

Gateway Gazette

January/February 2020

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Paralyzed Veterans
of America
Gateway Chapter

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

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

Gateway Chapter

Time to update your address or email?

Please email us at info@gatewaypva.org or write or call us at the following:
Gateway Chapter PVA • 1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center • St. Louis, MO 63132
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We are offering the option to receive our Chapter's newsletter by email. Members taking advantage of electronic delivery will help to reduce the cost of printing and postage. In turn, this will allow the Chapter to put more funds toward our members and member programs. If you have not done so already, please contact Administrative Assistant Amber Lee at amber@gatewaypva.org, or Executive Director Chris Blanchard at chris@gatewaypva.org, if you would like to start receiving your newsletter electronically.



by Stanley D. Brown

President's Message

Honoring SCI Service

United Access Donation

Holiday Wishes

CHLs needed for Southern MO

Gateway Honors the Retirement of Two Exceptional SCI People

Dr. Jai Park will be retiring the end of this calendar year and occupational therapist Deborah Gray the end of January. Dr. Park has served as a SCI/D doctor for 40 years and Deborah as our therapist for 38 years. Both gave us exemplary care over the years and will be missed. Dr. Park won the highest PVA award, the Speedy Award, in 2016. She came to the convention to receive the award with both of her children and two grandchildren, and as expected was most gracious and humble in her remarks. For almost 2 years she served as the Acting SCI Chief. In that role she declined any additional salary increase and performed the duties of two SCI physicians for the units at both Jefferson Barracks and John Cochran. Over the years she was a steadfast supporter of Gateway PVA both in spirit and financially. My earliest memories of Dr. Park, which continue to set the tone of her compassionate and professional care of us, was me receiving after hour calls concerning my medicine and health. It was not uncommon to receive a call from her still at work after 7 PM concerning test results or medicine she had ordered. Like Dr. Park, Deb was a compassionate professional working with us. She early on in spite of disagreement from the then SCI Chief, advocated for therapist involvement in all

patient home visits. She rightfully thought and stressed the importance of occupational therapists seeing us in our actual home environments to determine what we additionally needed to "live life to the fullest." I remember many conversations on her visiting our national parks and commenting on accessibility. Her joy of working with veterans was clear every time you entered the crafts room and were greeted with her wonderful smile. Please read her "farewell" on page 11 of this newsletter. I will truly miss Dr. Park and Deborah Gray and wish them well in their well-earned retirement!

United Access Graciously Donates \$20,000 in 2020 to Gateway PVA

Gateway Executive Director Chris Blanchard and I met with United Access founder and CEO Richard May in December when he told us he had a foundation that was going to donate \$20,000 in 2020 to our chapter, with "no strings attached." I told him we would place the funds directly in our grants account specified for accessible vehicle transportation which means we will be able to give more grant funding to members for hand controls and accessible vehicles. Over the years Richard and United Access have been great supporters of our organization and members, instilling

in his workers exemplary customer service. The next time you meet with anyone from United Access thank them for their company's generosity with this \$20,000 donation.

Holiday Wishes to All Our Members and Supporters

I hope everyone has a healthy and fulfilling year in 2020. Our Gateway Board continues to perform on your behalf in offering programs and grants for sports and recreation participation around the country, home accessibility, home generators, and accessible vehicle transportation. Our programs and grants are unmatched in my opinion by any of the other 32 PVA chapters. Hence, we have received the PVA Most Outstanding Chapter Award for four of the last five years and continue to receive Better Business Bureau approval and the highest (platinum) seal from Guide Star, a charity watchdog organization.

Gateway Still Needs Chapter Hospital Liaisons for Southern and Central Missouri

We are still in need of a member to visit and quarterly report on their visits to VA SCI spoke in Poplar Bluff and Columbia. Points will be given for this effort and reimbursement for trips over 50 miles. Please contact me for more information.

Christmas Cheer

by Rodney Harris, Senior Benefits Advocate

Christmas time is here again and the holiday season gatherings of family and friends begins. The hustle and bustle of shopping, fighting crowds and getting that perfect gift for someone can create undue panic and anxiety. We get so caught up in trying to make every detail perfect (or as near as possible) that we forget to relax and enjoy Christmas and what it really means. Hours of planning, shopping and wrapping comes down to the sounds of gift wrap being torn and thrown about which may only last minutes. Christmas is celebrated in many ways throughout our country and no matter how it is celebrated there are certain things that make the season brighter when you give a little of yourself to others.

Christmas cheer can be defined as “Food and Drink, especially alcoholic beverages consumed around the Christmas holiday.” We all know the feeling food and drink can bring when enjoyed during the holidays. We eat or drink too much and then we have to either nap or loosen a belt buckle a notch or two. Christmas cheer is also defined as the “Joyful and generous attitude expected of people at Christmas.” Now this definition is obvious when you watch Christmas movies on Hallmark but is it present everywhere?

