



MAGAZINE

MARCH | APRIL 2026

A close-up photograph of a fountain pen with a dark, polished barrel and a gold-colored nib. The pen is angled diagonally across the frame. Red ink has been splattered and smeared across the white background, particularly around the nib and the lower right portion of the image, creating a dramatic and somewhat somber visual effect.

ATTACKED BY THE **FOURTH ESTATE**

Media reporting paints veterans
as malingering frauds—insulting
and angering veteran community

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2026 Department Conventions				
Department	City	Convention Headquarters	Dates	Banquet
Alabama	Huntsville	Huntsville Marriott at the Space & Rocket Center	June 5–6	June 6
Arizona	Chandler	Crowne Plaza Resort Phoenix – Chandler Golf Resort	June 10–13	June 12
Arkansas	North Little Rock	Wyndham Riverfront Little Rock	June 5–6	June 6
California	Orange	Hotel Fera Anaheim, a DoubleTree by Hilton	May 20–23	May 23
Colorado	Colorado Springs	Embassy Suites by Hilton	May 20–21	May 21
Connecticut	Southington	Holiday Inn Cheshire	May 9	May 9
Delaware	Camden	Department of Delaware Headquarters	May 30	May 30
District of Columbia	Washington, DC	Denvel D. Adams National Service and Legislative Headquarters	May 15–16	May 16
Florida	Lake Mary	Orlando Marriott Lake Mary	June 18–20	June 20
Georgia	Macon	Macon Marriott City Center	June 4–7	June 6
Hawaii	Honolulu	Ala Moana Hotel by Mantra	June 19–20	June 20
Idaho	Ontario, OR	Holiday Inn Express & Suites	May 5–8	May 7
Illinois	Springfield	Northfield Inn, Suites & Conference Center	June 12–14	June 14
Indiana	Indianapolis	Indianapolis Marriott East	June 4–6	June 6
Iowa	Coralville	Hyatt Regency Coralville Hotel & Conference Center	June 5–7	June 6
Kansas	Salina	Sleep Inn & Suites Salina I-135	April 24–26	April 25
Kentucky	Lexington	Embassy Suites by Hilton Lexington/UK Coldstream	June 18–20	June 20
Louisiana	Baton Rouge	Embassy Suites by Hilton	May 14–17	May 16
Maine	Newry	Grand Summit Hotel	April 23–25	April 25
Maryland	Ocean City	Princess Royale Oceanfront Resort	May 25–29	May 28
Massachusetts	Plymouth	Hotel 1620 Plymouth Harbor	June 10–14	June 12
Michigan	Acme	Grand Traverse Resort and Spa	May 31–June 4	June 3
Minnesota	Duluth	Holiday Inn & Suites Duluth	April 30–May 2	May 1
Mississippi	Gulfport	Best Western Seaway Inn	April 16–19	April 18
Missouri	Columbia	Stoney Creek Hotel	May 27–31	May 30
Montana	Big Sky	The Wilson Hotel	June 5–6	June 6
Nebraska	Bellevue	Courtyard by Marriott Omaha Bellevue at Beardmore Event Center	May 22–24	May 23
Nevada	Reno	Silver Legacy Resort Hotel & Casino	April 30–May 3	May 2
New Hampshire	Lebanon	Courtyard by Marriott	May 1–2	May 2
New Jersey	Wildwood	Bolero Resort & Conference Center	June 14–17	June 16
New Mexico	Albuquerque	Embassy Suites by Hilton	June 25–27	June 26
New York	Saratoga Springs	The Saratoga Hilton	June 14–17	June 16
North Carolina	Raleigh	Hilton Raleigh North Hills	May 21–24	May 23
North Dakota	Bismarck	Quality Inn Bismarck I-94	May 1–2	No Banquet
Ohio	Lewis Center	The Ohioan Hotel & Event Center	June 11–14	June 13
Oklahoma	Catoosa	Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa	June 14–18	June 17
Oregon	Medford	Hilton Garden Inn	May 2–3	May 2
Pennsylvania	Harrisburg	Best Western Premier The Central Hotel & Conference Center	June 17–19	June 18
Puerto Rico	Dorado	Embassy Suites by Hilton Dorado del Mar Beach Resort	April 24–25	April 25
Rhode Island	Warwick	Crowne Plaza Providence-Warwick (Airport)	April 17–18	April 17–18
South Carolina	Columbia	DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel	April 30–May 3	May 2
South Dakota	Sioux Falls	Comfort Suites Sioux Falls Mall District	April 24–25	April 25
Tennessee	Franklin	Drury Plaza Hotel Nashville Franklin	June 10–15	June 14
Texas	Kerrville	Inn of the Hills Hotel & Conference Center	June 4–7	June 6
Utah	Salt Lake City	Hilton Garden Inn Salt Lake City Airport	June 5–6	June 5
Vermont	Warren	Sugarbush Resort	May 15–17	May 16
Virginia	Roanoke	Holiday Inn Roanoke-Tanglewood-Rt 419&I581	June 11–14	June 13
Washington	Pasco	Red Lion Hotel Pasco Airport & Conference Center	June 23–25	June 24
West Virginia	Summersville	Hampton Inn	June 12–13	June 13
Wisconsin	Green Bay	Oneida Casino Hotel	June 11–13	June 13
Wyoming	Cheyenne	Red Lion Hotel & Conference Center	May 1–2	May 2

From the NATIONAL COMMANDER COLEMAN NEE



Impact your community through volunteerism

During the holidays, I urged you to focus on food insecurity by volunteering at local food pantries and delivering meals to veterans in need. Though food insecurity is a perennial issue nationwide, it was a seasonal request that many of you met with the open hearts and outstretched arms characteristic of DAV volunteers. For that, I can't thank you enough.

As we move into spring, I have another challenge for you, and it's one I'm confident we can meet because of the dedication and enduring spirit of volunteerism I've witnessed at all levels of DAV.

Last year, DAV Community Impact Day saw nearly a thousand volunteers across the country give back to veterans in their communities. With your help, we're hoping to double that number on April 4 during the third annual event.

Volunteer opportunities like DAV Community Impact Day remain the most authentic and effective ways to interact with veterans, military families and the American public. Whether delivering meals, doing yardwork, organizing homeless stand-downs or participating in any of the countless other activities that fill the gaps in veterans' lives, the face-to-face engagement of our organization's volunteers reminds those in need that they're not alone.

This hands-on approach also makes DAV Community Impact Day one of our strongest membership recruiting tools. There's a significant difference between explaining what DAV does and demonstrating it through action. When the public and veterans who aren't yet members witness DAV volunteers actively improving their neighborhoods, assisting veterans or supporting local families, they see our mission in motion. Those experiences leave a lasting impression that speeches and brochures simply can't match.

But to capitalize on this opportunity, we need your help.

Please turn to Page 8, scan the QR code, and pledge as little as an hour of your day. That may not seem like much, but by investing our time and energy, we honor the service of our nation's veterans with tangible support and create a collective impact that lasts much longer than an hourglass.

To learn more about the event, visit communityimpactday.org, where you can also find a Quickstart Guide outlining ideas for volunteering and ways you can help spread the word.

DAV Community Impact Day is more than a date on the calendar—it's a powerful reminder of how meaningful service begins at the local level. But at its heart, it's about showing up, rolling up our sleeves and connecting with the veterans we serve.

Together, we can make April 4 the most successful DAV Community Impact Day yet.

Are you ready to meet that challenge? ■

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Cover story

After certain service-connected disabilities were characterized as minor or illegitimate, one veteran paints the real picture.

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Coleman Nee

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From the NATIONAL ADJUTANT BARRY A. JESINOSKI



Veterans deserve better

Politicians love to parade veterans around during their campaigns. They treat us as props in television ads, backdrops for speeches and convenient proof points for patriotism. They shake our hands, thank us for our service and swear they “have our backs.”

Then they get elected.

Standing next to a veteran for a photo or soundbite costs nothing. It requires no courage, no compromise and no work. It fits effortlessly into campaign messaging, where symbolism is rewarded and accountability is absent. But governing is where promises are supposed to turn into policy.

Recent Congresses rank among the least productive in modern history, paralyzed by dysfunction, partisan infighting and an apparent inability to do the basic job voters sent them to Washington to do. Veterans pay the price for that inaction. When Congress stalls, veterans wait longer for care, benefits and justice they have already earned.

Take the Major Richard Star Act, for example. This DAV-supported bipartisan legislation would fix a long-standing injustice that strips combat-injured veterans of the full benefits they earned through sacrifice. It has broad support on both sides of the aisle and has been championed for years. And yet Congress still hasn't finished the job. Veterans are told to wait—again—while lawmakers find time for partisan theater.

Even worse, Congress routinely hides behind budget tricks like PAYGO, short for “pay as you go,” a rule that requires Congress to offset new federal spending with cuts or revenue elsewhere. This self-imposed, arcane, get-out-of-jail-free card is a convenient excuse to delay or deny veteran legislation. It's waived for other priorities, but when it comes time to do right by veterans, suddenly the rules are ironclad. That's not fiscal responsibility—it's moral cowardice.

We hear endless speeches praising our service. But respect without action is meaningless. Veterans' issues are complex, but every member of Congress asked for this job. Each of them raised their hand knowing it would be tough. Difficulty is not an excuse for failure.

Veterans are often reluctant to demand more. We're trained to endure, adapt and push forward without complaint. Too many politicians exploit that, assuming we'll accept delays, half-measures and excuses.

Veterans deserve better than applause lines and empty promises. And that's why DAV remains so committed to ensuring these promises are kept. Our mission is to advocate—loudly and relentlessly—for veterans and their families, survivors and caregivers. And we will continue to remind Congress of this simple truth: Honoring service isn't a campaign moment. It's a responsibility measured by laws passed, promises kept and lives improved, not by how many veterans appear in a campaign ad. ■

On the 'bleeding edge' (September/October 2025)

I fully support the VA's efforts to minimize opioids and their impact on us. I refuse them due to having a job where being high could be life or death. Still suffering with chronic pain, I do not feel the VA truly hears me. My job keeps me away from phone service and internet, making 90% of the VA's suggestions for treatment impossible. I'd have to burn vacation days, and my sick time would run out before the second session was up. It would be nice to be able to have something that would just take the pain away. With the opioid pendulum swinging all the way past center, I will appreciate it when it's back to a middle. **Brian Beck, Nucla, Colorado**

Young-onset Parkinson's

The Department of Veterans Affairs won't admit that there is an influx of young-onset Parkinson's disease in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans. They know full well what is causing it, and they still won't add it to the list of presumptives. I know that it takes Congress, but this needs to be addressed immediately. **Joseph Simon, Hampton Roads, Virginia**

Editor's note: Concerns about young-onset Parkinson's disease among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are increasingly being raised. Adding the condition as a presumptive requires action by the VA or Congress based on scientific review. DAV advocates for timely, science-based decisions on toxic exposures and neurodegenerative conditions, and supports ongoing research.

Toxic exposure

Has anyone looked at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, for toxic exposure? We were exposed to a Superfund site there. The smells and the water in the bomber area in the 1980s were terrible. People that have been stationed

there have been diagnosed with various diseases such as ALS, MS, cancers and autoimmune diseases.

Bart Craven, Atlanta, Georgia

Editor's note: Yes, the Environmental Protection Agency is still cleaning the site, as several toxic agents, including PFAS, known as "forever chemicals," may have infiltrated the drinking water, as well as the air and soil. The Department of Defense recognizes this site is likely contaminated by PFAS due to their use of aqueous film forming foam to suppress fires; however, the VA does not concede PFAS exposure for purposes of providing presumptive benefits to those who served at that location. For more on toxic exposures, please read our report, *Ending the Wait for Toxic-Exposed Veterans*, at endingthewait.org.

