The first week back in the office started 2014 off with a refresher for the SEPVA Board of Directors. A two day training was facilitated by National PVA’s Chief Financial Officer, John Ring; Parliamentarian, Tom Wheaton; General Counsel, Len Selfon and Ken Weas, Field Advisory Committee Chairman and Program Review Committee Member.

All ten current Board members and myself, Executive Director, were in attendance as we were brought up to date on legal, financial and program responsibilities of the Chapter.

This training was very open and informal and gave everyone an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on a variety of topics. This gave us a better understanding of how we can move forward into 2014 and build a stronger Chapter. In addition, we learned where our strengths fell and where we could use a little more attention. For many of us, this was an introduction as to full the responsibilities for our Board members, as many members are newcomers to the SEPVA Board.

Having the National representatives here with undivided attention for two days made for a very successful session. I am proud to say that our Chapter is looking healthy as far as our programs are concerned. With nearly three years with the Chapter now, I was still unsure if things were going as good as they should be. Granted, I have high expectations for myself, therefore, I will continue to give 110% to the Chapter. With what we learned during this training session, I foresee a stronger and more efficient Chapter.

Many thanks to the group from National for coming down to Georgia.
Experiment with different pictures and sizes to find the right image, without wasting time. Swap pictures by dragging and dropping one of the pictures onto the other.
As I write this letter it is getting very cold outside, but thankfully not as cold as the second week of January. It’s not supposed to get this down South, but it did. I talked with Kurt Glass our, our Chapter Hunting and Fishing Director, I learned that we’ve had several good deer hunts this winter with more coming up. If hunting and fishing is your thing, please give Kurt a call at the office and tell him to put your name and phone number on his list. As the future events come up, he can give you a call and let you know. As our newsletter is published bi-monthly we do not always have time to put them in the newsletter. We never know when someone will call him about a hunt coming up.

We had been quite busy with this past holiday season and making plans for the New Year. All of our Officers and Board members started off the New Year with two full days of training last week. National PVA sent four staff members from Washington DC down to refresh us on the financial, parliamentarian and program responsibilities of our Chapter. Now we are fully equipped to do a better job running the Chapter business.

This is an election year for Southeastern PVA and our election committee will be sharing information on how you can be elected as an officer or board member for the next two years, starting in October 2014. We need more members to step up and run for the board or one of the officers positions. Several of our current board members, myself included, will be attending the PVA National Convention in mid February in Orlando, FL. We will give you a report in the next newsletter with what comes from that.

Things are going pretty good at the SCI Center in Augusta, Ga. They are hiring more nurses and doctors, but at the same time we are losing a couple doctors, too. We are still several nurses short. Hopefully the construction on the unit will be completed soon. If you are not getting your supplies and equipment on time please let us know. If you have any kind of problem when you go to the SCI in Augusta let us know.

If you are applying for benefits please call one of our National Service Officers. They are trained to help you. All of them are listed here in our newsletter (page 17).

I hope to see you at one of our membership meetings throughout the year. We are currently working to get our outreach membership meetings scheduled in Alabama for this year. Watch for dates! I hope you and your family have a Blessed 2014. ♦

We strive to keep our membership address list current. 1. To make sure everyone is receiving their newsletter/magazine 2. To reduce expenses with return mail service.

Therefore, please make sure that we have your current mailing address on file. Even if you are away for a short period of time, please call the Chapter office and let us know so that we can make the temporary change.

Complete this form and mail in, or call our 800 number. Thank you!
MEMBERSHIP REPORT

by: Al Evans

As of December 31, 2013 we have 2,074 voting members. Since the first of January we have had 5 members pass on to the Eternal Chapter of PVA; they will be greatly missed and continually loved.

Women’s Health

The Chapter is in the process of planning a Women’s Health and Information Conference to will be held in May, here at the Chapter headquarters (Augusta area). More information is to follow.

Please check out the Chapter website for updates as information becomes available.

Also the Salisbury VA is planning a Uniquely Able Women’s Conference in June. We will be posting more information as it becomes available. Both conferences will be open to the public.

