

GATEWAY GAZETTE

*The Official Publication of the Gateway Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America
A Member Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America*



Gateway PVA President Stan Brown sitting at the top of the ramp that leads to the Soldiers Memorial in downtown St. Louis just before leading a delegation of Gateway PVA members in the annual Veterans Day Parade.

Soldiers Memorial is now accessible for wheelchair bound visitors!

On Friday November 9, just one day before the annual Veterans Day Parade in downtown St. Louis, many workers scurried about finishing the final work necessary to allow use of the new switch-back ramp leading to and providing access for wheelchair bound visitors to the Soldiers Memorial. Access to the facility for wheelchair users had not been possible since Veterans Day 2004 when the antiquated elevator/lift system broke down with Gateway PVA President Stan Brown on board. The old elevator system which was continuously exposed to the elements and was prone to breakdowns could no longer be counted on to handle the weight of modern power wheelchairs while traversing up the twenty steps of the Memorial. President Brown had to be rescued by the city fire department after more than an hour of waiting. President Brown brought the problem to the Gateway Board of Directors and the topic was discussed over the course of several months. The board was against repairing the elevator/lift system because of the experiences of many of

the Directors. President Brown petitioned the city to make the memorial accessible, but the city was short on funding. Finally after last year's parade, funding became available and plans were drawn up. City representatives presented the plans for the switchback ramp to the Gateway PVA at a BOD meeting earlier this year. Work finally began on the project June 7th. After three years of waiting, President Brown and other Gateway members met at the memorial before this year's parade began and rolled up the ramp to tour the Memorial. *More pictures on page 7 and back cover.*

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Stan Brown
Ruth Kult
Fred Bradley
Becky Ballard
Cierra Gailes

Gateway Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America

<http://www.gatewaypva.org>

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Has your address changed? Please inform us by email to: susanlyle@gatewaypva.org, or writing or calling using the below information:

Gateway PVA
9738 Lackland Road
St. Louis, MO 63114
(314) 427-0393 or (800) 426-4058
Fax (314) 427-4183

**Gateway will be offering
transportation 5 days
a week for medical
appointments or trips
to JB. Call the office
for eligibility!**

Three bedroom wheelchair accessible ranch home for lease in Woodson Terrace, MO. No basement, carport with concrete ramp and railing, new kitchen, all doors extra wide, roll-in shower in bathroom. Call Jack at: 314-341-7076

A PVA Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist based in Richmond, Virginia, called to inform us that he knows of a couple of job openings in the St Louis area if any of our Gateway members are interested in re-entering the workforce. For anyone who is interested they can call Rick Schiessler at 1-866-752-8105.

BENEFIT DINNER and DANCE

for Joseph Judy (Brother-in-law of Gateway PVA Member Joey Avellone)

Saturday, January 19, 2008
5:30—11:30 PM Catholic War Vets (CWV)
3535 State Road 159, Belleville, IL
50/50 Drawing and chance to win other prizes
Advanced tickets \$10 Tickets at door \$12

Joseph Judy has been fighting brain cancer and this benefit will help defray some of his hospital costs.

For more information, contact:
Geraldine Beelman (618-977-2617) or
Joey Avellone (618-558-3443)

The material contained herein expresses the opinions of the writer and not necessarily the opinions of the editor or the Gateway Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America. All material in the *Gazette* may be reprinted unless specifically prohibited. Readers are encouraged to submit their articles or rebuttals to:
ddurrwachter@gatewaypva.org or in the US mail at address shown to the left and mark with attention to the editor.