You may also feel Christmas cheer when you hear your favorite Christmas song. Whether it is “Silent Night” or “Jingle Bells” we all get that feeling of the season singing along. This feeling can be described as the Christmas Spirit that fills you up with happiness and joy. This Spirit can help to remove any unhappy thoughts of the past year and replace them with hope and a brighter outlook for the New Year that approaches.

Many people will be staying in a hospital or nursing home this holiday season. Whether they are veterans or not most will miss out on sharing with family and friends. Some may have lost loved ones this year and could be struggling to hold the thoughts of them close. They will not get that hug or kiss that always makes things better for them.

So remember that Christmas time is about spreading happiness and joy to our fellow women and men. Begin by filling yourself with the Christmas Spirit (not the locally made “Spirits”) which will help you to spread the Christmas cheer to those who need it most this season. A joyful and generous attitude may just be contagious. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Paving Access for Veterans Employment

By Lauren Lobrano, Director, PAVE Program

Paralyzed Veterans of America's veterans' employment program, PAVE – Paving Access for Veterans Employment - was launched in 2007 to ensure that PVA members, their spouses, and caregivers, have access to meaningful employment, educational, and volunteer opportunities. Our team of certified vocational rehabilitation counselors and employment analysts provide high-touch, one-on-one assistance to guide veterans through the process.

Studies have found that there are significant benefits for individuals who are engaged, including improved quality of life, enhanced self-confidence, expanded social network, a sense of community and increased income for those who are employed.

PAVE staff are specially trained to work with veterans receiving Social Security Disability Insurance and other government benefits. We work hand in hand with PVA national service officers to take into consideration other benefits a veteran may be receiving from the VA.

Despite the positive attributes of regular engagement, veterans with significant service-connected disabilities are not currently seeking employment. More than 62% of veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 60% or higher either struggle with or opt out of joining the civilian workforce. When layered with the added challenges of managing a new injury or medical diagnosis, many may feel that the barriers to gainful employment are overwhelming. PVA's PAVE program Counselors and Analysts continue to be leaders in dispelling the myths and challenging stereotypes of those with disabilities. Working with dedicated employment partners, we will continue to create opportunities for quality and sustainable careers for those with significant and catastrophic injuries.

PVA Member Sean Ferry recently found success returning to work through the PAVE program. In late 2018, Sean decided that he was ready to pursue employment opportunities again. He did not have a great deal of success working on his own and reached out to the PAVE program in spring of 2019. Sean worked one-on-one with PAVE Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Genia Hachenberg, M.S., CRC, to explore his areas of interest and review the necessary accommodations at work. In September, Sean returned to work for the first time since his injury and shared the following about his experience working with PAVE:

"After my injury in 2014, my life was turned upside down. It was not easy to transition from being a Mechanical Engineer, and a rather avid hunter and fisherman, into a wheelchair dependent individual. After five years of unemployment, I turned to the PAVE program and its employees for assistance in getting back into the workforce. They were a great asset to me and a resource that helped me get my job and gain back my independence and self-confidence. Thank you PAVE." If you, your spouse, or caregiver, are interested in more information about Paralyzed Veterans of America's PAVE program, please reach out to PAVE Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Joel Hoots at (210) 617-5300 x 10148 or JoelH@pva.org.

You may also visit our website: www.pva.org/PAVE.org.

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Retired Army Sergeant Terry Vereline crosses the finish line of the 2019 New York City Marathon after walking 26.2 miles in her ReWalk Exoskeleton. She received this device in 2014 and has used it to take nearly 1,000,000 steps in the past five years.

Did You Know That Paralyzed US Veterans May be Eligible For a ReWalk Exoskeleton?

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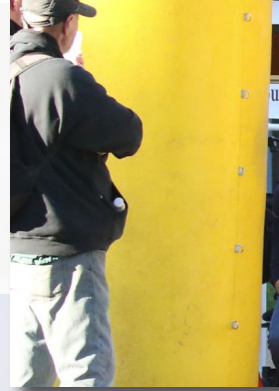
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General Information



JANUARY 2020

December 23 to January 1 -
OFFICE CLOSED

January 5-
Meat Shoot
1pm @ Legion Post 162
10 pts for members

January 14-
BOD Meeting
11:30am @ GPVA Office
15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

January 16 -
JB Luncheon/Chili Cook-off
12pm @ JB, Building 52
5 pts for members

January 16 -
Legal Clinic
10am to 1:30pm
@ JB, Building 52 South Dayroom

January 20-
OFFICE CLOSED

FEBRUARY 2020

February 2-
Meat Shoot
1pm @ Legion Post 162
10 pts for members

February 11-
BOD Meeting
4pm @ GPVA Office
15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

February 17 -
OFFICE CLOSED

February 20 -
JB Luncheon
12pm @ JB, Building 52
5 pts for members

February 29 -
Trivia Night
5pm @ Crestwood Elks
20 pts for members



Donated Google Pixel Phones

A company has generously donated Google Pixel 2 cell phones with accessories to the Gateway Chapter to give out to membership for free. These phones will work with any provider. If you are interested in receiving a phone and live within 50 miles of the Gateway office, we ask that you contact the office to schedule a time to pick it up. If you live further than 50 miles from the Gateway office, please verify your address with our office so that we can mail it to you.

