



# North Central Chapter



209 N. GARFIELD AVE  
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57104  
INFO@NCPVA.ORG  
605-336-0494



## Here's what has happened in the last few months and what's to come!

Thank you for supporting and following along with the PVA! In October, we had some members attend the Women's Retreat and reported back that they had a great experience there! We also hosted a membership meeting to reconnect as a chapter for the month.

November brought the start of our yearly audit, along with our Holiday Mailing Campaign in hopes to prepare for events in 2025.

Lastly, in December we had a blast at the Christmas Luncheon, where we ate, listened to music, and had door prizes for people to win.

Finally, we want to remind everyone that our non-profit relies on the kindness and support of our community. If you are able to donate your time or resources, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of those who need it most. Thank you for your continued support!

Enjoy this month's newsletter!

*Terry Paulsen & Tracey Safameh*

## Upcoming Events

### JANUARY 2025

**1: New Years Day = Office Closed**

**11: Mike Olson's Funeral Service**

**14: Governor's State of State Address  
1:00 p.m.**

**14: Legislative session starts**

**15: SDVC Meeting - Pierre 2:00 p.m.**

**20: MLK Day = Office = Office Closed**

### FEBRUARY 2025

**2: Ground Hog Day**

**13: Membership Meeting (Noon Lunch,  
1pm Meeting)**

**14: Valentines Day**

**17: Presidents' Day = Office Closed**

### MARCH 2025

**9: Daylight Savings Time**

**13: Membership Meeting (Noon Lunch,  
1pm Meeting)**

**17: St. Patrick's Day**

**19: Beginning of Spring**

**\*SAVE THE DATE\***

**GONE FISHING: May 22-23rd, 2025**



## Michael Francis Olson

Michael Francis Olson of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, passed away, unexpectedly, on November 23, 2024. Mike was born on November 6th, 1947 to Francis and Edith (nee Sampson) Olson in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Those who are grateful to have shared his life include three brothers: Colin Olson of Sioux Falls, Dennis Olson of Luverne, and Patrick Olson of Sioux Falls; two sisters: Karen Kohler (Loris) of Florida and Lisa Boswell of Kentucky; four nephews, two nieces, and lifelong partner Judy Hauck of Sioux Falls. Proceeding him in death were his parents, niece Alys, and nephew Cedric Olson.

After his graduation from O'Gorman high school in 1965, Mike proudly served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam Conflict and attended college. He was the president of the North Central Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). At the time of his death, he served as the Sports Director and on the National Board of the PVA. Mike was the 2017 Sioux Falls Veterans Council and Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce Veteran of the Year. He received numerous other awards and accolades of which he was very proud. He volunteered many hours for organizations serving Veterans and his community and enjoyed hunting and fishing in the great outdoors.

Mike loved Lake Madison and looked forward to spending each and every summer there regaling friends and family with stories of "minding my own business." He spoke of Exit 98 happenings with pure joy. Mike's years in the wheelchair never stopped him from a life fully lived.

Funeral Services for Mike will take place at the Risen Savior Catholic Church, 301 North Splitrock Blvd, Brandon, SD on Saturday, 11 January 2025. Service will begin at 9:30 with the internment to follow at the St Michael Catholic Cemetery, 3001 North Cliff Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD.

A celebration of life will follow the internment at the North Central Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America Office. 209 North Garfield Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD 57104 from 11:00 - 3:00.



## PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104

### OFFICERS

President, Chuck Doom  
Vice President, Harlan Schmidt  
Secretary, Greg Brandner  
Treasurer, Gene Murphy

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Duane Biesboer  
Rodney Melcher

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Gene Murphy  
Volunteer Coordinator: Charles Doom  
VAWS: Tracey Salameh/Sheri Kloes  
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Terry Paulsen  
Sports Director: Charles Doom  
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Schmidt  
P.O.C. MS Committee: Kristine Shaffer

### NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Vacant

### OFFICE STAFF

Terry Paulsen, Executive Director  
Tracey Salameh, Office Manager  
605-336-0494

Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 7:30 - 4:00

### 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

### 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



**Disclaimer:** The North Central Chapter PVA newsletter is published four 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.



# 2024 Christmas Luncheon

We had a successful Christmas Luncheon in December with about 75 people in attendance! We chatted, listened to music, ate good food, and had door prize giveaways. Thank you to all of those that attended, we enjoyed getting together to celebrate the holidays!





**SAVE THE DATE**

# Women Veterans Plus 1

**\$10 PER  
PERSON**

**MARCH 29, 2025, 9AM-1:30PM**

**OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
909 WEST 33RD STREET, SIOUX FALLS**

**STAND UP**



Celebrating women in military by creating a supportive, empowering space. Bring your "plus one" – such as a friend, partner, family member, or mentor. Together, we'll foster a community of shared strength, connection, and understanding.

