







# Help mark 100 years

Aug. 1-4, 2020 Hilton Anatole, Dallas

This year, we'll kick off our centennial celebration at the 2020 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Dallas—where you'll find big hats and big hair, as well as a hotbed of history, art and sports. There will also be special events and displays that honor the 100 years of service DAV marks this year.

The convention is a time for us to recognize our top volunteers and hear from department and chapter leaders while providing useful training. It's also an opportunity to advocate for ill and injured veterans, enjoy the camaraderie of fellow DAV members, and take ownership of the organization by choosing our leadership and setting our yearly legislative agenda—all while allowing for a hearty dose of fun in this premier vacation destination.

If you're interested in history, start your visit off at the Fort Worth Stockyards before touring Dealey Plaza and its Sixth Floor Museum in downtown Dallas.

# TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

The Transportation Security Administration can facilitate the screening of injured or wounded veterans. After making flight reservations, veterans or their care coordinators should contact a TSA Cares representative by calling toll-free 855-787-2227 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and weekends and holidays from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time. A representative will either provide screening information relevant to the veteran's disability or refer the veteran to experts at TSA for help through the screening process.

Meanwhile, culture buffs can divvy up their time between Fort Worth's Kimbell Art Museum and the Dallas Museum of Art. And if you've brought the kids along, you can devote some time to both the Fort Worth Zoo and the Dallas World Aquarium, or keep cool in the Hilton Anatole's lazy river and splash pad.

Make your time in the "Big D" even better by taking advantage of free transportation options throughout the city. Jump on the M-Line Trolley in Downtown and head out to explore Uptown and the Dallas Arts District. Or find your seat on the D-Link, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit free shuttle service, to begin discovering Downtown and Oak Cliff in no time. No matter where you're headed, Dallas makes it easier than ever to start exploring all of the amazing places the city has to offer.

The DAV room block is currently sold out at the Hilton Anatole. Please visit the DAV event page noted below for a list of nearby hotels. Should a room reservation be canceled, that room will become available in our room block at the negotiated \$149 rate until June 28. We recommend periodically checking with the Hilton Anatole for available rooms by calling 800-445-8667. Be sure to say you are looking for a reservation under the DAV room block. You can also check availability online by going to the DAV event page and clicking "Reserve Online."



# Learn More Online

As response to the COVID-19 outbreak continues, please refer to the DAV National Convention website at www.dav.org/events/2020-national-convention for the most current information on this event.

# From the NATIONAL COMMANDER STEPHEN "BUTCH" WHITEHEAD



# Advocate responsibly this election season

has dominated the headlines, we can't overlook the fact that we are in an election year—and that we are fortunate to have as a right and a civic duty the ability to choose our nation's leaders.

With the political divide in our country seemingly growing exponentially each passing year, it's important that we maintain civil discourse and respect for the individual rights of others during the coming election season. Some people are single-issue voters while others may vote entirely along political party lines. Either way, it's a deeply personal process, and I encourage you all to actively support the candidates of your choice, for whatever reason you choose.

However, as a member of DAV, you have the responsibility to ensure your activities as a private citizen do not give the appearance that DAV supports or opposes any candidate, such as wearing DAV caps and shirts at political events. Doing so would violate our congressional charter, national Constitution and Bylaws, and the laws and regulations governing DAV's tax-exempt status. It's incredibly important that we do not stray from these guidelines.

I understand holding onto deep personal political convictions, but as our next presidential election approaches, I humbly ask you to please keep in mind that DAV is a nonpartisan veterans service organization with legislative goals that focus on wartime disabled veterans, their families and survivors. It is up to all of us to remember these bounds in the course of our personal political advocacy. I urge you all to go to DAV.org to find out more information about the do's and don'ts of election-year advocacy.

Most important to remember is that the values we share in the veteran community are far more important than the issues on which we personally disagree. That is why I ask you to amplify your voice at all levels of government to ensure veterans' issues are elevated to the level they deserve. From the proper implementation of the VA MISSION Act to securing benefits for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits, the American public needs to be aware of these issues, and it's up to us to make this happen.

President Lyndon Johnson once said, "A man without a vote is a man without protection." More than six decades later, his words remind us of the importance of voting and remain a poignant reminder that individuals are the drivers of our democracy. I have no doubt our many members, advocates and supporters will once again take on the mantle of leadership in their local communities during the coming election season.

We must, however, remember to do it responsibly.



# **Learn More Online**

Prepare for election year advocacy at www.dav.org/veterans/resources/election-year-dos-and-donts.

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- DAV, Independent Budget co-authors check in on the implementation of the VA MISSION Act by issuing a new status report.
- He was there when the first shots were fired at Pearl Harbor. Now, DAV remembers the life of Navy veteran Will Lehner.
- Mind, body and spirit: The VA's Whole Health program is charting big numbers helping veterans relieve pain and improve well-being.
- After suffering a traumatic battlefield injury, one man finds his calling honoring the lives of the fallen.
- COVID-19 may have slowed the nation, but it hasn't stopped DAV's mission. Learn more about what the organization has done to continue serving veterans.

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# From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT J. MARC BURGESS



# Exploring the options

s the nation continues to grapple with the spread of the novel coronavirus, we at DAV have made many adjustments to continue serving the veterans and families who rely on our programs and services.

This pandemic has upended virtually every aspect of our lives, and especially

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than **4 million** 

service-connected

disabled veterans

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never sought help

for those who are disabled and possibly more vulnerable to the disease, it is a time of great uncertainty and concern. Please know that DAV remains here for you, and I ask that you do your best to remain there for each other.

You can read more about DAV's response to the COVID-19 outbreak on Page 30

and stay up to date online at dav.org/covid, but I'd also like to draw attention to an issue that many within our community are facing, and that may be proving especially difficult to cope with at this time—chronic pain.

There are more than 4 million serviceconnected disabled veterans in the nation, and there are likely many more out there who have never sought help for their injuries or illness. We each experience pain and discomfort in our own way, and within the scope of our own diagnoses. Our own body makeup, our experiences and traumas all

comprise a very unique set of factors that determine what types of treatment we will best respond to.

The VA has been in the business of treating veterans for decades, and pain management has undergone a continual evolution as new methods and approaches have entered the scene.

> cannabis within the veteran community. and other so-called "street drugs" have also shown promise treating certain conditions (read more on Page 18).

Complimentary approaches to pain management and healing give veterans something else to

lean on while those treatments undergo clinical trials—and the Department of Veterans Affairs offers a host of different methods from massage and acupuncture to yoga and adaptive sports (see Page 22).

What works for me may not work for you, and vice versa. But many veterans have seen success by changing how they experience and treat their conditions, and are reporting happier, more fulfilled lives as a result. It worth exploring these methods and taking advantage of all that the VA offers as you seek to heal your body and mind.



### **Burn pits**

It was great to read the article "DAV-led toxic exposure legislation introduced in Senate" in the January/February issue of the magazine. Soldiers who served in the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan need to be assisted. As a Vietnam War veteran involved with burn pits in that war, it is disappointing to learn that Vietnam veterans are not covered by this legislation. *Arnold* "Earl" Cheal, Ellerslie, Ga.

The VA is doing its best to deny our claims and watch us slowly perish. Why does every generation have to have their "Agent Orange moment"? Learn from history, treat our warriors and fix this problem. Lisa Gudmundson, via Facebook

# VA disputes scientific findings on proposed Agent Orange diseases

Agent Orange has been proven to cause many diseases through changes at the cellular level.

Definitive proof for every disease shouldn't be necessary. Once Agent Orange exposure is established, it should be on the VA to show definitive proof disproving any veteran's claim related to Agent Orange. Lacking that, pay the darn claim. **Jeffrey Buss, via Facebook** 

Of course, the VA was going to disagree. If anyone is surprised by this, they have kept their head in the sand. The VA has been fighting against claims due to Agent Orange since I was a kid, and I'm 47 years old. **Thomas Manning, via Facebook** 

There has been a celebration regarding the Blue Water Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 passing. For me, the success is bittersweet because of the long-standing refusal

of the VA to recognize that veterans who served in South Korea had the very same exposures. From 1967 to about 1971 (according to the VA), the Civilian Exclusion Zone (CEZ) in South Korea was awash in toxins such as Agents Orange, Blue, White and Monuron. *Clayton Brown, Dallas, Ore.* 

### **Jesse Brown**

I was, fortunately, a co-worker of Jesse Brown for a dozen years before being retired from DAV. I saw his hands-on approach to training, and he did it himself to make sure everything was done by the book. His compassion for disabled veterans was in your face—it could not be mistaken. He just exuded it and instilled the same in all those around him. I saw him only briefly when he was secretary of the VA. When I did see him, it was evident that he never changed. *Larry J. Bowden, Des Moines, Iowa* 

[Jesse Brown] was incredible in so many ways. I have many memories. Some really funny and many inspiring. He was a real friend to me and my family. A great man gone way too soon. **Sandy Trombetta, Grand Junction, Colo.** 

# 'A daughter's duty' (VA dental eligibility)

The story of the Korean War veteran (January/February issue) who was wounded twice and not eligible for VA dental care shows how terribly flawed the VA dental

system is. I had the same situation with a Korean War veteran, with two Purple Hearts (he was also wounded in Vietnam and lost an eye), who needed dentures. He was not 100% service-connected. so he was not eligible. As chief of a VA dental service and a former enlisted Army combat medic in Vietnam, I tried to get legislation passed to give eligibility to any veteran who received a Purple Heart. It didn't get very far, which is such an injustice to those who bled for our country. John Hofer, Cross Plains, Wis.

Thanks, DAV! Doing it alone with the VA claims process is quite a challenging endeavor for our veterans and their caregivers. I am glad to see that DAV is always there to try and help them through this difficult process.

David Aragon, via Facebook

# The passing of Pearl Harbor survivor Will Lehner

Rest in peace, brother. Thank you for your service to our great country during a time that few can truly understand and for all of the sacrifices you made.

### Christopher Wells, via Facebook

I will say your name aloud to honor you for your service to our country and to give you the respect you so rightly deserve. May all who knew you and loved you be surrounded by blessings and comfort. **Noelle George, via Facebook** 

WRITE TO US Please send feedback to DAV Magazine, 3725 Alexandria Pike, Cold Spring, KY 41076, or via email to feedback@dav.org. We also welcome feedback on our Facebook (facebook.com/DAV) and Twitter (twitter.com/davhq) pages. We regret we are unable to acknowledge every letter due to the volume received. Letters are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety. Letters involving claims are referred to DAV's Service Department.

# **DAV** supports legislation to improve veteran caregiver benefits, programs

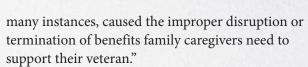
By Mary Dever

AV supports two pieces of legislation—introduced in both the House and the Senate—that would improve the current Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

The Transparency and Effective Accountability Measures for Veteran Caregivers Act, or TEAM Veteran Caregivers Act (S. 2216), was introduced in the Senate during the 116th Congress and would improve current policies by fully incorporating family caregivers within a veteran's care team, help establish clear standards for VA decision-making and communicating those decisions, and provide a smoother transition for veterans and family caregivers along the program's continuum of care.

