



Gateway Gazette

May/June 2021

Volume 45 Number 3



Gateway Chapter

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

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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
(314) 427-0393 or (800) 426-4058 • Fax (314) 427-4183

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

Welcome Spring/Summer, Cinco de Mayo, and Vaccines

The fifth of May is not Mexican Independence Day, but rather the date in 1862 Mexico defeated France at the Battle of Puebla as part of the Franco-Mexican War. Although a minor celebration in Mexico, it's widely celebrated here in the states. So in addition to enjoying a margarita or Carta Blanca, take a minute and enjoy the departure of winter, and most importantly the fact that you have been, hopefully, vaccinated twice. I don't want to argue with those of you who don't want to be vaccinated, you can still be thankful others are and our pandemic is drawing to a close or at least on a plateau. Be thankful the worst of it appears to be over. Like me, you are now starting to venture out in public, although I've yet to be in a restaurant again. To my knowledge, none of our members passed away with COVID. If you know otherwise, please let me know.

Emails, Baseball Tickets, and Paid Surveys

We are now getting baseball tickets for both the Royals and Cardinals on a monthly basis for games. Because of timing, we are unable to put all the tickets in newsletters published bimonthly. We also receive notice from universities and

MAY/JUN 2021

President's Message

Welcome Spring and Summer

Baseball Tickets

Accessible Vehicle Grants

Generator Grants

other groups looking for survey participants to be paid to take surveys. These notices come up randomly and we can only notify members by email. Access to the tickets and the surveys make us having your email address very important to notify you. If you're not getting these emails and want them, please contact the office.

Accessible Vehicle Grants

Gateway is now opening its grants for accessible vehicles again. We will be giving \$35,000 grants for purchasing an accessible vehicle, \$17,500 for a non-accessible vehicle with the knowledge that hand controls will be installed, and \$10,000 grants to assist in trading in your existing vehicle for a newer and better model with probably less miles. If you are interested, please complete the Accessible Vehicle Grant Application That can be found on our website www.gatewaypva.org under the "Forms" tab. You can email the application to us at chris@gatewaypva.org or send it to the office address. The form helps explain your need for the vehicle and what difference the grant would make in your life. Entries must be received by May 28, 2021. As in the past, we will not grade or rank the entries but rather put all qualified requests in a container to be randomly drawn

at our June Board of Directors meeting. So, if you're interested, you need to get your entry in as soon as possible. I'm not sure at this time how much money we can allocate for grants, but will know more with our finances at the Board meeting in May. Please call the office with any questions. Over the last six years we have awarded \$617,495 in vehicle accessibility grants.

Home Generator Grants

Our generator grants are now open all year long. We will award grants in the maximum amount of \$5500. Generators can be portable or stationary, automatically starting with a power outage for the whole house. Generators can be for a home that you own or sometimes a home that you rent with the consent of the owner. Generators cannot be installed in apartment complexes. Please submit two bids for the generator purchase and installation from qualified contractors. Over the last five years we have awarded \$304,932 to members for generators. Please email bids to chris@gatewaypva.org or mail them to the office address.

PLEASE VOTE FOR THE FY22 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VA Debt Relief Extended

by Brent Follas, Senior National Service Officer

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is extending debt relief for Veterans through September 30, 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. VA will suspend collection of all Veteran benefit overpayments incurred between April 6, 2020 and September 30, 2021. No adverse actions or collection attempts will occur during this suspension period. Veteran medical care and prescription charges incurred from April 6, 2020 through September 30, 2021 will be cancelled and any payments for this time period will be refunded.

VA is committed to keeping Veterans informed about their debt and the expansive relief options available. VA may send subsequent letters providing details of the benefit debt and patient statements regarding medical care copayment debts. These letters and patient statements are for information only, unless Veterans choose to act before the suspension period ends. No adverse action will occur at this time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

With regards to benefit overpayments, Veterans will receive a letter from the VA Debt Management Center (DMC) showing current debt amount as well as available options. Subsequent letters will be sent showing updates to Veterans' accounts. VA will resume mailing patient statements for medical care and prescriptions received prior to April 6, 2020 once all charges for medical care and prescriptions on and/or after April 6, 2020 are cancelled. However, no payments are required until at least October 2021.

