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While I am putting this article together, our National Director Paul Stewart, Board Secretary Lee Baker and our Executive Director Jennifer Windham were in Maryland at the National PVA annual convention. Later in this newsletter our National Director will provide an article on the outcome of the convention.

These last two months, April and May, have truly been the busiest for the chapter. April saw the VA semi-annual Camp Will-A-Way which had over fifty attendees. The impact that the camp had on the patients shall be fully realized in their future integration back into everyday life. In May we had the annual convention, the VA 2K walk and roll at the Augusta Riverwalk, Green jackets baseball game and the support dinner for the Augusta Fisher house.

On a very personal note, in April I went to the ER at the Augusta VA and was immediately admitted into the SCI ward. At all of our meetings and in speaking with new injuries, I always say to listen to your body and it will tell you the truth, and of course I didn’t listen to mine. I had been having cold sweats and spasms which I ignored, that lead to me being admitted, within days the UTI got worse. I developed pneumonia and being laid up made my break down worse. Six weeks later I am still in the hospital but doing a lot better. The reason I am making this personal note is I need to thank a lot of people, I can’t say how other chapter boards react or prepare, but our Board is always willing to jump in and do what is needed to support the chapter and keep things going. Our Executive Director Mrs. Jennifer Windham has always gone above and beyond. She ensured that everything the chapter needed to do, to provide for the Camp Will-a-Way was taken care of.

Administrative Assistant Alicia Barber, Alan Washington chapter Vice President, Lee Baker chapter Secretary, board members Twila Adams, Joe Willis and Keith Thompson went to work with Recreational Therapists Valerie McNary, Suzanne Kenricks and their team of nurses, support staff and volunteers to ensure that camp was a huge success. I want to thank you all for going above and beyond to help our members acclimate themselves back into everyday activities. I want to thank Edward Jennifer Windham for keeping National PVA, our National Liaison Mr. Ken Weas and myself informed on all chapter business.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games are fast approaching and I want to assure all participants for our chapter, that despite the fact that I will not be in attendance this year, will be well look after by our board members attending. Remember to be safe, have fun and keep on rolling.

Hopefully when the next issue prints, I’ll be out and raising hell again.

PVA’s Government Relations staff continues to collect stories from both members and non-members living with disabilities, regarding problems that you have experienced during air travel. Please visit www.AirAccess30.org and share your story.
Press Release

Paralyzed Veterans of America “Cautiously Optimistic” on New VA Patient Record System
Streamlined patient record system could fulfill critical care component for clinicians

WASHINGTON, DC—Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans) today expressed restrained yet hopeful support of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary David Shulkin’s announcement the VA will adopt the same Electronic Health Record (EHR) System currently used by the Department of Defense (DOD) to maintain veteran healthcare data.

By adopting the current DOD system, known as MHS GENESIS, the VA intends to improve interoperability to streamline patient care and protect healthcare data. It will replace the VA file recordation system, Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) that it’s utilized since the 1970s.

“Removing VistA from the VA system of care is long overdue, and Paralyzed Veterans of America is pleased Secretary Shulkin has exercised his authority to declare it a priority,” remarked Associate Executive Director of Medical Services Lana McKenzie, RN, MHA, CCM. “It will be up to Congress to adequately fund it, and for the VA to correctly build and operationalize the new system before we will be able to declare this a complete victory for our veterans.”

To date, VA and DoD have worked with limited efficiency in two separate EHR applications in an attempt to create a consistent and accurate view of individual medical record information. While some interoperability has been established between the two agencies for key aspects of the health record, seamless care has been constrained by changing information sharing standards, separate chains of command, separate implementation schedules, separate program offices that have separate funding appropriations, and other related issues.

“Technological integration of DOD, VA and community sector care is a tremendous undertaking that could vastly improve patient care,” concluded McKenzie. “Timely access to patient data translates into timely diagnosis and timely treatment, so it is a critical component to patient care. If it comes to fruition, the new system could positively impact veteran healthcare for future generations. Paralyzed Veterans will be closely watching this initiative.”

♦
Thank you, Veterans for helping our Country in battle, and for sacrificing your lives to protect our country. I am very thankful for all you have done for our country, and for helping all the people in the United States. I'm very thankful that you made the United States a better place to live. An example of a good veteran was my grandfather. My grandfather was a marine in World War II. Him and his friend were in the bottom of the ship when a bomb hit it. Then the ship started to flood. He tried to escape and succeeded, but his friend got stuck under a pole. So he had to leave his friend, because if he had stayed he would have died too. Many people have died in the war, but they died for the good of their country. So I think all veterans should be respected and honored for all they have done for the United States.

