



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Northwest Chapter

Volume XLIII Issue 4

# NORTHWEST OUTPOST

April/May 2020

*Inside this issue:*

*President's Column* 3

*Executive Director's  
Column* 4

*PVA Advocacy/  
Legislation Seminar* 5

*Letter to Our  
Veterans* 6

*Hold the Line* 7-8

*Events Calendar* 16

*Birthdays* 18



*Acting NWPVA President Matthew Mickunas & Senator Patty Murray*



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## ***Our Mission***

*The Paralyzed Veterans of America, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1946, has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members-veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction.*

*PVA will use that expertise to be the leading advocate for:*

- *Quality health care for our members,*
- *Research and education addressing spinal cord injury and dysfunction,*
- *Benefits available as a result of our members' military service,*
- *Civil rights and opportunities which maximize the independence of our members.*

*To enable PVA to continue to honor this commitment, we must recruit and retain members who have the experience, energy, dedication, and passion necessary to manage the organization and ensure adequate resources to sustain the programs essential for PVA to achieve its mission.*

***The Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America (NWPVA) a member chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America accomplishes it's mission by coordinated efforts through programs that:***

- *Provide opportunities for health promotion, recreation, employment, sports and recreation, service and camaraderie for paralyzed veterans;*
- *Elevate society's information level about the attitudinal, physical and legal barriers that confront persons with disabilities in order to influence the removal of those barriers;*
- *Advocate for and monitor the delivery of high quality and appropriate health care benefits and service;*
- *Cooperate with and seek the support of other groups and individuals that share NWPVA's objective;*

### **NWPVA Officers**

Acting President-Matthew Mickunas  
Secretary-Weldon Lee  
Treasurer-Aaron Hastings  
National Director-Michael Partridge

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Russ Norris, Joe Sapienza,  
Terry Chenoweth, Robert Brush,  
Michael Partridge, Andrew Bechtle,  
Robert Clinton, Fred Margiotta,  
Thomas Bungert, & George Vermef

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Membership & Advocacy Director-  
Thomas Bungert,  
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Outpost Editor-Lisa Lawrence  
Legislative & Government Relations  
Director-Mike Partridge  
Seattle VA Hospital Liaison-  
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# Brave New World: Covid-19

Matthew Mickunas

## "An Extraordinary Time"



**T**his issue is almost old news about the current pandemic, COVID-19, that you need to know to be as safe as possible. But as I write this article Governor Inslee just closed all the schools in Washington State until

April 27, not just the Puget Sound Counties (King, Pierce, and Snohomish), and issued 2 other Executive Orders. Therefore, this subject is so fluid that some things change overnight that we included in this issue a list of websites that can provide you a holistic approach to emergency preparedness and resources to help get us through this national, global crisis.

NWPVA's Sports Director, Russ Norris, and I just completed competing with the Tacoma Titans for the National Wheelchair Team Basketball Championship in Wichita, Kansas. Our team members are already winners as KCPQ-TV featured us at a practice session in a segment before we left. Russ and my other teammates were interviewed and our Sports Director demonstrated the healing power of disabled recreational sports activities. He made us all proud of him and grateful for his demonstrated leadership. We finished in third place. Next year I hope the Chapter will help sponsor the Team and we win it all!

On a Thursday evening while still in Wichita I received an email requesting emergency assistance from the VA. I created a working team to investigate the request. On Friday the team forwarded to me VA's official request and I put the team in motion to facilitate an emergency board meeting to consider a donation of no more than \$15,000 to purchase 18 medically sealed televisions for Seattle VA's new Isolation Unit for COVID-19 patients. The Board of Directors immediately became engaged with discussions via telephone, text, and e-mail. Saturday the Directors and Officers started voting. Sunday the motion was passed and a check will be provided to the Seattle VA before noon on Monday.

Currently, all of our planned chapter activities have

been postponed until after Memorial Day. Chapter meetings will be held telephonically. Voting on motions will be made electronically. We will continue to find ways to support our members and the VA's SCI/D program.

We do not hope we will get through this pandemic unscathed, but we know we will be better for the experience and lessons learned. This pandemic in our great Northwest is considered as a major natural disaster on the scale of a major earthquake. We have been prepared for "The Big One" (earthquake) or a volcanic eruption for years and are now executing modified disaster plans. We are confident we will get through this TOGETHER, all of US, in our great country. This is the time we demonstrate we are a great people in the face of an unseen enemy that we will defeat. We are *UNSTOPPABLE* because we *NEVER GIVE UP*.

### April is PVA Awareness Month

In April, during PVA Awareness Month, Paralyzed Veterans of America will celebrate the strength and perseverance of its members—veterans living with spinal cord injury and disorders (SCI/D), as well as MS or ALS—by sharing their inspirational stories. The organization will also highlight its efforts to ensure that veterans with SCI/D, MS or ALS are able to live full and productive lives through its programs in research, accessible design, employment, and veterans' benefits.

"While Paralyzed Veterans of America celebrates the inspiring stories of our members every day, April is a time for us to really share these stories with the public to help build our community of support for veterans living with spinal cord injury or disorders," said David Zurfluh, a disabled Air Force veteran who serves as national president of Paralyzed Veterans of America. "The great thing about PVA Awareness Month is that you have 30 days to do something—get involved in one of our local Chapter events, learn more about our members, programs and services—and share these resources with veterans you know.

