

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



North Central Chapter

## North Central Chapter

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



Volume 362

December 2022/January 2023

### Upcoming Events

December 2022/January 2023

Dec 8 . . . Annual Christmas Luncheon, Chapter Office, 11:30 AM - 1 PM

Dec 17 . . . Wreath Laying Ceremony SD Veterans Cemetery, Sioux Falls, 11:00 AM

Dec 22 . . . SF Veterans Council Meeting, Alliance Building, 7:00 PM

Dec 23 . . . Office Closed

Dec 25 . . . Merry Christmas!

Dec 26 . . . Office Closed

Dec 30 . . . Office Closed

Jan 1 . . . Happy New Year!

Jan 2 . . . Office Closed

Jan 11 . . . SD Veterans Council Meeting, American Legion, Pierre, 9 AM - Noon

Jan 12 . . . Membership Meeting, Chapter Office, Noon Luncheon and 1:00 PM Meeting

Jan 16 . . . Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Office Closed

Jan 19 . . . SF Veterans Council Meeting, Alliance Building, 7:00 PM



### Annual Christmas Luncheon

PVA North Central Chapter cordially invites you to attend our

ANNUAL

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Thursday, December 8, 2022

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

at the Chapter Office

209 North Garfield Ave, Sioux Falls

A Christmas luncheon, hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served along with door prizes to be given away.

Please call in your reservations by Monday, Dec. 5th, to 605-336-0494.

### CFC Campaign

If you are a federal government employee or your employer offers a charitable giving campaign through United Way, you can help us to continue our programs and services we offer to our members, veterans and other individuals with disabilities.

**CONTRIBUTION CODE: 54682**



Paralyzed Veterans of America

North Central Chapter



Merry CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY New Year

From all of at PVA North Central Chapter, we wish you and your families a joyous holiday season!

### SD State Veterans Cemetery

#### Endowment Fund

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

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

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

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

If you would like to contribute to the Endowment Fund, please click on the following link:

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

In observance of  
**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**  
**Monday, January 16, 2023,**  
the Chapter Office  
will be closed.

## **PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**

**North Central Chapter  
Paralyzed Veterans of America**

### **OFFICERS**

President, Chuck Doom  
Vice President, Harlan Schmidt  
Secretary, Greg Brandner  
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Duane Biesboer  
Perry Grimme Rodney Melcher

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Michael Olson

### **NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER**

Brad Friez

VA Dakota Regional Office  
2501 West 22nd Street, Room 100  
Sioux Falls, SD 57105

605-333-6801

800-795-3632

### **OFFICE STAFF**

Lisa Cummings, Executive Director  
Terry Paulsen, Government Relations Director  
Barbara Priesz, Administrative Assistant  
*Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 8 - 4*

### **Sioux Falls VA Health Care SCI Coordinator**

Melissa Suter, Social Worker  
605-336-3230 ext. 7898

### **Fargo VA Health Care SCI Coordinator**

Tracy Lamont, SCI Coordinator  
701-239-3765

### **Black Hills VA Health Care SCI Coordinator**

Amber Jones, SCI Coordinator  
605-347-2511 ext. 17003

### **— Attention Members —**

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



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

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

## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

### Membership-Duane Biesboer

The Chapter currently has a total of 159 members and 78 Associate Members.

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

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

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

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

### Volunteer Program-Charles Doom

The Chapter had 310 hours for the month of October. Casey Davidson and Mike Olson were October/November 2022 Volunteers of the Month. Remember to look for your volunteer number in the newsletter and win a \$25 Gift Card! If you see your number, call the Chapter Office!



### **“Friends Aiming High”**

**by John Green**

Framed and Matted - \$275

Print Only - \$75

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



### Wreaths across America

Our Mission: **REMEMBER** the fallen, **HONOR** the brave, **TEACH** the youth

Dear PVA North Central Chapter,

SD Veterans Cemetery Wreaths across America will be hosting our 2nd annual National Wreaths Across America Day in conjunction with over 3,400 other locations nationwide. Last year, we have had sponsorships to cover every Veterans grave and many volunteers to come out and honor them by placing these wreaths. We were astonished at the tremendous response the community gave and are expecting an even larger turnout now that more and more of the community is aware of our project and more Veterans have been laid to rest at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery.

We invite you to join us for a brief but meaningful ceremony on **Saturday, December 17, 2022, at 11:00 AM at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery.** We will place the seven memory wreaths in honor of the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and POW-MIA. After placing these wreaths, a few words will be said about what Wreaths across America Day is all about. At the conclusion of the ceremony, those in attendance will be given the opportunity to walk the cemetery and place wreaths.

Saying Their Names,

Aaron Van Beek, SDVC WAA Director

[www.midwesthonorflight.org/wreaths](http://www.midwesthonorflight.org/wreaths)



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## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

### With Telehealth, Veterans can Access Care when and Where they Need it

Last year, more than 2.3 million Veterans used VA telehealth to access VA care. VA is leading way, allowing Veterans to access care when and where they need it. This also makes it easier for Veterans to connect with their VA care team from home, a VA facility or wherever they are.

