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**Gateway
azette**

Vol.47 No. 1



PVA

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Gateway Chapter



Paralyzed Veterans of America

Gateway Chapter

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NEED TO UPDATE
YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION?

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DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE
YOUR NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?

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Contact us at one of the following:

Gateway Chapter PVA
1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center
St. Louis, MO 63132

314.427.0393 or 800.426.4058
Fax 314.427.4183

info@gatewaypva.org

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VETERANS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY OR DISEASE, LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

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Sports Director - Lou Monken
National Director - Don Feldott
Hospital Committee - Harry Brown

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Amber Lee, Executive Assistant
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Martha Rampani, Transportation

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Kansas City, MO 64128
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St. Louis Service Office

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Jefferson Barracks VA Medical Center

JB SCI, Room 2S25
#1 Jefferson Barracks Drive
St. Louis, MO 63125
Office: (314) 894-6467 or (866) 328-2670
Fax: (314) 894-6465

Rodney Harris, Senior Benefits Advocate

PVA National Liaison VP

Josue Cordova

by Rose Ganz

President's Report

GIVING BACK

This is the time of year when some reflect on giving, either time or money or goods to others in need, or just those we want show our love to this special time of year. I want to thank the members who were able to participate in the many activities and fund raisers we enjoyed this past year, I also want to encourage those who have not had the opportunity, we have several events coming up. We have Trivia Night on the 25th of February. On March 17 to 19 we have the National PVA Regional Boccia tournament and Meat Shoots the first Sunday of the month at the American Legion Post 162.



FROM THE DESK OF GATEWAY CHAPTER'S **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT**

Amber Lee

GATEWAY CHAPTER TRIVIA NIGHT - FEBRUARY 25

February 25 @ 5pm
GPVA TRIVIA NIGHT

LOCATION:
Crestwood Elks Lodge
10261 Bauer Rd
St. Louis, MO 63128

To help fund our Sports program, we will be hosting a trivia night full of games, contests and of course trivia! We are in need of confirmed volunteers to help the night run smoothly.

Additionally, we are asking members to reach out for silent auction items. Please let me know if you would like the letter and/or event flyer to hand out to places you frequent.

We are going with a Mardi Gras theme this year, and a costume contest to go with that theme (keep it family friendly please)!

NATIONAL PVA BOCCIA- MARCH 17-19

LOCATION:
The Pavilion at Lemay
305 Gregg Road
St. Louis, MO 63125

National PVA is running a small bocchia tournament and the Gateway Chapter is hosting the last tournament

of the circuit. Registration will open soon on National PVA's website. You can find the registration link at <https://pva.org/adaptive-sports/bocchia/>

Similar to the Italian game of Bocce, Bocchia is a Paralympic sport practiced in more than 50 countries, most frequently by individuals with spinal cord injuries or neurological disorders requiring a wheelchair.

For a long time, Bocchia was known as a leisure activity until it was introduced as a competitive sport in the 1984 Paralympic Games in New York. At the London 2012 Games, 104 athletes competed in seven medal events.

While Paralympic Bocchia competition is open only to quadriplegics, Paralyzed Veterans of America welcomes veterans with all types and levels of injuries to our Bocchia clinics. Able-bodied veterans can participate in the clinics by using a wheelchair to compete.





Washington Update

HOUSE TAKES ACTION ON CLOTHING ALLOWANCE LEGISLATION

The House is preparing to vote on H.R. 4772, the Mark O’Brien VA Clothing Allowance Improvement Act. This important legislation would make clothing allowance payments automatic until the VA determines the veteran is no longer eligible to receive the benefit. If the legislation passes the House, it will then go to the Senate for further consideration. The Senate companion bill to this legislation is S. 2513, the Brian Neuman VA Clothing Allowance Improvement Act. Please contact your senators about this legislation by visiting <https://www.voterveice.net/PVA/Campaigns/87463/Respond>

PVA TESTIFIES AT HOUSE HEARING ON IMPROVING ACCESS TO AIR TRAVEL

On November 17, the House Transportation and Infrastructure, Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing titled, “Accessible Air Travel: Addressing Challenges for Passengers with Disabilities.” The hearing featured testimony from Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI) who is retiring this year and is the sponsor for the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act (H.R. 1696). Rep.