POC: Jill Baker; [jill@sdvets.org](mailto:jill@sdvets.org); (605) 910-4045

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# **From the Office of Brad Friez**

## **National Service Officer**

First of all, I wanted to express my condolences to all who were affected by the recent passing of Mike Olson. Mike was a long-time member and board member of the local North Central Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the North Central Chapter's National Board Member as well. For many of us connected in some way to the North Central Chapter he was the face of the Chapter. He will be sorely missed by many.

I also wanted to comment on some of the many changes that the Veterans Administration has made or is about to in the manner in which either Veterans' benefits or medical treatment going forward is happening for Veterans.

We had found out recently that many Veterans' VA ID cards were either about to expire or in some cases did expire. This was creating challenges especially among those Veterans who were least able to find a resolution to this issue. In two cases we had PVA members who were inpatient in the local CLC wing of the Sioux Falls VA and they were instructed to go to the local Department of Motor Vehicles Driver Testing Station (DMV) to obtain an updated State of South Dakota ID in order to get their VA ID updated. In both cases these Veterans had been discharged from the military for a long time and been enrolled in the VA for decades. We were told by local VA staff that because this trip to the DMV was not a "medical appointment" the VA's Veteran Transportation Services (VTS) shuttles were not able to provide transportation for this purpose. The local VA Business Manager is working with the South Dakota Department of Public Safety to see if their staff could travel to the VA to accomplish the task of getting those Veterans their state ID's and not have to leave the VA Hospital for this task. This is a work in progress. Perhaps the new administration in Washington, D.C. will fix this where the VA ID's will not expire.

This leads us to another issue that has been on our mind for some time. VA (except for transportation to medical appointments) does not have handicapped accessible transportation for a variety of non-medical purposes. Whether it be for a HUD/VASH participant member who needs this type of transportation to check out employment options or to activate their cell phone coverage or for a variety of other non-medical needs. A recent example of this need is when the Chapter provided transportation for a quadriplegic Veteran who lived in Tea, SD and was inpatient at the VA for treatment. VA had given him a cell phone and before discharge from the VA he needed that cell phone activated. The VA did not have a handicapped accessible option to transport him to the cell phone carrier. So, the Chapter came through to solve this transportation challenge and this Veteran was then discharged from the VA. A month or so later this same Veteran had been transported back to the VA for medical treatment via ambulance. But his power chair was still in his apartment in Tea, SD. So again, the Chapter was approached and retrieved the power chair so that this Veteran could be discharged back home to his apartment. VA needs to have handicapped accessible transportation for these non-medical needs and we have been told that this will happen shortly.

Another change is that the kiosks for submitting payment requests for beneficiary travel will be returning to the VA shortly. Not sure of the exact date.

VA is recently attempting to return many Veterans to the VA for their specialized medical treatment if the VA now has that specific provider.

Care in the Community co-pays were paused in February of 2023 and as of July of 2024 the VA once again begin to bill Veterans for those co-pays.

For those Veterans who were provided massage therapy treatment the VA is recently needing to justify those consults by having proof that the massages are measurably improving that Veteran's health in some manner.

Wishing all of you a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2025.

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# Saving Sgt. Murphy

*How two South Dakotans rescued  
a third in the jungles of Vietnam*

Story by JOHN ANDREWS

**G**ENE MURPHY COULDN'T feel his legs. He'd been in the jungles of Vietnam for more than 10 months and was 45 days away from returning relatively unscathed to his hometown of White. Then a North Vietnamese Army soldier popped out of the thick undergrowth and shot him three times, twice through the right side, severely damaging his spinal cord.

Fortunately, as the firefight raged around him, he was not alone. Lyle Bowes, his friend and fellow South Dakotan, found him lying in the thick grass and bamboo several yards off trail. Murphy had been one of six soldiers from his company wounded that afternoon. A medevac helicopter hovered a short distance away, one wounded soldier already aboard and another hanging from its

jungle penetrator.

But as Murphy waited to be evacuated, he and Bowes heard the pilot over their company's radio frequency. "It's too hot. We have to abort. I'll be back in the morning," the pilot said as the chopper ascended and flew away over the mountains amidst heavy fire from the NVA.

