

# GATEWAY GAZETTE





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

**“Veteran’s with Spinal Cord Injury or Disease, Living Life to the Fullest”**

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**2015 Duke McDonald**

**Gateway PVA**

**Local Wheelchair Games**

**May 8, 2015, at 9:00 a.m.**

Events will be held in and around the area are enrolled for VA care. Applications can be completed online at

Jefferson Barracks Gymnasium.

**The 2015 National Veterans Golden Age Games**

**Aug. 8-12, 2015—Omaha Nebraska**

Open to Veterans ages 55 and older who are enrolled for VA care. Applications can be completed online at [www.veteransgoldenagegames.va.gov](http://www.veteransgoldenagegames.va.gov) and will be accepted through May 15.

**National Veterans Wheelchair Games**

**June 21-26, 2015**

**Dallas, TX**

Compete, Volunteer or become a Sponsor  
[wheelchairgames.org](http://wheelchairgames.org)



**Tuesday, May 5**  
**Midnight-Midnight**  
 24 hour Online giving for St. Louis area non-profits  
[GiveSTLday.org](http://GiveSTLday.org)



**Has your address changed?**

**Please inform us by email:**

[info@gatewaypva.org](mailto:info@gatewaypva.org),  
 or

**write or call us at the following:**

**Gateway Chapter PVA**

**1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center**

**St. Louis, MO 63132**

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

**Trap/Archery**

**Missouri Dept. of Conservation**

**Jay Henges Shooting Range**

**1st Monday of each month**

**May 4 thru August, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**1100 Antire Road High Ridge, MO**

**63049**



**Paralyzed Veterans of America**

Gateway Chapter



## President's Message

Spring 2015

*Accessible Vehicles, Home Generators, and Baseball Tickets*  
We Won't Be Undersold... Because we are giving them away again this year!



### Accessible Vehicles

As a repeat to last year, Gateway will purchase one or more accessible vehicles to be given away by a lottery method to members. Depending on available funds, we will be looking to purchase one or more accessible vehicles, probably minivans, that have already been modified and have 35,000 miles or less. Preference will be given to nonservice connected members and members with no vehicle at all. Please mail or email a note or letter stating how the vehicle would make a difference in your life. Your email or letter must be received no later than the close of business Friday, May 8, 2015. Winners must be able to title the vehicle in their name, provide insurance for the vehicle, and pay the necessary taxes and upkeep.

### Home Generators

We didn't see a great response for "new ideas" from our membership, but the board felt there was a sufficient enough interest in generators for homes. To qualify, you must establish the VA will not purchase a generator for you, and provide evidence of your own inability to pay for one. We will consider requests for a full house generator for home **owners** which will be permanently installed and runs continuously, as well as portable generators. Many permanent (automatic) generators, after installation, can cost around \$11,000. That would include the actual generator, all of the electrical work, panel upgrade, and necessary gas line modifications. The portable generator must be manually started (push button or pull cord) to be used, will probably run on gasoline, and require an electrician to do upgrades to your panel. The grant amount for **both** types of generators will be up to **\$5,500**. Both generators will require at least two cost estimates and will be paid directly to the vendor. Both Home Depot and Lowe's offer a 10% veteran discount. Members interested in grants for either generator, should submit a written statement or email to the Chapter by close of business Friday, May 8. The written statement should explain why the generator is needed and the difference it would make in your life.

### Play Ball... Free Cardinals and Royals tickets

#### Cardinals

Saturday, May 30, 6:15 PM, vs Dodgers: Four seats (two standard, two wheelchair)

Sunday, June 14, 2015, 1:15PM, vs Royals: Two seats (one standard, one wheelchair)

Saturday, June 27, 6:15 PM, vs Cubs: Four seats (two wheelchair, two standard)

Sunday, July 26, 1:15 PM, vs Braves: Two seats (one wheelchair, one standard)

Saturday, September 5, 3:05 PM, vs Pirates: Two seats (one standard, one wheelchair)

Sunday, September 6, 1:15 PM, vs Pirates: Four seats (two standard, two wheelchair)

Monday, September 21, 7:15 PM, vs Reds: Four seats (two wheelchair, two standard)

