

Gateway Gazette

July/August 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

COVID-19 Gift Cards

COVID-19 VA Testing

Vehicle Grants Now Open

VA Gradual Opening?

Miscellaneous

COVID-19 Gift Card Response

All members should have received my letter with a gift card application for the Gateway program to assist in these difficult times. We offered members a \$75 Walmart or Amazon gift card to help with groceries if needed. If you didn't receive that letter or see my email, please contact the office. The PVA Disaster Relief Fund (\$1500) is separate and administered and funded by our National Organization. It is, as the name implies, to help pay for expenses (house or property) caused from a natural disaster as opposed to normal maintenance (i.e., time to replace an old roof). That program is explained on the National PVA website <https://pva.org/covid-19/>.

We sent out 620 letters about the gift cards and received back 90 applications/requests so far. We are mailing \$6750 worth of cards. But the BEST news is, and it surprised my old curmudgeon self, that along with requests for gift cards, we received several responses from members saying they did not need the gift cards but appreciated the offer. And the VERY BEST news is, and it flabbergasted me, that eight members declined the gift card and instead sent in donations to help fund our efforts.

COVID-19 VA Testing

Several weeks ago I started to notice signs for both antibody and COVID-19 testing at urgent care centers in strip malls. I pressed our local VA and also the Kansas City VA Rehab/SCI, and now am glad to tell you that if you are either symptomatic or have been exposed to someone who tested positive, you should be able to get tested for the virus at either the Kansas City VA (816-922-4700 ext 57575) or St. Louis/Jefferson Barracks SCI (894-6677 ext 3). Contact the SCI clinics at both

VAs to set up the appointment. For all members closer to the spokes, I don't have an answer yet but suggest you contact your spoke clinic. For more information on antibody testing and Covid-19 testing, go to pva.org/covid-19/.

Vehicle Grants Now Open

Gateway will now open its vehicle accessibility grants for members. Like in the past, we will give one or two \$35,000 grants for members with no accessible vehicle or any low value vehicle that can be traded in for an accessible vehicle. The \$10,000 grants (number to be determined based upon our finances) are for members who currently have an accessible vehicle that is about ready for the junkyard or a regular vehicle that they can trade in for something accessible with the assistance of a \$10,000 grant. Preference will be given to members who have not received any vehicle grants in the past. Please email or send a completed application, explaining why you need the grant, which grant you think is appropriate, and how the grant and the accessible vehicle you are able to purchase would change your life. Applications can be found on our website www.gatewaypva.org on the "Forms" page. Submissions must be received no later than 5 PM, Friday, August 7, 2020. You may call the office to see if we are in receipt of your submission. Also as in the past, the Gateway Board of Directors will review each submission to determine eligibility but not try to rank eligible submissions, but rather randomly draw the winners.

VA Gradual Opening?

After numerous requests, all we really know is that our VA buildings will be opening for "normal" business in phases or tiers. Beginning in July, the SCI clinic will give 8 in person annual evaluations

per month. As I write this article, the Jefferson Barracks SCI unit is accepting new injury patients and those patients that would normally be on 7B at John Cochran. That unit has been converted for the positive COVID-19 patients. The best advice is to call your clinic to see if you can be seen in person or need to get lab work done. If you do have a VA appointment, remember to bring a mask. If you need your caregiver/attendant for your visit, inform the receptionist/clerk upon entering the building. Let me know if you have problems, I think that issue has been fixed.

Miscellaneous

We have canceled our biggest fundraiser, the Gateway/Jack Buck Annual Golf Tournament. We typically receive net revenue of \$80,000-\$100,000. I am now writing letters to previous sponsors and participants asking for donations anyway because we are continuing with our programs for members to include grants for home accessibility renovations, vehicle hand controls, and as announced in this newsletter-accessible vehicle grants. The next newsletter I will report on the success of our appeal in lieu of the golf tournament.

We are now conducting our Board meetings by Zoom videoconferencing. If you are interested, please contact the office. We had our quarterly membership meeting by videoconference with sparse attendance from members. I asked at that meeting and will repeat now for you as members, to let us know if there's anything the Chapter might do for you during these unprecedented times. Our office remains officially closed but we are staffed every day and I am in several times during the week.

VA Letters and Downloads

by Rodney Harris, Senior Benefits Advocate

I get calls all the time for a needed letter or income verification from VA for tax purposes or personal use. You can also request medical records and needed records from your service in the US military. You can easily download these needed documents at this VA website <https://www.va.gov/records/download-va-letters/>.

The following is important information from the VA website:

Download VA benefit letters - To receive some benefits, Veterans need a letter proving their status. Access and download your VA Benefit Summary Letter (sometimes called a VA award letter) and other benefit letters and documents online. Please sign in to get your VA benefit letters. Try signing in with your DS Logon, My HealtheVet, or ID.me account. If you don't have any of those accounts, you can create one.

What types of VA letters can I download using this tool? You can download a variety of VA letters that include information about your benefits and service history.

