



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.



President's Message

by Stanley D. Brown

- Gateway Garners Three National Awards at the Annual PVA Convention
- The Gateway Chapter has an Accessible Home to Give Away

● **B**oth Chris Blanchard, our chapter Executive Director, and I attended the most recent PVA annual convention in Minneapolis the last week in May. Amber Lee, our chapter Administrative Assistant, came up for the closing awards brunch. I know I mentioned this in my last column, but I can't help boasting again, this is the most awards our chapter has ever received at one time. We were named the "Most Outstanding Chapter" for 2018 of all 33 PVA chapters. We have now won that award for three of the last four years. Amber on our behalf, although she is almost entirely responsible for our Gateway Gazette, accepted the "Bob Webb Excellence in a Newsletter" award for the best chapter newsletter in 2018. The pictures on the front cover and back page depict the award presentations. In addition, I was humbled to receive the PVA Speedy Award for contributions to our membership and mission. It is PVA's most prestigious award. Previous Gateway recipients of this award are both Dr. Park and Dr. Woolsey in the nonmember category, and St. Louis disability icon Max Starkloff (posthumously). Not to be outdone, the Gateway Board of Directors reminded me I was again going to be honored by

receiving the chapter Joey Award for brazen self-promotion. ●

■ **A** Missouri couple has donated an accessible, three bedroom, two bath, one story home to the chapter. We in turn will donate the home to one of our members by a lottery method (like we do for automobile grants). The couple had their mother living there until she passed away, and then they rented it for a while. Both Chris and I have visited the home twice to initially meet the donors and to check on the home which is vacant. I hopefully convinced both neighbors to look out for the place. The donors wanted to give the home to a disabled veteran and after searching the internet for "legitimate" veteran organizations, they chose us. Pictures of the home are on page 11 of this Gateway Gazette. The hallway and bedroom doors are wide enough for my power wheelchair and the kitchen is "open" and also has a refrigerator, oven, and dishwasher. The living room and dining room are also open and large. One of the bathrooms has a roll-in shower. There is a utility space for a washer and dryer to be hooked up. Other than a fresh coat of paint in some rooms, and replacing one bedroom door, this house is ready for

occupancy. The low pile carpet is in good shape. The address is 608 Cooper Drive, Cahokia, Illinois 62206, just off Interstate 64 and Route 3. Feel free to drive by and ask us questions. The house actually sits on two lots and has a backyard (unfenced) and a wraparound gravel driveway in front. You can enter the front door in your wheelchair but the back door sidewalk needs to be raised. You can download an application from our website (www.gatewaypva.org) by clicking the "Forms" tab, we can mail you an application, or send you one by email. The application must be completed and turned in to the office no later than **5 PM on August 10, 2018**. As the application states, you will need to show proof of monthly disposable income of at least \$500 which should cover utilities. Verify for yourself, but I believe if you are at least 70% disabled and service-connected, you will pay no real estate tax in Illinois. Additionally, you must not have any outstanding civil or criminal judgments against you that are unpaid, because a creditor would quickly attach and sell the home of our lottery winner. As we do with the automobile grants, we will not try to "grade" the entries, but rather determine eligibility and then draw names. Please call with any questions. ■



Government Relations

by Acting GR Director, Stanley D. Brown

The VA MISSION Act is Signed into Law

On June 6, 2018, the John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka and Samuel R. Johnson VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act was signed into law. PVA and the majority of veterans service organizations supported this law. The National PVA statement was: "This historic, bipartisan legislation will reform care in the community, assess VA's infrastructure, and finally allow pre-9-11 veterans access to the VA Caregiver Program." Highlights of the law are as follows:

Veterans Community Care Program-Supplementing, Not Supplanting VA

- Consolidates all seven VA community care programs into one VA Community Care Program.
- Removes arbitrary 30-day/40-mile rule to receive care in the community; but may consider time and distance as well if the community care is "in the best medical interest of the veteran."
- Funding for continuing the existing Choice Act, is estimated to be \$5.2 billion through May 2019. For the remainder of FY19 and the new expanded and consolidated care program, there is no congressional consensus on the funding source or where the appropriation should be placed.