#### Royals

Monday, July 6, 7:10 PM, vs Rays: 10 seats (five standard, five wheelchair)

Wednesday, August 26, 7:10 PM, vs Orioles: 10seats (five standard, five wheelchair)



You may request any or all of the above game dates. Requests **MUST** be made to the Gateway office by close of business on May 19, 2015. You may respond by phone call, email, or regular mail. Cardinals tickets must be picked up at the Gateway Office or at Jefferson Barracks. Royals tickets must be picked up at the Gateway PVA service office at the Kansas City VA. **Mailing tickets has been problematic in the past, so NO tickets will be mailed.**

## Acting Government Relations Director Report

### Stanley D Brown-Joey Award Winner

### Spring 2015



On behalf of the Gateway Chapter, I attended PVA's Annual Advocacy and Legislation week the beginning of March. The snow from St. Louis followed me and forced canceling the last day of meeting with legislators, as the city of Washington closed down with 8 inches of snow. I also missed the first day of the seminar when Southwest canceled flight after flight leaving St. Louis on March 1. Bad weather also postponed the PVA and other veterans service organizations from testifying before the House and Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Nevertheless, I feel the trip was worthwhile and I did meet with four representatives from the House, and visited the offices of both of Missouri's Senators.



Seminar issues covered Social Security, air travel and the Air Carriers Access Act, the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (the Choice Act), prosthetic issues, protection of specialized services, expansion of the Comprehensive Family Caregiver Act program, and beneficiary travel for nonservice connected catastrophically disabled veterans. We also discussed the delays and problems with VA construction to include the cost overruns and delay in opening new VA hospitals in Denver and Orlando. Some of the issues/bills highlighted and presented to the representatives were as follows:

***Expanding Eligibility for VA Caregiver Support Services***-Public Law 111-163, the Caregivers and Veteran Omnibus Health Services Act 2010 provides additional monthly stipends to caregivers of only veterans with service connected injuries incurred after September 11, 2001

***Improve Travel Benefits for Catastrophically Disabled Veterans***-congressional offices were encouraged to expand the travel benefits/reimbursement to catastrophically disabled nonservice connected veterans. This change would ultimately save in long-term hospital stays and costs.

***Inclusion of Procreative Services in VA Healthcare***-the VA does not provide health care benefits for procreative services for service connected veterans unable to have a family and a full quality of life. The Department of Defense, however, does provide the services if the veteran applies while still on active duty.

***Strengthen Social Security***-the disability insurance trust fund is expected to be completed sometime in 2016, which would cause a 20% cut in Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. This obviously will be a contentious debate in the upcoming Congress.

***Supplemental Automobile Grants for Eligible Veterans***-The cost of replacing modified vehicles presents a financial hardship for the veterans as they face the full replacement cost of an accessible vehicle. Once a veteran has used their initial vehicle reimbursement amount, and that amount has increased over the years, the veteran does not have access to the increases.

***Capacity Reporting Mandate for VA Specialized System of Care***-the VA has not maintained its capacity to provide unique healthcare needs of severely disabled veterans, like those with SCI/D. The Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, would require the VA to maintain its capacity to provide specialized treatment and rehabilitation needs, and report on the status annually to Congress.

## GATEWAY CHAPTER PVA

### WISHES TO WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS

Roy Conkling .....St. Louis, MO

Jason Myers ..... Agency, MO

Jeffrey Ford .....St. Louis, MO





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**Or at**

## **[www.UnitedAccess.com](http://www.UnitedAccess.com)**



## LOVING THE ARTS

BY REBECCA BALLARD

The month of February is typically viewed as the month of LOVE, and Salute to Hospitalized Veterans. This year the St. Louis VAMC was all about “sharing the love” and commitment to veterans through support of the local creative arts program. The journey of healing through the arts began with the creative writing competition. Twenty-eight veterans shared their creative expressions of life, love, war, depression, joy, anger and humor through the art of written expression. Donald Crabtree, wrote a witty poem about growing old in the digital age (page 7 of the *Gateway Gazette*). He received a 2<sup>nd</sup> place ribbon in the category of Poetry Humorous. On February 12<sup>th</sup> love was definitely in the air as our talented singers, dancers and dramatic reading entries were judged. Local thespian and singer, LaRoy Smith delighted the audience by reciting, with exuberance, Edgar Allen Poe’s poem the *Raven*. Showering his fiancé Barb, with love he then sang *Always and Forever* by Luther Vandross. LaRoy placed 1<sup>st</sup> with his dramatic reading and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the musical division. Jim Schmidt, rocked the house then charmed the audience with his performances of *Bob Away My Blues* and