Veterans Talent Exchange

Veterans can go to: http://www.vtx.jobs to sign up and search for jobs.

100,000 JOBS MISSION

Charleston VAMC UPDATE

Stand Down – Served 1,412 homeless and persons in need, 504 of whom are Veterans. On November 21, 2013, Secretary Shinseki announced a 24% reduction in Veterans homelessness since 2010.

thanks to wrap-around VA services including HUD-VASH, case management, medical and mental health care.

Tele-ICU – VISN 7 is establishing Tele-ICU services at its medical centers with ICUs in partnership with Cincinnati VAMC/VISN 10 Tele-ICU monitoring center. Tele-ICU is an advanced form of Telehealth that provides continuous monitoring of patients, even when local providers are out of the room; this does not replace existing bedside staff or services, but adds an additional layer of support; each ICU room will be equipped with video conference equipment allowing remote assessment of Veteran patients by Tele-ICU doctors and nurses and real-time communication with local ICU staff.

Walk-In Homeless Clinic – 3rd Floor M-F 9-11 am. Or contact Erin.Smith1@va.gov for program specifics.

PTSD/Mental Health Research Building – Construction underway of $9.9M 16,000 square foot addition that adds 27 exams rooms, 3 group rooms and 5 wet labs; completion scheduled later this year.

PVA Awareness Month – April 2014

The Chapter office is planning a number of events for April, the 67th anniversary of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. A list of events will be posted on the Chapter website as soon as final arrangements are made. We are not looking at just Sports and Recreation events but information seminars, and veterans benefit training.

If you have any ideas of possible events that you would like to try, please give the Chapter a call. If you think we could set something up in your area please give us a call and please be willing to assist in putting on the event.

Our Board of Directors has discussed trying to get Hospital Liaison Officer (HLO) at all our eleven VA Medical Centers in our catchment area. If you are interested in becoming more involved with your medical center and working to improve the Health Care of not only our member but all Veterans please give the Chapter a call.

Honor Flight: 

Any veteran is eligible for Honor Flights, WWII veterans have first priority. It is imperative that veterans get their applications in as soon as possible, since the flights need to be coordinated with other Honor Flights across the country. The website is: http://honorflightlowcountry.com

Wheelchair Cushion Inspections - ATL VARO

The Atlanta VA Regional Office – During a veteran’s visit, to the Atlanta VARO, it was found that a veteran had a concealed knife under his wheelchair seat cushion. Because of this situation, Security Guards will now check under all wheelchair cushions for weapons. Please take note and leave all weapons at home.
HLO News:

We submit the following as a list of findings in our visits to and communications with the patients as well as the staff of our SCI Hub:

- The CNVAMC SCI/D Unit currently has 13 RN vacancies. Nine RN positions are under recruitment. Seven nurses were recently interviewed and the results are unknown to us.
- There is a shortage of 1 Health Technician and 3 LPN vacancies at this writing. The SCI Unit is currently experiencing the following shortage of Doctors: 2 MD’s (with another retiring in January, 2014 and another out on FMLA until 29 January, 2014 (one MD position will be filled by Dr. Harmon on 26 January 2014 and the other vacancy will be filled by Dr. Nixon in March 2014)). We are also short 3 PA’s (one PA and NP position has been posted); 1 Social Worker, and 1 Pharmacist (position posted and selected but not yet filled.)
- Delays in prosthetics purchases and receipt of equipment remains a concern. When you encounter any problems please contact your PVA National Service office.
- Ongoing construction delays are adding to the daily complications of caring for our patients.
- An excessive number of “Call-In’s” creates a serious coverage problem. During numerous shifts there are only 2 RN’s on duty to cover 21 – 23 patients. Considering the acuity level of our members, this lean coverage could result in severe health consequences.
- The lack of a designated “Escort Service” continues to put a strain on our nursing staff. While escorting patients to off-site locations, usually 20 to 35 minutes per transport, they are unable to provide the bed-side care required.
- Activities of Daily Living training area in Therapy is nonexistent.