(Continued on page 4)

## Brent King Darkness and Eternal Light



**D**arkness descended upon Seattle slowly. We watched it coming from west to east in an area that would encompass all of us in the Great Northwest in opposition to the

global jet stream as fast as a passenger on a modern airliner, and slow as a large ocean cruise ship. A new virus was closing down the life we knew and it was going to be a long night. The darkness brought panic in synchopated time as we began to self-quarantine to help protect one another.

Deep into the blackness of this pandemic we could see an eternal light. It was not hope that fueled the light, but goodness. In a flash of time we all became equal and we could see the good in each other. Neighbors began to help neighbors in different neighborhoods. Strangers began to say hello as they passed each other and shared stories waiting in long lines. The panic was reduced to calculated anxiety reducing cortisol levels that lower the body's immune response to an attack.

Out of a late Thursday night came a cry for help. Our local VA was constructing an 18 bed quarantine isolation medical treatment unit, and needed help in funding TVs in every unit. Televisions are not essential medical treatment items necessary to fight

the virus, but vital to diminish an adverse psychological impact of loneliness to those fighting to stay alive.

Friday our Chapter leadership responded when we received the final estimate of the needed donation, \$15,000.00, and initiated an electronic (e-mail) emergency board meeting to approve the request. Each donated TV would be installed with a donation plaque in memory of our eternal members, our late leaders' who have lights that have always guided us.

By Saturday, following discussion, the votes started to be cast. By the end of the day there was a sufficient quorum and a majority of votes to approve. On Sunday final touches were made to enable a check to be delivered Monday morning for a unit that opened on Monday, March 16th.

By the beginning of April, and PVA Awareness month, the eternal light of our organization and the goodness that we strive to provide, will enable a lasting legacy to remember. The next time darkness tries to extinguish the eternal light, the goodness within us all will be remembered.

I also can clearly hear another eternal light through the lifting darkness, my late Mother's voice and her picture in my mind's eye when I was a child, reminding me to: WASH MY HANDS!

*(Continued from page 3)*

We encourage you to participate and be part of our community of support for these heroes."

Since the inception of its Research Foundation, PVA has invested nearly \$50 million in grants to help cure spinal cord injury and improve the lives of people living with SCI/D. The organization's employment program, PAVE (Paving Access for Veterans Employment), has helped more than 4,300 veterans, military spouses and caregivers find meaningful employment.

PVA also continues to assist veterans and their families obtain the benefits they've earned through their military service, securing over \$289 million in annual and retroactive benefits for our clients last year. Additionally, Paralyzed Veterans of America remains the only veterans' service organization with on-staff architects that provide free design assistance and develop building codes and standards for the entire nation to follow.

# NWPVA President Leads Delegation to 2020 PVA Advocacy/Legislation Seminar

By: Robert Clinton

**A**cting NWPVA President Mathew Mickunas lead a delegation of three, including himself, Robert “Bob” Clinton and Fred Margiotta to Washington, D.C. to attend the 2020 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar. The group met at Seattle airport on February 29 and caught their Alaska Airlines flight to D.C. Having arrived early to adjust to the time change, the group took advantage of the extra day to visit Arlington National Cemetery. Touring the cemetery is an emotional experience; so many of our country’s heroes laid to rest in such a beautiful place, our delegation felt humbled to be able to honor the dead and appreciate their sacrifice. This experience also reminded us of our ongoing responsibility to advocate for our living veterans through our work with PVA, promoting legislative efforts to improve the lives of our members and indeed all veterans.

The Seminar began first thing Monday with a breakfast buffet and a chance to meet fellow attendees from across the country. Then, it was time to get to work, delegates were welcomed by PVA President David Zurfluh, Executive Director Carl Blake, and Government Relations Director Heather Ansley. Over the next two days, delegates were fully briefed on PVA’s advocacy goals for 2020 through a series of presentations by members of PVA National staff, Department of Veteran’s Affairs, and other experts and consultants to prepare them for their meetings with members of Congress and their staff.

Briefly, PVA’s top three legislative priorities are:

- Protect Access to VA’s Specialized Services like SCI, MS and ALS;
- Improve Access to Adapted Automobiles by increasing the benefit to cover an additional grant every ten years; and
- Improve Access to Adaptive Housing by increasing the amount of the grant and allowing the VA to prioritize ALS veterans’ claims.

The top three advocacy priorities are:

- Improve access to air travel for people with disabilities. (anybody tried to use an airplane restroom lately?)
- Increase compliance with the ADA; and,
- Preserve and strengthen Social Security.

Well prepared for our meetings on Wednesday and Thursday our delegation headed out for our meetings with Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) staff, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) staff.

Members or staff of Suzanne DelBene (D-Bothell), Cathy McMorris Rogers (R- Eastern WA), Don Young (R-AK), Jamie Herra-Beutler (R-Southwest, WA), Kim Schrier (D-8<sup>th</sup>), Rick Larsen (D-2<sup>nd</sup>), Denny Heck (D-10<sup>th</sup>).

Our delegation was welcomed by everyone we met, and we were generally gratified by the level of understanding and support from those we met with, but of course, we must continue to monitor these issues to ensure our Congressional representatives follow through and work to resolve our issues.

