

# GATEWAY GAZETTE

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

## The Chili Cook-off

By Matt Luitjohan

We had our Annual Chili Cook-off and GPVA Luncheon delayed by a week due to the weather, but we still had a fantastic showing and twelve different pots of chili to try. Our winners this year are: Cindy Lechner in third place, Rose Ganz in second place, and Joe Avellone in first. We appreciate everyone for coming in to participate and we look forward to some new entries next year, so start perfecting your recipes now.

We also had Ken DeClue come in to present a check for \$4,770.55 to Dr. Pereira for the Veterans Sports Team's General Post Fund 8179. The money was raised at their Veterans Appreciation Day on August 28<sup>th</sup> and the Meat Shoot they hosted on December 12<sup>th</sup> this past year. The Oakville Elks also hosted a meat shoot on December 12<sup>th</sup> and raised \$1,000 dollars for the sports team. The weather was bad but a few vets were able to make it to the meat shoots to show support and have a good time. Unfortunately, representatives from the Oakville Elks were unable to attend the chili cook-off, but Ted Giles made arrangements for me to pick up the check. Both organizations are planning on doing two meat shoots for our benefit next year. Once the dates are set I will post them in the Gazette so that we can have a great turnout to show our support and gratitude. Both organizations do other meat shoots throughout the year to raise money for their posts. If you enjoy going to meat shoots and would like to know the dates and times for other opportunities to support the Elks, please contact Charley at 314-652-4100 Ext. 64590 or Matt at 314-894-6602.

**Ken & Jan DeClue  
sampling the chili entries.**



**1st Place Winner Joey Avellone**

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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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**1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center Drive**  
**St. Louis, MO 63132**  
**Office (314) 427-0393 or (800) 426-4058**  
**Fax (314) 427-4183**



### Wheelchair Veterans Meat Shoot

The High Ridge Elks Lodge 2455 will be hosting an “Old Fashioned Country Meat Shoot” for the Wheelchair Veterans Sports Team from the Spinal Cord Injury Unit in Building 52 at Jefferson Barracks VA Medical Center. The fun will begin at Noon on March 6, 2011.

Ladies and Gentlemen, get out your rabbit and squirrel guns and come have some fun with your old and new friends. We will have meat and money rounds, as well as a big money round at the end.

Please note: We will **not allow** pulldowns (.678 chokes), long barrels (32” or shorter), or scopes (open sites only). We will be shooting from 62 feet. But, if you would like to sit down to shoot and stop that barrel from waving all over the place like me, well that’s ok too!

There will be plenty of food and refreshments available, including \$1.00 draft beer.

The Elks Lodge is located at 2808 Old Hunning Rd. in High Ridge, MO.

For further details, please contact Chairman Ken DeClue at (636) 671-0398 or (314) 723-0117.

Proceeds will benefit the Jefferson Barracks Wheelchair Veterans Sports Team.

### Mark Your Calendars for the Show-Me Rally!

**June 3-4, 2011**

**At the Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center**  
**16625 Swingley Ridge Rd.**  
**Chesterfield, Missouri**

**This year’s theme is “Beach Party.”**



Presented by the Missouri Chapters of the  
Star Touring & Riding Association

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](mailto: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 Stanley Brown