If we work together for the welfare of all veterans we can accomplish things that otherwise seem impossible.

Helpful Hints from SCI Home Care

By Kathryn Peters, LCSW

This month the Helpful Hints Column is about something near and dear to the SCI Patients, and that is physician coverage. The SCI Center announces changes with physician providers this year! Louis Scharff, III MD is retiring January 31, 2014. Dr. Scharff is a Medical College of Georgia graduate of 1959, and was board certified in 1966. Dr. Scharff joined the Augusta SCI Center 22 years ago, after a history of working in the community at Gracewood State School and Hospital and private practice. He was a member of the Army Reserves for 35 years. Dr. Scharff was very accessible to patients 24 hours a day. He will be missed greatly, and we all wish him relaxation and joy.

Robert Harmon, MD will be joining SCI January 27, 2014. Dr. Harmon graduated from UCLA Medical School in 1983. He is board certified since 1987 in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Harmon has 27 years of experience.

Another physician will join the SCI Center in April. He is a local provider with many years of experience. Efforts are underway to employ an additional provider to have a total of 8 clinical providers.

The Physicians are as follows:

  E. J. Stincer, MD Chief
  Kathryn Crankshaw, MD
  Michael Priebe, MD
  Dinesh Shah, MD
  Ronald Spearman, MD
  Marykutty Thomas, MD
  Robert Harmon, MD
  & two pending the hiring process
Southeastern Chapter’s Elections Are Coming Up In August

By: Jennifer Windham

We have officially started another election year for officers and directors for the Southeastern Chapter’s Board of Directors. Members that are interested in running for a position on the Chapter’s board are asked to send in a resume.

A “resume” is a brief description of who you are, your strengths, what qualifies you as a board member, what you have done in the past and would like to see done with our Chapter in the future.

Resumes with or without a photo, may be sent via email to me at the Chapter:

JenniferW@SoutheasternPVA.org.

You will find that all resumes printed in our Chapter newsletters through the end of July, to inform members of your interest and qualifications. ALL resumes to be printed in the newsletter are to be received by the Chapter no later than April 1, 2014.

Only in-person nominations with a resume will be accepted at the June 4, 2014 meeting at the Chapter Headquarters. Nominations will not be accepted without a resume.

An Election Committee has been appointed, consisting of: Larry Dodson, Al Evans and Chuck Turek. They have been appointed to review each resume that is submitted to the Chapter and ensure that the individual meets the following requirements:

1. A certified voting member of the SEPVA.
2. Member is in good standing with the SEPVA.
3. Confirm that individual has reliable/dependable transportation.
4. Confirm that the individual has the ability and is willing to make scheduled meetings.

Resumes will not be accepted after April 1st as ballots will be printed so that they are mailed out to members on June 27, 2014. Members will have until the 5th of August to have their ballots returned to the Chapter office. I will collect ballots from the post office box for the final time on August 5, 2014, as ballots will be counted at our August 6th Membership meeting. Any ballots received by mail after this date will be considered void.

Ballot are to be mailed. Hand delivered ballots will not be accepted. To ensure that your ballot makes it back in a timely manner to be counted, it is recommended that you return it by mail no later than July 30, 2014.

Please feel free to call the Chapter office if you have any questions pertaining to the election nomination process. ♦

CANDIDATE: AL EVANS

Hello, my name is Alphonso “AL” Evans. I will be running for President of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Southeastern Chapter, for the term of 2015 – 2016. I am a 25 year veteran of the U. S. Army. In 1995 after completion of SCI rehab at the Augusta VA, (then) President Charles Littleton asked me if I would be willing to complete the term, in office, of the retiring Secretary. I asked, “Just what I would have to do?” His answer was, “Check out the Chapter’s By-Laws.”

Turns out, that does even cover half of what the Chapter officers and Board of Directors must face to improve our mission and membership. That was April 1995 and I have enjoyed working with our members and Board of Directors every day since, serving as not only the Chapter Secretary but also the Sports Director.