Langevin spoke of the difficulties he has encountered as a wheelchair user in air travel and the need for reform.

Heather Ansley, Associate Executive Director of Government Relations, testified on behalf of PVA. Ms. Ansley noted that the major problem with commercial air travel is that aircraft are required to have very few accessible features. She urged Congress to make systemic improvements in air travel in the next FAA Reauthorization by including the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act. She also called on Congress to include language directing appropriate agencies and administrations to take the next steps as outlined in a September 2021 report on in cabin wheelchair restraint systems.

Other witnesses included Brian Ryks, Executive Director and CEO Metropolitan Airports Commission (Minneapolis/St. Paul) on behalf of Airports Council International—North America; Matt Scott, Paralympian, Team USA; Heather Krause, Director, Physical Infrastructure, Government Accountability Office; and Graham Keithley, Vice President

[continued on page 12](#)

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 vehicle is more than two years old, you may even qualify for a brand new conversion. Veterans discounts available. Check out our daily rental rates!

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Government Relations Report

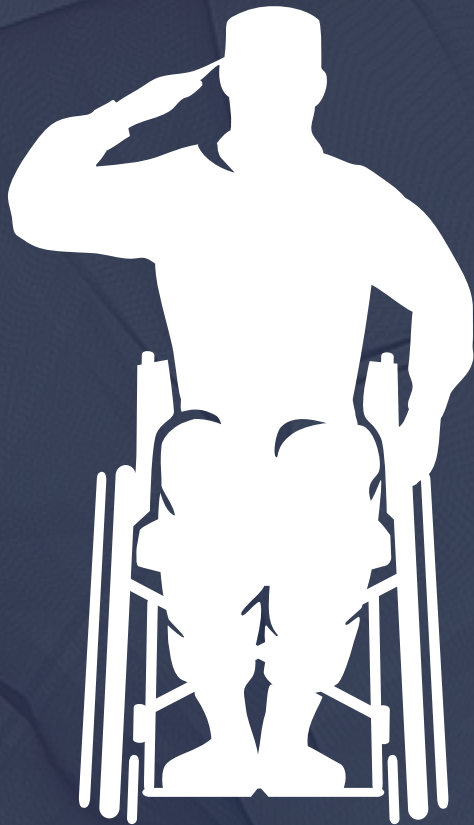
by Amber Lee, Acting Government Relations Director

I have been with the Gateway Chapter for a little over seven years. Of those years, I assisted Late President Stan Brown with various advocacy issues that he was addressing on behalf of Gateway members or on behalf of the disabled community in general - Stan served on six different committees during my time working with him. Additionally, I assisted him with PVA's Advocacy Week; this is when all PVA Chapters and National PVA visit with their State Congressperson and Senators on veteran issues and legislation. Due to COVID, in 2020 and 2021, Advocacy Week was all virtual, which I was able to join with Stan.

In 2022, Advocacy Week was still virtual, and was attended by President Rose Ganz, VP Steve McIntosh, Treasurer/ND Don Feldott, ED Chris Blanchard and myself. One of the legislations that we supported and brought the Representative's and their staff's attention to was the MAMMO for Veterans Act (Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans Act - HR4794/S2533). On June 7, 2022, three months later, it became law. Being a bigger part of Advocacy Week last year planted a seed in my mind.

My job at the Gateway Chapter is more than just a job to me, this is my career and what I love to do. While I definitely have a full plate with my duties as the Executive Assistant, I asked to be the Acting Government Relations Director (GRD), so that we have GRD representation for our Chapter. My duties as the Acting GRD involves monthly meetings with National PVA and attending Advocacy Week. This is a base level responsibility for a GRD, which I have gladly taken on.

For the first time, I will be attending Advocacy Week in person in Washington DC. Gateway member Larry Porter will be attending as well. Our visit with Congresspeople and Senators will be on March 1 and March 2. In conjunction with that visit, Larry and I will spend February 27 and February 28 with National PVA and other Chapter Government Relations Directors and Chapter members discussing veteran related issues and legislation that we will be presenting to Congresspeople and Senators. We look forward to advocating on behalf of the Gateway members, veterans, and the disabled community.