The TEAM Veteran Caregivers Act would require the VA to recognize and record all severely injured veterans' family caregivers and require a minimum standard of information when decisions to disrupt or terminate caregiver supports are made. In addition, the bill would ensure family caregiver support is extended for at least 90 days after discharge from the program to ease transition.

"Family caregivers are the unsung heroes for thousands of severely injured veterans, as they not only perform complex medical and personal care tasks but are often the lifeline of many ill and injured veterans to lead dignified and independent lives," said National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. "However, mismanagement of the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers has, in far too



In the House, legislation has been introduced that would amend the law to allow the VA to assist caregivers who support the needs of veterans with serious illnesses related to military service.

The Support Our Services to Veterans Caregivers Act, or SOS Veterans Caregivers Act (H.R. 4451), requires the VA to provide benefits to thousands of caregivers assisting veterans with serious illness, a long-standing priority for DAV.

Under the VA's current program, caregivers of seriously injured veterans are provided assistance with training and technical support to manage their loved ones' care needs, but that benefit doesn't apply to veterans who become dependent on others due to illnesses such as Lou Gehrig's disease (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or ALS), cancer or other devastating illnesses due to toxic and environmental exposures in the military.

"This bill would authorize the VA to give the caregivers of veterans with devastating illnesses the same supports for which caregivers of veterans with severe injuries are already eligible," said Ilem. "Veterans who are seriously injured or made ill due to their service deserve equitable care and benefits—for themselves and their caregivers."



# **Learn More Online**

Follow along with updates to this and other legislation affecting veterans and their families by joining DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at davcan.org.

# Walking a familiar path

DAV benefits advocate calls on personal experience to help Vietnam veteran struggling with PTSD

By Matt Saintsing

care of" when mortars began to rain on the

Dennis Eggers before being sent

physical and psychological scars

of war, he sought VA benefits and

health care after an information seminar with DAV service officers.

**Bottom:** Having had personal

experience with PTSD from

combat, Army veteran and

wartime service.

DAV National Service Officer

Ben Fugate encouraged Eggers

to get the help he earned during

to Vietnam. Returning with the

American soil, Dennis Eggers struggled with the aftermath of Vietnam. Recurring nightmares would wake him in the middle of the night, bringing with them memories of the horrors he lived through and other signs of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Eggers enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1966. After boot camp and radio operator training, he volunteered for Force Reconnaissance—a special operations entity known for performing unconventional warfare behind enemy lines. But in December 1967, he received orders to deploy to Vietnam as a replacement radioman with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines.

Five months later, he was injured in combat while patrolling an area that had been the site of a battle the previous day.

"They had us pinned down, and we retaliated with everything we had," recalled Eggers, "from mortars to recoilless rifles to airstrikes."

The attacking force was thought to have been "taken

care of" when mortars began to rain on the Marines' position. Shrapnel peppered Eggers' right side and lodged in his eye, blinding it instantly. Doctors were able to remove the small shards of a mortar shell, but infection set in, causing Eggers to ultimately lose the eye.

He was medically

retired from the Marine Corps at the end of 1968.

The nightmares, Eggers thought, were "just part of the deal." For decades, he didn't seek help for his mental or physical health, both of which required attention. But that changed in April 2018 when Eggers, then the commander of DAV Chapter 5 in Elmhurst, Ill., met National Service Officer Ben Fugate, an Army veteran who supervises the DAV Chicago National Service Office.

Fugate conducted an information seminar for the chapter, and following his presentation, he asked Eggers about his health and overall well-being. The two discussed possible exposure to Agent Orange before switching to the topic of PTSD.

Despite experiencing nightmares and anxiety in crowds as well as being easily startled, Eggers thought he didn't have it, recalled Fugate.

That response was all too familiar for Fugate, who served in Iraq. He had the same outlook on his mental health when submitting his claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs. In 2008, Fugate was cruising along the streets of Mosul when a 1,000-pound roadside bomb hit his vehicle.

"I lost three guys right in front of me in that explosion," said Fugate.

Six months after being honorably discharged, Fugate decided it was time to apply for VA benefits, and his wife encouraged him to seek care for his mental health.

"We sat down to fill out the paperwork, and she said I needed to include PTSD," he said.

Fugate initially resisted but then reluctantly agreed. He told VA physicians, however, that he didn't have it. But when a VA doctor pressed Fugate with the same questions he would later ask Eggers, the picture became much clearer.

"I had to take a step back," said Eggers. "I had just gotten out of the military, been through several jobs and had angry outbursts."

He was diagnosed with PTSD and received treatment.



Dennis Eggers presents a check from DAV Chapter 5 in Elmhurst, Ill., to Holly Wright, manager of the Fisher House Foundation at the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital.

Fugate stresses he was able to assist Eggers because he was once in the same position. But securing the VA benefits

for Eggers unfortunately proved to be another battle. In September 2018, the VA approved Eggers' claim for heart disease, likely due to Agent Orange exposure, but denied that he had PTSD.

"I took it personally," Fugate added. "This is not right."

Following the denial, Eggers attended VA compensation and pension exams and started seeing a mental health professional. The VA deferred its decision over Eggers' PTSD several

times in 2018 before issuing its final decision in May 2019, which came back favorably. Eggers' rating was increased for combat wounds in his back and spine, and he was granted service connection for PTSD.

When Fugate called Eggers to tell him the good news, both men became emotional.

"It was something special," said Fugate. "You could hear the tears in his voice and how excited and thankful he was."

The recurring nightmare Eggers had been living with is, at times, still with him, but he said it is different now that he received mental health treatment.

"Before, the dream would have no ending. I would wake up and my heart would be racing because I thought I was back in Vietnam," he explained. "Now, the dream has an ending, and I'm able to deal with it better.

"I would not have sought out help at the VA if Ben hadn't pushed me," he added. "He said, 'Dennis, I know where you're at. I've been there, and I'm telling you help is available, and here's where to start."

# VA MISSION Act update

Where the law stands one year later



Critical Issue Update





The VA MISSION Act—historic legislation aimed at expanding access to and improving the quality of care for veterans—went into effect in June 2019. Now, a year later, DAV and the two co-authors of *The Independent Budget (IB)*, Paralyzed Veterans of America and Veterans of Foreign Wars, are weighing in on the status of the implementation with the release of *The Independent Budget Veterans Agenda for the 116th Congress: Critical Issue Update*.

The most critical issue, according to the *IB* co-authors, remains the full and faithful implementation of the VA MISSION Act. This time last year, the group issued a report containing 26 specific recommendations to help ensure that the compromises reached under this historic legislation would be effectively carried out.

This new report evaluates the progress on those recommendations—which primarily pertain to expanding veterans' access to high-quality, timely health care both through the Department of Veterans Affairs and community providers.

"Since the MISSION Act has only been in effect since last June, many of the reforms have not yet been implemented," said DAV Washington Headquarters

# "America's veterans have earned and deserve nothing less, and we look forward to working in collaboration with leaders in the VA and Congress to bring the vision of the VA MISSION Act to fruition."

The Independent Budget

Executive Director Randy Reese. "It's too soon to judge whether the law will ultimately achieve the intended goal of improving veterans' access to high-quality medical care, but it's important that we keep a close eye on the process."

The *IB* co-authors report that, overall, the transition of the VA's community care program from the Veterans Choice Program to the VA MISSION Act's Community Care Network was significantly better than the transition to the original Choice Program. However, of the 26 recommendations made in the 2019 report, only one has been fulfilled, 11 have not been fulfilled, and 14 are considered "to be determined," which indicates partial or no fulfillment, with aspects that cannot be fully evaluated at this time.

For each recommendation, the report gives a status rating, and in many cases, supplemental recommendations about how the VA, Congress or both can help to achieve the goal.

Among those recommendations that the *IB* rates as not fulfilled are conducting an open, transparent process for developing market-area assessments and strategic plans that actively engage veterans service organization and veteran stakeholders; the equal application of quality and competency standards across both VA and non-VA providers to ensure the highest level of care possible for veterans; and the creation of a tiered integrated network that places VA providers first and the Department of Defense,

federal partners and academic affiliates second when VA care is not accessible.

"DAV, in particular, is disappointed in the VA's failure to expand the comprehensive caregiver assistance program to support veterans injured prior to 9/11," said Reese. "That portion of the VA MISSION Act is something our organization fought very hard for, and the continued delays are just unacceptable."

The report is far from a final evaluation of the VA MISSION Act, according to the group.

"However, we believe it is imperative to establish these benchmarks early on to hold the VA and Congress accountable for the full and faithful implementation of the law, and ultimately, the reform of the veterans health care system," said the *IB* co-authors. "America's veterans have earned and deserve nothing less, and we look forward to working in collaboration with leaders in the VA and Congress to bring the vision of the VA MISSION Act to fruition."

For more than 30 years, the *Independent Budget* veterans service organizations have worked to develop and present concrete recommendations to ensure that the VA remains fully funded and capable of carrying out its mission to serve veterans and their families, both now and in the future.



The full report, along with the *IB* recommendations for fiscal years 2021 and 2022, can be viewed at independentbudget.org.



By M. Todd Hunter

At the halfway point of his tenure leading DAV through its centennial year, National Commander Butch Whitehead shared with members a quote from Sir Isaac Newton to summarize his experience at the helm of the organization: "If I have seen further, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants."

"You—the DAV members in this room and more than a million across the nation—are those giants," he told a roomful of dedicated veteran advocates who converged from across the nation for the 2020 Mid-Winter Conference of the State Commanders and Adjutants Association, held in late February in Arlington, Va. "You are the ones using our collective voice to advocate for America's veterans and their

families. And right now, this week, across the river in our nation's capital—there's no better time or place to use our strength to push Congress to do the right thing by those who've sacrificed.

"Keep up the good work, and go be a giant for your fellow veterans," he concluded.

DAV and Auxiliary members took that charge to heart, holding dozens of meetings focused on the organization's key legislative priorities and advocacy efforts before taking DAV's message to Capitol Hill and speaking directly with members of Congress and their staffs.

Throughout the four-day conference, participants discussed recognizing toxic exposures among veterans, including burn pits and Agent Orange; fully and faithfully implementing the VA MISSION Act; addressing gaps and inequities in programs and health services for women veterans; improving benefits



"You—the **DAV members** in this room and more than a million across the nation—are those giants. You

are the ones using our collective voice to advocate

for America's veterans and their families."

-National Commander Butch Whitehead

for spouses and survivors of disabled veterans; and strengthening veterans mental health care and suicide prevention programs.

At the event's opening session, Dr. Paul Lawrence, undersecretary for benefits for the Department of Veterans Affairs, spoke about the priorities and budget of the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as the long-standing cooperative relationship between the Veterans Benefits Administration and DAV.

"Thank you for the things you do—advocating for Blue Water Navy, not only for benefits but for the extra money we need to administer the benefits; advocating for our women veterans; and, finally, for your work with claims," said Lawrence. "Veterans write us and say, 'I'm having problems with my claims.' And then we go and investigate and they're doing it themselves. We encourage them to 'please contact someone at DAV. They understand this and can help you."

