

Gateway Gazette

November/December 2020

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

Gateway Chapter

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

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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, Senior National Service Officer
Lena Oliver, Secretary II

St. Louis Service Office

9700 Page Blvd. Suite 101, Room 1-114
St. Louis, MO 63132
Office: (314)253-4480 or (800)795-3614
Fax: (314) 253-4170
Jeremy Lile, 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
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Paralyzed Veterans of America

Gateway Chapter

Time to update your address or email?

Please email us at info@gatewaypva.org or write or call us at the following:
Gateway Chapter PVA • 1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center • St. Louis, MO 63132
(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.



President's Message

by Stanley D. Brown

COVID Continues

Wellness Check

Annual Gateway Audit

PVA Annual Convention

COVID Continues

November will be the eighth month of this life-changing event. Eight months of wondering with each cough if you have acquired the virus; eight months of checking your temperature even though you don't feel particularly warm or cool; and eight months savoring those first bites of food to see if you get a taste. And for those of us who work with attendants, eight months of wondering about their cough and whether it's just allergies or a cold. Add to this experience the concern that you don't see an end in sight. Our Chapter is committed to provide support. We received requests from 82 members for the \$75 gift cards and we honored every request for a total of \$6,150. The Board just voted to again offer this \$75 gift card for relief for groceries and supplies. We can get cards from any national merchant. Call 314-427-0393 or email the office at chris@gatewaypva.org or amber@gatewaypva.org with your name, phone number, and choice of card. Phone calls or emails must be received by 5pm on December 4, 2020. Also don't forget the National organization (PVA) offers disaster relief funds up to \$1500 after showing receipts. A few Gateway members have received relief that way by showing delivered grocery receipts and medical supplies because the VA/mail was too late. Those requests are made on a form that is sent through the Gateway and NSO offices. For more detail, please go to <https://pva.org/covid-19/>. If there's anything else we can do, please let us know. In the last Gateway Gazette we published an article by our new SCI/D psychologist, Dr. Alex Alvarez on the mental health aspect of coping with these times. That same article is in the current PVA PN magazine.

Gateway Wellness Phone Bank

At our October BOD meeting, the Board voted to start trying to call members

and check on them during these difficult times. If you are interested please contact the office by email at info@gatewaypva.org or call at 314-427-0393. You will be given a list of names and a few standard questions (it will not be a survey) and end with an open-ended question asking if the Chapter could do anything for them. You will be given participation points (as yet determined how many) for the calling.

Annual Gateway Audit

We have just had our Fiscal Year 2020 audit completed. Our program expense ratio, program expenditures divided by total expenditures, was a little over 90%. This is excellent and the great "selling point" when we seek donations; the Better Business Bureau only requires 65%. In FY20 we spent \$591,517 on members and their programs compared to FY19's expenditures of \$477,680. The last three and a half months of the fiscal year was during the "shutdown" when we were spending very little on people doing things. Next year's numbers will probably be similar.

PVA Annual Convention

We have just completed the PVA 2020 Annual Convention by Zoom. At any given time there were over 100 people participating. Surprisingly it went in a fairly orderly fashion. I had some problems navigating with my voice software and the Zoom platform which had a separate microphone/talking system. Notable for awards received were the Bob Webb Chapter Newsletter Award for the best (out of the 33) Chapter newsletter. We won this award this year and once before, and both times thanks to Amber Lee, our Administrative Assistant, who designs and formats the magazine as well as organizes the articles. Chris and I basically just proofread. This convention, Gateway won its first Sports and Recreation

Award for the best sports and recreation program of all 33 Chapters. Thank you to Mike Norris, Chairman of our Sports Committee, and Rose Ganz who serves as the Deputy. Also acknowledged was a long time Gateway golf tournament sponsor-Emerson Corporation. I made the nomination and Emerson was selected by a National PVA committee for the Corporate Patriot Award. This is the same award Bob Rives and Professional Equities received a few years ago. Of the various resolutions submitted, of note were: 1) one that failed that adopted a preference for new Chapters to locate in SCI Centers; 2) passed was one that ended the Chapter Hospital Liaison program because of abuse in some Chapters; and 3) passed was one that removed the requirement for a Chapter doing fundraising by mail or email, to furnish the National organization the name and address of the potential donors the Chapter is contacting. Please contact me if you would like more information on any of these or a complete rundown of all resolutions.



VA Beneficiary Travel Self Service System

by Brent Follas, Senior National Service Officer

In 2020, the VA Beneficiary Travel Program offers eligible Veterans, caregivers, and other beneficiaries greater peace of mind and ease of submitting travel reimbursement claims through a new online claims reimbursement tool called the Beneficiary Travel Self Service System (BTSSS).

Eligible Veterans and caregivers receive mileage reimbursement for travel to and from VA health care, or VA authorized non-VA health care.

Veterans and Caregivers can submit claims and supporting documentation for reimbursement of costs incurred from use of a privately-owned vehicle (POV), common carrier, pre-approved meals and/or lodging, and other travel related expenses such as tolls, parking, and luggage.

BTSSS implementation began on July 2020 and will be expanded across the country in three subsequent phases through November 2020. With deployment of BTSSS, Veterans can submit, and track beneficiary travel reimbursement claims online from a computer or mobile device 24/7,

365 days a year through the secure, AccessVA website.

AccessVA can be accessed at <https://access.va.gov/accessva/>, using a DS Logon Level 2 account or VA PIV card to authenticate the identity of the user. A DS Logon is an ID issued by DoD that will allow Veterans and caregivers to access many VA and DoD sites with one user username and password.

BTSSS ensures timely processing and payment of travel reimbursements and reduces manual intervention and improper claim payments through automated features and it replaces the kiosk method and reduces the need for completing hard copy claim and in-person claim submissions.

