attend with members and enjoy nearby attractions. During the day there is a great deal of DAV business to accomplish. After hours, you can enjoy all Las Vegas has to offer.

There are a limited number of reduced-rate rooms available before and after the convention, so it is advised that you make travel plans early to secure your reservation.

To make hotel reservations, call 800-634-3434. Be sure to tell the booking agent that you are attending the DAV National Convention to receive the special rate of \$112 single/double per night. More information can be found online at www.dav.org/events. ■

Travel Assistance

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) can facilitate the screening of injured or wounded veterans. Veterans who require assistance (or their care coordinators) should contact TSA Cares with details of the itinerary after making flight arrangements with an airline. Call TSA Cares toll-free at 855-787-2227 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern time). A TSA Cares representative will provide assistance, either with information about screening that is relevant to the veteran's specific disability, or the veteran may be referred to disability experts at TSA to guide and help them through the screening process.

DAV Minnesota Program Connects Veterans to Medical Equipment

By Steve Wilson

The Department of Minnesota recently announced the 2013 results of their innovative Donor Connect Program, which connects donors from various sources throughout the state who donate medical equipment to injured or ill veterans.

“The Donor Connect Program is an outstanding result of the Department on Minnesota’s ongoing dedication to innovation,” said Department of Minnesota Commander Robert Hartley, Jr. “Within today’s DAV, it’s not enough to conduct business as usual. Each Department must strive to implement inventive service programs utilizing all available resources, which may include the latest technologies or, as with the Donor Connect Program, a [DAV] member’s executive expertise.”

The program saw more than 500 pieces of equipment, ranging from home care aids and exercise machines to mobility assistance devices like stair chair lifts and power scooters.

“The donated equipment in 2013 is valued at more



Herb Mason, left, enjoys his new scooter, which he received from the Department of Minnesota Donor Connect Program. Gerry Falkowski, right, is the manager of the program, which is completely donation based and at no cost to veterans.

than \$510,000,” said Stephen Whitehead, Department of Minnesota’s Adjutant and Executive Director. “It’s all been transferred from donors to disabled veterans or their family members in Minnesota and western Wisconsin.” ■



Learn More Online

Other Departments wanting to implement an innovative program similar to Donor Connect should reach out to DAV Minnesota by calling 651-210-1161 or visiting www.davmn.org/donate-volunteer-veterans/medical-goods/.

Innovation Competition Aims to Improve VA Mental Health Services to Veterans

■ The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the first Industry Innovation Competition in 2014 to identify, test and evaluate promising innovations that enhance accessibility to and enhance the quality of mental health care and services to veterans.

The competition is part of the VA Center for Innovation, a department-wide program that seeks the most promising initiatives from employees, the private sector, non-profits and academia to enhance the performance of VA operations and reduce or control the cost of delivering those services.

This Industry Innovation Competition seeks creative solutions in three areas of significant importance to the VA.

Public and private companies, entrepreneurs, universities and non-profits are encouraged to propose new ways to respond to Veteran mental health challenges specific to the topics:

- Upstream Suicide Intervention.
- Improving Veterans Receptivity to Mental Health Care to Promote Treatment, Engagement, and Participation.
- Innovative Methods of Incentivizing Behavior to Improve Mental Wellness.



These topics and processes are detailed in the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) and can be found at www.fbo.gov and at www.innovation.va.gov.

REUNIONS

ARMY

4TH BATTALION, 39TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION April 3–5, 2014, San Antonio, TX. Contact: Jim Haines, Phone: 303-809-1815, Email: lbearcat67@live.com.

18TH AVIATION COMPANY "OTTER NEST" AND 54TH AVIATION COMPANY "OTTER AIR SERVICE" July 31–August 3, 2014, Nashville, TN. Contact: Ron Haugen, Phone: 507-995-5575, Email: rhaugen@fmwildblue.com, Web: www.18thAviationCompany.com.

24TH EVACUATION HOSPITAL (VIETNAM) September 11–14, 2014, Branson, MO. Contact: Thomas Catalano, Phone: 315-786-0429, Email: tpcatalano@live.com.