DAV Patriot Boot Camp

Thank you, DAV, for all that you do for us! Winning the Patriots Pitch contest was just the icing on the cake. I made so many new friends and formed awesome new relationships with my fellow veterans during my time at Patriot Boot Camp. From the structure of the program, mentors and classes to the fellowship and team building, this was by far the best event ever. Veteran business owners—if you are not already sending in your application to participate in the next Patriot Boot Camp cohort, then you are missing out. Take advantage of this amazing opportunity to learn, become a better business owner and be part of something greater than yourself. **Scott Morris, Arlington, Texas**

Editor's note: Learn more at patriotbootcamp.org.

Polytrauma Center milestone

The 20th anniversary of the Tampa VA Polytrauma Center is an incredible milestone. The work done there shows just how far dedication, innovation and veteran advocacy can go. Huge respect to the DAV leaders, medical teams and every veteran whose resilience inspires these advances. I'm proud to see this continued commitment to care and recovery.

Chad Desmith, Moorhead, Minnesota

CHAMPVA approval wait

I am a county veteran service officer, and I help with survivor benefits. I'm also a member of DAV. Could DAV help find out why it takes five to six months for CHAMPVA to be approved? Why are we still sending applications via fax that regularly get lost, and why is it a nightmare to reach a human being to check the status of an application? They are buried in a silo built in the Stone Age, so until the VA can fix that, I'll ignore the lip service. Thanks for all you do, DAV! **Thallassa Gunelius, Bayport, Minnesota**

Editor's note: According to the VA, the backlog of pending CHAMPVA applications that existed last year has been eliminated and new applications are now being processed in less than a week. The VA also says that it has moved to a more automated application processing system that will further increase efficiency. However, if you have or know of others who have problems with CHAMPVA applications or other claims for benefits, you can always contact a DAV service officer at benefitsquestions.org.

WRITE TO US Please send feedback to DAV Magazine, 860 Dolwick Drive, Erlanger, KY 41018, or via email to feedback@dav.org. We also welcome feedback on our social media pages. We regret we are unable to acknowledge every letter due to the volume received. Letters are subject to editing for clarity, style, accuracy, space and propriety. Letters involving claims are referred to DAV's Service Department.

Empowering veterans with transparency

DAV-supported bill would expand written consent to more prescriptions that have significant side effects

By Kevin C. Miller

Chronic pain is the leading cause of disability for those who have served, and severe pain is 40% more common among veterans than nonveterans. What's more, this pain can often be accompanied by coexisting mental health conditions. When left untreated or unrelieved, chronic pain can contribute to depression, anxiety, poor sleep patterns, decreased quality of life and substance use disorder—making it a risk factor for suicide.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, obtaining written informed consent is mandated for long-term opioid painkiller prescriptions. Written informed consent is a process where a veteran or their caregiver receives a summary of the risks, benefits and alternative treatments and is given the chance to ask questions before having the prescription filled. This approach represents a cornerstone of ethical medical practice that empowers veterans and fundamentally can improve health outcomes. However, this practice doesn't extend to all high-risk medications.

"Every day, veterans are prescribed high-risk medications. Veterans deserve clear answers on treatment alternatives to ensure they aren't facing worsening health outcomes in their search for relief," said DAV National Legislative Director Jon Retzer.

Currently, the protocol for obtaining written informed consent only extends to long-term use of opioids, but the

Written Informed Consent Act (H.R. 4837/S. 3314) aims to expand this practice for antipsychotics, stimulants, antidepressants, anxiolytics, narcotics and other medications with significant risks and side effects.

"America's veterans put their lives on the line in defense of our nation and our freedoms. It's our job in D.C. to ensure they have the information, support and care they need to thrive and prosper when they return home," said Sen. Tim Sheehy, who introduced S. 3314. "This bill is a commonsense step toward empowering veterans to make informed decisions about their own medical care, and I'm proud to be leading it in the Senate."

This legislation aims to enhance patient rights and safety by ensuring that veterans are fully informed about the medications they're prescribed, particularly those with high risks and potential for significant side effects.

"Veterans deserve to be fully informed about the medications they take, especially those with potentially dangerous side effects," Retzer said. "When veterans understand the full spectrum of potential outcomes, they can weigh these against their personal values and treatment goals to make the most informed decision possible for their own personal health care needs." ■



Stay Informed

To take action on this and other key veterans legislation, join DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) at davcan.org.

WHEN WAR COMES HOME

From a desert airstrip to civilian life, a Marine confronts the cost of service

By Matt Saintsing

On a four-hour helicopter ride, Lenny Dolshenko left the life he knew and entered a war that was just beginning. The 400-mile inland mission, launched from the USS Peleliu, aimed to seize and secure a desert airstrip in southern Afghanistan.

It was just two months after 9/11.

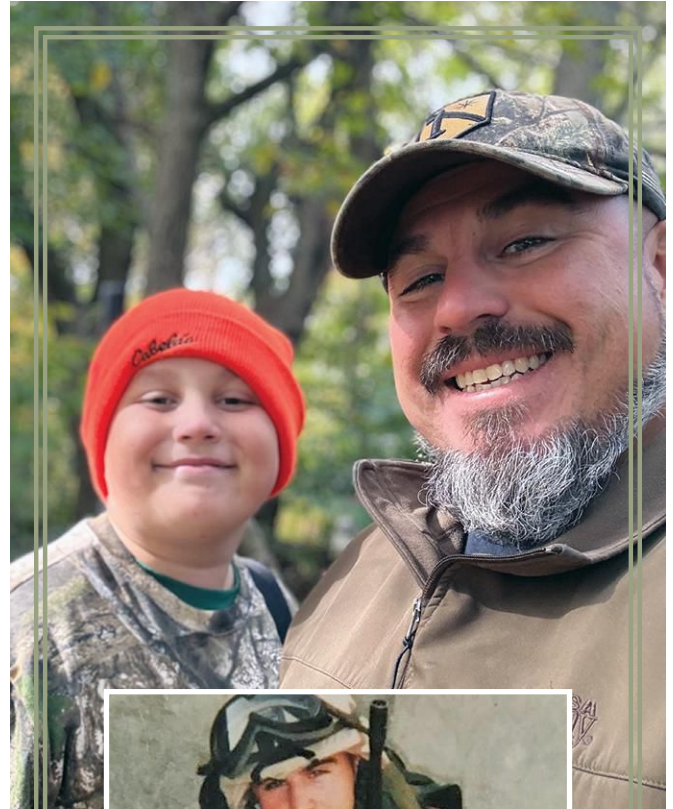
“We were the first conventional troops in Operation Enduring Freedom,” Dolshenko said. “We pulled off the longest Marine Corps amphibious raid in history.”

The Marines landed at night, cleared their objective and secured the airfield that became known as Camp Rhino—a critical foothold for forces moving deeper into the country. The mission itself was brief, but the intensity lingered long after it ended.

“It was almost like I couldn’t turn it off,” Dolshenko said, recalling the constant nervous anxiety he felt while deployed.

That tension followed him home.

For many veterans, the transition from service to civilian life brings battles that aren’t immediately visible. Trauma and service-connected injuries—physical and



Lenny Dolshenko in full combat gear during his unit's pullout from Afghanistan. He deployed just weeks after 9/11. Years after coming home, Dolshenko now spends his time making memories closer to home, like a squirrel hunting trip with his son in Indiana.

psychological—can compound over time, straining careers, finances and family life.

After leaving the Marine Corps in 2004, Dolshenko tried to move forward without addressing what lingered beneath the surface.

“I just sucked it up,” he said, “like a lot of Marines do after we get out—issues we carry with us from the Marine Corps and deployments.”

“If you were in Afghanistan or Iraq—any war or no war—and you feel you have a legitimate claim, we want you to talk to the DAV national service officers here who will guide you through the process.”

—Terry Hillard, 2024 Disabled Veteran of the Year

He became a police officer in Elkhart, Indiana, drawn to a profession that mirrored the structure and sense of mission he had known in uniform. But the hypervigilance that once served him in combat followed him into law enforcement. Anxiety, nightmares and flashbacks steadily mounted.

“That feeling of uncertainty—not knowing what was coming next but knowing what could be coming next,” he said. “Those were very familiar emotions. I experienced them as a police officer, and they took me back to my time in the Marine Corps.

“There were work situations that brought me back to Afghanistan,” he added. “The post-traumatic stress disorder snowballed the further I went in life.”

Recognizing Dolshenko was struggling, fellow veterans on the force encouraged him to attend a meeting at DAV Chapter 42 in Plymouth. There, he met DAV benefits advocate John Rodriguez, who helped him file claims for tinnitus, hearing loss and PTSD. Like many veterans in law enforcement, Dolshenko was initially apprehensive about seeking his earned VA benefits, citing long-standing cultural and career concerns. “It took me a few months to really pursue my benefits,” he said.

That hesitation is common among police officers who served in uniform. DAV’s 2024 Disabled American Veteran of the Year, Terry Hillard, has spoken candidly about waiting nearly five decades to file a VA claim out of fear that documenting a disability could jeopardize his police career.



A Vietnam veteran and fellow Marine, Hillard now uses his credibility to educate police officers, firefighters and other first responders about the benefits they earned.

“We don’t want what happened to me to happen to anyone else,” Hillard said in 2024. “If you were in Afghanistan or Iraq—any war or no war—and you feel you have a legitimate claim, we want you to talk to the DAV national service officers here who will guide you through the process.”

For Dolshenko, the cost of waiting became painfully clear. After 14 years with the department, he was medically

retired following an accident, but his partial pension wasn’t enough to cover his mortgage or support his family.

“The most important thing was getting him [the VA disability compensation] he already earned,” Rodriguez said. “And we succeeded in that.”

The VA approved those benefits last year.

“I didn’t know how I was going to pay my bills,” Dolshenko said. “Because of John, his team and their hard work, I was able to keep my house.”

While Dolshenko was initially uneasy about seeking his earned VA benefits—particularly as a police officer—he now recognizes that veterans of all backgrounds should ask for help when they need it.

“There’s a lot of that Marine mentality—being the tough guy, being in control of everything,” he said. “I knew Marines who had it much worse than I did, so I compared myself to them. But John, his team and other guys I worked with really opened my eyes to what I’ve earned.” ■

Let's make **APRIL 4** a day that speaks louder than words.

DAV Community Impact Day

A nationwide movement is underway to show veterans how much they matter. When you pledge your time at communityimpactday.org, you're showing that simple acts of gratitude and service can have a profound effect on people's lives.

It's a chance to come together as a community—DAV members, families and friends of veterans are all welcome and encouraged to get involved.

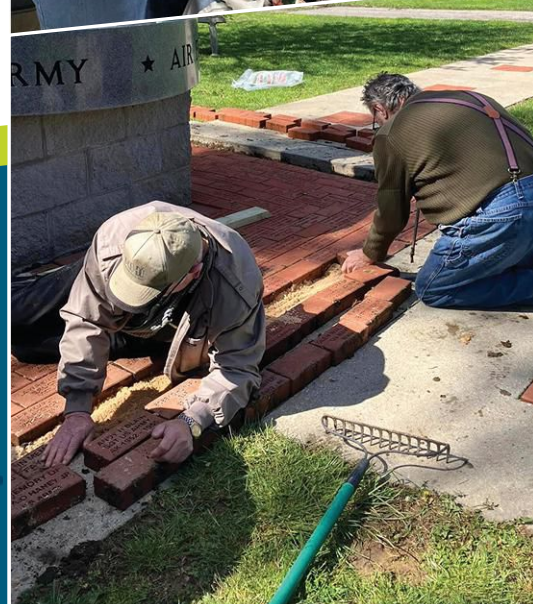
Even an hour can make a difference.

Register today, and we'll send you ideas for meaningful ways to give back, along with information on how to connect with others in your area.