Here are four ways that Veterans can use telehealth as part of their VA care plan.

#### PRIMARY CARE

Some routine appointments with a primary care provider can often be conducted virtually. Video telehealth visits enable the VA provider to see the Veteran just as if they were in an exam room. Veterans can even receive physicals and screenings for conditions such as high blood pressure, obesity and depression

With the [VA Video Connect](#) app, Veterans meet with VA providers through secure videoconferencing using a smartphone, tablet or computer with an internet connection. Veterans can also invite family members or caregivers to join their VA video appointments, even if they live in a different location.

Connecting face-to-face over video - even when miles apart - can help Veterans be more engaged in their treatment plans. And it helps VA providers know when Veterans need more support.

Veterans can also use [My Health Vet](#), VA's online patient portal, to exchange secure messages with their provider. And they can access their test results through the portal's Blue Button feature.

#### INSTANT CARE FOR NON-URGENT NEEDS

[VA Health Chat](#), VA's instant messaging app, gives Veterans quick access to care for nonurgent health concerns. [VA Health Chat](#) is available in select locations around the country.

The app provides Veterans with a secure channel to chat with VA staff through text or video. Veterans can receive answers from VA staff in minutes for non-urgent needs. This can include medical advice for a minor injury or questions about prescriptions.

Veterans can also use [VA Health Chat](#) to schedule VA appointments, refill VA prescriptions and more.

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#### MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Veterans can use telehealth technologies and other VA virtual tools to support their mental health.

More than 98% of VA mental health providers have conducted at least one video visit with a Veteran. This means it is likely that you can access some part of your mental health care through telehealth.

VA mental health providers also use telehealth technologies to screen and treat Veterans for anxiety, depression, PTSD and more.

VA offers many apps to help Veterans improve their mental health and well-being. These free and secure tools and resources can reach Veterans who may be unable or hesitant to get treatment. Some VA apps that promote Veterans' mental health include the [Annie App for Veterans](#), [PTSD Coach](#), and [Mindfulness Coach](#).

#### ACCESS CARE CLOSER TO HOME

VA's ATLAS pilot program expands access to VA care for Veterans in rural areas.

ATLAS (Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations) provides Veterans with comfortable, private spaces in convenient locations in their communities to connect with VA providers through VA Video Connect, ATLAS sites remove barriers for Veterans, such as long travel times to facilities or limited internet connectivity at home

Veterans can access clinical services that do not require hands-on exams through a video visit at the ATLAS site. These services vary by location and can include primary care, mental health and other specialty services.

An on-site attendant is available to assist with technology support. To learn more about ATLAS pilot program and find sites nationwide, visit the ATLAS webpage.

#### ASK YOUR PROVIDER WHETHER TELEHEALTH IS A GOOD FIT

Veterans should consult their VA provider to see whether telehealth is a good fit for their health care needs. Some programs might not be available in all locations. To learn about your telehealth options, visit the VA Telehealth Services website.

## **PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**

### **VA Announces Funding Opportunities to Help Veterans Experiencing Homelessness**

**WASHINGTON** — 10-27-2022. As a part of ongoing efforts to end Veteran homelessness, the Department of Veterans Affairs published three grant opportunities for Fiscal Year 2024 that will help Veterans who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The first grant opportunity is for VA's [Supportive Services for Veteran Families program](#), which provides supportive services to rapidly rehouse Veterans and their families, prevent the imminent loss of a Veteran's home, or identify new, more suitable housing situations for Veterans and their families. VA anticipates awarding funding to eligible organizations located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and Virgin Islands.

The two other grant opportunities are for VA's [Grant and Per Diem program](#), which provides Veterans-in-need with transitional housing beds and case management—connecting them to VA benefits, community-based services and permanent housing. VA anticipates awarding nearly 390 total grants through this program, which will provide beds for approximately 11,000 Veterans nationwide.

“These grants will provide critical resources to help Veterans and their families climb out of homelessness or prevent them from falling into homelessness in the first place,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “Every Veteran deserves a good, stable, safe home in this country they fought to defend — and these grants are a key part of making that goal a reality.”

More information about each of these opportunities is as follows:

#### **Supportive Services for Veteran Families Grants**

The first grant opportunity is through VA's SSVF program and will support both new and renewal grant awards to community-based nonprofit agencies and consumer collaboratives. The grant money will fund operations for fiscal year 2024, beginning Oct 1, 2023. In addition to providing services to prevent Veterans from becoming homeless or to rapidly rehouse Veterans who are currently homeless, these funds also pro-

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vide additional authorities and flexibilities to assist Veterans in remaining in and obtaining permanent housing.

SSVF grant applications must be received by the SSVF Program Office by 4 p.m. ET, February 10, 2023.

View the SSVF Notice of Funding availability, learn more about SSVE or email [SSVF@va.gov](mailto:SSVF@va.gov).

