Help Us Serve America’s Veterans

Health Care, Benefits, Advocacy, Sports, Recreation, Education are just a few of the programs your tax-deductible contributions help support.

For more information, call (800) 248-2548 or visit www.buckeyepva.org

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Like us on FACEBOOK!

Paralyzed Veterans of America
Buckeye Chapter
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SUMMER 2020

Change Your Direct Deposit Information

Change your VA direct deposit information for disability compensation, pension benefits, or education benefits online.

If you receive disability compensation or pension payments from VA, you can update your direct deposit information in your VA.gov profile. You'll need your bank’s routing number and account number to make the updates (you'll need to sign in to VA.gov to update your direct deposit information. Once signed in, you'll have to verify your identity and set up 2-factor authentication only if you've haven't done this already).

If you receive education benefit payments from VA, you'll need to sign in to eBenefits to update your direct deposit information. You'll need your bank’s routing number and account number to make the updates.

To update your direct deposit information or the address on your paper checks, you can:

- Call us at 800-827-1000 (TTY: 711), or go to your nearest VA regional office and change this information in person.

The Veterans Benefits Banking Program provides a list of Veteran-friendly banks and credit unions that can set up an account for you so you can use direct deposit.

To get started, call one of the participating banks or credit unions listed on the website. Be sure to mention the Veterans Benefits Banking Program.
**Mission Statement**

The Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter strives to improve the quality of life of honorably discharged veterans who have spinal cord injury, dysfunction or illness including but not limited to multiple sclerosis and ALS (Lou Gehrig’s disease) through advocacy, medical research, sports and recreation, education and communication.

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**DISCLAIMER**

The Buckeye Banner is a publication of the Buckeye Chapter, PVA and is meant to inform its readers of Chapter activities, legislation, and other matters of concern to veterans and members of the disability community. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of BPVA, its Officers, Board Members, the Editor or production staff.

Revised 8/20
Remember When...

It started out for two weeks—schools were closed, work places shut down to clean everything—until it was safer. Six months later and we are still in lockdown with no end in sight. All of us here at Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter want all of our members and friends to know we are here for you and want to help if we can.

The Board divided our 470 members’ names amongst each other and we gave all of our a members a ‘Buddy Check’ call. We all were extremely delighted to hear our members stories and talk with them about their concerns and interests. We realized some of you are busy, and if we didn't actually get to talk to you, we left a message to contact the office if there was something you needed help with. We were trying to update our contact list with correct phone numbers, addresses, and emails. If you didn’t get a call from one of us, please give the office a call so we can update your info.

A new Board will be taking over in October. I encourage all of you to attend our General Membership meetings and stay in contact with us by following us on Facebook, the Buckeye PVA website or by giving us a call. I hope you are all staying healthy and busy—there are all kinds of adaptive organizations providing virtual get-togethers, like cycling, strength training workouts (i.e. Sit Strong), book club, yoga, air rifle, chess, games, and more. If you are interested, or need help finding something, please give us a call.

We will be sending out our holiday gift cards so check your mail around the end of October for the application. Remember when things are looking down, “Look Up”—brighter days are coming.

-Holly

President’s Report

September 2020 Basket Raffle:
Support Buckeye PVA!

ARE YOU READY FOR ROUND #2?!

We would usually be throwing an in-person fundraiser, but thanks to COVID-19 that will have to wait until we can safely gather again! In the meantime, purchase a ticket (or 10) for our virtual raffle (that went live on Wednesday, 9/2) to be entered to win a basket of prizes. There are 13 unique baskets to choose from this time around! Raffle tickets are: $5 a piece, 3 for $10, or 10 for $30. The drawing will take place via Facebook Live on Wednesday, 9/23 @ 12 PM.

A HUGE thank you to our sponsor, Koester, DiSalvo and Fried, who will be matching the first $2,000 raised!

A link to the raffle will be posted on the Chapter Facebook page (facebook.com/buckeyepva) and will also be emailed to all members!

Good luck, and thank you for supporting Buckeye PVA!
A Note From Sharon Moster

Sharon Moster
BPVA Executive Director

It’s so hard to believe that summer is starting to turn to fall – the leaves are changing and there is a nighttime chill to the air. And yet for all these months we continue to survive a pandemic so big that our lives will likely be changed forever. But there is hope. Hope that 2021 will be a come back year. That you will be able to attend all of our events like the Buckeye Wheelchair Games, the National Veterans’ Wheelchair Games; the Arts and Crafts Fair; and so much more – that is Hope. Many of you requested and received a second Covid gift card. Even though that program has ended for the year, our Annual Gift Card program will begin in October. Watch for that announcement in your mailbox and online.

