

# Gateway Gazette



**It was Taco Thursday at JB!**



Gateway Chapter  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
<http://www.gatewaypva.org>

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

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Dennis Durrwachter, Treasurer  
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Stanley Brown—St. Louis-John Cochran

### National Director

Stanley Brown

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Chris Blanchard, Executive Director  
Amber Lee, Administrative Assistant  
John Vasel, Transportation  
Martha Rampani, Transportation  
Vacant, Government Relations Director

### St. Louis Service Office

400 South 18th St., Room 109  
St. Louis, MO 63103  
Office: (314) 552-9887 or (800)795-3614  
Fax: (314) 552-9738  
Fred Bradley, Senior Benefits Advocate  
Alan Knabe, National Service Officer II  
Susan White, Accredited Administrator

### 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

### Kansas City Service Office

4801 Linwood Blvd, Rm. M1-566  
Kansas City, MO 64128  
(816) 922-2882 or (800) 795-3612  
Fax: (816) 922-3369  
Brent Follas, NSO II  
Rebecca Warchola, Senior Secretary

### National Liaison VP

Charles Brown

### Gateway Chapter PVA

#### Wishes to welcome our new members:

Nicholas A. Hendrickson	Kenneth Myers
Nicolas A. Rusk	Joe W. Zappa
David Kliros	Matthew Kaiser
Edward Williams	Christian Watson

Gateway PVA is proud to have become a partner of the Nationwide Vietnam War 50th Commemoration.

We will be honoring all veterans who have served from **November 1, 1955 through May 15, 1975** at our luncheon on **April 21, 2016 at Jefferson Barracks in Building #52.**

We will be presenting these veterans with a commemorative lapel pin and a certificate. All of our members who served during that time frame have been mailed a letter explaining this event.

The luncheon begins at noon and family members are invited to attend.



#### Time to update your address or email?

Please email us at:  
[amber@gatewaypva.org](mailto:amber@gatewaypva.org)  
or

write or call us at the following:

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

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**[editor@gatewaypva.org](mailto:editor@gatewaypva.org)** or via US mail at the address shown above and send to the attention of the editor.



<https://www.facebook.com/GatewayPVA> [https://twitter.com/Gateway\\_PVA](https://twitter.com/Gateway_PVA)

## President's Message

By Stanley D. Brown



### Gateway PVA Home Grants



President Brown learns of the Rams' move

At our February 9, 2016, Gateway Board of Directors meeting, we completed approving four **home modification grants** and four requests for assistance with **generator funding**. Every Gateway PVA member is eligible for up to \$10,000 for home accessibility modifications after exhausting their available VA funding sources, which is usually the \$2000 HISA grant for nonservice connected veterans. You can use some of the grant for one request and then the rest later on a different project. The home modification grants are always open, assuming we continue to manage our finances correctly. Gateway has also previously opened two time frames for prospective (no funding for generators previously purchased) purchases of home generators, whether portable or permanent.

This grant is worth \$5500, which will cover most portable generators, and most permanently installed home generators (12 kW-22 kW). Permanent home generators will require additional wiring, probably gas lines, and a new gas meter box. This grant can be awarded regardless of your service connection or your ability to pay for the generator yourself. I expect we will have an open request period for generators again in May or June when we have a better look at our year end finances (budget year ends June 30, 2016)

### Gateway PVA Accessible Vans and Transportation Grants

At our February 9, 2016, Board meeting we also drew names for the donated 1999 full-size Ford Econoline that one of our members gave to us. It "only" had 160,000 miles. With \$2500 in repair work, we obtained the safety and emissions inspection, and the van will soon be gifted to our member who had no vehicle at all. I expect we will open up for **Accessible Van Requests** again in May, and determine what funding is still remaining/available in the FY16 budget ending June 30, 2016. Experience tells us, even used accessible vans will cost \$38,000-\$40,000. Over the last two years we have purchased four in that price range, and two older models at less cost. Last year we also provided three \$10,000 **Transportation Grants** to members who had older vehicles, but wanted to upgrade or get a newer vehicle with less miles and less needed repairs. The \$10,000 grants were to assist in purchasing, along with the trade-in value of their current vehicle, for a better accessible vehicle, or to help in paying for needed repairs. Our procedure or process for giving away these vans has been in the past, and it will be the same this year, a random lottery of those individuals applying and considered eligible. We never try to do the impossible task of choosing the "most deserving" individual. Please watch the newsletter and your emails for the next time we ask for submissions. I expect that will be in April or May of this year. Please call the office by mid-April if you have not heard anything. If you are not on our email list, I would encourage you to do so. We carefully guard the list.