62ND – A/502ND – 175TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANIES September 18–22, 2014, Washington, DC. Contact: Tom Anderson, Email: teander@cox.net, Web: www.vinhlongoutlaws.com.

720TH MILITARY POLICE BATTALION, 615TH, 212TH, 188TH AND ALL ATTACHED UNITS May 1–5, 2014, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: Thomas Watson, Phone: 864-391-2661, Email: mp720reunion@wctel.net, Web: www.720mpreunion.org.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE CHAPTER 62 LUNCHEON April 27, 2014, Palm Beach, FL. Contact: George Fisher, Phone: 561-585-7086, Email: georgefvb@aol.com.

MERRILL'S MARAUDERS & DESCENDANTS August 29–31, 2014, Milwaukee, WI. Contact: Jerrie Daly, Phone: 651-204-5002, Email: mmpdreas@gmail.com.

THAILAND LAOS CAMBODIA BROTHERHOOD October 2–5, 2014, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: Joseph J. Wilson, Phone: 719-310-3558, Email: jjwilsonjr@yahoo.com.

US ARMY AIR CORP PILOT CLASSES OF WWII September 10–15, 2014, St. Louis, MO. Contact: Stan Yost, Phone: 239-466-1473.

VIETNAM GUNTRUCKERS AND ALL TRANSPORTATION UNITS August 5–9, 2014, Columbus, GA. Contact: John Dodd, Phone: 434-724-1469, Email: johndodd@centurylink.net, Web: www.vietnam-guntrucks.com.

VIETNAM DUSTERS, QUADS, SEARCHLIGHTS, VULCANS AND HAWKS 32ND ANNUAL REUNION May 24–28, 2014, Arlington, VA. Contact: Bruce Geiger, Phone: 914-576-1050, Email: bmgeiger@aol.com, Web: www.ndqsa.com.

NAVY

NAVAL AIR STATION SANFORD, ALL UNITS AND SQUADRONS 1942-1968 June 26–29, 2014, Sanford, FL. Contact: Ralph Feeback, Phone: 407-302-2252, Email: dlfrst@aol.com.

PATROL SQUADRON 45 ASSOCIATION October 15–19, 2014, Jacksonville, FL. Contact: Doug Mitchell, Phone: 687-650-7500, Email: poohbearmit@aol.com, Web: www.vp45association.org.

USS ABNAKI (ATF-96) August 13–17, 2014, Colorado

Springs, CO. Contact: Don Fries, Phone: 678-525-7925, Email: donwfries@gmail.com or Pete Pilgrim, Phone: 319-431-8552, Email: petepilg@aol.com.

USS BERGALL (SS-320/SSN-667) September 4–7, 2014, San Francisco, CA. Contact: Bryan Waller, Phone: 616-745-2923, Email: bwaller@bergall.org.

USS CAMP (DER-251) September 28 – October 1, 2014, Charleston, SC. Contact: Gail Sweeden, Phone: 865-482-7981, Email: gsweeden@att.net.

USS CHICAGO (CA-14, CA-29, CA-136, CG-11, SSN-721) April 30 – May 5, 2014, Anaheim, CA. Contact: Lisa McGregor, Phone: 714-782-7437 or 866-593-7092, Email: lmcgregor@windrosetravel.net, Web: www.usschicago.org.

USS COGSWELL (DD-651) October 20–22, 2014, San Diego, CA. Contact: George Overman, Phone: 760-889-2216, Email: secretary@usscogswell.com, Web: www.usscogswell.com.

USS CUSK (SS-348) September 7–11, 2014, Deadwood, SD. Contact: Delmer L. Wetering, Phone: 605-368-2432, Email: dswetering@aol.com.

USS FORREST B. ROYAL (DD-872) June 19–22, 2014, Charleston, SC. Contact: Ron Larsen, Phone: 715-423-8905, Email: mosbyusn@wctc.net.

