

GATEWAY GAZETTE

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

The Duke McDonald/PVA Local Wheelchair Games Considered A Huge Success!

By Amy Will

Over forty athletes joined together on May 15th, 2009 to attend a much bigger and better Local Wheelchair Games held at the Jefferson Barracks VA Medical Center. Opening up this event to both veterans and local athletes from the community heightened not only the competition, but also the camaraderie. The Field Clinic facilitated by Tom Brown, Director of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, provided valuable 1:1 training. Several local athletes learned techniques and adaptations that took their throwing to a whole new level. The competitive events included Table Tennis, 9 Ball, Slalom, Bowling, Weightlifting, and a Poker Run. Over fifteen organizations from the St. Louis community joined together to provide educational materials and resources during the Community Expo. A BBQ luncheon with entertainment, and an awards ceremony, also added to the festivities. Below are some photos from the event, and there are more on page 10.



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

Gateway Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America

<http://www.gatewaypva.org>

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PVA members should be aware of the availability of medical identification bracelets or pendants containing medical information (allergies, diagnoses, etc.) that would be valuable to emergency health care providers. If interested, tell your physician or nurse practitioner, who will then send a consult to the Prosthetics Service, which will issue them. If you are subject to autonomic dysreflexia or use baclofen for spasms, you might especially want to use this service.

Please contact me if you have any questions at 314-652-4100 x6-4819.

Bob Sontag, LCSW, Social Worker
Robert M. Woolsey Spinal Cord Injury Center
St. Louis, MO

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

There will be a membership meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, on Friday, August 14, 2009 at 12:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Kansas City VA Medical Center Recreation Hall on the 1st floor. Lunch will be provided by the Gateway Chapter PVA. All local members are encouraged to attend.

Membership participation points will be given for attendance at this meeting.

Has your address changed? Please inform us by email to: susanlyle@gatewaypva.org, or you may write or call us at the following:

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

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:

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

President's Report

By Stan Brown



Fiscal Year 2010 VA Budget Increase

The President's 2010 proposed VA budget is the first one in 23 years to exceed the comprehensive budget and policy document called the Independent Budget. The Independent Budget is a proposal submitted by the PVA, AMVETS, DAV, and VFW. The Obama administration proposed a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget of \$55.9 billion in discretionary funding, exceeding the service organizations' Independent Budget recommendation by \$1.3 billion. The administration's discretionary funding proposal for fiscal year 2010 is \$5.8 billion above 2009 appropriation amounts. The 2010 budget proposal also includes \$47.4 billion for medical care programs, an increase of \$4.4 billion over 2009, and \$580 million for Medical and Prosthetic Research, a \$70 million increase over the fiscal year 2009 level. Equally important is the fact that with the current Administration we have their support for "advance appropriations" of VA healthcare funding by committing to working with Congress and veterans service organizations on advance appropriations for fiscal year 2011. Advance appropriations provisions will ensure the VA provides long-term healthcare benefits by providing funding that is sufficient, timely, and predictable.

Kansas City Area Members Meeting—August 14, 2009

We will be holding our second Gateway PVA membership meeting for our Western Missouri members on Friday, August 14, 2009 at 12 PM noon. The meeting will be held at the Kansas City VA on the first floor, in the Recreation room. Gateway PVA will again provide lunch for everyone in attendance. Please come and offer your suggestions on how we can better serve our members in this part of the state. It will also provide up-to-date information on Gateway's business which, includes programs and finances. Meeting attendance is worth participation points, so please try to make the meeting.

The Best Story of the Local Wheelchair Games

My congratulations and thanks to VA staff, volunteers, and sponsors who made our May 15th, 2009 Wheelchair Games the best I have seen in my 10 years of participating. I also want to congratulate a fellow curmudgeon, Bob Kiger, for being selected as "Spirit of the Games" winner. Away from the fanfare, in my opinion the best testimony for the Games was occurring. Even a jaded curmudgeon like myself must acknowledge the inspirational moment I had watching PVA member Bill Skiles compete on the obstacle course. In the past as a C4-5 quad, I've been reluctant to do the obstacle course because of my limited deltoid and bicep strength. This year I waited cautiously and tentatively behind Bill Skiles in line to do the course. Bill is an Army veteran who has multiple sclerosis. As he started the course late in the day, there were few spectators. By necessity of time, the organizers were already announcing and handing out event medals. The best story, however, was happening on the obstacle course as this soft-spoken young man persevered through the course and his disease. I watched quietly as Bill stopped often with his muscles cramped or his strength expended. His spasms made his arm jerk off the joystick. It took Bill frequent stops to regather strength and control, but he finished with a smile and told me it was my turn.

