



Paralyzed Veterans of America

North Central Chapter

**A Member Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America
Chartered by the Congress of the United States**

North Central Chapter

209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104
1-605-336-0494 * 1-800-505-4782
Email: info@ncpva.org Website: www.ncpva.org
National PVA Website: www.pva.org



June/July 2020

Upcoming Events June/July 2020

June 6 . . . D-Day (1944)

June 11 . . . Membership Meeting, Chapter Office, Noon Luncheon and 1:00 PM Mtg

June 14 . . . Flag Day

June 20 . . . First Day of Summer

June 21 . . . Father's Day

July 2-3 . . . Holiday, Office Closed

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Because of the coronavirus, many of our events may have been cancelled.

Annual Poker Run to be determined

Please check ahead of time.

~ ~ ~

Additional Cancelled Events

Annual Prairie Dog Hunt,
Chamberlain
PVA Picnic

From Executive Director

Lisa Cummings

I hope everyone has been staying safe and healthy since this pandemic began. With the precautions still in place, I believe this will be the normal for quite some time for everyone. With that said, Chapter staff had been working from home and individually coming into the office periodically. We have now opened the office working from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and closed to all foot traffic for the time being. In the near future we will all be back in the office working regular business hours.

As many of you have noticed all of our events have been cancelled which will include the June picnic. It is yet to be determined if we will have our poker run in July. National PVA has cancelled all of the events through the end of July including the National Wheelchair Games. A new release came out that The 40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held on August 8-13, 2021 in New York City.

The Chapter President would like to have a Membership Meeting with social distancing on Thursday, June 11th, with a noon lunch and 1 pm meeting. Please respond back to me by June 8th if you will be attending or not so I know how much food to order and if there is enough participation. (we do not have the capability to teleconference) Let me know if you have

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SD State Veterans Cemetery

Endowment Fund

With the passing of SB 91, the South Dakota Veterans Council has established an Endowment Fund with the South Dakota Community Foundation. This fund will be used for the maintenance and operations of the veterans cemetery.

The South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery will be located at the 1-90/I-229 area in Sioux Falls, SD and will encompass up to 50 acres of land donated by the City of Sioux Falls.

All federally defined veterans, spouses, and dependent children are eligible for burial in the State Veterans Cemetery.

We are proud to be able to give our veterans their final resting place on the eastside and keep them close to their families.

If you would like to contribute to the Endowment Fund, please click on the following link. Our goal is to raise \$3,000,000.00 by 2023.

<https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-advisors/existing-funds/south-dakota-veterans-cemetery-fund/>



Thursday/Friday, July 2-3

Office will be closed

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

North Central Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America

OFFICERS

President, Perry Grimme
Vice President, Casey Davidson
Secretary, Greg Brandner
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Duane Biesboer Charles Doom
Rodney Melcher

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VAVS: Lisa Cummings/Sheri Kloes
Membership Officer: Duane Biesboer
Newsletter Editor: Barbara Priesz
Sports Director: Mike Olson/Charles Doom

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Michael Olson

NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER

Brad Friez
VA Dakota Regional Office
2501 West 22nd Street, Room 100
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
605-333-6801
800-795-3632

OFFICE STAFF

Lisa Cummings, Executive Director
Terry Paulsen, Government Relations Director
Barbara Priesz, Administrative Assistant

Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30-4:30

Sioux Falls VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Rachel Gangle, Social Worker
605-336-3230 ext. 7898

Fargo VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Tracy Lamont, SCI Coordinator
701-239-3765

Black Hills VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Michelle Hough, SCI Coordinator
605-720-7003

— Attention Members —

If you are receiving your newsletter by mail and would like to receive this via email, please contact me at the Chapter Office
(LisaC@ncpva.org/605-336-0494) with your email address. This will help save the Chapter on postage and printing costs.



<http://www.facebook.com/ncpva>

Disclaimer: The North Central Chapter PVA newsletter is published six times a year. It serves its members and interested parties by informing them about chapter activities, veterans' issues, SCI related matters, advocacy and legislative developments and other relevant issues concerning disabilities and the disabled community. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the North Central Chapter, its Officers, Board Members or the Editor. Similarly, appearance of advertising herein does not constitute an endorsement of their products or services. The editor has the right to edit all articles.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Membership-Duane Biesboer

The Chapter currently has a total of 181 members and 92 Associate Members.

Regular membership is FREE! If you know of anyone who has a spinal cord injury or disease please have the Veteran contact the Chapter office.

Beginning October 1st, all Associate Members will be invoiced for Annual Dues. Annual dues are \$30 per year and Life Dues are \$200.00.

Thank you to those who have sent in their dues!!

Please notify the Chapter when you have
a change of address.

Volunteer Program-Charles Doom

The Chapter had 77 hours for the month of April, YTD - 1624. Kristi Allen and Scott Bentz were Apr/May 2020 Volunteers of the Month. Remember to look for your volunteer number in the newsletter and win a \$25 Gift Card! If you see your number, call the Chapter Office!



“Friends Aiming High”

by John Green

Framed and Matted - \$275

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To order your print, please contact the
Chapter Office at (605) 336-0494

Notice of PVA North Central Chapter Election

Election Timeline

February 1

Nominations Open. Nominations may be made in person or by any other electronic means. Submit bio/photo and why you would be a good candidate by March 20th.