Attendees also heard from Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, executive director of the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS), who spoke about how the program focuses on community integration, research and implementation strategies to prevent veteran suicide.

"Suicide is a combination of a lot of different factors," Van Dahlen explained. "About 30 things need to go wrong simultaneously. If we can intervene in any one of those, we might save someone's life. But this work happens at the community level. That's why we need all of you, and that's why DAV will be a critical partner as we move forward."

Throughout the conference DAV also honored several dedicated veterans advocates for their outstanding efforts and achievements on behalf of the men and women who served.

"The recipients of this year's advocacy awards have illustrated an unmatched commitment to fighting for the best interests of veterans and their families," said Whitehead. "Veterans are a nonpartisan issue, and these honorees worked tirelessly to ensure our nation keeps its promises to our nation's heroes."

Sen. Sherrod Brown, a member of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, received the Veterans' Champion award; Sen. Dan Sullivan received the Outstanding Senate Legislator of the Year award; Rep. Julia Brownley received the Outstanding House Legislator of the Year award; and Dr. Richard Stone of the VA's Veterans Health Administration received the

# **Storming the Hill**



Members of the Department of Arizona met with Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, who serves on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.



Sen. Tammy Duckworth, an Army veteran and double amputee of the Iraq War, shares a laugh while meeting with advocates from the Department of Illinois. Duckworth is a DAV life member and the organization's 2008 Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year.



Members of the Department of Indiana met with Sen. Todd Young to discuss ways lawmakers on Capitol Hill can help disabled veterans.

Outstanding Federal Executive of the Year award.

The conference peaked on Feb. 25, when Whitehead testified before a special joint session of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees. Veterans and supporters packed the caucus room to maximum capacity in the Dirksen Senate Office Building for the hearing.

In his testimony, Whitehead detailed the aftermath of suffering a traumatic brain injury as a result of mortar attacks while deployed to Iraq in 2007.

"When I returned home several months later, I was still dealing with physical, psychological and emotional injuries—but not knowing quite how to deal with these challenges," he explained. "I soon discovered that my VA providers understood me and the military injuries I suffered better than any health care system in the world—and since then, I've chosen to receive all of my care from the VA.

"The VA was there for me when I needed it. Now, we must all work together to make sure the VA is there for future generations," he implored lawmakers.

The commander then methodically explained DAV's critical legislative priorities to the joint session, beginning with the need for Congress to override VA Secretary Robert Wilkie's decision to delay adding four pending Agent Orange presumptive conditions until the end of this year.



VA Under Secretary for Benefits Dr. Paul Lawrence spoke on behalf of the VA secretary at the Commanders and Adjutants Opening Session at the 2020 Mid-Winter Conference. Lawrence provided an update on the VA MISSION Act and Electronic Health Record and described how the VA is modernizing to acquire supplies and medicines faster and cheaper.

"This decision ignores the fact that the National Academy of Medicine has already reviewed dozens of studies on multiple occasions over many years. In every case, it was concluded that these diseases are associated with Agent Orange. We don't need to wait

# **DAV Outstanding Performance in Advocacy Awards**

This year marked the introduction of DAV's Outstanding Performance in Advocacy (OPA) Awards. During the legislative seminar of the 2020 Mid-Winter Conference, National Commander Butch Whitehead, National Adjutant Marc Burgess and National Legislative Director Joy Ilem presented awards to the top-performing departments and Benefits Protection Team Leaders (BPTLs) for their commitment to supporting DAV's national legislative goals.



Division I: Department of Virginia BPTL Tom Wendel



Division II: Department of Minnesota BPTL Trent Dilks

for any more studies," said Whitehead. "If the VA will not take the right action, then, in the name of justice, you must. Our Vietnam veterans have waited long enough."

The commander then advocated for the passage of the Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act. The legislation, which was conceptualized by DAV, would formally concede that veterans who served near burn pits were exposed to harmful chemicals and toxins. Such recognition would make it easier to prove direct service connection.

"We ask all of you to support this legislation, S. 2950, so that veterans suffering from burn pit exposures do not have to wait decades for justice, like the Vietnam generation before them," said Whitehead.

Before concluding with a plea for Congress to enact the Deborah Sampson Act, a comprehensive piece of legislation that ensures women have access to high-quality, gender-sensitive and specialized health care services to the same extent as their male peers, Whitehead noted that DAV and our *Independent Budget* partners—Veterans of Foreign Wars and Paralyzed Veterans of America—had

recently issued an interim progress report on implementation of the VA MISSION Act.

"Of the 26 recommendations that we made to guide implementation of the law, only one has been fulfilled," Whitehead informed lawmakers. He also noted that the VA's failure to meet the MISSION Act's Oct. 1, 2019, deadline to expand the caregiver program to pre-9/11 veterans was a major disappointment for the organization.

"Despite having 16 months to prepare, the VA failed to implement the required IT solution and delayed the expansion until later this summer at the earliest. This is simply unacceptable. We call on Congress to take whatever actions are necessary to mandate that the VA end the delay and begin the caregiver expansion."

Just as he opened the week with a quote from Sir Isaac Newton, Whitehead ended his testimony with another quote, this time from President Theodore Roosevelt: "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

"To me, that prize is being part of the long and storied tradition of DAV," said Whitehead, "one that I know will continue to flourish for the next 100 years."



Division III: Department of Wisconsin BPTL AI Labelle



Division IV: Department of Nebraska BPTL James Shuey



Division V: Department of South Dakota BPTL Gene Murphy

"We have been able to make a lot of legislative headway thanks to the dedication of these grassroots leaders, and we are exceptionally grateful to them for taking on the responsibilities of serving in this important position."

-National Commander Butch Whitehead

# Membership Advantages help veterans

By Bryan Lett

According to the Federal Trade Commission, from 2015 to 2019, active-duty military members, their dependents and veterans reported more than 163,000 cases of fraud that amounted to losing more than \$338 million.

Another important FTC statistic pointing to why this issue is so important in the military and veteran community is that the average loss for veterans is 23% higher than for current service members—and 44% higher than for other civilians.

But with your DAV membership, you can save 20% to protect your digital and financial identity with DAV partner Identity Guard.\* DAV members get advanced protection, backed up by 22 years' experience from a company that has helped more than 47 million people protect their identities.

"Identity Guard uses state-of-the-art artificial intelligence to continuously scour billions of data points to discover potential vulnerabilities and alert you when your identity may be at risk," said Adila Abukar, partner solutions director with Identity Guard. "DAV members can think of Identity Guard as an early warning system that is always helping to protect your identity, because you can't stop a threat unless you can spot a threat."

Your membership also provides you access to a wide range of money-saving advantages. These gracious partners stand with our veterans through a variety of programs, products and services. Members can pile up savings with many different and popular brands—and it assists veterans by putting funds back into DAV's mission.

"The program allows us to partner with corporations who give our members discounts," said National Membership Director Doug Wells. "It's vital for our members to utilize their Member Advantages as often

as possible, as those affinity agreements further support DAV's mission. When a member makes a purchase or uses a service, a portion of that sale reverts back to DAV."

Another partner who offers DAV members perks is USAA, a financial institution that was started in 1922 by 25 military members to serve the unique needs of military personnel.

"Today, USAA remains focused and committed to facilitate the financial security of members, associates and their families," said Gary Williams, USAA's assistant vice president of military affinity. "One important way we bring the mission to life is working together with DAV to deliver financial products that are tailored to serve the needs of the military community; for example, DAV and USAA co-brand two rewards credit cards."

DAV members can enjoy up to three times the rewards points, and even redeem points for cash, merchandise, gift cards and more, when using a DAV and USAA rewards card?

More companies have also partnered with DAV through the Membership Advantages program, including Avis and Budget Car Rental, which offer up to 25% savings on their base rates<sup>3</sup>, and Quicken Loans. DAV members considering the purchase or refinance of a home<sup>4</sup> can get \$500 cash back after closing, plus a \$750 closing-cost credit.

"It is our goal at DAV to continue to find great partners who care about veterans and their families so we can offer more great deals and savings to our members," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "Our members deserve the best services and savings we can provide to them."



# **Learn More Online**

For more information and a complete list of Membership Advantages, visit dav.org/membership/member-advantages.

\*DAV receives a royalty payment of 20% of the monthly price of the service selected. The agreement between Intersections Inc. (D.B.A.—Identity Guard) and DAV runs through Dec. 22, 2020. <sup>2</sup>DAV receives \$10 for every new DAV USAA Rewards credit card account opened, \$1 for each renewal and 0.25% of each purchase (excluding refunds, returns or cash and reward point transactions). The agreement between USAA and DAV runs through June 30, 2020. <sup>3</sup>Avis (Budget) will provide 5% of annually reported base rate and mileage revenue at participating locations in the U.S. and District of Columbia (excluding Alaska) to DAV. In order to qualify for payment for the minimum base rate and mileage, revenue must exceed \$5,000. The agreement between Avis (Budget) and DAV runs through Dec. 31, 2020. <sup>4</sup>DAV receives an annual fee from Quicken Loans in the amount of \$5,000. This offer between DAV and Quicken Loans runs through Jan. 18, 2021.

# From the NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR DOUGLAS K. WELLS JR.

# Merging recruiting with technology

Digital recruiting efforts made more important by COVID-19 outbreak

s we get closer to completing another membership year of inspiring those in the veteran community to join our DAV family, I want to thank each of you for your work in helping grow our membership ranks so we can become even stronger advocates for veterans' issues on Capitol Hill.

In the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak across the globe, I thought now was the perfect time to stress our online and digital recruiting tools. These tools offer a smart and effective way to stay in the fight during such a crisis. As we all know, our mission is too important to the veterans and families we serve to not push forward. However, doing so smartly, without risking anyone's health in the process, is the goal.

To continue advancing our cause and promoting policies that ensure veterans and their families can live with respect and dignity, DAV and its members must evolve with the times and use every available resource at our disposal.

We work hard each day to find new and innovative ways to help our recruiters in the field. Today, DAV continues to evolve on social media, and DAV members are leveraging technology to continue to play vital roles as spokespeople for the unique requirements of veterans and their loved ones. One way DAV has evolved is the online membership application. Since

nearly everyone has a smartphone, nearly everyone has a membership application within arm's reach.

This technology provides us with the mobility and flexibility to introduce anyone at any time to DAV and the value of being a member.

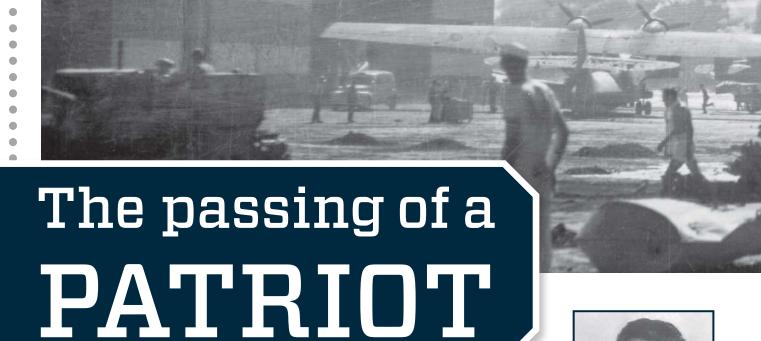
One of our more recent recruitment initiatives—and one we're excited to continue—is the Recruit a Warrior program. It is designed to help our members reach as many veterans as possible.