After learning more and more about Veterans Health Care and Benefits, and the problems the Chapter faces each day, I feel it is time I step up in order work closer with National PVA and address our problems from the Chapter’s Point of View.

I am asking for your support in August when you receive your ballot. Please vote and mail your ballot back to the Chapter in September. ♦
CANDIDATE: CHUCK TUREK

For those of you who do not know me, allow me to introduce myself. I am Chuck Turek; I am running for the office of Vice President of Southeastern Paralyzed Veterans of America (SEPVA). I am currently a member of the Board of Directors, having been appointed to the board to replace an exiting board member. I also currently serve as the National Director representing SEPVA, as well as, the Advocacy/Legislation Director for the state of Georgia. I served with the 199th Infantry Division during the Vietnam Conflict and was wounded in action in 1970 resulting in my SCI. I have been dealing with the Veterans Administration and its various departments since my discharge from the Army in 1970. After returning home I was able to complete my doctoral education in clinical psychology and worked as a neuropsychologist and rehabilitation psychologist until 2001. I then opened a private practice until I retired on 2005.

I became involved with SEPVA not long after my retirement. I quickly learned that SEPVA is like no other chapter of the PVA. Not only do we have the largest membership, but the second largest membership area in the organization. This makes us unique and presents some interesting challenges. I believe that communication between the members and our elected officers is of the upmost importance. We need to keep a constant open dialogue between the two. I propose that we initiate a “panel of representatives” composed of one member from each of the 11 hospitals we serve. These panelists would act as liaison between the members served by these hospitals and the Chapter’s elected officers. The panel would bring awareness of the wants and needs of our members and any problems that may arise in a more expedient and timely manner.

I believe that I possess the skills to help bring a strong leadership for our chapter. I believe that my experience in working with people, organizing and running a successful professional office would be of benefit to SEPVA. Let us work together to not only continue the good work that our chapter is currently doing, but to improve and expand our programs for the benefit of our members.

ABLE Act Co-Sponsors Update

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act (S 313/H.R. 647) has reached an unprecedented number of Congressional co-sponsors: 316 in the House and 51 in the Senate. With more than half of the U.S. Congress supporting the bill, Congressman Ander Crenshaw (R-FL) and Senator Robert Casey (D-PA) and a bipartisan, bicameral group of bill co-sponsors and supporters called on Congress to pass the ABLE Act and provide an improved quality of life for individuals with disabilities through tax-free savings accounts.

The legislation would amend Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Service Code of 1986 to create tax-free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. The bill, first introduced in 2006, would ease financial strains faced by individuals with disabilities by making tax-free savings accounts available to cover qualified expenses such as education, housing, medical and transportation expenses. The bill would supplement, but not supplant, benefits provided through private insurance, the Medicaid program, the beneficiary’s employment and other sources.
House VA Disability Assistance Subcommittee Examines Adjudication of Complex Claims

On December 4, 2013 the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs conducted a hearing to examine how the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) adjudicates complex claims. The Subcommittee considers complex claims as those with multiple issues and claims for veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), veterans who may have experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST), and veterans who receive Special Monthly Compensation (SMC).

The most emotional testimony of the hearing was provided by a widow of a Vietnam veteran who has had a claim pending for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits for more than 23 years. Her claim has been denied and appealed many times due to different questions raised by the VA over the years.

Sherman Gillums, PVA’s Associate Executive Director for Veterans Benefits, testified on behalf of Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). Mr. Gillums explained that since complex claims involve veterans with catastrophic disabilities, PVA has a unique expertise given the nature of our membership. Our service officers have honed a unique expertise in developing and advancing the most complex claims in the system. Where Special Monthly Compensation claims are often the exception for most accredited representatives, they are common for PVA.