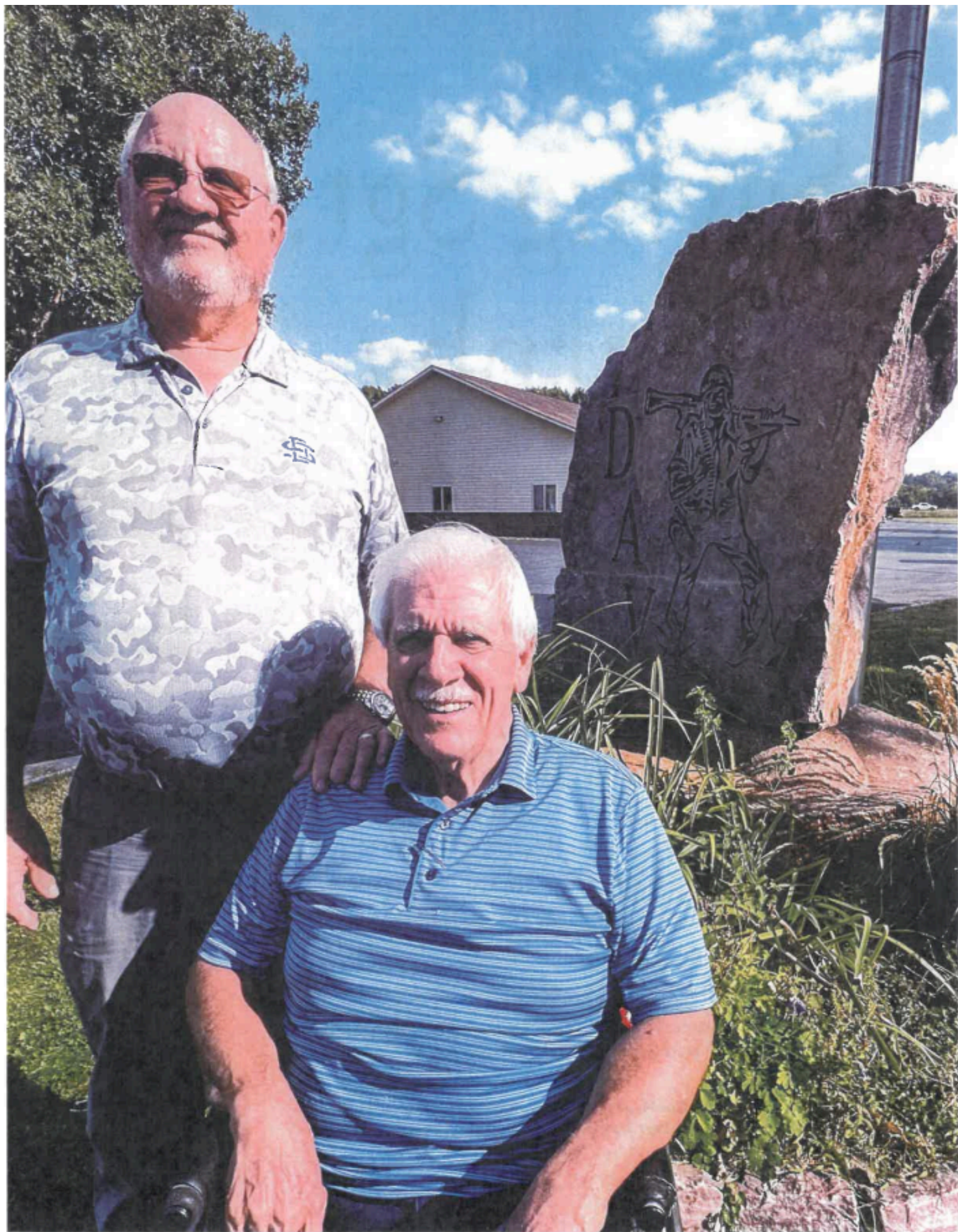
Murphy and Bowes were devastated. Would the pilot really come back the next morning? Even so, would Murphy survive the night?

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**OF THE ROUGHLY 400** people who lived in White in the 1960s, 38 men served in Vietnam, including Murphy, his brother Bob and two first cousins. Murphy grew up playing baseball and softball in the summertime and basketball and eight-man football for White

Lyle Bowes (standing) and Gene Murphy spent 14 hours in the Vietnam jungle awaiting rescue after Murphy was wounded in 1969. The experience bonded them, and they remain close.











Murphy and Bowes (above) trained in mortars but spent their tours with the 4th Infantry Division in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.



High School, graduating in 1966.

High school football was also a highlight for Bowes, who grew up on a farm 6 miles northeast of De Smet. His two older brothers had both left the farm by the time he was 9, so Bowes learned early the rigors of farm work as he helped his father. Still, life in rural Kingsbury County felt idyllic. "You never had to worry about not being able to trust people," Bowes says. "If somebody needed their corn shelled, you all grabbed your shovels and headed over there. It was a very community-minded way of life."

Murphy studied for a year at South Dakota State University in Brookings, but in the fall of 1967 dropped out to work construction. He wanted to re-enroll in January of 1968, but he wondered about his draft status, so he visited the local draft board. "I talked to the young lady, and she said she'd check," Murphy recalls. "She went in another room and came back. 'You'll be getting a letter tomorrow,' she

told me, which I did."

Meanwhile, Bowes was attending Dakota State University in Madison. "I didn't care for school, but we were encouraged to go to college," he says. "It was September or October, and I was sitting in a classroom. I looked out the window and the sun was shining, and the leaves were falling, and I said, 'What am I doing here?' I knew I was going to get drafted if I left because that's just what happened. I had my brother take my books back on Monday morning and I volunteered for the draft."

When Bowes boarded a Greyhound bus in Brookings bound for the military induction center in Sioux Falls, the only open seat was next to Murphy. They became quick friends and found themselves together throughout their training and service in Vietnam.