### Winter Blues

Most of our membership has just suffered through what is hopefully the end of a dreadful winter. In St. Louis we had a tornado on New Year's Eve day. It touched down about 5 miles from my house. At that time I was in Sam's buying supplies for inpatients at the spinal cord unit at Jefferson Barracks and only heard the torrents of rain. If I had left the store 30 minutes earlier, I probably would have driven right into the tornado. On Tuesday, February 1, the St. Louis area and most of the Midwest began to receive either a heavy ice storm or considerable snow. That Tuesday morning my caregivers started calling me saying they would not make it to work. "NUTS," is all I thought, facing days in bed. I called the spinal cord unit and talked to long experienced, but forever young, Mary Ann Jacobs, one of the SCI Nurse Practitioners. Her response was simple and typical of her: "We don't want any of our veterans staying at home when it's unsafe, we will find room for you as an inpatient." And so they did. I don't know what I would have done without that care for those days of terrible weather. It seems, and I did not know, most of us living at home actually periodically qualify for "respite care" as an inpatient. One of our board members told me he spent three days in bed during the bad weather, relying solely on his elderly mother for care. I would encourage all members living at home to contact their assigned social worker to find out about the "respite care" program. My sincerest thanks and gratitude to the always great NP Mary Ann Jacobs and all the Jefferson Barracks nurses and aides who had to put up with me for my three-day stay at the SCI unit.



### John Cochran in the News

There recently has been considerable news coverage concerning the care given veterans at the John Cochran VA Medical Center. Two important VA surveys have surfaced since our last newsletter. The VA's 2010 patient satisfaction survey entitled "Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Provider Systems" ranked John Cochran 139 out of 140 VA hospitals for inpatient satisfaction. In 2009 John Cochran was last, but their score was actually a percentage point higher than the 2010 score. The VA also made available in a press release the 2010 Veterans Health Administration Facility Quality and Safety Report of VA hospitals. The "report card" had John Cochran ranked last out of 123 reporting VA hospitals under the inpatient category of "Overall Rating of Hospital." In addition, surgeries at the John Cochran hospital were stopped February 2 when the cleanliness of surgical instruments was questioned. All of this is indeed unfortunate, but not surprising. There is now considerable congressional interest concerning the John Cochran VA Hospital and the care it gives veterans.

### Member Involvement

Speaking with my counterparts in other PVA chapters, they all bemoan what continues to perplex me. How do we get more of our members involved? A recent national PVA survey showed the average age of our member to be about 61 years old. Gateway's membership census shows that 56% of our members are between the ages of 45 and 64. In a sense we work against ourselves in that we strive to help our younger members become fully involved by either working or going to school full-time to become gainfully employed. We also, rightfully, support and encourage our members to marry and raise families. How do they have time for Gateway PVA? Tell me what we can do to help. For the rest of you, how can we get you involved? Two newsletters ago I mentioned the Gateway Board of Directors set-aside two appointed board positions for members living more than 100 miles from the chapter. We authorized mileage and lodging expenses for attending two mandatory meetings a year. Only one person called with interest, and I appreciated that call, but he did not live far enough away. I like to think Gateway PVA improves the lives of its members. Please get involved and help us fulfill our mission statement of "Veterans with spinal cord injury or disease, living life to the fullest."

### In memory of...



Kent Bell	Rich Hill, MO	12/11/10
Melvin Bonner	Florissant, MO	01/07/11
Larry Deconcini	Glen Carbon, IL	12/31/10
Moses Outlaw	St. Louis, MO	11/24/10
Robert Richardson	St. Louis, MO	07/08/10
Max Starkloff	St. Louis, MO	12/27/10



*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.*





## Housing Grants

By Tony Timmons

### What types of Grants are available for Housing purchase, remodeling and renovating?

This is a typical question presented to us by veterans, service-connected and non-service connected. There are two types of Grants available through the completion of the VA Form 26-4555.

They are the **Specially Adapted Housing Grant**, and the **Special Home Adaptations Grant**. There are different monetary limits and qualifying criteria for both of them. Due to spacing restrictions, I am going to provide a brief description of both; however, if you have questions regarding these or any other benefits please do not to hesitate to contact one of our offices. *(Please see page 2 for Service Office phone numbers.)*

#### 1. Specially Adapted Housing Grant

The maximum amount of this grant is \$63,780. It is available to veterans with service-connected permanent and total disability due to one of the three following conditions:

- a) the loss or loss of use of both lower extremities or,
- b) blindness in both eyes, having only light perception, plus loss or loss of use of one lower extremity or,
- c) loss or loss of use of one lower extremity together with other disabilities which precludes locomotion without the aid of braces, crutches, canes or a wheelchair.