Kimberly Babicke
5th Grade
Holy Cross Catholic School

The letter to the left was submitted during PVA's Veterans Day Poster and Poem Contest. This contest is done throughout the US. This was a special one we wanted to share with you. The photo above, is a creation by one of our SEPVA members, Cynthia Todd. She has inspired many in the Augusta area with her rock paintings. Including the rock painting that took place at SOAR Camp this past April.

**HEADS UP**

We have been notified there is an issue with the Automated Pharmacy Refill Line and we apologize for any inconveniences for our Veterans. IT is working to correct the issue with the Vendor and we encourage Veterans that need to place refill requests to use the online option www.MyHealth.va.gov or to call the call center line at 1-800-836-5531.
Photos from 2017 SOAR Camp

Photo credits to: C. Todd and S. Bleman and the Charlie Norwood VA photographer

Archery

Corn Hole

Fishing

Crafts

Scrabble

Bonfire Fun
On April 25-28th the CN VAMC Spinal Cord Injury Unit set out on its adaptive Sports, Outdoor Adventure on Recreation (SOAR) program at Camp Will-A-Way in Winder, GA.

It was spectacular! Over 42 Veterans with SCI/D and 15 Caregivers participated in this specially coordinated experience. Events included: Zip line, Boccia ball, motor rally, paracord bracelet making, fishing, exercise group, leisure education, archery, corn hole, movie night on the green, karaoke night, and a camp fire and cook out. Veterans and their caregivers were able to explore new leisure activities to increase their awareness of the many opportunities that are available to people with SCI/D.

Additionally scheduled, specifically for the caregivers, were a support groups, as well as, a special afternoon of massage and rock painting in appreciation of all they do.

Special thanks go to the Veteran’s Organizations, as well as, community volunteer organizations who supported this endeavor include: Southeastern PVA, VFW and Auxiliary Department of GA, Marine Corps League Riverfront Detachment 1132, and the Pilot Club of the CSRA. Without these contributors and supporters, we would not be able to host this event.

Additional appreciation goes to the CNVAMC Spinal Cord Staff, as well as, all of the departments within the medical facility who supported our efforts. We cannot do this alone. Departments include: transportation, logistics, supply and distribution, linens, facility management, pharmacy, warehouse, and many others. We are so fortunate to have witnessed Veterans with life altering injuries SOAR again.
Paralyzed Veterans of America Weighs in on the American Health Care Act Debate

As Senate prepares to debate legislation, questions remain for veterans

WASHINGTON, DC— In a May 3, 2017 letter sent to U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans) urged the House leaders to reject the latest version of the American Health Care Act (AHCA), citing conflicting information circulating about this legislation and the adverse impact it could have on paralyzed veterans, as well as other veterans with disabilities.

For veterans and Paralyzed Veterans’ members in particular, the letter stated, “the AHCA continues several problematic policies first identified with the Affordable Care Act (ACA), as well as new provisions that could affect the ability of many veterans and their family members to afford health insurance in the private market. The underlying AHCA bill would purportedly:

- Continue to exclude The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) beneficiaries—dependents of the most catastrophically disabled veterans—from the dependents’ coverage policy up to age 26.
- Fail to remove the prohibition on enrollment into the VA health care system for Priority Group 8 veterans, thus denying these veterans access to the principal health care system for veterans.
- Deny access to tax credits making health insurance affordable to anyone eligible for a host of other federal health programs, including those “eligible” for coverage under Title 38 health care programs. This would prevent many veterans who may be “eligible for” but not enrolled in the VA health care system from accessing these tax credits intended to help people buy insurance.”

By a vote of 217 to 213 on May 4, 2017, the U.S. House of Representatives narrowly approved legislation intended to repeal and replace major parts of the Affordable Care Act. As the Senate prepares to take up the issue, Paralyzed Veterans of America National President Al Kovach, Jr. today expressed hope that the Senate will set aside politics and confront the issues that made both the ACA and AHCA problematic for veterans with severe disabilities.

“Disagreement continues over whether eligible veterans will receive tax credits under the new law or whether the new law will actually prohibit it once enacted,” said Kovach. “Our Congress needs to take the lessons we learned from unclear provisions in the Affordable Care Act and ensure any new law is better than the status quo for veterans and dependents who have been largely overlooked.”

The measure is now headed to the Senate, where Senate leaders will face a new set of political and procedural challenges that could complicate the final passage of the House bill or will, most likely, require the crafting of an entirely new bill.