They attended boot camp together at Fort Lewis in Washington. They were together for advanced training in mortars

and flew together to Cam Ranh Bay, one of three ports where American servicemen arrived or departed South Vietnam. They were entering a war zone, but remained optimistic, perhaps naively. "We felt encouraged because we were separated a little bit from the line company," Bowes says. "We were support fire, so our hope was that would protect us in some way."

But after a few days at Cam Ranh Bay, Murphy and Bowes learned they had been assigned to the 4th Infantry Division. "I remember raising my hand and saying there had to be some mistake," Murphy says. "We were trained on heavy weapons mortars, not infantry. They said, 'You'll learn real quick.'"

A week later a helicopter flew them into the jungles of Vietnam's Central Highlands. Murphy remembers looking across a landscape of crude tents made out of ponchos and dirty soldiers who hadn't bathed in months crawling out



Custer native John O'Connell, on the left with a Dustoff crew, was the pilot who flew Murphy out of the jungle. Their South Dakota connection remained unknown for more than 40 years.

from the thick bamboo. That's when Bowes turned to him and said, "Murph, I think we're in deep trouble."

**BOWES SAYS** the Central Highlands reminded him of the Black Hills in terms of size, but that's where the similarities ended. Every plant and tree seemed to have sharp spikes jutting from its trunk or stem. They quickly became familiar with wait-a-minute vines, a rope-like plant that grew like creeping jenny but sported thorns like a fine saw that pulled at their legs. When entangled, a soldier had to ask his buddies to wait a minute as he freed himself.

The critters were just as infuriating. Huge mosquitoes tried relentlessly to sting through ponchos. Vicious red ants jumped off the bamboo and onto soldiers, then reared up on their back legs and dug into exposed flesh. Leeches attached themselves to pores and became

engorged with blood. A green viper about 12 to 18 inches long was called a step-and-a-half snake because, Murphy was told, "If they bite you, you'll have a step and a half before you're dead." Once, Bowes and few buddies were sitting under a tree when they glanced up and saw a 25-foot python lounging on a branch directly overhead.

Murphy and Bowes spent the majority of their time in the Central Highlands running night ambushes, four-man long-range reconnaissance patrols or search and destroy missions. They were based out of Camp Enari south of Pleiku, though they only saw it twice during their time in the jungle.

Their company was on the move April 20, 1969, but their route over a mountain was steep and wet. Bowes found another path where steps had been cut into the mountainside. "That scares you, because you know who's out in the jungle cutting steps," Bowes says. "It's NVA, and they've

been there a while. So I started up the steps and they had sentinels out. One of them took off; I heard him going through the jungle. The captain spread us out because you don't know how many are there. We worked our way up the hill and started getting into fights."

Murphy was walking point with his squad when he was hit. "I didn't see him, but they said he was only about 20 feet from me," Murphy says. "He popped out of this little spider hole. He shot me first and I thought he'd blown my legs off because I was numb from the waist down. I played dead on him right away, but then I moved. I felt for my thighs, and I tipped my head just to see the tips of my boots and he shot another 30-round burst at me. I could see them coming up my right leg. The dirt was just flying. So I pulled myself behind a big tree."

Bowes ended his pursuit of the NVA sentinel and called in artillery. That's when his captain told him that six of their



“

*I don't know whether you know yet or not, but yesterday during a fire fight Gene got wounded.*

”

soldiers had been wounded. “I asked him if there was any reason why I couldn’t go and help get those guys out of there,” Bowes says. “He said I could go ahead.”

As he headed down the trail, he met another soldier with a badly wounded arm. Bowes asked who the other wounded men were.

“One of them’s Murphy,” the sergeant said.

“Gene Murphy?” Bowes asked.

“I don’t know any Gene,” he replied. “All I know is it’s Murphy.”

So Bowes continued down the trail yelling Murphy’s name over the gunfire. “If he’d have been unconscious, I would have had no idea where he was,” Bowes says. “But he heard me. He was off over in the jungle.”

When Bowes reached him, Murphy’s first words were, “What the hell took you so long?” Fueled by adrenaline, Bowes ripped two small trees out of the ground and wrapped a poncho around them, fashioning a crude stretcher. Then he and two other soldiers carried Murphy about 400 meters to their command post.

Murphy thinks he was injured at about 4:30 in the afternoon, which left plenty of daylight for evacuation. But there was no landing zone for the medevac chopper, which hovered over the treetops and lowered its jungle penetrator to extract the wounded soldiers. That left it vulnerable to heavy fire from the NVA. As the aircraft was riddled with bullets, the pilots knew they had to get out before they crashed. Bowes and Murphy watched the

chopper fly away over the mountains.

They began to realize that they were in for a long night. Bowes dug a hole for the two of them and they settled in. An eerie silence descended over the battlefield. Each side refrained from firing their weapons because neither knew how large the opposing force was. “We sat there and whispered all night long because I had no idea what I was up against,” Bowes says. “We didn’t know where these guys were. We might get overrun. We didn’t know anything. There was nothing I could do and nothing he could do other than ask for water. I’d give him a capful at a time out of my canteen, just to wet his lips, because I didn’t know if that water was infected. That would have caused even more problems.”