Friday morning at 0300, the delegation met in the hotel lobby to catch their Alaska Airlines flight back home to Seattle. During the five-and-one half hour flight, the delegation experienced first-hand the need to improve disabled access in boarding, access to restrooms, and seating.

If you have any questions about these legislative/advocacy priorities, please contact, Matt, Bob, or Fred.

*Robert “Bob” Clinton in front of the U.S. Capitol*



# Letter to our Veterans

**V**alued Veterans and families:

We understand that our community's constantly evolving COVID-19 situation can be overwhelming, especially with all the information in the news. Please know VA Puget Sound Health Care System's #1 priority is the health and well-being of you, the Veterans entrusted to us for care, and our staff who make that care possible. We continue to provide operational updates on our website <https://www.pugetsound.va.gov/emergency/index.asp> and encourage you to subscribe to get these updates by email.

Here are some important related topics we want to make sure you keep in mind:

## **Stay on top of your health**

It is important to note that most cases of COVID-19 are mild and can be managed at home. If you are over 60, have underlying health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease or diabetes, have a weakened immune system or are pregnant, you are at higher risk. Be alert for any flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, body aches or shortness of breath. If you experience any of these symptoms, please DO NOT go to one of our care sites or to the emergency room unless you need emergent services, instead contact your primary care team for guidance.

If you have any questions about

symptoms you may be experiencing, an upcoming appointment, or want to convert a clinic appointment to a virtual one, call us at 1-800-329-8387 extension 71234, call your primary care team or use My HealtheVet to message your team.

## **COVID-19 Screening**

We are screening Veterans and visitors and expect to expand this to employees soon. Of those screened, we are testing those individuals with symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath who meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention criteria for evaluation. We understand this causing extra time to be factored in when arriving, and we hope this site-specific guidance will help in your planning:

### *Seattle Campus:*

- Patient/visitor entrances: Radiation Oncology, Women's Health, Building 100 main entrance, Building 101.
- South entrance closed to patients and visitors entering the building.
- Patient Shuttle is available from South Entrance (Building 1) to Main Entrance (Building 100) available every 5-10 minutes.
- Patients are being asked to park in the multi-level Veteran's parking garage.

### *American Lake (Lakewood) Campus:*

- Centralized, drive-thru screening during weekday began

March 13.

- By appointments only service during weekends.
- Audiology Clinic cancelled on Saturdays.

### *Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Community Resource & Referral Center:*

- No additional changes aside from general policies within this communication.

## **Clinic and Emergency Room Visits**

While it is still safe for patients to receive care across all our care sites if you have an upcoming appointment for a routine checkup, wellness visit, or other non-urgent care needs, we recommend you convert it to telehealth to reduce your chance of exposing yourself, or others unnecessarily. We are currently reaching out to patients to convert appointments to phone or video connect as appropriate. If you have not heard from us and want to reschedule or convert a clinic appointment to a virtual one, call us at 1-800-329-83887 extension 71234, call your primary care team or use My HealtheVet message to your team.

## **Postponement of elective and non-urgent surgeries and procedures**

From March 16 through April 15 (subject to change) we are cancelling elective surgeries in which a delay will not negatively impact a patient's outcome. Patients' whose elective surgeries are being impacted by this change will be contacted by the VA Puget

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

Sound Team. They will be re-scheduled as the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled. This action helps VA Puget Sound providers and facilities focus staff and resources on critical patient needs and COVID-19 efforts.

### **Patient Visitation**

As of Friday, March 13, all VA Puget Sound care sites suspended general visitation. Guests and Veterans without appointments or valid medical needs will be restricted at all VA Puget Sound Health Care System care sites until COVID-19 is no longer a threat to our community.

If you have been advised by your care team to come in to be seen or you need to be seen in the emergency department, please come in.

We recognize there are times when having a family member or visitor present is crucial, therefore exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. We also en-

courage family members and friends to use alternative ways to interact with their hospitalized loved ones, including phone calls, Facetime, Skype and other means.

### **Changes to Canteen & Support Services**

To better protect patients and staff, we've made some changes to our Veteran Canteen Service (food, retail and coffee stands) and support services such as gym access:

#### *Seattle Campus:*

- Veteran Canteen Services Patriot-Brew Coffee Shop closed on the weekends.
- Self-serve food options discontinued.

#### *American Lake (Lakewood) Campus:*

- Gym is closed to avoid Veterans being exposed to crowds.
- Veteran Canteen Services (food and retail) closed on weekends.

### **We are in this together**

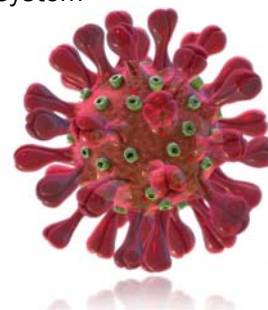
During this time of uncertainty, we

want to reassure you that we are doing everything we can to provide the best care possible, while ensuring the safety of our Veterans, staff and visitors. Our continued priority is to protect you, your loved ones and our care team, and hope you remain safe and well.

Please take precautions. Wash your hands regularly; stay at home and away from large groups of people; and cover your cough. We care about you and our community and want to keep everyone safe.