“For Paralyzed Veterans of America members and all of the nation’s veterans, health care is not a political issue. It is literally a matter of life and death in many cases,” concluded Kovach. “We are unconcerned with partisan arguments, political affiliations or even the title of the new healthcare law. We simply want our government to get it right.”
Wheels Helping Warriors Turns Donated Vehicles Into Support For Seriously Injured Veterans

Paralyzed Veterans of America’s national vehicle donation program empowers veterans suffering from spinal cord injury or disease

Southeastern US – Local Southeastern residents will have the opportunity to provide a better life for our nation’s veterans by donating their used vehicles to benefit Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans), the nation’s foremost advocate for servicemen and servicewomen with spinal cord injury or disease. For 70 years, Paralyzed Veterans has ensured these veterans receive the benefits earned through their service, as well as funded research and education for cures and improved care for individuals with spinal cord injuries, or spinal cord diseases such as multiple sclerosis (MS) or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). This type of support is made possible, in large part, by fundraising programs, such as its Wheels Helping Warriors vehicle donation program.

The program is supported by 27 chapters nationwide, including in Southeastern and accepts all vehicles, regardless of age or condition. The vehicle is sold at auction and the money raised goes directly back to Paralyzed Veterans to serve its mission of helping our country’s most catastrophically injured veterans. The stress-free donation process is fast, easy, and individuals even qualify for a tax deduction based on the sale value of their vehicle.

“As a family we felt very proud to be able to contribute,” said Matt Lemire, Wheels Helping Warriors car donor. “As the father of two younger children we saw this as an opportunity to teach them about the importance of giving back, and that with this donation our family could show our support for a worthwhile program that assists those who have served their country.”

Paralyzed Veterans’ Wheels Helping Warriors vehicle donation program gratefully accepts a variety of vehicles, including cars, airplanes, motorcycles, boats, RVs/campers, semi-tractors, farm equipment, SUVs, horse trailers and trucks.

“Our vehicle donation program raises critical funds that allow our organization to deliver key benefits to injured veterans in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico,” said Al Kovach Jr., Paralyzed Veterans’ National President. “One vehicle at a time, with the help of thoughtful individuals and families, we are able to give back to those in need.”

Paralyzed Veterans makes it simple to participate in Wheels Helping Warriors. Visit www.SoutheasternPVA.org or call 855-744-0782 to schedule a free pickup. The average pickup time is 24-28 hours from the time of the request.

About Wheels Helping Warriors

Wheels Helping Warriors is Paralyzed Veterans of America’s vehicle donation program. Individuals can donate a variety of types of vehicles and have them picked up at no charge. Donations are tax-deductible and funds raised from vehicles sold at auction help directly support programs that improve the quality of life for paralyzed veterans and their families.

About Paralyzed Veterans of America: Paralyzed Veterans of America is the only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated solely for the benefit and representation of veterans with spinal cord injury or disease. For 70 years, we have ensured that veterans have received the benefits earned through their service to our nation; monitored their care in VA spinal cord injury units; and funded research and education in the search for a cure and improved care for individuals with paralysis.

As a partner for life, Paralyzed Veterans also develops training and career services, works to ensure accessibility in public buildings and spaces, provides health and rehabilitation opportunities through sports and recreation and advocates for veterans and all people with disabilities. With more than 70 offices and 34 chapters, Paralyzed Veterans serves veterans, their families and their caregivers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico (ParalyzedVeterans.org). ♦
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Paralyzed Veterans of America’s National Convention Summary

By: Paul Stewart, National Director

This year’s convention was held in National Harbor, Maryland. In attendance were the Executive Committee, National Board of Directors, PVA Staff, Executive Directors, and other members of PVA. The meeting is for preparing the organization for the next year’s budget, to discuss issues regarding members and veterans, election of officers, and opportunities to bring up new business.

President Al Kovach after three years of being the President for PVA, has stepped down from the position. He will still have a role within the organization as the Immediate Past President. I would like to thank you Al, for all you have done for the organization as our National president.

Our new elected of officers are as follow: President- David Zurfluh, Senior Vice President- Ken Weas, Vice Presidents- Joe Fox, Charlie Brown, Hack Albertson, and Robert Thomas, Treasurer- Tom Wheaton, and Secretary- Larry Dobson. Congratulations in your position. Keep the passion we all have for the organization.

The convention started off with a presentation from VA Secretary, Dr. David Shulkin. He shared information about the direction in which the VA is heading, assuring that the VA wasn’t going in the direction of closing and sending our veterans in the private sector. Dr. Shulkin did mention the different choices our veterans would have for care. Staffing concerns for the VA healthcare were addressed for the whole system, especially for the SCI.