Murphy and Bowes spent about 14 hours lying in the jungle. Around 7:30 the next morning a medevac chopper returned. This time, Bowes made sure Murphy was the first to board. He carried him to the landing zone, placed him on the jungle penetrator and watched as he flew to safety.

“I was thirsty,” Bowes says. “I hadn’t drunk any water since all this started because I wanted to make sure I had enough for him. I knew there was water in my canteen because I put it there. But when I picked it up, it was empty.” Unbeknownst to Bowes, Murphy discovered it at daybreak, thought it was his and drank it dry.

**LATER THAT MORNING,** Bowes wrote a letter to Murphy’s parents, telling them that their son had been wounded. (They received several official telegrams, as well). But since Bowes could only communicate with fellow soldiers in his company, he knew that he wouldn’t learn his friend’s fate until he received his own letter from home.

Murphy was flown to the 71st Evacuation Hospital at Pleiku, where he underwent the first of three surgeries he would eventually have to repair damage and stave off infection. But nothing could be done for Murphy’s spinal cord injury. On his third day there, a doctor and a chaplain told him he would never walk again. “I was angry,” Murphy says, “but in every hospital there was always somebody worse off than Sgt. Murphy. I had three buddies that were triple amputees, and one guy was a quadriplegic. I always thought I was fortunate.”

He began the long road of learning how to live without the use of his legs. He spent 18 days in the hospital at Pleiku, where doctors worked to stabilize him. Then he was transferred to the 106th Army General Hospital in Yokohama, Japan. After five and a half weeks there, he went to Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center just outside of Denver for nine and a half months of recuperation.

Bowes finished his tour and returned to the United States in June of 1969. He was stationed briefly at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, which allowed him to visit Murphy at Fitzsimmons on the

weekends. That October, he brought Murphy back to White on a 30-day convalescence leave. It was the first time Murphy had been home since June of 1968.

Huge banners greeted them as they entered town, and more than 200 people turned out to welcome him back. The homecoming proved good for soul and body. When Murphy left for Vietnam, he weighed 165 pounds. He was down to 135 pounds on the day he was wounded. Two months later, he weighed just 83 pounds. But the home cooking of friends and family helped him gain 20 pounds in a month.

In March of 1970, Murphy was transferred to a spinal cord center within the Veterans Administration in Milwaukee. He learned how to drive a car using hand controls in the parking lot of County Stadium, home of the Milwaukee Brewers, and learned other life skills before coming home to White for good in June.

He enrolled at Dakota State and later married Eldine Anderson, a farm girl from Bruce that he met at a party in White. The young couple then moved to Sioux Falls and both enrolled at Augustana University. Eldine studied nursing and Gene majored in business administration. While in college, Murphy started helping at the local Disabled American Veterans office. He was 16 credits short of graduating when he went to work for the DAV full time (Augustana awarded him an honorary degree in 2021). He's held several titles there in more than 50 years, but Bowes calls him "Mr. VA of the USA." Murphy has helped fundraise, shaped policy and met with presidents to further the cause of veterans. He was named the DAV's national commander in 1987-1988.

Bowes delivered seed corn and then went into farming with his brother. He later found a job driving a gravel truck in Brookings, where he met Marcia Man-

nerud, whose father Erv operated a construction company. They were married, but the family business dissolved when Erv died of a heart attack in 1973. Lyle and Marcia purchased some of the company's assets and eventually launched Bowes Construction, a business Lyle oversaw until his retirement in 2012.

Murphy and Bowes have been asked to share their story countless times and have been honored at several special events. One such occasion happened about five years ago at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron. Red Wilk, a Huron contractor and Vietnam veteran, presents the American Hero Award to a group of veterans every year during the Bull Bash, held at the fairgrounds grandstand. Around 10 veterans are honored each evening, and Bowes and Murphy were among the honorees. As they talked with other veterans before the presentation, Bowes heard Murphy shout, "Hey Lyle! This is the pilot!"



Bowes treated Murphy for jungle rot (above). Murphy spent time in three Army hospitals recovering from his spinal cord injury and learning life skills.



"Okay, so he was a pilot," Bowes replied.

"No," Murphy said. "This is *the* pilot!"

**NOBODY REALIZED** it for about 40 years, but the man who flew Gene Murphy out of the jungle in Vietnam was John O'Connell, who spent nearly five decades as a crop duster near Letcher in Sanborn County. About 15 years ago, O'Connell attended a Vietnam veterans convention in Mitchell. When he walked in to buy a ticket, Murphy was sitting behind the table. They struck up a conversation about their tours in Vietnam and soon, details started to overlap. "All of a sudden, we just looked at each other and went, 'Holy mackerel,'" O'Connell says. "We put it all together right there."