Because "thank you for your service" is more than just words. **It's action.**

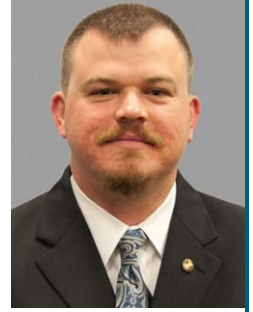


APRIL 4, 2026
communityimpactday.org



From the NATIONAL VOLUNTARY SERVICES DIRECTOR

JOHN KLEINDIENST



What started as a refresh became a revival

From the beginning, we hoped DAV Community Impact Day would be more than a single day of service. We saw its potential to be a catalyst for gathering in the name of veterans and spurring continued volunteer service.

That's why hearing stories like the following is heartwarming and inspiring.

When DAV member Jennifer Alvarado and Auxiliary member Terri Lazzaro learned about Community Impact Day in early 2025, they saw it as an opportunity to provide an outlet for people to give back. They were looking for ways to revitalize Chapter 66 in Hammonton, New Jersey, and promote its recently chartered Auxiliary unit.

They landed on organizing volunteers to refresh their meeting space.

"It was run down," Lazzaro said. "We thought it should be a neater, cleaner, more vibrant place. It snowballed from there."

Volunteers pressure-washed the outside, cleaned out the space, painted walls and made repairs. A local business refinished the floors with fresh epoxy at no cost.

"It brought us all together," Lazzaro said. "We couldn't believe how many people showed up."

The result was a meeting hall the chapter's members could be proud to invite others to.

"We're now doing actual outreach because of this," Alvarado said.

The hall, once only used for monthly meetings, now hosts frequent events including a winter homeless veterans stand down, monthly veteran coffee meetups, benefits seminars and a first-ever "Vetsgiving" dinner for veterans and their families.

Other organizations are renting out the space, generating income the chapter uses to help local veterans in need. The local newspaper has started promoting chapter events. The town of Hammonton invited the chapter and unit to march in both its Halloween and Fourth of July parades. Other local nonprofits are calling the chapter and unit asking how they can be involved.

"Community Impact Day has had a greater impact than we realized," Alvarado said.

Vetsgiving, in particular, was the highlight for her because it represented the newfound vibrancy of a chapter that was growing stagnant. She watched as members and their families shared a meal with each other, strengthening the community and the trust they've built over the past year.

Lazzaro said they're looking forward to building on the momentum that started last April.

"We need to help," she said. "We need to bring people out of their shells and literally save a life."

Big change can happen from a single act of service. Please consider pledging an hour of time serving veterans on April 4 at communityimpactday.org and see the change you can spark. ■

FINDING PURPOSE

Once-struggling Navy vet rebuilt his life through accountability, the VA and community. Now, he helps others.

By Brian Buckwalter

Joanne and Jose Mendoza are active volunteers with Chapter 12 and Auxiliary Unit 12 in San Bernardino, California.

Jose Mendoza doesn't shy away from his past.

Struggling with direction after the Navy. Substance abuse. Spending time in prison. Getting laid off from his job. Experiencing homelessness.

Then came finding community, healing, purpose and a mission to help other veterans get out of the "foxholes" they find themselves in.

"I want to jump in the hole with you, and I want to help you get out," Mendoza said. "Somebody helped me."

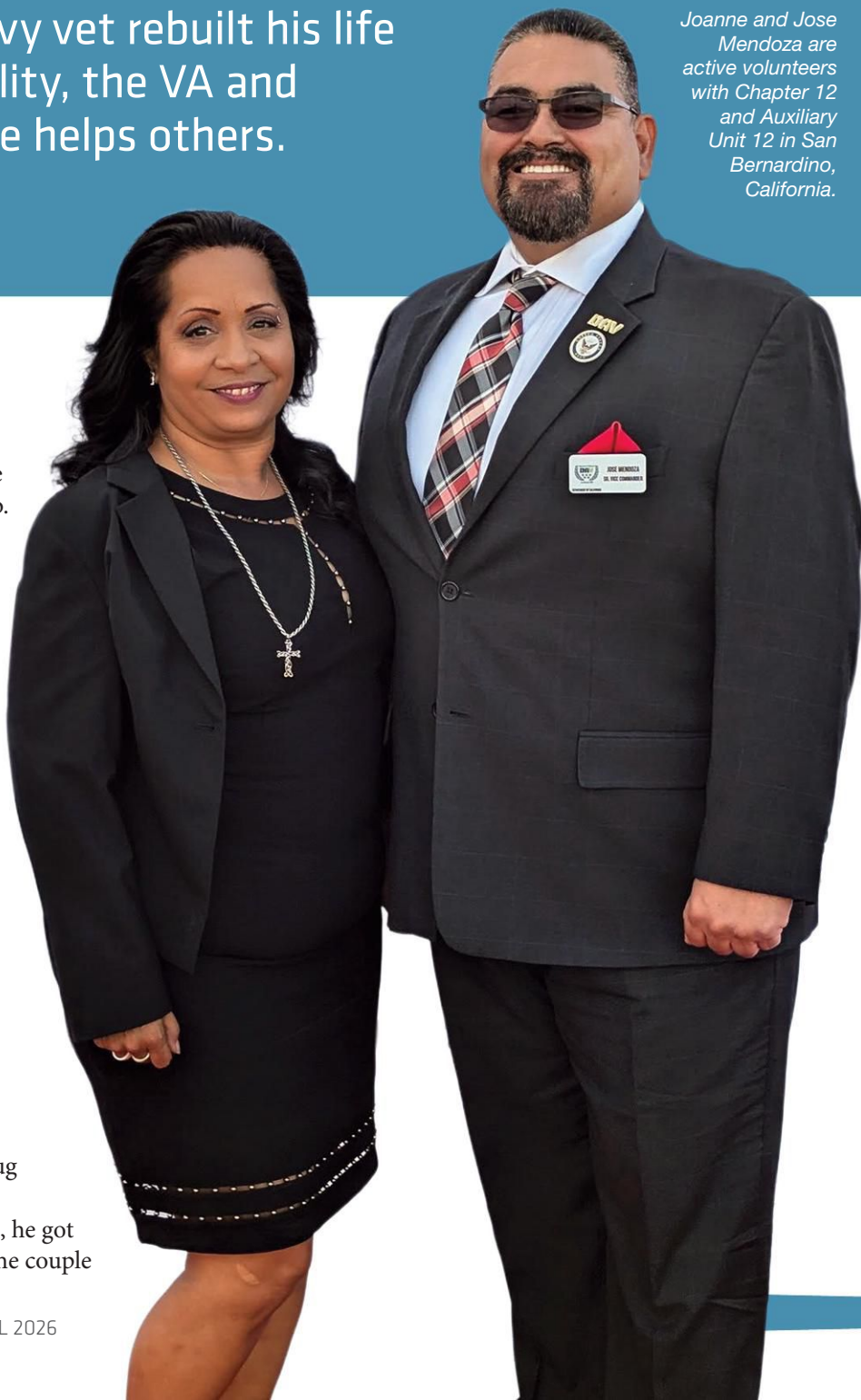
Mendoza was medically separated from the Navy in 1999 after a car accident caused a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and vision loss.

The transition was difficult. He wasn't fully aware of benefits or resources available to him and was trying to cope with post-traumatic stress on his own.

"I was self-medicating," he said. "I didn't care if I lived or died."

He later wound up in prison for drug and weapons charges.

After finishing his sentence in 2006, he got a job and met his now-wife Joanne. The couple



“He was motivated to give back. What I saw was a guy who cared and was willing to put in some time and maybe just needed a chance. What I saw was a guy who wanted to repair his life, which is the DAV story, right?”

—Joseph Moseley, DAV Chapter 12
past commander

started building a life together in Rancho Cucamonga, California, outside Los Angeles.

Then the Great Recession hit in 2007, and they lost everything—their apartment, possessions and temporarily lost custody of Joanne’s three children. The couple lived in hotels, out of their car and in a friend’s apartment.

In early 2008, they’d saved enough money for a one-bedroom apartment and were allowed to get the kids back.

“It was in the middle of the worst neighborhood, but we had to start from somewhere,” Jose said.

Because of his eye injury, TBI and PTSD, Jose avoided people. He was self-conscious about how he looked and wore dark sunglasses to hide the wound. Living in that confined space made processing it all more difficult.

Unemployed and full of self-loathing, he had a hard time controlling his temper. He’d have nightmares—screaming and thrashing in his sleep.

“It compounds,” Jose said, “and there’s nowhere for you to go when you’re frustrated.”

Joanne finally convinced him to seek help at the Department of Veterans Affairs. She’d encouraged him in the past, but he realized he was getting worse.

“It got so bad that I went to the VA hospital myself, and I sat there and I said, ‘I need help,’” Jose said. “I just broke down.”

He started seeing a doctor and attending group classes for PTSD. He was withdrawn at first, but as he listened to other veterans’ stories, he found he could relate to them and started opening up.

But back at home, he and Joanne would frequently argue. That escalated to a moment where Jose hit Joanne. He said he initially tried to run from the situation but realized he had to make amends for what he did.

“I turned myself in,” Jose said. “I went to domestic violence court. I knew I had messed up my partner, and I didn’t know how to fix it. I messed up the person I was closest to that was trying to help.”

They separated for two months after the incident as they worked to figure out their future. They ultimately wanted to reconcile.

“I knew there was something in our relationship,” Joanne said. “We just needed that ‘one help’ to get us back on our feet.”

They found it through the VA and a community counseling provider. Joanne and Jose both sought individual treatment, attended marriage counseling together and ensured their children also received counseling.

“When I destroyed the family, I realized that I had to bring my family back together, and so we did a lot of this stuff together,” Jose said.

Jose also continued to receive therapy for his PTSD and TBI and attended the VA Substance Treatment and Recovery (STAR) program.

“I had a lot of help at the VA hospital,” he said.

Over time, the Mendozas’ situation improved. They moved into a townhouse. They volunteered together at the VA hospital, accumulating thousands of hours. Their marriage grew stronger.

“She stood by me through the hardest times of life, and that’s why I value our relationship so much,” Jose said. “We stuck together through the worst times there was, and I think that’s what makes us so strong.”

“I knew if we worked together, we could do whatever we wanted,” Joanne said.

A highlight of that partnership and tenacity came after they moved to Victorville in California’s High Desert in 2013. They had an opportunity to move into a bigger home in a nicer neighborhood, but it was a transition Jose was unsure about at first. He had come to rely on the VA medical center and the Vet Center in San Bernardino.

“I was moving an hour away, and there were no resources up there,” he said. “I was scared that if I didn’t have resources, I was gonna fail.”

The Mendozas’ solution was to create their own community and resources.

“The more I helped other people, the more it helped me,” Jose said.

(Continued on Page 12)



Left: Mendoza and other Chapter 12 volunteers regularly host food distribution events for local veterans in need. **Right:** Mendoza signs a guest log at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., where he annually meets with lawmakers to advocate for legislation that benefits ill and injured veterans.

Joanne was alongside him every step of the way. This included organizing events such as Victorville's first Veteran Appreciation Cruise Day in 2016.

Around this time, the Mendozas met Joseph Moseley at an event where they were all volunteering. Moseley was then the commander of DAV Chapter 12 in San Bernardino and immediately connected with Jose.

"He was motivated to give back," Moseley said. "What I saw was a guy who cared and was willing to put in some time and maybe just needed a chance. What I saw was a guy who wanted to repair his life, which is the DAV story, right?"

Moseley invited Jose to join DAV, mentored him and urged him to take on chapter leadership roles.

Through all this, Jose still struggled with how he felt he was perceived by others.

