



NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS
OF THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK

FALL 2017

COMMANDER'S REPORT

*By Israel Rivera
Department Commander*

I would like to extend my thank you to all who supported me for the position of State Commander for the Department of New York in 2017-2018. As a reminder, please keep up with our lawmakers on protecting our benefits. Continue to reply to our legislative alerts. As Commander, I have attended to some of the seminars at the National Convention in New Orleans. I met a lot of wonderful people from all of the different states, including Puerto Rico.

At this time, I am making my plans to start visiting all the Veterans Hospitals in the State of New York. I am very proud to be working with the staff at headquarters. They have been very helpful to me. I like to ask questions, and learn more as I go along being your Commander for the year 2017-2018.

Our Rehab Cruise was this past July. It was a beautiful day being with all of the different chapters, passing through Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn. I also met a lot of new people discussing what is going on in the world.

It is also a sad time of the passing of our Sergeant-at-Arms- Lou Nicoletti who always kept us laughing. Also, our Executive Director Prospero Sodano is presently in rehab. Please keep him in your prayers for a speedy recovery.

I am looking forward to the Mid-Winter Conference in Washington DC, listening to our National Leaders speaking to our legislators, then our SEC meeting in March.

ADJUTANT'S REPORT

*By Donald A. Sioss, PNC, PDC
Department Adjutant*

Once again, the summer is over and we are in the fall. We have been busy over the last few months and will continue to do so, as the fall proceeds.

We held our Annual Department Convention once again at the Hudson Valley Resort in Kerhonkson. It was an enjoyable four days, spent in the Catskills. The weekend commenced with our annual golf outing, chaired this year by Tom Wohrab. Once again, we had a beautiful day and the golfers had a continental breakfast and a barbeque lunch before heading out onto the course. I heard many good reports about the event, which I have to rely upon, since I am not a golfer.

The opening session commenced on Monday morning with the Auxiliary in attendance. We had several representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, with changes in directors at several VISN 3 facilities, we were missing a couple of directors. In any event, they spoke to us and relayed Secretary Shulkin's vision for the VA. We also had a representative from the New York State Division of Veterans Affairs speak. After the opening session, we went into the normal convention business.

Besides the regular reports from our Finance Committee, Treasurer and line officers, we conducted a number of seminars in the afternoon. The first day, Monday, the NSO's conducted a seminar for Chapter Service Officers (CSOs). We had a fairly good attendance at this seminar and certified numerous Chapter Service Officers who can assist veterans in completing claim forms to submit to the VA. This allows us to continue to provide service to our members and disabled veterans

Tuesday morning was a continuation of our business session and included the most important committee report from the resolutions committee. Resolutions that

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ADJUTANT'S REPORT *(con't)*

are submitted by chapters are considered and if approved at the convention, forwarded to the National Organization for consideration at the national convention. If approved at national, the resolution is included in the DAV's legislative program. The important thing to note is that legislation starts at the grassroots level and continues to the Congress. Another important committee report was from our new Women's Veterans Committee.

Tuesday afternoon, we presented three seminars, aimed at helping chapter officers run their chapters better and improving our service to our members. These include seminars for commanders and adjutants, treasurers and public relations. The convention concluded with the election of Israel Rivera as our Department Commander for 2017-2018. Let's all work hard for Israel and make this another banner year for the Department of New York.

Soon after convention, we had our annual cruise on the East River on the Skyline Princess. We departed from the World's Fair Marina on a four-hour cruise down the East River to the Statue of Liberty and back. While cruising, we enjoyed a sumptuous buffet, unlimited drinks and music for dancing and listening on the top deck. National Commander David Reilly flew in to be on the cruise with us. This was the second year that we had the National Commander on our cruise. If you missed it this year, be sure to attend next year.

A quick trip to National Headquarters for the State Commanders and Adjutants Association followed and we had a chance to learn more about DAV programs. This also gives our top leadership an opportunity to meet with a number of the national directors. This is an invaluable opportunity, because when we need their help, they know who we are and are always ready to give us a hand.