Gillums emphasized that while the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has made tremendous strides in reducing the backlog since launching its 21st century transformation initiatives, complex claims remain problematic because disability benefits questionnaires, evaluation builders, and rules-based calculators oversimplify cases that require critical thinking and inductive reasoning, not algorithms, to adjudicate with true accuracy. The problem in defining accuracy is complex. Gillums explained that “if by accuracy VA means the veteran generally receives maximum entitlement, then accuracy targets remain unmet.” A veteran with a catastrophic disability will usually receive an accurate SMC rating under VA’s definition based on limited evidence and binary rules but not the most accurate SMC rating possible that reflects the true extent of disability or need. This problem is reflected in the difficulties PVA service officers have experienced when submitting claims for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease). Since the passage of the presumptive rule on ALS opened entitlement to veterans and survivors, PVA has worked over 6,200 ALS claims, which has made our field staff well-versed in the issues with these complex cases and demonstrative in our insistence that they are timely and accurately adjudicated. In one particular case, a veteran diagnosed with ALS received notice that he needed to submit to a Compensation & Pension (C&P) exam to prove his need for skilled care despite presenting competent medical evidence of such need from his treating physician.

The rater, an experienced rating coach, was bound by VA’s quality-driven rule that C&P exams are mandatory, even though he had enough evidence to grant the claim at the (r)(2) SMC level. Unfortunately, the words "hospice" and "skilled care" noted in the medical records simply triggered the requirement to order a C&P exam in the name of quality instead of serving as prima facie evidence of imminent death thus substantiating entitlement based on need for regular skilled care. In this case, common sense gave way to a calculator, which is supposed to be an assistive tool in decision making, not a replacement for one's reasoning faculties.

PVA understands the dilemma VA faces under pressure to reduce the claims backlog while also achieving timeliness and accuracy targets. But not every aspect of this problem is a numbers game. In the case of complex claims, there are no shortcuts to doing them right. They require experienced minds that are free to apply common sense and proven veteran legal principles in the qualitative deliberation of claims with no black-and-white answers. Ultimately, we believe accuracy is measured by whether VA has provided the maximum benefit possible in these complex claims. ♦
Giving Injured Veterans A Camping Experience

By: Chuck Spilman

Paralyzed Veterans of America Southeastern Chapter members will be treated to a unique camping experience thanks to the generosity of donors who purchased special Christmas themed personalized ornaments and placed them on the *Lights of Love* Christmas Tree in space hosted by the Aiken Mall.

Sponsoring the tree, the Pilot Club of the CSRA, a volunteer service organization, is donating all proceeds to the Paralyzed Veterans of America Southeastern Chapter. This project sends Chapter members and their caregivers to Camp Will-A-Way near Winder, Ga., for a three-day camping experience at no cost to them.

Medical and therapy personnel from the Spinal Cord Injury Unit of the Charlie Norwood Veterans Administration Medical Center (CNVAMC), Augusta, Ga., provide necessary medical attention to the campers. VA employees that attend camp are paid employees during the standard work hours, but are volunteering their time to be there after hours to ensure that SCI patients are cared for and safe.

Southeastern PVA President Homer Cole said, “Seeing the broad enthusiastic grins on the Veterans’ faces as they coast along a zip line, free from the confines of their wheelchairs, causes caregivers and staff to applaud and shout their encouragement to their loved ones and patients.”

Other activities include fishing, pontoon boat rides, kayaking, archery and Boccia ball. Traditionally the last night of camp Charlie Norwood VA staff produce a lively, fun filled evening of games, music and dancing featuring wheelchair users and caregivers.

Camp Will-A-Way is not a tent and bed roll on the hard ground event. Members and their caregivers reside in up-to-date buildings, providing privacy and temperature controlled comfort. Meals are eaten in a large dining room. Campgrounds and buildings are extremely wheelchair accessible.

The seven foot tall *Lights of Love* Christmas Tree shone at the Aiken Mall from November 29 through December 23, 2013. Tending to the tree and receiving donations were Pilot Club officers Shawnda Scelsi, President and Elizabeth Copeland, President elect. Pilot Club members taking part were: Brandon Arant, Joshua Scelsi and Alexis Wren. Southeastern PVA members taking part were: Luther Clark, Donnie Gibson, Linda Hutchinson, Rex Lutz, Charles and Margaret Spilman.