April 20

Nominations Closed.

May 1

Ballots will be mailed out with a self-addressed return envelope. Ballots must be returned in the envelope in a timely manner.

June 11

Election results will be reported at the Annual Membership Meeting.

October 1

New term of office begins

In accordance with Chapter bylaws, election of Officers will be held annually, and the Officers will serve a one (1) year term. Officers include: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. At the Annual June Chapter Membership Meeting, the Election Committee will report the election results.

Certification of Membership - If a write-in candidate be elected, he or she shall have thirty (30) days to successfully complete the certification process, if not previously certified. If you have any questions on the election procedure, contact the Chapter Office.

**CAREGIVER
SUPPORT LINE**
 **1-855-260-3274**



PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) announced the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry now exceeds 200,000 registrants.

The registry, which began in June 2014, allows veterans and service members to self-report their exposures and health concerns in an online questionnaire that can be used to initiate discussions of health concerns with a provider.

"Concerns about the long-term effects of exposure to burn pits remain a priority," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "By joining the registry, veterans, service members and the Department will further understand the impact of deployment-related exposures on health."

The Department of Defense encouraged registry participation in a letter to more than 700,000 active duty, Guard, and Reserve members, which ultimately helped push participation beyond the 200,000 mark. In addition to completing a questionnaire, registry participation involves an in-person exam by a provider.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most VA facilities are deferring exams to protect registry participants, medical staff and other patients.

To learn more about this [registry](#), including eligibility requirements click on the link.

Vet Centers Up Date

During this pandemic, please remember the Sioux Falls and Rapid City Vet Centers are remaining open and continue to provide the following services:

Individual Counseling (face-to-face, telehealth and phone visits)

Group Counseling (telehealth)

Marital and Family Counseling

Military Sexual Trauma

Please give them a call to schedule an appointment!

- Sioux Falls Vet Center (605) 330-4552
- Rapid City Vet Center (605) 348-0077



Thank You from MJFSVH

The staff at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home extends their sincerest thanks for the out pouring of support with cloth mask donations.

In times of need the American spirit never seems to fail!

The Home has received an ample supply and feel confident their residents and staff are well taken care of.

The staff asks that if you have the time and supplies; to continue your efforts and redirect them to local VA facilities or other health care facilities in your area who may be in need.

How Innovation and Partnership are Ending Diabetic Limb Loss at VA

The [Veterans Health Administration Innovation Ecosystem](#) (VHA IE) is a leader in health care innovation, but it does not innovate alone. Using public-private partnerships, VHA IE draws in the best and brightest partners to solve challenges unique to the Veteran community. But what happens when an innovation shows value? How does VHA IE advance these promising solutions to change and save more Veteran lives?

VA's groundbreaking partnership with [Podimetrics](#) is a great example. This partnership is led by Suzanne Shirley, VHA IE Director of Partnerships & Community Engagement and clinical social worker. The partnership, named The Initiative to End Diabetic Limb Loss at VA (TIEDLLV), supplies at-risk, diabetic Veterans with mats that use thermal imaging to measure the temperature of a Veteran's foot. These mats can detect diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) up to five weeks before they would normally present.

Veterans stand on the mat for 20 seconds each day, and their information is recorded and uploaded to the cloud. In the cloud, Podimetrics' advanced artificial intelligence (AI) system analyzes it for signs of DFUs. [The preliminary impact](#) was positive, with reductions in hospital admissions and amputations.

Success, however, does not mean innovation like this stands still, and Shirley – alongside Podimetrics CEO, Jon Bloom, and VA National Podiatry Chief, Dr. Jeffrey Robbins – saw a way to make the system work better for both Veterans and VA.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

VA Launches Clinical Trial for Veterans with COVID-19

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began a new clinical trial to test a Food and Drug Administration-approved prostate cancer drug as a potential treatment for male veterans with COVID-19. In a double-blind randomized controlled trial, VA scientists will compare the drug degarelix (trade name Firmagon) to a placebo for improving the clinical outcomes of nearly 200 veterans who have been hospitalized with COVID-19.

“Veterans who have contracted this virus are in need of immediate care,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This trial is an important step in advancing knowledge of a potential treatment for those infected with COVID-19. We are here to do everything in our power to preserve and protect life.”

Degarelix is often used to treat advanced cases of prostate cancer. It works by rapidly, but temporarily, suppressing the body’s production of male hormones. These hormones can fuel the growth of prostate cancer. Scientists are testing degarelix because lab evidence suggests male hormones trigger the production of a protein called TMPRSS2 on lung tissue. The virus that causes COVID-19 relies on TMPRSS2 to enter lung tissues.

Researchers from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Columbia University applied advanced artificial intelligence and computational genomics techniques and used that lab evidence for this COVID-19 data. The researchers collaborated with VA to plan the new trial.

Potential side effects of degarelix are typically linked to long-term treatment. In the trial, patients will be administered only one dose of the drug that will last 28 days. Any side effects of degarelix are thus expected to be temporary.

By temporarily lowering male hormone levels, researchers believe they can reduce the production of TMPRSS2 in lung tissue and thus prevent the virus from penetrating lung cells. Hormone levels will return to normal at the end of treatment.