How do I download a VA letter?

Before you download your VA letter, we'll ask you to review the address we have on file for you. This address will be listed on your letter. If this address isn't correct, you can update it. But your letter will still be valid even with the incorrect

address. Please note to download a letter, you'll need the latest version of Adobe Reader. It's free to download.

What if I want to download a letter or document that isn't available from this tool?

Right now, you can only download the VA letters you see listed when you sign in.

Use these links on the website to get access to other common VA letters and documents you may be eligible for:

View and print your Post-9/11 GI Bill statement of benefits

Sign in to eBenefits to request a Certificate of Eligibility for home loan benefits

Sign in to eBenefits to request a copy of your discharge or separation papers (DD214)

What if I have trouble downloading a VA letter?

Call MyVA311 for help: 844-698-2311. If you have hearing loss, call TTY: 711. If you have any issues or concerns please contact your local PVA National Service Office. Some VA regional offices will not print these letters for you so this link will be helpful the next time you need documentation from VA.

Kim's Korner

by Kim Vonder Haar, LCSW

I hope with the COVID19 restrictions being lifted across the states, you are remaining healthy and cautious.

In St. Louis we are opening up services very slowly. Currently we are not using 7B for spinal cord injury, due to the need for covid specific units, administration needed the bed capacity of 7B for the unforeseeable future. If one of our veterans needs to be hospitalized at John Cochran our physicians are seeing veterans remotely, and nurse management is checking to make sure staff on any particular floor is educated on the needs of veterans with spinal cord injuries. At Jefferson Barracks, we have begun to take a few carefully screened new injury admissions. There is no timeline for inpatient or outpatient annual evaluations, although we have been doing a high number of video annual evaluations. We are not allowing any visitors, no recreational therapy activities, and many staff members are still working from home.

Please be checking on your fellow veterans. Isolation is becoming a very difficult thing to cope with, and reaching out with a phone call, letter, etc. can mean more than you think. I encourage anyone that can, to contact recreational

therapy and join in on one of their video events. They are educational, fun, and a way to connect to others. You need a new connection link every day, and Matt and Charlie are glad to add you on to the email group. Attend once, once a week, or every day, no restrictions!!!

Bowel and bladder program seems to be running a little smoother, as far as payments. I am judging that by the decreased number of calls I am receiving. Remember, mail your time sheets in. That is the only way they are being accepted at this time.

I will be out for several weeks beginning July 7th, nursing my husband to health after a hip replacement. Please contact Rashonda DeShay or Stacy Duncan, my fellow social workers, if you need assistance.

Take care! We miss seeing you all! Remember: socially distance, wash your hands, and wear a mask. If we all do these simple things, we will be able to see each other in person sooner than later.

ADA30



Americans with Disabilities Act

Celebrate the ADA! July 26, 2020

On July 26, we will mark the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This landmark disability rights law provided protections for people with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, and public accommodations. PVA was a key part of the coalition that pressed for its passage and has created a dedicated web page - www.pva.org/ADA - containing fact sheets about various aspects of the law and links to resources that can help advocates and supporters draw attention to the law's achievements as well as the need for continued enforcement vigilance.

While PVA and many other organizations had planned numerous public events to celebrate the ADA, the current public health environment means that those events will be mainly virtual. However, there is an array of material for online ADA anniversary events and local activities that have been collected by the national network of ADA Centers to ensure that supporters of the ADA can mark this occasion in appropriate style.

One very basic way advocates can ensure attention to the ADA in their community is to ask their local government

officials who is the ADA Coordinator. Communities with 50 or more employees are required by the ADA to designate such a position and were supposed to create a transition plan for compliance with the ADA. To observe ADA 30, advocates can ask the ADA Coordinator to engage with the disability community to re-evaluate and update existing transition plans, assess pedestrian access and identify areas in need of improvement or survey websites for accessibility and prioritize web pages to be updated based on use and content.

Efforts are underway to highlight the ADA on social media through posts on Twitter and Facebook and through the use of hashtags such as #ThanksToTheADA. Through these platforms supporters are invited to share a moment in their lives when they were thankful for the ADA. Ways to participate through videos, pictures, written words, or other means can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GURly4765lk&feature=youtu.be>. More information can also be found <https://www.adaanniversary.org/ideas-celebrate-ada>.

As noted, PVA has been highlighting aspects of the ADA throughout 2020 - in issue briefs, PN articles, and our own social media. Recent articles have focused on the history of the ADA and PVA's role in its passage, challenges in the hotel and parking access, and housing that is and is not covered by the ADA. Forthcoming articles will focus on the ADA's coverage of service animals, employment protections, voting access, and existing tax credits and deductions that promote compliance with the law. PVA is also planning an ADA 30 webinar on July 23 from 1:00 to 2:00 pm CST. Details about that event will be made available in the coming weeks. Check www.pva.org/ADA for updates.