President's Report

By Stan Brown

Secret VA Planning for SCI Move to Expanded John Cochran



How is that for a sensational headline? My first day out of bed after five weeks of a pressure sore on my backside, and I'm rushing to meet our newsletter deadline. While I was in bed, I was called by our national PVA Director of Architecture and asked if I was aware of the plans to move the Jefferson Barracks SCI unit to the ground floor of a proposed new tower at John Cochran. I said definitely not, no one from our Gateway Chapter, or apparently our national organization, had been informed of these plans or asked for input. At our October 2007 Gateway Board Meeting, our Board voted unanimously to "go on record" that the existing John Cochran facility should be closed and moved to another location. Too many of our members have had bad experiences at the existing JC Medical Center. The only authorized VA patient satisfaction survey (SHEP), for fiscal year 2006 indicates JC had the worst satisfaction scores of all surveyed 132 VA Medical Centers. The first six months of fiscal year 2007 responses are unbelievably even lower. In the three largest response survey areas, JC has "significantly worse than the national average" satisfaction scores in every single one of 29 survey questions. John Cochran is the **only** VA Medical Center out of 131 responding, to score that poorly.

For years Gateway has raised concerns over the treatment of our members at the JC facility. The VA response has been consistent and ineffective: Form a committee and do some training. The latest new committees and improvement teams have been in place a year since the last special PVA site visit in response to a member's shameful care in the JC ICU. Recently, one of our board members and a prior board member used the JC emergency room. One was left unattended twice on a gurney for three hours each time and the other was placed in a room without a call-button. These are only the problems that have been actually reported to us recently.

During our national PVA site visit (December 18-21), we have been verbally told that the SCI unit move to a larger John Cochran facility is only in the planning stage and that no funding or Congressional approval has been obtained. We are unable to pinpoint the time of the funding request, construction, or completion. This plan and the unilateral decision without stakeholder input, is indeed troublesome. We have a good patient-centered SCI unit at Jefferson Barracks that by its location and setting is conducive to patient rehabilitation and family inclusion. There appears to be a secret VA plan to close it and move it to arguably the worst VA Medical Center in the entire system. No doubt under the right circumstances it is logical to have SCI rehabilitation closer to an acute care facility, but it is clear by the VA's own measurements and SCI/D patient experience, those circumstances don't exist with John Cochran. There must be a better solution. All stakeholders, to include the PVA and other veteran representatives, need to be involved in working toward the **quality healthcare** men and women who have served this country deserve.

And, lest I forget, Happy Holidays from the Board of Directors and Staff of Gateway PVA.

PVA Disaster Relief Fund for Winter Storms

By Stan Brown

Most of our membership in the Midwest is eligible for our national organization's Disaster Relief Fund for expenses incurred with this winter's storms. Funds will only be distributed to PVA members. A maximum of \$2500 per individual or family will be granted. Each application will be evaluated for need and maximum disbursements will not be made in all cases. Funds may be used for transportation, temporary shelter, food, the modifications for accessibility, prosthetic appliances, and medical supplies. The funds will not be provided if other assistance has been provided to pay for the items in question. Applications can be received by the Gateway Chapter or the National Service Office.

Attaboy

By Ruth Kult

HI ALL!

I have been in a wheelchair for a few months over 20 years. This doesn't make me an authority on the ways and days of living on wheels, but it does allow me to share my opinion since I have been there, done that. 'Tis the season for giving. I've been waiting and just not receiving. I'm not asking for much; just a few lines. All I need is a name and the reason why this person deserves an Attaboy. I'll take it from there. A few people wrote in, but these were a very straggled few. It isn't hard to do. Like I mentioned a few months ago, throw me a bone. From what I hear, quite a few people read this, but would rather not participate with an idea. So, it looks like I'm on my own again. This time I'm not going to write about any one particular person. What I'm going to do is give my opinionated suggestion to all of the newly injured...

When I was first injured we had outings, but what we didn't have was an Amy Will or a Matt Luitjohan encouraging us to go. So what if it takes you longer to do things than it use to, big deal. If people stare or gawk, not a problem, just stare back. Most people are more concerned about their own lives than to worry about yours with the exception of children. They're just really inquisitive about things. It's kind of strange, but they're not shy about asking anything. Who knows, you might just teach them a thing or two. They could be the new therapists of the future and you might be the very person responsible for their decision in a career choice.

I realize people have different injuries and most things that used to be really easy for them to do are very difficult or impossible for them now. The hardest thing for people to realize is ACCEPTANCE does not mean giving up. Until a person is willing to accept their lives the way they are right now the harder it will be on them and the harder it will be on everyone else.