The study is not suitable for female veterans. Existing evidence shows degarelix may have the opposite effect in the female body by increasing TMPRSS2 production, thus worsening the severity of COVID-19 symptoms.

The West Los Angeles VA Medical Center is leading the trial. The study also involves VA medical centers in New York (Brooklyn and Manhattan) and Washington state (Puget Sound), leveraging the Prostate Cancer Foundation/VA network of centers of excellence. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is involved in the analysis of research specimens, but not the clinical element of the study.

VA researchers expect to complete the trial in about four months. For more information, visit research.va.gov.

State Cemetery Update

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard had the opportunity to visit the state veterans cemetery project last week and was updated on the status of the development.

“It’s exciting to visit the cemetery and see the progress that has been made,” said Deputy Secretary Pollard. “You can feel just how meaningful this cemetery is going to be.”

“Although it isn’t substantially complete yet, the Committal Shelter will be the centerpiece of the cemetery,” said Pollard. “Coming around the rolling hills where the service flags will be, revealing the Committal Shelter will be an emotional experience to all who visit.”

Open excavations for foundations and utilities will still be present through the next several weeks. Journey is installing fencing and gates now that grades are close to being finished. This is needed to control access to the project.

Tours or site visits from people outside of the construction team are not currently allowed due to safety issues and COVID-19. SDDVA will work with our partners to schedule periodic tours later in the process.

Foundations have been completed for the administration building and the committal shelter, and wood framing has begun. Work has begun on the columbarium wall.

To date we have pre-applications from 240 veterans and 192 spouses for burial at the State Veterans Cemetery. “We thank all who have worked so diligently to make this cemetery a reality,” said Pollard.

Virtual Dedication of Korean War Memorials in All 50 States

Hannah Y Kim, a Korean American woman with a mission, will unveil a website (www.KoreanWarMemorials.com) that will feature photos of nearly 180 Korean War memorials she has personally visited. Kim traveled 132,100 miles across six continents in 30 countries that participated in the Korean War (1950-1953) and, in the United States, all 50 states and U.S. Territories of Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and the American Samoa. She visited South Dakota in May of 2018. (continued on Page 16)

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, SPORTS & REC

Because of the coronavirus,
this Sports & Rec Page
is intentionally left blank.

Many of our events
have been cancelled.

Our Annual Poker Run in July
to be determined.

Please check ahead of time.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, FUNDRAISING

Thrivent Choice Dollars® directions can help Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter.

Are you a member of Thrivent Financial who's eligible to direct Choice Dollars®?

Choice Dollars charitable grant funds can make a world of difference to our organization as we work together to support our programs and services we provide to our veterans. By directing Choice Dollars, eligible Thrivent members recommend where they feel Thrivent should distribute a portion of its charitable grant funds. Directing Choice Dollars is easy. Simply go to Thrivent.com/thriventchoice to learn more and find program terms and conditions. Or call 800-847-4836 and say "Thrivent Choice" after the prompt.



Support Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter by shopping at AmazonSmile.com Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your **eligible** AmazonSmile purchases to **North Central Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans Of America Inc** whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.

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Newsletter Booster Program Thank you for your support!

Ronald and Darla Shelburg
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Warren Zweifel

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Please support your local Chapter!

Newsletter Booster Program

The North Central Chapter PVA publishes the newsletter 6 times per year. We would like to invite our PVA members, Associate Members, and business associates to help support the Newsletter Booster Program. Your name will be published in each newsletter (unless otherwise specified) for only \$10.00. Please help defray the cost of publishing by supporting **YOUR** Chapter. Thank you!

I wish to make the following donation to the Newsletter Booster Program:

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PVA North Central Chapter, 209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN**VA Gets Boost from Cares Act**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has expanded support services enabled by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to make available immediate relief for veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The CARES Act allocates \$17.2 billion for the Veterans Health Administration, \$300 million of which will be used this fiscal year to address the challenges faced by homeless and at-risk veterans. "A significant percentage of homeless veterans or those at risk of homelessness are uniquely vulnerable to COVID-19 due to their living conditions, age and chronic health complications," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The funds from the CARES Act are vital and will allow the VA to continue working diligently to prevent the spread of infection in communities and keep veterans safe and on the pathway to permanent housing during this perilous time."

Funding is provided for three critical VA programs to assist with the emergency response needed for veterans living without safe, stable housing. • **Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program** - \$202 million has been allocated to provide emergency housing and homelessness prevention assistance to very low-income veteran families to mitigate the expected wave of evictions and potential homelessness that will result from extensive unemployment. Funds for this program will also assist the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing program in placing Veterans in safe housing to isolate them from the virus. • **Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program** - Grants from the GPD program usually consist of a capped per diem payment from the VA to community organizations to provide transitional housing and supportive services to veterans. \$88 million has been allocated to this program, which allows the VA to waive per diem limits during the crisis and help GPD grantees to provide all needed emergency housing and supportive services, including emergency placement for veterans who need to be isolated for their safety or the safety of others. • **Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program** - \$10 million has been allocated to provide emergency shelter and supportive services during the crisis, including placement in hotel rooms for veterans needing emergency shelter or isolation to avoid spreading the virus. Housing will be paired with care, treatment, and rehabilitative services. Learn more about how the VA is working to protect Veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic and the VA's homeless programs at www.va.gov

PVA Seeks Temporary Increase in A&A

Many PVA members rely on personal care attendants to help them with activities of daily living. However, attendant care is very expensive and often the Aid and Attendance (A&A) benefits provided to eligible veterans do not fully cover this cost. In fact, some PVA members who pay for full-time attendant care incur costs that far exceed the amount they receive as Special Monthly Compensation/Aid and Attendance beneficiaries. In March, a PVA member informed us that his attendant care costs could increase as much as 25 percent as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Since that time, we have heard from other members with similar concerns.