GATEWAY G.I.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Aimee Andrzyczak
Michael Bastunas
Rodney Blassingame
Brian Brooks
Christopher Brown
David Hull
Justin Merida

Edward Ratka
Donald Reeder
John Richardson
Bradley Schmidt
Genelle Starkey
Michael Stehwien

MISSING IN ACTION

Have you seen or know the whereabouts of these members? They are in danger of being dropped from the PVA roster. Please contact the Gateway office with current contact information for the following members:

Ronnie Anderson
Amos Brown
Curtis Herrington
Jarid Hill
Clyde Hixson
Kevin Jackson
Davett Jones
Robert Melchior
Charles Packard
Sylvester Roddy
Laurice Sappington
Curt Sidmore
Jeremy Talley
Donnell Thames

IN MEMORY OF

Thomas McIntosh of Sparta, IL	11/23/2021
Robert Schneider of Springfield, MO	08/14/2022
Gary Fears of St. Louis, MO	09/27/2022
Monty McLaughlin of Hillister, MO	10/06/2022
Rex Friend of La Cygne, KS	10/17/2022
David Collins of Lees Summit, MO	11/22/2022

GENERAL INFORMATION



JANUARY

JANUARY 2
OFFICE CLOSED

JANUARY 10 at 11:30am
Board of Directors meeting
Via Zoom (contact office for link) and
in person w/proof of COVID vaccination
and signed waiver
15 points for nonBOD members

JANUARY 16
OFFICE CLOSED



FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 14 at 11:30am
Board of Directors meeting
Via Zoom (contact office for link) and
in person w/proof of COVID vaccination
and signed waiver
15 points for nonBOD members

FEBRUARY 20
OFFICE CLOSED

FEBRUARY 25 at 11:30am
Trivia Night
Crestwood Elks Lodge
20 points

Happy New Year!

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Washington Update

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and Associate General Counsel, Airlines for America. To watch the hearing, please visit <https://youtu.be/QGELWXQ1mBw>. To read the testimony from all of the witnesses, please visit <https://transportation.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/accessible-air-travel-addressing-challenges-for-passengers-with-disabilities>

SENATE VETERANS' COMMITTEE EXAMINES PACT ACT IMPLEMENTATION

The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act (P.L. 117-168), which expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances, was signed into law in August. On November 16, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing to learn from top VA officials about the implementation of this important legislation. Dr. Shereef Elnahal, VA Under Secretary for Health, led the panel of VA witnesses who fielded a number of questions from Committee members about the law.

Dr. Elnahal told the Committee that VA is working quickly to implement many of the provisions of the PACT Act. He outlined three key priorities: reaching every veteran who may qualify for the new care and benefits; building capacity to meet the needs of every veteran seeking VA care; and initiating internal changes to help VA deal with these issues in the future. He said VA is putting out information about the bill through every means possible and that the Department is using all of the authorities granted by Congress to hire more people, and to bring them on board quickly.

He also discussed the new toxic exposure screening for veterans, which VA recently initiated.

Another witness, Mr. Joshua Jacobs, Senior Advisor for Policy Performing the Delegable Duties of the Under Secretary for Benefits, spoke of the Department's advanced preparation for the Act's passage and ongoing efforts to hire and train more claims processors. He also detailed additional steps that the VA will be using to process claims which are being filed in record numbers.

Many of the questions that followed centered on the Department's ability to provide care for increasing numbers of veterans seeking care for their toxic exposures. Dr. Elnahal and other VA witnesses stressed that VA has aggressively implemented and is using many of the new hiring authorities granted by Congress. For example, since the bill was passed, they have hired 700 more housekeeping aides.

Committee members were especially concerned with VA's efforts to get the word out about the law and veterans' potential eligibility for new benefits or services. Sen. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) asked about VA's efforts to inform younger women veterans of the necessity to be screened for breast cancer and Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) inquired how VA is coordinating with the Defense Department to ensure that service members are aware of the PACT Act as they leave the military. Dr. Elnahal noted breast cancer is a type of "reproductive cancer" potentially covered by the Act. Also, VA is using multiple media platforms to reach women veterans and active duty servicemembers alike in addition to the Transition Assistance Program for the latter group. Some lawmakers also expressed concern with various organizations taking advantage of the Camp Lejeune Act which was a provision of the larger PACT Act.