Then he learned about and attended the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, an event that DAV presents with the VA every year in Colorado. He remembers being inspired by watching amputees and other severely disabled veterans ski down the mountain, enjoying themselves.

"It just changed my life," Jose said. "It showed me there's more after your disability."

Today, Jose and Joanne are familiar faces around Chapter 12 and its Auxiliary unit. He's currently the chapter commander and she's the Auxiliary unit adjutant. Jose also currently serves as the senior vice commander for the Department of California. They're both focused on helping other veterans find purpose, community and support through DAV.

The chapter's building is open five days a week, offering a wide variety of opportunities to be involved, including

benefits seminars, scuba diving outings, amateur radio classes, drone piloting classes, Bible studies, a gardening club and a food pantry.

"We're trying to meet the veteran where they're at," Jose said. "We'll do anything to help a veteran."

Moseley said Jose's journey has been inspiring to many veterans.

"You want to find the one who actually struggled and found success," Moseley said. "That's what he's doing. He's finding success, and he's sharing it."

Mentees include Jarod Behee, an Army veteran and fellow winter sports clinic participant who found a new mission through Chapter 12.

"I was struck in the head by a sniper when I was in Iraq. Meeting Jose and being mentored by he and Joe has made a huge difference for me and my wife, Julie," said Behee. "We're an incredibly active chapter, and everyone looks out for each other. When you have a severe traumatic brain injury, it makes it more difficult to handle some of the admin stuff, but they're the kind of people who make sure no one is ever left behind and they've helped me through it."

"[Jose's] gone through a lot of pain, but it's made him a better leader, and he has changed a lot of people's lives in ways that give them hope. Mine included."

Jose's work extends beyond DAV. He mentors veterans through his county's Veterans Treatment Court. He sits on a veterans advisory committee for U.S. Rep. Pete Aguilar and works with local leaders on veterans' issues.

His recognitions include being named a 2024 Veteran of the Year honoree by California State Sen. Eloise Gomez Reyes and a 2025 JPMorgan Chase Community Icon honoree.

After more than a decade of involvement, Jose and Joanne aren't slowing down, but they are shifting focus to find and mentor new DAV leaders.

"You don't have to be a superstar sniper; you don't have to be some recon warrior," Jose said. "You can be a cook in the Navy, like I was, and still make a difference in our community." ■



Call if You Need Help

If you're experiencing intimate partner violence, find support by calling the **National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233** or **TTY 800-787-3224**. If you're a veteran in crisis, call the **Veterans Crisis Line at 988, then press 1, or text 838255**.

From the NATIONAL SERVICE DIRECTOR SCOTT HOPE



There when it matters

Veterans understand what it means to endure forces beyond their control. During service, we train for worst-case scenarios, adapt under pressure and look out for one another when conditions are at their most unforgiving. But when hurricanes flatten neighborhoods, fires erase memories or floods destroy everything familiar, too many veterans and their families are left to pick up the pieces alone.

And for DAV, that warrior ethos of helping one another doesn't vanish when the uniform comes off. That's why, for 56 years, DAV has stepped in during those moments of crisis. Our Disaster Relief Program exists for one simple reason: Veterans who served this nation should never be abandoned in their most vulnerable hours. When natural disasters upend lives, DAV provides direct aid to help cover the personal loss of food, clothing and shelter—basic needs that become overwhelming when everything else has been taken away.

The scope of that commitment can be seen on the faces of those who swore to protect us all. Over the decades, DAV has distributed millions of dollars to veterans and their families impacted by bone-crushing winds, winter storms, tornadoes, wildfires, floods and earthquakes. In the past five years alone, DAV provided nearly \$6 million in disaster relief assistance. But those dollars aren't just numbers on a ledger. They represent groceries when cupboards are bare, a warm place to sleep when homes are uninhabitable and a measure of stability during the most uncertain days of a family's life.

They're a promise sustained by people who understand that gratitude for service must be expressed not in words alone but through ongoing action when veterans face the hardest moments of their lives.

Financial assistance is only part of the support DAV provides. In disaster-stricken communities, DAV also distributes comfort and hygiene kits—backpacks filled with blankets, toothbrushes, soap and other essential items. These kits may seem simple, but they restore dignity and self-sufficiency when both have been stripped away. They say you're not forgotten and you're not facing this alone.

From Georgia and Oklahoma to Montana and California and everywhere else disasters may strike, DAV remains ready to respond. Whether for a single home or an entire community, our presence reflects a promise rooted in service. The commitment veterans make to the nation, and to one another, doesn't end when active duty does.

If you're a veteran or a family member affected by a natural disaster, know that help is available. Reaching out to a DAV benefits advocate can be a life-changing first step toward recovery. Learn more and apply for assistance at benefitsquestions.org. In the aftermath of destruction, DAV stands where it always has—shoulder to shoulder with veterans, helping them rebuild not just homes but hope. ■

Empowering veterans living with diabetes



DAV, Dexcom unite on comprehensive diabetes resource hub

By Victoria Short

A new partnership between DAV and health care company Dexcom is set to significantly strengthen support for veterans managing diabetes—a condition that affects former service members at higher rates than the general population.

In March, the two organizations debuted DAV's first online diabetes resource, designed to give veterans and their families a reliable hub for education.

"This comprehensive resource provides veterans with a one-stop online location for learning about prevention, treatment options and available resources," said DAV National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski. "Our goal is to provide these resources in a way that meets veterans' specific needs."

This marks Dexcom's first partnership with a veterans charity—an important step as the need for targeted diabetes education and management continues to grow. Diabetes affects an estimated 25% of the veteran population, underscoring the urgency of providing clear, accessible guidance for those at heightened risk.

For many veterans, the risks associated with diabetes are intensified by service-related injuries, chronic stress and challenges accessing consistent care. Early detection, strong self-management skills and trustworthy information can make an enormous difference. Yet too many veterans face gaps in understanding what symptoms to watch for, how to advocate for proper care or what technologies may improve day-to-day management.

DAV's new resource page, presented by Dexcom, seeks to close those gaps.

The resource page provides insight into the prevalence of diabetes among veterans, especially those with Type 2 diabetes, as well as various treatment options.

In addition, the page offers clear explanations of risk factors, prevention strategies and common complications,



PHOTO BY TECH SGT MELISSA CHATHAM/U.S. AIR FORCE

along with practical tips for monitoring glucose levels, navigating nutrition and staying engaged in care.

Veterans can also find information on modern diabetes tools, including continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) systems, like the Dexcom G7 and Dexcom G7 15 Day CGMs, and how technology can support safer, more informed decision-making. As a leader in glucose biosensing, Dexcom brings both expertise and a strong commitment to this new initiative.

“The connection between military service and diabetes cannot be overlooked—veterans are nearly twice as likely to develop the disease as the general population,” Jesinoski said. “DAV is committed to empowering veterans with the knowledge and tools to manage diabetes and lead healthier lives, and we’re grateful for Dexcom’s partnership in providing these vital resources.”

Dexcom will have a booth at the 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention, further strengthening its connection to the veteran community.

You can visit the resource page at dav.org/diabetes. ■

The resource page is for informational purposes only. Please consult a health care professional for medical advice.



PHOTO BY SPC WESLEY LANDRUM/U.S. ARMY





Deborah Sampson's landmark legacy

Historic women veterans legislation became law 5 years ago. Here's how it's going.

By Elizabeth DePompei

January marked five years since the enactment of one of the most significant laws focused on women veterans. Named after the woman who brazenly disguised herself as a man to fight in the Revolutionary War, the Deborah Sampson Act mandated historic investments in understanding the unique needs of women veterans and improving the quality of and access to care provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The law's 28 provisions address everything from prostheses for women to the impact of military sexual trauma (MST). While most of the law's provisions appear to have been met, questions remain.

Rep. Julia Brownley, who authored the bipartisan legislation, called the law transformational but said the VA must implement the law as Congress intended.

"VA has made progress, including improving transparency and ensuring new facilities reflect women veterans' needs, but critical gaps remain," she said. "Access to child care and strong, enforceable policies to prevent and address sexual harassment and assault cannot be optional.

"Through continued congressional oversight and direct engagement with women veterans and organizations like DAV, I am working to advance additional legislative solutions to ensure equitable care for all who have served."

In response to a question about remaining gaps, Dr. Sally Haskell, deputy chief officer for clinical operations and director of comprehensive women's health in the VA Office of Women's Health, said, "VA remains steadfast in our mission to ensure all veterans receive the care, support and respect they deserve.

"VA's women-centered care programs and services provide a continuum of care and have significantly improved the well-being of women veterans."

Sen. John Boozman, who championed the law in the Senate, said improving the VA's ability to meet women veterans' needs was imperative.

"I have focused extensively on ensuring breast cancer detection and treatment within the VA is world-class, given the higher rates among women veterans compared to the general population, and have appreciated the department's collaboration on this mission," Boozman said. "Today, women who answered our nation's call to serve have more access to a comprehensive range of services and providers than ever before."

Here are updates on some of the key provisions from the Deborah Sampson Act, based on mandated reports since its passage, the most recent available public data and information requests.

Eliminating barriers

As noted in DAV's report *Women Veterans: The Journey Ahead*, a lack of child care is often a barrier to receiving health care, and women are more likely to have sole or primary child care duties.

The Deborah Sampson Act mandated a pilot program using certified child care services in the community for veterans receiving readjustment counseling and related mental health services. The provision ultimately required that all VA facilities offer some form of child care services by January 2026, which could include stipends. The VA did not respond to a request for an update on the availability of child care services by publication time.

Staffing and training

The law also required every VA medical facility to have at least one full- or part-time women's health primary care provider. According to the VA Office of Women's Health, as of December 2025, all VA facilities had a full- or part-time women's health primary care provider.

The VA was also required to offer a women veterans training module for community care providers and report back annually on its utilization. Around 2.8 million veterans use the VA's network of more than 1 million community care providers, and women are often referred to community care for gender-specific needs. According to the most recent report available, only 464 community providers completed the women veterans training module between April 2021 and March 2023.

Confronting trauma

One mandated report shows that 38,893 disability compensation claims related to MST were submitted in fiscal year 2023. Over 70% were from women.

The law called for specialized teams to process MST-related claims, and according to the VA, as of December 2025, its MST Operations Center employed over 1,300 specially trained representatives. But a July 2025 VA Office of Inspector General report found the center's turnover rate was over 22% and that MST claims accuracy dropped 10 percentage points between 2019 and 2024.

"This landmark legislation codified a much-needed and far-reaching focus on the fastest-growing demographic of veterans, and DAV is committed to ensuring it is upheld in the truest spirit of the law," said DAV Deputy National Legislative Director Naomi Mathis.