Thank you for your continued patience and understanding.

Michael Tadych, FACHE  
Director of VA Puget Sound Health Care System



## **Hold The Line!** By: An Infectious Disease Epidemiologist

**A**s an infectious disease epidemiologist, at this point I feel morally obligated to provide some information on what we are seeing from a transmission dynamic perspective and how they apply to the social distancing measures. Like any good scientist I have noticed two things that are either not articulated or not pre-

sent in the “literature” of social media. I have also relied on my much smarter infectious disease epidemiologist friends for peer review of this post; any edits are from peer review.

Specifically, I want to make two aspects of these measures very clear and unambiguous.

First, we are in the very infancy of this epidemic’s trajectory. That means even with these measures we will see cases and deaths continue to rise globally, nationally, and in our own communities in the coming weeks. This may lead some people to think that the social distancing measures are not working. They are. They may feel futile. They aren’t. You will feel

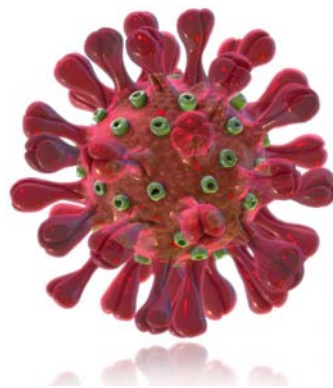
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discouraged. You should. This is normal in chaos. But this is normal epidemic trajectory. Stay calm. This enemy that we are facing is very good at what it does; we are not failing. We are not failing. We need everyone to hold the line as the epidemic inevitably gets worse. This is not my opinion; this is the unforgiving math of epidemics for which I and my colleagues have dedicated our lives to understanding with great nuance, and this disease is no exception. I want to help the community brace for this impact. Stay strong and with solidarity knowing with absolute certainty that what you are doing is saving lives, even as people begin getting sick and dying. You may feel like giving in. Don't.

Second, although social distancing measures have been (at least temporarily) well-received, there is an obvious-but-overlooked phenomenon when considering groups (i.e. families) in transmission dynamics. While social distancing decreases contact with members of society, it of course increases your contacts with group (i.e. family) members. This small and obvious fact has surprisingly profound implications on disease transmission dynamics. so far. Study after study demonstrates that even if there is only a little bit of connection between groups (i.e. social dinners, playdates/playgrounds, etc.), the epidemic isn't much different than if

there was no measure in place. The same underlying fundamentals of disease transmission apply, and the result is that the community is left with all of the social and economic disruption but very little public health benefit. You should perceive your entire family to function as a single individual unit; if one person puts themselves at risk, everyone in the unit is at risk. Seemingly small social chains get large and complex with alarming speed. If your son visits his girlfriend, and you later sneak over for coffee with a neighbor is



now connected to the infected office worker that your son's girlfriend's mother shook hands with. This sounds silly, it's not. This is not a joke or a hypothetical. We as epidemiologists see it borne out in the data time and time again and no one listens. Conversely, any break in that chain breaks disease transmission along that chain.

In contrast to hand-washing and other personal measures, social distancing measures are not about individuals, they are about societies working in unison. These measures also take a long time to

see the results. It is hard (even for me) to conceptualize how on a population level 'one quick little get together' can undermine the entire framework of a public health intervention, but it does. I promise you it does. I promise. I promise. I promise. You can't cheat it. People are already itching to cheat on the social distancing precautions just a "little"- a playdate, a haircut, or picking up a needless item at the store, etc. From a transmission dynamics standpoint, this very quickly recreates a highly connected social network that undermines all of the work the community has done so far.

Until we get a viable vaccine this unprecedented outbreak will not be overcome in one grand, sweeping gesture, rather only be the collection of individual choices our community makes in the coming months. This virus is unforgiving to unwise choices. My goal in writing this is to prevent communities from getting 'sucker-punched' by what the epidemiological community knows will happen in the coming weeks. It will be easy to be drawn to the idea that what we are doing isn't working and become paralyzed by fear, or to 'cheat' a little bit in the coming weeks. By knowing what to expect, and knowing the importance of maintaining these measures, my hope is to encourage continued community spirit, strategizing, and action to persevere in this time of uncertainty.



## Afraid of Getting sick? Don't fall for a Con

**I**t's not a matter of if the strand of coronavirus that causes disease COVID-19 will spread into North America, it's a matter of when, announced the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While this is bad news for most Americans and Canadians, it's great news for scammers who are cashing in on our anxiety about the disease. Look out for fake cures, phony prevention measures, and other coronavirus cons.

### How the Scam Works:

- You are worried about coronavirus and hear about preventions or a "cure" on social media, in an email, or a website. The message or website contains a lot of information about this amazing product, including convincing testimonials or a conspiracy theory backstory. For example, one scam email claims that the government has discovered a

vaccine but is keeping it a secret for "security reasons".

You figure it can't hurt to give the medicine a try, so you get out your credit card.

- Don't do it! Currently there are no U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved vaccines or drugs to prevent coronavirus, although treatments are in development. No approved vaccines, drugs, or products specifically for coronavirus can be purchased online or in stores.
- Peddling quack medicines isn't the only way scammers are trying to cash in on coronavirus fears. Con artists are impersonating the CDC and the World Health Organization in phishing emails. These messages claim to have news about the disease and prompt readers to download malicious software. Another scam email tries to con people into donating to a fake fundraising effort, claiming to be a government program to develop a coronavirus vaccine.