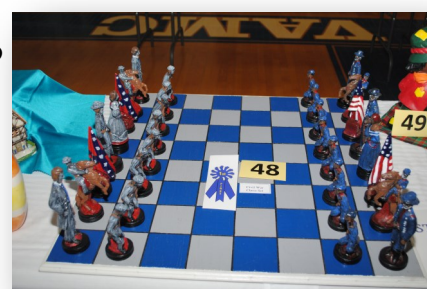


*It’s No Secret*. Jim received a 3<sup>rd</sup> place for *Bob Away My Blues* and 1<sup>st</sup> place for *It’s No Secret*. When singing the song *It’s No Secret*, Jim shared the loving story of when he was a child his father would gather the kids, play guitar and sing this treasured song. Now Jim gathers his grandchildren and carries on the family tradition. The grand prize of **Best in Show** was awarded to Steve Miller! He wowed the audience and judges alike, with his original song *Call His Name* and cover of *Like a Cowboy*. “Falling down and getting back up again” are words from *Like a Cowboy* that Steve has learned to live by.

Talented artist and PVA members, Michael Erbe, Charles Hampton, Richard Jones and Charles Howard were the recipients of 1<sup>st</sup> place honors in the categories of glazed ceramics, stained ceramics, colored drawing and wood building kits. Quilt-maker, Lorn Russell, wrapped us up in the warmth of his love with his hand sewn king size quilt. Lorn tells the story of how quilting saved his life and soul when he was first injured. “Making quilts gave me something to do after my injury. It gave me a reason to get up, and lifted me from my depression.” He has made over 200 quilts since then! He received 2<sup>nd</sup> place honors, as did Teresa

Woodby for her glazed ceramic entry. Michel Erbe, Julio Rivera, and Ruth Kult were awarded 3<sup>rd</sup> place winnings in the categories of watercolor, mosaics and glazed ceramics. Julio remarks that, “every time I walk by my project I beam with pride. I am so proud.”

Please wish all of our 1<sup>st</sup> place winners good luck as they now advance to the second phase of judging in the national competition. We also wish to thank all who entered the festival and to those of you who demonstrated your love and support by attended the talent show and visual arts show! A big shout out to the SCI staff who volunteered their time to make these programs happen!





## I'm Old Fashioned

By Donald Crabtree

**WINNER**

Am I the only male or female  
That's never sent or received an e-mail?

When I hear someone say "dot com",  
I don't know where they're coming from.

I always vote and pay my taxes  
but I'm not quite sure what a Fax is.

I've never ever received a text:  
what in the world will they think of next?

It's hard to believe but never the less,  
we found Grandma's house without a GPS.

I don't have a smart phone; I can't send a  
Tweet,  
But this doesn't mean my life is not complete.

Friends tell me, "I should get on line,"  
I tell them I don't need to, I'm doing fine.

There are times I almost tell myself  
"You're Obsolete, you belong on the shelf".  
But really that's not hard to bear.  
I'm Old Fashioned And I don't Care."

## Becky Ballards Retirement

Debbie Gray SCI OT



Things change. Sometimes the changes are eagerly anticipated and other times they come with a hint of sadness. Becky Ballard will be turning in her VA badge and heading to retirement the first week of July. We certainly wish Becky every happiness in the next chapter of her life, but those left behind will surely feel the void. Becky came to work in Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) in 1981 and shortly after that, she created and opened the SCI Craft Room. Hundreds of veterans with SCI/D have healed mind and body through the therapeutic use of crafts. Becky's extensive knowledge of both art and the use of adaptive technique and equipment combined to allow even the most physically challenged of those veterans to accomplish beautiful creations. Numerous veteran families found comfort in the Craft Room, as they waited for their loved one to improve medically and return home. Additionally, Becky and the Craft Room created a place for dozens of volunteers to serve veterans with SCI/D. Most of you are aware that Becky also organized scores of National and local veteran events. With all her work for the VA, Becky brings a calm attitude, intense advocacy for veterans, and a strong work ethic. She sticks with whatever challenge and gets it done! Veterans with SCI/D have all benefitted from the work of Becky Ballard, OTR! When you see Becky, wish her well. Send a farewell greeting to her email [Rebecca.Ballard@va.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Ballard@va.gov). Do as Becky would do and share a piece of yourself to make some veteran have a better day. **Please come to a special farewell gathering in the SCI Dining Room of Building 52 on Friday, June 12, at NOON.**