Emergency Assistance Program

Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter has available an Emergency Assistance Program. This program helps members of the Buckeye Chapter who may find themselves in financial distress causing possible eviction from their homes, disconnection of utilities or the inability to pay for food. Members must be in good standing for a minimum of 90 days prior to qualifying for consideration. Application for help is limited to twice yearly or up to a maximum of $500 per year. This is a confidential process. Payments must be made directly to the vendor. Please contact the Chapter office for more details. (800) 248-2548 or (216) 731-1017.

An important announcement! Ellen Schwartz has joined us as Program Director. Her article appears in another part of the Banner. Let’s welcome her with open arms!

In the meantime, we continue to be here – ready, willing and able to continue to guide you through this strange time. Call us 216-731-1017 or email us sharonm@buckeyepva.org or ellens@buckeyepva.org.

Stay safe,
Sharon

Greater Cincinnati including Dayton, Donate Today

Greater Cincinnati and Dayton, give G.I.V.E. a try and support veterans through a donation. Through the Paralyzed Veterans of America’s G.I.V.E. (Goods Inspiring Veterans Everywhere) clothing donation program, service never goes out of style.

Your generous donations of clothes, small appliances, and gently used household goods help improve the lives of severely injured veterans and strengthens the fabric of our community. Plus, your donations are tax deductible – a receipt will be issued upon pickup/drop off.

In Ohio, this service is only available in the Greater Cincinnati/Dayton area, but is expanding to different locations. Stay tuned for an area near you!

To donate, call (314) 416-1300 or visit the website for more information: www.pva.org/ways-to-give/give/give-clothing

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ANY VAN PURCHASED WE WILL MAKE A $250.00 DONATION TO THE P.V.A. BUCKEYE CHAPTER!
**Meet Ellen Schwartz!**

Greetings! My name is Ellen Schwartz, and I am the new Program Director here at Buckeye PVA. I am a University of Toledo graduate, a wife to Ethan, and a mother of two girls, Kennedy (age 3) and Raegan (age 1.5). I was born and raised on a farm in Northwest Ohio, but now call the suburbs of Cleveland home.

Before working at BPVA, I was an Employee Engagement Specialist at a local aviation company for just over five years. In that role I had the privilege of working with numerous nonprofits organizing programs, events, volunteering initiatives, etc. in order to serve families in need. If I am not working, I am usually on an adventure with my family, crafting, listening to an audiobook, or going on a walk in the Metroparks. I truly feel at home here at BPVA and could not imagine being anywhere else.

Since starting at BPVA in June, I have been busy immersing myself in the Chapter’s mission. Starting in the middle of the global pandemic has been an adventure! From launching round two of our COVID-19 Gift Card Program—which lead to the disbursement of just over 260 $75 gift cards, to hosting our first-ever Virtual Raffle—which raised over $2,100, things have been anything but boring!

Though I will not be able to meet most of you in-person for a while, I look forward to getting to “know” you through our virtual programs and events. You will be receiving a handful of Constant Contact emails from me soon outlining things we have going on in the Chapter. For instance, round two of our Virtual Raffle launched on September 2—keep an eye out for an emails containing updates about it! Also do not forget to follow our Facebook page (details about the raffle will be announced there, too). Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me to the Chapter with open arms! I cannot wait for all that is to come. If you have any questions for me in the meantime, do not hesitate to reach out.

Stay safe and healthy!

Ellen

E: ellens@buckeyepva.org

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**VA publishes final regulation for its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published its final regulation to improve and expand the VA Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) with the final regulation going into effect on Oct. 1.

Under the final regulation, PCAFC will include eligible Veterans that have a single or combined service-connected disability rating by VA of 70% or higher, regardless of whether it resulted from an injury, illness or disease.

Caregivers can visit VA Caregiver support website (https://www.caregiver.va.gov/) or call the Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274 for questions.

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**Mileage Reimbursement**

Who is eligible to participate in the program?

Must be a BPVA Member in good standing for a minimum of 90 days to participate. The Committee has the option to make exceptions for extenuating circumstances.

What is the acceptable time period before the program becomes available for use?

The BPVA member must be hospitalized for a minimum of one week.

What is the acceptable distance for mileage reimbursement?

The mileage reimbursement will be given to visitors for travel to a VA hospital in the State of Ohio for the well-being of members who are hospitalized. Beginning and ending travel must be in the State of Ohio.