USS MADDOX DESTROYER (DD-731, DD-622, DD-168) September 14, 2014, Baton Rouge, LA. Contact: Dennis Stokhaug, Phone: 262-679-9409, Email: maddox64@aol.com.

USS RASHER (SS/SSR/AGSS-269) May 14–19, 2014, St. Louis, MO. Contact: Robert Bidon, Phone: 507-263-3882, Email: rjbodons@rconnect.com, Web: www.ussrasher.org.

USS RATON (SS/SSR/AGSS-270) September 17–21, 2014, Branson, MO. Contact: Larry D. Kramer, Phone: 360-697-2842, Email: ldkramer43@hotmail.com.

USS SAVANNAH (AOR-4) November 9–14, 2014, Savannah, GA. Contact: Ray Heinrich, Phone: 252-715-3132, Email: aor4ray@yahoo.com.

AIR FORCE

51ST FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR WING ASSOCIATION September 11–14, 2014, Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact: Ernie Stroud, Phone: 803-475-2654, Email: erniesth@windstream.net, Web: www.keithfannon51st.org.

84TH ATMS/MAS SQUADRON May 16–17, 2014, Vacaville, CA. Contact: John Burnett, Phone: 707-448-4264, Email: jnburnet@cwnet.com.

496TH FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQUADRON April 28 – May 1, 2014, Myrtle Beach, SC. Contact: Norman Kelley, Phone: 352-489-4436, Email: normlocks@gmail.com.

AIR WEATHER ASSOCIATION April 30 – May 4, 2014, Charleston, SC. Contact: Kevin Lavin, Phone: 434-296-2831, Email: Airweaassn@aol.com.

TORREJON AB SPAIN (ALL YEARS) August 28–31, 2014, Florence, KY. Contact: Burnethel Sanford, Phone: 951-739-0202, Email: mizbs3492@msn.com.

TORREJON AIR FORCE BASE HIGH SCHOOL (MTHSA ALUMNI 1955-1992) July 10–13, 2014, Tyson's Corner, Fairfax County, VA. Contact: Dia S. Poole, Phone: 916-838-1604, Email: mhsths@gmail.com.

ALL SERVICES

VIETNAM HELICOPTER PILOTS ASSOCIATION (CH-54 FLYING CRANE PILOTS) July 1–6, 2014, Louisville, KY. Contact: Jim Oden, Phone: 479-246-9100, Email: rjoden@cox.net.

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA CHAPTERS 463 AND 1039 May 2–4, 2014, Deadwood, SD. Contact: Virgil Stockstad, Phone: 605-716-4967, Email: virgil@rushmore.com.

INQUIRIES

- Searching for anyone who served with Charlie Wolff, 18th Battalion, 72nd Infantry, MP A Company, Long Binh, Vietnam, "Operation Over Take," night convoy. Please contact Charles Wolff, 70079, South Division - 1B, 281 N. State St., Concord, NH 03301.
- Searching for anyone who served with me during World War II. Please contact Jimmie Polite, 1106 Willersley Lane, Channelview, TX 77530-2430, Phone: 281-862-9325.
- Searching for anyone who served with me in Fort Bragg, NC, from August 1960 to March 1963 in Company B, 92nd Engineer Battalion, 159th Engineer Group "Black Diamonds." Please contact Thomas Turano at 128 Fifth St., Blakely, PA 18447, Phone: 570-383-0803.
- Searching for anyone who served with the 1st Administration Company, 1st Infantry Division, 1965–66, Dian, Vietnam. Please contact James AuBuchon, 15020 Ash Drive, Leawood, KS 66224, Email: aubie1542@yahoo.com.
- Searching for anyone who survived an airlift from Korea to Japan during the Korean War, 1950 to early 1951. Please contact Ralph A. Pisano, 34692 Calle Loma, Capistrano Beach, CA 92624, Phone: 949-493-3404, Email: 13rapsr@cox.net.
- Searching for Randy Wilkinson who served with me at Romey Air Force Base in 1953 (Borinquen). Please contact Dana Simmons, 6 Sawmill Road, St. George, ME 04860, Phone: 813-944-9694, Email: ritabluebird@aol.com.
- Searching for SFC Jimmie Underwood who served with me in the Gulf War and who retired in or around the Columbia, S.C., area. Please contact Sammy Wilson, 873 Red Hill Road, Jesup, GA 31545.
- Searching for anyone who served at Camp Humphreys, South Korea, during 1972–1973 and was assigned to the 513th Light Engineer Maintenance Company. This unit was also attached to the 520th Direct Maintenance Company. Please contact Sammy Wilson, 873 Red Hill Road, Jesup, GA 31545.
- Searching for Charles or Chuck Swanson who was stationed with me at Fort Hood, Texas, in 1974. Please contact Edwin Schweinfurth, 51 MacDougal St., #291, New York, NY 10012, Phone: 929-210-4086, Email: ny100122007@yahoo.com.
- Searching for members of Platoon 358, Parris Island, February 1966. Please contact Frank Williams, Phone: 828-803-2229.