**Thank YOU for YOUR service, Becky Ballard. Enjoy sleeping in, digging in the soil, and nurturing all sorts of new experiences. We'll miss you, but we're SO happy for you. ♥♥♥**

## Gateway Chapter PVA Clothing Donations

Did you know that the Gateway Chapter PVA accepts clothing donations year round?

Call the office at (314) 427-0393 or toll free at (800) 426-4058 to schedule a drop off time!

1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center  
St. Louis, MO 63132

**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.

Phillip Baldwin

Joe Sabo

Jonathan Lewis

Kenneth Williams

Rick Taylor

Richard Banton

Michael McKinney

Chad Kocina

## St. Louis VA “Cluster Busters” Boccia National Team

By Charles Wright

Boccia, a game that started in Italy, has been a part of the Paralympic Games since 1984. It tests the athlete's coordination, accuracy, concentration and ability to strategize. It was originally presented as a sport for athletes with cerebral palsy, but is now open to male and female athletes with severe locomotor disabilities of a cerebral or non-cerebral origin, including individuals with CP, stroke, traumatic brain injury, high-level spinal cord injuries, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease/ALS) and arthrogryposis.

Team “Cluster Busters” has been a great success over the past year. Our team has reached close to 20 team members in a short period of time. Not only do we have local competition, “Tournament of Champions Cup” hosted by the SCI RT Dept., Crestwood Elks and American Legion Post 162. Our team will be traveling to Kansas twice this year for the Midwest Games in May and USA National Boccia Tournament in July. Also, we have exciting news that 3 of our SCI Veterans will be competing in Montreal Quebec in May. Scott Richards and Charlie Brown Paralympian will be competing at the 2015 Boccia Americas Team and Pairs Championships on the USA Boccia Team, and Joey Avellone will be competing at the Nationals Canadian Boccia Tournament at the same location working on qualifying for the USA Team for 2015. Check out some of our photos from this month's Tournament cup series hosted at the American Legion... 4 of our visitors came from Kansas city area to help classify our team members for the Midwest Games. Keep up the great work Team! Coach Tuna...



## National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic

By Matthew Luitjohan



I am writing this article while at the National Disabled Veterans Winter sports Clinic in Snowmass, Colorado, where 7 of our SCI Vets and 2 of the Polytrauma vets from St Louis have come to participate in North America's largest adaptive ski program. While here, the veterans are learning to ski or improving their skiing skills with instruction from some of the best adaptive ski instructors from all over North America. They are also being exposed to other sports, such as

Snowmobiling, Rock Climbing, Sled Hockey, Cross Country Skiing, SCUBA Diving, and Curling with 350 fellow vets from all over the USA. Don't think you could do it? You should give it a try. One hundred thirty of these veterans are brand new to the clinic and the oldest veteran here is 87 years young! Applications for next year's clinic will be out in August sometime and will be due back to me by the middle of October. If you are interested or you would like more information, please call or e-mail me at [matthew.luitjohan@va.gov](mailto:matthew.luitjohan@va.gov) or 314-894-6602.