### How to Spot a Coronavirus Con:

- Don't panic. Do your research: Be skeptical of alarmist and conspiracy theory claims and don't rush into buying anything that seems too good-or crazy-to be true. Always double check information you see online with official news sources.
- Be wary of personal testimonials and "miracle" product claims. Be suspicious of products that claim to immediately cure a wide range of diseases. Also, testimonials are easy to make up and are not a substitute for scientific evidence.
- It's "all natural". Just because it's natural does not mean it's good for you. All natural does not mean the same thing as safe.
- Check with your doctor: If you're tempted to buy an unproven product or one with questionable claims, check with your doctor or other health care professional first.

## Online Face Masks

**A**s the coronavirus outbreak worsens, BBB.org/Scam Tracker has received numerous reports about scam websites claiming to sell face masks online. As you strive to keep yourself and loved ones healthy, be sure to watch out for

phony ecommerce sites and other scams. Even better, save masks for the medical professionals who really need them, says Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### How the Scam Works:

- You want to buy a face mask to help protect yourself-or family-from coronavirus. Masks are sold out in your local stores and many major online sellers. So instead, you turn to purchasing masks from an online shop you don't know.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

- Unfortunately, phony online stores abound-especially when an item is in high demand. According to Scam Tracker reports, these phony sellers take victims' money and never deliver anything at all. One person reported ordering nearly \$200 in masks and received no product or response from the seller: "I checked back a few times over the past week to see if there was updated information of a shipping date, but never got more information than 'the order was being processed.' These sites use tricks like limited time deals to entice you into ordering more.
- In the worst cases, these sites are actually a way to steal your personal and credit card

information, opening you up to identity theft.

#### How to Avoid Coronavirus Scams:

- *Be savvy about product claims.* While wearing a face mask may seem like an easy way to stop coronavirus from spreading, the CDC does not actually recommend it for the general public. Be sure to evaluate claims of any medical product before buying. Especially watch out for products claiming to offer a "miracle cure" for a range of ailments.
- *Only buy from reputable stores and websites.* The best way to avoid getting scammed is to buy directly from a seller you know and trust. Check BBB.org to see what consumers' experiences have been

- *Be sure the online store has working contact info.* If a company seems legitimate but you aren't familiar with it, be extra careful with your personal information. Before offering up your name, address, and credit card information, make sure the company is legitimate. A real street address, a working customer service number, a positive BBB Business Profile...these are just a few of the things to be looking out for to determine if a company is legitimate.
- *As the disease spreads, be wary of other coronavirus cons.* Look out for fake cures, phony prevention measures, and other scams.

## New Volunteer Coordinator Appointed

**P**VA Northwest Chapter acting President Mathew Mickunas has appointed Board Member Robert "Bob" Clinton as chapter Volunteer Coordinator. Starting immediately, Bob will take over responsibility for identifying chapter volunteers, officially registering new volunteers, and accounting for their time and mileage. In the past may of these tasks were accomplished by our hard working Office Manager Lisa

Lawrence, but given Lisa's work load, Matt decided to reactivate the position of Volunteer Coordinator in an effort to breath new life into the volunteer program, and make Lisa's work life a little easier.

Going forward Northwest Chapter volunteers can expect to receive a phone call from Bob reminding them that their volunteer hours and mileage are due to him by the fifth of the month following the month in which the hours were

completed. A volunteer hour is an hour of an individual's time during which he or she represented their chapter. Bob will then report the hours to National by the 15th of the month.

Bob's new email address for volunteer hours and questions is bclinton.va@gmail.com. You can also contact Bob at 202-255-7891

# COVID-19

**I**nformation on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) is everywhere and constant in King County Washington. Here's what you should know and do to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy.

## Know the symptoms

The virus causes respiratory illness in humans, usually 2-14 days after exposure. Illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe, including fever, cough, and shortness of breath. The virus is thought to spread mainly from close contact with an affected person. It spreads in the air, like flu, and through droplets from sneezes and coughs. The droplets can stay suspended in the air and can land on surfaces that are touched by others.

## Understand your risks

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers COVID-19 to be a serious public health threat, but individual risk is dependent upon exposure. For the general American public—those who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time—the immediate health risk is low.

## Keep an eye on coronavirus,

## but remember the flu

Symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath also happen to be symptoms of the common cold and flu. This year, at least 29 million flu cases have been reported with 280,000 hospitalizations and 16,000 deaths from flu. Flu activity most commonly peaks between December and February and can last until May.

What's important to remember is that anyone can get the flu. But you are more likely to become infected if you:

- Have a weakened immune system
- Have frequent, close contact with young children
- Work in a health care setting where you may be exposed to flu germs
- Live or work with someone who has the flu
- Haven't received an annual flu shot

## Take precautions to guard against Infection

- Get a flu shot
- Keep your hands clean by washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes,

nose, and mouth

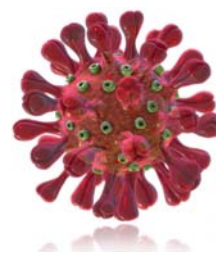
- Avoid people who are sick
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with tissues or your arm/sleeve. Dispose of tissues in the trash
- Keep surfaces clean using disinfecting wipes
- Check the CDC advisories prior to planning travel

## Stay home and phone

If you have symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath, please call your local VA medical center and select the option to speak to a nurse before visiting a facility. Tell them about your symptoms and any recent travel.