To participate, all you have to do is follow these two simple steps:

- 1. Enter your email address at dav.org/warrior to receive your personalized referral link.
- Share your referral link with fellow warriors. This link is unique to you and will automatically track how many new members you've recruited.

We understand the challenges veterans face, and that is why, when speaking with a potential member, we must illustrate the whole picture of DAV's mission and services. From securing earned benefits and providing transportation to operating an employment program and supporting volunteer initiatives, DAV helps veterans and gives us the opportunity to serve in meaningful ways.

We can work smarter and not harder if we, as an organization, develop good habits and utilize the tools available to us.



DAV life member who was aboard the USS Ward during Pearl Harbor attack passed away in January at age 98

By M. Todd Hunter

any of the survivors of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor were still in their teens or early 20s on Dec. 7, 1941, and no one knows exactly how many are still with us. Today, the youngest of them are venturing into their late 90s, and their numbers are fading with each passing day.

Navy veteran and DAV life member Will Lehner was one of those survivors, and in January, he passed away at 98 years old.

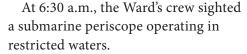
"You knew by looking at him where he had been," said Mike "Gunner" Pohl, past adjutant and treasurer of Lehner's home chapter in Stevens Point, Wis. "He wore his 'Pearl Harbor Survivor' hat all the time."

Lehner's Pearl Harbor story was unique. Many people are familiar with the USS Arizona, the USS Oklahoma and the USS Utah—ships that were sunk during the bombing. Lehner was aboard the USS Ward, a ship that was patrolling the harbor entrance and was responsible for firing some of the nation's first rounds of World War II, sinking an enemy submarine a full hour before the first Japanese bombs hit the Navy's anchored fleet.



**Above:** Mike "Gunner" Pohl (left) and Will Lehner (right) at a local DAV event in Wisconsin. Lehner was aboard the USS Ward when it sank a Japanese submarine before the attack on Pearl Harbor. **Opposite page:** The USS Ward engaged and sank a Japanese submarine before the attack on Pearl Harbor.





"So we looked around, and all of a sudden, we see the conning tower come up out of the water," Lehner told DAV during a 2016 interview. "But we didn't know it was a Japanese sub; we didn't know what it was. Then finally the whole thing was up, and we were only about 50 yards from it."

The Ward's captain then gave the order to fire.

"They fired the No. 1 gun, which was up on the bow, and I watched the sub. [The shot] went right over the conning tower and splashed right behind it."

Then the second shot was fired.

"I saw it when it hit the conning tower at the lower part of it," said Lehner. "The shell hit, and when it hit, the sub rolled over and came back again and started going down."

Radio reports to higher headquarters were largely dismissed; the enemy vessel was never accounted for.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Ward was retrofitted as a high-speed transport. Lehner and the crew of the Ward became part of the task force responsible for troop landings in the South Pacific, where kamikaze attacks by Japanese planes were common.

"What they liked to do is come in on the fantail on the stern, and they'd skid along the top of the ships, if they could, and kill as many people on deck as they could first and then slam into the ship and then that would explode the gasoline," Lehner said.

It was such a kamikaze attack that eventually led to the scuttling of the Ward on Dec. 7, 1944, three years to the day after it first engaged the enemy at the mouth of Pearl Harbor.

"Three of them came down on us," Lehner said. "I was first loader on No. 4 gun, which was on the aft part of the ship. We were firing, and we knocked down two of them, but the third one got through."

Lehner and his shipmates were forced to abandon ship and made their way to other friendly vessels before the destroyer USS O'Brien—coincidentally commanded by the Ward's former captain, Lt. Cmdr. William Outerbridge—scuttled the damaged Ward.

Lehner was discharged and treated for the psychological wounds of war. After returning home from his military service, he experienced some of the same issues that have always affected veterans throughout the history of war.

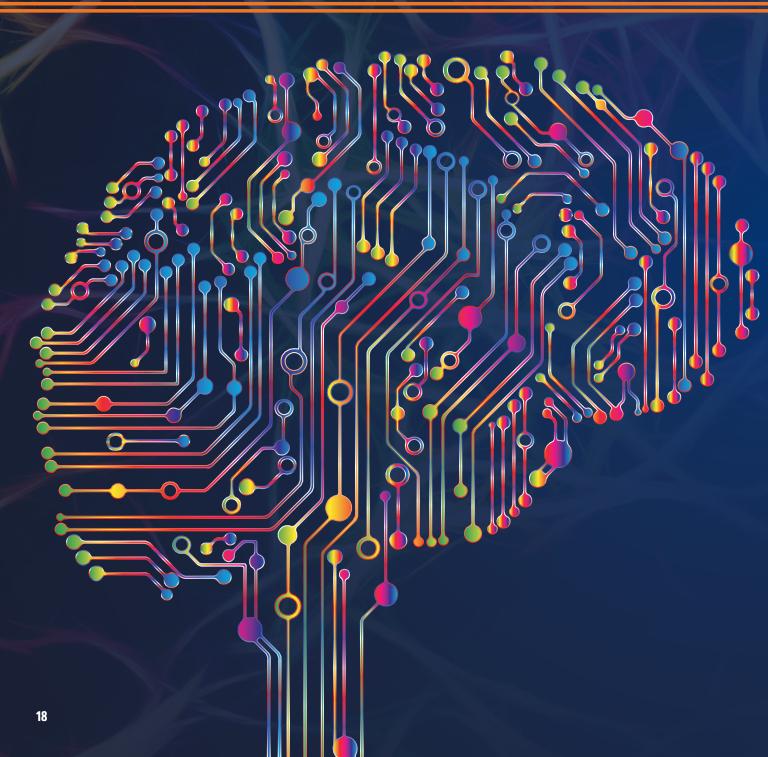
"I didn't talk about any of my experiences to my kids or to my wife for about 20 years," Lehner said. "I had [post-traumatic stress disorder]. To me, I was just holding it in and just wanted to forget about it."

But then a unique opportunity presented itself when he discovered his own children didn't know anything about Pearl Harbor.

"He went to a lot of schools to talk about it," said Pohl. "It was his way of honoring the guys and gals that died at Pearl Harbor.

"He would talk your ear off if he could," Pohl continued. "He was very likable, very easygoing. A humanitarian and a caring, giving man. He was a man I stood in awe of. I felt like a kid next to him—and I've stood next to President Reagan. That didn't compare to knowing Will Lehner." ■





# through

# MDMA shows promise healing mental trauma in FDA-approved clinical trials

By Matt Saintsing

when it comes to treating post-traumatic stress disorder, nothing is better than trauma-focused psychotherapies, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. By centering on the memory or meaning of harrowing and often painful events, veterans can process and make sense of their most stressful experiences in war.

But momentum is steadily growing to battle the symptoms of PTSD with alternative medicine, including one illicit substance that's showing tremendous promise in recent studies.

MDMA, commonly known as the street drug ecstasy or Molly, is culturally linked to the rave scene of the 1990s. First synthesized in 1912 for pharmacological purposes, the CIA experimented with the substance as a potential psychological weapon during the Cold War. Nearly all research came to a halt in 1985 when it was placed on the list of Schedule I drugs. More recently, however, it's shown to significantly reduce PTSD symptoms when paired with psychotherapy. The research has been so promising that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted the drug "breakthrough" status and is fast-tracking final phases of clinical trials in the hopes of developing a new countermeasure to PTSD.

Army and Marine Corps veteran Jonathan Lubecky knows the challenges of living with the invisible scars of war all too well. While he was deployed to Balad Air Base, Iraq, in 2006, an enemy mortar crashed down inside the portable toilet he was using. He was left without a single physical scratch, but he would later learn he suffered a traumatic brain injury and developed severe PTSD.

"I got blown up in a Port-o-John—shittiest place to get blown up," said Lubecky. "Had I stood up, the shrapnel would have gone through me instead of in front of me."

This event marked the beginning of a life-changing and dangerous journey involving daily suicidal thoughts, which he acted on five separate times. After retiring from the Army in 2009, he began self-medicating with alcohol and marijuana, masking the underlying problems. He also tried the medication prescribed to him by the VA, at one point taking 42 pills per day. But help seemed beyond his grasp.

"Most of what I was thinking was, is this going to be my life for the rest of it? Nightmares every night?" he said. "I felt like the world would be better without me in it."

But in 2014, Lubecky signed up to take part in a study involving MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, organized and conducted by the Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), an organization working to advance the science of potentially beneficial compounds like MDMA.

MAPS' multiple clinical MDMA trials have shown to reduce PTSD dramatically.

Under close observation, Lubecky ingested MDMA three times over 12 weeks in conjunction with psychotherapy sessions. He would take a green capsule containing 125 milligrams of MDMA, and after roughly 40 minutes, when the drug started to take effect, his therapy session would begin. An additional 70-milligram dose was also offered to help boost the sessions.

"It worked," said Lubecky. "Five years later, and I still don't have PTSD, and I haven't done MDMA since."

The results stunned him. Lubecky's Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS)—a way to measure PTSD severity—was nearly cut in half. A year later, his depression had dramatically subsided.

According to Dr. Michael Mithoefer, the acting medical director for MAPS and a psychiatrist who is heavily involved in the clinical trials, MDMA can break down barriers some may have with PTSD and encourage trust—a vital component of a patient-therapist relationship.

"It can be very **painful to process trauma**, whether
you have MDMA or not.
It's just that **MDMA** tends
to make **processing more possible**."

-Dr. Michael Mithoefer, psychiatrist

"The VA acknowledges that psychotherapy is the best treatment for PTSD," he said. "But it doesn't work for a lot of people, at least half."

Many people have extreme difficulties tolerating therapy and end up dropping out of treatment.

"Sometimes, they are just so overwhelmed by anxiety and emotions that it just doesn't help," Mithoefer added.

Emotional numbing is another facet of PTSD, where patients may be able to talk freely about their trauma but are not necessarily meeting the goal of processing memories and emotions.

According to Mithoefer, MDMA helps reverse the brain functions that can paralyze people when trauma is triggered. Brain imaging studies have shown PTSD appears to increase commotion in the amygdala, the brain's fear center, and reduce activity in the prefrontal cortex, which regulates emotion. MDMA's ability to overcome fear and defensiveness, increase empathy and compassion, and heighten introspection can significantly improve psychotherapy for PTSD.

It also releases naturally occurring hormones, such as oxytocin and prolactin, which are associated with feelings of trust, intimacy and bonding, making patients more likely to open up during therapy.

"It can be very painful to process trauma, whether you have MDMA or not," said Mithoefer. "It's just that MDMA tends to make processing more possible."