Next Camp Will-A-Way is scheduled for May, 2015. If you are interested in attending camp next May, contact the Chapter or Recreational Therapy (Valarie or Suzanne) at the Augusta VA.
706-364-2688

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Groups Call for Advance Appropriations for All VA Accounts

WASHINGTON, DC—Today, the co-authors of The Independent Budget—AMVETS, DAV, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Veterans of Foreign Wars—expressed concern with the funding provided for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill being considered in the House and Senate. The omnibus bill provides funding levels for FY 2014 and advance appropriations for VA medical care accounts for FY 2015 that virtually mirror the recommendations of the Administration made in April 2013.

AMVETS National Commander John Mitchell expressed the organization’s disappointment with the Omnibus bill: “It is very disappointing that we are fully three months into the new fiscal year and critical funding needed to maintain services in the VA has yet to be provided,” said AMVETS National Commander John Mitchell.

While the veterans organizations doubt that the funding levels for medical care for FY 2014 and the advance appropriations for FY 2015 are sufficient to meet the continually growing demand on the VA, they expressed serious concerns with the reduction of funding particularly for Major Construction, as well as similar cuts in Medical Facilities. The Omnibus bill provides only $342 million for Major Construction, nearly $800 million less than what The Independent Budget for FY 2014 recommends, and billions less than the true need for construction funding. Additionally, the bill would slash funding for Medical Facilities, reducing that account by nearly $500 million.

DAV National Commander Joseph W. Johnston urged the following: “Unfortunately, this budget agreement contains the same inadequate funding levels proposed by the Administration for infrastructure and medical and prosthetic research. Congress needs to dramatically increase annual appropriations required to repair, renovate and replace essential VA medical facilities as well as boost funding for life-saving and life-changing biomedical research programs.”

While the veterans groups appreciate the modest increases provide Medical Services and the Veterans Benefits Administration, as well as Information Technology, they emphasized that more must be done. Specifically, the organizations have called for passage of legislation in the House and Senate (H.R. 813 and S. 932, respectively) that would make all of the accounts of the VA advance appropriations. Currently, only the medical care accounts are funded through advance appropriations.

Paralyzed Veterans’ National President Bill Lawson stated the following: “The last couple of years have clearly shown the benefits to the VA of having the health care system funded by advance appropriations. The VA health care system has been shielded from the severe negative consequences of political gridlock that ultimately led to a partial government shutdown last fall. It is time that the rest of the VA is afforded the same protection.”

The organizations will release the 28th edition of The Independent Budget—a comprehensive budget and policy document written by veterans for veterans—in February 2014. The document will once again call for sufficient, timely and predictable funding to be provided for all VA programs. Additionally, it will emphasize the need to end the partisan warfare that has jeopardized the health care and benefits of the men and women who have served and sacrificed for this country.

VFW National Commander William A. Thien expressed the following: “Our organizations and the millions of veterans we represent will no longer tolerate Congress leveraging veterans’ health and wellbeing to achieve unrelated political ends. It is time for Congress to put the interests of veterans and their families ahead of their own.” ♦
Expand Eligibility for VA Caregiver Support Services

Severely disabled veterans with a service-connected injury or illness do not have full access to caregiver support programs and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As a result of Public Law 111-163, the “Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010,” the VA only provides comprehensive benefits as part of the Caregiver Support Program to caregivers of veterans with a service-connected injury that was incurred after September 11, 2001. Specifically, these benefits include health care coverage through the VA’s Civilian Health and Medical Program of Veterans Affairs, a monthly stipend based on the care provided, and payment for travel and lodging when participating in medical appointments with a veteran.

The majority of PVA members are excluded from these VA caregiver benefits because of the arbitrary selection of the September 11, 2001 date; or because the law also excludes veterans with serious illnesses or diseases such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and Multiple Sclerosis (MS), both of which have a catastrophic impact on activities of daily living, and eventually leave veterans dependent upon caregivers. The need for caregiver support services does not change for service-connected, catastrophically disabled veterans based on the date of injury. No reasonable justification (other than cost considerations) can be provided as to why pre-9/11 veterans with a service-connected injury or illness should be excluded from the comprehensive caregiver program.

