

Gateway Gazette



Gateway Chapter
Paralyzed Veterans of America
<http://www.gatewaypva.org>

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

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Gateway Chapter PVA

Wishes to welcome our new members:

Norman Keller

Julius Nickerson



Annual JB SCI/D Chili Cook-Off and GPVA Luncheon



It's that time of year again! Start perfecting your chili recipes because the most exciting chili cook-off at Jefferson Barracks is happening on Thursday, January 21, 2016! All crock pots of chili must be in the Jefferson Barracks SCI dining room by 11:30 AM. There will be tastings and voting, along with a luncheon provided by the Gateway Chapter PVA.

Please inform Matt and Charley to reserve a spot for your chili (as well to make sure that there will be adequate table space for all entries). If you would like more information, or have any questions, you can contact Matt at 314-894-6602 or Charley at 314-652-4100 Extension 64590.

Time to update your address or email?

Please email us at:
amber@gatewaypva.org
or

write or call us at the following:

Gateway Chapter PVA
1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center
St. Louis, MO 63132
(314) 427-0393 or (800) 426-4058
Fax (314) 427-4183

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editor@gatewaypva.org or via US mail at the address shown above and send to the attention of the editor.



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President's Message

By Stanley D. Brown

Bearded Dragon Season

Staffing the SCI/D Centers—Will We Ever Catch Up?



The front page of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, December 2, 2015 edition, carried the following lead for their article: “VA trying, again, to fill long vacant-St. Louis VA directorship.” The St. Louis VA Medical Center Director position has now been vacant for 29 months. In the interim, it has been filled with “acting” directors. Throughout the VA system, there are 14 vacancies for directors of VA Medical Centers. The VA pays Medical Center Directors one half or less, than directors in the private sector, but the VA says the pay discrepancy is not the primary reason it takes so long to find a Medical Center Director for St. Louis. I’ve heard similar vacancy numbers for Medical Centers’ Chief of Staff positions. We’ve been without a Chief of Staff in St. Louis for about one and a half years. Although these vacancies are certainly not desirable, Gateway members/veterans may not think the absences or instability in these top management slots, directly affects their care. However, “vacancies” and the need to recruit and retain VA staff, has certainly not been limited to upper management. It took us in excess of two years to finally bring on board our new SCI/D Chief. In ad-

dition, we now finally have on board a Deputy Chief currently assigned to the six bed acute care unit at John Cochran and also responsible for SCI/D administrative duties.

We have just received our fifth PVA site visit report, where it has been reported that the nursing shortage and the inability to fill budgeted nursing slots, has hurt care at our SCI/D unit and actually at times limited the number of patients we could take. Members who needed to be in a SCI/D inpatient bed, had to remain at home or a private facility until there was a vacancy in our unit. In November 2015, we had 27 beds (down from 32 because of construction) but could only fill 21 because of staffing shortages. Among the 24 VA SCI/D Centers, there were 903 beds, but only sufficient staffing for 827. St. Louis and our SCI/D unit are not alone in facing this nursing shortage. A November 2015 Government Accounting Office (GAO) report studied four VA Medical Centers and found similar staffing problems. The report went on to say that there were about 17,000 professional caregiver vacancies in the VA. RN positions accounted for 12,000 of those vacancies. The turnover rate for RNs was 7.9%, meaning almost 8% of the hired RNs were gone within five years. From their study, the GAO extrapolated four major challenges contributing to staffing shortages: a lack of sufficient administrative support for medical centers, competition with private sector medical facilities, reduced pool of nurses in rural locations with advanced training, and employee dissatisfaction. The report concluded that the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has a number of key initiatives to help Medical Centers recruit and retain nurses, but face the challenges of competition with the private sector and the lack of sufficient administrative support.

These themes are familiar to me. Gateway’s Senior Benefits Advocate Rodney Harris, Gateway Hospital Liaison Chairman Scott Richards, and I meet monthly with St. Louis VA management and discuss the continued staffing shortages for the SCI/D unit. As I think back on the meetings, they are similar. Our same questions elicit the same responses concerning nurse shortages. I believe local management is sincerely trying, but we are not catching up filling in these vacancies.