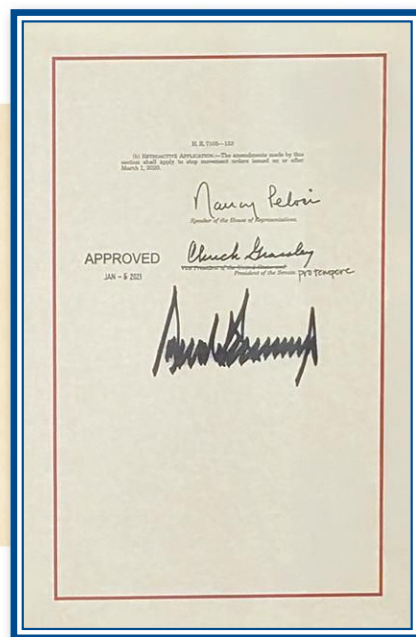
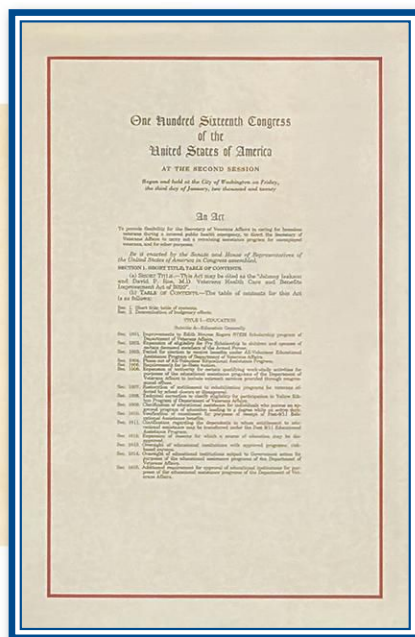
"We also recognize that this law was just one step in fulfilling our duty to a historically underserved group of veterans. We look forward to continuing this critical work alongside the VA and Congress." ■

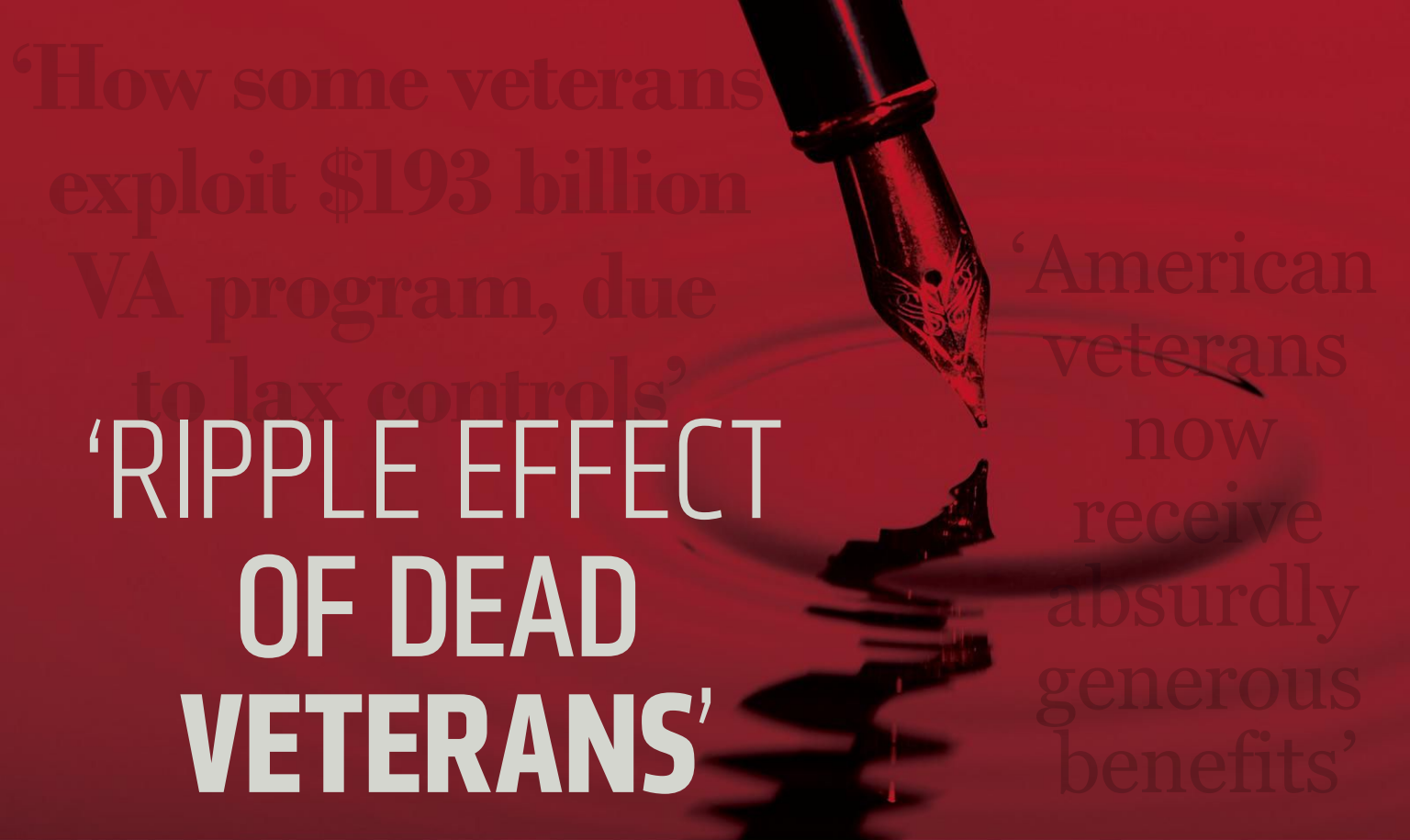


Learn More Online

Visit davgovwomenveterans.org for an update on each of the law's 28 provisions.

Signed into law Jan. 5, 2021, the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act includes 28 provisions from the DAV-championed Deborah Sampson Act. Those provisions include mandates aimed at improving the quality of and access to health care for women veterans, the fastest-growing demographic of veterans.





DAV member and veterans advocate cites danger of media reporting that takes aim at veterans health care and benefits

By M. Todd Hunter

A 60-mile bike ride through the southern Arizona mountains was enough for Daniel Blevins to calm down and collect his thoughts. But once he began recording cellphone video to put those thoughts out into the world, the exhaustion from such an arduous journey kept him from making the kind of impactful and coherent statement he was hoping for.

The following day, Blevins laid out his thoughts on social media in response to what had gotten him so riled up—an article written by The Washington Post alleging that disabled veterans are “swamping” the Department of Veterans Affairs with false, fraudulent and dubious disability claims for minor or illegitimate injuries and illnesses.

As a former VA employee, DAV life member, and national board-certified health and wellness coach, the disabled Army veteran knew better.

“I was livid. I was pretty much seeing red,” Blevins said before explaining that he has lost a “staggering amount” of friends to veteran suicide in the 14 years since taking off his uniform. “I’ve had friends who showed up to the VA who didn’t get the care they needed, and they went home and killed themselves that same day. And that article is going to keep that person from even going in the first place.

“People read that, word gets out, they see it all over social media, and it’s going to have this ripple effect of dead veterans.”

“In our view, this story was neither investigative news reporting nor analysis,” DAV National Legislative Director Jon Retzer testified at an October 2025 Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee hearing that explored the VA disability system and was spawned by the article. “It was a long-form editorial developed from a preconceived conclusion that they then tried to support with a series of misleading and conflated statistics; anecdotal quotes transformed into generalizations; unsupported assertions; and a near-total

misunderstanding about the history, purpose and functioning of the VA disability compensation system.”

The article, “How some veterans exploit \$193 billion VA program, due to lax controls,” points to the large number of veterans awarded disability compensation in recent years and highlights a small number of outrageous frauds committed by a relative handful of individuals.

According to the VA Office of Inspector General, there have been fewer than 200 fraud convictions annually in recent years. With the Veterans Benefits Administration processing almost 3 million claims in the most recent fiscal year, that equates to a fraud rate of less than one one-hundredth of 1%.

One of the article’s main themes that Blevins took umbrage with is minimizing the effects of what it called “minor or treatable afflictions” such as hemorrhoids, eczema and acne—all of which affect his daily life.

“One of my disability claims is listed as hemorrhoids. Sounds minor, right? Something to mock in an article?” Blevins wrote in his social media post. “The truth: It’s unexplained rectal bleeding I’ve dealt with since Iraq. I bleed multiple times a week. It wrecks my schedule, ramps up my anxiety, and forces me to plan entire days around managing it.

“They also slam veterans for claiming ‘pimples and acne,’” he continued. “Since Afghanistan, I’ve had sores erupt across my back and face that bleed, scar, and burn like fire.”

Beyond those afflictions, the article also highlighted the fact that many veterans file claims for multiple disabilities. The undeniable truth, though, is that the rigors of military service can take a toll on one’s body.

In Blevins’ case, a 2008 Humvee rollover caused a spinal injury that resulted in the left side of the former cavalry scout’s body becoming atrophied and has contributed to his sciatic nerve radiculopathy and carpal tunnel syndrome. His positioning between bomb-jamming devices and proximity to mounted .50-caliber machine guns on Humvees also left him battling intense migraines—another one of the “common disabilities” the article takes aim at, along with erectile dysfunction, which Blevins also suffers from.

He knows all too well about the stigma associated with submitting VA disability claims. His more than a decade of work in the veteran community has allowed him to witness the common refrain many DAV members

“They also slam veterans for claiming ‘pimples and acne.’ Since Afghanistan, I’ve had sores erupt across my back and face that bleed, scar, and burn like fire.”

—Daniel Blevins



Top: Since his 2006–2007 deployment to Afghanistan, Blevins has dealt with outbreaks of sores and acne across his face and back at least once per month. These outbreaks usually last a week at a time. **Above:** Then-Army Sgt. Daniel Blevins mans a .50-caliber machine gun in a Humvee turret in Iraq in 2008.



“Veterans aren’t defrauding the government. We’re navigating a system that forces us to prove our bodies are broken in the right way to get basic health care.”

—Daniel Blevins

Blevins with his children, (left to right) Caellum, Lillian and Declan, at a pumpkin patch in Wilcox, Arizona.

and service officers hear: Many veterans feel they don’t deserve VA health care and benefits because they perceive their disabilities as minor and believe other veterans are more deserving.

“They’re going to think, ‘This is just a small issue of rectal bleeding. This is just a small cyst on my back,’” he said. “The reality is, your quality of life is going to suffer all the way until you die young from it.”

Blevins admits he’s concerned about that possibility when it comes to his issues, which is why seeing them minimized in the media and in the eyes of other advocates looking to dismantle the VA disability system is so upsetting. He also worries about how the outcomes of his “minor afflictions” will affect his wife and three children.

“There is such a reduced quality of life by joining the military,” he said. “If you were to show me how my disabilities were going to keep getting worse over time and the access to care wasn’t going to get too much better, I would have never started a family in a million years.”

The Washington Post’s coverage isn’t the only instance of attacks on veterans benefits recently. In November 2024, The Economist published “American veterans now receive absurdly generous benefits,” which characterized veterans disability payments as roadblocks to national-debt

reduction efforts. That article also received tremendous rebuke in the military and veteran community. Together, these and other media reports that take aim at veterans health care and benefits represent a larger danger.

“To create this narrative that people don’t deserve the health care that they desperately need and earned could only be brought by somebody that is so out of touch with reality,” Blevins said. “[Politicians] are going to read that, and they are going to make funding decisions based on that. And it is going to affect VA programs across the board.”

“Veterans aren’t defrauding the government,” Blevins wrote in his social media post. “We’re navigating a system that forces us to prove our bodies are broken in the right way to get basic health care.

“This kind of reporting doesn’t just mislead the public—it fuels stigma, discourages people from seeking help and hands ammunition to lawmakers who already think cutting veteran support is a budget fix.”

Still, Blevins maintains that his story is similar to countless others.

“I got out [of the military] completely uninformed and broken,” he said. “And then it was 100% on the VA to try to make me better.” ■



Air Force veteran Adam Cassidy (left) is a strong advocate for Werner Enterprise's veteran programs.



From **JOBLESS** to workplace **ADVOCATE**

Success after the military often happens through a combination of individual action and strong employer support

By Liz Stetler

When transitioning out of the Air Force in 2015, Adam Cassidy thought he was ahead of the curve by sending over 175 applications to different employers. He only received about a dozen responses.

Cassidy's struggle was one that many veterans face: breaking through the noise of the job market while balancing the transition into a new chapter of life.

After some trial and error, Cassidy landed a job at logistics and trucking company Werner Enterprises as a safety manager. When he learned of the company's veterans program, he knew immediately that he wanted to get involved.

He started by offering to review veterans' resumes for Werner's hiring team. He knew that without someone capable of translating military skills, valuable experience could get buried at the bottom of the resume pile. For example, a military occupation title and description rarely cover the range of responsibilities that a veteran has likely acquired in that position. Many veterans also bring qualities like dedication and reliability to the workplace, but those "soft skills" may not appear on a resume.