Improved Recruitment and Retention of Healthcare Professionals

- Increases the amount of debt reduction VA can provide through the Education Debt Reduction Program from \$120,000 to \$200,000 over five years and \$24,000 to \$40,000 annually.

Establishment of a Commission to Review VA's Aging and Underutilized Infrastructure

- Between 2018 and 2026, VA will complete local capacity and commercial market assessment of VA infrastructure and eventually make recommendations through Congress to the President from a Commission for possible realignment.

Expansion of the VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance to Family Caregivers

- Included in the VA Mission Act is a provision to expand family caregiver funding to those veterans catastrophically injured in the line of duty prior to September 11, 2001.
- Because of the cost of this program, and part of the negotiations for passage of the bill, the expansion of coverage will occur in two phases: first for veterans catastrophically injured on or before May 7, 1975 and then two years later for those veterans after catastrophically injured in the line of duty after May 8, 1975. Eligibility for post-9/11 veterans remains the same throughout the expansion process.
- Before any pre-9/11 veterans can participate in the expanded program, the VA must submit to Congress a certification that the necessary IT system is in place. PVA estimates this will not occur until May 2019.



Sports Report

by Mike Norris, Sports Director

On the 29th of March I loaded into my van and began a journey. I was going to Aspen, Snowmass Colorado and the Disabled Veteran Winter Sports Clinic. I had been to the clinic a few times when I was younger and I remembered the rush of going downhill at a fast pace. I remembered the nightly parties and the list of activities that keep you busy all week. I also remembered the cold.



It is no secret that Quadriplegics are not fond of the cold and when you think of Colorado you have visions of snow covered mountains and frigid temperatures. I tried to prepare for the cold by bringing clothing designed for the cold wet conditions. I had waterproof snow pants, long underwear, multiple warm shirts and hoodies. I prepared for the worse. I was ready for the cold, however as I drove into Glenwood Springs, Colorado, the temperature was seventy degrees and the bright sunshine made it feel even warmer. The locals were dressed in shorts and t-shirts, enjoying the spring warmth and cloudless blue sky. The parks were full of children playing on the playground and adults eating lunch. I could have lingered there for hours basking in the sun but with fifty miles to go I loaded into my van and headed to Snowmass.

When I arrived at the Snowmass Westin motel/lodge I was greeted by our coach and recreation therapist Matt Luitjohan, and my Team St. Louis mates Rusty Ezzel and Rose Ganz. I got checked in and found my room. The staff at the Westin were amazing, they fixed any

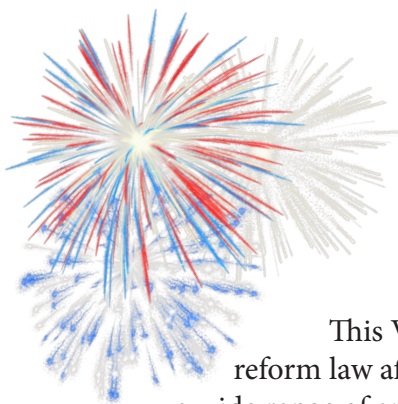
and all problems. If your bed was too high, they lowered it. If a door was in the way they removed it. On Monday morning I went to an ice rink in downtown Aspen to learn about Sled Hockey. The sport looked fun. The game is fast paced and rugged. The hits and checks are real. Sled Hockey though is more of a paraplegic sport. I have okay upper body strength for a C6-7 but I don't have balance so I would spend most of my time laying on the ice waiting for some one to lift me up. So hockey is not for me but I am glad I got to try.

Tuesday was our first downhill ski day. I was bundled head to toe in warm clothes but once again the weather was warm and sunny. We boarded the ski lift to go up the mountain and for me this is a favorite thing to do. On the lift you are above the ski runs and trees. You can see the snowboarders in the half pipe doing tricks or you can look at the scenery. For me those few minutes are special.

The rest of my week went by too fast. I spent time with friends comparing notes and sharing our experiences. The clinic offers so many things to keep you busy and things that inspire confidence. Scuba in a heated pool, cross country skiing, driving a snow machine, rock climbing, even Bowling and Yoga. I met veterans that are dealing with life the same way I am. I also renewed old friendships with people I hadn't seen in years.

Next year I hope that even more of our St. Louis Gateway PVA team will come out to the mountains with us. Don't think about the weather or cold or snow. Come out and try something new. Find out why every one who goes talks about Miracles on the Mountain.