Of the 103 patients that had chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD who completed MAPS' Phase 2 trials, just over half no longer met the qualification for PTSD diagnosis in the months following treatment. At the one-year mark, 68% no longer qualified. All patients suffered from chronic, treatment-resistant PTSD for an average of just under 18 years. The stunning results were published in the journal Psychopharmacology in May 2019.

Phase 3 trials, the final step of research required by the Food and Drug Administration before deciding to approve a drug for treatment, are currently underway at 14 sites across the United States, Canada and Israel. Mithoefer is hopeful that, following these stages, MDMA-assisted psychotherapy could be an accepted treatment for PTSD by 2022.

However, MDMA, like other psychedelics, remains illegal and can be dangerous in the wrong hands. Independent doctors and psychologists screen all patients participating in these trials. Under the current regimen, MDMA is never given as a takehome drug, and patients only receive it two or three times over several months. Additionally, two therapists



Left: Jonathan Lubecky, a veteran of the Marine Corps and Army, poses with a .50-caliber sniper rifle at Balad Air Base, Iraq, in 2006. Center: Wearing his dress blues, Lubecky is an advocate for alternative therapies, including MDMA, which he says helped to cure him of PTSD. Right: Pictured in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., Lubecky, now a civilian, works to bring attention for MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for veterans to U.S. lawmakers.

# "Five years later, and **I still don't have PTSD**, and I haven't done MDMA since."

-Jonathan Lubecky, Army and Marine Corps veteran

are present during the therapy sessions, and breaks are taken to help "integrate" the experiences.

Despite the success of these trials, MDMA remains a Schedule I substance, which marks the drug as having no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse.

"By no means should we communicate these compounds are risk-free," said Dr. Roland Griffiths, professor of psychiatry and neuroscience at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research. "They're not."

But because some psychedelic drugs left the laboratory in the 1960s and began flooding antiestablishment and anti-war movements, they were "promoted in an unwise fashion," said Griffiths.

The federal reaction that followed mostly stripped scientists from being able to research any potential benefits to psychedelic compounds, including MDMA and psilocybin, the active compound in

so-called "magic mushrooms." The move, according to some advocates, criminalized legitimate science.

Scientists in recent years began picking up such research, thanks in large part to private donations to organizations such as MAPS.

"It wasn't until we got permission to give a high dose of psilocybin to psychedelic-naive individuals in 2000 that this work began to be reinitiated," added Griffiths. "We published our study in 2006, and over the course of the last 14 years, increasingly, other academic centers are coming online."

"DAV is supportive of continued research on nontraditional therapies, complementary and alternative medicine, and expanded treatment options for veterans," said Deputy National Legislative Director Adrian Atizado. "Anything that can safely help our veterans heal from the lasting psychological impacts of war, particularly for those who tried treatment before without success, is worth studying further, which these trials are attempting to do."

# Body, mind and spirit

# VA alternative therapies result in major successes

By Ashleigh Byrnes

AV Past National Commander and Marine Corps veteran Brad Barton was injured during the siege of Khe Sanh in 1968. Halfway through the 77-day battle, a North Vietnamese mortar round exploded outside his tent, sending shrapnel through his back and severing his spinal cord. He has been in a wheelchair ever since.

"It was a major adjustment, but what helped me through the whole experience was the fact that I was so lucky and so grateful that I had survived my injuries," said Barton. "So I was highly motivated when I returned through the hospital system and went through rehabilitation to get back some normalcy in my life."

Barton has seen, as he says, "the best and the worst of [the] VA" over the years. Much of the system has changed since his injury—from a time when there was only a single type of wheelchair available to now, when disabled veterans have a wealth of customized and durable medical equipment, devices and prostheses.

But there is another tool in the VA's arsenal that's proving to be just as valuable. In 2018, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced it would be designating 18 facilities as Whole Health Flagship sites, signaling a shift from a health care system focused mainly on disease and injury treatment to one that addresses veterans' physical, mental, spiritual and environmental needs. The program includes things like acupuncture,

yoga and tai chi, massage therapy, clinical hypnosis and biofeedback, all available to veterans as part of their personalized health plan.

As part of this program, Barton enrolled in an eightweek mindfulness training program in which he was led through guided meditation, focusing on pain he was experiencing and tuning in to how his body was reacting.

"I remember after the first session, I woke up in the middle of the night and my hip was killing me. But instead of letting it disrupt my sleep, I said, 'OK, where's the pain at? How bad is it?" said Barton. "And I fell right back to sleep. It didn't really disrupt my sleep at all. It was totally unbelievable to me."

Barton's experience is not a fluke, but rather one promising anecdote about how the VA's Whole Health program is helping veterans better manage pain and reduce reliance on medication alone.

"The data supports a threefold reduction in opioid use among veterans with chronic pain who used Whole Health services compared with those who did not," said Heather Malecki, director of integrative health and wellness at the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center—one of the original flagship locations.

A VA report released in January noted that, among comprehensive Whole Health users—classified as patients who went to eight or more whole health visits—opioid use decreased 38% compared with the 11% increase among those who did not use Whole Health. According to the VA, veterans are twice as

likely to die from accidental overdoses compared to the general U.S. population.

"Nobody is saying we're going to fix it, we're going to eliminate all pain, we're going to eliminate all mental health concerns, we're going to eliminate any chronic conditions," said Malecki. "It's reframing the way patients view their own pain experience and giving them a bigger toolbox to manage it."

And better pain management isn't the only benefit of the program. Many of the veterans in the VA's Whole Health program report weight loss and improved mental health as well as better vital signs and diagnostic test results.

Marine Corps veteran John Pearson is a former cancer patient who was exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam. He has been taking tai chi classes regularly through the D.C. VAMC and says the program has drastically improved his overall health.

"When they told me my blood pressure was 104 over 56, I almost fell out of the chair," said Pearson. "My kidney function has improved, too, and my A1C is now at 7, down from a 12. I realized if I want to live, I've got to do this."

Whole Health has also shown significant success in helping to reduce outpatient pharmacy costs by 9% annually for those with mental health conditions and 11.5% each year for those with chronic pain.

"We understand some people are skeptical about whether or not these alternative approaches can really help reduce their pain," said Deputy National Legislative Director Adrian Atizado. "But especially for those veterans who may carry a higher risk for opioid addiction, like combat veterans, we have to use every tool in the arsenal, and this approach seems to be working."

Malecki said the VA expects 44% of veterans with chronic pain to engage in Whole Health services by the end of 2020, an indication that veterans are not just



DAV Past National Commander Brad Barton, pictured with wife Donna, suffered a spinal cord injury in Vietnam in 1968. Today, he utilizes the VA's Whole Health program to manage pain and improve his overall physical and mental wellness.

seeing the benefits but are sharing their experiences with others.

"We do a 'Taking Charge of My Life and Health' group where the veterans help each other make goals," said Army veteran Kathy Bixby, a Whole Health nurse educator at the D.C. VAMC. "They have a week or two in between to come back and talk about how they succeeded or what were the barriers. So really, they're paying attention to what they want their health for, and they're recognizing an opportunity to make change."

"We're giving them skills to be able to know how to do that and be successful," said Bixby, who herself lost 50 pounds thanks to her experience with the program. "And they're getting to talk about it among their peers. It's really very powerful." ■



The data supports a **threefold reduction in opioid use** among veterans with chronic pain who used Whole Health services compared with those who did not.

> -Heather Malecki, director of integrative health and wellness, Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center





By Matt Saintsing

onald Smith was just 11 when Pearl Harbor was suddenly attacked. He watched as the young men in his hometown—a farming community in rural Mississippi—went off to war. He felt dejected that he was too young to answer the call to serve.

But fate had something else in store for Smith. He went on to give 20 years to the U.S. Army, including wartime service in Korea and Vietnam, and a chance to fulfill the patriotic duty he had felt drawn to as a boy.

"I'm very proud of him.
Whether he gets the **Medal**of **Honor or not**, it doesn't
make any difference to me. **He's a hero in my books**and a great husband, too."

-Jean Smith, Donald Smith's wife

On June 19, 1966, while supporting a daring rescue mission for an entire infantry company that had been pinned down for 48 hours, Smith repeatedly engaged enemy forces as a door gunner of a UH-1B "Huey" helicopter, allowing 42 American soldiers to escape to safety.

His bravery in Vietnam did not go unnoticed, and he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions. And in 2013, Smith received news that he was under consideration for the nation's highest military honor, the Medal of Honor.

The DAV life member's Army career began in 1950 as a combat engineer. His first duty station was in occupied Japan following the ending of World War II. As the Korean War broke out, he found himself helping build infrastructure for the American forces on the peninsula.

"What we did in Korea was build bridges and roads to make things travelable," recalled Smith. "Bunkers, trenches, we built a little bit of everything."

Smith would often handle demolitions for construction. On one occasion, he found himself

Opposite page: A veteran of both the Korean and Vietnam wars, retired Staff Sgt. Donald Smith has been nominated for the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest honor for service members who distinguish themselves on the battlefield, for gallantry in Vietnam. (Photo by Jennifer Mitchell/Maine Public) Right: Donald Smith visits with villagers in South Vietnam in 1966.

behind enemy lines in the sweltering Korean summer. He had been separated from his unit for 10 days. The only food he had to eat was a chicken, which he stole, along with some raw rice.

"It's a wonder that didn't kill him," said Jean Smith, Donald's wife. "To this day, he doesn't eat chicken."

After the war, he was briefly assigned to Camp McCoy, Wis., before volunteering to switch jobs and becoming a helicopter crew chief.

"I wanted to fly, so I thought I'd try for aviation," said Smith. "And wouldn't you know, I managed to pass the test."

He was sent to Vietnam around Christmas 1965. On the morning of the rescue mission, Smith was told that dozens of Americans were in harm's way near the coastal city of Tuy Hòa, and he would help cover the medical evacuation helicopters from his gunship.

"All I could think of was [to] do everything I could to bring them out of there," explained Smith. "It never crossed my mind, the danger, or anything like that."

Although multiple enemy rounds hit his aircraft, Smith didn't hesitate and kept engaging the enemy with overwhelming force.

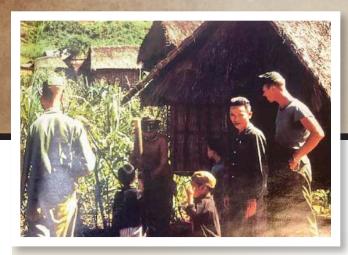
"Completely disregarding his own safety," the citation for his Distinguished Flying Cross reads, "while receiving intense hostile fire, [Smith] pinpointed the most active enemy emplacements and sprayed them with devastating fire."

Smith hit the enemy "with such a disruptive effect that the infantry company was able to move from its position for the first time in two days," the citation continues.

After the dust settled and the choppers made it safely back to base, 42 American soldiers were saved from nearly certain death.

Smith met Jean in 1969. They got married the following year and are now retired in Maine.

The bid to receive the Medal of Honor began in 2013, decades after Smith left military service. Former Rep. Michael Michaud, who represented Maine's 2nd



Smith with Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, who supports his nomination for the Medal of Honor.