I can't say stop hoping cause there is always hope. What I can say is don't stop living your life because we just don't know what will happen tomorrow. Keep on keep-in on!

My own simple advice, whether it's wanted or not. Do everything available at the hospital. You don't know if you'll like it until you try it. You might surprise yourself. Actually, you're in a pretty controlled environment to try new things. It's safer to try your new wings out here than somewhere else. Find your strengths.

Thanks for reading and for all the newly injured: Start with baby steps; Rome wasn't built in a day.



Spinal Cord Injury/Dysfunction Service invites you to our **OUTPATIENT SUPPORT GROUP**

We meet on the second Thursday of every month

1:30-2:30

Building 52, Second Floor conference room.

Those unable to attend in person can participate by means of teleconference.

Simply call toll-free 1-800-767-1750 and enter access code 29945.

By means of speaker-phone you'll be able to hear everyone and be heard by everyone.

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For questions or more information, call our Social Worker
Bob Sontag, LCSW at 314-652-4100, x6-4819

All Paws Rescuers has cats and/or dogs for adoption free of charge for any local area veteran who would like to have one. The delivery of the pet may even be arranged for free. Please contact Andrea at 314-612-0156.

Recipients of the Purple Heart

By St. Louis NSO Fred Bradley

I was asked to write an article to explain about healthcare for veterans who received a Purple Heart. The focus is how does having the Purple Heart impact eligibility for healthcare through VA. To quote, VHA Directive 2001-021 dated April 5, 2001 reads:

“POLICY: Public Law 106-117, the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, amended previous law to place veterans awarded the Purple Heart in enrollment priority group 3, and to exempt those veterans from co-payment requirements associated with provision of hospital care and outpatient medical services.”

What this means is if you were awarded the Purple Heart, you do not have to pay co-payments for in-patient or out-patient care. However, some veterans may still be subject to co-payments for prescriptions unless they meet the low-income exemption criteria, are service-connected 50 percent or greater or the medication is for a service connected condition. Any veteran who received a Purple Heart will continue to be reimbursed for any medical care co-payments on or after November 30, 1999. Again, this may not include reimbursement for prescriptions.

The provision for veterans with a Purple Heart probably does not impact a great number of PVA members as most will have been informed of their benefits including possible co-payments for care and/or medications. Also, if we are aware of a veteran who has a Purple Heart, we would encourage them to file a claim for service connection for the disability or disabilities sustained in the incident (if he or she never filed before). Most SCI /D veterans will have been counseled on filing for compensation or for non-service connected pension benefits.

However, there are always a few who “fell through the cracks” or perhaps received a Purple Heart for a relatively minor injury. For those veterans who are not in receipt of non-service connected pension or compensation and who had to pay for medical care from VA and were awarded a Purple Heart, you should provide a copy of your DD214 or DD215 or a copy of your Personnel File and/or military orders of the award of the Purple Heart to the VA Medical Center where your Primary Care Provider is located. For many of you, it’s the SCI Unit. They will forward this to the people who are responsible for upgrading your priority group status.

If you have any questions on how this applies to you, please contact your National Service Officer.

MIA

Have you seen or know the whereabouts of these members? They are in danger of being dropped from the PVA Roster. Please call us, write us or Email us if you know where any of these members are! Contact info is on page 2.

Anderson, Roamin
Jones, Davett N
Pfeifer, James E
Sullivan-McGuire, James

Berg, David A
Lauderdale, Charles T
Radecki, Raymond J
Williams, James E

Fuqua, William
Morehouse, Allen W
Roden, James T

Horras, Phillip W
Nibarger, Robert W
Salyer, Dale

Please have someone contact the Chapter in the event of a member's death so that we can inform other members who might wish to pay respects to the departed.

In memory of....



