

November/December 2021



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ETERANS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY OR DISEASE, LIVING LIF

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NEED TO UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION?

DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?

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Contact us at one of the following:

Gateway Chapter PVA 1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center St. Louis, MO 63132

314.427.0393 or 800.426.4058 Fax 314.427.4183

info@gatewaypva.org

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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 to info@gatewaypva.org or via US mail at the address shown above.

OFFICERS

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APPOINTMENTS

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

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 Vacant, National Service Officer 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

> PVA National Liaison VP Josue Cordova



New Gateway Communications

In this time of social distancing, Gateway is going to start a new program to put you more easily in touch with our service officers, our Executive Director and myself. If you have had trouble reaching service officers in the past, please contact the office and we will set up a Zoom call for you and a service officer to answer your questions on VA benefits or perhaps your appeal, or any other questions concerning the VA. We will also start, beginning with November 18, with the third Thursday of each month at 11 AM making available a Zoom call with our office and a service officer to answer any question concerning benefits from the VA, PVA, and Gateway in particular. If you have questions about our various grants for housing accessibility, generators, vehicles, or hand controls, please contact the office and we will send you a link to the Zoom call. We'll try this new program for a few months to see if it is helpful.

Gateway PVA FY21 Audit

We have just completed our most recent audit and it was I think our most successful year. Our program expense ratio was 90.4%, meaning out of every dollar we spent, a little over \$0.90 went to members and programs for members. Most impressive was the fact that we spent \$641,338 on programs and members. That's the most we have ever spent on programs and members and I'm sure more than any other chapter spends on their members. Included in that number was \$172,536 for accessible vehicles, \$69,109 for accessible housing grants, \$14,843 for hand controls, and

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Stanley D. Brown

\$60,500 for generators. As stated in the first paragraph, please feel free to call the office with questions or sign up for one of the Zoom calls.

PVAction Force

Many of you have already used PVA's Voter Voice to access the simple application to express your opinion on various pieces of legislation. Below you'll find the notice and a QR code you can use the photo app on your smart phone to have a direct access to the application. If you have any problems accessing the application, please contact the office.



network, led by Paralyzed Veterans of America, that actively takes action on vital issues affecting Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders, and diseases, like MS and ALS. Free and open to all Americans, the group takes part in petitions, receives important legislative alerts, and more!

Join PVAction Force today and help PVA "Make An Impact Today and Everyday."

Jack Buck/Gateway PVA 25th Annual Golf Tournament Fundraiser

We held the golf tournament fundraiser on October 5, after skipping last year, and cleared \$81,625 from the tournament. Much to my happy surprise, we had 12 members and associate members come to the tournament in these difficult times. All of us coming made a big difference in showing our support for the golfers and helps our efforts to raise funds.

PVA Fall Board Of Directors Meeting

I attended the Fall BOD meeting in Orlando October 17-October 21, 2021. Everyone in attendance was required to show proof of vaccination and sign a waiver for attending, similar to the protocol for attending the National Veterans Wheelchair games recently in New York. Four of the thirty-three chapters chose not to attend or they had no one able to attend. Two of the board members had positive Covid tests right before the meeting. Of particular interest is the fact we continued to move forward on selling our current national headquarters in Washington DC and chose to rent one floor of an office building three blocks from our current location. The new space will be considerably smaller than the current ten story office we currently occupy.

In Person Gateway PVA Board Meeting

Starting November 9, 2021, we will again hold in person board meetings and also do a hybrid model where people can call in to a Zoom call. To attend in person, you and your attendant will need to be vaccinated and sign a waiver to attend. Later we will email everyone and ask for a copy of your vaccination card and a signed waiver. More information will come out in November.

FROM THE DESK OF GATEWAY CHAPTER'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chris Blanchard

QUARTERLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

The Quarterly Membership meetings are held via Zoom due to not being able to host them at the Jefferson Barracks VA for the time being. The next meeting will be December 16, 2021 at 1:30pm. Make sure that we have your email, and keep an eye out for an email from our Administrative Assistant, Amber Lee, the week prior asking who would like the Zoom link to join. These meetings are a great way to stay updated on what the Chapter is doing.