PVA's Legislative Team has been working with Congress to address this looming crisis by advocating for a temporary increase in Special Monthly Compensation/Aid and Attendance benefits by as much as 25 percent to offset higher costs associated with the ongoing health crisis. Our concern is that without proper attendant care our veterans could be forced to seek residential placements, which could endanger their long-term health, and increase VA costs.

After an unsuccessful attempt to include this provision in the third COVID relief bill that passed late last month, we are working with congressional staff to get the provision included in the next relief bill. Lawmakers are expected to begin work on this measure soon, and our efforts center on firming up the need for this proposal. If you use A&A dollars to pay for self-purchased care and you pay more for your care than the amount of money you receive from VA; have seen an increase in the rates you pay for your care that is related to the pandemic; or if you have been told that rates will increase as a result of the pandemic, we need to hear from you immediately. Please send a brief email describing your situation to PVA's National Legislative Director, Morgan Brown, at morganb@pva.org.

Combatting Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness during COVID-10

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) wants our veterans and their caregivers to overcome loneliness during this time of social distancing.

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PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN

(continued from Page 8)

While sheltering in place helps us stop the spread of COVID-19, the decreased social engagement and lessening of medical visits can lead to feelings of helplessness, isolation, and loneliness. For those living with mental health issues and chronic diseases, we may see a worsening of symptoms. There are things we can do to take care of ourselves and help **#BeThere** for others. If you are able, try to spend a little time outdoors each day, even if just for a few minutes on your front porch, as there are many benefits to being outside. Keep your mind occupied and take a break from the news by working on free coursework, listening to audiobooks, watching virtual concerts, plays, & tours of museums, or calling or writing friends and loved ones. Don't have internet access? For the next two months, Comcast is providing free internet service for disabled veterans.

If you do find yourself struggling with increased anxiety, depression or other psychological symptoms, you can call or text mental health professionals at Psychological Health Center of Excellence Psychological Resource Center, call or chat with peers at Veterans 4 Warriors, or use some of the self-help strategies at Make the Connection. If you need help right away, we encourage you to call the **Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255**, and press "1" if you are a veteran, texting 838255, or chatting via their website.

You can also view the VA's latest on information on maintaining your mental health here: <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/coronavirus/>

Frequently Asked Questions**What do I do if I get sick and need to be admitted**

into an SCI/D Center? If you believe you need admission to an SCI/D Center, contact your SCI/D care team by calling them or sending a secure message through **MyHealtheVet**. If you experience a medical emergency, call 911.

What do I do if I get sick?

Contact your SCI/D care team by calling them or sending a secure message through **MyHealtheVet**.

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What do I do if I think I might have the corona virus?

If you have a fever, cough, flu-like symptoms, or think you may have come in contact with the corona virus, contact your local VA Medical Center or doctor's office prior to visiting.

What do I do if the SCI/D Center says that they won't admit me as a patient?

At this time, SCI/D Centers are limiting admission to new injuries and emergent care. Telehealth appointments are offered as an alternative when appropriate. If you feel telehealth is inadequate in meeting your care needs, contact your local PVA Service Officer.

What do I do if I can't get urgent care in my community?

Visit one of the nearest VA hospitals, clinics, or community-based outpatient clinics.

For more answers to FAQs from the VA, visit: <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/>

Hempel Named New State American**Legion Adjutant**

District 7 Vice Commander Kevin Hempel has been selected as the American Legion State Adjutant.

Kevin Hempel was born in Webster and raised in Pierre and Sioux Falls. He graduated from Lincoln Senior High School in Sioux Falls and attended South Dakota State University where he received a BS in Sociology. He attended Navy Officer Candidate School and was commissioned an Ensign in 1981. He retired as a Captain with over 30 years of service. During his time in the Navy, he served on seven different ships and a number of senior staffs, earned a MS in administration and served in five different command billets. (continued on Page 10)

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

(continued from Page 9) from **Terry Paulsen**

(Regarding Kevin Hempel) After retiring he attended Vermont Woodworking School where he earned a certification in furniture making, then returned to the Sioux Falls area where he and his wife started a custom furniture business. Hempel became a Legionnaire in 2014 by joining Post 15. He quickly became active serving as the post adjutant, 2nd vice commander, 1st vice commander and commander for 2018-2019. In 2019 he was elected as the vice commander for District 7 and chairman of the Department training team.

Codington County names new Veterans Service Officer

Codington County Commission has selected Todd Rose as their new county veterans service officer. Todd replaces Al Janzen who retired April 17. Al served as the Codington County VSO since May of 1998. Please join SDDVA in welcoming Todd to our partnership and thanking Al for his commitment and dedication in serving our veterans and their families.