VA MISSION Act Signed into Law

by Brent Follas, National Service Officer II

This VA reform law affects a wide range of areas and the “official” name of this law says a lot of about its’ focus; informally known as the VA Mission Act, this legislation’s formal name is the VA Maintaining Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act. President Trump signed the Mission Act into law on June 6, 2018. The VA now must work on the criteria to be considered including wait times for VA appointments, quality of VA care and distance from a VA facility. Over 30 veteran service organizations (VSOs) have endorsed this reform effort as it worked its’ way through legislative channels.

Eliminating Funding Gaps, Consolidating Programs, And Modernization

The VA Mission Act does some important things in the short term as well as introducing long-care fixes. The short-term improvements are crucial for some veterans; the Act eliminates a gap in care due to funding issues associated with the VA Choice program. VA Choice funding ended on May 31, 2018. VA Choice was designed to help veterans get non-VA healthcare if distance or wait list issues are a problem. VA Choice continues to be funded in the short-term until replaced. The long-term fixes are associated

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with the replacement of VA Choice; the VA Mission Act consolidates seven different programs offering community care including VA Choice into a single entity. Funding is also provided for education and training, VA medical staff recruitment, and a review of VA medical facilities. This review process is intended as the first step in a modernization program for VA locations that need upgrades.

Veteran Care Program

In the past, among of the chief complaints about VA healthcare involved timely scheduling of appointments, care and services. Under the VA Mission Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs is required to coordinate timely care including help for those who need VA medical services outside their region of residence. The VA is also tasked with making sure veterans “do not experience a lapse in health care services.”

A significant improvement under the VA Mission Act is that the Department of Veterans Affairs is now required to provide, “access to community care if VA does not offer the care or services the veteran requires, VA does not operate a full-service medical facility in the state a veteran resides, the veteran was eligible for care in the community under the 40-mile rule in the Veterans Choice Program” and when the veteran meets certain requirements. The VA is required to enter into contracts with private

networks to insure veterans get this care when warranted.

Authorization For Veteran Care Contracts

To implement the Veteran Care Program, the VA is authorized to enter into contracts-Veterans Care Agreements-with community healthcare providers with rates comparable to the VA Veterans Community Care Program. In addition to this authorization, certain procedures are also included in the act to guide this process in terms of making the agreements, how they are paid, and how they are enforced.

Veteran Care Homes

The VA is now authorized to enter Veteran Care Agreements with State Veterans Homes with the purpose of eliminating competitive contracting; State Veterans Homes are not technically considered to be federal contractors, but under the VA Mission Act these homes are required to follow federal Fraud, Waste, And Abuse requirements.

Veteran Access To Walk-In Services

Veterans have walk-in care access under the VA Mission Act, but this portion of the law includes certain conditions including a requirement that vets must have used VA healthcare services within a 24-month period prior to

Continued on Page 11



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GATEWAY GI

General Information



July 2018

July 3 -
OFFICE CLOSED

July 4 -
OFFICE CLOSED

July 10 -
BOD Meeting
11:30am @ GPVA Office
15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

July 19 -
JB Luncheon
12pm @ JB, Building 52
5 pts for members

July 29 to August 5
NVWG @ Orlando, FL

Redeeming Sports Points

by Chris Blanchard, Executive Director

For those members who have not participated in sports/athletic events this fiscal year, (July 2017—June 2018) your earned points can be used for other forms of entertainment (such as movies, gift cards, concert tickets, etc.; not available to Associate members). This usage will be awarded at \$1 per point earned, up to \$150 annually and only awarded in a non-cash distribution such as gift cards or event tickets (minimum of 25 points). Participation points, if not used on sports or recreation may be redeemed for gift cards. A Sports Year begins the day after the BODs (Board of Directors) meeting that occurs at least 30 days prior to the start of the NVWG and ends the day of that BOD meeting. June 12, 2018 is the end of the fiscal year for sports points. You have until August 31, 2018 to redeem your points for entertainment cards. You must contact the office and let us know what type of card you would like (i.e., Subway, AMC, etc.). Points will not be redeemed by Visa Gift Cards. Any unused points for FY18 do not carry over to points for FY19. If you have any questions concerning your sports points total, or any other questions, please contact the GPVA office. Sports points accumulation for FY19 begins June 13, 2018.