#### 2. Special Home Adaptations Grant

The maximum amount of this grant is \$12,756. It is available to veterans with service-connected permanent and total disability due to one of the two following conditions:

- a) blindness in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less or,
- b) the loss or loss of use of both hands.

Veterans who are approved for a Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant are advised of their eligibility for Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI). The veteran will be assisted by one of VA's SAH Agents in the completion of VA Form 29-8636, Application for Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance. Veterans must be approved for an SAH grant before applying for VMLI.

#### Are there other benefits similar to Specially Adapted Housing to which a disabled veteran may be entitled?

Yes, an eligible veteran or service-member may be entitled to the Home Improvement and Structural Alterations (HISA) benefit, which has a current maximum of \$6,800 for a service-connected disability and \$2,000 for a non-service connected disability. These claims are handled through Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service at the nearest VA health care facility. The form used for these claims is the VA Form 10-0103.

The majority of the information I have provided here can be found on the [VA.gov](http://VA.gov) website. A lot of this came from the VA Pamphlet 26-69-1, which goes into greater detail regarding what these grants can be used towards. As I said previously, if you need any assistance in accessing, completing or submitting these forms, please contact one of your PVA Service Officers at one of our three offices in the State of Missouri. In addition, if you have any questions about any of these benefits, or any other benefits, please feel free to contact us. We are here to help you.

*(Please see the inside cover for contact phone numbers.)*

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## One Individual Helping Another

United Access is always looking to reach out and help those in need. In this particular case one of our technicians, Kelly “Rev” Roades, took it upon himself to help someone in need. With help from many others, he was able to raise enough money to purchase a Full-Sized Dodge Wheelchair Van with a rear lift. The van was picked due to its large size and ample head space.

Rev is with the St. Louis Family Church, whose slogan is “Honor-God, Help People,” and for this lucky family that is exactly what they did. The van was delivered during the holiday season this year and the family was very grateful. Below is a recap of the event written in Rev’s own words:

As a technician at the United Access St Louis facility, I see a lot of cars come and go. Eventually, one of those vans played a significant role in my life. You see, I have a family member, who we call “Jen” for short, who had an unfortunate diving accident some months back that left her paralyzed. Now, as a Christian and a family member, my heart really had a burden to reach out to her. My wife and I aren’t rich and our desire was to help her financially and physically, to help her get around. We prayed about it. God put it on my heart to have a fundraiser and buy the van. It was so interesting watching how things came to pass. First off, United Access went to bat and the seller sold us the van for almost a third of what it was worth; I say KUDOS to St. Louis, Missouri, General Manager, Rich Venhaus for the help. Secondly, as I let people know our need, I started getting calls from friends, church family, and old high school buddies. We actually had the money to buy the van BEFORE the fundraiser. We wanted to get the van inspected and were excited as we wanted to deliver it. I got a call from the local repair shop and they said it was done and to come get it. I asked excitedly how much the bill was, the gentleman told me \$1,477.00. My heart kind of sank and I said okay, we’ll come get it in a couple of days. I went home and my wife and I prayed about it. The next day, I put in a request for funds and prayer for the situation. I got one email, and then another and the repairs and inspection were paid for. God is so good. All the funds we had to have had been covered. By the day of the fundraiser we had so many donations of items for a silent auction and food to sell, not to mention all the great cooks for a chili cook-off. All needs were met and all the money made was a blessing on top of the van.

Jen’s life has changed so much since her accident in July. Her first outing from the hospital was actually to visit United Access in Springfield, Missouri; she knew at that moment that she would be able to go out and about and eventually drive again. Through this tragedy many people have seen God in action, watching what the devil meant for defeat, God has turned into blessings. Watch for an update because I truly believe that this time next year we will need a new van that Jen can drive, and our God will supply again.