Todd has resided in Watertown since 2001 with his wife Sheila and their three children; Kahlab, Meghan and Emily. Todd grew up in Flandreau and enlisted in the South Dakota Army National Guard in May 1985 as a field artillery cannoneer. He served in numerous positions and locations around the state during his 31 years of service with 26 years working fulltime for the Army National Guard. He has two deployments, one with the 2 / 147th Field Artillery from December 2003 – February 2005 to Iraq and one with the 196th Maneuver Enhance Brigade from May 2010 - April 2011 to Afghanistan. He was appointed to Command Sergeant Major for the 1 / 147th Field Artillery in January 2012 through August 2015 when he retired.

Todd enjoys the outdoors by archery hunting, fishing, golfing and campfires with friends and family. Todd can be reached at 605-882-6289 or veteran@codington.org.

From the Office of Brad Friez

National Service Officer

The pandemic is still at the core of our respective lives. This virus seems to have impacted almost every facet of our city, our state, our country, and our world.

We are still working at the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office building but we continue to be in a temporary location. I believe we made the move as of March 9th and were told it would be about two weeks before we could return to our normal location. The VA has been repainting our walls, replacing the carpeting, and installing a wider door to the office. Two months later, we are still in the temporary location and now it looks like it will be sometime in June when we will return to our former location. The Regional Office building has been closed to the general public since March 19th but we do business through phone calls and emails.

Currently the VA Regional Office Building staff have us go through a series of screening questions and check us for a fever. We also have to wear a mask when leaving our respective work stations.

The Regional Office Building will not open up to the general public until the front entrance addition will be complete with some type of x-ray device, perhaps similar to the local courthouse. But no one seems to know the exact date. Eventually the building will be manned by VA Police. We were told that we will eventually need to wear masks and gloves and have a Plexiglas partition similar to what you see at your local grocery store.

The hospital has increased their screening of individuals coming to the VA and not allowing visitors, unless the Veteran is terminally ill. They do permit each Veteran to be accompanied by one other person when checking in. Because of the screening, VA has suggested that Veterans arrive earlier for their scheduled appointments. The VA has set up a temporary pharmacy outside of the hospital for Veterans to pick up their medications from.

The VA has hired Dan Hubbard, effective April 12th, as the Associate Director who was acting in that capacity for several months. In addition they have hired a Dermatologist and a Physiatrist. They are still recruiting for the Nurse Executive position.

Please do what you need to do to stay safe and healthy! And if so inclined, please pray for our country's leaders and those who are in harm's way during this time of the pandemic.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

(continued from Page 1) from **Lisa Cummings**

any questions. Please stay home if you are not feeling well. Thank you.

On a very sad note, the following memo was received from our National PVA:

Dear PVA Family/Friends of Past President Joe Fox,

Joe asked me to send this email to sincerely thank everyone for all of the support and friendship through the many years, as he may not have the chance to personally say goodbye.

Joe wanted to share with you news he received from his oncologist this week.

Joe was diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer (stomach, spreading to lung).

Joe has opted to spend the remainder of his time under the care of home Hospice to be able to spend quality time with his beloved wife of 50 years, Hilda, and their family.

Joe's oncologist has advised the family that Joe's time could possibly be a couple of weeks, a couple of months, or days.

Hilda specifically asks for prayers that she will be able to help Joe with all of his needs when he is discharged tonight from the hospital and comes home to stay.

If you would like to send a greeting or an email message, Joe and Hilda would like hearing from you.

Joe and Hilda Fox

23526 Lupine Place

Murrieta, CA 92562

Jfoxpva@verizon.net

Please keep Joe, Hilda and their family in your thoughts and prayers.

I hope everyone has an enjoyable summer! Please check our Facebook page and website for updated news and events. Lisa

VA cancels National Veterans Wheelchair Games amid COVID-19 Pandemic



WASHINGTON --The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced, April 1st, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, scheduled to occur July 3-8 in Portland, Ore., has been canceled amid concerns surrounding COVID-19.

VA made this decision out of an abundance of caution for the health, safety and well-being of vulnerable populations like older Veterans and those with underlying medical conditions, as identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

VA and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), co-presenter for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, look forward to serving participants at the 2021 games in New York. Plans are in place to bring the event back to Portland at a future date.

Veterans Benefit from New Health Data Sharing

Veterans are now benefitting from a joint effort to share health records with community health care partners, which launched April 18.

The joint health information exchange, or HIE, helps Veterans by allowing VA and Department of Defense health care systems to quickly and securely share patient records with community health care partners.

The new system also allows sharing when a Veteran or DOD beneficiary is being seen by the community partner. VA and DOD health care providers can review records from external partners for continuity of care. The joint HIE can reduce the burden on Veterans to share their health history multiple times. This also helps Veterans avoid duplicative tests or carrying printed health records.

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“When clinicians have a more comprehensive picture of their patient’s health data, including data from private sector providers, this improves the quality of health care,” said Dr. Neil Evans, the interim director of the Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization (FEHRM) program office. “The health information being exchanged should enable patient-provider conversations to start more productively and lead to a better experience for Veterans.”

