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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK, INC.
200 Atlantic Avenue, Lynbrook, New York 11563



JULY 2008 NEWSLETTER

IN THE BEGINNING

Robert J. Finnerty, Department Commander

I would like to thank all of the members who supported the Department and myself this past June at our Annual State Convention. Our Convention was a success. Yes, there were some glitches (the food); our Headquarters is working hard to correct these issues. To PDC Tom Mazza, my wife Margaret and everyone else who assisted with the hospitality room – thank you all. A big thank you goes out to Golden Technologies for once again donating the use of motorized scooters for our Convention.

This past week was our Annual Rehab Cruise, which was attended by over 225 veterans and friends. What a beautiful day it was!

The day after the Rehab Cruise, DAVA Commander Terry Skyler and I started our tour visiting the down state VA Hospitals and State Veterans Home. We started at the Brooklyn VA Hospital and met with Yvette Cintron, Chief of Voluntary Services and Russell Dolecal. From there we headed to the Manhattan VA Hospital where we met with Chief of Network Visn 3 Prosthetics, John Loosen, Associate Director Martina Parauda, and Michael Brennan, Assistant Chief of Voluntary Services.

On Thursday we toured the State Veterans Home in Stonybrook. We then met with Dennis Krulder, PDC and Chief of Voluntary Services Mary O’Sullivan at Northport VA Medical Center. On Friday, we met with Erik Langhoff MD, PHD at the Bronx VA Hospital. I would like to thank all the VAVS’s for the tours at each of these facilities.

I am impressed with the courtesy, the true friendship, and the respect we have for one another in our great State of New York. Let’s keep it up, it makes leading the Department smoother. Just one word on baseless criticism; every legitimate concern should be coupled with a constructive suggestion. Useless talk burdens us all. Foolish concerns can blur our focus and hinder our mission. So keep up the sweet harmony. I am looking forward to continuing to lead our Department in the same direction – (“Excelsior”) onwards and upwards. Thank you all and God bless.

DAV-NY CONVENTION RETROSPECT

Sidney Siller, Sr., PDC, Department Adjutant

It’s about three weeks since our 87th Annual Department of New York Convention. The work done in 2007 and 2008 by our Chapters and Department Committees achieved a high level of achievement and success, except for our state legislative agenda.



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In the areas of certification of Chapter Service Officers, we had 78 individuals qualify with respect to their training. Our grateful thanks to Jeff Hall and our NSO staff for their splendid efforts. In this regard, we are planning to support our claims benefit services by supporting our NSO's with a Department of New York (DSO) program. You will be informed of the developments in this area as it takes shape and is implemented. We have great anticipation about the success of a DSO program, since we can do so much good for our members.

The Transportation Program is in excellent shape. However, several resolutions were introduced and passed relating to having our National Department renegotiate the Transportation Agreement with the VA, so that local VAMC Hospital Director's will no longer have discretion to deny our van donating Chapters the privilege of using the vans in patriotic and civic parades or occasions. Also, there are issues concerning maintenance and repairs that have burdened our HSC staff and volunteer drivers. The National Amputation Chapter #76 has again submitted resolution's pertaining to the specific needs relating to their service connected injuries. We hope to be more successful with all of the above at the upcoming National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The Colorado Trust has transformed its name, pursuant to the Trust Agreement, it is now known as the Columbia Trust. So, don't discard van applications when you receive them titled Columbia Trust. The Department of Florida recently triggered the name change when it donated over \$500,000.00 cumulatively to the DAV Grant Agency. Our congratulations to the Department of Florida, who together with the thousands of our transported members helped DAV-FL attain this achievement.

Of utmost interest, we reported at the Convention that the Admiral Halsey Sr. Citizen Village in Poughkeepsie was closed. A problem that was solved and successfully concluded.

Our finances are in good condition, except for the fact that we have lost approximately 13,000 members; DAV-NY and our Chapters will lose substantial sums in per capita payments. Please keep this in mind when planning your Chapters activities.

The biggest disappointment has to do with our State of New York's treatment of veterans. However, there is nothing new on this front. We intend to deal with it differently by seeking out an appropriate lobbyist and PR representative to assist us. To our Legislative Chairman Bob Becker, don't give up, help may be on the way; so keep on doing a great job; the results will come. We also have a great State Director of the Division of Veteran's Affairs in James McDonough.



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We passed several new Amendments and will pass them on to you, once National approves them.