Annual SCI Chili Cook-off

Come and join us for the greatest chili cook-off known to the VA. It's once again time to start getting your chili recipes perfected and then put it to the test on January 16th, 2020. All crock pots of chili must be in the SCI dining room by 11:30AM. There will be chili tastings and voting by all, followed by a luncheon provided by the Gateway PVA Chapter. Please inform Matt Luitjohan and Charley Wright if you plan to bring a pot of chili so that they can have adequate table space for all of the entries. To reserve your spot, for more information, or to have any questions addressed please contact Matt at 314-894-6602 or Charley at 314-652-4100 Ext 64590.

Free Legal Clinic

The Saint Francis Community Services Veterans Law Clinic and Armstrong Teasdale will be available for Gateway members for wills and trusts, powers of attorney, minor civil matters, and traffic cases on Thursday, January 16, 2020. Attorneys will be available at the Spinal Cord Building (Building 52) in the south dayroom from 10:00AM until 1:30PM. Please bring all your necessary documents. Old wills or trusts, full names of beneficiaries' contact information, bank and stock account numbers, CD numbers, owned property addresses, and anything else relevant to the work you want done need to be given to the clinic people on that Thursday. Please call our office to tell us you're attending on that Thursday for legal clinic assistance. Also, please contact President Brown if you have questions about what you will need or whether or not the legal clinic will work with your issue.

We proudly support Gateway PVA



If you have a **service-connected disability**, you may qualify for VA funding assistance for wheelchair accessible vehicles or driving modifications. If your current mobility is more than two years old, you may even qualify for a brand new conversion.

St. Louis North

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**



Kim's Korner

by Kim Vonder Haar, LCSW

Hope everyone's holiday was happy and full of family, friends and wonderful memories.

A few things:

- Bowel and Bladder program- late payments continue to be a problem for many of the caregivers. I have brought the attention to the SCI Chief and to National SCI office at the VA. I don't have a way to get information any better than you do. I was told that the best way to get your time sheets processed is to now mail them in to : 1 Jefferson Barracks Drive 04F-JB-OCC St. Louis, MO 63125 and to check on status call the customer support number at 314-845-6603. I realize this is difficult for all, but I have no access to where in the process financial payments are, if your paperwork was received, etc.

- Dr. Park's last day at Spinal Cord injury is January 3 and Debbie Gray, therapy supervisor will be retiring January 30th. Combined they have close to 80 years of experience at the St. Louis VA Spinal Cord Injury Unit. They will be missed for their knowledge, commitment, and service to our veterans.

- Jackie Black, PT has been chosen and accepted the role of therapy supervisor. She will be trying to learn as much as she can from Debbie before she retires, but I am sure it will be a smooth transition. Jackie is an amazing therapist and person, please stop and congratulate her on this new role

- The VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP) offers discounted private dental insurance for Veterans and family members who meet certain requirements. Find out if you're eligible, and how to enroll in a plan that meets your needs and budget. Google this for more information about premiums and eligibility

- Remember to get your parking permit for JB and JC next time you are at building 52, from Michelle in the clinic, or myself. Please bring your license plate number with you.

- Thanks for your service and please let me know of any topics you would like me to cover in this column.

Farewell

by Debbie Gray, Occupational Therapy

Well, the time has come. After 38 years, I will be retiring on Jan 31. My entire VA career has been spent working with veterans with SCI/D, and I must say it's been my ultimate pleasure to know so many of you, so very well, and for so very long. I've been able to share this news personally with many of you in the past months, but there are others of you out there who I think about often and regret not being able to give this news in person. I have completely enjoyed my career work of SCI; I feel quite proud to be able to serve Veterans; I will think often and fondly of the many,

many great times, hard times, emotional times, joyful times and fun times. The SCI therapists who remain are the best possible group of friendly, conscientious professionals, ready to meet your ongoing needs. Many have asked what I'll do in retirement: sleep late; spend even more time with the grandsons; read more; tackle a never-ending to-do list; and finally, continue to visit National Parks. I've been to 248, but that still leaves me 171 more to go! Thanks to each of you for what you've brought to my life. Stay well, do regular pressure reliefs, enjoy life, and stay the course. Peace.



Paralyzed Veterans of America

Gateway Chapter

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