With this in mind, PVA fully supports H.R. 3383 and S. 851, the “Caregiver Expansion and Improvement Act of 2013,” as it would expand eligibility for VA caregiver assistance benefits to veterans who became injured prior to September 11, 2001. Additionally, we will advocate for legislation to expand eligibility for the VA Caregiver Support program to veterans who have incurred a serious illness or disease as a result of their service.

Report on Federal Employment of People with Disabilities

In 2000, President Clinton issued an executive order to increase the number of federal employees by 100,000. Little progress was made toward that goal, and in 2010, Executive Order 13548 required agencies to submit recruiting and training plans, increase retention and “return to work” of people with disabilities, and report results of employment efforts. This report for FY 2012 was issued in December, 2013.
Each Federal agency submitted a Disability Plan outlining goals and strategies, and employees from more than 56 agencies have been trained on recruitment techniques, the Schedule A Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities, reasonable accommodation, and the Department of Defense’s Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP). They have also received training on helping employees who become ill or injured on the job to return to work. (Under Schedule A, individuals with disabilities are eligible for excepted service positions within the federal government and to apply non-competitively to merit promotion announcements. Schedule A has been a strong tool to increase federal employment of people with disabilities. OPM recently issued final regulations, simplifying the Schedule A hiring process for job applicants with disabilities).

Major findings in the report include: There are more people with disabilities in Federal service both in real terms and by percentage than at any time in the past 32 years. People with disabilities were hired at the highest percentage in 32 years.

In FY 2012, total full-time permanent employees with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans, increased from 203,694 in FY 2011 to 219,975, an increase from 10.97 to 11.89 percent. In FY 2012, full-time permanent new hires with disabilities, including 30 percent or more disabled veterans, totaled 16,653, representing an increase from 14.65 percent in FY 2011 to 16.31 percent in FY 2012. Schedule A disability appointee new hires totaled 1,539, an increase from 0.98 percent in FY 2011 to 1.51 percent in FY 2012. Permanent GS 14 and 15 new hires with disabilities totaled 683, an increase from 12.24 percent to 14.65 percent in FY 2012.


**CMS Issues Final Rule for Medicaid Home and Community Based Services Settings**

On January 10, 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a final rule establishing new requirements that apply to Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). The rule, which was several years in the making, is of particular importance because it requires that HCBS settings meet certain qualifications in order to be eligible for Medicaid reimbursements. These qualifications include that HCBS settings should:

- be integrated in and support full access to the greater community;
- be selected by consumer choice from among setting options;
- ensure individual rights of privacy, dignity and respect, and freedom from coercion and restraint;
- optimize autonomy and independence in making life choices; and
- facilitate choice regarding services and who provides them.

The rule also identifies which settings are not HCBS settings and describes locations that will be considered institutional unless determined otherwise through some type of review process. There will be a transitional process for states to ensure that their waivers and state plans meet the new requirements.

Home and Community Based Services
By: Al Evans, Sports Director

**Heroes on the Water (HOW) Program**

If you know of any Vets that would like to go out and fish a Kayak please put them in touch with Scott Mahan, the Charleston, SC chapter coordinator of HOW program at: mahansc@gmail.com.

This is completely free to them including all kayak gear fishing gear and even paid fishing license. Depending on how far they come they will even them up in a motel/gas money/and lunch/supper.

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**National Veterans Wheelchair Games**

Here we are the 34th National Wheelchair Games preparations are here. If you need an application either give me a call or go the PVA or the 34th National Veterans Game website. Games are to inspire veterans to remain active year around and improve their Quality of Life, through Sports and Recreation.