With respect to our new Commander Bob Finnerty and his line, I can only say that from what their potential is, the sky's the limit for success. I think our Nominations Committee has done superb work in this difficult job. The candidates who did not make it this year appeared to have the leadership qualifications, but there were not enough positions for all. To those candidates I say keep honing your leadership skills and DAV knowledge.

Just one last thought – DAV wives are special when supporting their husbands for office. Whether it's Helen Mazza, Debbie Barbuto, Diane Wisnesky (just to name a few); and now Margaret Finnerty. I still am jealous. When I ran for Commander in 1856, I was single and the hospitality room was not as gracious and opulent as Commander Finnerty and Margaret especially made it. Thanks to Margaret (with Tom Mazza) and all of her beautiful predecessor's who helped their husbands achieve the high honor of leading DAV-NY.

Our work, which is excellent, is not over. We have much work to do. So work with your Department and DAV-NY will continue to excel.

ALL NATIONAL CONVENTION (GO-ERS) DELEGATES

If you are attending the National Convention in August, please note that the **DAV District Meetings for our District** will be held on **Friday, August 8, 2008 from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm and it is imperative that you be there.** Check the Convention Agenda for the meeting room location.

DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT YOUR 2008 DELEGATE CREDENTIALS

You'll need delegate credentials to represent your Department, Chapter or Auxiliary Unit during the 87th DAV and Auxiliary National Convention at Bally's in Las Vegas, Nev., "so don't leave home without yours."

"It's important for all DAV and Auxiliary delegates attending our National Convention to obtain proper credentials to be seated as voting delegates representing their Department, Chapter or Unit," National Adjutant Arthur H. Wilson said. "Having proper credentials maintains the integrity of our convention system and guarantees the most accurate representation of the will of the membership of this great organization."



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National Membership Director Anthony Baskerville stressed the electoral process is the key to the future of the DAV and Auxiliary, adding the National Membership Department is prepared to assist anyone in order to make the process of obtaining credentials as easy and accurate as possible.

Details of the credentialing process are mailed to all Departments, Chapters, Auxiliary State Departments and Units well in advance of the National Convention. The April Membership Memo is scheduled to include all necessary forms needed for credentialing. The forms must be signed by the Commander and Adjutant of the delegate's appropriate Department or Chapter or Auxiliary State Department or Unit. All subordinate organizations of the DAV should select delegates and alternates as soon as forms arrive and be sure to get the lists of delegates and alternates to National Headquarters before the July 11 deadline.

Remember, conventions are for guests too. Be sure to register guests attending the National Convention to ensure they will have registration badges permitting them to attend many business sessions and lots of planned social functions.

The 87th DAV and Auxiliary National Convention at Bally's Las Vegas will certainly be a fun-filled, exciting event you won't want to miss. Get your credentials, and join us for a great convention.

GI BILL INCREASE

Source: NAUS Weekly Update 11 Jul 08

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that the Montgomery GI Bill will soon be increased by 20% - a total increase of nearly \$220 a month increase over last year's rate. The increased full-time student payment rate of \$1,321 multiplied by the 36-month brings the GI Bill total payout to over \$47,500. If you are GI Bill eligible and have benefits remaining, you get this increase no matter when you became eligible or begin using it. This is increase that will help pay college costs until the new GI Bill goes into effect in August 2009.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS WEEK

Recently, the House of Representatives unanimously passed resolution – H.Con.Res. 336 - to establish *Disabled American Veterans Week*. This resolution specifies that one week each year should be established to honor America's heroes and draws attention to the unique challenges faced by disabled veterans.



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FAMILY FILM FESTIVAL

Source: EANGUS Minuteman Update 10 Jul 08

While school's out, kids and their parents can visit selected Regal theatres around the country for their no charge Family Film Festival for nine weeks of movies. Regal has provided this service to the community since 1991. Selected G & PG movies start at 10AM each TUE and WED during the festival. First-come, first-served seating is limited to theatre capacity. The Family Film Festival is safe, lots of fun and a great way for kids to spend a weekday morning in the summer. To see if the no charge movies are playing in your city go to <http://www.regmovies.com/nowshowing/familyfilmfestivalschedule.aspx> and use the drop down box to find your state. It will then display the local theaters, movies, show times, etc.