The National Convention returned to New Orleans. I think this is my 7th or 8th convention in NOLA. However, it is a fun city, with lots of good restaurants and many things to see and do. More importantly, the National Organization conducted an excellent convention. There were interesting guest speakers, including VA Secretary Dr. Shulkin and of course reports from the major DAV departments. The DAV is active on many fronts, supporting disabled veterans and their families. There were many committee meetings and an abundance of seminars. As always, the convention is an excellent opportunity to learn more about the DAV, its programs and how to run your chapter. There was of course the fun night with Gary Sinese and the Lt. Dan Band. However, the crowning achievement was the election of the first female commander for a Veteran Service Organization - Delphine Metcalf-Foster who was with us in New York for our department convention.

The highlight for the Department of New York was for our own Donald Day who was elected to the national line again as the National 2nd Jr. Vice Commander. Congratulations to Donald! In a few short years, it is likely that we will have another National Commander from New York. If things go normally, this will be at the convention in Dallas. It should be a fun trip. We had a number of New Yorkers on his campaign committee and helping in his candidacy. We will need to continue this work.

I am pleased to report that several important pieces of legislation have recently been passed by the Congress and signed into law. They include an extension of the Choice Care Act plus the approval of numerous VA leases and the recently signed Appeals Modernization Act. The Appeals Modernization Act is legislation that the DAV has been advocating for a long time. It will streamline the appeals process which now can take several years to get a decision. Many older veterans with appeals pending have been dying before a decision is reached on their case. This landmark bill will improve the appeals process, so that veterans will get their decisions in a timelier manner. A big part of winning these legislative issues, is the grassroots support that you provide by being a part of the Commander's Action network. Keep up the good work!

Let's make this a banner year for the Department of New York!

HELP WANTED: The recent death of our longtime Sergeant-at-Arms, Lou Nicoletti has created an opening for a **Sergeant-at-Arms**. This is an appointed position and the commander is looking for someone who is interested in the position and helping us at various functions. Drop us a line at Headquarters, if you are interested.

CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF VA CHOICE FUNDING LEGISLATION

Statement by VA Secretary David J. Shulkin

Congress took an important step last night in helping the VA to continue to build an integrated system that allows veterans to receive the best healthcare possible, whether from VA or the private sector. The \$2.1B in Choice funding ensures there will be no disruptions to quality care for our Veterans. Our Veterans have earned and deserve the best care possible and we will keep raising that bar with the help and support of our Congressional leaders.

**DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK
2017-2018 OFFICERS**

COMMANDERISRAEL RIVERA
SR. VICE COMMANDER JOSEPH J. PENNELL
JR. VICE COMMANDERRACHEL K. FREDERICKS
JR. VICE COMMANDERGEORGE A. SANDER
JR. VICE COMMANDERMICHAEL A. MARTIN
JR. VICE COMMANDERTHOMAS WOHLRAB
CHAPLAINHARRY STEARNS
JUDGE ADVOCATE.....KEITH A. ROBINSON, PDC
TREASURER.....DONALD DAY, PDC
ADJUTANT DONALD A. SIOSS, PNC, PDC
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR..... PROSPERO SODANO



**DAV NATIONAL LINE OFFICERS
2017-2018 OFFICERS**

COMMANDERDELPHINE METCALF-FOSTER
CALIFORNIA
SR. VICE COMMANDER DENNIS J. NIXON
TEXAS
1st JR. VICE COMMANDER.....STEPHEN WHITEHEAD
MINNESOTA
2nd JR. VICE COMMANDERDONALD DAY
NEW YORK
3rd JR. VICE COMMANDERANDREW MARSHALL
FLORIDA
4th JR. VICE COMMANDERJOSEPH PARSETICH
MONTANA
NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE...MICHAEL DOBMEIER
MINNESOTA
NATIONAL CHAPLAIN.....MICHAEL DOVER
GEORGIA



FILE YOUR IRS 990

Every year at this time, your chapter is required to file a Form 990-N. Failure to file the form will cause your chapter to lose its tax exemption and be put “on hold” by national. If the tax exemption is not regained, your chapter could have its charter revoked.