WHAT VETERANS CAN DO NOW

For benefit overpayments, no action is required through September 30, 2021. That said, if Veterans would like to resolve debts sooner, there are options they can exercise now. VA can work with Veterans to determine what option is best.

Options include:

- Dispute the Debt
- Request a Waiver

WHOM TO CONTACT

For questions about VA benefit debt, including information on how to make voluntary repayment arrangements or for information about how to request a waiver, how to dispute a debt, or how to submit a compromise offer; call the DMC (800-827-0648) from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. CT Monday through Friday. Visit <https://iris.custhelp.va.gov/app/ask/> to submit your request online.

- For medical care copayment questions, please contact the Health Resource Center at (866-400-1238) from 7:00 a.m. to 7 p.m. CT Monday through Friday.
- If a Veteran's debt was referred to the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury), the debt is suspended through September 30, 2021. For questions on debts referred to Treasury, contact the Treasury Cross-Servicing Program (888-826-3127) or the Treasury Offset Program (800-304-3107).

Please follow the national and local guidelines to stay healthy and safe.



Want To Improve Your Bowel Function?



Recently published research reveals between 50 and 80% of participants reported improvements in bowel function and/or management after walking in an exoskeleton*

Did you know Paralyzed US Veterans May be Eligible for a ReWalk Personal Exoskeleton?

**Contact ReWalk for more Information:
rewalk.com/contact or
508.251.1154 option 2**

*Chun A, et al. Changes in bowel function following exoskeletal-assisted walking in persons with spinal cord injury: an observational pilot study. Spinal Cord. 2020;58(4):459-466.



VA Community Emergency Care Information for Veterans

via va.gov

In most instances, Veterans are eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)-authorized emergency care at an in-network facility if VA is notified of the emergent event within 72 hours. The VA medical center (VAMC) nearest to a Veteran's emergent event can identify in-network emergency care providers.

Veterans do not need to check with VA before going to an emergency department in the community or calling an ambulance. During a medical emergency, VA encourages all Veterans to seek immediate medical attention without delay.

To simplify and streamline this emergency care notification process, VA established a national emergency care contact center.

The Emergency Care Centralized Notification Center allows community providers to report instances of a Veteran presenting to a community emergency department. It offers simplified access to VA for care coordination, eligibility determination and payment authorization information. Centralized notification standardizes communication, documentation and collaboration between VA and community providers.

General Information

VA should be notified within 72 hours of the start of an emergent event, via phone or encrypted email, that a Veteran has sought emergency care at an in-network facility. This notification ensures VA can authorize the care. This step also assists VA in coordinating the Veteran's transfer to a VAMC and additional care, and ensures that the requirements for VA to pay for the care are met. Care coordination and patient transfer activity should be conducted directly between the local VA medical center and the community emergency department. Local VAMC staff are responsible for care coordination and transfer activity when notified of a Veteran receiving treatment at a community emergency department.

During the notification process for each emergent episode of care, treating community providers will receive authorization decision information and, if applicable, directions on how to submit claims. Failure to notify VA of care rendered through an in-network community facility prevents VA from authorizing the emergency treatment and prevents claims and payments from being made through one of VA's third-party administrators.

Veteran Information:

Name
Social Security Number
Date of Birth
Address
Date Presenting to Facility
Date of Discharge
Admitted? (YES/NO)
Chief Complaint/Admission DX and/or Discharge DX

Treating Facility Information:

National Provider Identifier (NPI)
Name
Address
Point of Contact (POC) Name
POC Phone#
POC Email Address
*Note: POC will receive VA authorization decision information

Notification Requirements

The person notifying VA should be prepared to supply case-specific information, as seen below.

This information is explained in VA Form 10-10143g, Non-VA Hospital Emergency Notification, available online at https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-10143g_Non-VA_Hospital_Emergency_Notification_Fill.pdf.

Case-specific details are necessary for care coordination and eligibility determination. If the person notifying VA is unable to supply all necessary information, VA will contact the appropriate parties to collect the information.