ADVENTURE EXCURSIONS FOR OEF/OIF VETERANS

Source: Student Veterans of America John D. Mikelson Notice 10 Jul 08

Outward Bound, an international non-profit outdoor education program, is offering fully funded outdoor adventure excursions to all OEF/OIF veterans. It doesn't matter what your current military status is (active, inactive, discharged, retired) you're eligible to attend as long as you deployed in support of OEF/OIF combat operations while in the military. These five-day excursions offer adventure activities such as backpacking, rock climbing, canyoneering, canoeing, and dog sledding in wilderness areas in Maine, Texas, Colorado, California, and Minnesota. Scheduled courses from September 8, 2008 February 9, 2009 are listed below, and future courses will be scheduled soon. All expedition costs for lodging, equipment, food, and instruction are completely funded by a multi-million dollar Sierra Club grant, including the participants' round-trip transportation between home and the wilderness site. The excursion is offered at no cost to the participant.

To sign up for one of the prescheduled courses, contact Doug Hayward at 1-866-669-2362, ext. 8387, or e-mail him at obvets@outwardbound.org. To learn more about the OEF/OIF program, visit the website at www.outwardboundwilderness.org/veterans.html. You can also contact two of their retired Judge Advocates, Joe and Amy Frisk, who are working for Outward Bound on this program at vetsor@outwardbound.org, or at (303) 968-4420. The open enrollment course schedule is:

- Leadville CO - Backpacking and Rock Climbing in the Colorado Rockies: 3-7 SEP & 4-8 OCT 08.



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- Newry ME - Backpacking and Canoeing: 7-11 & 19-23 OCT 08 .
- Big Bend TX - Back packing and Canyoneering: 2-6 & 15-19 NOV 08.
- Joshua Tree National Monument CA - Backpacking and Rock Climbing: December 3-7 & 14-18 DEC 08.
- Ely MN - Dog Sledding: February 3-7 FEB 09.

VETERAN FREIGHT JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Source: Fleet Owner Online Justin Carretta article 7 Jul 08

Both Schneider National and Con-way Freight have implemented programs to attract former military personnel to the trucking business, helping train and prepare armed forces members for a life behind the wheel. The trucking industry needs good, quality workers. Former servicemen and women need a post-military career. It seems like a natural fit. Schneider National announced last week its Veterans Owner-Operator Program, which will give former military personnel the training, mentoring, financial incentives and purchasing power necessary to become an owner-operator, the carrier said. Schneider signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that will subsidize veterans' commercial drivers' license training through their GI Bill benefits. The carrier added that it would work closely with veterans to ensure they are able to become owner-operators six months sooner than prospective owner-operators without a military background.

According to Schneider, more than 25% of the company's employees have military backgrounds, and the carrier ranks sixth on G.I. Jobs' Top Military-Friendly Employer list. Con-way Freight is also looking to attract armed forces personnel, launching last week a public-private partnership with the U.S. Army Reserve that will allow both organizations to recruit, train and employ those interested both in serving their country and joining the commercial freight transportation industry. According to Con-way, the agreement gives Army Reserve soldier's employment opportunities with Con-way Freight after they complete their military occupational training, formally creating a relationship between the armed forces and the private sector.

BUFFALO'S FIRST DAV DAY AT THE BALLPARK

The first DAV Day at the Ballpark was a big success. There was plenty of food, folks and fun. Department Commander Robert Finnerty threw out a ceremonial "first pitch." Then, the rain started and the game was delayed twice. The game was eventually finished and the Buffalo Bisons went on to beat the Scranton Wilkes-Barre Yankees. There were 348 tickets bought by DAV Buffalo Chapters and other organizations. We



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hope that next year will be even bigger! The DAV received multiple recognitions on the jumbotron, thus spreading the word about our commitment to "Building Better Lives for our Nations Disabled Veterans and the Families."

CONVENTION SERVICE OFFICER TRAINING

Bryan J. Held, NSO Supervisor Buffalo

I would like to thank the entire National Service Officer Corps for their assistance in conducting this year's annual Department/Chapter Service Officer (DSO/CSO) training. There were 61 DSO/CSO's certified to take claims on behalf of their respective Chapters and to forward those claims to the nearest National Service Office. Next years training will be even bigger and better. The Chapter and Department Service Officers provide one of the most important links in the Organization. He or she is responsible for providing and gathering information to assist in obtaining benefits and services available to veterans, their dependents and survivors. The primary function of the DSO/CSO is to advise and instruct claimants and to forward all pertinent claims communication and information to the DAV National Service Office of jurisdiction.