Aug 2018

August 14 -
BOD Meeting
4pm @ GPVA Office
15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

August 16 -
JB Luncheon
12pm @ JB, Building 52
5 pts for members

August 17 -
Boccia A. Legion 162



Welcome to Our New Members

Thomas Anderson • Lewis Bertoncino, Jr. • Andrew Booth • Michael Brooks
George Cowan • Jeffrey Koa • George Kudlinski • Barry Langford • Glenn Mobley
Dewayne O'Neal • Thomas Reger • William Shields, II • Brian Thomas • David Waller

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

Thomas Dooley • Nicholas Hendrickson • Edward Williams

In Memory Of

William Nesheim of Saint Louis, Missouri	2011
Thomas Krafft of Saint Charles, Missouri	08/02/16
Darrell McPherson of Tenton, Missouri	09/26/17
Kent Gebke of Long Beach, California	01/04/18
Gunther Kaletka of Saint Louis, Missouri	05/02/18
Eldon Young of Troy, Illinois	05/09/18

23rd Annual Jack Buck/GPVA Golf Tournament

Our Annual Jack Buck/Gateway PVA Golf Tournament is our biggest fundraising event each year. The tournament is put on entirely by volunteers, who also secure most of the live and silent auction items sold at the tournament. We still need gift certificates from places (restaurants especially) that our members frequent. It is absolutely imperative that members show up in numbers between 10am and 1pm at the golf course to show presence and support on Tuesday, September 18. You're not asked to do much other than roll around and be visible and be in the lineup for the shotgun start at noon. The tournament will be at the same course as always, the Landings at Spirit golf course in Chesterfield, Missouri. Call the office if you need directions. Attendance will be worth 20 participation points.

2nd Annual PVA Boccia Nationals

The PVA Boccia Nationals will be on October 18, 2018 to October 20, 2018, and is open to veterans and civilians with spinal cord injuries, amputations, poly-trauma, multiple sclerosis, or other neurological conditions. Veterans must also be eligible to receive care at a VA medical facility. No previous victories or tournament championships are required. Play is required in a wheelchair. Registration is limited to 50 athletes, and registration forms are due by September 28, 2018 with a \$50 registration fee. Please contact the Gateway office for further information and/or to obtain a registration form.



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requesting walk-in services. Walk-in care is available from community healthcare providers who have a contract or other agreement with the VA to provide the services. According to the text of the law, “Veterans who are not required to make a co-payment at VA would be entitled to two visits without a co-payment and then VA would be authorized to charge an adjustable co-payment”.

Those who are required to co-pay may pay for the first two walk-in visits, with a VA-authorized co-payment adjustment for successive walk-in care. The Department of Veterans Affairs is required to “ensure continuity of care” including accessibility to medical records from walk-in care providers and medical record sharing between VA and these agencies.

Expanding the VA Veteran Caregiver Program

Important changes to the VA Comprehensive Assistance For Family Caregivers includes expanded eligibility for veterans with service-connected medical issues. In the past access to this program was more limited and emphasized post-9/11 military service.

Accessible Home Giveaway

608 Cooper Drive, Cahokia, Illinois 62206

See President's Message on page 3 for more details





**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

Gateway Chapter

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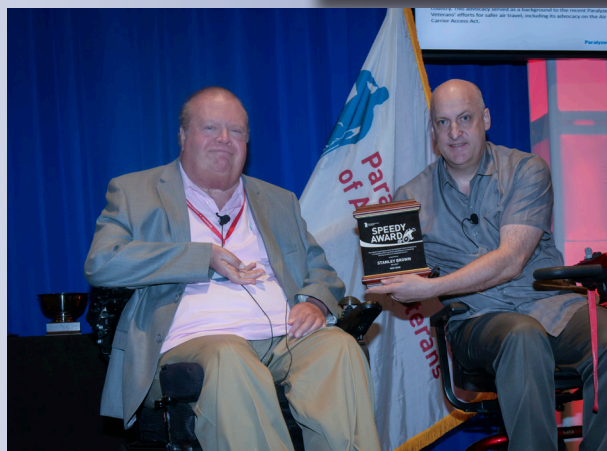
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