Congressional District from 2003 to 2015, first sent the nomination. Other members of Maine's congressional delegation have supported Smith's endeavor to receive the prestigious honor, including Sens. Susan Collins and Angus King and former Rep. Bruce Poliquin.

Smith has been a DAV life member for the past 22 years and is currently part of Chapter 1 in Augusta, Maine.

At 88 years old, Smith said he would use the opportunity to travel and talk to people about the war.

"I'd see what I can do to help them," he added.

But Smith stops short of calling himself a hero. To him, it was just another mission, albeit one where he had the opportunity to make a decisive impact.

"I'm just one of the boys, and that's what they thought of me," he said. "I tried to take care of the people in my group."

Smith was already a hero, his wife said.

"I'm very proud of him," Jean added. "Whether he gets the Medal of Honor or not, it doesn't make any difference to me. He's a hero in my books and a great husband, too."

# A Lyons **heart**

Combat-wounded veteran of Afghanistan finds purpose providing final honors for veterans

By M. Todd Hunter

When a high-value target failed to show up where Lance Cpl. Ed Lyons had been lying in wait for more than a day, the designated marksman of Company G, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, and his spotter were ordered to tactically egress from their hiding position in the Garmsir District of Afghanistan's Helmand Province and rejoin their squad for the patrol back to their forward operating base.

That order forever changed Lyons' life. Just 200 yards from his unit, Lyons stepped on a pressure plate explosive device.

"It was like the earth opened up and all hell broke loose," said Lyons, who was seven weeks into his first combat deployment in November 2009. "I don't remember anything other than the world going dark and feeling my body being thrown through the air and hitting the ground."

The blast took Lyons'

left hand, caused a traumatic brain injury and left him with various other internal injuries due to shrapnel in his abdomen. A 45-minute firefight ensued before Lyons was medevaced out with the help of his Above: Ed Lyons plants an American flag at the headstone of a grave in Fort Logan National Cemetery, where he worked as a caretaker. Right: Lyons at the 2019 DAV National Convention in Orlando, where he received the Outstanding National Cemetery Administration Employee of the Year award.

spotter. Medical personnel at Landstuhl Regional

spotter. Medical personnel at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany had difficulty stabilizing him in the immediate days after, but he eventually

"Ed saw the worst of war and suffered tremendous personal losses. But he found

**his life's purpose** as an employee of the National Cemetery Administration,

devoting himself fully to honoring our nation's

**veterans** and ensuring their families are cared for in life's most difficult times."

-National Commander Butch Whitehead

became well enough to be transported back to the U.S.

After 2 1/2 years recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where he received a prosthesis for his hand, Lyons was medically retired from the Marine Corps.

"The exact phrase used was that I 'suffered from physical disabilities of such proportion' that I 'would never render use in civilian or military industrial life," Lyons explained about

his discharge paperwork. "For a 22-year-old, that was a punch to the gut."

Suffering from survivor's guilt, Lyons struggled at times during his transition from a Marine

infantryman to civilian. That changed in 2014, when Lyons' brother, Gerard, an Army veteran of Iraq and then-manager of Yellowstone National Cemetery, invited him to attend the cemetery's grand opening on Memorial Day.

"I knew right then that this is what I was going to do for the rest of my life," said Lyons.

He was initially turned down from the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) because he didn't have enough experience, according to Lyons. But after working various manual labor jobs and submitting multiple applications, Lyons was eventually accepted as a caretaker at Fort Logan National Cemetery in Denver.

Lyons quickly earned the respect of his peers and supervisors through his work ethic—a trend that continued as he climbed the ladder of duties at NCA.

Just four years later, Lyons was selected out of several hundred applicants to attend NCA's yearlong Cemetery Director Intern Program. From there, he was selected to serve in his current position as assistant director of the Sarasota National Cemetery in Florida.

For his exceptional dedication to honoring the lives of America's veterans and caring for their families, Lyons received the Outstanding National Cemetery Administration Employee of the Year award at the 2019 DAV National Convention in Orlando.

"Ed saw the worst of war and suffered tremendous personal losses," said National Commander Butch Whitehead. "But he found his life's purpose as an employee of the National Cemetery Administration, devoting himself fully to honoring our nation's veterans and ensuring their families are cared for in life's most difficult times."

Assisting veterans and their families has helped give Lyons closure for the friends who never made it home from Afghanistan.

"It helped me overcome my own demons while making someone else's worst day just a little bit better," he said.

Treating every family in a way he hopes someone did for his friends has become his personal mission and goal.

"This could be any one of their families, so I'm going to do it right." ■

# Did you know that DAV members have access to great discounts on products and services?



To take advantage of these special offers: dav.org/membership/member-advantages







T · Mobile



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T-Mobile offers DAV members† and their families a \$125 Visa Card and \$25 in additional benefits per line activated with new service. This is in addition to T-Mobile's Magenta Military discounted program. Call 833-236-1769 and use Promo Code DAV1. Not available in stores. This limited-time offer is valid through May 31, 2020.

Introducing a confident mortgage experience with Quicken Loans.º You'll receive \$1,250 in savings!, plus our dedicated VA-specialized team will guide you through a complimentary mortgage review, giving you the confidence you need.

DAV receives a royalty payment of 20% of the monthly price of service selected. The agreement between Intersections Inc. (D.B.A. – Identity Guard) and DAV runs through Dec. 22, 2020. "DAV receives 3% of total Product Value of member purchases from 1-800-FLOWERS and their Family of Brands when using the promotional code provided. This offer between DAV and 1-800-FLOWERS renews on a month-to-month basis, effective Feb. 22, 2019. 'DAV receives \$10 for every new service line activated with Business Mobility Partners. This agreement between DAV and Business Mobility Partners runs through Nov. 8, 2020. "DAV receives an annual fee from Quicken Loans in the amount of \$5,000. This offer between DAV and Quicken Loans runs through Jan. 18, 2021

### COMMENTARY



# **From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER** DIANE J. FRANZ

# The mission needs all of us

ecently, I had the honor and the privilege to fly to our nation's capital to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The experience was an honor, and I felt an indescribable feeling of awe wash over me.

It's impossible to experience something like that and not start thinking about all of the sacrifices our bravest men and women have made throughout our history to keep our country free and safe. It's truly something special, but I would like to focus on the stories that, too often, go on outside public view.

Beyond the amazing stories of so many of our veterans, there are other stories that unfold in front of you when involved with DAV and the Auxiliary. You see, firsthand, the dedication and impact caregivers have on their loved ones. You see the willingness of volunteers to go above and beyond to ensure veterans and their families are taken care of. You see the generosity of supporters and get a sense of just how much they care and enjoy being a part of our mission. It truly takes all of us.

But it is the caregivers, or the unsung heroes, who have stood out so much to me. When compared to caregivers nationally, the ones who assist those who served face unique challenges.

For example, veteran caregivers are twice as likely to be in their caregiving role for 10 years or longer than caregivers nationally. With such long periods of time devoted to ensuring the

health and well-being of our nation's heroes, veteran caregivers are often forced to make trade-offs with their careers and financial stability in order to take care of their loved ones. It becomes their full-time job, and their level of sacrifice is something to behold.

DAV has always supported caregivers and has fought for more comprehensive legislation and benefits for them. I couldn't be prouder to be a part of an organization that sheds light on these very special and deserving individuals.

Family caregivers willingly and selflessly dedicate themselves to the care of their veteran, putting aside their careers, personal goals and ambitions as well as concern for their own emotional and physical health. They do not seek accolades for the sacrifices they make; in fact, they ask for little help and receive even less to alleviate the enormous burden they bear in caring for critically injured or ill loved ones.

So many of these caregivers have soldiered on for decades, without support or relief, and far too many feel the weight of the world on their shoulders. Family caregivers are among the most critical components of severely disabled veterans' recovery and rehabilitation and help them live to their highest potential, yet the American public is largely unaware of the many sacrifices these men and women make on a daily basis. It's our goal to change that.

# **Drive-a-hero**

Oklahoma sets up one-stop shop to onboard volunteers





By Mary Dever

The DAV Transportation Network depends on volunteers to transport veterans to and from their appointments at no cost, and finding and enrolling those volunteers has proven difficult in many communities across the country. But the DAV Department of Oklahoma has developed a new way to quickly recruit and onboard drivers: the Drive-a-Hero event.

DAV members in Oklahoma hosted the first Drivea-Hero, a one-stop-shop event, at their department convention in 2019, making it easier for volunteers to complete the necessary requirements in a single day.

They coordinated with the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System so potential drivers could meet with VA staff to perform the required background checks and physical evaluations. Trained professionals were also on hand to conduct volunteer orientation and annual training for new and seasoned volunteers.

"It's a motivator for us to go out and recruit, when we can ask people if they want to volunteer, to be able to bring them in and, in one day, get them through all the prerequisites that can normally take 90 days or more," said Department of Oklahoma Adjutant Danny Oliver. "When a person comes in to volunteer, they'd like to roll up their sleeves and start volunteering. They don't want to have to wait two to three months."

The debut event was a success for the department, and Oliver said they're planning to expand it to reach more drivers and volunteers from across the state.

By the end of the day, 34 new volunteers had signed up to help veterans in Eastern Oklahoma. According to Oliver, that many volunteers could have taken years to onboard without the collaboration and support DAV enjoys from the Department of Veterans Affairs in the state.

"The Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System

is grateful for the support and ongoing partnership with our local DAV partners," said Ionathan Plasencia, associate director for Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System. "The Drive-a-Hero campaign will ensure veterans who do not have transportation continue to get access to vital VA health care services. I was proud to share this successful campaign with Ralph Gigliotti,

Top: Shantel McJunkins (right), VA Voluntary Service specialist, helps Marine veteran Dennis Hammons fill out an application to become a new DAV volunteer driver.

Bottom: Jana Burk (left), medical technologist with the Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System, conducts part of the required medical screening for Army veteran Marcus Lutz, who volunteered to be a new DAV driver. (Photos courtesy of VA Public Affairs Specialist Nathan Schaeffer)

director of the VA Rocky Mountain Network, who has shared this initiative with other VA health systems in our network."

The program is answering an urgent need and could be mirrored in other communities.

"As our nation comes out of this pandemic, we know this important effort will need to evolve in the face of our 'new normal," said National Voluntary Services Director John Kleindienst. "But efforts like the Drivea-Hero event in Oklahoma may prove to be a template that DAV leaders and volunteer coordinators can use to efficiently onboard volunteers across the country."

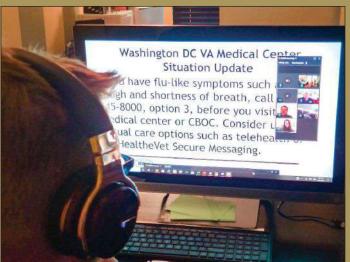
Insurable, licensed drivers need only pass a physical to be considered for participation. ■



# Learn More Online

To find ways to volunteer in your community, go to day.org or volunteerforveterans.org.