O'Connell grew up in Custer. He became fascinated with aviation as a boy watching B-36 bombers glide into Ellsworth Air Force Base. He went to South Dakota State and enrolled in the ROTC flight training program, then became a flight instructor there for three years. "I had friends who came back from Vietnam and told me to get as much aviation

training as I could before I went," he says. "Your chances of surviving were a lot better."

O'Connell headed to Vietnam in February 1969 and for the next year served as a medevac pilot with the 283rd Dustoff Detachment out of Pleiku, about 20 or 30 miles from the rescue site in the Central Highlands. He clearly remembers April 20, 1969. "That was the first time that I really got the crap shot out of my aircraft, so I remember it really well," he says.


His medevac crew pulled two soldiers out of the jungle, but heavy small arms fire shut down the chopper's electrical and communications systems. Fuel was also draining from the bullet-riddled tank in the belly of the helicopter. "We pulled the aircraft straight up until we got the guy on the cable out of the jungle and flew about a quarter of a mile to an open field and sat down. Just as we got on the ground the aircraft quit because it ran out of fuel," O'Connell says they counted more than 300 bullet holes in the helicopter.

The crew returned the next morning to retrieve Murphy. When the two met in Mitchell decades later O'Connell won-

dered if things might have turned out differently if they had extracted him right away. "He was going to be the next guy on the hoist," O'Connell says. "We were going to pull one more guy and then Gene. I'd always felt bad. I asked him if he would have been better off if we'd gotten him out of there sooner, but he said his spine was already damaged. Nobody was going to solve that problem."

After Murphy introduced O'Connell to Bowes at the state fair, the two became fast friends, bonding over their time in Vietnam and a shared love of South Dakota State University and its sports teams. The three have also occasionally gathered for Veterans Day presentations.

The November holiday gives everyone a chance to reflect upon the sacrifices of our service men and women. Gene Murphy thinks about it every day. "How do you thank the guy who saved your life?" he asks. "The good Lord and Lyle Bowes saved Sgt. Murphy's butt that day."

Theirs is a friendship kindled on a Greyhound bus, forged in the jungles of Vietnam and sustained by their dedication to one another and their fellow veterans. 



## Membership

Duane Biesboer

The Chapter currently has a total of 142 members and 102 Associate Members.

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

**Annual Dues for 2024-2025 have been mailed out. If you have not sent that in, please do so!**

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

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



### 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**



**988- SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE**

## Volunteer Program

Charles Doom

The Chapter had 693 volunteer hours from October 2024-December 2024.

### Social Media Update- NEW FACEBOOK PAGE



Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter

See dashboard Edit Advertise

We are in the process of updating our social media pages and we needed to start a new Facebook page. Please follow our NEW Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61566417141295>

or by searching Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter and the page will look like the one above with the pheasant hunt picture. We will be posting events, pictures, and other news throughout the year on here to keep our members and community up to date on our chapter!

# Automobile for Sale



**Van Type:** 2018 Pacifica Limited Braunability

**Mileage:** 44,500 miles

**Details:** Front wheel drive-side doors, ramp, rear door, remote or manual-remote start, new battery, good tires. Drivers seat & passenger seat removable. Hand controls and chair lockdown for driving.

**If interested call 605-413-2562.**

# A Contact to Know:

## Brian Slack

Brian Slack works at the VA and he helps patients advocate and receive the following Specialty Programs:

**HISA** - (Home Improvement Structural Alteration) – this program is a grant for veterans to help with their homes to help keep them in there. Exp – Walk-in Shower, door widenings

**AAE** – Automobile Adaptive Equipment – pay for adaptive equipment for automobiles

**Service Dogs** – we pay for the healthcare of the dog

**Clothing Allowance** – Program that pays veterans whose clothes get damaged from bracing we issue to them.

**Email: [Brian.Slack@va.gov](mailto:Brian.Slack@va.gov)**



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## 2025 South Dakota Legislative Session

The 100th Session of the South Dakota Legislature will convene at approximately 1:00 pm on Tuesday, January 14, 2025, with Governor Kristi Noem's State of the State Address.

This year's session is scheduled for 38 legislative days, with the main run concluding March 13. March 31 is reserved for considering gubernatorial vetoes.

Legislative Research Council's website can be viewed at: <https://sdlegislature.gov/>.

The legislative calendar can be found at :  
<https://mylrc.sdlegislature.gov/api/documents/267376.pdf>

There are 105 legislators—35 in the Senate and 70 in the House of Representatives.

Members of the Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee include: Greg Blanc (Rapid City), Joy Hohn (Hartford), Taffy Howard (Rapid City), Vice Chairman Sam Marty (Prairie City), and Chairman Larry Zikmund (Sioux Falls).

Members of the House Military and Veterans Affairs Committee include: Bobbi Andera (Sioux Falls), Aaron Aylward (Harrisburg), Heather Baxter (Rapid City), Chairman Tim Goodwin (Rapid City), Terri Jorgenson (Rapid City), Tony Kayser (Sioux Falls), Scott Moore (Ipswich), Peri Pourier (Rapid City), Tony Randolph (Rapid City), Christopher Reder (Warner), Vice Chairman Tim Reisch (Howard), William Shorma (Dakota Dunes), and Keri Weems (Sioux Falls).