HAND CONTROL GRANT

Non-service connected members, after exhausting any eligible modifications through the VA, may receive funding to obtain and have hand controls installed. Members must obtain two bids/quotes from reputable sources to obtain and have the necessary equipment installed for hand controls to drive the vehicle. The bids will be presented at an upcoming Gateway Board of Directors meeting for approval. Members must also have proof of completed hand control training. Gateway will pay the vendors directly after the work is successfully completed. Be sure to NOT have the work done prior to the Board

approval, members will not be reimbursed after the fact.

GENERATOR GRANT

This grant is for the amount of \$5500 or less, and will only be paid to contractors after the work is done, or vendors after delivery. Grants can be applied to a portable generator (which should cost less than the \$5500) or go toward an automatic permanent home generator (which will cost more than that grant amount). In either case, portable or permanent home generator, members are required to obtain two bids for the same product or scope of work. If the cost of work exceeds \$5500, the member is responsible for the remaining amount. Photos of work before and after must be submitted to the Chapter by either the member or the vendor. Lien waivers must also be submitted to the Chapter.

Natural Disaster Guidance: Hurricane Ida

by Thomas J. Murphy, Acting Under Secretary for Benefits

School Attendance

• If your school is, or was, temporarily closed due to Hurricane Ida, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will consider your attendance as continuous and your benefits will not be affected.

• Students using Chapter 33 (Post-9/11 GI Bill) or Chapter 35 (Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program): As long as the enrollment was submitted prior to Hurricane Ida, no further action is necessary to continue to receive benefits.

• Students Using Chapter 30 or 1606 (Montgomery GI Bill) should continue to verify their attendance until further notice as if the school did not close, doing this will ensure that benefits are not affected. Students may verify their attendance, using the WAVE website or by calling 1-877-VACERT.

• Please contact our Education Call Center at 1-888-442-4551 (Mon. – Fri., 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST) for any questions about your GI Bill benefits. If you're unable to contact us by phone, you can send us a secure inquiry through the GI Bill Help Portal and place "Hurricane" in the subject line.

• If your school remains open, but you are unable to attend (i.e., if you had to relocate as a result of the natural disaster), VA is unable to continue GI Bill benefit payments. When you are no longer pursuing classes, your school must report the termination to VA as soon as possible.

Loan Guaranty Program

• VA provides information online about policy and procedures regarding natural disasters related to VA-guaranteed loans

• Loan Guaranty Service will engage with every Veteran with a VA-adapted home located in the impacted disaster region to determine if the Veteran sustained property damage to provide further assistance in rebuilding

• Mortgage servicers can extend forbearance and other mortgage options to Veterans with VA-guaranteed loans in the affected disaster areas, whose ability to repay their loans has been impacted directly or indirectly by the disaster

Benefit Payments

We have identified 1,855 Veterans who receive their VA benefits via paper checks and have provided the following information to our contact call centers on how to best help affected Veterans:

• If a Veteran or beneficiary indicates financial hardship, the contact center agents must request a one-time special payment address where a replacement payment can be sent.

o This can be a Direct Deposit account (into which VA can issue an electronic funds transfer (EFT) / direct deposit payment) or a mailing address out of the area impacted by Hurricane Ida (to ensure the check can be delivered). Affected ZIP codes where post offices are closed can be found at the below link, the USPS updates this information routinely.

• VBA can issue a same-day EFT payment to affected Veterans. To do this, the Veteran needs to enroll in Direct Deposit.

• If Veteran callers do not have a bank account into which they can receive direct deposit, VA has established the Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP) to give Veterans and beneficiaries access to military-friendly banks and credit unions they might not otherwise be able to access due to lack of awareness, individual credit history, and / or legal history. Veterans can find more information about VBBP at the https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/ banking.asp

• If Veterans call us, they can change their address or switch to direct deposit over the phone.