Jen’s “New” Used Dodge Van





## The 2011 VA's Got Talent Night Provides an Evening of Diverse Entertainment for All

By Becky Ballard

On a cold February evening, twenty-five gifted and diverse veterans heated up the JB Theater, performing to a near capacity crowd of 300! The St. Louis VAMC hosted the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual VAs Got Talent Night on February 10. The talent ranged from novice to seasoned, from young to young at heart, from WWII to OEF, from various backgrounds and cultures and varying disabilities. But they had a few things in common: the joy and camaraderie they shared while performing, the support of each other's gifts, and service to their country.

PVA members Rusty Ezzell and Jim Schmitt were the bookends of the show. Rusty, 2010 National award winner, started the show off with an inspiring rendition of John Lennon's "Imagine." Jim Schmitt and Jeff Eichhorn ended the show with "Heart Full of Soul." In-between we were moved by dramatic readings, poetry, short stories, instrumental selections and an array of song and dance.

This show was a unique experience because, for the first time, three veterans entered the dance competition! They were also the oldest and youngest participants. Ninety year old Joseph Hosner and his wife Jean melted our hearts as they danced the Polka to a rousing beat. Joseph stated "I took my wife on a first date to a dance and we've been dancing ever since!" In the second act, the dance floor sizzled as our youngest participants, Heather Loeffelman and Ralph Basabe Abueg, danced an energetic Salsa!

Terrance Lyn Nelson gave us a glimpse into what life is like when serving in the Middle East with an original dramatic reading "Sandbox." WWII veteran Robert Morgan humored the crowd with his short story, "What is Hanging on Your Arm?" From Gospel to Rock and Roll and Country to Pop, the audience was entertained by an assortment of musical selections. LaRoy Smith demonstrated just how much heart he has by singing "You Gotta Have Heart." For those of us who know LaRoy, we know he has plenty!

One week prior to the talent show, the judging for creative writing took place. I am happy to announce that Donald Crabtree was awarded third place for his poem "Guardian Angels of Building 52" and second place for "In His Arms."

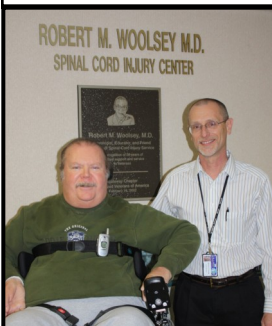
Our WWII dancing veteran Joseph Hosner took home the Best of Show honors, narrowly beating out Rusty Ezzell, Rick Beaver, John Poitras, and the Salsa dancers for top honors. All other winners will be announced at the Visual Arts Show on February 25.



LaRoy Smith



Rusty Ezzell



The Gateway Chapter PVA wishes to thank Bob Sontag for his 30 years of service to our veterans. Bob spent 25 years in SCI before his retirement in January 2011.



### Wheelchair Accessible Home For Sale 2117 Morning Mist, Florissant MO

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## Air Travel Security Guidance

By Stan Brown



Recent Transportation Security Administration (TSA) heightened security measures have made air travel a little more complicated. Go directly to their website (<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/index.shtm>) or call 1-866-289-9673 for more detailed information. I've summarized below the information I think relevant to all of us in wheelchairs:

### Medication and Supplies

Medication and related supplies that are carried through security checkpoints are normally x-rayed. If you don't want your medication x-rayed, you can request a visual inspection of your medication and medical supplies. These items need to be in a separate pouch or bag and handed to the TSA security officer prior to screening. I know from experience, that I am usually required to break down my CPAP machine after taking it out of the carrying case. I also always carry tools for repairing parts of my wheelchair and it helps to put those tools in a separate bag for the x-ray; it also helps to explain, before being asked, why the tools are necessary.