Attaboy

By Ruth Kult



HELLO,

Sometimes I wonder why I even bother; not one person puts forth an effort to submit a request for an attaboy. But, then I think just because people decide not to write about anyone isn't a good enough reason why a little something shouldn't be shared. What other form of introduction and praise is this easy? Many people like to read about others or about themselves, so why can't a little time be spent saying a nice word or two. Spreading the joy isn't so hard. Just being nice is a good enough reason to say a few kind words.

Since I've been around the PVA, they've had their fair share of van drivers. The chapter had to let Chester Spangler go due to financial cutbacks. I thought we were doomed. I figured Chester was a big part of the PVA Transportation program; the Gateway PVA's only one of a kind, irreplaceable van driver. He was much more than a van driver to many of us. He was a good Navy guy that helped the outpatients, as well as the inpatients, and even helped Becky Ballard on numerous occasions. Chester was a talkative person and if you weren't happy and laughing when you arrived, after being around him for a few minutes, you'd be smiling. Chester's personality was contagious. After Chester, there were a few part-time drivers. There was Monica, D, and then Jim. All three of them are gone for various reasons.

After the last van driver, Jim, had decided to move on, we were without a permanent driver for a little while. Of course there was, and hopefully still will be, our Wednesday volunteer driver, Richard Bishop. Richard recently fractured his hand and has not been able to drive for us for a few weeks. We hope it heals and he can return to us; we miss him dearly. Richard has been our volunteer driver for 3 years! And, then, we were extremely blessed to get John.

John is much like Chester, a tad bit quieter, but equally as hardworking. I believe he was also a Navy man. The outpatients that he brings to the VA really seem to enjoy his company and it's good therapy for them to get out. They get to spend their afternoon in the crafts room creating beautiful objects and working on their socialization skills. They even get out of their ordinary lunch routine by eating at the VA. They get to pick out exactly what they want to eat. I know it's only the canteen, but it's also a little spot of freedom where they can make their own choice.

Having John as our van driver is very awesome. He is very helpful with many things, even carpentry. Becky needed a place to store things, so John put his knowledge of carpentry to work and provided her with the perfect shelf. He really compliments the PVA! He's not disabled with a spinal cord injury or disease, but he is a veteran helping other veterans and we appreciate his patience and kindness. Thanks John!

As always, thanks for reading.

As part of the Gateway Chapter PVA Transportation Program, our driver, John Vasel takes our members to therapy, shopping, annual holiday events, and chapter outings. To the right is a photo of our member, LaRoy Smith, rolling onto the lift of the chapter van after a day of fun at our April trap shoot.



SUMMER SPLASH – July 17-18, 2009

Learn to Water Ski Clinic for the Disabled at Creve Coeur Park

Water Skiers Needed:

Enjoy a Day at the Lake
Learn How to Water Ski
Take a Boat Ride or Jet Ski Ride
Mix with others in a Peer Support Environment
Skiers Do Not Need to be Able to Swim, but
Skiers Must Practice Water Safety
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Email: info@mdwsa.org

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Association & the Gateway Confluence
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Veterans Day 2009 Poster & Essay Contest

The Paralyzed Veterans of America's sixth annual National Veterans Day Poster and Essay Contest theme is: ***Veterans Day: Why I'm Grateful for Our Nation's Veterans.*** All entries must be received by October 02, 2009. The contest will consist of a poster contest for 1st – 4th graders and an essay contest for 5th – 8th graders. The final winner of the poster contest and the final winner of the essay contest will each receive an award plaque and an all-expense paid trip for him/her and one family member to Washington, DC, to participate in the Paralyzed Veterans of America's Veterans Day 2009 ceremonies. The winning results will also be featured in *PN Magazine*.

Please spread the word about the contest to your local schools, scouts, boys and girls clubs, church groups, families, friends and any others who may be interested. Visit www.thankyouveterans.org for contest rules and information. If you have any questions, send an e-mail to Evelyn at: evelynr@pva.org.