# ADAPT and OVERCOME

DAV responds with force as nation grinds to a halt





Veterans are no strangers to the concept of adaptability. "Semper Gumby," as the saying goes. But that unofficial military motto has, perhaps, not been as widely tested in recent memory as during the nationwide response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

DAV's primary model of service has always been built around face-to-face interactions with veterans and their families, whether it helps with claims, transportation to medical appointments or assistance navigating the job market. But to help curb the spread of the virus, DAV leaders had to go back to the drawing board to mitigate disruption of its programs as the nation began to see closures of all non-essential operations.

Although DAV's national and transition service offices closed in late March, veterans, transitioning service members, families and survivors were still in need of benefits assistance—perhaps even more so in the face of a pandemic.

"Our work can't stop because of this virus," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "We had to get creative. We can still submit claims electronically. We can still conduct interviews with veterans. This is completely new; we've never done anything like it before, but I'm confident in our ability to continue serving veterans."

Veterans in need of assistance can visit benefitsquestions.org to get in touch with service officers via email, and the National Service Department is working on other solutions to help stay connected with claimants.

"We're still very much on the job," said Marszalek. "We're as active as we possibly can be. The foot is on the throttle."

And while distancing measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 also closed down the venues for many of DAV's upcoming job fairs, the virtual job fair platform is helping to keep veterans connected to employers seeking their skill sets.

"Since we already host a number of virtual job fairs, there was a ready-built solution to enable us to keep operating, which is critical as we continue to see these high projections for unemployment," said National Employment Director Jeff Hall. "The first national virtual job fair after we moved the program online was our most heavily attended online event ever."

Even across local chapters and departments, DAV members are finding ways to help their fellow veterans

in their time of need. While the DAV Transportation Network in Oklahoma was suspended due to the outbreak, department leaders worked to ensure volunteer drivers conducted essential VA protocol training so they will be ready and able to begin safely transporting veterans again once the program reopens.

# "Our work can't stop because of this virus.

... We're still very much on the job."

-National Service Director Jim Marszalek

And as gatherings of more than 10 people had been nixed, Chapter 10 in Fairfax, Va., swapped out its monthly chapter meeting for an online information session.

"It's very important to still be able to reach out to our members," said Chapter 10 Commander Tom Wendel. "And I think that's something we're going to have to look at in the future, because many of our members don't have a lot of people in their house, and they're going to be isolated during this time. For them to have the opportunity to talk to somebody is going to be very helpful for them."

The chapter's online session appealed to not only regular meeting attendees but also several members who had never attended an in-person chapter meeting before.

"These are challenges that none of us would have foreseen," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "Once we get down the road, I think we will be able to look back and be proud of how our staff responded to this unprecedented situation. I can't say enough how proud I am of all our staff and our members for their ingenuity and continued dedication to those we serve in really uncertain times."



# **Learn More Online**

For more information regarding COVID-19, visit dav.org/covid.

### REFLECTIONS



# From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN MICHAEL P. DOVER

# COVID-19



he COVID-19 outbreak has had a massive global impact and may very well still be causing fear and uncertainty as this article is being published.

We should remember that discussions of suffering, illness and disease have a psychological impact as well. Recognizing this can help us communicate in a way that is more loving and compassionate toward our neighbor.

We may be inclined to communicate in ways that are either overly rational or emotional. Some may be inherently prone to downplaying the severity of such public-health threats, while others may be inclined toward catastrophizing, or believing a situation is far worse than warranted by the evidence.

We should recognize our own dispositions and acknowledge that others may differ. We shouldn't be dismissive of the young mother who earnestly inquires if we should consider canceling religious services to avoid the spread of the disease, nor should we feel it is our place to "scare some sense" into the overly analytical optimist who thinks the threat is overstated. It's important to remember that everyone has a different set of circumstances and needs they must consider to protect themselves and their families.

We should also recognize that we are not the first in history to struggle over how to deal with epidemics and pandemics—or how to talk about them.

Throughout history, religious leaders facing plague and infectious diseases have had to consider such questions as, "is fleeing in the face of disease an act of faith or presumption?" and "how far does the duty of neighborly love extend and when might it be disregarded?"

Without prescribing a course of action, faith leaders can provide tools for navigating the interrelations of conscience, scripture and experience. We can learn from those who came before about deferring to individual conscience and not placing burdens on people that exceed the bounds of our faith.

We can also learn from their example about carrying on with our lives in times of distress. As French theologian John Calvin noted, "Duty must not be neglected, no more in epidemic disease than in war or fire."

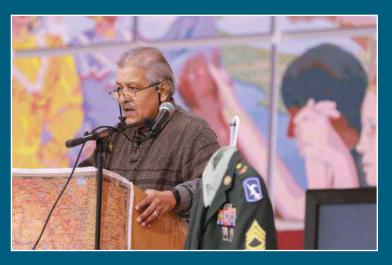
While the names of the epidemics may change, our duty as members of DAV is to defer to our faith, to divine providence, to the demands of conscience, and yes, even to our own physical disabilities. DAV, its Auxiliary and our organizations' members cannot assist others if we do not take the appropriate actions for our own protection.

It is not wise to minister from a half cup. Stay healthy, do what your doctor says, and take the needed measures so when the time comes, we can all resume our mission of caring for our fellow veterans.

In His service to you.

### Paying tribute to all who served...

Marty Ramirez of Chapter 7 in Lincoln, Neb., conceptualized, helped create and dedicated a monument honoring Chicano/Mexican American veterans at the Guadalupe Center in Scottsbluff, Neb. The monument pays tribute to the service and sacrifice of Ramirez's fellow veterans in wars throughout America's history. Following military service in Vietnam, where he was wounded in combat, Ramirez joined DAV. He served nearly four decades as a counselor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and has earned numerous awards as a leader in the veteran and Hispanic communities. (Photo by Lauren Brant/Star-Herald)



Spread the news! Send photos of your DAV or Auxiliary news to production@dav.org. To be considered for publication, photographs should be at least 3 by 5 inches at a resolution of 300 dpi. Submissions should also include a description of the event, along with the names of those pictured, when applicable. In most cases, submissions are published in the order in which they are received but are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety.



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To donate your vehicle, call or visit: 1-833-227-4328 | dav.org/cars



To commemorate 100 years of service to America's veterans, DAV is calling on you to conduct 100 Acts of Honor in the name of veterans.

### What counts as an act of honor?

- Clean up a community veterans memorial.
- Perform a chore for a veteran who is unable.
- Sign up to be a volunteer driver.
- Any action that honors or supports veterans.

No act is too big or too small. Share it online with the hashtag #100ActsofHonor. To find volunteer opportunities in your community, sign up at VolunteerforVeterans.org.





# Educating candidates, lawmakers on top DAV priorities

■ DAV introduced its Vision for Veterans priorities list ahead of the 2020 elections to help presidential and congressional candidates, as well as current lawmakers, understand the critical challenges facing the veteran community.

The list establishes seven priorities that reflect both the most urgent needs of veterans and the issues that will have serious, long-lasting impacts on those who served. The document includes informative issue briefs and recommendations for a path forward through policy and systematic reforms that will:

- Protect and strengthen benefits for ill, injured and disabled veterans.
- Ensure timely and accurate delivery of all earned veterans benefits.

- Sustain a comprehensive, high-quality veterans health care system.
- Improve veterans mental health care and suicide prevention efforts.
- Provide equitable benefits and services for women and minority veterans.
- Expand support for families and survivors of disabled veterans.
- Enhance veterans transition, employment and economic empowerment.

"In the years to come, lawmakers will face major decisions about the future for our nation's veterans, and we have to be clear about the importance of the policies they'll put in place to ensure the men and women who served receive the care and benefits they've earned," said National Commander Butch Whitehead. "Vision for Veterans offers a roadmap for every candidate seeking federal office, and all those currently in office, to guide their decisionmaking process with the best interest of our nation's heroes in mind."

Throughout 2020, DAV will be reaching out to candidates for the House, the Senate and the presidency to share its vision of what the future for America's veterans should look like. View the full Vision for Veterans list at http://dav.la/117.

# VA campaign to help diabetic veterans manage care

■ In an effort to ensure diabetic veterans have a better understanding of their personal health, the Department of Veterans Affairs launched the Understand Your Diabetes Numbers campaign to educate patients and their families on hemoglobin A1C, glucose monitoring, blood pressure and kidney tests, and other vital measurements essential to their well-being.

"One in 4 veterans enrolled in VA health care services has diabetes," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This public health campaign encourages veterans to be proactive with their health care teams by improving their understanding of diabetes test results."

The yearlong campaign—which addresses treatment goals, medication and nutritional management,



and patient safety—will include key topics such as understanding the importance of hemoglobin A1C test results, shared decision-making between veterans and their health care team, hypoglycemia safety, insulin differences, good nutrition, carbohydrate counting, and kidney function and blood pressure measurement.

For more information, talk to your primary care doctor or visit http://dav.la/1m0.



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### **REUNIONS**

#### ARMY

ruthlessriders.co

**1ST BATTALION 40TH FA VIETNAM** June 14–19, Mt. Pleasant, SC, Contact: James Bishop, Ph: 209-952-0535, Email: iames@iabishop.com

4TH BATTALION, 39TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION (VIETNAM 1966–1969 BEARCAT, DONG TAM) Sept. 24–26, Charlotte, NC, Contact: Jim Haines, Ph: 303-809-1858, Email: Izbearcat@live.com 7TH SQUADRON 17TH AIR CAVALRY RUTHLESS RIDERS, PALEHORSE REUNION Sept. 9–13, Gatlinburg, TN, Contact: Joe, Ph: 201-390-5350, Web:

11TH ARMORED CAVALRY VETERANS OF VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA Aug. 26–30, Indianapolis, IN, Contact: Frank Church, Ph: 386-365-0487, Web: 11thcavnam.com 62ND AVIATION COMPANY, COMPANY A, 502ND AVIATION BATTALION, 175TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY Sept. 17–21, San Antonio, TX, Contact:

Bert Rice, Ph: 410-507-3366, Email: bert07@comcast.net, Web: vinhlongoutlaws.com

101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION ASSOCIATION Aug. 12–16, Grand Rapids, MI, Contact: Ph: 931-431-0199, Web: screamingeagle.org

101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION VIETNAM VETERANS ORGANIZATION Aug. 26–30, Fayetteville/Fort Bragg, NC, Contact: Ron Long, Ph: 310-977-4253, Email: ronlong71@msn.com, Web: www.101namveteran.com 272 MP VIETNAM VETERANS REUNION May 21–23, Nashville, TN, Contact: Jim Walker, Ph: 404-372-1369, Email: jimwalker@aol.com

30TH FIELD ARTILLERY June 8–12, Fort Sill, OK, Contact: Dan Mitchell, Ph: 405-618-6441, Email: countyhonorguard@yahoo.com, Web: hardchargers.com NATIONAL 4TH INFANTRY (IVY) DIVISION