How much is the reimbursement?

Reimbursement will be at a rate of $.20 per mile. Mileage will be determined via MapQuest based on the submission of the visitor of the beginning and ending address. Chapter will reimburse up to 2 trips per month with a $2,000 cap per year.

Reimbursement request containing the name of the member, name and address of the visitor, the date of visitation and the origin of the trip must be submitted by the 20th of the following month, with payment at the end of month. Request for reimbursement will only be valid for one calendar month following travel.

How will reimbursement be paid?

Reimbursements will be via check.

What locations are included in the program?

Reimbursement will be for Ohio VA hospitals only.

For more information contact the Chapter Office at 800-248-2548.
• House Veterans’ Committee Hearing on Sexual Harassment at VA

On July 22nd, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the Women Veterans Task Force met in an open session to conduct an oversight hearing entitled, “Safety for All: Ending Sexual Harassment in the Department of Veterans Affairs.” VA representatives at the hearing included Ms. Pamela Powers, Acting Deputy Secretary; Mr. Dan Sitterly, Assistant Secretary, Human Resources and Administration Operations, Security, and Preparedness; Dr. Patricia Hayes, Chief Consultant, Women’s Health Services, Office of Patient Care Services, Veterans Health Administration; and Ms. Lelia Jackson, Senior Strategist for the Office of the Chief of Staff, Veterans Health Administration. The hearing covered topics including the safety of VA employees following a GAO report that one in four women working at VA reported sexual harassment. Other topics included harassment of patients at VA and lack of clear reporting channels, procedures when a report occurs, and follow-up. PVA submitted a statement for the record. According to Department of Labor statistics, veterans with significant disabilities, including many PVA members, have consistently lagged behind those of their counterparts without disabilities. According to Department of Labor statistics, veterans with service-connected disabilities are less likely to participate in the labor force than veterans without disabilities.

• PVA Submits a Statement for House Veterans’ Committee Legislative Hearing

On July 23rd, the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee met to review more than a dozen bills focusing on burial benefits, life insurance programs, and reinstatement of the 48-hour review for claims processing. VA representatives at the hearing included Dr. Maria Llorente, Assistant Deputy Undersecretary for Health for Patient Care Services, Veterans Health Administration (VHA); Dr. Amanda Johnson, Director of Reproductive Health, VHA; Mr. Yuri Walker, RN, JD, MPH, Director of Risk Management Program at Office of Integrity, VHA; Ms. Beth Murphy, Executive Director of Compensation Service, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA); Ms. Charmain Bogue, Executive Director of Education Service, VBA; and Mr. Glenn Powers, Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs and Cemetery Operations, National Cemetery Administration.

• House Appropriations Bill Funds DOL VETS Programs

The House Appropriations Committee issued its report in mid-July for funding of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. Included in the massive funding bill was $312 million for fiscal year 2021 for the Department of Labor’s Veterans Employment and Training Service, of which $29.3 million is directed to the Transition Assistance Program, $57.5 million to the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, and continuation of funding for the Disabled Veterans Program that was created in the 2020 appropriation.

• Census Reminder

The U.S. Census Bureau is sending reminder postcards to an estimated 34.3 million households. This will be the final mailing before census takers begin visiting nonresponding households across the nation in mid-August. Responding now minimizes the need for census takers to visit homes to collect responses in person.

• Effort to Expand VA’s list of Medical Conditions Associated with Agent Orange Advances

The Senate approved language in its version of the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would expand VA’s list of medical conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange to include bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism. PVA endorsed the effort which was led by Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Ranking Member Jon Tester (D-MT). Unfortunately, the House did not include similar language in its version of the bill; so, this will be one of many differences that must be negotiated in a joint House-Senate conference this fall.

• Hearing on Getting Veterans To Work After COVID-19

On July 21st, the House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a virtual oversight hearing entitled, “Getting Veterans to Work After COVID-19.” The Senate approved language in its version of the bill; so, this will be one of many differences that must be negotiated in a joint House-Senate conference this fall.
On July 23rd, the House unanimously ap-
proved H.R. 3004, the Ryan Kyles and
Paul Beme Specially Adaptive Housing
Improvement Act of 2019. The bill is now
with the President. We have every indica-
tion that he will sign the bill into law.