#### **Grant and Per Diem Grants**

The second and third grant opportunities are available through VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem program and will support two kinds of grants for FY24:

- 1) Per Diem Only grants will fund transitional supportive housing beds or service centers, and
- 2) Transition in Place grants will provide Veterans with apartment-style housing that allows Veterans to remain in their homes when they complete the GPD program. VA anticipates awarding 350 Per Diem Only grants to support approximately 10,500 transitional housing beds and 15 service centers nationwide. The department also anticipates awarding approximately 40 Transition in Place grants to support 600 TIP beds nationwide.

PDO grant applications must be received by 4 PM, ET, February 6, 2023, and TIP grant applications must be received by the GPD program office by 4 PM, ET, January 30, 2023.

In this calendar year, VA has already placed nearly 31,000 homeless Veterans into permanent housing - putting VA on track to meet and even exceed its goal of 38,000 permanent housing placements for homeless Veterans in 2022.

#### **Sioux Falls Vet Center**

The Sioux Falls Vet Center has a new address:

5020 South Broadband Lane, Suite 100

Sioux Falls, SD 57108

Telephone: (605) 330-4552

## **PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, SPORTS & REC**



### **27<sup>th</sup> Annual Platte Pheasant Hunt**

The Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter disabled hunters attended the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Pheasant Hunt in Platte, SD on 03-05 November 2022. Twenty-one (21) Hunters participated in the two-day hunt. The hunters were welcomed Thursday night at the Legion Post 115 with the Ladies auxiliary providing a social and supper meal. Friday consisted of breakfast at the Community Center and a great day of hunting. The Local community hosted the annual auction and supper at the community center on Friday night. Saturday consisted of breakfast at the community center and another great day of Pheasant hunting.

The Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter would like to thank the entire Platte Community for another wonderful pheasant hunt. The PVA hunters want to express their sincere appreciation to the Platte Community, American Legion Post 115, Ladies Auxiliary, Volunteers, and Landowners who helped make the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual PVA Pheasant Hunt a huge success.



## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, FUNDRAISING



We're proud to be a Thrivent Choice®-enrolled organization. Through the Thrivent programs, we are eligible to receive grant dollars, fee-free donations, and support from Thrivent Action Team service projects.

To learn more about Thrivent's membership benefits and generosity programs visit [thrivent.com/generosity](http://thrivent.com/generosity)

### Qualified Charitable Distributions



The Pension Protection Act of 2006 first allowed taxpayers age 70½ or older to make tax-free charitable donations directly from their IRAs. Technically, these taxpayers were allowed to exclude from gross income otherwise taxable distributions from their IRA ("qualified charitable distributions," or QCDs), up to \$100,000, that were paid directly to a qualified charity.

These gifts are also known as "Charitable IRA rollovers." The law was originally scheduled to expire in 2007, but was extended periodically through 2014 by subsequent legislation, and finally made permanent by the Protect Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015.

### **Newsletter Booster Program Thank you for your support!**

Ronald and Darla Shelburg  
 Alan & Kathryn Gobczynski  
 Paul Hanson  
 Dennis Hahnemann  
 Paul Haggar

## **Please support your local Chapter!**

### Newsletter Booster Program

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

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Amount of donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send all remittance payable to:

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

## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN

### Social Security Benefits Increase in 2023

Approximately 70 million Americans will see an 8.7% increase in their Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments in 2023. On average, Social Security benefits will increase by more than \$140 per month starting in January. Federal benefit rates increase when the cost-of-living rises, as measured by the United States Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI-W). The CPI-W rises when inflation increases, leading to a higher cost-of-living.

This change means prices for goods and services, on average, are higher. The cost of-living adjustment (COLA) helps to offset these costs. COLA notices will be sent out throughout the month of December to retirement, survivors, disability beneficiaries, SSI recipients, and representative payees. If you want to know your new benefit amount sooner, you can securely obtain your Social Security COLA notice online using the Message Center in your personal my Social Security account. This information can be accessed in early December, prior to receiving the mailed notice.

Benefit amounts will not be available before December. "Medicare premiums are going down and Social Security benefits are going up in 2023, which will give seniors more peace of mind and breathing room. This year's substantial Social Security cost-of-living adjustment is the first time in over a decade that Medicare premiums are not rising and shows that we can provide more support to older Americans who count on the benefits they have earned," Acting Commissioner Kilolo Kijakazi said. January 2023 marks when other changes will happen based on the increase in the national average wage index. For example, the maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll tax in 2023 will be higher.

The retirement earnings test exempt amount will also change in 2023. The maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) will increase to \$160,200. The earnings limit for workers who are younger than "full" retirement age (see Full Retirement Age Chart) will increase to \$21,240. (They deduct \$1 from benefits for each \$2 earned over \$21,240.) The earnings limit for people reaching their "full" retirement age in 2023 will increase to \$56,520. (They deduct \$1 from benefits for each \$3 earned over \$56,520 until the month the worker turns "full" retirement age.) There is no limit on earnings for workers who are "full" retirement age or older for the entire year.

### Did You Know

If you are currently service connected at 30% or higher you can add your dependent to your claim for an additional stipend? I recently have had a few veterans that were unaware of this additional stipend. You can google VA Compensation rates or go to this hyper link [Benefit Rates-Compensation \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/benefit-rates-compensation) to see if you are getting the right amount of compensation for you and your spouse.