ASSOCIATION Aug. 10–16, Colorado Springs, CO, Web: 4thinfantry.org/content/2020-national-reunion VIETNAM DUSTERS, QUADS, SEARCHLIGHTS, VULCANS AND HAWKS June 2–7, Norfolk, VA, Contact: Bruce Geiger, Ph: 914-576-1050, Email: bmgeiger@aol.com, Web: ndgsa.com

### NAVY

**USS ABNAKI (ATF-96)** Sept. 27–30, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Steven Andersland, Ph: 210-410-1820, Email: sandersland@outlook.com

USS BOSTON (CA-69, CAG-1 AND SSN-703)
SHIPMATES AND CREW July 9–12, King of Prussia, PA,
Contact: Barry Probst, Ph: 508-580-5808, Email:
president@ussboston.org, Web: ussboston.org
USS COGSWELL DD651 ASSOCIATION WITH USS

WEDDERBURN DD-684 ASSOCIATION, 1943–1969
Sept. 21–23, Bellevue, WA, Contact: George Overman,
Ph: 760-889-2216, Email: secretary@usscogswell.com,
Web: usscogswell.com

USS DUBUQUE (LPD-8) June 25–28, Dubuque, IA, Contact: Lawrence Parker, Ph: 812-228-7260, Email: ussdbq8reunion@yahoo.com

USS FORREST ROYAL (DD-872) June 25–28, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Ron Larsen, Ph: 715-423-8905, Email: mosbyusn@wctc.net

USS FRANK KNOX (DDR/DD-742), 1944–1971
Sept. 23–26, Albuquerque, NM, Contact: Vaughan Kruger, Ph: 206-466-6094, Email: vaughankruger@yahoo.com
USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB/CVA/CV-42)

AND AIR GROUPS June 3–7, Jacksonville, FL, Contact: Bill Solt, Ph: 321-362-5806, Email: sisbill@aol.com USS LITCHFIELD COUNTY (LST-901) Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Don Lerche, Ph: 309-530-8710, Email: donlerche@yahoo.com

USS PARK COUNTY (LST-1077) Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Mike Kempf, Ph: 317-490-4229, Email: m.w.kempf@sbcglobal.net

USS RASHER (SS/SSR/AGSS-269) Sept. 16–20, La Porte, TX, Contact: Richard Moore, Ph: 804-815-0730, Email: drifterpilot@cox.net

USS RATON (SS/SSR/AGSS-270) Aug. 24–28, Tucson, AZ, Contact: Larry Kramer, Ph: 360-697-2842, Email: ldkramer43@hotmail.com

USS ROCHESTER (CA-124) Aug. 17–21, Rapid City, SD, Contact: Joe Hill, Ph: 931-432-4848, Email: nitecraw@twlakes.net

**USS SUTTER COUNTY (LST-1150)** Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Guy Simmons, Ph: 978-476-3895, Email: guysimmons@aol.com

USS TAYLOR (DD/DDE-468) Aug. 27–31, Harrisburg, PA, Contact: James O'Neill, Ph: 804-212-8911, Email: oneillfalm@aol.com

USS WEXFORD COUNTY (LST-1168) Aug. 11–13, New Orleans, LA, Contact: Larry Condra, Ph: 314-604-5221, Email: larrygeec@netscape.net

Phase: larrygeecemetscape.net

VP-6 PATRON SIX BLUE SHARKS ASSOCIATION

Aug. 19–22, Whidbey Island, WA, Contact: Jim Lamers, Ph:

703-727-7944, Email: JimIVP6@comcast.net, Web: vp-6.org

### AIR FORCE

**555 RED HORSE** July 29–31, Austin, TX, Contact: Sam Elizondo, Ph: 956-224-0558, Email: minombreesmas@gmail.com

601ST TACTICAL CONTROL ASSOCIATION

June 24–27, Bellefontaine, OH, Contact: Paul Mussolino, Ph: 937-838-0812, Email: mussolino@earthlink.net 6950 USAFSS, 1974–1978, RAF CHICKSANDS,

**ENGLAND** Sept. 24–27, San Antonio, TX, Contact: Richard Robert, Email: chicksandreunion@gmail.com

### ALL SERVICES

# ALL MILITARY, UNITS, DOD AND CIVILIAN CONTRACTORS AT/NEAR PLEIKU, VIETNAM

Sept. 13–17, Hershey, PA, Contact: Ron Chromulak, Ph: 412-515-7247, Email: ron1bev@comcast.net or Contact: JD Smith, Ph: 859-271-3523, Email: j.d.smith.lake@gmail.com, Web: pleikuab.com

CHARLIE ROCK AND 4/5 FA—DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM July 9–12, Orlando, FL, Contact: Michael Manigo, Ph: 706-464-2808, Email: manigo40@yahoo.com or Contact: Robert Gaines, Ph: 317-698-3876, Email: vorogaines@comcast.net

NEBRASKA VIETNAM VETERANS Aug. 13–16, Lincoln, NE. Contact: Web: vetsreunion.com

UDORN RESEARCH GROUP (UDORN RTAFB), 1961–1976 July 9–13, Weatherford, TX, Contact: Jerry Long, Ph: 817-673-0459, Email: jclhydsr71bafb@gmail.com

### INQUIRIES

- Searching for members of the 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery, who were deployed in OIF 2008–2009 and OEF 2011–2012 to have a reunion in Kansas City, MO, Sept. 2020. Contact: Alejandro Esparza, Email: jandroalegt500@aol.com.
- Searching for volunteers who were at Edgewood Arsenal, MD, in the early 1960s, and were exposed to VX nerve gas agent and may be having problems from exposure, such as myself. Contact: Ed Myers, Email: jjffshing2@yahoo.com.
- Searching for Tim Sullivan and Joe Mcvey who served in Chicago, 1969–1970. Contact: Richard "Frenchy" La Chapelle, Email: dlachape@sbcglobal.net.
- Searching for anyone who was stationed in Pobwon-ni, Korea, 1968–1969. Contact: Richard "Frenchy" La Chapelle, Email: dlachape@sbcglobal.net.
- Searching for Air Force Sgt. Debbie Wallace who was stationed at Lockbourne Air Force Base, Headquarters Squadron, Columbus, OH, 1971–1973. Contact: Terry McAlister, Ph. 502-338-9582.
- Searching for anyone who was in the 8th Army, A Battery, 7th Battalion, 2nd Artillery, Signal Company, in the Korean DMZ from December 1966 through spring 1968.
   Contact: Ken Green, Email: ypeters127@comcast.net.
- Searching for George Ranft, USMC, 5th Comm Battalion, Da Nang, in 1967. Contact: Bob Sutherland, Ph: 520-975-2009, Email: bobsutherland@hotmail.com.
- Searching for Tech Sgt. Janis K Olson (JKO), radio operator 304xx, last stationed at Minot AFB, ND, in 1996.
   Former bases: Shemya, AK; Dyess AFB, TX. Contact: Jane Flowers, Ph: 507-320-0866.
- Searching for Spc. 4 11B20 Larry Clements, 198th Infantry Brigade, who was stationed in Vietnam August 1971–June 1972. Contact: Wilbert H. Baucom, Ph: 501-847-8550 or 501-960-2271.

- Searching for Robert M. Greene who was originally from Chicago. Green was stationed at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, 1967–1968. Green was a member of the vocal group called Doc & the Cavaliers, who performed and toured with an Air Force show known as 7AF Command Performance. Contact: Jesse Holt, Email: patjess2@cox.net.
- Searching for anyone who served in the 360th TEWS at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, May 1970–March 1971.
   Contact: Jim Stodola, Email: energy46@verizon.net.
- Searching for anyone who served in the 3rd Brigade, 2/12th Battalion, B Company, 4th Platoon, An Khê, Camp Radcliff, 1965. Also looking for pictures or other forms of verification of the company being awarded the Presidential Meritorious Unit Citation for the Battle at Plei Mei. Contact: Freddie Slaughter, Email: Freddie.slaughter@sbcglobal.net.
- Searching for anyone who served with A Battery, 599th Field Artillery, January–December 1951, Fort Bragg, NC. Contact: Moe Moore, Ph: 617-491-7714.
- Searching for Leland Grant Ritter of Texas, who was stationed at the NAS Whidbey Island, WA, where he worked in the electric shop. Contact: Marion Galgerud, Email: boyde1941@cox.net.
- Searching for anyone who may have served with Rodrick "Marty" O'Banion, USAF, HOR: Vermon, EOD 3/12/68, discharged 1/12/72, Pease AFB, NH. AFSC: 42153 AGE Repairman in SEA/Indochina. Contact: Joseph Cleary, Email: jlclear50@comcast.net.
- Searching for Ronald Peacock USMC, 1968–1969, from San Leandro, CA, Unit: 2nd Squadron, 3rd Platoon, E Company, 27th Marines, 1st Marine Division. Contact: Albert "Hondo" Hernandez, Ph: 505-506-7397, Email: beckyhernandez46@yahoo.com.
- Searching for someone who was in boot camp, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, MCRD San Diego, May 25, 1964, Platoon 240, Company E, and went to ITR L Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd ITR, MCB Camp Pendleton, CA. Contact: David Manchua, Ph. 512-963-0338.
- Searching for "Woody," "Smitty," "Chris" or "Dick" who were U.S. Air Force enlisted men and veterans stationed at Toul-Rosières AB, France, around 1962–1964, and who were members of the rock 'n' roll band The Checkmates on base. Contact: Michael Hicks, Email: Michaelinboise@aol.com.
- Searching for E03 Harry Morrel, MCB 10, A Company, Camp Wilkinson (Gia Le), Vietnam. Originally from Key Biscayne, FL; last known address Dallas. Contact: Larry Capes, Email: rodeopetediesel@amail.com.
- Searching for anyone from 1st Engineer Support Company, 1st Engineer Battalion, at Camp Talega, Camp Pendleton, CA. Boarded ship Oct. 10, 1965, USS Calbert (APA-32), at San Diego. Went to Okinawa, then to Chu Lai. Contact: David Mancha, Ph: 512-963-0338.
- Searching for Marines Skip Johnson from Philadelphia, PA; Charles "Snake" Watkin from Louisiana; and other comrades who played basketball at MCAS Cherry Point, NC, with Ike. Contact: Ike, Ph: 989-971-4227.
- Searching for anyone who served in the Air Force at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, in 1966 in the A/C Sheet Metal Shop.
   Contact: Edwin Graf, Email: edwingraf191@gmail.com.
- Searching for the following former Marines: James Thompson from Spokane, WA, who later moved to Seattle; Lance Wood from Seattle, who has a cat tattoo; Paul Albause from New York, but settled in California and married a general's daughter; Tim Dolan from Chicago, whose dad possibly worked for the newspaper; Don Mouda from the Tri-Cities area in Washington; Martinez who had a no-shaving order; and Bey the radioman who was from Georgia. Contact: Gus, Ph: 360-951-1340, Email: gregggerrits@gmail.com.

#### **PLANNING A REUNION?**

We welcome submissions from our readers for reunions and inquiries. Email the details to feedback@dav.org. Submissions must be received at least six months prior to the event date and are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety.

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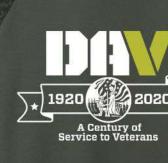


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