In addition to calling first, consider using VA's telehealth and virtual care options. VA's telehealth providers can evaluate your symptoms and provide a diagnosis and comprehensive care, so you do not have to leave your home or office.

Get VA's latest updates on the new coronavirus site:  
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/index.asp>



## Social Security Offices Will Only Offer Phone Service \*Online Services Remain Available\*

All local Social Security offices will be closed to the public for in-person service as of Tuesday, March 17, 2020. This decision protects the population we serve—older Americans and people with underlying medical conditions—and our employees during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, we are still able to provide critical services.

Our secure and convenient online services remain available at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). Local offices will also continue to provide critical services over the phone. We are working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local governments, and other experts to monitor COVID-19 and will let you know as soon as we can resume in-person service.

### If you need help from Social Security:

- First, please use our secure and convenient online ser-

vices available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/onlineservices). You can apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits online, check the status of an application or appeal, request a replacement Social Security card (in most areas), print a benefit verification letter, and much more—from anywhere and from any of your devices. We also have a wealth of information to answer most of your Social Security questions online, without having to speak with a Social Security representative in person or by phone. Please visit our online Frequently Asked Questions at:

- [www.socialsecurity.gov/ask](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ask).
- If you cannot conduct your Social Security business online, please check our online field locator for specific information about how to directly contact your local office. Your local office still will be able to provide critical services to help you apply for benefits, answer your questions, and provide other ser-

vices over the phone.

- If you already have an in-office appointment scheduled, we will call you to handle your appointment over the phone instead. If you have a hearing scheduled, we will call you to discuss alternatives for continuing with your hearing, including offering a telephonic hearing. Our call may come from a PRIVATE number and not from a U.S. Government phone. Please remember that our employees will not threaten you or ask for any form of payment
- If you cannot complete your Social Security business online, please call our National 800 Number at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1800-325-0778). Our National 800 Number has many automated service options you can use without waiting to speak with a telephone representative. A list of automated telephone services is available online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/contact/phone.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/contact/phone.html).

## Restriction on Visitors to SCI Unit

Due to the Corona virus concerns, VHA is requiring us to take actions to reduce the possibility that SCI inpatients may be exposed to Corona virus. We will need to restrict visitors to

our unit (and to the non-SCI rehab unit and the Community Living Center). In general, access will be limited to families/friends of patients receiving hospice/end-of-life care, critically ill, or for family/other caregivers who need to come in to receive training need-

ed prior to patient discharge. I have also proposed that patients with new SCI can be visited by family members or friends for the first week of their hospitalization at VA Puget Sound. If FHA modifies the restrictions that are need-

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 121)

ed for hospital populations at increased risk from Corona virus (including Veterans with SCI and residents of the CLC), we will consider modification. Likely we will set up a single entry point to SCI/CLC/1-E Rehab to control entry of visitors. This is all new and it's being done at the direction of the Chief of Staff and emergency management committee, in response to interim guidance from VACO.

We will also be modifying recreation therapy outings, likely to limit them to activities that won't involve close contact with others besides our staff.

Unfortunately, the monthly pizza parties that PVA has been providing will likely need to be discontinued. We are being encouraged to use "social distancing" to reduce the chance of transmission on the unit, so we should avoid convening large groups of patients and having non-patients come onto the unit.

We can continue to have monthly meetings with the PVA chapter representatives in our conference room if you wish to attend in person. It's likely there will be a temporary (all of this is temporary) restriction on volunteers coming onto the inpatient unit, which would restrict face-to-face contact between patients and the CHL.

We are being encouraged to convert outpatients appointments to telehealth or other virtual care when appropriate. Patients with respiratory infections or febers but aren't sick enough to require a medical evaluation will be screened for at the facility entrance points and not allowed to enter. We will also be postponing elective admissions. Patients who are positive for infection will be treated in a separate part of the hospital. We will also be monitoring staff for symptoms of infection and not allowing staff with suspected infection to work on-site.

Stephen Burns, MD  
Spinal Cord Injury Service Director  
VA Puget Sound Health Care System.

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Dear Members,

The Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America's Chapter BOD/Membership meeting will be held on the Zoom Service computer webinar on April 15th @ 12:00 Noon. Please ensure you sign in at least 10 minutes prior to ensure proper video/audio settings. If you are unable to attend via computer, there is a call in option below.

If you have motions to introduce, please send them to me in a sentence format so that I can copy and paste in the webinar procedure.

Topic: Northwest PVA Board/Membership Meeting  
Time: April 15, 2020 12:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)  
Zoom Meeting ID: 927 236 4376

Go to <https://zome.us/j/9272364376>

Dial in from phone: 253 215 8782 (If you get a busy signal, please keep calling till connected).  
Meeting ID: 927 236 4376  
May Meeting To Be Determined, please check on [nwpva.org](http://nwpva.org)



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Northwest Chapter



### **Tacoma Titans Wheelchair Basketball**

Community members, veterans, and wounded warriors comprise the local wheelchair basketball club known as the Tacoma Titans.