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GATEWAY GI

General Information

MAY 2021

May 11 -

BOD Meeting

11:30am via Zoom

15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

JUN 2021

Jun 1 -

BOD Meeting

11:30am via Zoom

15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

Jun 17 -

Qtrly Mbr Meeting

1:30pm via Zoom

15 pts for members

*Gateway Chapter monthly luncheons at Jefferson Barracks Building 52 are canceled until further notice. The luncheons will resume when the VA determines it is safe to host them again.

Welcome to New Members

Serena Baldwin

Paul Barnick

Chad Neidig

Robert Netemeyer

Alonzo Richardson

In Memory of

William Webster of Whiting, KS	01/04/2019
Gerry Fannon of Odessa, MO	07/19/2020
William Foster of Trenton, MO	12/14/2020
Raynard Chapman of St. Louis, MO	12/15/2020
William Young of Mexico, MO	12/20/2020
Robert Saner of El Dorado, KS	12/28/2020
Josephine Caldwell of Joplin, MO	01/05/2021
John L. Wood of Winfield, MO	01/13/2021
Lewis Bertoncino, Jr. of Roach, MO	01/29/2021
Brian DePaul of Kansas City, KS	02/08/2021
Charles R. Smith of Wichita, KS	02/16/2021
Karl Klaus of Perryville, MO	02/23/2021
Charles Howard of St. Louis, MO	03/19/2021
Stephen Stratmann of Edwardsville, IL	03/26/2021

FY22 Board of Directors

It is once again time to vote on the seven Board members and the Office of Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Please take time to fill out the enclosed FY22 Gateway Chapter ballot and read the ballot instructions carefully and return your completed ballot to the Gateway Chapter office. If you have any questions please contact the Chapter office. Ballot entries will close at 5pm on June 7, 2021.

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Providers should use one of the following centralized options to notify VA with details about Veterans receiving emergent care in the community:

1. Email: VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov
2. Phone: 844-72HRVHA (844-724-7842)

Providers should encrypt all emails to VA containing patient information. If a provider is unable to utilize email encryption requirements, they should notify VA by calling 844-72HRVHA.

If notification is made to a local VA medical facility the notification will be referred to the Emergency Care Centralized Notification Center for action.

For information about care coordination, documentation submission, eligibility, claims and payment go to: http://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/info_EmergencyCare.asp.

Letter from the desk of Steve Spurgeon

I would like to reply to the article from the desk of Bonnie Hilburn.

I support Bonnie and would like to address what I have seen and heard since my spinal cord injury in 1997. There was a spinal cord unit established with Dr. Curtis, Dan the nurse and Stan the Social worker. They were there everyday of the week. Dr. Curtis was your PCP. When you went to yearly clinic it was all taken care of that day. While there the pharmacy had someone come down and go over all your medicine and anything you needed. Followed by a OT and PT consult while in the clinic. You got your lab work, sonogram all had been set up by the nurse and support staff. You could call in when sick or needed anything and get an appointment.

Dr. Curtis and staff talked with great excitement of future plans of having an inpatient SCI at KCVA. It was to be located where the cafeteria is at today. It was being cleared out and prepared. I was wheeled down to show me the area. Was told our entrance would be out the door by where now is the gift shop.

Somehow the inpatient area fell through and was replaced with cafeteria. The SCI clinic was renamed to include Therapy in the name. A few more years and remodeling the name changed to Therapy and rehab clinic with a sci at the bottom. The clinic reduced to a couple days a week as our doctors and nurses were

used else where and their space was reduced. Clinic took weeks to get in and if you wanted to see anyone else it meant another appointment on another day. Not easy at 1 1/2 hours away.

During this time I started losing faith in the KCVA. Then the KC chapter of PVA started and we did get some things done.

We met with the director Kent Hill he promised SCI was important and would stand with us. There would always be an open door policy with us. The red tag parking out the bottom door was for us. Only about 6-8 spaces but was all that was needed. The last few years getting in was a task for all the transport vans coming, going and setting there. The VA police do not enforce handicapped parking for lifts only. That is why we were granted the red tag in the back. Now I learn that has been lost.

I learned late because I was moved from KCVA SCI to another town to have my PCP there. He is not a spinal cord DR. I still have to make appointments for everything else in KC.

Last but not least I was told as I complained about feeling pushed aside that NO one else was complaining. Just wanted to say "Bonnie we are not alone I have talked to others that have voiced concern" I will add my voice yours.

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