This past August, Werner Enterprises was recognized as DAV's Large Patriot Employer of the Year for its



Left: Werner Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer and Air Force veteran Eric Downing (left) is presented with the 2025 Large Patriot Employer of the Year award at DAV's national convention in Las Vegas. **Right:** Part of Werner's veteran program includes military-themed trucks that travel the country.

Evaluation criteria for the Patriot Employer Awards include the strength of the company's veteran recruiting and hiring efforts; retention and career-building efforts; policies supporting active-duty, disabled and veteran employees; and community outreach initiatives to support all veterans in communities where the business operates.

According to Yost, all companies that can demonstrate their support

demonstrated excellence and dedication to the military and veteran community through its hiring, onboarding and retention practices.

"I love being in the service of others," said Cassidy, who became a DAV life member in 2023. "That's what drew me to the military. I tell our drivers that transportation is another way to serve. Less gunfire but the same principle—it's about safely accomplishing the mission."

Now, in addition to his role as director of safety, Cassidy helps chair the Werner Enterprises Veterans (WEVets) group. Based in Omaha, Nebraska, where Werner is headquartered, the fast-growing group is made up of over 300 members who help the company's veterans capitalize on networking opportunities, develop in their careers and serve communities.

"Every year, we highlight employers who make a difference by hiring from the veteran community through our Patriot Employer Program," said DAV National Employment Director Jeremy Yost, a Marine veteran. "But the consideration goes beyond just hiring veterans and military spouses. We want to recognize and assist employers who help them grow and thrive in their careers long-term."

"As our 2025 Large Patriot Employer of the Year, Werner is a great example of how to build veteran support systems into multiple areas of the business."

in these areas deserve a spotlight, but smaller businesses don't always receive as much recognition for their hard work. With categories for small, midsize and large companies, the DAV Patriot Employer Program ensures equal appreciation and promotion across the board.

Along with Werner Enterprises, in 2025 DAV awarded NTT Global Data Centers Americas Inc. as the midsize employer and Artemis ARC as the small employer.



Ruben Valverde, a Marine veteran and senior director of global technical asset management at NTT Global Data Centers, proudly accepts the 2025 Midsize Patriot Employer of the Year award on behalf of his organization.





“Supporting veterans isn’t just something we do,” said Artemis ARC CEO Luke Sturges, who is a service-disabled Army veteran. “It’s something we deeply believe in. We know that veterans bring incredible talent, resilience and leadership to everything they do. We’ve seen firsthand how their experience strengthens teams and drives impact.”

“Since 2021, DAV’s Patriot Employer Awards have boosted awareness for the winning organizations within the military community,” Yost said. “But along with that audience, we hope other companies are watching and learning from the winners. We want them to borrow ideas and expand their own veteran and military support programs. And then we want to highlight them, too. It’s a win on all sides.”

While there are three award winners, all nominated employers who meet the eligibility requirements will be recognized as DAV Patriot Employers and receive a digital badge to display on their website.

Cassidy’s career at Werner shows that veteran success often happens when strong programs are met with individual action. While company policies lay the foundation, real impact comes from the everyday actions of employees who choose to support their veteran colleagues. ■



Left: Luke Sturges, Army veteran and Artemis ARC CEO, participates in Wreaths Across America with his team. Project Artemis is a corporate focus on philanthropic activities that encourage and foster community engagement with Artemis employees nationwide. **Right:** Sturges accepts the 2025 DAV Small Patriot Employer of the Year award.

Take individual action

Even if the company you currently work for doesn’t have an official initiative for supporting the veteran community, you can make an impact. Here are five ways you can help shape your workplace culture to be more veteran-centric:

- Organize a book club or skill-sharing session to educate colleagues and leadership about military experience or culture.
- Reach out to newer veteran employees to offer support and guide them through any onboarding challenges.
- Recommend veteran-focused service or volunteering events to leadership that align with your company’s values and mission.
- Help plan veteran appreciation events and awareness days that honor military service and foster pride across teams.
- Share DAV’s veteran hiring guide with your human resources and recruiting teams. It was built to educate employers on military-related hiring challenges and help them establish strong veteran and military programs.



For More Information

Does your company champion and support veterans and the military community? Consider nominating them for DAV’s Patriot Employer Award.

To learn more about the awards and our other employment services, scan the code or visit dav.org/get-help-now/employment-entrepreneurship.



INVESTED in a mission



Air Force veteran who once struggled with money now runs a successful youth financial education company

By Elizabeth DePompei

Inspired by a family of service members and entrepreneurs, Jasmine Paul has long had the desire to create something in the spirit of solving other people's problems.

Yet when she needed that same spirit for her own problems, she hesitated to reach out for help. It was her senior year of college and, with her personal finances in disarray, Paul was living out of her car and sleeping on friends' couches.

Despite being raised by parents who retired from the military, Paul admits she had no intention or inclination to go into the service herself. But she needed to pay for school. Little did she know that receiving a commission would do so much more than ease her financial burden.

"Once I commissioned into the Air Force, I was like, 'OK, we got to figure out this money thing, because I don't want to go back to that situation,'" Paul said.

She read books, asked questions and got curious about personal finance. Meanwhile, she relished being a nuclear missile combat crew officer. Then something unexpected happened—she discovered she wasn't the only adult who struggled with financial literacy.

"I had airmen maxing out credit cards and, unfortunately, had some go through some really hard personal finance experiences," Paul said.

Empowered with more information and experience, Paul—who eventually became a finance officer in the Air Force—started helping her fellow service members pay off debt, helping around 110 people pay off more than \$350,000.

"Everyone just kept saying, 'I wish I learned about money as a kid,'" Paul said. "That's where The Wealth Playground was birthed."

Following in her aunt's and grandmother's footsteps, and inspired by her personal experiences, Paul founded her business—driven to get to the root of the financial literacy gap and provide solutions. The

Wealth Playground, a youth financial education company, offers children's books and curricula Paul authored, along with virtual and in-person learning products. Paul works with nonprofits, school districts and other organizations to reach thousands of kids.

She had the experience, the knowledge and a clear mission, but the further Paul walked in her entrepreneurial journey, the more isolated she felt. Like so many founders, especially those who spend their formative years in military service, Paul struggled to find a community of like-minded founders who understood the challenges she faced.

Then in 2024, Paul attended DAV Patriot Boot Camp, a three-day, in-person program that connects military- and veteran-connected founders with no-cost education, mentoring and community. Paul said it felt like she was back in the military with her brothers and sisters. She also credits the one-on-one mentoring she received with giving her a well-earned push.

"I feel like Patriot Boot Camp gave me that hype that I needed," Paul said. "Like, 'Oh, you're dope! Why are you playing around?'"

The program also gave her one of her first opportunities to compete for funding in a pitch contest. It went well—she won first place.

"That's something I've been practicing for a while now, and so it was really awesome to be able to share [my pitch] and [for] people get it," she said. "So winning was like icing on the cake."

She later went on to compete in DAV Patriot Boot Camp's annual pitch contest, held on the big stage and with more money up for grabs during the DAV national convention. Now Paul leads a virtual master class on pitching, designed for founders and other creators.

Since her Patriot Boot Camp cohort, she's added more products to her shop, had one of her children's books included on an American Library



Air Force veteran Jasmine Paul, founder of youth financial literacy company The Wealth Playground, found support through DAV Patriot Boot Camp for entrepreneurs.

Association's list for libraries, graduated from a Goldman Sachs accelerator program, and secured over \$45,000 in pitch winnings and grants. She also continues building key partnerships with organizations like the Taco Bell Foundation.

"Jasmine and The Wealth Playground show what's possible when veterans find missions in entrepreneurship—they make lasting, positive impacts on communities and help solve universal problems," said DAV Patriot Boot Camp Director Matt Feldhaus. "We're honored that we could be part of her journey and beyond proud to support her launch into this next phase of growth."

Years ago, as she dealt with financial challenges, and later when she left the Air Force after more than a decade of service, Paul faced immense uncertainty. Now she wants others to know that there's always hope.

"I would just share for all the veterans out there, especially those who are transitioning ... there's life after the military, and there are people who are going to support you and welcome you, and that you're going to be OK," she said. "There's programs like DAV. There's a plethora of information out there. And so, for anybody transitioning, you're going to be OK." ■



Paul's company has worked with school districts and nonprofits to empower thousands of kids with financial education, including through original children's books.



Billy Kirby joined the Army in 1940 from Osage, Texas. Deployed to Italy at age 23, he fought in the Battle of Rapido River (nicknamed the "Bloody River") during the Battle of Monte Cassino. Though Kirby was seriously wounded and nearly lost his arm, he was among the 27 men who survived.

PROGRESS through PERSISTENCE

Every VA program was hard-won. World War II veteran shows how advocacy can preserve benefits for future generations.

By Liz Stetler

Few have seen the full arc of veterans care like Billy Kirby. A World War II veteran who was gravely injured in Italy in 1944 and served as DAV national commander in 1988, he has witnessed—and helped shape—the Department of Veterans Affairs' evolution from overcrowded hospitals to a more comprehensive system.



Above left: Placards honoring Kirby's tenure as a service officer and member of DAV Chapter 8 in Wilson, North Carolina, and as DAV national commander hang in his North Carolina home. **Above right:** DAV National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski (left) and Kirby (right) enjoyed meeting in spring 2025 at Kirby's home.



The VA hospitals are in constant danger. We need people doing the work.

—Billy Kirby

Kirby's own military service was cut short. At age 23, while fighting at the Battle of Rapido River (nicknamed the "Bloody River") in Italy, he was shot in his right shoulder and nearly lost his arm.

Two years later, even after extensive therapy in Army hospitals, Kirby was unable to physically perform a salute.

He was medically discharged in 1946, but his service to others continued through the decades with DAV as a benefits advocate and congressional liaison, influencing legislation that built the modern VA.

One landmark achievement that Kirby helped push during his tenure on Capitol Hill was the creation of the VA long-term care and nursing home programs in the 1960s.

"The VA hospitals were full because they had so many long-term patients who'd had strokes or were paralyzed," Kirby recalled.

At times, veterans were turned away. "The VA created a nursing home program that could take and treat those long-term patients," he said. "I think that was the most important legislation we had."

These programs delivered lifelong care; freed hospitals for acute needs; and established cost-effective, veteran-focused treatment.

Yet Kirby, having seen so much improvement, has warned that gains are fragile.

"The VA hospitals are in constant danger," Kirby said. "We need people doing the work."

DAV National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski, who has counted on Kirby as a confidant and close associate throughout his DAV career, agreed with that assessment of potential peril.

"When veterans disengage, decisions about us will still get made. It just happens without our voices at the table," Jesinoski said. "DAV's role as an advocacy engine depends on participation from our members and community. Commander Kirby's career is an excellent example of service in action, and his leadership forged paths that continue to help veterans today."

Today's VA bears the mark of such advocacy. "Every program we've got, we had to fight hard to get, and it can be taken away just as quickly," Kirby said. "Know the importance of DAV and activism." ■

A NEW MISSION

How a former corpsman found purpose in content creation



By Kevin C. Miller

While some call them “influencers,” creators like Navy veteran Warren Delanozapata are more than the word implies. Many are mission-driven entrepreneurs. Much like in the military, their success hinges on personal accountability and grit. It is a career earned through raw talent and the disciplined hustle that defines the entrepreneurial spirit.

In 2021, Delanozapata began his transition from the Navy, using the GI Bill to pursue a degree in kinesiology at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. Given his seven years of experience as a Navy corpsman, a career in physical therapy seemed like a natural evolution. However, as he moved through his studies, a different passion took hold: gaming and content creation.