With both competitive and developmental teams an athlete can find great success in this popular team sport.

The Tacoma Titans practice and play year-round. During the season teams travel locally participating in games and tournaments within the National Wheelchair Basketball Association and the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball League. Then during the off-season players have the opportunity to cross train and participate in outdoor 3 on 3 style tournaments like Hoopfest in Spokane (June).

The program is also a Paralympic Sport Club and offers unique competitive and recreational opportunities.

**Contact us to get involved!**  
(253) 404-3955  
adaptive@tacomaparks.com



# Rewards of Getting Involved With the Chapter and Volunteering

By: Matt Mickunas

**G**reetings Lifetime Alumni Northwest PVA Members and your Families. This past year & New Year Northwest PVA has been busy, and we've had strong advocacy along the way. Last year NWPVA was present at National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Winter Sports Clinic, Salmon for Soldiers, hunting in Eastern Washington, outreach to Veterans Homes, sponsoring the Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall, attending Korean War ceremonies, and participating in adaptive curling & fencing. We've all met new friends and compete to uphold our physical and mental wellness. This year the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) were to be held in Portland 3-8 July and we expected a full team from Northwest PVA's region that covers Washington, Alaska, and Montana. The NVWG's have been cancelled this year due to the CORON-19 virus. We hope to send our team to the games next year in New York. Look for the Game's Homepage and events dates and times at [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org) under the Programs Tab/National Events.

Northwest PVA is aspiring new membership and calling out to our members at large within our region to volunteer through your Northwest PVA Chapter. Let us know your interest and how you want to help your country and be an advocate in sports, accessibility, education, employment, and Veteran issues. If you enjoy writing

and want to give us your updated advocacy, please feel free to submit an article to the NWPVA's newsletter with pictures included. If you're in the local area, please join us at the Northwest Chapter office in Burien to attend a Membership Meeting, they are the third Thursday of every month (except July, Aug. & Dec) from 1-3 pm, or you can also join the Membership Meeting via Zoom. There you will hear the latest news and resources, and then you can follow your passion and advocate our issues at the local, city, county, and state levels.

Please join us at the Seattle SCI dayroom for our monthly homemade style pizza party; its normally every third Thursday at 5:00 pm. (cancelled until further notice due to COVID-19). At the pizza party there's plenty of time to catch up with old friends and some of the staff that took care of you while you were a patient on the unit. Feel free to reach out to your Chapter by going to [www.nwpva.org](http://www.nwpva.org), there you'll find our information to call, message, or write us. Please let us know what your chapter can do for you, or what you need from your chapter.

Retiring after 24 years in the Army, I started volunteering at the State Veteran's Home in Orting, Washington, and for the last 10 years it truly made me a passionate advocate and peer mentor. I'm so honored to be able to volunteer at the Veterans Home. It

leaves me humbled just to be associated with the Veteran residents living there. I advocate for and joined the adaptive sports community as a member of the Tacoma Titans wheelchair basketball team. The Titans are a co-ed adaptive recreational sports team that is truly passionate. We push each other physically and mentally to compete. This is a living example how a SCI/D disability can be rewarding. Another advocate roll I partake in is Washington's Veterans Affairs Advisory Council (VAAC). The VAAC operates with the motto of "No Veteran Forgotten". I volunteer as a member of an appointed 13-member advisory committee for a term of four years to the Director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), and the Washington Governor's Office. The VAAC holds Town Hall meetings in counties throughout the State of Washington. This provides a forum for Veterans and their families to learn about the services and resources available in their own communities. These meetings in turn allow the VAAC committee to know the issues that are important to our Veterans & their families across the state and provide advice to the WDVA Director and Governor.

When we get through this pandemic, please consider getting involved with the Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America.

# April



12th Easter

22nd Administrative Professionals  
(Lisa's) Day

# May

5th Cinco De Mayo

10th Mother's Day

16th Armed Forces Day

25th Memorial Day

## Lets Talk About the WALL, the East Wall, That is, in the Chapter Office.

Lets talk about it:

On top is a picture of John "Jack" Michaels.

Jack was the founder of the chapter, along with Jack Martin and Jerry Lindsey.

On each side of the **wall**, is a hand made quilt with t-shirt insignias from the various cites that the National Veterans Wheelchair Games were held. One hand made quilt was made and donated to the chapter by Jenny Moller. Jenny was a constant companion of Jerry Lindsey. The other quilt was hand made and donated to the chapter by Ruth Rabdau, who worked at Kersey Mobility.

In the center, on the bottom of the **wall**, are the engraved names on the plaques commemorating the recipients of the Speedy Awards, the Presidents Award and the Annual Volunteer Award.

The **wall** contains the history of the chapter. Its interesting to stop and read the names on the plaques. I invite you all to read those names. If you have a question, I'll be more than happy to try and answer it.



## NWPVA Medical Equipment Distribution Program Ends

**E**ffective **immediately**, the NWPVA will no longer receive or distribute hospital/medical equipment and supplies. To those individuals and companies who have donated equipment and/or supplies in the past, we thank you for your wonderful giving spirit. Know that, you have been a godsend to those recipients of your donations.