### Screening

It is beneficial to let the TSA security officer know your level of disability. I usually just announce that I am "paralyzed from the chest down." Only respond with a smile when you're asked if you could "just stand up for a minute." You should not be required to transfer from your wheelchair to another chair or be lifted out of your chair during the inspection process. You should likewise not be required to take off your shoes if you're unable to do so. Alternative security procedures can be applied to your shoes. Most of us in wheelchairs will be subject to pat down inspection because we won't fit with our wheelchairs through the screening devices. You should be offered a private screening area if you want one, and the Security Officer should be wearing gloves during the pat down.

Security officers should not be asking you to remove orthopedic shoes, appliances, or medical devices (insulin pumps, feeding tubes, ostomy or urine bags). I have an ileal conduit, which means I have both a urine bag on my stomach and a leg bag for urine attached above my ankle. Make it a point to drain everything before going through screening and before boarding an airplane. I also recommend announcing the presence of these medical devices, prior to the pat down search.

### Walkers, Crutches and Canes

Walkers, crutches, canes, and other assistive devices that can fit through the x-ray machine must undergo x-ray screening. Notify the TSA security officer if your device requires special handling.

### Service Animals

If you have a service animal, you should inform the TSA personnel that your animal is a service animal and not a pet. TSA staff should have been trained not to distract the animal and should ask for permission before touching your animal. If you walk through the metal detector with your service animal and the alarm sounds, both you and your service animal may be required to go through separately or be required to undergo additional screening to include a pat down. TSA's staff should ask for your permission and assistance in performing a physical inspection of your service animal.

### Wheelchair Backpacks

Most of us in wheelchairs carry our belongings in a backpack on the chair. Either you or your assistant will be required to take the bag off the wheelchair to go through x-ray screening. My advice is to take only what is absolutely necessary for your trip. Pull questionable items (items that might look suspicious on the x-ray screening) out of your backpack to be viewed independently.



Jason Austin

Floyd Henderson

Robert Norgaard

Keith Roberts

James Roden

Cecil Rodgers

James Sullivan-McGuire

*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 inside the front cover.*





The 31<sup>st</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games is coming to Pittsburg PA. This weeklong competition from August 1-6, 2011, will be the largest annual wheelchair sporting event in the world celebrating the talents and tenacity of our nation's brave heroes.

**For Information or to Request an Application**

Contact: Charley Wright at 314-652-4100 Ext. 64590 or Matt Luitjohan at Ext. 66602

--Application Deadline is April 1st, 2011--



**2011 Duke McDonald PVA Local Wheelchair Games**

May 6, 2011, at Jefferson Barracks

More Details to Follow!

**New and Enhanced VA Benefits Provided to Caregivers of Veterans**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching the first in a series of new and enhanced services supporting family caregivers of seriously ill and injured Veterans. In May 2010, President Obama signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 legislation authorizing VA to establish a wide range of new services to support certain caregivers of eligible Post 9/11 Veterans.

In addition to the new benefits and services for eligible Veterans who were disabled in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001 (Post 9/11 Veterans), VA will also begin providing enhanced benefits and services to caregivers of Veterans of all eras who are already enrolled in VA care, including:

- Access to VA's toll-free Caregiver Support Line: 1-855-260-3274
- Expanded education and training on caring for Veterans at home
- Other support services such as counseling and support groups and referral services
- An enhanced website for caregivers

Some of the new benefits of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act are restricted by law to the caregivers of the most seriously ill and injured Post 9/11 Veterans. Those additional benefits include:

- A monthly stipend
- Health care coverage
- Travel expenses, including lodging and per diem while accompanying Veterans undergoing care
- Respite care
- Mental health services and counseling

Each VA medical center has designated caregiver support coordinators who will assist eligible Veterans and caregivers in understanding and applying for the new benefits. The coordinator at Jefferson Barracks is Kay McBrady. She can be reached at (314) 652-4100, Extension 55403. VA also has a Caregiver Support Web page, [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov), which will provide general information once final regulations are published.