Building upon the success of VA’s health information exchange work, known as VHIE, the joint HIE creates an enhanced platform that will support significant expansion of VA and DOD’s community exchange partnerships. Later this year, the joint HIE will add a sizeable network of partners, dramatically increasing by more than 15,000 the total number of community partners VA and DOD can exchange data with, making it much more likely that a Veteran’s health records—including prescriptions, allergies and medical notes—from the private sector will be conveniently available to their VA provider during and between their appointments.

The joint HIE honors patient consent. Health records of patients who opt out of sharing will not be exchanged through the HIE. Veterans who want to opt out can do so through My HealtheVet or visit www.va.gov/VHIE/VHIE_Sharing_Options.asp to learn more.

About the System

The health data sharing capability is a joint effort between the FEHRM, VA and DOD. The HIE—which includes DOD, VA and the private sector—connects VA and DOD together with more than 2,000 hospitals, 8,800 pharmacies, 33,000 clinics, 1,100 labs, 800 federally qualified health centers and 300 nursing homes.

“The recent COVID-19 pandemic underlines the importance for clinicians on the front lines to be able to quickly access a patient’s health record, regardless of where that patient previously received care,” Evans said. “As the DOD and VA implement a single, common record, the joint health information exchange and the associated expansion of community exchange partners is a critical step forward, delivering immediate value to all DOD and VA sites.”

The benefits of the new joint HIE capability are available to all VA and DOD care providers and to all participating community partners. This new joint HIE

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capability is part of a broader effort to transform health care delivery for Service members and Veterans through implementation of modern health information technologies.

The FEHRM is working closely with VA, DOD and other partners to implement a single, common electronic health record to benefit Service members, Veterans and their families. By implementing the same EHR system and sharing the same health care data source, VA and DOD will document care from the time a patient enters the military and then through their care as a Veteran in one single, common health record.

14678

VA COVID-19 Staffing and Supply Update

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has maintained an increasing supply of beds for both veterans and COVID-19 patients, steady supplies across the nation and a stable staffing situation in the vast majority of VA locations nearly two months into the national emergency.

As of late April, the VA had the capacity to take in 12,215 critical and non-critical patients, up from 9,840 in March.

That increase was the result of a decision to defer elective surgeries in anticipation of a rising number of patients infected with COVID-19. It created capacity that has allowed the VA to take in non-veteran patients across the country.

This early preparation has allowed the VA’s overall occupancy rates to remain steady at 35-40% nationwide in both acute care and intensive care units (ICUs), well below the crisis capacity levels that some feared as the virus spread.

“The VA’s team has managed its resources wisely during this crisis,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “By deferring elective surgeries, the department opened ample space for COVID-19 patients and has been able to serve its ‘Fourth Mission’ of caring for all Americans during this crisis.”

The VA’s stock of medical supplies remains robust with millions of N95 masks on hand, along with plenty supplies of hand sanitizer, gloves, gowns and eye protection. On April 30 the VA took possession of another 4.5 million masks the department pur-

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chased with the aid of New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu and inventor Dean Kamen who helped facilitate the medical supplies being flown to his home state in the face of this crisis.

The VA also had 1,943 ICU ventilators on hand as of April 24, along with 826 transport ventilators and 1,218 anesthesia machines.

The VA has been testing more and more people as America's overall testing capacity has increased. As of late April, the VA tested more than 109,000 people, resulting in more than 92,000 negative tests and about 9,200 positive tests. The remainder are pending results.

About 63% of the veterans who tested positive are now at least 14 days from that test result and most of them are recuperating at home.

While about 2,200 VA employees had tested positive for the coronavirus in late April, the VA is still able to provide care to veterans across the country, while helping 38 states and territories care for COVID-19 patients, either through missions assigned by the Federal Emergency Management Agency or by working directly with state officials.

Most VA medical facilities are reporting lower sick-leave usage than normal. Additionally, the VA has been bringing on new personnel at a record pace to bolster staff at its facilities.

Between March 29 and April 28, the VA hired 9,338 medical staff, including 2,147 registered nurses and thousands of additional staff are expected to join VA into early May.

VA Releases New COVID-19 Coach Mobile App

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the launch of the COVID Coach app, a new mobile app designed to help both veterans and civilians cope with feelings of stress and anxiety they may be experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The app includes practical tools, information and resources that can all be used from the safety of one's home to track well-being, mood swings and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

A personal goal setting tracker can help users work toward achieving small victories. The mindfulness and sleep tools can be helpful for Improving mental health

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and well-being. The indoor activities tool and staying healthy recommendations have been specifically tailored to the current COVID-19 situation.

"The VA wants to make sure veterans have access to every resource available," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The COVID Coach app provides tools and information to stay mentally and physically healthy."

Direct links to resources are available within the app for those who may need additional professional support. The COVID Coach can be used independently or while engaged in mental health treatment but is not intended to replace needed professional care.

COVID Coach was developed by VA's National Center for PTSD's Mobile Mental Health Team, in conjunction with the Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Download the app on iOS and Android devices or from VA's Mobile App Store.

VA and Parkinson's Foundation Form Partnership

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Parkinson's Foundation announced they are teaming up to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of veterans living with Parkinson's disease. "This collaboration ensures veterans diagnosed with Parkinson's have access to the information and resources they need to better manage their health," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The joint effort enhances the multitude of services that care teams at the Veterans Health Administration provide to veterans with Parkinson's disease."