During the month of October, the VA sends out a Tax Abatement letter or some call it a Summary of Benefits letter that has all the basic data to show and provide proof of your service connection disability. This form can be used when applying for other possible benefits. Some examples are the SDGF&P reduced Fee Hunting License, National Parks Access Pass and for Veterans that are considered 100% P&T or spouses on DIC that can apply for the first \$150,000 property tax relief.

Keep an eye on your compensation deposits at the end of December, the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will be 8.7% according to the Social Security Administration.

This should lead to a significant increase in 2023. Certain veterans may be eligible for mileage reimbursement when attending VA approved appointments. The eligibility criteria for travel reimbursement are listed below:

- Veterans who have a service-connected rating of 30% or more.
- Veterans who are traveling for treatment of a service-connected conditions, or
- Veterans who are receiving a VA pension, or
- Veterans whose incomes does not exceed the maximum annual pension rate, or
- Veterans traveling for scheduled compensation or pension examinations.

With any of these topics above or other questions you might have, please contact your local County VSO for assistance.

**Notes from Todd Rose**  
(Veterans Service Officer  
for Codington County)



**PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN****Paralyzed Veterans of America Applauds the House for passing the AUTO for Veterans Act, Urges the Senate to Quickly Pass**

Washington, D.C. (Sept. 29, 2022) – [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#) Executive Director [Carl Blake](#) released the following statement today in response to the House passing H.R. 3304, also known as the AUTO for Veterans Act. This revised legislation authorizes the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide an additional automobile allowance immediately to eligible veterans if 25 years have elapsed since the date they received their first automobile grant. Over time, the period would shorten to 10 years.

The AUTO for Veterans Act would also change the definition of “medical services,” to include certain vehicle modifications like van lifts, which are offered through VA’s Automobile Adaptive Equipment program. This latter provision would help ensure veterans with non-service-connected illnesses and injuries continue to receive help through the AAE program.

“Paralyzed Veterans of America’s effort to secure a second automobile allowance for eligible veterans took a big step closer to becoming law today and we greatly appreciate the bipartisan effort to move this bill forward. We thank Representatives Lizzie Fletcher, Dan Meuser, and David Trone for leading the effort to expand access to transportation for disabled veterans. PVA is especially grateful to House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano and Ranking Member Mike Bost, who made the bill’s passage possible.”

Blake continued, “access to safe, reliable transportation is essential to the health and wellness of catastrophically disabled veterans. We now call on the Senate to pass this important legislation as quickly as possible.”

**The average life of a modified vehicle is 11.5 years (or less), and costs tens of thousands of dollars to replace it.** Although disabled veterans can receive multiple AAE grants over the course of their lives, they are limited to a single grant to purchase a vehicle. The current limitation fails to take into account that a disabled veteran will need more than one vehicle in his or her lifetime. The cost of a new modified vehicle today, coupled with inflation, present a tremendous financial hardship for many disabled veterans who need to replace their primary mode of transportation once it reaches the end of its useful service life.

**The ALS Association and Paralyzed Veterans of America Call on Congress to Quickly Pass the Justice for ALS Veterans Act**

Washington, D.C. (Nov. 10, 2022) – As the nation prepares to observe Veterans Day, the [ALS Association](#) and [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#) call on Congress to pass the **Justice for ALS Veterans Act (H.R.5607/S.3483)**, which allows survivors of veterans who died from service-connected ALS to receive a small boost to the rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), which is commonly known as the “DIC kicker.”

ALS is a fatal progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. It carries an average life expectancy of three to five years, with U.S. veterans twice as likely of being diagnosed than the civilian population. The disease has no known cause or cure and usually calls on spouses and family members to sacrifice their careers to take care of the veteran, resulting in a loss of income and making re-entry into the workforce years later much more challenging.

When an individual serves their country, their family serves, too. Congress should address the financial needs of spouses and dependent children and parents of veterans who passed because of service-related ALS.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes ALS as a presumptive service-connected disease at 100 percent disability. In addition to the DIC benefits available to eligible survivors, the VA provides a monthly financial benefit (i.e. the DIC kicker) to the spouse of any veteran who is 100 percent disabled for a continuous period of at least eight years immediately prior to death. Unfortunately, surviving spouses and family members of deceased veterans with ALS are often denied this additional financial support because the veterans do not live long enough to meet the eight-year life expectancy requirement.

The Justice for ALS Veterans Act would waive this eight-year requirement and ensure families of all veterans who die of ALS receive this boosted benefit.

“The ALS Association wholeheartedly supports this bill to increase compensation for surviving spouses of veterans who die from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS),” said Calaneet Balas, President and CEO, The ALS Association. “ALS is a devastating disease that impacts not only the person living with ALS but their entire family and causes great financial stress. Congress should pass this bill immediately.”

“Survivors of ALS veterans should not be denied a benefit other federal survivors receive simply because the service-connected disease their veterans acquired made it nearly impossible for them to meet an eight-year life expectancy requirement,” said Carl Blake, PVA Executive Director. “We urge Congress to quickly pass the Justice for ALS Veterans Act, which would allow these survivors to receive the additional compensation they earned, and need.”