**Gateway Chapter PVA Wishes to Welcome  
Our New Members**

**Dennis Doyle**

Columbia, IL

**Stephen Fischer**

Swansea, IL

**Allen Kelley**

Essex, MO

**Mark Oakes**

Elkland, MO



## SOUTHERN BUS & MOBILITY PROVIDING ACCESSIBILITY TO THE WORLD

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Southern Bus & Mobility has a brand-new St. Louis facility in Valley Park, conveniently located near the intersection of Interstate 44 and Highway 141. The new facility includes: a spacious showroom for mobility vans; sales offices; a customer waiting area; and a large area for the parts, service and detail departments. In addition to our Valley Park location, Southern Bus & Mobility has another location in Breese, Illinois, which is just 40 miles east of downtown St. Louis. We have a full parts and service facility along with a body shop at the Breese location. Southern Bus & Mobility is a member of the National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association (NMEDA), a QAP-certified (Quality Assurance Program) NMEDA dealer, and a member of the Adaptive Driving Alliance (ADA).

Southern Bus & Mobility firmly believes in service after the sale. We have certified technicians from a variety of manufacturers to provide excellent customer care and product support. We can work with third-party payment organizations such as the Veterans Administration and Vocational Rehab.

Our featured products are the lowered-floor minivans with ramps. Southern Bus & Mobility is a dealer for the Eldorado Amerivan, Braun Entervan, and Viewpoint Mobility's Vision. The Amerivan and Entervan have side-entry ramps, and those vans can be set up for disabled people to drive the vehicle thanks to a remote control entry, power door, power ramp and kneeling system. The side-entry vans also allow the wheelchair user to ride in the center of the van or next to the driver in the co-pilot position. The Vision has a rear-entry ramp and is ideal for wheelchair or scooter users who will have an attendant with them to operate a simple spring-loaded, light-weight ramp.

In addition to the lowered-floor minivans and full-size vans with wheelchair lifts, Southern Bus & Mobility also specializes in the installation of wheelchair/scooter lifts, Bruno Turny Automotive Seats (TAS), transfer seats, hand controls, wheelchair restraint systems and much more. We also sell and service commercial and school buses with and without wheelchair lifts.

Southern Bus & Mobility is a stocking dealer for all the lowered-floor minivans, and interested customers can come out to see them at our indoor showroom at either location. We also have lifts and specialty seats on display. For more information, contact us toll-free at **866-327-1600 (St. Louis)** or **877-526-4131 (Breese, Illinois)**.



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**March 2011**

<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
					Nevada PVA Trapshoot Tournament Las Vegas, NV March 4-6	
6 High Ridge Elks Meat Shoot @ Noon	7	8 BOD Meeting 11:30 am	9	10	11	12
					Mid-America PVA Billiards Tournament March 11-13 in Tulsa, OK	
13 Billiards Tournament	14	15	16	17  Luncheon at JB @ Noon followed by Quarterly Member- ship Meeting	18	19
20 	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

**April 2011**

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
					1	2
<b>PVA AWARENESS MONTH</b>					PVA Bass Tour in Tavares, FL April 1-3 (for info- <a href="http://www.pvabasstour.com">www.pvabasstour.com</a> )	
3 PVA Bass Tour	4	5	6	7	8 Newsletter Articles Due	9
10	11	12 BOD Meeting 4 pm	13	14	15 Trap Shoot at Olin in East Alton, IL 10 am-2:30 pm	16
17	18	19	20	21 Member/Patient Luncheon at JB Bldg 52 @ Noon	22	23
24 	25	26	27	28	29	30



Address Service Requested

Gateway Chapter  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center  
St. Louis, MO 63132



# Chili Cook-off 2011

President Stan Brown beams upon receipt of the “Joey” Award for “Brazen Self Promotion.” He has recently been featured on KMOX, Fox 2 News, and Newschannel 5 discussing the issues surrounding the John Cochran VA Hospital.



Ken DeClue presents a donation check to Dr. Pereira



After our chili cook-off, some of the group lined up to thank Ken for supporting the Jefferson Barracks VAMC SCI Unit and their sports program.



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