### Chris Blanchard is our new Gateway PVA Executive Director

After an extensive and interesting search, to include several interviews, I have selected and the Gateway Board of Directors confirmed, Mr. Christopher Blanchard as our new Executive Director. Chris is a Marine Corps veteran of six years, with service in the first Gulf War. He has prior experience with Paraquad, an exemplary disability advocacy organization here in St. Louis. Please welcome him at the next luncheon you attend.

**Continued on page 7**

*In Memory of...*

<i>James Easton</i>	<i>Dexter, MO</i>	<i>12/19/13</i>
<i>Patrick R. England</i>	<i>Overland Park, KS</i>	<i>10/16/14</i>
<i>Frank Rayfield</i>	<i>Piedmont, MO</i>	<i>10/25/15</i>
<i>Raymond J. Radecki</i>	<i>Malvar Batangas, Philippines</i>	<i>11/22/15</i>
<i>Melvin Mueller</i>	<i>St. Louis, MO</i>	<i>11/30/15</i>
<i>Paul Wilson</i>	<i>Granite City, IL</i>	<i>12/23/15</i>
<i>Joseph M. Piotrowski</i>	<i>Higbee, MO</i>	<i>12/29/15</i>
<i>Gary D. Boitel</i>	<i>Kansas City, MO</i>	<i>01/10/16</i>
<i>Edward W. Grimm</i>	<i>Blue Springs, MO</i>	<i>01/10/16</i>
<i>Verlin Wright</i>	<i>Mountain Grove, MO</i>	<i>01/27/16</i>
<i>Michael Laughman</i>	<i>Kansas City, MO</i>	<i>02/18/16</i>

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

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## This Able Veteran

By Stefanie Ellis



Formed in 2011, *This Able Veteran* is a 501(c)3 organization committed to helping provide a path to healing and recovery for veterans returning home with psychological and/or physical injuries as a result of their service. These injuries can leave veterans increasingly isolated and withdrawn while trying to cope with the many obstacles they face as they try to assimilate back into society. Concerned for the number of veterans returning injured, *This Able Veteran* was formed to help decrease the distressing number of veteran suicides.

Utilizing highly-trained service dogs and an essential Trauma Resiliency Program, *This Able Veteran* has been able to empower veterans with a novel

vehicle that not only complements the veteran's ongoing therapeutic programs, but also allows them to actively participate in recovery and healing. The dogs are specially bred and trained from the time they are 8 weeks old for at least one full year.

Interested veterans are screened for their readiness to affect change in their lives and their individual needs are assessed. Once a veteran is selected for a class, the dog is custom trained to respond to rising anxiety levels in his/her veteran, while both awake and asleep. When the service dog's training is complete, the veteran is flown in to attend the 3-week Trauma Resiliency Program where they are paired with the dog specifically trained for them. During the training, the veteran is taught techniques and strategies to use when a trauma trigger occurs and how to rely upon their dog for assistance. In addition to the Life Skills Training component, the veterans are empowered to effect change in their daily battle with traumatic injury. This program, which is provided at no cost to the veteran, delivers intervention without the use of medications, which is critical for long-term recovery.

Working in conjunction with Clinical Outcomes Group, Inc. (under the direction of Dr. Richard H. Hunter, Ph.D., ABPP), SIU Carbondale's Psychology Department launched a study to measure the long-term efficacy of *This Able Veteran's* PTSD service dogs and their Trauma Resiliency Program. The self-reporting study used the same indicators as the DOD and the VA. Study results show that the combination of the two interventions profoundly impacts the severity of the veteran's reported symptomatic PTSD. The research elicits real hope for a new avenue of recovery and healing. According to Dr. Hunter, "The progress that I've seen with very seriously injured veterans from this program exceeds any that I've ever seen in my 50 years of practice."

Testimonials from those veterans having completed the program speak for themselves. Steve, a veteran graduate said, "What I got out of this program is that I'm not a victim anymore. I came away from here being a more compassionate human being than I have ever been in my life. I have more empathy and patience. I am kinder. I haven't had a nightmare in 6 months. Life is good. It's spectacular. This program is life altering."

For more information visit: [www.thisableveteran.org](http://www.thisableveteran.org),

or contact: This Able Veteran  
1714 South Wolf Creek Road  
Carbondale, IL 62901  
(618) 964-1162





**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

## YOUR FUTURE AWAITS

Paralyzed Veterans' scholarship program now accepting applications



Paralyzed Veterans of America invests in our members and their families.

Our Educational Scholarship Program assists members and their immediate family members by providing scholarship funds to help with a post-secondary education.

We will award scholarships in the amount of **\$1,000** to full-time students and **\$500** to part-time students for an academic year.

### APPLICANT MUST BE:

- A Paralyzed Veterans of America member, spouse of a member, or an unmarried child (under 24 years of age) who is dependent (as defined by the IRS) on the member for principal support
- A United States citizen
- Accepted and enrolled as a full- or part-time student in an accredited U.S. college or university

*Previous award recipients may apply.*

Download an application at [pva.org](http://pva.org), or for more information contact Christi Hillman at 800.424.8200, ext. 776; [ChristiH@pva.org](mailto:ChristiH@pva.org).