Beginning October 1st, this legislation in-
creases the overall value of the Specially
Adapted Housing (SAH) grant to $98,492
and provides qualifying veterans with
twice as many opportunities to access
their grant. As of October 1, 2030, eligible vet-
erns who have exhausted their benefit
will be able to apply for a supplemental
grant if VA determines their residence still
needs modifications.

Much to our consternation, the House had
been holding the bill for nearly three
months. But thanks to those who partici-
pated in our recent VoteVoice grassroots
advocacy campaign on this bill, coupled
with the efforts of PVA National, we were
able to convince the House to act. Now,
our focus will shift from advocacy to mon-
toring its implementation.

During our webinar on VA’s adaptive
housing programs, Mr. Jason Latona,
Chief, Specially Adapted Housing, let
PVA members know that VA has been
preparing for passage of this legislation
and is ready to begin implementing the
program once it is authorized. Incidental-
ly, one of the most important components
of the initial legislation would have priori-
tized SAH claims for veterans diagnosed
with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).
Due to PVA’s advocacy, VA recognized
the need for this change and adjusted its
processes to accommodate these veterans
as the bill was working its way through the
legislative process. Since VA had already

acted on behalf of ALS veterans, that pro-
vision was not included in the final bill.

PVA TESTIMONY ON IMPACT OF COVID-19
ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND ITS BENEFICIARIES

On July 17th, Deputy Executive Director
Shaun Castle testified on behalf of PVA
before the House Ways and Means Social
Security Subcommittee concerning the
effects of the coronavirus on Social Secu-
ritiy disability (SSDI) beneficiaries and
the Social Security system. Mr. Castle reflect-
ed on the experiences of several PVA
members who have been struggling with
the isolation brought on by the pandemic
and worries over exposure of themselves
and their caregivers to the virus. He also
reported on problems faced by clients of
PVA’s vocational rehabilitation program
in reaching Social Security Administration
field offices which have gone almost com-
pletely online.

Mr. Castle reiterated PVA’s strong support
for the Social Security 2010 Act, H.R. 860,
and its many benefit improvements and
well-balanced measures to strengthen
the Social Security system for the long-
term and applauded the efforts to provide
temporary relief during the pandemic to
Social Security beneficiaries through H.R.
6356, the Emergency Social Security Ben-
efits Improvement Act. He also expressed
PVA’s continued support for additional
steps to protect beneficiaries with disabili-
ties through H.R. 4386, the Stop the Wait
Act. That legislation would eliminate the
five-month waiting period for SSDI as
well as the 24-month waiting period for
Medicare.

In addition, PVA offered its support for
H.R. 7499, the Social Security COVID
Correction and Equity Act which was in-
troduced to address an unforeseen conse-
quence of the economic downturn that
could have dramatic and long-lasting ad-
verse effects on millions of Social Security
beneficiaries. Because Social Security
benefits are based on a complex formula
using average wages, the massive unem-
ployment caused by the COVID-19 reces-
sion could cause a severe drop in benefits
for those born in 1960. H.R. 7499 would
prevent that from happening.

NEWS ITEMS OF NOTE
- House Passes VA Funding Bill
  On July 24th, the House passed, 224-189,
  a funding bill that provides $104.8 billion
  for VA, with $12.5 billion in emergency
  funding to help with rising health care
  costs for veterans. This appropriation pro-
  vides a 13 percent increase over FY 2020.
  It also includes a one-year extension of
  VA’s authority to provide advanced repro-
cutive technologies like IVF, a top priori-
ity for PVA. VA’s bill is linked to the mili-
try construction funding bill, which in-
cludes politically-charged provisions relat-
ed to wall funding along the border with
Mexico and renaming of military bases. It
is likely that VA will start FY2021 under
a continuing resolution as the House and
Senate finalize their differences.

- Senate Veterans’ Committee Hosts
  VA Roundtable

PVA recently participated in a closed Sen-
ate Roundtable hosted by U.S. Senator
Jerry Moran, chairman of the Senate Vet-
erns’ Affairs Committee, to address vet-
erns equality and ways VA can better
serve minorities. Senators, VSOs, and in-
dividual veterans came together to discuss
multiple topics including barriers to care,
unique issues for specific populations of
veterans, and needed improvements.

According to Veterans Health Administra-
tion Directive 2010-054, veterans are Catastrophically
Disabled when they have a severely disabling injury,
disorder or disease that permanently compromises
their ability to carry out the activities of daily living.
The disability must leave the veteran so dependent as
to require assistance to leave home or require
constant supervision to avoid physical harm to
themselves or others.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) places all
veterans eligible for medical care into one of eight
priority groups. Veterans determined
Catastrophically Disabled will automatically be placed
in Priority Group 4 unless eligible for a
higher priority group based on other
eligibility criteria.