- ARE YOU LOOKING TO GET MORE ACTIVE?
- WOULD YOU LIKE TO HANG OUT WITH OTHERS WHO HAVE THE SAME INTERESTS AS YOURSELF?
- DO YOU HAVE AN INTEREST IN GIVING BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

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(253) 297-5389  
[www.seattleadaptivesports.org](http://www.seattleadaptivesports.org)  
[info@seattleadaptivesports.org](mailto:info@seattleadaptivesports.org)

## 2020 National Veterans Wheelchair Games- Portland-Cancelled

**D**ue to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has canceled the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, scheduled for July 3-8 in Portland, Oregon.

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

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

We wish each of you the very best over the next year, and we look forward to seeing you next year in New York. Please take care of yourself and your families.

For questions or concerns, please contact Dave Tostenrude (206) 445-3519 or Jen Purser (804) 398-0446

# Happy Birthday!

## April

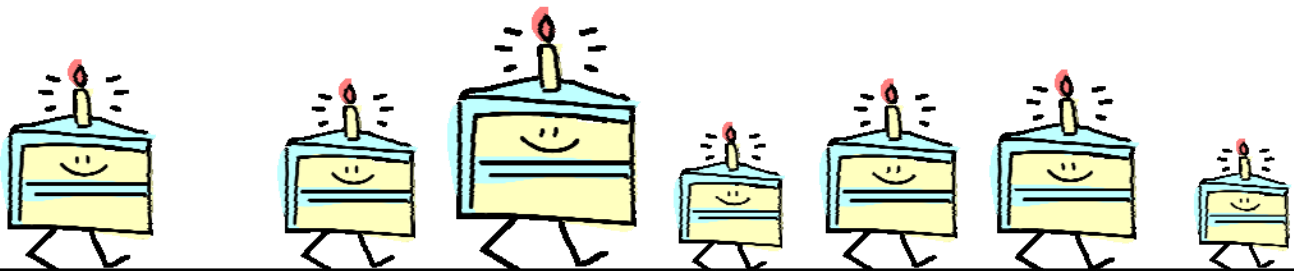
Steven Johnson.....3rd  
 Sharon Stepp.....4th  
 Wallace Carlson.....5th  
 Ronald Zumwalt.....7th  
 Douglas Keil.....7th  
 William English.....7th  
 Jay Mills.....7th  
 Francis Entrup.....8th  
 John Woods.....8th  
 Joseph Barnes.....9th  
 Steven Hathon.....9th  
 William Prante.....10th  
 William Travis.....11th  
 Casey Pooler.....11th  
 Michael Belfield...12th  
 Lonnie Williams...12th  
 Steven Stiens.....14th  
 D. Struchen.....14th

R. Hendrickson.....15th  
 Lynn Peterson.....15th  
 Daniel Underwood..15th  
 William Goss.....16th  
 Clayton Thomburg...16th  
 Daniel Crim.....16th  
 Francis Rawson.....17th  
 Robert Brush.....17th  
 Jennifer Roney.....17th  
 Jeffery Sparks.....20th  
 David Frymire.....22nd  
 Robert Russell.....22nd  
 Richard Dube.....23rd  
 Michael Green.....26th  
 Mark Zemeck.....26th  
 David Meek.....27th  
 Jeanette Moen.....30th

## May

Charles Spencer.....1st  
 Brad Shepherd, Jr. 1st  
 Richard Edlund.....2nd  
 Mark Hale.....3rd  
 Timothy Weber.....3rd  
 Toai Nolan.....3rd  
 Anthony King.....4th  
 Gregory Heimann.....5th  
 Jeremy Daniels.....5th  
 Alex Schied.....6th  
 Matthew West.....7th  
 Anthony Hadlett.....8th  
 Mark Crim.....8th  
 Robert Cockrell.....11th  
 Kenneth Smith.....13th  
 Thomas Knoppi.....15th  
 Stephen Alonge.....15th  
 Michael Merrill.....15th  
 Jerome Mischel.....16th  
 Robert Rupp.....16th

Brandon Powell.....16th  
 William McIntyre.....17th  
 Carl Casey.....18th  
 Mike O'Neill.....18th  
 Steven Tucker.....18th  
 Suzan Carpenter.....18th  
 Mary Degg.....19th  
 Stephen Pratt.....19th  
 Robert Pressley.....21st  
 Bradley Skramstad.21st  
 Jeanne Farrell.....23rd  
 David Zurfluh.....23rd  
 L. Mallebranche.....24th  
 Theodore Fossos....25th  
 Douglas Harsh.....25th  
 John Miller.....28th  
 Kelly Arneson.....29th  
 Joseph Borsky.....30th  
 Bryan Dormon.....30th  
 Clyde Lentz.....31st



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Considering a new car, throwing in the towel on an old motorcycle that won't run or looking to get rid of an ATV? In all situations, Paralyzed Veterans of America's Wheels Helping Warriors Vehicle Donation program is a perfect outlet for your generosity. It's easy to donate. Be sure your title is on hand, fill out the online form at <https://pva.carsmarketing.org/HOME.html> or call 877-900-8387 (877-900-VETS). We will schedule the pickup free of charge and donors receive a tax deduction for the donation.



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