Applications must be completed in full and **postmarked no later than June 17, 2016.**

## FUND A LIFETIME OF SUPPORT FOR SEVERELY INJURED VETERANS.



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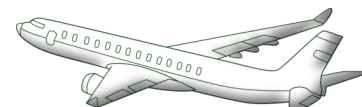
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**Continued from page 3*****Paralyzed Veterans of America Wants Your Airline Experience***

The Government Relations Department of our National PVA office has launched/opened a new website for members to record or relate their experience with airline travel. The website is [AirAccess30.org](http://AirAccess30.org), and there is a cover page on the website requesting your input. I enthusiastically support this effort of our organization to gather as many "stories" of our airline experiences as possible, with the end goal being in my opinion, amending the Air Carrier Access Act to ensure the disabled community can fly safely. Again, in my opinion, the Act is not working currently and needs amendment to include private rights of action for violations of the Act. Back in 2012, Gateway posted an online survey requesting responses to specific questions on the disabled air travel experience. In December 2012, National PVA representatives and I met with about 20 airlines and contract service providers in Washington DC. I did a PowerPoint presentation on our survey findings, which were as you might expect-not favorable. Everyone agreed we just needed to train airline personnel and their contract providers. I did some of that training in different cities and consistently was taken aside by an airline management person, who confided to me that the turnover rate of the people transferring us (quads) and handling our wheelchairs, was over 40% in a year. Unless the airlines did the training on the road in a continuous cycle, we (disabled fliers) would have to assist in training their staff year-round. I'm hopeful our (PVA's) latest efforts in collecting incidents or stories to amend the Air Carrier Access Act, will lead to us finally flying safely.

***SCI/D Legal Clinic Day - January 21, 2016 PVA Luncheon***

Third year law students and supervising attorneys from the St. Louis University Law School Veterans Law Clinic, were available at our luncheon on Thursday, January 21, 2016, to assist members with legal issues/needs. The assistance was free of charge to members. Assistance and legal work was provided in preparing and signing (executing) both durable and nondurable powers of attorney. General durable powers of attorney granted someone of a member's choosing, the authority to make medical decisions, as well as financial decisions on their behalf. Students and attorneys also helped with simple wills, landlord-tenant issues, domestic relations issues, accumulated misdemeanors/tickets and consumer issues.

The clinic was a great success and we hope to repeat it at least twice a year. Gateway membership wishes to thank the following organizations, which made the law clinic possible: Catholic Charities Veterans Legal Project, St. Louis University School of Law-Legal Clinic, City of St. Louis Veterans Legal Project, Veterans for Peace and SLU Law and Public and Social Policy Students.



# TAX BREAKS!

Illinois has enacted a major tax break, effective this year. Below are the summaries from the state's website about the property tax exemptions for Illinois and Missouri. Missouri has not changed.

## Illinois Property Tax Credits Regardless of Income

In June of 2015 the legislators in Illinois voted unanimously on a Senate Bill providing real estate tax relief to veterans with service-connected disabilities and Governor Quinn signed it into Law. The conditions for exemptions are outlined in the following paragraphs.

The **Disabled Veterans' Standard Homestead Exemption** provides a reduction to a property's Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) to a qualifying property owned by a veteran with a service-connected disability.

### Beginning in tax year 2015 -

- ♦ a \$2,500 homestead exemption is available to a veteran with a service-connected disability of at least 30% but less than 50%
- ♦ a \$5,000 homestead exemption is available to a veteran with a service connected disability of at least 50% but less than 70%
- ♦ **veterans with a service-connected disability of at least 70% are exempt from paying property taxes on their primary residence**

This exemption is available to the unmarried surviving spouse of a service connected veteran provided that the veteran was in receipt of the exemption prior to his/her death. Additionally, beginning in tax year 2015 and thereafter, the unmarried surviving spouse of a service member killed in the line of duty is exempt from paying property taxes on the



## Missouri Property Tax Credits Income Based



The Missouri Property Tax Credit Claim gives credit to certain senior citizens and 100% disabled individuals for a portion of the real estate taxes or rent paid for the year. The credit is for a maximum of \$750 for renters and \$1,100 for owners who owned and occupied their home. The actual credit is based on the amount of real estate taxes or rent paid and total household income (taxable and nontaxable). If you rent from a facility that does not pay property taxes, you are not eligible for a Property Tax Credit.