I would like to thank Oxon Hill High School Choir and AFJROTC for doing a wonderful job of presenting the colors and assisting in the presentation of the Chapters. Following the Opening Ceremony, awards were presented. One of the awards was the Speedy Award, for non-members. This award is usually given out at the end of the convention, however, since Senator Robert Dole had a prior commitment. Therefore, we presented this award to him at this time. He very humbly accepted the award. He has done so much with our veterans and people with disabilities. Senator Dole thanked us all for what we do; from being veterans and for what we do as an organization. It was a pleasure to see him accept the Speedy Award.

The meeting sessions of the convention were very informative, especially when going over resolutions and budget. We were able to resolve the resolutions pretty easily and to come up with a budget.

During the Convention additional awards were given out to chapters, members, and non-members for their contribution to the organization, as well as, the community and the VA. I feel that our chapter could very well be in the running for some of these awards in the future, but we all have to work for it. I would love to see one of our members or someone we know, accepting an award and representing our chapter in the near future.

There were a few issues that came about during convention, in which National PVA will be discussing with the hotel. First off, was the hotel accessible lift at the pool, it had been broken since the convention’s beginning. If I had wanted to swim while there, it would’ve been my responsibility to find other means of accessing the pool (people to lift you, etc.). The lift remained broken throughout the convention. Here is a kicker, the hotel charges a resort fee, in which part of it cover the cost to access the pool. Yes, many of us did it in the past: we got on the ground and pushed ourselves into the pool. Then to exit the pool we would pull ourselves out or had someone to assist us. The accessible lift would have given us more independence and less worries of hurting ourselves or the need for someone assisting us. I don’t think it is fair that we would still have to pay for something if we can’t use it.

Secondly, the hotel shuttles, to and from local areas became an issue. There was a casino within a mile of the hotel. It is a good haul to get there especially on a warm day. The hotel offers free shuttle services to the location, as long as you show your room key. I spoke with a front desk person to verify this information. I was advised where to go and the hours of operation. So the next day, my wife and I decided to take the shuttle shopping/casino. The shuttle there was not an accessible shuttle. There was a sign which gave you info as to what you needed to do to request an accessible shuttle. This was a lengthy process. I called the phone number listed. Then, I was advised to go to transportation on 1st floor and they would have transportation for me. I got there and verified that there was still no cost
to using this shuttle. While I was there waiting, a hotel representative was on the phone with a driver. From what I could hear on my end, the shuttle driver was unfamiliar and hesitant to take us. When I got to the shuttle, the driver was unaware of the tie down or how they work. I asked him if the tie down had any electrical component he needed to work which he said no. So after about 10 minutes of trying to connect the front tie downs, he did finally find an electrical switch to control the tie downs. Obviously, he had had no training on how to use the equipment. With this experience, I called the contact number to share my experience. Getting a return shuttle to the hotel was just as much an ordeal. As I waited for a ride, I met up with another PVA member and he advised me the driver was on his way. When the driver was there, he told me he would be right back. He came back picked me up. He too didn’t know how to use the equipment. When asked if this was his first time driving the vehicle, he answered yes. When we got back to the hotel, I gave him some advice as to how to use the equipment and the reasons behind it. I explained the liability he takes, when not securing the person or the wheelchair. As I headed into the hotel, he informed me that I owed him $15.00 for the ride. I had to get management of the hotel to resolve the issue. Lack of communication on the hotel’s behalf and the shuttle transportation, was responsible for all of this. The transportation should have been clearly familiar with the security of persons in wheelchairs, or else it shouldn’t have been advertised to the PVA people, that shuttle service was provided (cost free).

A fire alarm rang while we were in the meeting session on the second floor. There wasn’t much communication about what to do, I guess the ignorance on our part would be just sitting there waiting for direction. You are talking at least 50 people with disabilities, most in wheelchairs just sitting there. None of us were heading towards doors/exits. In my opinion, this would be a priority for all, to know how to respond, should something like this occur. Knowing where the nearest exits are located. This should be covered at each meeting, since most of the times it is in an unfamiliar location for most of us. ♦

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**SCI Outing to the Augusta GreenJackets Game May 12**

*Take me out to the ball game!*
VA HEALTH CARE ACCESS
By Earnest Hill
Senior National Service Officer

As of April 12, 2017 the VA has released an update 49 Health Care Access Update. The release is to increase transparency within the system of care. They have launched a new Access and Quality Tool that will insure an easy way to understand a way of accessing patient wait times and quality of care data. The tool will give more accountability, more information about VA services and will hold VA to a higher standard of care. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin has stated that no other healthcare system in the country releases this type of information on wait times. The tool is used to empower Veterans to make choices with healthcare that works best for them and their families.