Brown, Roger
Gazaway, Francis
Riggin, Brad
Wilcox, Matthew
Wilson, Bobby

Columbia, MO
Nevada, MO
Oak Grove, MO
St. Louis, MO
Sikeston, MO

10/23/2007
12/12/2007
12/14/2007
12/24/2007
11/07/2007





Members of the Spinal Cord Injury Support Group gathered recently at The Fox & Hound Smokehouse and Tavern for their second annual Christmas party. Cheryl Ova, SCI LPN coordinated the event and arranged with The Fox & Hound to provide a meeting room and appetizers. The event was attended by 35 patients, family members and SCI support staff from the Kansas City VAMC. Of that number at least 12-15 participants are regular attendees of the monthly Spinal Cord Injury Support Group. Terry Wade, VA travel office, assisted with coordinating travel for those veterans in the group who otherwise would not have been able to attend this VA sponsored SCI support group activity. Attendees enjoyed an afternoon of good food and camaraderie. A plaque was presented to Tammy Sterling, the manager of the Fox and Hound, in appreciation for their generosity and support with this year's holiday event.

The Spinal Cord Injury Support Group at Kansas City VAMC was started two years ago and provides support and guidance with adapting to new injuries and adjusting to life style changes for the patient including health, socialization and self-advocacy. The group meets monthly on the second Wednesday from 10:30 -11:30 in Rehab Medicine at KC VAMC.

Written by Kathy Riker, photos taken by Rebecca Warchola.



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Above: Photos taken at the annual Veteran's Day Parade held in downtown St. Louis on November 10, 2007.

Below: Photos taken at the Oakville Elks Lodge #2726 Meat Shoot held on December 9th. Proceeds from the event will go to the JB Post 2342 fund, which is used to send mobility impaired veterans to events such as the Winter Ski Clinic, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and national PVA fishing tournaments. We deeply appreciate all the hard work of the volunteers and all the participants who contributed to this great cause!



From left to right: Chaplin Goodwin, Rose and Victor Ganz, Steve Stratmann, Ron and Ann Malburg.

From left to right, Front: Ann Malburg, Ed Reeve, and Dennis Durrwachter Back: Ken DeClue and Ted Giles.

St. Louis VA Brings the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Back to St. Louis in Style

By Becky Ballard



Although we didn't have Jack Buck as Master of Ceremonies, and we didn't have all of the local service organizations cooking meals like they did in 1989, the return of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) was deemed quite a success! Jane Powell graced the stage as Mistress of Ceremonies and the meals were conveniently held at the hotel as the St. Louis VAMC hosted this year's festival.

During the week of October 22 through the 28, over 120 very talented veterans, representing 52 VA Medical Centers, converged in St. Louis to join in the fun at the 19th Annual NVCAF. Invited veterans successfully progress through a series of competitions, beginning at their local VA's. Nearly 3,000 entries started the selection process of this year's best in music, dance, drama, creative writing and artistic expression.

A grand performance and art display was held at the Touhill Performing Arts Center on the UMSL campus on October 28th. The lobby of the Touhill turned into a stunning art gallery where the top 50 award winning pieces of art were beautifully displayed, enhanced by an interactive session with the artists. Over 1,300 guests viewed the art work and enjoyed the live stage performance featuring 32 of the top musical and dramatic selections. The audience was dazzled with a variety of performances, including a mother and son gospel duo from Fresno, California, and a Dunedin, Florida dance team, featuring the lead dancer who is a paralyzed veteran, who also happens to be a former quad-rugby player! Two St. Louis VAMC veterans were selected as performers in the music and drama divisions. Wayne Valentine played an original piano solo, and Jeff Rinehart started the show off in grand Missouri style with an impression of Mark Twain.

The goal of the festival is to promote healing through the arts! Throughout the year, therapists at VA hospitals across the country are prompting the opportunity to heal through artistic expression. Veterans experience both a sense of pride and increased self esteem, as well as develop mobility and fine motor skills as they learn to dance with a prosthetic limb or paint after an SCI. Healing through the arts also gives veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression the opportunity to express themselves through non-traditional methods. Singing, either as an individual or in a group, and writing original music are other examples of expressing one's self through the arts.

I would like to thank the PVA for the generous support of this project and the STL VAMC staff who volunteered many hours to ensure the success of this event.