"The VA and the foundation are working to increase access to information about Parkinson's disease," said John L. Lehr, president and chief executive officer of the Parkinson's Foundation.

"Educating and training VA staff on disease management and therapies, along with improving veterans' access to direct health services related to the disease is a paramount objective".

These efforts help to provide veterans with needed resources and tools for coping with Parkinson's. The foundation also offers online resources for individuals and their caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic, to include Facebook Live Q&A events with subject matter experts.

Learn more about how the Parkinson's Foundation improves care and advances research toward a cure.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

VA's Plan on Returning to Pre-Covid-19 Operations

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced a three-phase plan for resuming regular operations at its medical centers, benefit offices and national cemeteries in a post-COVID-19 setting.

The VA never closed its doors during the pandemic but did implement a wide range of actions to ensure the safety of its patients and employees. Under the VA's plan, conditions on the ground will determine how quickly each facility resumes normal operations, and each phase of the plan is aimed at making sure that Veterans' safety comes first.

"A central planning solution for resuming regular operations makes no sense here because some areas of the country will take longer to recover, while other areas have seen minimal cases," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "That's why we're letting local conditions dictate our next steps."

VA medical facilities will be permitted to embark on Phase 1 of the plan once certain local conditions have been met. These conditions include falling numbers of patients exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, reduced numbers of people testing positive for the virus, and increased testing capacity.

Once these and other conditions are met, local VA facilities will maintain their current risk-mitigation activities (such as continued telework when possible) but may also begin assessing how best to permit elective procedures and resume certain face-to-face visits that have been postponed.

Phase 2 of the plan is the resumption of services that have been postponed, again as deemed possible based on local conditions, and subject to safety protocols deemed as necessary by local staff.

In Phase 3, VA facilities will again allow visitors to hospitals, community living centers, senior living facilities, and spinal cords injury and disorder units after a full assessment of the risks and only amid continuing improvement in their part of the country. Most VA employees will also return to work in this phase.

The VA's national cemeteries, benefit administrators and Board of Veterans Appeals will also be using this same three-phase approach to determine whether and how best to resume things like public cemetery interments and face-to-face meetings with veterans about their benefit status.

All 2020 Midwest Honor Flight Missions are Postponed

The Midwest Honor Flight's board of directors made the difficult decision to postpone all 2020 scheduled flights out of caution for our veterans, guardians, and crew. This heartbreaking decision was not made lightly as many hours of planning have taken place to make these flights possible. This change comes after the National Honor Flight Network announced their Lone Eagle trips, which are conducted by the Network staff for terminal veterans and those without home Hubs, are also postponed until 2021.

This decision has an immediate impact on the 2020 Missions on August 22 (Lyon County Riverboat Foundation Mission 7), September 5 (Clifford & LaVonne Graese Foundation Mission 8), September 19 (Mission 9), and October 10 (Mission 10). Guardian Training opportunities for these flights have also been postponed. No veterans or guardians had been confirmed for these flights but those that were up for consideration will be receiving this release along with an additional letter with more information.

"Our first priority on every Midwest Honor Flight Mission is the safety of our veterans, our guardians, and our crew," says Aaron Van Beek, the President of Midwest Honor Flight. "With all the unknowns, we decided to wait until traveling and gathering restrictions are lifted to ensure all our veterans have a safe and enjoyable trip in Washington, D.C. This decision was certainly not taken lightly as numerous hours have been given by our faithful volunteers in an effort to bring our local Veterans out to see their memorials. However, safety is, and will always be, our number one priority. We appreciate everyone's continued support and patience as we work through these challenging times and look forward to seeing everyone again at upcoming events and missions in the future."

Midwest Honor Flight will continue to monitor the situation and keep the communities informed of any future updates.

Applications are still being accepted during this time. To apply or to learn more about their Midwest Honor Flight visit: <https://www.midwesthonorflight.org/covid.html>.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**PVA North Central Chapter****Birthday Roster - June/July 2020**

Alan Hughart	June 01
Charles Doom	June 01
Eileen White	June 03
Raymond Durband	June 06
Brian Nelson	June 06
Eugene Murphy	June 10
Joseph Snyder	June 10
Kelly Eszlinger	June 10
Fidell Wadsworth, Jr.	June 11
Cameron Hoverson	June 12
John Myers	June 15
Duane Biesboer	June 15
William Deknikker	June 15
Dennis Elfring	June 15
Steve Wagner	June 20
David Wren	June 21
Troy Metzinger	June 21
James Arneson	June 24
Kerry Parker	June 27
Marlin Kirkeby	July 01
Norwood Baybridge	July 01
Brian Wallin	July 01
Allan Knoll	July 01
Maurice Kruger	July 02
Mary Jayne McCarthy	July 02
Robert Singelstad	July 03
Gregory Brandner	July 08
Russ Stapert	July 12

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Richard Doppelhammer	July 13
William Furan	July 13
Kelvin Elder	July 15
David Erkens	July 16
Daniel Stapleton	July 21
Alan Kingsley	July 26
Lisa Cummings	July 27
Arlind Williams	July 30

Wills for Heroes

Wills for Heroes is a free monthly legal clinic for veterans and their spouses to receive simple wills and powers of attorney. This clinic is for income-qualifying individuals and by APPOINTMENT ONLY.