Insurance

• VA provides assistance to help ease the hardships of those affected. VA offers Instant loan Approval online and expedited same day processing for policy loans when Veterans contact the Call Center.

Continued on Page 13

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** 9389 Natural Bridge Rd. St. Louis, MO 63134 Local: (314) 989-1010 Toll-Free: 877.501.8267

St. Louis South 980 S. Highway Drive

Fenton, MO 63026 Local: (314) 292-5150 Toll-Free: 877.501.8267

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We're here to help! Call us today or stop by and take a test drive.

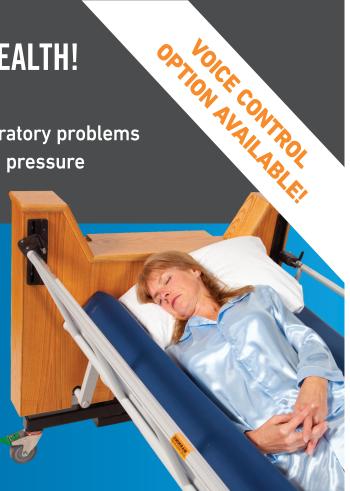


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WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Michael Sims Precious Smith Lewis Young

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 contact the Gateway office with current contact information for the following members:

> Steven Cathey Nelson Donovan Lynda Hauth Jarid Hill Kevin Jackson Robert Melchior Joseph Roberts Laurice Sappington Donnell Thames Willis Walker

IN MEMORY OF

Charles Cecil of Terrace, FL	02/16/2015
Raymond Boyer of Alma, AR	12/17/2019
John Bryant of Weston, MO	08/05/2020
Ralph Jones, Jr. of Riverside, MO	01/26/2021
Michael Pangburn of Camargo, IL	05/30/2021
Michael McEnaney of St. Joseph, MO	06/08/2021
Rickey Marsh of St. Genevieve, MO	07/26/2021
Charles Lauderdale of Louisville, KY	08/11/2021
Kip Lackey of Cottage Hills, IL	08/13/2021
Rene Peterson of Independence, MO	08/21/2021
James McDaniel of St. Louis, MO	08/27/2021
Richard Blake of Overland Park, KS	09/24/2021
Glenn Mobley of Oxly, MO	09/24/2021

GENERAL INFORMATION



NOVEMBER 9 at 11:30am

Board of Directors meeting Via Zoom (contact office for link) and in person w/proof of COVID vaccination and signed waiver 15 points for nonBOD members

NOVEMBER 11 OFFICE CLOSED

NOVEMBER 25 to 26 OFFICE CLOSED



DECEMBER 14 at 11:30am Board of Directors meeting Via Zoom (contact office for link) and in person w/proof of COVID vaccination and signed waiver 15 points for nonBOD members

DECEMBER 16 at 1:30pm

Quarterly membership meeting Via Zoom - contact office for link 15 points for members

DECEMBER 23 to 31 OFFICE CLOSED 80 South Hwy Drive Valley, Park, MO 63088 866-327-1600



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Want To Improve Your Bowel Function?



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.

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I wanted to say "thank you" to the VA for building a new gym for us veterans to reunite in and for the new pool and bowling alley which are also in this building. The gym isn't just a place for us veterans to reunite, it's also where the NVGAG team practices Bocce ball, shuffleboard, basketball and other events. It's better than the old gym because it has air conditioning so it's not hot and the pool is nice. The water is warm and it also has a spa treatment area. On Wednesdays, I go for exercise sessions to help with my balance. The bowling alley and the billiards room are nice. The new lanes are different because they are synthetic floors and not wood like the old lanes, but overall a beautiful facility. As I said, the gym is very useful in helping with my physical therapy and helping me to practice for the Golden Age Games. As for the pool, I use it for doing water exercise and snorkeling and that helps with maintaining my balance.