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# GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR

## Senator Elizabeth Dole Act Passed

After months of bipartisan negotiations, Congress passed the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act. As its name suggests, this comprehensive and transformative legislation will improve the lives of veterans and their caregivers on several fronts, including Department of Veterans Affairs health care and benefits, streamlining the disability claims process, expanding access to job training and employment opportunities, address veteran homelessness and strengthen mental health services, easing burdens for aging and disabled veterans to receive at-home care and much more. We applaud the leadership of House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Mike Bost, Ranking Member Mark Takano, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester, and Ranking Member Jerry Moran, who worked tirelessly together to get this bill through the legislative process. This expansive package is an excellent example of how our elected leaders can positively impact the lives of veterans when they come together. We look forward to the President signing this bill, which will bring much needed relief to America's veterans and their caregivers.

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## 2.5 percent increased signed into law Nov. 24 and is based on Social Security Administration's COLA increase for next year.

The Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2024 was signed into law on Nov. 25, military retirees and disabled veterans receiving Department of Veterans benefits will see a 2.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in 2025.

The COLA increase is tied to the increase of the same amount announced by the Social Security Administration last October. Most government disability and retirement payments are required by law to increase annually by the same amount to account for the rate of inflation.

The COLA amount is determined by the Department of Labor and is based on the Consumer Price Index, which measures a broad sampling of the cost of consumer goods and expenses and how they relate to the previous year's cost.

The increase will impact veterans receiving VA disability compensation and clothing allowance, and for survivors receiving dependency indemnity compensation payments.

According to Military.com, the increase means veterans rated at 100 percent without any dependents will receive approximately \$93.45 per month, while those rated at 10 percent will see an increase of around \$4.28 per month.

- Veterans Benefits



# Changes to social security in-person services

Social Security Administration offices are expanding appointment-based services. By scheduling appointments, they hope to reduce wait times, streamline service delivery, and improve the overall customer experience.

SSA is implementing appointment-based services nationwide in two phases. The first phase is a transition period now through January 5, 2025. The purpose of this transition period is to educate customers about needing to schedule an appointment for SSA services. Many of their services can be provided via phone with an appointment and do not require a customer to walk into an office for service.

Effective January 6, 2025, they will require customers to schedule an appointment for service in their field offices, including requests for Social Security cards. They encourage customers to become accustomed to their online services, where many transactions can be completed conveniently and securely, and automated services available on their National 800# at 1-800-772- 1213.

Customers who are not able to handle their business online or with the automated options, may call their local Social Security office or the National 800# to schedule an appointment.

People will not be turned away for service who are unable to make an appointment or do not want to make an appointment. For example, members of vulnerable populations, military personnel, people with terminal illnesses, and individuals with other situations requiring immediate or specialized attention may still walk in for service at their field offices. Some of offices have minimal to no wait times, and they will still serve customers who walk in.

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## FORMER REP. DOUG COLLINS TO BE NOMINATED FOR VA SECRETARY

President-Elect Trump has announced that he intends to nominate former Rep. Doug Collins (R-GA) to be the next VA Secretary. Collins is a veteran and colonel in the Air Force Reserve where he serves as a chaplain. He served in Congress as a U.S. Representative from 2013 to 2021.

Following the announcement, Collins stated on X, "We'll fight tirelessly to streamline and cut regulations in the VA, root out corruption, and ensure every veteran receives the benefits they've earned." He further said, "Together, we'll make the VA work for those who fought for us. Time to deliver for our veterans and give them the world class care they deserve."

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# How to Donate to our Organization

Our organization depends on donations throughout the year to host events for our members. Please consider setting up a monthly donation through our website. On our website home page ([www.ncpva.org](http://www.ncpva.org)), you will see a “Donate Now” button. When you click that, you can click the checkbox that says “Make this a monthly donation”. We have had a large increase in participation at events, and we would like to continue to take as many people to these activities as possible. Thank you for your future donations!



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Veterans of America**   
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# PVA Washington Post Updates- December Issue



## A MAJOR VICTORY FOR VETERANS AND CAREGIVERS

After months of advocacy work from PVA, the House has passed H.R. 8371, the Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act. The bill now moves to the Senate for further action. The passage of this bill brings us one step closer to securing critical improvements in healthcare and benefits for Veterans and their families.

Help us ensure this bill becomes law by contacting your local Senators.  
JoinPVAction Force **Join PVAction Force** to let your voice be heard.



## PVA PROVIDES ESSENTIALS FOR SCI/D REHABILITATION

Through PVA's partnership with the VA, every VA Acute Care SCI/D Center now includes a Home Environment Area (Transitional Apartment), essential for the rehabilitation of newly injured Veterans, giving Veterans and caregivers a chance to practice daily tasks in a real-world setting before discharge.