On May 5, 2010, the President signed Public
Law 111-163, the Caregiver and Veterans
Omnibus Health Services Act of 2011. The
law states that Catastrophically Disabled
veterans will be exempt from paying
inpatient, outpatient and prescription copays.
Veterans with catastrophic disabilities are
also exempt from paying copayments for non
institutional respite care, non-institutional
ergie evaluation, non-institutional adult
day health care, Homemaker/Home Health
Aide, Purchased Skilled Home Care, Home
Based Primary Care, and any other non-
institutional alternative extended care
services. However, Catastrophically Disabled
veterans will still be required to pay
copayments for other extended care services
such as Nursing Home Care.

A Catastrophically Disabled determination will be
authorized upon review from a VA clinician
and signed off on by the facility Chief of Staff.
An evaluation appointment may be scheduled for
Veterans who may not have sufficient medical
evidence made available to the VA Medical Center.
Veterans may also request a Catastrophically
Disabled evaluation by contacting an Enrollment
Coordinator at their local VA health care facility. It is
VA policy to provide a Catastrophically Disabled
Veteran an evaluation within 30 days of the request.

Reminder yourself to ask your SCI Outpatient Social
Worker during your next annual examination if you
have been determined to have a Catastrophic
Disability.
Folks,

This veteran’s story honors the memory of Lieutenant-Colonel John Bietz who Blaine met in 1990 at Santee Cooper, South Carolina’s Short-Stay Recreational Facility, a playground accommodating all military personnel. He was a helicopter Wrang officer at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina. He piloted a helicopter gunship for two tours in Vietnam. Blaine always told him, “You look like a Christmas tree,” when he wore his dress blues because of all the medals and ribbons adorning his jacket. John flew many missions over the ocean that came with a great number of stories about giant, unrecognized sea life. He was confident that he had seen a 50 foot 60 foot shark that in later years motivated him to dig for Megalodon teeth. He unearthed a couple hundred of them through the years and on one visit to John’s home in Beaufort, North Carolina, Blaine saw 3 jars full of these pre-historic shark teeth.

In 12 years of fishing together, they caught quite a few thousand fish: striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, bluefish, striped bass, 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Turn Your Used Vehicle Into Support for Paralyzed Veterans of America

We'll use the proceeds from the sale of your car, truck, RV or boat to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes.

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Call 877-900-VETS or donate online at pva.careasy.org
As summer draws closer to an end, we see adaptations relating to COVID-19 everywhere as we all push to return to normal. Unfortunately, we saw the cancellation of many events in the PVA community; the good news is that we are starting to see them rescheduled and reorganized. The most notable of these cancellations was the 40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Instead of having the NVWG in Portland, it was announced that the Games would be taking place virtually and would include new events such as Adaptive CrossFit and an Esports tournament playing the game Rocket League. The Butler Cup Team (Dennis Brostek, John Wade, Larry Bostic, Scott Law, and Tom Fisher) took Bronze, Holly Koester and I took Gold and Silver respectively in our divisions for the Cascade Cup, & Scott Law and I took Gold and Silver respectively in Disc Golf. Holly Koester also took Bronze in the 30 Day Cycling Challenge logging 425 miles. Rounding out the list, Holly joins Larry Bostic and Nate Collins in Air Rifle finishing 5th, 7th, and 9th respectively. The 40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games will now be taking place next summer in New York City with more details coming soon.

We also had to postpone several chapter events including the Buckeye Chapter Golf Outing, Buckeye Wheelchair Games, the Buckeye Cup, and the All You Can Eat Fundraiser. Thankfully the raffle for the AYCE was modified to take place virtually, with a 2nd raffle coming in September, and the Buckeye Cup will take place in the first quarter of 2021.

I highly encourage everyone to reach out to their Recreation Therapists at the VA for the myriad of activities they are offering. You will find everything from Virtual Fitness Clinics and Leisure Activities, to Cooking Classes and Yoga. You can also find more activities the PVA will be doing by looking in your PN Magazine. -Josh

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It could be a simple trip to the mall, a ride to the movies or just a visit to a friend’s home. The little things in life can make a big difference. It’s why MobilityWorks has been helping veterans connect with who and what matters most since 1997. Veterans have unique needs so we treat each of them as individuals. First of all, we listen. Then, we work together to find the best solution.

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