The Work Continues...

National Chaplain Ron Ringo, left, and his wife, Shirley, standing next to him, have responded to the call again. The Ringos recently deployed to Italy to facilitate a series of CREDO emotional/spiritual retreats and workshops for service members and their families in Italy, Spain, Greece, Crete, Poland, Portugal and Germany. They will be deployed until September, when they will return home to continue their work at their Eagle's Wings Mind, Body, Spirit, Wellness Center in Ridgway, Colo. Pictured with the Ringos are Navy European Command Chaplain Capt. Alan Hansen, right, and his wife, Elizabeth, in Italy.



Helping kids



DAV is once again joining with Camp Corral to provide a unique and fun camp experience to help our kids. This summer, more than 2,600 children of fallen and injured veterans will be attending a free week of Camp Corral throughout the nation. Last year, more than 200 of the camp participants were sponsored through **DAV's "Just B Kids" scholarship program**. Children between the ages of 8 and 15 are invited to come experience Camp Corral and enjoy a week of nonstop fun and excitement.

If you have a kid in your life who would like to attend Camp Corral for **free**, visit www.justbkids.org to link to information on eligibility and to apply.



2014

**CAMP
CORRAL**

Schedule

DATES	LOCATION	CITY	STATE
June 1-6	YMCA Camp Classen	Davis	Okl.
June 8-14	YMCA Camp Flaming Arrow	Hunt	Texas
June 8-14	YMCA Camp Greenville	Cleveland	S.C.
June 22-27	4-H Camp Timpoochee	Niceville	Fla.
June 22-27	Eastern NC 4-H Center	Columbia	N.C.
June 22-27	YMCA Camp Manitou-Lin	Middleville	Mich.
June 29-July 4	Eastern NC 4-H Center	Columbia	N.C.
June 29-July 4	YMCA Camp Gorham	Eagle Bay	N.Y.
June 29-July 4	YMCA Camp Shady Brook	Sedalia	Colo.
July 6-11	YMCA Camp Loma Mar	Loma Mar	Calif.
July 6-11	YMCA Camp Hanes	King	N.C.
July 6-11	4-H Memorial Camp	Monticello	Ill.
July 13-18	Texas 4-H Conference Center	Brownwood	Texas
July 13-18	Rock Springs 4-H Center	Junction City	Kan.
July 27-Aug. 1	YMCA Camp Shady Brook	Sedalia	Colo.
July 27-Aug. 1	Camp Joy	Clarksville	Ohio
July 27-Aug. 1	4-H Camp Ocala	Altoona	Fla.
Aug. 3-8	YMCA Camp Seymour	Gig Harbor	Wash.
Aug. 3-8	YMCA Camp Carson	Princeton	Ind.
Aug. 10-15	YMCA Camp Weaver	Greensboro	N.C.
Aug. 10-15	Northern Virginia 4-H Center	Front Royal	Va.
Aug. 11-16	YMCA Camp Fitch	North Springfield	Pa.





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