Veterans Legacy Memorial Website Updates

Just prior to Memorial Day, VA updated their Veterans Legacy Memorial website so that friends, families, and visitors can leave tributes and/or comments on a veteran's memorial page. This applies to any veteran interred in any of VA's 140 national cemeteries. To find a veteran, enter the name in the database search tool. You can modify your search by branch, war era, and location. After creating an account on the website, you can leave a direct entry, reply to someone else's tribute, or leave a

memento or photos. You can then share that tribute on social media. You can also like someone else's tribute. There are plans to expand this service for veterans interred at Army cemeteries (including Arlington National Cemetery), cemeteries managed by other military departments, the National Park Service, the American Battle Monuments Commission, tribal cemeteries, state/territory cemeteries, or private cemeteries.

VA to Resume In-Person Disability Exams

Over 230,000 compensation and pension (C&P) exams were placed on hold during the pandemic. Some veterans who cancelled their appointments or whose appointments were cancelled due to COVID-19 are being reported as no shows. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) increased the number of appointments that could be conducted through telehealth or through ACE exams so veterans' claims could proceed. VA facilities have begun phasing back in services at 20 facilities. VBA's contract medical disability examination

vendors are gradually resuming in-person exams in those locations as well. This week, in Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, Utah, and Wyoming vendors will begin scheduling and completing pending in-person exams as soon as possible. These exams will be held according to the personal protective equipment, sanitation, and distancing requirements prescribed by VBA. Also, there will be no decision on a claim if a claimant fails to appear for an exam due to continuing concerns about exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

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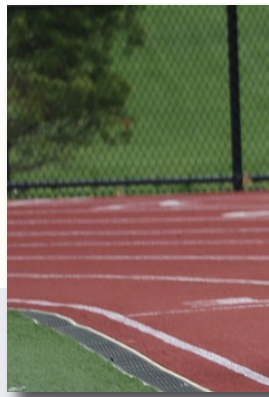
www.southernbusandmobility.com





GATEWAY GI

General Information



JULY 2020

July 2 and July 3 -
OFFICE CLOSED

July 14 -
BOD Meeting
11:30am via Zoom
15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

AUGUST 2020

August 11-
BOD Meeting
11:30am via Zoom
15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

Redeeming Sports Points

For those members who have not participated in sports/athletic events this fiscal year, (July 2019—June 2020) 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 \$300 annually and only awarded in a non-cash distribution such as gift cards or event tickets (minimum of 25 points). A Sports Year begins the day after the BOD's (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 9, 2020 is the end of the fiscal year for sports points. You have until August 31, 2020 to redeem your points for entertainment cards. You must contact the office to find out how many points you have and let us know what type of card you would like (i.e., Subway, AMC, etc.). Points will be reduced in the amount of the activation fee if you want a Visa Gift Card. Any unused points for FY20 do not carry over to points for FY21. If you have any questions concerning your sports points total, or any other questions, please contact the GPVA office. Sports points accumulation for FY20 begins June 10, 2020. For more information concerning the Sports points program please visit our website at www.gatewaypva.org, go to the "programs" tab and scroll down to the "sports" page.



Welcome to New Members

Christopher Anderson

Russell Blase

Joseph Caldwell

William Chase

Paul Dysart

Scott Hensley

Shawn Herrin

David Hyche

Carl Keith

Emmett Klump, Jr.

Zachary Kral

Glen Laramore

Daniel Laris

William McGahan

Philip Mette

Bradley Morrison

Bruce Norman

James Palmer

Robert Robertson

Charles Smith

Cassandra Troup

Joseph Velasco

Silas White, Jr.

James R. Williams

Philip Witte

Kenneth Yancheck

In Memory of

Terry Nelson of Marianna, AR

05/15/18

Steven Spriggs of Overbrook, KS

05/02/19

John Wood of Shelbina, MO

12/29/19

Steve Beakley of St. James, MO

01/04/20

Kevin May of Kansas City, MO

01/23/20

Larry Moss of Excelsior Springs, MO

02/03/20

Norman Keller of O'Fallon, IL

02/04/20

Kevin Lipscomb of Mexico, MO

02/24/20

David Monroe of Sikeston, MO

03/15/20

Kenneth Fletcher of Mound City, IL

04/18/20

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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.

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Watch Marine Veteran Steve Holbert's story at www.indego.com/veterans





**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

Gateway Chapter

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St. Louis, MO 63132

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If you have received this publication in error,
please call the office and let us know.

PVA is an organization founded on the brother and sisterhood of service, with a single-minded mission — to empower our brave men and women to regain what they fought for: their freedom and independence. We continue this mission today and fight for the civil rights of paralyzed veterans and all people with disabilities.

Racism, exclusion, and marginalization in any form have no place in our society. For this reason, we stand with our black members, colleagues and supporters — and all affected by senseless violence, oppression and injustice. We are an organization of catastrophically disabled veterans, founded after WWII, who have fought and continue to fight for the founding promises of our country. The broader societal changes that are needed begin with each and every one of us – and they begin by breaking the silence and speaking out. This fight is a duty that belongs to all of us. We owe it to our country.