To join this fight, send a letter to your local member of Congress [here](#) and/or via [PVAAction Force](#).

## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

### New Lifetime Pass for Military Veterans and Gold Star Families to Access Public Land

The Biden-Harris Administration announced that starting on Veterans Day (Nov. 11), veterans of the U.S. Armed Services and Gold Star Families can obtain a free lifetime pass to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites spread out across more than 400 million acres of public lands, including national parks, wildlife refuges, and forests.

“We have a sacred obligation to America’s veterans. This new lifetime pass is a small demonstration of our nation’s gratitude and support for those who have selflessly served in the U.S. Armed Forces,” said Secretary Deb Haaland, whose father served during the Vietnam War. “I’m proud the Department of the Interior can provide veterans and Gold Star Families opportunities for recreation, education and enjoyment from our country’s treasured lands.”

“Our national forests and grasslands represent so much of the beauty of the nation our brave service members have sacrificed so much for,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Though they can never be fully repaid, by connecting the families of the fallen and those who served with these iconic places, we can, in a small way, say thank you.”

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and our federal teammates are proud to honor our veterans with free lifetime access to more than 2,000 federal recreation areas across the nation,” said Lieutenant General (LTG) Scott Spellmon, Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “This is a small token of appreciation for veterans who have bravely dedicated their lives to defending our freedom.”

“This pass conveys our immense gratitude and respect for those who have given so much,” said National Park Service Director Chuck Sams. “As a veteran, I know firsthand the many sacrifices that members of the Armed Forces and their families have made in service to our country, and I am thrilled that Gold Star Families and military veterans can now enjoy lifetime access to national parks and other public lands.”

Each lifetime pass covers entrance fees for a driver and all passengers in a personal vehicle (or passholder and up to three adults at sites that charge per person) at national parks and national wildlife refuges, as well as standard amenity fees at national forests and grasslands, and at lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (continued in next column)

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Veterans can present one of the four forms of acceptable ID (Department of Defense ID Card, Veteran Health ID (VHIC), Veteran ID Card, or veteran’s designation on a state-issued US driver’s license or ID card) at participating federal recreation areas that normally charge an entrance fee. Gold Star Families can obtain information, self-certify they qualify and download a voucher on [NPS.gov](https://www.nps.gov).

The Alexander Lofgran Veterans in Parks Act, passed in December 2021, authorized free lifetime access to federal lands to veterans and Gold Star Families. The new lifetime pass for veterans and Gold Star Families is in addition to the free annual Military Pass, which has been available to active duty servicemembers and their families since Armed Forces Day, May 19, 2012.

Federal recreational land management agencies offer additional lifetime passes, including a Senior Pass for US citizens or permanent residents over age 62 and an Access Pass for US citizens or permanent residents with a permanent disability. More information is available on [NPS.gov](https://www.nps.gov).

The Interior Department and other federal land agencies also offer fee-free entrance days for everyone throughout the year to mark days of celebration and commemoration, including the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., National Public Lands Day, and Veterans Day.



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ch/46-03030359947e](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-03030359947e)

**PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER****VA will Prioritize Delivering Benefits to Veterans with Cancer under PACT Act**

WASHINGTON — On November 7, 2022 on National Cancer Awareness Day, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced it will prioritize the processing of Veterans' benefits claims for cancers associated with the [PACT Act](#). VA will expedite these claims to ensure Veterans with cancer are getting timely access to the care and benefits they need and deserve.

The PACT Act added presumptions of service connection for more than [20 new conditions, including various cancers](#). These presumptions help Veterans get their earned benefits by reducing the evidence necessary for VA to find that a condition was caused by burn pits or other toxic exposures. They also simplify the claims process by eliminating the need to establish a link between the Veteran's service and the claimed condition.

Since the PACT Act was signed into law August 10, Veterans have filed nearly 125,000 PACT Act-related claims. Of those claims, nearly 14,000 are for cancers covered by the PACT Act. "We are working hard to get benefits to all Veterans who qualify under the PACT Act as soon as possible, and Veterans living with cancer are at particular risk," said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. "Expediting claims for these Vets will ensure that they get the care and benefits they need and so rightly deserve."

This decision is a part of the Biden-Harris Administration's [broader efforts](#) to care for those with cancer and end cancer as we know it. In addition to prioritizing claims for Veterans with cancer, VA will continue to prioritize the processing of claims for Veterans with terminal illnesses and those experiencing homelessness.

VA will begin processing all PACT Act-related claims Jan 1, 2023. In anticipation of the surge in new claims, VA is hiring at 56 regional offices and 39 other special processing and call centers within the United States and Puerto Rico. [Learn about the positions and how to apply](#).

For more information about PACT Act and how to file a claim, visit [va.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT). If Veterans, their families, caregivers or survivors have questions about PACT Act and wish to speak with someone to help, they may call 1-800-MyVA411 at any time. 00009

**All Veterans Enrolled in VA Health Care will be Eligible for New Toxic Exposure Screenings**

WASHINGTON — On November 8, 2022, Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and clinics across the country began to offer enrolled Veterans a new toxic exposure screening. These screenings are a key part of the [PACT Act](#), a new law that empowers VA to deliver care and benefits to millions of toxic exposed Veterans and their survivors.