"Freedom has it's life in the hearts, the actions, the spirit of men, and so it must be daily earned and refreshed – else like a flower cut from it's life giving roots, it will wither and die." - Dwight D. Eisenhower

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Here is a brief legislative update that I trust will be of benefit to you personally or for lobbying purposes.

FY2009 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – As with last year there is confusion over the NDAA. Although the House passed HR 5658, its version of the bill, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said it's unlikely Congress will pass any fiscal 2009 spending bills this year. Instead, Congress may use continuing resolutions to fund the government at current levels until the new administration takes over. While there is always hope of a compromised bill with the House, recent past history is indicative that continuing resolutions are on the way again. Nevertheless I urge you to contact your senators on bills being taken up by the Senate that are of interest – these include TRICARE, concurrent receipt, and SBP among others shown below:

- Sen. Frank Lautenberg's (D-NJ) and Sen. Chuck Hagel's (R-NE) amendment to protect military beneficiaries from disproportional TRICARE fee hikes



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- Sen. Harry Reid's (D-NV) amendment to expand eligibility for concurrent receipt payments
- Sen. Saxby Chambliss' (R-GA) amendment to provide fairer retirement credit for Guard and Reserve members who served in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Sen. Bill Nelson's (D-FL) amendment to end the DIC offset from SBP for some 59,000 widows.

2009 COLA may be the highest in 26 years since inflation has been rampant during the last few months. Should slight decreases in oil price occur, perhaps inflation may slow down.

VA Retro is a program designed by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) and VA to pay military retirees retroactive money due as a result of increases in their percent of disability. These payments include retroactive adjustments to Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC), Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) and VA disability compensation. Prior to recent laws pertaining to CRSC and CRDP, a retiree was not allowed to receive both military retired pay and VA disability compensation. CRSC provides special compensation to retirees who have an offset to retired pay due to receipt of VA disability compensation for combat-related disabilities - regardless of disability rating percentage. The CRDP program provides a 10-year phase-out of the offset to retired pay due VA disability compensation. Only payments made by DFAS for CRDP are taxable; CRSC is non-taxable. No application or claim is required as VA is working with DFAS to provide retirees with full entitlement. The 100% unemployable are also entitled to VA Retro payment if awarded retroactively by VA. Retirees may call DFAS toll free at 1-877-327-4457 for more information. Questions concerning disability rating percentages should be directed to VA at 1-800-827-1000.

As you know we avoided a 10.6% cut in **payments to doctors for Medicare and TRICARE** when Congress overrode the President's veto. Also there is anticipation of a 1.1% increase as of January 1, 2009; however at the end of 2009 there could be a 21% cut in Medicare and TRICARE payments if Congress doesn't fix the current payment formula that imposes annual cuts.

The House has approved a measure to provide up to 20,000 rental vouchers a year for **homeless veterans**, assist non-profit organizations who provide housing help to low income veterans, and exclude veterans' benefits in calculations of housing assistance from the Housing and Urban Development and Agriculture departments.

DOD and the Department of Education signed a memorandum of understanding to help meet the **education needs for military children**. It is likely that a commission will be formed among the states that have signed the Interstate Compact on Educational



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Opportunity for Military Children. Presently ten states have signed on. Of the more than 1.2 million military students, 92 % don't attend DOD-operated schools. This initiative is aimed at easing education problems for those facing deployed parents, PCS moves, and varying curriculum requirements. This work attempts to assure that academic credits do not disadvantage military students for graduation and other purposes.

TAPS

Department has been notified that the following comrades have been called into final formation above:

Ray D. Ellsworth, Chapter #153, 7/1/08

Russell Keever, Chapter #145, 7/13/08

Thomas H. Straight, Chapter #153, 7/14/08

Department and the membership extend deepest sympathies to the family members, friends and comrades of these fallen heroes. May each one rest in honor.

Please feel free to call, write or e-mail davny@optonline.net Headquarters if you have a loss in your Chapter that you would like to include in this column.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Scranton Yankees DAV Night at the Ballpark

Scranton Yankees vs Pawtucket Red Sox

August 4, 2008

PNC Field 7:00 pm

2008 National DAV Convention

August 9, 2008 to August 12, 2008

Bally's Hotel Las Vegas

South Las Vegas, NV