You must call and schedule an appointment to meet with an attorney on the day of the clinic. Call East River Legal Services (605-336-9230) for the next scheduled time.

**PVA North Central Chapter****"Darrell Jepsen Memorial
Scholarship" Program**

The PVA North Central Chapter has established a scholarship program to provide financial assistance for PVA members and their families so that they may achieve their goals in the academic arena. Scholarships will vary according to the number and merit of applications received and the total funds available. At no time will a grant exceed \$1,000.00 per academic year.

Applications are now available for 2020-2021. Please contact the Chapter Office for an application or you can download it at www.ncpva.org.

Applications must be postmarked by July 1st, no exceptions.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**(continued from Page 5) - Korean War Memorials**

The online portal will present 400 videos with stories of nearly 1,200 veterans she has met throughout her journeys between 2017 and 2019, including her 90-day tour across America in 2018.

Originally scheduled for a launch in time for the 70th anniversary of the Korean War on June 25th, 2020, the website will make the U.S. content available sooner for Americans to visit over the Memorial Day weekend. The U.S. content includes more than 1,000 photos of nearly 100 memorials Kim has visited, with a video of her interviewing local veterans and supporters at each site.

"It breaks my heart that most of the Memorial Day commemorations across the nation have been canceled due to COVID-19. I want to ensure that those who died fighting for our freedoms will be remembered and honored, albeit remotely. I hope people will viscerally see that freedom is not free," says Kim.

The website will feature a virtual Wall of Remembrance with the names of nearly 41,000 killed worldwide in the Korean War, including more than 36,000 Americans from each U.S. state and Territory. Visitors will be able to pay tribute by leaving comments.

"I wouldn't be here without the sacrifices of the veterans and wish to convey the gratitude of the Korean people. Ultimately, this website is our collective gift to the veterans, their fallen comrades and families," adds Kim, who was able to develop the website through the support of Naeil Foundation, an organization established by successful second-generation Korean Americans. Most of her travels were funded with donations from her Korean American family and friends who pitched in to express their thanks.

A former chief of staff to Congressman Charles B. Rangel (retired), and founder of Remember727, Kim has made it her lifelong mission to honor the Korean War veterans and promote peace on the Korean Peninsula. Her devoted activism began in 2008 at the age of 24 when she lobbied Congress to enact legislation, signed by President Barack Obama in 2009, which established July 27 as National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day in the United States.

Kim is also the official Ambassadors of the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation USA (KWVMF), which is currently raising funds to add a physical Wall of Remembrance to the National Korean War Memorial in Washington, DC. She will direct a link to the KWVMF's donation page for anyone who wishes to support their efforts to memorialize the names of 36,000 Americans who died in Korea.

14851

Building Better Caregivers - Taking Care of You

A workshop developed at Stanford University to help Caregivers take better care of themselves: a service of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Caregiver Support Program and Canary Health.

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- Whatever you are facing, a Building Better Caregivers Workshop can help you build the strength you need to take better care of others - and yourself.

Why join a Building Better Caregivers workshop?

- Find practical ways to manage your own fatigue and stress.
- Discover how to manage difficult behaviors and feelings when caring for a Veteran.
- Make good decisions and future plans for your loved ones and you.
- Learn what you need to do to improve your sleep, eat better, and stay active.

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- Log on when you want to - whenever it works for you..
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- Join a group of 25 Caregivers in each workshop with new sessions posted each week for 6 wks.
- Stay connected after the workshop by participating in an online community of BBC graduates.

Who can participate?

Caregivers of Veterans and Veterans who serve as Caregivers to someone with dementia, memory problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, a serious brain injury or any other serious injury or illness. The Veteran must be receiving VA Healthcare to access the program.

Sign Up Today at:

signup.buildingbettercaregivers.org/enroll

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**Car Sunshades for Sale - \$10.00**

Proceeds will benefit the Chapter's programs and services! Contact the Chapter office (605) 336-0494 for further information.

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VA Health Care Systems Contact Information

Sioux Falls VA Health Care System

2501 West 22nd Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
Phone: (605) 336-3230 or (800) 316-8387
Fax: (605) 333-6878

VA Black Hills Health Care System - Fort Meade Campus

113 Comanche Road
Fort Meade, SD 57741
Phone: (605) 347-2511 or (800) 743-1070
Fax: (605) 720-7171

VA Black Hills Health Care System

500 North 5th Street
Hot Springs, SD 57747
Phone: 605-745-2000
Fax: 605-745-2091

Minneapolis VA Health Care System

One Veterans Drive
Minneapolis, MN 55417
Phone: (612) 725-2000 or 866-414-5058
Fax: (612) 725-2049

Fargo VA Health Care System

2101 Elm Street
Fargo, ND 58102
Phone: (701) 232-3241
Fax: (701) 239-3705

VA Montana Health Care System

1892 Williams Street
Fort Harrison, MT 59636
Phone: (406) 442-6410
Fax: (406) 447-7916

Cheyenne VA Health Care System

2360 E. Pershing Blvd.
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Fax: (307) 778-7336

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Fax: (307) 672-1900

The PVA North Central Chapter proudly serves the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Southwest Minnesota, and portions of Montana and Wyoming.