Continued on page 4

President's Message

Continued from page 3

Last May at the PVA Annual Convention in San Diego, VA Secretary Robert McDonald spoke to our assembled Board of Directors. At the end, he asked for questions. No surprise that I flopped up my arm and was recognized. I asked about the perennial staffing shortages and cited the direct impact on the SCI/D care in St. Louis. He responded that he had people looking into VA staffing issues and that the VA Human Resources (HR) departments had to do a better job in getting people working in positions sooner and retention rates had to improve.

The last VA scandal to saturate the airwaves was in Phoenix in November 2014. John Cochran has fortunately stayed out of the news. With the addition of the new six bed acute care unit, I'm of the opinion our members get better care than in the past at John Cochran. But will the VA notoriety in general, salary differentials with the private sector, and the lengthy HR background checking (vetting) be improved? One of the recommendations of the GAO was for the VA to conduct a system-wide evaluation of its nurse recruitment and retention initiatives, to determine their effectiveness. The VA response was a "concurrence" that stated the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) will establish a work group containing the field and programs personnel with this subject matter expertise to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative. The target completion date for the evaluation is October 2017. I believe PVA is committed to continue pushing for these improvements, as well as Gateway's leadership, and wonder even with the VA Secretary's commitment, the vast bureaucracy and culture at some sites of the VA can be changed.

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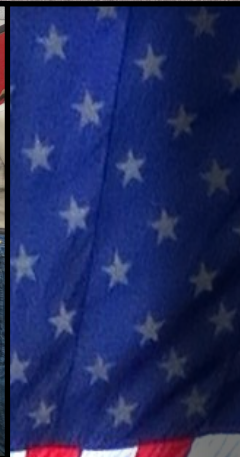
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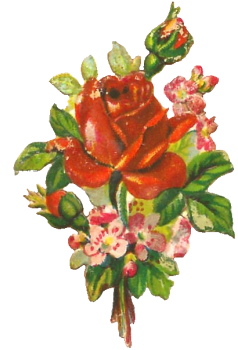




In memory of...

James A. Blanford	Henderson, KY	01/11/15			
Kerry Davis	St. Louis, MO	07/28/15			
Theodoris Hampton	East St. Louis, IL	07/29/15			
Nolan Fitzgerald	Fieldon, IL	08/05/15			
Alva Manship, Sr.	Bolckow, MO	08/24/15	Charles W. Gillespie	Clinton, MO	10/05/15
Brian Williams	St. Louis, MO	09/17/15	Lawrence E. Hill	Belleville, IL	11/16/15
Arthur Ratliff	Raytown, MO	10/03/15	Thomas B. Allen	Platte City, MO	11/20/15

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



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GREATER ST. LOUIS HONOR FLIGHT



Background

Greater St. Louis Honor Flight began flying veterans to Washington, DC in 2008. The organization was founded by two area women who were passionate about making sure the St. Louis community's veterans had the chance to see their national memorials. By the end of the 2014 calendar year, GSLHF will have flown 45 Honor Flights, serving more than 1,200 St. Louis area veterans.

What We Do

Greater St. Louis Honor Flight honors St. Louis area veterans' service to our country by providing an all-inclusive trip to Washington, DC to visit the memorial built in their honor. Most of the veterans that we serve are in their 80s and 90s and lack the physical and mental wherewithal to complete a trip on their own and often their families and friends lack the resources and time necessary to complete the trip to our nation's capital. Most veterans have given up any hope of ever visiting the memorial that was specifically created to honor their sacrifice.

We are losing our World War II veterans at a staggering rate of 550+ per day. We are committed to doing all that we can to ensure that they get to DC before it's too late. [We are currently focused on World War II and Korean War veterans as well as those veterans from any war who are suffering from a terminal illness.](#) However, our vision goes beyond WWII. In the future, Greater St. Louis Honor Flight plans to pay tribute to those who served during [Vietnam](#), followed by veterans of more current wars.