You won't want to miss out on the fun for 2008! The St. Louis Local Festival will be held February 29th in the JB Gym. So if you have a song in your heart, a poem in you head or paint on a canvas, contact a therapist and join the fun! The 2008 NVCAF will be held in Loma Linda, California.



Photos taken at the 2007 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival held at Touhill Performing Arts Center at the University of Missouri St. Louis campus.



AT Reutilization Program for Independent Living Recycled DME Program Expansion

Paraquad, Inc. is pleased to announce the expansion of the Recycled Durable Medical Equipment (DME) Program to the Assistive Technology (AT) Reutilization Program providing assistive technology products, clinical services, and building a regional network of community collaborators to increase distribution.

Through a three-year grant awarded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services the program will increase access to assistive technology devices and services for people with disabilities throughout the region.

The AT Reutilization Program is a one-stop clearinghouse acquiring, repairing and distributing recycled durable medical equipment. AT devices include manual wheelchairs, power wheelchairs, scooters, canes, crutches, walkers, shower chairs, toilet seats, recreational devices, seating cushions, back supports, augmentative communication devices, and adaptive baby-care equipment. The program also includes education and outreach efforts, clinical service processes, and a regional network of community collaborators.

Paraquad is pleased to continue our collaborative relationship with the Program in Occupational Therapy at Washington University School of Medicine.

The AT Reutilization Program community collaborators include Delta Center for Independent Living, Disability Resource Association, Linc, and Wheels for the World. Through these collaborations, the program service area includes eastern Missouri—Crawford, Franklin, Gasconade, Iron, Lincoln, St. Charles, St. Francois, St. Louis, St. Louis City, Washington and Warren counties and western Illinois—Madison, Monroe, Randolph, and St. Clair.

AT Donations

We are currently seeking AT device donations from local hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, and private donors. Items are transported free of charge. In-kind AT donors will receive a letter for tax purposes. Donated AT devices are repaired and refurbished equipment under the supervision of a certified repair technician.

AT Distribution

AT devices are available at a low cost. A listing of devices is obtainable online at www.paraquad.org and by mail. Availability of items are based on the equipment donated and may fluctuate greatly.

AT includes manual wheelchairs, power wheelchairs, scooters, canes, crutches, walkers, shower chairs, toilet seats, recreational devices, seating cushions, back supports, augmentative communication devices, and adaptive baby care equipment.

AT Clinical Services

Paraquad has established a clinical team in collaboration with Washington University Program in Occupational Therapy to evaluate the current screening, assessment, and training processes of assistive technology distribution.

The clinical team evaluates persons receiving recycled or refurbished equipment for safety, fit, positioning, and function. Program staff develop a training program for persons that indicate further need for instruction upon assessment.

AT Cleaning Service

Individualized AT device cleaning services are available by appointment. Funding for the AT Reutilization Program is provided by Emerson and the U.S. Department of Education.

For additional information about the AT Reutilization Program contact the Assistive Technology Center at 314/289-4272 (voice) or 314/289-4252 (TTY)

Or email Ciarra Gales at cgales@paraquad.org

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<i>January 2008</i>						
<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
		1 New Years Office Closed	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 BOD Meeting Overland 11:30	9	10 Patient Sup- port Group at JB 1:30 - 2:30	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 Chili Cook-Off Membership Meeting JB	18	19
20	21 ML King Day Office Closed	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

<i>February 2008</i>						
<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
					1	2 Groundhog Day
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10 High Ridge Elks Meat Shoot Noon	11	12 BOD Meeting Overland 11:30	13	14 Valentines Day Patient Support Group at JB	15 Newsletter Articles due	16
17	18 Presidents Day Office closed	19	20	21 Luncheon JB	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

Address Service Requested

Gateway Chapter
Paralyzed Veterans of America
9738 Lackland Road
St. Louis, MO 63114



Jim Spencer, Stan Brown, Bob Huskey, and Bobby Jackson try out the new Soldiers Memorial Ramp



Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury or Disease . . . Living Life to the Fullest