MEMBERSHIP

The lifeblood of any organization is the membership. With the continuing loss of many World War II and Korean War veterans, the Department’s membership continues to drop. We are all working very hard to recruit new members and the importance of recruiting cannot be overemphasized.

First and foremost, the more members that we can recruit to maintain our membership level, the better our voice is with Congress. Second, a large majority of our income is based on membership. Each year both the Department and the chapters receive a per capita distribution from the Life Membership Fund. This distribution is based on membership - the more members you have, the higher the distribution. In addition, some years ago we contracted with National for them to do our fundraising. This has been a highly successful venture. But, once again, the distribution to the department from the National fundraising program is based upon our membership - more members = larger distribution.

So, how can you help? Easy. Be on the lookout for prospective members. This could be anywhere - at local events and you see someone wearing a veteran ball cap - say hello, thank him or her for their service and engage them in a conversation. If they turn out to be disabled, talk about the DAV and then ask them when they would like to join. If you have the DAV membership App on your phone, you can sign them up instantly!

At the local VA hospital or clinic, it is an excellent time to engage other veterans in conversation. Chances are that they will also be disabled, and if not a member, they may be unfamiliar with the DAV. Here’s your chance to enlighten and recruit them. Explain the benefits of joining the DAV and ask them when they can join. You’d be surprised how successful you can be with this type of approach.

Chapters can also run a membership drive. It is easy. Call the National Membership Department and tell them that you would like labels for prospective members. Provide them with the zip codes that encompass your chapter’s area and mailing labels will be on the way to you. While you’re waiting for the labels, compose a recruiting letter to these prospective members. Once again, emphasize the advantages of belonging to the DAV. Put the mailing together and send it out along with a membership application. Naturally, you will not experience a 100% return, but you will get results. When a new member does sign up, have someone from the chapter call him or her and invite them to your meeting. This will help to get them active!

Lastly, we are in the process of sorting through a large list of “trial members.” These members were signed up by DAV Transition Service Officers without the traditional \$40 down payment. They have been carried on the DAV roles for many years but have not made any payments. Department headquarters will sort these members by zip code and forward chapters their contact information. It is suggested that you reach out to them and try to get them to commit to paying their membership fee. Once again, explain the benefits of DAV.

VA AWARDS \$188 MILLION IN GRANT FUNDING TO HELP HOMELESS VETERANS

WASHINGTON - Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced \$188 million in grants for two programs benefiting homeless Veterans. The grants were made through the Grant and Per Diem (GPO) program, awarded to community agencies providing services to homeless Veterans. Awards announced today will provide approximately \$185 million in per diem funding for 556 projects to community agencies that provide transitional housing and supportive care for homeless Veterans. Awards were made to programs in 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

In addition, approximately \$3 million in grant funding will be awarded to 13 community agencies that provide services for homeless Veterans with special needs. The GPO Special Need funding provides additional operational costs for transitional housing and services for homeless Veterans who fall under "Special Need" populations, including women, those with chronic mental illness and individuals who care for minor dependents.

"The GPO program has been instrumental in providing needed services to community organizations," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "We look forward to our continued partnership with the awardees as we work together to end Veteran homelessness. Our goal is to help give at-risk Veterans stable housing and a good start to independence."

Since the GPO program began awarding grants in 1994, approximately \$2 billion has been awarded to community organizations serving homeless Veterans. The complete list of awardees may be found at <https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp> More information about VA's homeless programs is available at www.va.gov/homeless. Community organizations seeking details can visit VA's National Grant and Per Diem Program website at www.va.gov/homeless/GPD.ASP.