For questions, you can visit <https://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay/>, reach out to your local VA Travel Department or the Paralyzed Veterans of America National Service Office in your area.

American Legion 162 Meat Shoot



The American Legion 162 meat shoot is on the first Sunday of the month. It's located at 9305 South Broadway, St. Louis, Missouri 63125.

Please come for some fun and a chance to take home some meat.

Hope to see you there.

Bob Weigand

VVC Program by Matthew D. Luitjohan, CTRS

Hello, we hope you and your loved ones are healthy and doing well throughout these challenging times. In March, when the COVID-19 pandemic caused a dramatic shift in all of our daily routines, we started doing daily video calls to help offset the decrease in social interactions many of our veterans experienced. Since that time, the program has expanded to include morning and afternoon classes as well as an evening meditation class on Thursdays. We offer a wide range of classes and each one ends in a group chat. The group chat allows you to visit with your fellow vets and discuss topics as they arise.

We encourage you to try out a class or two to see what it is like, learn, enjoy the comradery, and socialize with peers and staff. The current class schedule is listed to the right for you to review, but it does change occasionally. The classes are available to all. No advanced reservation is required, but feel free to reach out to Matt or Charley if you are having technical challenges and need assistance. The classes are not something you need to commit to daily or even weekly. You'll see that some of our participants join when they can but may not be on regularly whereas others are on many calls a week.

How does it work? Email Charley (Charles.wright6@va.gov) or Matt (matthew.luitjohan@va.gov) if you are interested and we will add you to an email list. Each day there is a class, you will receive a link to click on. That link is good for all the classes for that day; however, there is a new link each day. If you are currently receiving our daily emails and wish for them to stop please email us and we will remove you. If you have any questions, concerns, etc. please email Matt and/ or Charley to have them addressed. We miss all of you and hope to see you soon!

Schedule is as follows but is subject to change:

- 10:30 AM Mondays:
15/20 minutes of Seated Tai Chi with Lars
Remainder Open Chat
- 1:30 PM Mondays:
20 minutes Seated Yoga with Kat
- 10:30 AM Tuesdays:
15/20 minutes of Strength and
Stretching-Focus is Boxing Stretching
- 1:30 PM Tuesdays:
20 minutes "Where in the world is Amy
Ikpeama" Exploring Our World

A wide range of guest speakers are also scheduled at this time.

- 10:30 AM Wednesdays:
15/20 minutes of Seated Yoga with Kat
Remainder Open Chat
- 1:30 PM Wednesdays:
20 minutes Strength and Stretching-Focus
is Dumbbells, Resistance, and Stretching
with Kat
- 10:30 AM Thursdays:
15/20 minutes of Trivia with Lars
Remainder Open Chat
- 1:30 PM Thursdays:
20 minutes Seated Tai Chi with Lars
- 7:00 PM Thursdays:
45 minutes iRest Yoga Nidra Guided
Meditation with Matt
- 10:30 AM Fridays:
30 minutes Jackie J. Show Friday Feast
(showcasing new and delicious recipes)
Remainder Open Chat
- 1:30 PM Fridays:
20 minutes Seated Aerobics Class with Kat

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GATEWAY GI

General Information

NOV 2020

Nov 10 -

BOD Meeting

11:30am via Zoom

15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

Nov 11-

OFFICE CLOSED

Nov 26 to 27-

OFFICE CLOSED

DEC 2020

Dec 8-

BOD Meeting

11:30am via Zoom

15 pts for non-BOD mbrs

Dec 17 -

Qtrly Mbr Meeting

1:30pm via Zoom

15 pts for mbrs

Dec 24 to 25 -

OFFICE CLOSED

Dec 31 to Jan 1 -

OFFICE CLOSED

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

Welcome to New Members

Nicole Fuller • Paul Lovelace

In Memory of

Carl Cox of Edwardsville, IL	03/22/2016
Kenneth Koester of St. Louis, MO	06/09/2020
George Cowan of Troy, MO	06/11/2020
Russell Bainer of Wichita, KS	07/15/2020
James Williams of St. Louis, MO	07/27/2020

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.

Ronnie Anderson • Steven Cathey • Kevin Jackson •
David Kliros • Matthew Nichols • Jerold Reynolds •
Joseph Roberts • Laurice Sappington • Henry Thilking •
Willis Walker

**NVWG Team St. Louis
@ New York City
August 8-13, 2021**

The VA New York Harbor Healthcare System is honored to join the National VA and PVA Team to host the 40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New York City in the summer of 2021. The National Veterans Wheelchair Games poses an excellent opportunity for Veterans and their families to experience the worlds largest stage in New York City. Look out Big Apple, you are about to be amazed at what our outstanding Veterans can accomplish through adaptive sports!

Make sure to keep up to date by checking <https://www.wheelchairgames.org/> for all information and planning needs. If this will be your first time attending the NVWG, please contact Gateway PVA for further information on possible assistance. For more information, you can reach out to Coach Charley at Charles.wright6@va.gov



Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers has Expanded

This program has expanded for veterans with 70% or more service connected disability and in need of in-person care. The program now covers service connected injuries on or before May 7, 1975; it has always covered those after September 11, 2001. The VA will pay for family caregivers (by VA definition) directly for those hours assisting with activities of daily living (ADL). Please contact your social worker for an application and go to <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5533>.

We proudly support Gateway PVA



If you have a **service-connected disability**, you may qualify for VA funding assistance for wheelchair accessible vehicles or driving modifications. If your current mobility is more than two years old, you may even qualify for a brand new conversion.

St. Louis North

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Toll-Free: 877.501.8267

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Paralyzed Veterans of America

Gateway Chapter

1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center
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