About the Flights

Each Honor Flight day begins very early in the morning at Lambert St. Louis International Airport. Volunteers begin to arrive around 3:30AM in order to set up. Veterans begin arriving around 4:00AM. Each veteran is paired with a guardian for the day – someone to provide a measure of safety and care for each of our honorees. A guardian can be a family member, but is often a volunteer from the community. With their guardians at their side, the veterans make their way through security. Breakfast is served at the gate, prior to boarding the plane. Flights depart at 6:00AM, arriving at Baltimore-Washington International Airport greeted by a water cannon salute – an honor reserved ONLY for retiring pilots and Honor Flights. A waiting bus takes Honor Flight participants to the World War II Memorial. Group pictures are taken and veterans are given the opportunity to experience the Memorial in whatever way is best for them. A ceremony is then held at the Missouri Pillar where fallen brothers are remembered. Often our veterans are approached by visiting strangers who want to hear stories and have their pictures taken with them. After about an hour and a half at the WWII Memorial, the bus departs. Lunch is served on the bus while our participants are taken on a bus tour of Washington, DC. Following the bus tour, Honor Flight participants arrive at the Korean, Vietnam and Lincoln Memorials. From there, our honorees are taken to the Iwo Jima Memorial and then to Arlington National Cemetery. Following a tour of Arlington National Cemetery, Honor Flight participants experience the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. From there we head to the Roosevelt Memorial and then to the Air Force Memorial.

Following the Air Force Memorial visit, the bus takes participants to Baltimore-Washington International Airport. Upon arrival, Mail Call is distributed. Mail Call comes as a surprise to our veterans and is always a highlight of the day. Friends, family members and strangers write letters to our veterans, expressing gratitude for their service to our country. We arrive in St. Louis around 8:00PM. Upon arrival, veterans are treated to Welcome Home Celebration at the airport, attended by volunteers, other veterans, friends and family members. The experience is unforgettable.

[To apply or for more information you can visit the website at www.gslhonorflight.org](http://www.gslhonorflight.org) or call 636-230-2466.

Dr. Jai Park Wins PVA “Speedy” Award

By Stanley D. Brown—President/National Director

I am so pleased to announce that our very own Dr. Park was selected to receive the PVA “Speedy” award in the non-member category. Our chapter nominated Dr. Park and had overwhelming evidence to support the nomination. The 34 PVA Board of Directors annually vote for a member and a non-member to receive the award which is given as “the highest honor bestowed by the Paralyzed Veterans of America and is presented in recognition of significant contributions to improving the lives of America’s paralyzed veterans.” Writing the nomination and “arguing” in support of the nomination, was the easiest case I have ever had. Dr. Park was selected by a unanimous vote of the 34 Directors at the November PVA Board meeting in Phoenix. She will be presented the award at the annual convention this May in Jacksonville, Florida. Our own Dr. Robert Woolsey won the award in 2009.



Below are excerpts from our nomination of Dr. Park:

“She has provided 35+ years of dedication and service to our members and other veterans who use the St. Louis VA SCI service. I cannot think of a better person for this award.”

“Dr. Park served as the acting SCI/D Chief for two years, basically doing the work of two physicians.”



MIA

-Warner E. Robertson-

-Michael L. McKinney-

-Robert A. Rosenthal-

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 to us, or e-mail us if you know where they are! Our contact info is inside the front cover.



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Legal Clinic Day-January 21, 2016 PVA Luncheon

Third year law students and supervising attorneys from the St. Louis University Law School will be available at our luncheon on Thursday, January 21, 2016. They will assist Gateway members with legal issues/needs. This service will be free of charge to members. I anticipate they will be able to assist you in preparing and signing (executing) both durable and nondurable powers of attorney. General durable powers of attorney can grant someone of your choosing the authority to make medical decisions, as well as financial decisions on your behalf, even after you are physically and cognitively unable to do so. I anticipate the students and attorneys will also help with simple wills, landlord-tenant issues, and consumer issues you may have. If you are interested, please bring necessary documents to include the name and address of individuals you would want acting in your behalf. This "clinic" will be available in building 52 (don't know the room yet) from approximately 10 AM until 3 PM. Please call me ahead of time with any questions.

