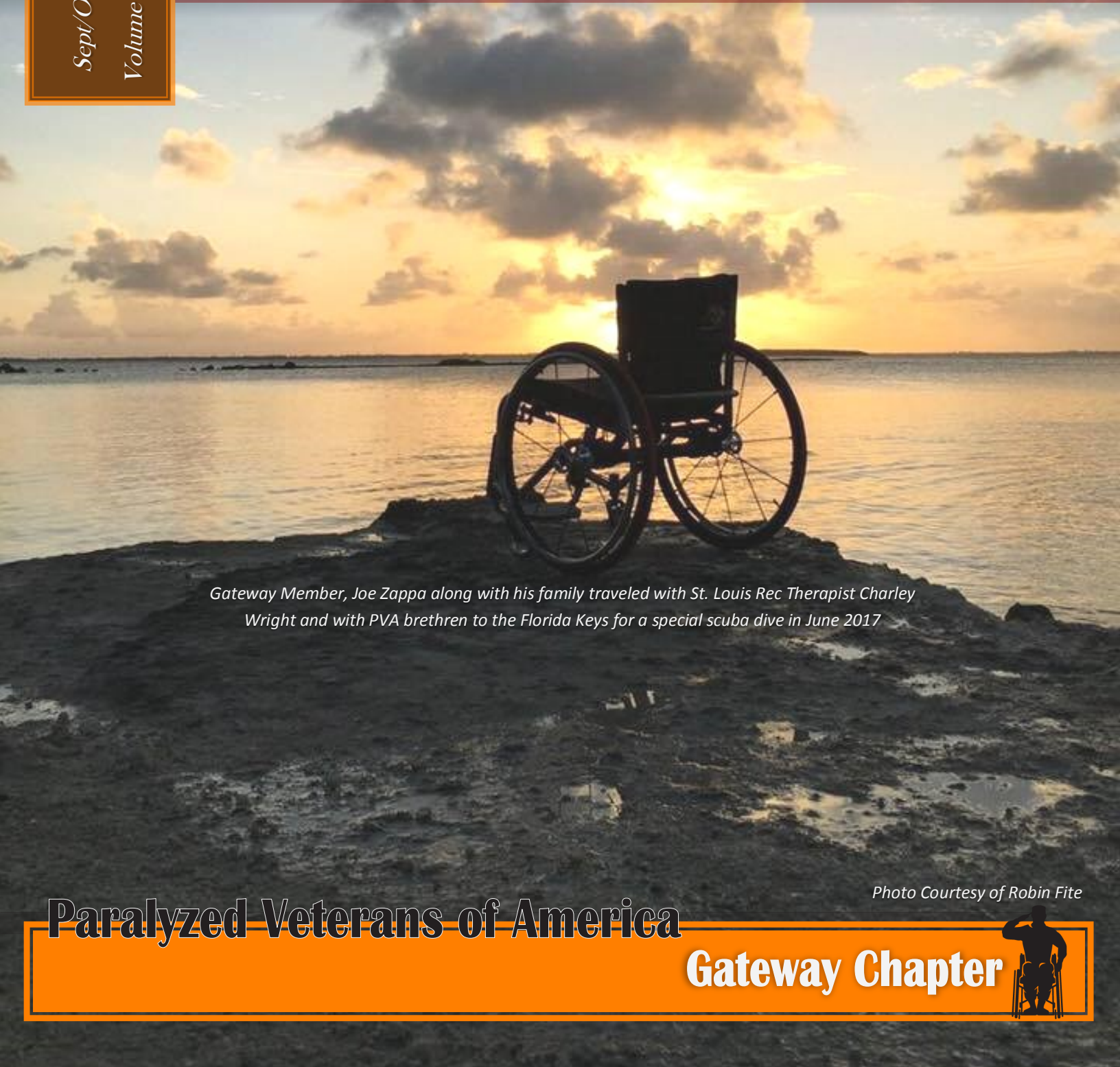


# Gateway Gazette

Sept/Oct 2017  
Volume 50 Number 4



*Gateway Member, Joe Zappa along with his family traveled with St. Louis Rec Therapist Charley Wright and with PVA brethren to the Florida Keys for a special scuba dive in June 2017*