“At first, it was just a hobby to make extra income while in school,” said Delanozapata. “But as I neared graduation, I realized physical therapy wasn’t my true passion. I knew I could turn content creation into a career.”

Breaking through as a full-time creator is a high-stakes endeavor. It requires transforming a hobby into a sustainable business—managing branding, analyzing audience data and navigating volatile social media algorithms. This relentless cycle is a hurdle that causes many to quit.

But Delanozapata, known online as MPX_Player, refused to quit. Applying the mental fortitude he gained in the Navy, he experienced a breakthrough in 2025. He more than doubled his following, surpassing half a million fans across his platforms, and is considered one of the top 50 creators in Call of Duty: Warzone. This growth unlocked massive milestones, from representing major brands like Xen Gaming to purchasing his first home using a Department of Veterans Affairs home loan.

“I had been a member of REGIMENT for a while but not DAV. Once I learned how they connect veterans to life-changing VA benefits, **I knew I had to get involved.**”

—Warren Delanozapata

In October 2025, Delanozapata was invited to DreamHack Atlanta, one of the nation’s largest gaming conferences, as a featured guest for the gaming community REGIMENT. There, his mission found a new purpose. Through a partnership between REGIMENT and DAV, Delanozapata saw an opportunity to serve again.

“I had been a member of REGIMENT for a while but not DAV,” Delanozapata said. “Once I learned how they connect veterans to life-changing VA benefits, I knew I had to get involved.”

He signed up as a DAV member on the spot and immediately volunteered as a lead influencer for DAV’s Veterans Day streaming event on Twitch, a livestreaming platform where content creators broadcast themselves and interact with viewers in real time.

“Delanozapata embodies the modern veteran entrepreneur—someone who took the discipline of the Navy and applied it to a brand-new frontier,” said DAV National Communications Director Rob Lewis. “We are thrilled to welcome him. By leveraging his success as a creator, he is helping us amplify our mission and ensuring more veterans can access the benefits they have rightfully earned.” ■



Learn More Online

For more information about how to become involved in DAV gaming and livestreaming, scan the code or visit dav.org/dav-gaming-and-livestreaming.



From the AUXILIARY NATIONAL COMMANDER

MELISSA L. PIERCE



Our strength is in service

As we welcome the change of season, our organization is infused with renewed energy and purpose. March and April mark a critical period for the DAV Auxiliary as we ramp up our spring projects and prepare to celebrate National Volunteer Month in April. This time offers a powerful opportunity to reflect on the commitment that unites us: our unwavering devotion to disabled veterans and their families.

The DAV Auxiliary mission is carried out through service, and the thousands of hours you contribute across the nation are truly priceless. Whether you're serving in a Department of Veterans Affairs facility, organizing a local fundraiser or comforting a veteran's spouse, your time is the foundation of our mission. I urge you to visit volunteerforveterans.org to ensure you log your hours and credit them to DAV or the Auxiliary.

This April, I call on every unit to embrace the #DAVAImpact250 challenge. This nationwide campaign challenges us to meet our collective goal of honoring veterans as we approach our nation's 250th birthday. If you haven't visited your local VA medical center recently, please connect with a volunteer representative and step forward. Even simple gestures, like sharing a coffee or reading to a patient, bring light to those who have sacrificed so much.

Our service also reaches into the halls of Congress. I'm proud of our recent legislative efforts, where our delegation advocated for critical issues like caregiver support and improved benefits for toxic-exposed veterans. However, the fight is continuous. We must maintain pressure to ensure Congress fully funds the VA and protects the hard-earned benefits of our nation's heroes.

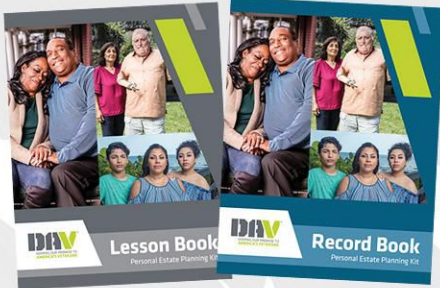
I urge every member to sign up for DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network) alerts at davcan.org. When you receive an alert, please take five minutes to contact your elected officials. Your voice, multiplied by the thousands, is the most powerful tool we have.

Finally, the effectiveness of our advocacy relies on the size and spirit of our membership. I challenge every member to "just ask." Ask an eligible family member to join our ranks, and encourage our junior members to become more active; they're our future leaders. The more members we have, the louder our voice becomes.

Thank you for your fierce loyalty and compassionate service. Together, we'll continue to fulfill our promise to heal, help and hold the line for the veterans counting on us. ■

Creating a legacy that protects you, your family and DAV

Whether you call it gift planning, estate planning, legacy planning or any other term, please know that DAV has resources available to help you create a plan that protects your family and loved ones, lessens your tax burdens, and builds an impactful legacy that will help ensure the future of your family and our nation's veterans.



LEGACY PLANNING KIT

The Lesson Book shows you the steps to get started creating a plan to protect you and your family. The Record Book helps you keep all your important information in one place.



STOCK GIVING

By donating appreciated assets that you've held for more than a year, you can save on capital gains taxes and get a charitable deduction for the full value of your gift.



[FREEWILL.COM/DAV](https://www.freewill.com/dav)

You can use this no-cost online platform to create a legally binding last will and testament specific to the requirements of the state you live in.



BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS

Each institution has a specific process for naming beneficiaries (primary and secondary). You could also consider naming DAV as a beneficiary as a potential tax savings.



QUALIFIED CHARITABLE DISTRIBUTION—IRA

By making this type of donation directly to DAV, at age 70 1/2 or older, you remain in a tax bracket you're comfortable with and avoid adding any ordinary income.



CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY

A gift that pays you for a lifetime! This type of donation (\$10,000 or more) over age 60 can provide you with regular payments for life and allow DAV to further our mission.

Contact a gift planning expert
at **800-216-9802, press 1**,
or email giftplanning@dav.org.



To learn about more ways
to give, scan the QR code or
visit davplanmygift.org.



VA announces intent to reorganize the Veterans Health Administration

■ The Department of Veterans Affairs is restructuring the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to eliminate administrative hurdles and grant local hospital directors greater autonomy, the VA said in an announcement on Dec. 15, 2025. The shift aims to modernize the system, ensuring veterans receive consistent, high-quality care regardless of the VA facility they visit.

The VA said this isn't a reduction in force or an attempt to reduce VHA staffing levels. The department said the goal is to improve veteran health outcomes and ensure policies are applied consistently throughout all facilities.

As part of the reorganization, the VHA Central Office will have responsibility for setting policy goals and conducting financial management, oversight and compliance, and operation centers and Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) will take policy direction from



the VHA Central Office to develop operational, quality and performance standards. The changes aim to provide clearer guidance for delivering health care throughout the VA.



Learn More Online

For DAV's statement on VHA reorganization, scan the code or visit qrs.ly/q9h7shd.



Process eases for women veterans needing specialists



PHOTO BY STACY PEARSALL

■ On Dec. 4, 2025, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced a significant update to health care access for women veterans. The VA has eliminated the administrative requirement of obtaining a primary care referral for gynecology appointments.

This policy change allows the more than 1 million women veterans enrolled in VA health care to schedule their appointments directly with a specialist, ensuring timely and barrier-free access to essential reproductive health services.

"DAV applauds this decisive move to modernize the VA health system for the women veterans who they serve," said Naomi Mathis, DAV deputy national legislative director. "Removing the referral requirement eliminates a significant barrier and will ensure women veterans can access the timely, gender-specific support through the VA that they have earned."

If you have questions or need assistance in applying for VA health care, contact your nearest DAV service office at benefitsquestions.org.



From the NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DEBRA VARNER DANCER

Making a difference



I often hear that what holds someone back from serving is the belief that their contributions are limited. But even the smallest effort or gesture can make a meaningful difference.

Throughout the year, we observe several days that honor acts of kindness. One coming up this April is DAV Community Impact Day, which was created to inspire volunteerism for veterans in our hometowns.

Days of service like this may seem small, but they hold significant meaning for those they honor. They're opportunities for us to consider how we can make a difference.

While its historical accuracy is debated, I'm reminded of a popular anecdote of a World War II event that shows how small actions can profoundly impact people's lives.

The story goes that during the last months of the war, the British conducted daily bombing raids over Berlin. One night, a large group of German fighter planes attacked the bombers.

During the dogfight, one of the bombers got separated from the protection of British escort planes. Five German rounds slammed into the fuselage of the bomber near the fuel tank.

The crew braced for the explosion, but it never came. Fuel poured from the holes where the rounds pierced, but there was no explosion. After landing, a mechanic handed the pilot five rounds he'd pulled from the plane.

The pilot carefully opened the munition and found there were no explosives inside. Instead, he found a tiny wad of paper with a note.

It said that the rounds were made by Polish prisoners of war. When the guards weren't looking, they'd leave the shells empty as a small act of service.

Within DAV, many of us are motivated to create positive change—even if it's a small act—but may not know the most effective way to accomplish this goal. A takeaway from this story is that all we need is the desire and a little bit of strategy.

Whatever you decide to do using the gifts and talents you've been given, incorporate these three D's into your strategy:

Desire is the spark to take action; it's where your gifts intersect with a need in our community.

Decision is the commitment to act, regardless of how big or small you perceive your efforts to be. Nothing gets done without deciding to do so.

Dedication is the fortitude to see something through, even when there are roadblocks.

With those things in mind as you make a plan to serve, your actions will make a difference. Even the small acts of many add up to create a big impact. Who knows, your actions may even save a life.

Learn more about DAV Community Impact Day and other ways to get involved at volunteerforveterans.org. ■

Death of national service office assistant supervisor

■ Kevin Noel, the national service office assistant supervisor in Pittsburgh, died Jan. 8, 2026. He was 56.

Noel, a service-connected, disabled Army veteran of the Gulf War, served from January 1988 until his discharge in December 1996.

A native of Cumberland, Maine, he began his DAV career in May 1999 as a member of Class 8 of the National Service Officer (NSO) Training Academy in Denver. His first seven years were as an NSO, including supervisory positions in Atlanta; Nashville, Tennessee; and Togus, Maine. He was then transferred to Pittsburgh in 2006, where he worked for nearly two decades until his death.

He was a member of DAV Chapter 76 in Pittsburgh.

Noel was a passionate, tireless advocate for veterans.



Noel

During the COVID-19 pandemic, he was recognized by then-National Service Director Jim Marszalek for his commitment to his fellow veterans, making and taking an extremely heavy volume of phone calls to ensure they got the help they needed, even as offices were closed.

He always said that he saw his role as an extension of his military service. "I'm taking care of you, and the little things take care of themselves," he'd liked to tell veterans and

survivors he assisted.

"Kevin leaves behind a legacy of unwavering dedication to helping veteran; his presence will be greatly missed throughout this organization," said National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski. "We are deeply saddened by this sudden loss, and we extend our sympathies to his family."

He is survived by his three children, Alexander, Jillian and Anabella.

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If you have a real estate asset costing you money or not being utilized and you want to put the equity to good use, donating it is a great way to support disabled veterans. You may even claim a significant tax deduction!

Learn more:
[DAV.ORG/REAL-ESTATE-DONATION](https://davy.org/real-estate-donation)
 or call 844-277-HOME (4663)

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Help the brave men and women who served by donating any car, truck, RV or boat, and you could qualify for a tax deduction.

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You could win \$2,500 and a trip to Orlando

Recruit one new DAV member for a chance to snag a special convention prize package

By Jonathan Kaupanger

Your mission is simple: Sign up just one fully paid new DAV member, and you'll instantly be entered to win the ultimate prize package for the 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention in Orlando, Florida. Think sunshine, community and \$2,500 in spending money—hotel room included. Stop dreaming about a vacation and start recruiting your way to one.