For additional information The Access and Quality Tool can be found at [www.accesstocare.va.gov](http://www.accesstocare.va.gov).

As a foot note:

The Paralyzed Veterans of America’s need for information as it pertains to issues with getting medical care and equipment.

Since Paralyzed Veterans of America has been established as a Chartered Organization one of the organizations mission’s on the medical side is to monitor and make sure that our members are receiving efficient access to care.

We have been asked to request to our members through the local chapter’s to request that whenever you are having issues with getting access or delayed medical treatment or equipment to contact your local Chapter or National Service Officer located at your local spoke and or hub. For those whom that do not understand what Hub and Spokes mean let me explain:

Hub is the main SCI Center in your catchment area that conducts your annual exams and whom are responsible for Spinal Cord Teams that are located at the Out Patient Clinic’s. I would like to point out that it is very important that you go to the Hub once a year to get your annual examination.

Spoke is the local Out Patient Clinics in your area that has a small Spinal Cord Team that will take care of most of your basic care issues and equipment needs.

We are very concerned with making sure that you received quality care and that the Medical Centers are providing the services in a timely manner. Our Service Officers are not always aware of the issues that you may be having if you do not contact us so we can assist as needed and if determined that it’s a bigger problem we can compile names and numbers and present them on a National level to bring awareness and get a solution that will benefit all.

I want to thank all military veterans for their dedicated service to our great nation. ♦

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The flight attendant on our trip was handing out plastic pilot wings to some kids. As I stepped forward, she jokingly offered me one, but I passed. Pointing to the Airborne wings on my Army uniform, I explained, “The last time someone gave me wings, I had to jump out of the airplane.” ~ Just Giggle ~
Sports Report
By: Paul Stewart

Basketball
Abilities Unlimited of the Carolinas consist of Wheelchair basketball of all ages, Track and Field, and Adult Softball. The Charlotte Rollin Hornets (part of AU) had 4 of 5 teams compete in the National Wheelchair Basketball Association Nationals in Kentucky. This would consist of two Prep division teams, one Varsity team and Division 2 Team (adults).

For the Carolinas Conference in wheelchair basketball, there were four teams representing the conference. They were: Spartanburg Pistons, Triad Trackers, Fayetteville Flyers, and Triangle Thunder. Also at Nationals, representing Georgia, were teams from Blaze Sports and Shepherd.

Curling
Curling is growing more and more popular throughout the south. There are leagues in Wilmington, Charlotte, and Durham, NC; Greenville and Columbia, SC; and Atlanta, GA. Twila, Kevin and I belong to the Charlotte Curling Association. Curling isn’t all about the power it takes to move the rock across the sheet of ice. This is a sport where finesse and skill are utilized in order to win. This is my second year doing curling, and I have learned this over the time. In playing against Twila, I have learned that she plays her rocks better than me. I tend to force the rock down the ice and it wouldn’t do me any good. One of the interesting things to say about the Charlotte Curling Association, this past year we had the highest number of disabled members than any others in the United States.

I would like to see if it would be worth having a Curling Clinic this coming winter. Do you have an interest in something like this? We really have a great time. Yes, it may be cool so I recommend that you dress warm. You may say, “How can I curl, I’m in a Wheelchair?” or “I don’t have the strength.” But wait, WE play from wheelchairs. Players do not have to full strength. This is an ADAPTIVE form of this game. If you like the sport, you practice and you get better.

Hunting
I have to give it to the special hunts I have recently been on in North Carolina. “Back in the Woods,” “Glenola Baptist Church Sportsman For Christ,” and “Sawtooth Hunt.” These hunts are set up for people with disabilities. At these hunts they do a pretty good job at getting guides to get hunters out in the woods. They bring in hunters are of all ages. The number of participants are approximately 50 or more hunters (not including the guides). At each of the hunts, roughly half of them are veterans. As I’ve been to these hunts, some of the people become extended families and we look forward to seeing them again. In the past, NC has made exceptions for the hunting license for out-of-state hunters. If you plan to try to go to these hunts always make sure of this ahead of time. If you are interested in finding out about any of these hunts, you can look them up on Facebook.

While summer is now upon us, there are some other activities you can try: tennis, cycling, waterskiing, surfing, softball, and etc. I mention this because I feel everyone deserves to have the same quality of life, as everyone else. Yes, I know mention a lot about sports, maybe this isn’t your thing. So, why not try getting out and just go to your local mall. Just push around the mall and people watch, go to the park. Watch your children, grandchildren or favorite team play. Get yourself involved in something. Just get out!
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