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## Gateway PVA Bus Riders Wanted – Friday Adventures

We are looking to expand our free bus service to Fridays in the future. With sufficient interest of members in nearby geographical areas, we would pick members up and do day trips to the zoo, parks, museums, movies, etc. We could also go to Jefferson Barracks, if Recreation Therapy has an event planned. We are really looking for people that are not currently being served by our bus service the other days of the week. We will pick people up at their homes, or nursing facilities, on both sides of the river. Anyone, even if you are now being transported by us one day a week, please call or email the office to tell us you are interested and if you have any other ideas on where you would like to go on those Fridays.

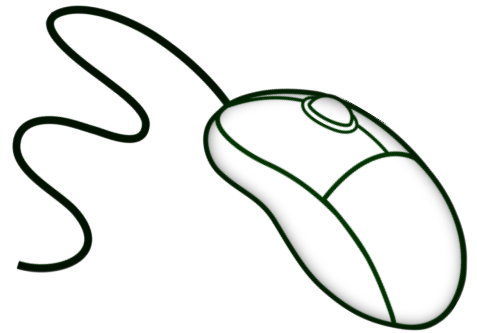
With sufficient interest we would start this service no later than June.



## Give STL Day

“Give STL Day” is a 24 hour online fundraiser for St. Louis region nonprofits. This is an annual event and this year it begins at

**12:01am on May 3, 2016 and runs through 11:59 pm.**



**100%** of your donation will go directly to the Gateway Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America. This is an easy way for everyone to donate. Remember that 90.2 cents of every Gateway expenditure goes directly to our members and programs.

# SCI RT Major Events

Please note that events are subject to change.



## MARCH

25th-26th: Boccia Tournament  
Louisville Kentucky (2 night stay)  
KY-IN Outreach

25th: Boccia Crestwood Elks  
12pm-4pm

## APRIL

2nd-9th: Winter Sports Clinic

20th: Gateway Getaway  
Lincoln Museum

22nd: Boccia America Legion  
12pm-4pm

23rd-24th: W/C Lacross Clinic  
St. Louis

## MAY

6th: Local Wheelchair Games

20th-23rd: PVA Bass Tournament KY  
Lake (2 night stay)

27th: Boccia Crestwood 12pm-4pm

29th: Scuba Atlanta



## JUNE

17TH-18TH: Marion SCI Outreach  
Adaptive Sports Clinic

25th-July 2nd: NVWCG Salt Lake

## JULY

6th-7th: Gateway Getaway  
Memphis, TN Redbirds game

20th-25th: Boccia Nationals  
Kansas City (5 night stay)

## AUGUST

14th-21st: Scuba Trip  
(non-VA sponsor event)

26th: Boccia America Legion  
12pm-4pm

## SEPTEMBER

15TH-18TH: Trout Lodge



## OCTOBER

28th: Boccia "Cluster Busters"  
Championships American Legion  
12pm-4pm



## NOVEMBER

18th-20th: SCI Scuba  
Atlanta (2 night stay)



## DECEMBER

**OPEN**



# March 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 BOD Mtg. @ GPVA 11:30 am 15 pts. Non-BOD Mbr.	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 Member/Patient Luncheon @ Noon Quarterly Mbr Mtg. after Luncheon 5/15 pts	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 Crestwood Elks Boccia 12pm—4pm KY-IN Boccia Tournament	26
27 	28	29	30	31		

# April 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 Winter Sports Clinic
3 Winter Sports Clinic	4 Winter Sports Clinic	5 Winter Sports Clinic	6 Winter Sports Clinic	7 Winter Sports Clinic	8 Winter Sports Clinic	9 Winter Sports Clinic
10	11	12 BOD Mtg. @ GPVA 4:00 pm 15 pts Non-BOD Mbr.	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 Gateway Getaway @ Lincoln Museum	21 Member/Patient Luncheon @ Noon Honoring Vietnam Era Veterans 5 pts	22 Boccia American Legion 12pm—4pm	23 St. Louis Lacross Clinic
24 St. Louis Lacross Clinic	25	26	27	28	29	30



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Gateway Chapter

**1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center  
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## **Executive Director's Message** **Chris Blanchard**

I wanted to take a moment to share my enthusiasm about becoming a part of an organization as vital to former service men and women as is the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Although I do not have a spinal cord injury or disease, I too am a disabled veteran and understand the issues that we all face. I will do everything in my capacity to assist this chapter and the organization as a whole, in continuing to successfully serve the needs of its members. My background includes six years of active and reserve duty with the Marine Corps where I am proud to have served in Southwest Asia during the first Gulf War. The majority of my career has been comprised of business development in the private sector. However, from 2011-2014 I had the opportunity to begin working in the not-for-profit field. I was the Employment Manager for Paraquad here in St. Louis where my staff and I worked to assist people with disabilities to find and maintain gainful employment. I am certain that the skills and lessons learned there will transfer to my responsibilities here at Gateway PVA. I look forward to meeting as many members as I can and to serving the needs of our chapter.



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