*Photo Courtesy of Robin Fite*

**Paralyzed Veterans of America**

**Gateway Chapter**



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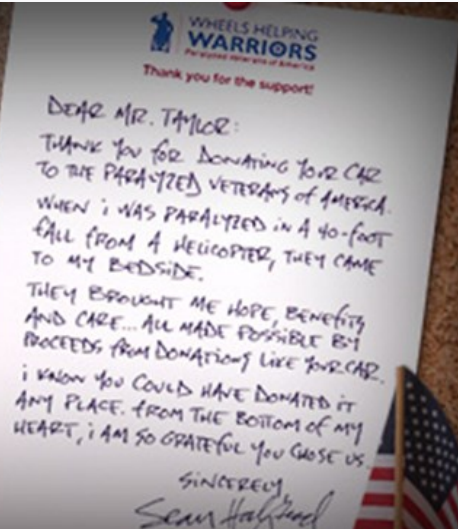
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# **Paralyzed Veterans of America**

## **Gateway Chapter**

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# President's Message — Fall 2017

By Stanley Brown



In the last fiscal year, July 1, 2016 through June 31, 2017, Gateway spent \$113,868 on home generator grants, \$98,223 on home accessibility grants, and \$101,973 on vehicle grants including hand controls. The Chapter also purchased two seats for the entire St. Louis Cardinals home season as well as 10 Kansas City Royals games and two seats for the entire Kansas City Chiefs home season at a total cost of \$15,888. Our annual Jack Buck/Gateway PVA Golf Tournament and our investments, made these member expenditures possible. The tournament is put on entirely by volunteers, who also secure most of the live and silent auction items sold at the tournament. We still need gift certificates from places (restaurants especially) that our members frequent. I waited 1½ hours at a local hotel last week to get a certificate from “the manager who had the authority.” It is absolutely imperative that we show up in numbers between 10 AM and 1 PM at the golf course to show our presence and support. You’re not asked to do much other than roll around and be visible (our military experience should help with that) and be in the lineup for the shotgun start at 12 PM. The tournament will be at the same course as always, the Landings at Spirit golf course in Chesterfield, Missouri. Call the office if you need directions. Attendance will be worth 20 participation points, PLUS we will be giving away by lottery to one of our members, two box seats (one wheelchair accessible space and one “regular” seat) to that night’s Cardinals-Cubs baseball game. You will be given the tickets after the drawing on September 26 at the golf course.

## The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017

You may have seen this on the news recently, and even seen PVA’s Executive Director Sherman Gillums next to the President, at the signing of this new law. The Act (law) endeavors to speed up and improve the VA benefit appeals process that has veterans waiting years for their appeals to be decided and address that often times those decisions are inconsistent and appear to be arbitrary. Sherman and PVA staff were crucial with other Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), in pursuing and testifying before congressional bodies, for both Houses to pass and the President to sign the new law. Between Fiscal Year 2015 and Fiscal Year 2017, the number of pending appeals rose from approximately 380,000 to 470,000, a 20% increase, despite the infusion of considerable funding to address the problem. The new law creates three “lanes” for veterans’ appeals, including the “Local Higher Level Review Lane” in which an adjudicator uses the same evidence considered by the original claims processor; the “New Evidence Lane” in which the veteran can submit new evidence for review and has a hearing; and the “Board Lane” in which jurisdiction for the appeal would transfer immediately to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals. The new law also requires the VA Secretary to submit periodic reports to Congress on the backlog status of pending appeals and the waiting period for decisions.

## VA Claims in 30 days, really?

By Jeremy Lile, National Service Officer

The Department of Veteran's Affairs is working to try and expedite the processing time of compensation claims for increase. The VA has rolled out a new program called Decision Ready Claim (DRC) processing. So NSOs across the nation have been or are currently being trained on the accelerated claim system. The primary purpose of the DRC initiative is to expand upon Veterans Benefit Administration's (VBA) successful Fully Developed Claim (FDC) program to better serve veterans and their families. The DRC initiative is a claims submission option through an accredited VSO/NSO representative which allows the VA to complete a claim within 30 days of submission. Veterans and accredited VSO/NSOs work together to obtain all the necessary records, medical exams, and VA Forms and then submit a complete DRC package through the DRC Upload Portal. The DRC initiative officially began on May 1, 2017, at the St. Paul Regional Office. On June 19, 2017, it was expanded to the Waco and Houston Regional Offices. Implementation to all the other Regional Offices began July 24, 2017, and will be complete by August 31, 2017. The DRC initiative is currently limited to claims for increase. DRC will not be used for conditions already at the authorized maximum, or claims for individual un-employability, pension/special monthly pension, restricted access, or claims from pregnant or incarcerated veterans. VBA will expand the type of claims that can be submitted via the DRC initiative as the initiative develops.