The DEAD LINE to have your application into the Chapter is 4:30pm MARCH 6, 2014. You will need to contact either your SCI Coordinator or Primary Care Provider for your physical exam. [NOTE: You may notice that the requirement for wheelchair inspection has been removed. Wheelchair repair is not responsible for the condition of you chair or sport equipment. The athlete is to ensure that all their equipment is in good working condition. You need to bring your Owner's Manual and tools if assistance is needed. The VA also advises that you bring your VA Prosthetics card if the VA issued you the equipment.]

All room hold deposits are due no later then July 15, 2014. Price of room per night: ($155.00 + 15% tax = ) $179.03.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL THE CHAPTER!**

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2014PVA Bass Trail

2015The schedule for the PVA 2014 Bass Trail is now out. It can be found on www.pva.org. There are five stops on the 2014 Trail.

Florida Gulf Coast PVA, March 28-30, 2014,
Kentucky-Indiana PVA, April 11-13, 2014,
National PVA Tournament, April 18-20, 2014,
Mid-Atlantic PVA, May 30 – June 1, 2014, and
National PVA Tournament, June 6-8, 2014.

The 2015 Trail will begin in October 2014. Bids for the 2015 Trail are being planned now. This trail will begin in October 2014.

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We have been contacted by the Healing Waters – Fly Fishing Association of North and South Carolina. We are looking for veterans with disabilities that would like to learn fly fishing and going on such fishing outings. We are planning to hold fly fishing classes that would include casting and reeling. Even people with limited arm and hand functions can take part in this sporting event. If you are interested please give the Chapter a call.

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**Bowling Clinic in Monks Corner, SC**

The Swamp Fox Lanes in Monks Corner, SC and the Chapter are currently working on putting on another Adaptive Bowling Clinic. The date of the clinic is currently schedule for March 22, 2014. Give the Chapter call for more information.

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**BOCCIA BALL**

The newly formed Boccia Ball team at the Salisbury VA will be play against the team from Raleigh on March 1st. The will be practicing February 3rd and March 10. Please contact the chapter for more information.
ATTENTION MOUNTAIN HOME, TN MEMBERS:

Fain Grogg, from the Mountain Home, TN area has shared that a small group of hand cyclist in that area. They are growing...not all are veterans. If you are interested in getting involved in Wheelchair sports in the Mountain Home, TN area please check out the new Facebook page: SCI Mountain Home VA at https://www.facebook.com/groups/488801697853085.

Picture to the right is from the 2013 Eastman 10k race, Kingsport, TN. They had four hand cyclist and one push rim.

Another great activity in Knoxville, TN is the adaptive climbing program for anyone with a physical disability. Check out this link for further information: http://www.gocatalystsports.org/

Further information about any of this is attainable from:

Fain Grogg  
James H. Quillen VAMC  
Mountain Home, TN 37686  
PH. (423) 979-3502

INTERESTED IN SALT WATER FISHING?

Are you interested in Salt Water Fishing and would like the opportunity to go?

The Chapter has been approached by individuals with boats, who are willing to take veterans out of the water for a day of salt water fishing.

These boats are able to handle wheelchairs and people with disabilities. Please give the Chapter a call if you are interested. Serious interest only; We don’t want you to not show up after we arrange the boats.

Disabled Sports USA Far West

(Lake Tahoe) – Invites all-expense paid  
ABILITY CAMP – 4 DAYS/3 NIGHTS  
March 31 – April 5, 2014.

This program serves severely injured military and their guest. Eligible participants include active duty military and veterans with permanent physical disabilities such as amputations, traumatic brain injury, spinal core injury and vision loss.

To apply, go to: http://dsusafw.org/militarycamp.pdf, and email application to cindy@disabledsports.net, or call Cindy at 530.581.4161 x202.
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Daylight Saving Time Begins Top Events and Things to Do

- Move your clocks forward 1 hour before bed on Saturday night.
- Go to bed an hour earlier Saturday night.
- Get outside and enjoy the extra hour of daylight.
- Replace the batteries in the smoke alarm and carbon dioxide monitors.
- Clean out the medicine cabinet. Dispose of all medicines properly.