Stanley D. Brown
Gateway PVA President
(314)427-0393



Santa Claus came to SCI/D Town



Paralyzed Veterans
of America

SPORTS & RECREATION SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

For more information, contact Paralyzed Veterans Sports at 800.424.8200 or pva.org/sports

PARALYZED VETERANS NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS CIRCUIT

CAL-DIEGO

Jan. 22–24, 2016

Rifle & Pistol Shoot

Jan. 22, 2016

Redlands, CA

FLORIDA GULF COAST

March 3–5, 2016

Odessa, FL

NEVADA

March 18–20, 2016

Pistol Shoot

March 18, 2016

Las Vegas, NV

VAUGHAN

April 22–24, 2016

Edwardsville, IL

COLONIAL

June 3–5, 2016

Baltimore, MD

IOWA

June 17–19, 2016

Pistol Shoot

June 17, 2016

Cedar Rapids, IA

PARALYZED VETERANS BASS TOUR

FLORIDA

GULF COAST

April 1–3, 2016

Lake Toho

Kissimmee, FL

VAUGHAN

May 13–15, 2016

Rend Lake

Mt. Vernon, IL

KENTUCKY- INDIANA

May 20–22, 2016

Kentucky Lake

Gilbertsville, KY

NATIONAL

June 10–12, 2016

Potomac River

Waldorf, MD

MID-ATLANTIC

June 16–18, 2016

James River

Richmond, VA

ANNUAL PVA/AWBA BOWLING TOURNAMENT SERIES

FLORIDA

GULF COAST

Feb. 26–28, 2016

Tampa, FL

CAL-DIEGO

TBD

BOCCIA CLINICS

CAL-DIEGO

Oct. 28–29, 2015

San Diego, CA

KENTUCKY- INDIANA

March 18–20, 2016

Louisville, KY

ANNUAL PVA/NWPA BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT SERIES

MID-ATLANTIC

March 18–20, 2016

Midlothian, VA

MOUNTAIN STATES

April 22–24, 2016

Fountain, CO

MID-AMERICA

April 1–3, 2016

Oklahoma City, OK

BUCKEYE*

July 22–24, 2016

Independence, OH

* A non-NWPA sanctioned event

ANNUAL AIR RIFLE & PISTOL PROGRAM

CAL-DIEGO

Jan. 18–19, 2016

San Diego, CA

BUCKEYE

April 29–30, 2016

Geneva, OH

MID-ATLANTIC

March 10, 2016

Richmond, VA

NATIONAL

TBD

PARALYZED VETERANS HANDCYCLING SCHEDULE

CLERMONT

ROAD RACE

February 6–7, 2016

Clermont, FL

ONE CITY

MARATHON

March 13, 2016

Newport News, VA

VALLEY OF THE

SUN RACES

February 12–14, 2016

Phoenix, AZ

RIMS ON THE RUN

March 19–20, 2016

Deland, FL



January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 New Years Day OFFICE CLOSED	2
3	4	5 Annual GPVA Inpatient Steak Dinner at JB @ 3:30 pm	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 BOD Mtg. @ GPVA 11:30 am 15pts. Non-BOD Mbr.	13	14	15	16
17	18 Martin Luther ★ King Jr's Birthday ☆ ★ OFFICE CLOSED	19	20	21 Legal Clinic Open Chili Cook-Off & GPVA Luncheon at JB @ Noon 5 pts.	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Newsletter Articles Due 15 pts. published	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 BOD Mtg. @ GPVA 4:00 pm 15pts. Non-BOD Mbr.	10	11	12	13
14 	15 Washington's ★ Birthday ☆ ★ OFFICE CLOSED	16	17	18 Member/Patient Luncheon @ Noon 5 pts.	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29					



**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

Gateway Chapter

**1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center
St. Louis, MO 63132**

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