The basic process for filing a DRC is fairly simple. First of all, the VSO/NSO must ensure that there is a VAF 21-22 (POA) and an Intent to File form loaded up in the veteran's VA claim folder (VBMS). Then the VSO/NSO must determine if the veteran is even eligible for an increase. For example: a veteran that is service connected for Tinnitus at 10% is not eligible for an increase because that is the maximum authorized. If the VSO/NSO determines that the veteran is eligible for an increase, they must work with the veteran to gather evidence to support the claim. Recommended evidence is testimony and statements, medical records, personnel records, financial records, VA Forms, and Disability Benefit Questionnaires (DBQs). It is imperative to make sure the evidence is not only current, but also relevant for increase for the desired disability and that it has a reasonable possibility of substantiating the claim. The next step is for the VSO/NSO to schedule an appropriate exam for the veteran, the VA will determine if the exam is necessary.

Once all the pertinent evidence is gathered, the VSO/NSO will need a completed VAF 21-526EZ signed by the veteran in order to file the DRC. Then a decision should be rendered 30 days later. Because VA has a Duty to Assist, if more evidence is required, then the claim will be processed as a normal fully developed claim and the 30 day expedited processing is dropped. Therefore it is important to keep it as clean and simple as possible. Only submitting what is pertinent to the claim increase. Lastly, make sure the evidence is current and compelling enough to get the quick decision. For more questions, please call me at (314) 253-4480.



## 22nd Annual Jack Buck / Gateway Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America Golf Tournament

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

The Landings at Spirit Golf Club  
180 North Eatherton Road  
Chesterfield, MO 63005

10:00 a.m. Registration—Lunch—Putting Contest  
12:00 p.m. Shotgun Start  
5:30 p.m. Awards Dinner, Program & Live Auction

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# GATEWAY GI

## General Information



## 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.

Jeffrey Ford • Troy Bucklew • Eddie Dillard • Randy McGahan

Frederick Claxton • Harry Knoblauch • Joe Reese

## Receive Gazette via Email

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](mailto:amber@gatewaypva.org), or Executive Director Chris Blanchard at [chris@gatewaypva.org](mailto:chris@gatewaypva.org), if you would like start receiving your newsletter electronically.

## 2017 National PVA Shooting/Archery Clinic





# Sports Report

By Mike Norris, Sports Director

July 2017 was another busy month for the Gateway PVA sports team. On July 5<sup>th</sup> the team was in route to Naperville, Illinois. This quiet suburb of Chicago was the site of the 2017 Boccia Ball National tournament. The Gateway/St. Louis VA Boccia team, known to all as Cluster Busters, were among approximately two hundred Boccia athletes to compete in the four day event.

Upon our arrival we checked in to our motels and then moved through the processing procedures needed to classify and schedule so many athletes for the competition. At every turn into a new room or down the next hallway there seemed to be an old friend to catch up with or an old rival to verbally spar with. Sometimes it was both. We let it be known that St. Louis was there to uphold our reputation of winning.

The first competition was for individuals only. One on one - head to head - competition where you not only try to win the game but you try to score as many points as possible. There can be no mercy because total points scored in the tournament could be the difference in moving on to the next level of competition.

The team was proud to see some of our teammates on the awards podium. In the Open class, Cluster Busters had two athletes rise to the top. Larry Porter took the Gold Medal and Terri Fuda won the Bronze Medal. For Terri, this was her best showing at a National Boccia event. She is an up and coming player who just keeps getting better. In the BC4 classification Scott Richards won the Silver Medal. In the BC3 class our very own Joey Avellone took the Bronze.

Up next we moved into the Pairs Competition. Once again St. Louis had several Medal winners. Joey Avellone and his partner Austin Hanson brought home another Bronze in the BC3, and Scott Richards and his partner Adam Burnett won Silver in the BC4 and Mike Norris and Doug Barnes and Ruth Kult won Gold in BC5.

So you can see some of us are staying busy. We keep meeting and practicing and preparing for the next competition. We invite you to come out and join us. For more info on Boccia check out [usaboccia.org](http://usaboccia.org) and check your Gateway Gazette for upcoming events.