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 to us, or e-mail us if you know where any of these members are! Our contact info is on page 2. Thanks for your help!

Bazant, Dennis L.

Saighman, Donald

Snyder, Ron

Tallie, Jeramie

Williams, Kenneth E.

Your VOTE Makes a Difference!

It's time for our members to nominate their new Board of Directors for the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year. Inside this issue of the Gateway Gazette is an insert that we encourage you to complete and return to us. We have had wonderful membership representation in the past, and look forward to another stellar year. Feel free to nominate a past board member who you know has done a good job for your chapter. If you are interested in nominating someone else, or even nominating yourself, please do so! We welcome new faces and new ideas; nominate anyone who can contribute to our mission. However, first consider the sacrifice of time and effort that is required to be a good board member. You must be able to attend the monthly BOD meetings held in our chapter office, and also be able to attend frequent events to represent your membership. Talk it over with friends or family before making the decision to volunteer your time.

The insert is easy to fill out, and all positions, except for the President, are available. Pull out the insert, write in your choices, fold the form in thirds (our return address is pre-printed for you on the back), tape the edge, and don't forget to put a stamp on the outside before you place it in the mail. It's that simple!

Once the nominations have been received, we will contact each person to verify that they are able to run for the elected position. All our membership will receive the official ballots in the mail in August.

Gateway Chapter PVA Wishes to Welcome the Following New Members:

Leonard Amsler—St. Louis, MO

Joseph Boerio—Springfield, IL

Douglas Pence—Drury, MO

Jeramie Waters—Raytown, MO

Steven Birkemeier—Rolla, MO

James Jordan—Alton, IL

Glen Stearns—Pomona, IL

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



In memory of...

Guy Corbin
Gary Garland
Ronald Isrig
Fred Meyer
Mike Ready
Willie Saffold

Council Bluffs, IA	03/06/2009
Pryor, OK	01/24/2009
Desloge, MO	04/30/2009
Elkland, MO	01/19/2009
LeRoy, IL	01/17/2009
University City, MO	05/18/2009



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How Does Net Worth Affect Non-service Connected Pension

By Fred Bradley



A common question asked by potential recipients of non-service connected pension goes something like this: "How much can I have in the bank or in savings before I'm considered ineligible to receive non-service connected pension?" This is called net worth or corpus of estate. There are some general guidelines VA uses to determine if net worth is a bar. The definition of net worth as stated in 38 Code of Federal Regulations 3.275(b) is:

"The market value, less mortgages or other encumbrances, of all real & personal property owned by the claimant and/or spouse, except the claimant's single-family dwelling and reasonable personal effects." In simple terms, it means VA excludes the value of the home they live in as well as a reasonable lot size. This is somewhat a judgment call. A reasonable lot size would probably be 5 acres or less. Farm land, equipment, barns, machinery, livestock etc are considered net worth. Rental property is considered net worth & the money received is counted as income.

Also, net worth includes assets such as stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, mutual funds, savings accounts, IRA's 401K's etc. VA considers net worth of the spouse & dependent children as well. However, under the unusual circumstance that a child has excessive net worth, then VA will exclude that child as a dependent on the veteran's pension award and not count the child's net worth.

To determine if net worth is a bar, VA takes into consideration whether it is reasonable for the claimant to consume some of his/her estate for maintenance. Pension is based on need and that need does not exist if the claimant's estate is of such size that he or she could use it for living expenses. VA uses \$80,000 estate value as a base-line. However, VA still looks at net worth even if it below \$80,000.

Other factors VA considers is found in (38 Code of Federal Regulations 3.275(d): "Whether the property can readily be converted into cash at no substantial sacrifice; life expectancy; number of dependents the claimant has; potential rate of depletion, including unusual medical expenses." Unusual medical expenses can include nursing home or in-home attendant care expenses. These expenses must be paid out-of-pocket without reimbursement from any source.

A list of specific exclusions to net worth are: Agent Orange settlement payments, Restitution of individuals of Japanese ancestry who were interned, evacuated, or relocated during the period December 7, 1941 through June 30, 1946, Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, children of Viet Nam veterans who receive payments for spina bifida, Victims of Crime Act, Medicare Prescription Drug Discount and Transitional Assistance Program. And, just to clarify, payments from any of these sources does not count as income against their pension, either.