Hello. This is to thank the Gateway PVA for the Cardinals tickets that they give me every year. Thanks for the memories and the fun. Okay, while at the game me and my friend saw two double plays and saw the Cardinals score one run. The seats we had where box seats right behind home plate. As you know, the stadium was not that full at the beginning of the season and they have the big screen all around the stadium.

The section was closed in and has air conditioning. The food was great and the people were nice to us. And even though we didn't get the chance to go back stage with the players, we did get the chance to talk to a few of the players. It was a rough game and the Cardinals lost 6 to 1, but we still enjoyed the game. Thanks again PVA. Looking forward to going to the game next year. GO CARDINALS!

Just wanted to say that I enjoy having fun with other veterans at the Trout Lodge Outdoor Adventure. Going out kayaking with friends and playing bumper kayaking, and having fun on the zip lining and horseback riding. Me and Charlie the horse got along real well. I like rock climbing and I sure miss all my friends out at Trout Lodge. I will be glad when we can go back because I miss seeing the bald eagles and other fun stuff to see and do. The hotel is nice with the rooms right on the lake and the staff and food is very nice. This is a wonderful place to go and I get to do my favorite water sports. We watch the eagles soar, have pontoon boats for fishing, go tubing and water skiing. I like shooting using a 22 caliber rifle, playing Bocci ball with my fellow veterans and going on the zip line trying to shoot the target as i go by. I also do rock climbing and pole climbing and the last time I was out there and reached the top. I miss you Tout Lodge and will be glad when you reopen.



SCI/D Therapy Team update:

Fall is here, and we have more exciting updates! We have added an experienced OT to our SCI team. Her name is Kayla Bayne, and she will serve primarily on the inpatient SCI rehab team for now. We are always excited to welcome fresh ideas from staff new to our VA SCI rehab team, and we hope you have the opportunity to meet Kayla on campus soon. Kayla is filling a part-time position, and we hope to add more time to this position as our inpatient and outpatient clinics continue to grow.

We have also thankfully been able to support Kat Mcdonald as our primary SCI VVC Outpatient Wellness program coordinator with a temporary position. We hope to be able to fill this as a full time position very soon. The SCI VVC Wellness program started in response to the Covid pandemic. Our team learned that this was a great opportunity to connect veterans with SCI with one another and to our SCI team- and we plan to continue beyond the pandemic. We serve veterans with SCI across 7 states, and we can expand class offerings to veterans from other SCI centers easily through this virtual technology. Class offerings are typically 2x/day, at 10:30 and 1:30 CT, and include a variety of classes including Tai Chi, Stretch and Strengthen, Boxing, Yoga, Aerobics, Trivia, Mental Health wellness group, and a cooking class with our SCI dietician. If you haven't connected through VVC- you really should give it a try! VVC stands for "VA Video Connect", and it is a secure, virtual platform to connect you with VHA staff. If you would like more information, please contact me and I am glad to share more details on this wonderful programming.

The holiday season is quickly approaching. Our SCI rehab team would like to thank our Gateway PVA family for continuing to support us through these challenging times. We are definitely seeing more of you in person in conjunction with your appointments, and we look forward to the time when it is safe to gather as a group again. Our inpatient veterans and staff truly enjoy the Thursday PVA lunches, but we sure do miss your presence at these events. We sincerely wish all of you a safe and happy holiday season.

If you have questions, concerns, or kudosplease contact me at Jacqueline.black@va.gov or 314-939-8711.

Cont. from Page 5

• In addition, we expedite same day processing and approval of the following policy actions:

o Withdrawals from dividend credit and deposit accounts.

o Extension of premium payment grace period.

o Extension of reinstatement deadlines. o Processing of death claims.

• The Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (OSGLI) is following disaster alerts that are issued by each state department of insurance in the event of natural disaster. They are expecting an alert from the state of Louisiana shortly. These alerts generally provide a moratorium on lapsing or extension of premium payments. OSGLI follows these procedures for all-natural disasters.