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### *In memory of...*

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Robert Simmons	Jamesport, MO	08/21/16
James Thomann	Springfield, MO	04/10/17
Ronald Mason	Florissant, MO	05/14/17
Mitchell Seiger	Herculaneum, MO	06/15/17
Dale Anderson	Sedalia, MO	06/22/17
Kelly Wilson	Fort Dodge, KS	06/30/17
Eldred Kornbostel	Chesterfield, MO	07/05/17
Mark Foltz	Columbia, MO	07/06/17
Holland Stephens	Andover, KS	07/09/17

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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# Life's a Garden, Dig It

by **Ethan Blumhorst**

**H**ow was your summer? Mine was pretty stellar, as I was lucky enough to spend it interning with the St. Louis VA Spinal Cord Injury Recreational Therapy Department. I could not have been more blessed learning from my supervisor Charley Wright and his partner in crime Matt Luijohan, as well as all the awesome veterans I was honored to assist. Being a veteran myself and living abroad for close to a decade, I was ready to spread my wings and find a new stomping ground. After a long search however, I found that I could not find a better place that serves veterans than right at home. Along the way, I also witnessed the PVA and specifically the Gateway Chapter was right there in all that they do for the community through events, local programming, and the grants allowing veterans to focus on and enjoy their abilities and not their disabilities.

Unfortunately I missed the Local Wheelchair Games by a week, but my first day started with trapshoot and lunch with folks blasting away clay pigeons from their chairs on their own or with the assistance of adaptive equipment. Seeing veterans with tetraplegia taking down targets was a sight to behold, and set the tone for the summer. The amount and variety of programs SCI rec therapy offers is dumbfounding, both for inpatient and outpatient vets. From adaptive bowling, archery, kayaking, handcycling, aquatics, golf, fishing, hippotherapy, and exercise programs; the week is usually jam-packed with opportunities for veterans to continue to push themselves, learn, and have fun in the process. Nearly each week with the community re-entry program, veterans are taken into the community to work on skills have been learning during active rehabilitation with inter-disciplinary team including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and rec therapy. Veterans travel to different local gems and learn to maneuver throughout different terrains and have fun while getting some chow besides hospital food. Gateway PVA also has a luncheon every month for those that are unable to make it out, and even ensure those unable to get out of bed get in on the goodness and go room to room so nobody misses out.

Boccia has become a prominent Paralympic sport, and the St. Louis Cluster Busters are at the forefront. As of the moment we have some athletes down in Colombia competing with the US team to show the world our grit and unbreakable spirit. I was lucky enough to be a sport assistant for a ramp athlete at the US Boccia Nationals last month where several brought back medals, including two bronze for us in singles and pair competition. I got to see an immense family congregate and compete in Cincinnati for the 37<sup>th</sup> National Veteran Wheelchair Games hosted by the VA and PVA as a coach, where Team St. Louis brought home 18 Gold, 11 Silver, and 7 Bronze medals. I also joined the LifeWaters family which is a disabled veteran scuba diving organization started by Charley years ago, and am fortunate enough to be at the beginning stages of becoming a Scubility buddy diver.

My experience seemed like a small tight knit family I was able to be with for the holidays. I am ending the same as a began—on a high note, with the PVA Boccia Nationals here in St. Louis. Going to be a great experience and the first held which I am proud to be a part of. I will also be joining Charley, Matt, and some great veterans to an outreach at the Marion VA shortly then hopefully the YMCA Trout Lodge, which could take a page in and of itself alone. I just wish to say thanks to all the veterans, the St. Louis VA, Gateway PVA, and Matt and Charley for a joyous summer and hope you all look into and take part in some of the glory that Gateway PVA and St. Louis VA SCI Recreational Therapy has to offer, because I've only discussed the meat and haven't even touched the potatoes such as the harmonica program, crafts and the Winter Sports Clinic.



# September 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4  LABOR DAY OFFICE CLOSED	5	6	7	8 Kansas City VA Mbr Mtg @11:45am	9
10	11  PATRIOT DAY	12 BOD Mtg. @ GPVA 11:30 am 15pts. Non-BOD Mbr.	13	14  Y5 TROUT LODGE	15  POW/MIA Recognition Day	16 12pm—4pm High Ride Elk 2445 Veteran Appreciation Day
17  POTOSI, MO	18  USAF Birthday	19	20	21 5/15 pts Member/Patient Luncheon @ Noon Quarterly Mbr Mtg. after Luncheon	22	23
24	25	26 20 pts 22nd Annual Jack Buck/GPVA Golf Tournament	27	28	29	30

# October 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9  OFFICE CLOSED Columbus Day	10 BOD Mtg. @ GPVA 4:00 pm 15pts. Non-BOD Mbr.	11	12	13  US Navy Birthday	14
15	16	17 11am-3pm Annual Membership Picnic @ Des Peres Park	18	19 Member/Patient Luncheon @ Noon 5 pts.	20 12pm—4pm American Legion Cluster Busters Championships	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31  Halloween				



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Gateway Chapter

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