MEMBERSHIP STATUS

...as of 9/21/17

TRIAL MEMBERS: 467
PART LIFE MEMBERS: 1,514
FULL LIFE MEMBERS: 40,821
TOTAL MEMBERS: 42,802

GOAL FOR FULL LIFE MEMBERS: 509

VA TO INCREASE ACCESS TO SAFE AND EFFECTIVE LUNG SCREENING PROGRAMS

WASHINGTON- Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a new partnership to increase access to lung screening for Veterans.

Sponsored by the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, the project brings together experts from within and outside VA to develop the VA-PALS Implementation Network (VA-Partnership to increase Access to Lung Screening). Its goal is to develop early-detection programs for lung cancer, a malignancy with an 80 percent cure rate when caught early.

This new project will launch lung-screening services at the Phoenix VA Health Care System by December 2017, and then extend these services to nine additional VA medical facilities starting in 2018. Once fully implemented, the project has the potential to become even more widely available throughout VA. "This partnership is another example of VA's work to improve Veterans health and well-being," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "The VA-PALS lung screening initiative demonstrates our priority to work together with outside organizations to provide more efficient care aimed at addressing serious health concerns."

The VA-PALS initiative builds upon lessons learned from currently available screening programs, including those of VA's Office of Rural Health, which is supporting the project's goal to reach Veterans living in rural areas. It also adds to a portfolio of other major VA lung cancer initiatives, which include the VALOR Trial (Veterans Affairs Lung Cancer Or Stereotactic Radiotherapy) and the APOLLO Network (Applied Proteogenomics Organization Learning and Outcomes).

"Research shows that with comprehensive lung screening programs, early identification of lung cancer leads to more effective treatments and, ultimately, saves lives," said John Damonti, president of Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation. "The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation is proud to partner with the VA-PALS Implementation Network in this important step to increase access to state-of-the-art screening for Veterans at risk of lung cancer."

VA UNVEILS CLAIMS SUBMISSION OPTION THAT PROMISES TO COMPLETE CLAIMS WITHIN 30 DAYS

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) continues efforts to improve timeliness of services for Veterans and their families. VA unveiled the Decision Ready Claims (DRC) initiative, a disability claims submission option with accredited Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) that promises to deliver faster claims decisions to Veterans and their families.

"The DRC initiative is a collaborative effort between VA and VSOs to help Veterans receive faster decisions on disability claims," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "VA works closely with participating VSOs to make sure they are properly trained in this new process and given the tools they need to participate successfully in the program on behalf of the Veterans they serve." Veterans who choose to submit their claim under DRC can expect to receive a decision within 30 days from the time VA receives the claim. VSOs will ensure all supporting evidence- such as medical exams, military service records, etc. is included with the claim submission. This advance preparation by the VSOs allows claims to be assigned immediately to claims processors for a quick decision.

DRC was first implemented May 1, 2017, at the St. Paul (Minn.) Regional Office, and is now available at all VA regional offices. While DRC is currently limited to claims for increased compensation (commonly known as claims for increase), and requires Veterans to work with VSOs, VA's goal is to expand the types of claims accepted under the initiative and allow Veterans other ways to submit their claim under DRC.

DRC is another key step in aggressively modernizing VA's benefits delivery to Veterans in a fully digital operating environment. With electronic claims processing as a foundation, VA's innovation will improve service to Veterans, their families, and survivors.

VA TO REVISE STATE VETERAN HOME CONSTRUCTION REGULATIONS

New Regulations Will Make it Easier for Rural Communities to Compete for Grants for their Projects

WASHINGTON - Today, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin announced that VA plans to propose changes to regulations for its State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program to make it easier for States to receive VA funding to construct Veterans homes in rural areas.

State Veterans Homes provide Veterans with nursing home, domiciliary or adult day health care and are owned, operated and managed by State governments. Currently, the construction grant regulations focus on Veteran demographics as well as nursing home and domiciliary bed need within a State, when determining priority group placement based on projected demand for assistance. Unfortunately, this makes it difficult for some rural areas to compete for VA State Home Construction Grants.

In highly rural areas, there could be a 500-mile distance from one State Veterans Home to the next, which gives family members limited options when searching for a conveniently located facility for a Veteran family member.