**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, 2015.



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>Mailed Ballots are due in our office by JUNE 8, 2015!</b>					1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		<b>St. Louis Gives Day—</b> see insert			<b>Local Wheelchair Games @ JB</b> (See pg 2)	9
		5 pts.				
10	11	12	12	14	15	16
<b>Happy Mother's Day</b>	<b>Trap/Archery Jay Henges Range</b> (Info on page 2)	<b>BOD Mtg. @ GPVA, 4pm</b> 15 pts. non-BOD Mbr.				
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
				<b>Member/SCI Patient Luncheon at JB @ Noon</b> 5 pts.		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
	 <b>Memorial Day Office Closed</b>					<b>BOCCIA</b> International Play & KC Tournament Begins! Thru June 3rd
31	<b>BOCCIA TOURNAMENT in KC</b>					
    						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<b>Trap/Archery Jay Henges Range</b> (Info on page 2)				<b>Newsletter Articles Due</b>	<b>D-DAY</b> Steel Mayhem Brotherhood GPVA Poker Run
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	 <b>BALLOTS DUE!</b>	<b>BOD Mtg. @ GPVA, 11:30 am</b> 15 pts. non-BOD Mbr.				
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
				<b>Member/SCI Patient Luncheon &amp; Qtrly Member Mtg. at JB @ 12pm</b> 5/15 pts.		<b>NVWG</b>
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
 <b>Happy Father's Day</b>	<b>NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES, DALLAS TEXAS</b>					
28	29	30				



## VA Works to Expand Choice Program Eligibility

The VA has amended the eligibility requirements to determine the driving distance from a veteran's residence to the closest VA medical facility. The following is presented from a VA Fact Sheet from March 24, 2015.

### Background

On August 7, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146) ("VACAA"). Technical revisions to the Choice Act were made on September 26, 2014, when the President signed into law the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-175).

In March 2015, VA announced the expected expansion for eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program by changing the calculation used to determine the distance between a Veteran's residence and the nearest VA medical facility from a straight line distance to driving distance.

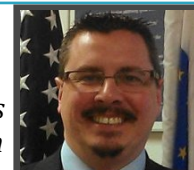
### Summary

One of the current eligibility criteria for the Veterans Choice Program is based on the distance calculation using the *straight line* distance from a Veteran's home to the nearest VA medical facility. Under VA's plan for expansion, this criterion will change to the *driving distance* calculation between the Veteran's home and the nearest VA medical facility.

For example: Under the new distance calculation, a Veteran who lives less than 40 miles, straight line distance, from the nearest VA medical facility, but who needs to physically drive more than 40 miles to get there would be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. Under the previous straight line distance calculation, this Veteran would not be eligible for the Program unless they were waiting for an appointment longer than 30-days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician.

VA is expanding the eligibility determination in order to increase Veterans access to high quality, timely healthcare. VA looks forward to continued collaboration with Veterans and our partners to ensure the success of the Veterans Choice Program.

*That said, Paralyzed Veterans of America's position remains that our members need access to specialized VA care, not simply the nearest VA facility. We continue to encourage all PVA members to go to a VA Spinal Cord Injury & Disease Center for specialized care so that we can keep the pressure on VA to fully staff and resource these facilities.*



**Brent Follas**  
National Service  
Officer  
Kansas City, MO

## In memory of...



Bernard Carr	St. Louis, MO	02/06/15
Jerry D. Fouts	Nixa, MO	02/16/15
Ronald L. Harlmon	Kansas City, MO	09/30/14
Robert W. Hoisington	Catawissa, MO	12/27/14
Roy M. Jones	Lawrenceville, IL	09/04/14
James A. Mitz	Evansville, IN	09/02/14
Saundria M. Silva	Stover, MO	12/07/14
Ira M. Simmons	St. Louis, MO	08/07/14



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 might wish to pay their respects to the departed.



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Gateway Chapter

**1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center  
St. Louis, MO 63132**

Address Service Requested



**BOD Election Ballot is Enclosed!**  
**(Due by June 8th, 2015)**



# Thanks

**The Sons of the American Legion (SAL) Post 1227,  
located in Beckemeyer, Illinois, sponsored a quilt  
raffle and donated \$1,000 of the proceeds to our**

**Paralyzed Veterans of  
America Gateway  
Chapter. Thank You!**



Pictured are: (from left to right) Tom Mensing, SAL commander; Cory Mensing, SAL member; Stanley Brown, President of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Gateway Chapter; Jim Mensing, past SAL commander and current finance officer; Josh Mensing, SAL member; Greg Kruse, past SAL commander; and Steve Awalt, SAL member.

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