The rules of the contest: Recruit one new paid member between now and June 30, and you'll be automatically entered in the contest. There's only one entry per person, no matter how many new members you recruit. After June 30, we'll hold a drawing at DAV National Headquarters to pick the winner.

"One million members is more than a number—it's a nonnegotiable floor for our legislative strength," said National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski. "It's what commands attention on Capitol Hill. Let's strip the recruitment goal down to its simplest form: Find one. If every current nonrecruiter brought in just one new member, we don't just secure our advocacy; we exponentially multiply it. Don't worry about the total—worry about the veteran you can personally empower today."

And when you recruit more than one new member, besides being entered in the Recruiter Rally, you'll receive credits to purchase items from the DAV Store and other possible awards! ■



Scan the code or visit
dav.org/membership-recruiter-rally





A legacy of integrity

31 years, countless contributions:
DAV honors Ed Hartman's service
and welcomes new inspector general

After 31 years of dedicated service, DAV Inspector General Ed Hartman announced his retirement, effective March 6.

Hartman, a service-disabled Army veteran, was appointed inspector general in 2009. In this role, he ensured compliance with the DAV Constitution and Bylaws and oversaw the solicitation and fundraising activities of DAV and its departments, chapters and subordinate affiliates.

"It has been an amazing honor to serve in multiple roles at DAV. Interacting with the people and watching the growth in our organization over these past 31 years has been incredibly rewarding," Hartman said. "I can't imagine a more fulfilling career journey after the Army."

An Indiana native, Hartman enlisted after graduating from high school and was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. During and after the Persian Gulf War, he served in operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Provide Comfort.

Hartman began his tenure with DAV as a service officer after military service. He graduated from the DAV National Service Officer Training Academy in 1995 through the University of Colorado Denver.

His first assignment was at the national service office in Washington, D.C., as a national service officer apprentice. A year later, he was promoted to national appeals officer at DAV's Board of Veterans' Appeals Office.

Hartman went on to serve as the assistant national service office supervisor in Washington, D.C., then worked in multiple capacities with the national Voluntary Services Department before his appointment as deputy inspector general in 2009. He is a life member of DAV Chapter 19 in Erlanger, Kentucky.

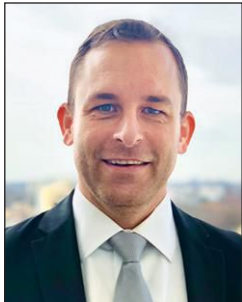
As Hartman steps down, DAV is proud to announce that Deputy Inspector General Ryan Burgos will be promoted to inspector general.

Burgos, a service-disabled Air Force and Army veteran of the Iraq War, was appointed deputy inspector general in 2024. He joined DAV's professional ranks as a national service officer apprentice in 2011 and is a life member of DAV Chapter 19 in Erlanger.

"Ed Hartman has been a model of integrity while providing valuable insight and a commitment to excellence," said National Adjutant Barry Jesinoski. "I am confident that as Ryan Burgos steps into this role, he will continue the drive for excellence and professionalism." ■



Burgos



Hunter

Deputy National Communications Director

■ **M. Todd Hunter** was appointed deputy national communications director at DAV Washington Headquarters, effective Feb. 2.

In this capacity, Hunter will support a variety of DAV's public relations and internal

communications programs, including strategic planning; media relations; and content creation, including press releases, op-eds, magazine articles, video updates, e-newsletters and podcasts.

Hunter's DAV career began in 2014 when he was appointed associate national communications director in Washington, D.C. He was subsequently appointed to assistant and deputy national communications director before briefly leaving the organization to direct public

affairs for another organization. He returned to DAV as an assistant in January 2025.

A native of Orlando, Florida, Hunter enlisted in the Marine Corps from 2005 to 2013. He served as a combat correspondent at American Forces Network Okinawa, Japan; American Forces Network Afghanistan; and Defense Media Activity Headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland.

Hunter holds numerous individual decorations and unit awards for combat service and humanitarian assistance. He has also earned more than 20 national awards for military broadcast journalism, including being named 2009 U.S. Department of Defense Broadcast Journalist of the Year and U.S. Marine Corps Broadcast Journalist of the Year on three separate occasions.

Hunter is a life member of DAV Chapter 10 in Fairfax, Virginia, and has earned a master's degree in strategic communication from American University and a bachelor's degree in communications from Thomas Edison State University. He resides in Herndon, Virginia, with his wife, Karen, and their three children.



Miller

Assistant National Legislative Director

■ **Kevin C. Miller** was appointed assistant national legislative director at DAV Washington Headquarters, effective Feb. 2.

In this capacity, Miller will use his experience to support efforts to advance a broad range of federal legislative goals and policies to

assist injured and ill veterans.

Miller began his DAV career in 2022 as an associate national communications director and was subsequently

promoted to assistant national communications director in May 2024, where he served until his current appointment.

A native of Fresno, California, Miller enlisted in the Marine Corps and served as an infantryman from 2002 to 2006. He deployed with the 1st Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team to Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Djibouti from 2003 to 2005. Later in 2005, he redeployed to Ramadi, Iraq, as a member of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

Miller, a life member and chapter commander of DAV Chapter 4 in Wheaton, Maryland, has earned a Master of Public Administration from San Francisco State University and a bachelor's degree from Cal Poly Humboldt. Miller and his wife, Libby, reside in Silver Spring, Maryland, with their two dogs.

REUNIONS

ARMY

173RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

June 16–22, Rapid City, SD, Contact: Kimberly Hubbard, Ph: 619-884-9571, Email: kimberly@essential-lodging.com, Web: skysoldier.net/rapidcityreunion

VIETNAM VETERANS LINE HAUL April 28–May 3, Pigeon Forge, TN, Contact: Hoss and Monica Taylor, Ph: 904-335-7402, Email: vietnam566th@yahoo.com

NAVY

NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION 12 (NMCB-12) June 23–26, Bath, ME, Contact:

Bob Williams, Ph: 207-844-8142, Email: mcb12vietnam@gmail.com

NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION 58 (NMCB-58) May 12–18, San Antonio, TX, Contact:

John Hughes, Ph: 571-332-5961, Web: nmcb58.org

USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (SSBN-602) May 14–17, Springfield, IL, Contact: Tom Ponko, Ph: 757-630-8775, Email: ponko_a2zinc@msn.com

USS ALBEMARLE (AV-5) May 2–6, Corpus Christi, TX, Contact: Steve Nye, Ph: 508-372-9024, Email: srn820@yahoo.com

USS LA SALLE (LPD-3/AGF-3) May 11–15, Buffalo, NY, Contact: Michael Batz, Ph: 314-805-9067, Email: lasalle@yahoo.com

USS YELLOWSTONE (AD-27) April 20–23, Savannah, GA, Contact: Karen A. Bowen, Ph: 352-208-5400, Email: usnad27@comcast.net

MARINES

MARINE CORPS MOTOR TRANSPORT

ASSOCIATION Sept. 20–24, Jacksonville, NC, Contact: George Hanlin, Ph: 301-514-1087, Email: secretary@usmcmmta.org, Web: usmcmmta.org

USMC WEATHER SERVICE (METOC) June 14–18, Binghamton, NY, Contact: Dave Englert, Ph: 812-630-2099, Email: englertd@psci.net, or Kathy Donham, Ph: 252-342-8459, Email: kathy.donham@hotmail.com

ALL SERVICES

VIETNAM HELICOPTER CREW MEMBERS

ASSOCIATION Aug. 12–16, Albuquerque, NM, Contact: Jim Sheridan, Ph: 901-850-0500, Email: vhcmaed@sprynet.com, Web: vhcma.org



Orlando to host 2026 DAV and Auxiliary National Convention

Aug. 1-4, 2026 | Rosen Shingle Creek

This year, DAV's annual national convention returns to sunny Orlando, Florida. Known for its attractions and entertainment, "The City Beautiful" ensures visitors of all ages have an experience they'll never forget.

The convention is an opportunity to advocate for ill and injured veterans, enjoy the camaraderie of fellow DAV members, and take ownership of the organization and its yearly agenda—while allowing for a hearty dose of fun in this premier vacation destination.

Orlando offers something for everyone: family-friendly attractions; world-class dining and entertainment; top-notch golf courses and other recreational activities; and, of course, beautiful weather.

After spending time working alongside fellow veterans to help shape DAV's future, an array of one-of-a-kind experiences awaits you. Convention-goers can experience the magic of Walt Disney World, the sights and sounds

of Universal Orlando, the wonders of the marine life at SeaWorld, the world-class shopping at Pointe Orlando or the breathtaking views atop the 400-foot Wheel at ICON Park, just to name a few. Florida's world-famous beaches and Kennedy Space Center are also only an hour away.

Attendees enjoy a special room rate at the Rosen Shingle Creek of \$149 per single or double. Additional hotel reservation information is available at dav.la/4rCWPOZ or by calling 866-996-6338. Be sure to tell them you are reserving under the Disabled American Veterans room block if making reservations by phone. ■



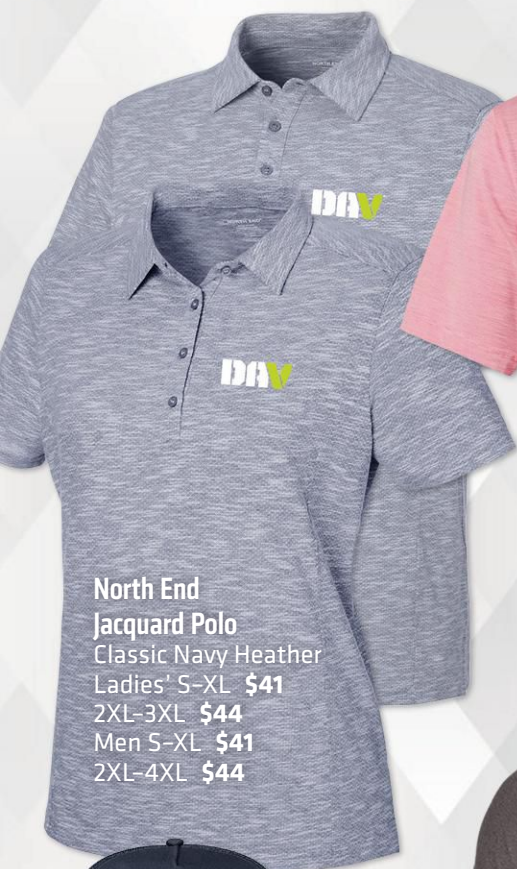
For more information and to make your hotel reservation in the DAV room block, scan the QR code or visit dav.org/events/2026-national-convention.

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



KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO
AMERICA'S VETERANS

GET SPRUCED UP FOR SPRING IN DAV APPAREL



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Jacquard Polo**
Classic Navy Heather
Ladies' S-XL \$41
2XL-3XL \$44
Men S-XL \$41
2XL-4XL \$44



**Paragon Striped
Heather Polo**
Red Heather
S-XL \$39
2XL-4XL \$43



**CornerStone®
Snag-Proof
Pocket Polo**
Black or Red
S-XL \$42
2XL-4XL \$46



**Pukka
Rudder Hat**
Navy | \$28



Richardson Low Pro Cap
Black/Charcoal | \$22



**Colosseum
Raglan Tee**
Pavement
S-3XL \$35



Long-Sleeve Polo
Olympic Blue or Grey
S-4XL \$39



Place your order at davstore.org

davstore.org | sales@dav.org | 877-426-2838, press 5 | 860 Dolwick Drive, Erlanger, KY 41018 | M-F, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. ET
Tax is only collected for orders shipped to FL, GA, IL, IN, KY, MD, MI, MN, NC, NJ, OH and VA. Call for shipping and tax rates on mail orders.