One last factor VA will consider: If the person increases their net worth while receiving pension, net worth will become a bar to receiving non-service connected pension. The payment of non-service connected pension is not intended to increase a person's net worth or to maintain it either.

If you have any questions about this topic or any other benefit, please contact your National Service Officer.

In St. Louis, call 314-552-9887 or Toll-free 1-800-795-3614

In Kansas City, call 816-861-4700 ext. 6032 / 6033 or Toll-free 1-800-795-3612



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MUDDY MAYHEM RETURNS TO COLORADO THIS SUMMER!

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FENONPHOTO.COM

If interested, please contact Geoff Hopkins, Associate Director of Sports and Recreation, at geoffh@pva.org or 202-416-7736.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

—Mark your calendars—

July 9th, 2009—THERE WILL BE A TEAM MEETING FOR ALL LOCAL ATHLETES ATTENDING THE NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES IN SPOKANE, WA

All Veterans attending this year's wheelchair games in Spokane, Washington, must attend the Team St. Louis meeting on July 9th at Noon at the Jefferson Barracks VA Medical Center in the Building 52 SCI Unit dining room. This is the SCI/ Gateway Team Meeting! All information, team shirts, and hopefully check disbursements, will take place on this day. If you need help preparing for the games, contact Matt Luitjohan or Amy Will at 314-652-4100 ext. 6-6602 to set up a practice time prior to the event!

The Experience is the Prize

By Terri Fuda

What makes a memorable experience is what you take away from it. The anticipation and preparation put into the local games here at Jefferson Barracks helps to set the atmosphere. As the day progresses the games and people are the footprints for the memories. The fun and friendship make the experience more wonderful than I can write on paper.


The individual field instruction from Tom Brown was priceless. As he spoke to everyone, it felt like it was directed to them only. It felt that it was so personalized because of the time and interest he took to give advice or correct our way of holding an object or the way of throwing it. How lucky we were to have had him help, even for one day.

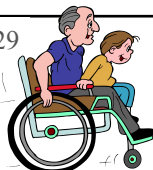
The poker run was something that I can only say you must experience at least once in your lifetime. It was so much fun!!! This was the first time I had participated and really didn't know what it was, no bluffing, but hands down it was a wonderful experience!

Experiencing for the first time this year, with a bit of encouragement from a couple of great people, I never imagined the difficulty and skill needed to do the slalom. Hats off to all of the athletes who participated in this event! My goal was to just finish, while others finished with ease. At the end of the day I thought to myself, if the local games are this much fun I can not wait for Nationals!

As I received my medal I was filled with pride not only for the hardware I received, but for how much I took away, for a memorable experience with people I can now call my fellow athletes and friends. And, most of all, for an outstanding staff that all threw in their hats to help make an ordinary Friday a **Great Friday!** Here are some photos of the event~



<i>July 2009</i>						
<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
	FN Magazine Office, PVA, Gateway Chapter PVA, & VBD Service Offices					CLOSED this Week
			1	2	3	4 Happy July 4th!
5	6	7	8	9 Patient Support Group @ JB 1:30 - 2:30 pm	10	11
12	13 29th Nat'l Vets Wheel- chair Games this wk in WA	14 BOD Meeting Overland 11:30 AM	15	16 Member & JB Patient Lunch—Bldg 52 @ Noon	17 TRAP SHOOT 10 AM @ Olin in East Alton	18 MO Dis- abled Water Ski event 17-18 "Summer Splash"
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

<i>August 2009</i>						
<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7 Newsletter Articles Due!	8
9	10	11 BOD Meeting - Overland 4:00 PM	12	13 Patient Support Group at JB 1:30 - 2:30 PM	14 K.C. Area Members Meet @ Noon—KC VAMC	15
16	17	18	19	20 Member & Patient Lunch @ JB - Noon Building 52	21 10 AM Trap Shoot @ Olin Trap & Skeet (East Alton)	22
23/ 30	24/ 31	25	26	27	28	29 

Address Service Requested

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



Here are some photos from Red Oak Resort in Camdenton, MO. The Star Touring & Riding Chapter 437 hosted the Show Me Rally that some of our members attended on May 30, 2009. The group collected over \$3,600 that was graciously donated to our paralyzed veterans at the Gateway Chapter. We thank everyone involved!



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