This is just one of the ways PVA works to ensure that Veterans are fully prepared to transition back to independent living.

For more resources/support, please visit <https://pva.org/find-support/>

### Caring for a Veteran?

Call VA's Caregiver Support Line for help toll-free:

**1-855-260-3274**

Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 11:00 pm EST  
Saturday, 10:30 am – 6:00 pm EST

**VA Caregiver Support PROGRAM**

 **Department of Veterans Affairs**



# PVA Wraps Up Sixth Annual Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat in Southern California

WASHINGTON, Oct. 9, 2024 – [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#) – the nation’s premier nonprofit of choice for disabled veterans, their families, and caregivers – wrapped up its [2024 Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat](#) in Long Beach, California today. The three-day event engaged, supported, and uplifted female veterans with spinal cord injuries and diseases, like MS and ALS, from 24 PVA Chapters across the United States.

This year, 35 women veterans participated in advocacy and leadership workshops, as well as group activities tailored to address the unique challenges they face daily. A key highlight of the Retreat was the viewing of PVA’s newly released public service announcement, [Women First](#). The PSA prominently features U.S. Air Force Veteran/PVA National Senior Vice President Tammy Jones and U.S. Army Veteran/PVA National Vice President Anne Robinson – who founded PVA’s Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat – as well as renowned sports anchor Hannah Storm. Together, the trio paint a stark contrast between the difference in medical care for able-bodied women and women with disabilities.

“Women veterans form a vital and distinct community,” stated Jones. “PVA’s Empowerment Retreat is an extension of that community and provides them with essential tools they need for success. It also underscores the importance of supporting each other as we navigate the everyday ups and downs of being a woman veteran.”

Both Jones and Robinson brought their personal stories to the forefront in the latest PSA, emphasizing that women veterans with disabilities encounter countless barriers in accessing medical care. From patient rooms and weight scales to medical facilities and staff training, inaccessibility at every healthcare touchpoint matters and can make the difference between life and death. Their involvement in PVA’s Women First campaign aims to raise awareness of these issues, making it a fitting complement to this year’s Retreat, which focused on leadership development and resilience.

The 2024 Retreat not only included empowerment sessions, but also included activities like morning yoga, meditation, and a 1940s-themed party highlighting the importance of physical and emotional well-being. This year’s all-expense-paid Retreat took place from October 5 – 8 and was generously sponsored by First Nation Group, Siebert Williams Shank Foundation, and TriWest Healthcare Alliance.

To learn more about PVA’s Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat, the unique challenges women veterans with disabilities face, and how PVA is amplifying their voices, visit [PVA.org/WomenVeterans](https://PVA.org/WomenVeterans).

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# Happy Birthday!

## PVA North Central Chapter Birthday Roster

### January 2024

Thomas Holtey	Thomas Dietz
David Morgan	Bob Schutte
Lawrence Hogan	Gary Kipena
Jack Gill	Ross Beranek
Randy Brown	Les Hovrud
Lary Marthaller	Kenneth Bassett
Eric Kritzmire	Evan Ellis
Steve Thompson	Colin Olson
Bob Sanchez	

### February 2024

Andrew Watson	Jonathan Englund
Allan Trautman	Chad Maxon
Gary Reineke	Saundra Tryner
Caron Morris	Eugene Ridenour
Ralph Martin	Cathy Brandner
Ernest Milliron	Harlan Schmidt
Terry Bacon	Douglas McCuddin
Julie Squires	Mark Johnson
Judy Hauck	Mark Wolf
Randall Thornburg	

### March 2024

Vern Anderson	Anthony Steensgaard
Kurt Lysne	Dennis Adams
Fred Nielsen	Tom Shields
Ronald Remer	Lance Anderson
Steve Barrett	Terrence Kohler
Harold Muldenburg	Linda LeBorgne
Brad Friez	Tim Ruppert
John North	Elizabeth Maisonneuve
Warren Zweifel	Carl Elk Boy
Glenn Broski	



## SD State Veterans Cemetery Endowment Fund

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

The South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery is located at the I-90/I-229 area in Sioux Falls, SD and encompasses 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.

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



Have you considered including PVA North Central Chapter in your will or trust?

This type of donation will serve as an investment in our organization that will reap our members benefits for many years to come.





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- ☐ Have trouble navigating stairways in your home?
- ☐ Have trouble entering or leaving your home?
- ☐ Need assistance getting in and out of bed?

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National Service Office: (605) 333-6896 NSO Email: [www.dav.vbasux@va.gov](mailto:www.dav.vbasux@va.gov)

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

*“DISABLED VETERANS HELPING DISABLED VETERANS”*



## JOIN THE DAV

*“Our government and our people have no greater obligation than to assure that those who have served their country and the cause of freedom will never be forgotten or neglected”*

*—President Lyndon B. Johnson*

## 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

1898 Fort Road  
Sheridan, WY 82801  
Phone: (307) 672-3473 or (866) 822-6714  
Fax: (307) 672-1900

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