By incorporating a consideration for the need of Veterans in rural areas into the ranking priorities for grant applications in the regulations, rural States may find it easier to compete for the limited VA construction grant funding that is available. "We want to remove the red tape," said Secretary Shulkin. "Veterans in rural areas need to be able to get nursing home care when it's needed as close as possible to their homes, families and friends. Changes in VA regulations can save families from having to travel long distances to visit a loved one in a facility far from home."

VA anticipates that the revision of these regulations will be completed by the end of this calendar year (2017). The updated regulations will be available for public comment. VA is working to ensure that the updated regulations go into effect as soon as possible.

For more information about State Veterans Homes, visit https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/Guide/LongTermCare/State_Veterans_Homes.asp.

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Department of New York

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VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES GEAR UP FOR ADVENTURE AT SAN DIEGO SUMMER SPORTS CLINIC

*National Adaptive Sports Event
Marks 10th Year*

WASHINGTON - Veterans from across the country are set to participate in the 10th National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic from Sept. 17-22 in San Diego, California.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in collaboration with founding event sponsor the Veterans Canteen Service and host level sponsors Fisher House Foundation, Cisco and Wyndham by the Bay Hotel - will host more than 120 Veterans with disabilities as they learn cycling, surfing, sailing, kayaking and archery at venues throughout San Diego during the rehabilitation sports and recreation clinic.

“Adaptive sports have a long history at VA, and our objective is to challenge Veterans to redefine their capabilities, set strong goals and live active, healthy lives,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “We want Veterans at this clinic to take what they have learned in San Diego and continue to move forward, not just for this one week, but the remaining 51 weeks of the year.”

The clinic kicks off with opening ceremonies at the Wyndham San Diego Bayside Hotel Pacific Ballroom at 2 p.m. Sept. 17, and sports activities take place Sept. 18-22. Participation is open to Veterans with disabilities who are receiving care at any VA medical facility.

The National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic is hosted by the VA San Diego Healthcare System, and more than 300 volunteers are expected to donate their time and effort. For more information, visit www.summersportsclinic.va.gov and follow #NVSSC on Twitter at @VAAdaptiveSport or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/vaadaptivesports.



VA RELEASES SUICIDE STATISTICS BY STATE

*Report shows State, Age, Gender and
most common method*

WASHINGTON-Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released findings from its analysis of Veteran suicide data for 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

The release is part of VA's comprehensive examination of more than 55 million records, from 1979 to 2014, which will be used to develop and evaluate suicide prevention programs across every state.

The new data include Veteran suicide rates and overall suicide rates by state, age group, and gender and list the most common suicide methods. Analysis of this information will help VA's Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention gain insight into high-risk populations and share that information with community based health care providers and partners, continuing to expand the network of support for Veterans.

Among VA findings:

- Findings show there is variability across the nation in the rates and numbers of deaths by suicide among Veterans. Overall, the Veteran rates mirror those of the general population in the geographic region, with the highest rates in Western states. While we see higher rates of suicide in some states with smaller populations, most Veteran suicides are still in the heaviest populated areas.

- The suicide rate among middle-age and older adult Veterans remains high. In 2014, approximately 65 percent of all Veterans who died by suicide were age 50 or older.

- After adjusting for differences in age and sex, risk for suicide was 22 percent higher among Veterans when compared to U.S. non-Veteran adults. After adjusting for differences in age, risk for suicide was 19 percent higher among male Veterans when compared to U.S. non-Veteran adult men. After adjusting for differences in age, risk for suicide was 2.5 times higher among female Veterans when compared to U.S. non-Veteran adult women.

“These findings are deeply concerning, which is why I made suicide prevention my top clinical priority,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “I am committed to reducing Veteran suicides through support and education. We know that of the

20 suicides a day that we reported last year, 14 are not under VA care. This is a national public health issue that requires a concerted, national approach.” Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a Veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisline.net/Chat, or text to 838255.