Veterans may call the Insurance Center at 1-800-669-8477 or OSGLI at 1-800-419-1473. For more information on benefits, visit our website or call us free at 1-800-827-1000.

Thank you for your continued support of VA and our joint partnerships.

Hello to all! It has been a very long time. I'd like to use the excuse of I've been too busy, but it's more along the lines of "The Covid Laziness Disease" and like most people, I'm snapping out of it. Hopefully people are coming to their senses and knock-itoff with being afraid of just being cordial and you yourself be careful. If you feel ill, stay home, invest in a thermometer, which is one big thing. It's time to realize life goes on.

In September of the years prior when I was a steady contributor to the newsletter I would say something about myself having a golf team. Well, I did. It was the usual suspects of my brother and my oldest nephew and two friends of my brothers. I believe we came in sixth place in their flight. My nephew won the 50/50 draw and donated it back to Gateway. He made me a very proud aunt. I had already left so I wasn't even there to give him the snake eye or to pressure him into it.

This is kind of very different. This is something I need to do for me. A few people know about this but I just recently lost my 20 year old nephew, Jackson who was close to me. He would have been 21 in November. Writing is how I can kind of get a release of anxiety and stress.

This is my version of a fish tail. The PVA Bass Tournament was in Marion, IL at Lake Egypt this October and I thought WOW I'm going to this. I need to get away from this house. I asked Martha Rampani, the PVA Bus driver, if she was interested and luckily she was. We went on Friday-Sunday. I had never been before so I asked, Rose Ganz, a regular attendee of the tournament, what was needed. She said two working rods. Besides golfing luckily fishing is his other love of my brother. The only problem was there were two rods there, but I can't use a fancy spinning reel. I use a spin cast where you push the release.

I'm stuck with one rod. I look over and there's a ScoobyDoo rod, which was my Jackson's. So I grabbed it thinking I would never have to use it. It was just a backup if something went wrong with your main one. I would use while my volunteer fixed the other. I just thought it'll be fine.

Well, we drive to Marion and check in at the Hampton. We then go to the marina. I had to register. Talk, talk and talk. We were then released to go back and try to sleep for a few hours before an early morning. Well, the day was here, but I was thinking it was too bright, sunny and warm. What do I know about this? Well, the horn was honked which means you cast your line out so it was cast and the one in charge said "whoever catches the first fish will win 5 dollars" and BAM, a fish. I told you what do I know about fishing and weather? Granted, but they can't be sardines. They have got to be at least 4 inches.

Ding-dong me thinking I would never have to use Scooby Doo. I am grateful I spotted it up on the shelf and decided to bring it as my back up. I was in for a surprise. My regular size rod was down for repairs. Stupid things like these only happen to me. Scooby Doo to my rescue.

We fished until the horn at 2:00. I feel there is a significance to this. I caught 21 fish. He'd be 21 this year. Scooby Doo was his. I think he was smiling on me that day.

Now, we go to the volunteer dinner. Granted this is a new thing for me so I have no idea of what it is about to happen. They start calling winners for the shore-line fishers. I had no idea cash was even involved. No one ever told me that. I thought a participation medal or small trophy. It is fun when you're catching fish. EWE the sweet smell of cash when you're doing something fun. I won second place to the tune of \$400.00. I donated \$200.00 to the PVA in memory of my young nephew. He would not have wanted to donate more.

Here we are on the third and final day. The third day is doubles day. I was teamed up with our one and only LaRoy Smith. Apparently someone thought my spot was prime. They got there way early and took my spot. It was fine though cause we moved further down, cleared out brush and got another spot under a shade tree. It was good.

LaRoy and I managed to get third place for \$125.00 each. I'm still kind of perplexed to get cash for a fun thing.

Well, this is my little fish tale, but it comes with a morale of a story. You probably heard this many times, always hug your loved ones an extra time because you never know when it's going to be your last.

Kindest Regards.

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Gateway Chapter

1311 Lindbergh Plaza Center Saint Louis, MO 63132

Current Resident or





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