The screening takes around five to ten minutes and begins by asking Veterans if they believe they experienced any toxic exposures while serving in the armed forces. Veterans who answer "yes" will then be asked about specific exposures, including open burn pits/airborne hazards, Gulf War-related exposures, Agent Orange, radiation, Camp Lejeune contaminated water exposure and other exposures.

Veterans enrolled in VA health care will be offered an initial toxic exposure screening then follow-up screenings at least once every five years. "These screenings are an important step toward making sure that all toxic exposed Veterans get the care and benefits they deserve," said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. "At the end of the day, these screenings will improve health outcomes for Veterans — and there's nothing more important than that."

After completion of the screening, VA will connect Veterans who are concerned about toxic exposures to information about benefits, registry exams and clinical resources. Medical concerns will continue to be addressed through existing care teams or other facility resources as appropriate.

Veterans can ask about receiving the screening at their next VA primary care provider appointment. If Veterans are not assigned to a primary care team or wish to be screened sooner than their next appointment, they are invited to contact their local facility and ask to be screened by the toxic exposure screening navigator.

September 6th, VA began a pilot of this program-screening 13,380 Veterans across 12 medical centers over a two-week period and finding a 37.4% concern of exposure among those Veterans.

## **PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**

### **From the Office of Brad Friez**

#### **National Service Officer**

I wanted to explain how important it is for our Paralyzed Veterans of America member Veterans who have their annual SCI exam at the Sioux Falls VA to mention to the SCI Provider that they want to meet with their National Service Officer from the PVA. We need your help in doing our necessary outreach. It has probably been at least three years since our office had participated in any SCI annual exam for any of our Veterans who are on the Sioux Falls VA SCI registry.

We were told by the former SCI Physician that we could not participate at the SCI Clinic and that SCI Veterans who want to meet with their Service Officer would have to come to our office within the VA Regional Office building across the street from the Hospital. I have concerns about this policy especially in the cold of winter with the wind chills we have here in South Dakota or when summer hits with its high temperatures and humid conditions.

I am sure that the SCI Team at the Sioux Falls VA Hospital must do a great job when it comes to the medical treatment of our SCI Veterans. But I am equally sure that they do not know about VA benefits and what potentially a visit with an advocate could bring to an SCI Veteran.

VHA Directive 1176 which explains VA's system of care for Veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders had been updated in February of 2020. It mentions PVA in a few sections. In fact, PVA is the only Veteran Service Organization mentioned by name in 1176. It is in reference to major, minor, and non-recurring SCI/D projects. This implies that the VA when doing any building or remodeling of SCI/D areas of a VA Hospital must involve our organization. Thus, PVA's architectural staff would be fully engaged in these construction projects. There is even an agreement called a Construction Project Liaison with PVA which is entitled VA Directive 7501.

Other sections of 1176 mention that before a Chief of an SCI Center (hub) is hired the VA must consult with appropriate Veteran Service Organizations (this would include PVA). PVA was instrumental in the setup of the spoke and hubs across the VA's VHA SCI system of care.

Lastly, 1176 further states that the SCI coordinator (social worker) is to have knowledge of community resources and services for individuals with disabilities and refer SCI/D Veterans to a Veteran Service Officer with the Veteran's consent.

### **Installation of Board of Directors for 2022-2023**



The installation of Board of Directors for 2022-2023 was held at the annual membership banquet at Holiday Inn City Centre on October 7th by Lisa Cummings, Executive Director. Pictured above from left Chuck Doom (President), Mike Olson (National Director) and Perry Grimme (Member) .

Other members on the board are: Harlan Schmidt (Vice President), Greg Brandner (Secretary), Gene Murphy (Treasurer), Duane Biesboer (Member) and Rodney Melcher (Member).

*Congratulations to all of you as we look forward to another year of leadership!*

### **Annual Membership Banquet - October 7, 2022**

We were FINALLY able to host our Annual Membership Banquet this year after a 3 year hiatus! It was great to see everyone who showed up. The banquet was held at the Holiday Inn City Centre with prime rib and all the fixings. Entertainment was provided by comedian/magician Kristoffer Olson. Awards were presented to Shawn Fields and Bonnie Schmidt.

Thank you to those who attended! Lisa



### **South Dakota Veterans Council**

The SD Veterans Council will hold their meeting on **Wednesday, January 11, 2023**

American Legion, Pierre, 9:00 AM - Noon

*You are welcome to attend!*

## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

### Dueling Pianos's Fundraiser - October 21, 2022



The Chapter held it's first fundraiser on Oct. 21 with Dueling Pianos at The Alliance. We had a great turnout with lots of fun and laughs during the evening. We look forward to having this as an annual fundraiser!

Thank you to all of our volunteers, staff, Table Sponsors and all who purchased tickets! Lisa



### Fast Facts about New Toxic Exposure Screening for Veterans

*Enrolled Veterans can be screened at VA Medical Centers, Clinics*

Have you heard about the new Toxic Exposure screening?