Jacqueline Black, PT, ATP

I hope you are all enjoying the holiday season and the close of another year. While I'm not great at New Year's resolutions, I do like the "fresh start" feeling of a new year.

2023. How can that be?

I want to share news that our SCI Admissions Coordinator, Kim VonderHaar, accepted another position with the VA. We will certainly miss Kim! We gave her our sincere thanks for her outstanding service to the St Louis SCI Center and well wishes in her new VA position. If you would like to send her well wishes, you can mail it to SCI or send to me, and I will make sure she receives your message.

In the interim, one of our other fabulous social workers, Rashonda Deshay, will be managing the SCI admissions coordination needs. We have an interdisciplinary admissions team that provides

support in this role, and Rashonda is our current team leader. As you are likely aware, we have referrals for SCI admissions for a variety of reasons, including new spinal cord injury, new medical issues for persons with SCI that result in need of inpatient medical/rehabilitation management, wounds that requires inpatient management, and SCI Annual Evaluations for veterans with complex needs or that live a long distance from the VA. The inpatient SCI Annual Evaluations were put on pause in the early phases of the pandemic, but we are now cleared for inpatient annual evaluations, when deemed medically appropriate and when our census allows room for a bed. If you typically had your SCI Annual Evaluation completed as an inpatient, and you have not resumed that since the pandemic, please reach out to me and I am glad to discuss this with you further.

On behalf of our entire St Louis SCI Service, I send you warm wishes for a great holiday and wonderful New Year. It is truly our honor to serve you for your SCI healthcare needs. We are here for you, and we look forward to seeing you next time you are in Building 52! If you have questions, concerns, or kudos about SCI Therapy- please contact me at Jacqueline.black@va.gov or 314-652-4100, ext 64691.

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
Gateway Chapter

TRIVIA NIGHT

February 25, 2023



GAMES



CASH BAR



AUCTION



FOOD



50/50



DRINKS



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(MARDIGRAS THEME)

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Bring your snacks and table decorations (personal alcohol beverages are not permitted)

If you are unable to attend but wish to make a monetary donation or wish to donate an item for auction - please make your check out to Gateway PVA and send your donation to Gateway Chapter PVA, 1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center, Saint Louis, Missouri 63132 or contact the office at 314.427.0393

AUTONOMIC DYSREFLEXIA IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY!

You need to recognize it and get the right care fast!

Autonomic Dysreflexia is a sudden increase in blood pressure, 20 mmHg systolic higher than usual, as a response to something unusual (pain, pressure, unpleasant or pleasant stimulation) happening below the level of injury in persons with a spinal cord injury T6 and above. ***If left untreated, this medical emergency can lead to stroke, seizures, or even death.***

Common Signs & Symptoms

- Sudden increase in systolic blood pressure (top number), more than 20 mmHg
- Pounding Headache
- Sweating
- Flushed or reddened skin
- Goosebumps or tingling sensation
- Blurry vision or seeing spots
- A stuffy nose
- Anxiety or jitters
- Tightness in your chest, flutters in your heart or chest, or trouble breathing

If any of these signs appear, follow the steps below:

1. Sit up or raise your head 90 degrees. **IMPORTANT:** You need to stay sitting or upright until your blood pressure is normal.
2. Loosen or take off anything tight (abdominal binders, support hose etc.)
3. Check your blood pressure about every 3 minutes.
4. Check for common causes of Autonomic Dysreflexia (bladder, bowel, or skin).
5. If warning signs continue or return, call your healthcare professional, and go to the emergency department.
6. At the emergency department tell the staff you need immediate care:
 - May have Autonomic Dysreflexia
 - Need blood pressure checked
 - Need to remain sitting up
 - Need causes of the problem identified
 - Scan QR code for Clinical Guideline

Note: If your health care professional has given you specific instructions or medications to take if you have Autonomic Dysreflexia and these are not working, immediately contact your health care professional or emergency department.

Scan QR code for Clinical Practice Guidelines:





Gateway Chapter
1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center
Saint Louis, MO 63132



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Paralyzed Veterans
of America

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