If you're enrolled in VA health care, you can now receive the toxic exposure screening at VA medical centers and clinics across the country. If you're not enrolled but meet eligibility requirements to [enroll](#), you will have an opportunity to receive the screening after you enroll. (continued in next column)

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During your screening, you'll be asked if you believe you experienced toxic exposures during your military service. If you answer yes, you may be connected to support and resources, including a review by your primary care team or provider. During your screening, you'll be asked if you believe you experienced toxic exposures during your military service. If you answer yes, you may be connected to support and resources, including a review by your primary care team or provider.

#### **Get to know the Process**

As the screening becomes a regular part of your health care, you may have some questions. Here are some quick facts to get to know the process:

- It's quick. The screening is a series of questions that takes around 5-10 minutes and can occur as part of one of your regular health care appointments.
- It documents a variety of exposures. There are several types of possible exposures or hazards you may have experienced during your military service. This includes open burn pits and airborne hazards, Gulf War-related exposures, Agent Orange, radiation, Camp Lejeune contaminated water exposure and others.
- It helps support your long-term care plan. The purpose of the toxic exposure screening is to make your VA health care team aware of any potential exposures to toxins during your military service. This allows for ongoing care that ensures early diagnosis and treatment of any health concerns that may arise in the future related to your exposure(s). If you report a potential toxic exposure, it will be noted in your health record. Your primary care team will be made aware of your concerns and will connect you with resources to address your follow-up questions.
- You'll receive additional information. After your screening, you will also receive [information](#) about benefits, registry exams, and clinical resources to address any concerns you may have.
- You can ask about the toxic exposure screening at your next VA health care appointment. If you do not have an upcoming appointment or want to be

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**PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**

(continued from Page 13)

screened sooner, contact your local VA facility and ask to be screened by the Toxic Exposure Screening Navigator.

- You'll be screened at least once every 5 years. Even if you don't have concerns today, you may in the future. This helps keep your records up to date and ensures exposure concerns are part of your long-term care plan.
- You can decline. If you choose not to be screened, you will have the option to decline until the following year.

**Additional Information**

These are a couple of things to keep in mind:

- It is not diagnostic. The screening identifies and documents potential exposures. If there is a need, it will support you in connecting with your health care team. You can also always contact your local VA health care team through Secure Message or call 1-800-MyVA411 and press 8.
- It's not part of the VA benefits claims process. For information about how to file a claim, visit <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>.
- Being screened is separate from joining a VA environmental health registry. VA has six registries: Agent Orange, Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pits, Depleted Uranium, Gulf War, Ionizing Radiation, and Toxic Embedded Fragments. You'll receive information about registry participation after your screening.

**Be Proactive**

One of the best ways to manage your health is to proactively develop a long-term health care plan with your care team. The new toxic exposure screening can be an important part of that discussion.

For information about enrolling in VA health care, visit: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction>.

For more information about the screening and toxic exposures, check out these additional resources:

- [Military Exposures – Public Health](#)
- [VA.gov/PACT](#)

10123

**Are you a Veteran with ALS?**

Consider **RADICAVA** and here's where to start. If you and your doctor think **RADICAVA** may be an option for you, you may want to take the first step by working with him or her complete a Benefit Investigation and Enrollment Form, or BIF. Your local VA can provide you with this form.

This form is simply a request for more information. Once the BIF is signed and submitted, they will provide you with a summary of your insurance coverage for **RADICAVA**. This may help you make an informed choice about your treatment.

Completing the BIF is NOT a commitment to start **RADICAVA**. You can still choose whether or not you to begin treatment after starting the BIF process.

**This program is offered only to adults with ALS or their caregivers who are US residents.**

The ALS Education Specialist discusses basic information about Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma America, Inc. products and does not take the place of your doctor.

**How RADICAVA May Help**

In the clinical trial, **RADICAVA** slowed the loss of physical function, as measured by the ALSFRS-R. At 24 weeks, people who receive placebo (n=66) lost an average of 7.50 points. People who received **RADICAVA** (n=68) lost an average of 5.01 points. The is a difference of 2.49 points. **RADICAVA** slowed the loss of physical function by 33%.

For an ALS Education Specialist, call toll free at 1-855-457-6968.

\*\*The PVA North Central Chapter does not endorse any products. We share with you what companies are sharing with us.

Lisa Cummings, Executive Director

PVA North Central Chapter

**For Sale -****2006 Ford Econoline E250 Van Dark Shadow Grey/Medium Flint**

77,376 miles. Remote - Door and Lift. Dual Battery System. 8" Lowered Floor. Hand Controls.

Contact Linda at 605-332-2124 (landline). Leave a message if I am not available.

**PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER****PVA North Central Chapter****Birthday Roster - December 2022/January 2023**

Leland Olson	Dec 01
Stephen Vogt	Dec 03
David Byrd	Dec 06
Tony Hylland	Dec 06
Alan Gobiczynski	Dec 07
Willard Black	Dec 08
James Huckabay, Sr.	Dec 08
Timothy Doyle	Dec 09
John Pike	Dec 10
Jonathan Olson	Dec 11
Dennis Theel	Dec 11
Lyle Monsees	Dec 14
Frank Hood	Dec 17
Paul Haggar	Dec 20
Michael Ollerich	Dec 21
John Trautman	Dec 26
Jeanne Saunders	Dec 27
Darryl Schock	Dec 29
Randy Brown	Jan 01
Mitchell Kostek	Jan 03
Steve Thompson	Jan 03
Colin Olson	Jan 05
Eric Kritzmire	Jan 07
Gary Kipena	Jan 08
Lawrence Hogan	Jan 09
Bob Sanchez	Jan 10
Lary Marthaller	Jan 11
Lester Hovrud	Jan 12

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David Morgan	Jan 15
Thomas Holtey	Jan 16
Samuel Terry	Jan 16
Jack Gill	Jan 22
Thomas Dietz	Jan 26
Kenneth Bassett	Jan 27
Bob Schutte	Jan 28
Ross Beranek	Jan 29
Stephen Larson	Jan 31

**988 Suicide Crisis Line**

On July 16, 2022, 988 became the national three-digit phone number for all mental health, substance use, and suicide crises. 988 will be routed to South Dakota's only National Suicide Prevention Lifeline center, **The Helpline Center**, transitioning from the current Lifeline number, 1-800-273-8255. 988 will offer rapid access to behavioral health support through connection with trained crisis specialists.

**How will 988 differ from 211?** 211 is a non-emergency number for finding community resources, such as food banks and shelters. 911 is currently used for all emergencies, including mental health emergencies. 988 will be a mental health crisis number, and calls will be handled by National Suicide Prevention Lifeline counselors.

**When should you call 988?** Anyone in need of crisis support for themselves or someone else should call 988 which started on July 16th. 988 is an opportunity to transform our country's behavioral health crisis system to respond to anyone in need.

**Is 1-800-273-8255 going away?** No. Moving to 988 does not mean the 800 number goes away. Dialing either number will get people to the same services, no matter which number they use. In the end, 988 is an easier-to-remember way for all Americans to access a strengthened and expanded network of crisis call centers.

For more information about 988, click on: <https://sdsuicideprevention.org/988-2/>.

## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER



# Want To Improve Your Bowel Function?



Recently published research reveals between 50 and 80% of participants reported improvements in bowel function and/or management after walking in an exoskeleton\*

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[rewalk.com/contact](http://rewalk.com/contact) or  
508.251.1154 option 2**

\*Chun A, et al. Changes in bowel function following exoskeletal-assisted walking in persons with spinal cord injury: an observational pilot study. Spinal Cord. 2020;58(4):459-466.





### PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

#### *Holiday Office Hours*

*Merry Christmas*



#### Christmas

Office Closed

Friday, December 23rd - Monday, December 26th



#### New Year's

Office Closed

Friday, December 30th - Monday, January 2nd

#### SUPPORT PVA

#### NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter relies solely on private donations and receives NO government funding! Your contribution is 100% tax deductible, as we are a 501(c) (3) corporation. Support by individual donors and businesses enable us to make our services FREE to members.

Please support our mission through a direct donation to:

PVA North Central Chapter  
209 North Garfield Avenue,  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

#### Car Sunshades for Sale

Proceeds will benefit the Chapter's programs and services!

Contact the Chapter Ofc  
(605) 336-0494



#### QUESTION:

#### **HAVE YOU CONSIDERED INCLUDING PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST?**

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### How to Donate Property

Please donate that Auto, Boat, Yacht, Truck or RV that's no longer needed to NCPVA! Receive the maximum legal tax deductions and possibly a partial cash payment.

For more information about car, boat, RV and other property donations or to receive a "no obligation" evaluation of your potential vehicle or other property donation, please call toll free: (866) 2-GIVING or (866) 244-8464.

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**ATTENTION VOLUNTEERS**

BE SURE TO LOOK FOR YOUR  
VOLUNTEER NUMBER OR VAVS  
VOLUNTEER NAME SOMEWHERE  
IN THIS NEWSLETTER AND CON-  
TACT THE CHAPTER OFFICE IF  
YOUR NAME OR NUMBER IS  
LISTED.

CHUCK DOOM  
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM  
COORDINATOR

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[www.davsd.org](http://www.davsd.org)    [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org)

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TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED



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*—President Lyndon B. Johnson*



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Paralyzed Veterans of America  
North Central Chapter  
209 N. Garfield Ave  
Sioux Falls, SD 57104

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

### VA Health Care Systems Contact Information

#### **Sioux Falls VA Health Care System**

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

#### **VA Black Hills Health Care System - Fort Meade Campus**

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

#### **VA Black Hills Health Care System**

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

#### **Minneapolis VA Health Care System**

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

#### **Fargo VA Health Care System**

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

#### **VA Montana Health Care System**

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

#### **Cheyenne VA Health Care System**

2360 E. Pershing Blvd.  
Cheyenne, WY 82001  
Phone: (307)778-7550  
Fax: (307) 778-7336

#### **Sheridan VA Health Care System**

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