Beginning October 1, 2020, the Buckeye PVA will offer members in good standing of at least 90 days funding for assistance with the cost of hand controls and other adaptive driving controls in their personal automobile. Chapter funding may be provided through application by any full voting BPVA member after all other funding is exhausted (i.e. VA). Member will be required to provide a written estimate and proof of any and all other funding. For the Chapter to pay for installation of driving controls, there must be an understanding between the member and BPVA. The BPVA’s role is to only provide charitable funding. BPVA member must agree in writing that BPVA is only a funding source and carries no liability or obligation of any kind except for payment to the vendor for the controls. The vendor must be a NMEDA certified dealer.

At the time of application, and prior to BPVA making payment to the vendor pursuant to invoice, the member must provide the following:
1. Certificate of Insurance
2. Certification of driving evaluation on a case by case basis (done by the V.A.)
3. Current driver’s license front and back
4. Invoice from the vendor

Payment limits after all other sources have been applied is: up to $2,500 for para adaptation; up to $5,000 for quad adaptation. Payment will be made directly to the vendor.

If a member wants the Chapter to pay up to $2,500 to install the controls with self pay handling the rest, that is permissible. However, all funds would have to be paid to the dealer before the Chapter would provide funding.

This grant is available every 5 years. Give us a call at (216) 731-1017, send us an email at info@buckeyepva.org, or head to our website at buckeyepva.org to get an application.
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.

We’re on Social Media!
BPVA is trying to increase our followers on Social Media.
Please follow us and spread the word!

Paralyzed Veterans of America, Buckeye Chapter
@PVABuckeye

Paralyzed Veterans of America—Buckeye Chapter
@BuckeyePVA

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/or 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
President’s Report

It seems like only yesterday we were getting ready for 2020, now 2021 is just around the corner. As I think back, this has been a very challenging year especially with the COVID-19 virus. Now it is time to look forward to the challenges, events, and issues, which will be encountered in 2021. The most imposing challenge we are always looking at is the difficulty in raising the funds needed to keep all of our programs running. Our “Great Food, Great Cause” fundraiser, Annual Buckeye Wheelchair Games (BWG) at Spire Institute, Annual Buckeye 8 Ball Tournament, the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and Annual Golf Scramble Fundraiser were all called off because of COVID. As of this writing 2021 isn’t looking much better.

More information about these events will be in the upcoming newsletters and on the chapter web site. www.buckeyepva.org

This was election year for our chapter with all 9 offices up for re-election. I’m extremely happy to report we have some new young blood on the board. Your officers and board for the next two (2) years are:

- Carl Harris – President
- Joey Myers – Board Member, GRD
- Doug Beckley – Vice President
- Paul Mann – Board Member
- Robert Morris – Treasurer
- Lucas Meyers – Board Member
- Holly Koester – Secretary
- Milton Young – Board Member
- Scott Law – Board Member, Sports Director

Lastly, a grateful “THANK YOU” to the volunteers, sponsors, donors, staff, officers, directors, and all our members who took their time to step up to help support the chapter throughout the year. I have full confidence that this will continue through the New Year. Your officers and directors look forward to continue serving the BPVA chapter and its members.

If you have any thoughts or ideas big or small that may help improve the productivity of the chapter, please don’t hesitate to share them with one of the officers or directors. Contact the chapter office or email me at carlh@buckeyepva.org.

Best wishes for a VERY MERRY HOLIDAY SEASON and a WONDERFUL and HEALTHY and SAFE NEW YEAR to everyone!!!!

Sincerely,
Carl Harris
E: carlh@buckeyepva.org

A Note From Sharon Moster

This will be my last article for the Banner as I am retiring come December 31.

When I came to Buckeye PVA, I was educated in many ways in non-profit management. But Buckeye PVA was nothing like my experiences.

Buckeye PVA is more like an extended family than a non-profit organization. The Board is made up of Aunts and Uncles. Our Board meetings are like a giant family dinner – everyone is talking, sometimes out of turn, some of us are yelling, some are laughing. However, all of us are working toward one goal. That is to make sure that all of you are well taken care of.

This family has had its share of struggles over the years. Disagreements over things big and small. When resolved, we “hugged” it out.

Deaths in the family have been far too many. While I can’t list everyone we’ve lost, I want to share some memories. When I got here, Leonard Hallbank was Vice President. Leonard was a kind, gentle soul. He was calm for the most part and he had a great chuckle. It was soothing for me as I made my way through Chapter initiation. No other Board member who we’ve lost has made a bigger impression on me.

We have had a great group of volunteers in the last few years. But in the beginning there were three who were devoted to us. Alice Tyna, Chris Sonye, and the late Patty Harris. These three wives did everything they could to serve the Chapter. And serve was not just theoretical, they actually served at all our luncheons! I miss the help from Alice and Chris. But most of all I miss Patty Harris. Much like Leonard Hallbank, Patty was calm, determined and seemingly happy. She had an old world style with a modern mind. Plus she was Carl’s wife and deserved to be knighted.

Speaking of Carl, of all the people I have met, no one gave me more problems and more inspiration than Carl Harris. While we fought like cats and dogs (and believe me, he had to win), in the end most of the time he gave me great advice.

I’m hopeful that all of you will remember me fondly. I honestly did my best to serve all of you and it has been my pleasure. As I move on to the twilight of my career, I want you to know that many of you will be in my mind and my heart for the rest of my life.

Ellen Schwartz will be replacing me in January so feel free to call on her if you need any help.

Sending out lots of love,

Sharon Moster
E: sharonm@buckeyepva.org
Happy Holidays, everyone!

I hope you all had a wonderful Halloween and Thanksgiving. My family and I dressed up as characters from Disney’s Frozen for Halloween and enjoyed a small, COVID-safe Thanksgiving. Things sure do look different this year, but we were able to focus on the “joy” regardless. It is hard not to constantly have a smile on my face with two little ones!

As the fall season comes to an end, and winter approaches, I hope you and your loved ones continue to stay safe, warm, and healthy.

Here at the BPVA Chapter office, things have been anything but quiet. Between the launch and conclusion of the Holiday Food Coupon Program, to welcoming a new administrative assistant into the office (Madalyne “Maddi” Snyder), things have been extra busy, however, we would not change a thing!

BPVA has quickly turned into “home” for me in the past 6 months. I owe a huge part of that to Sharon. She has served as an amazing mentor, friend, and role model to me since arriving. It has been the privilege of a lifetime to learn from her. As she enters retirement, she will be leaving huge shoes behind to fill. I will do my best to take the lessons she has taught me and apply them to my new role as Executive Director in January. Sharon has left an immeasurable impact on the chapter, and I hope to continue to build on her legacy.

Until then, I look forward to the day I get to meet many of you in person. Feel free to give me a ring at the office or email me at ellens@buckeyepva.org anytime.

I wish you and yours a Happy New Year. Cheers to a healthy, happy 2021—and finally, a HUGE congratulations to Sharon on her retirement!

Best,
Ellen Schwartz
E: ellens@buckeyepva.org

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.

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.
Meet Madalynne Snyder!

Hey there! My name is Maddi Snyder, and I am the new Administrative Assistant, and newest addition to the Buckeye PVA family! I am a proud graduate of Bowling Green State University with my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology. I was born in Northwest Ohio and am new to the Cleveland area, although it is already starting to feel like home after just 6 short months. I live with my boyfriend, Doran, and we have already been taking advantage of all the things Cleveland has to offer, including National forest trails, The Flats downtown, and even Patterson’s Fruit Farm!

My experience with nonprofit organizations is ever growing! Having previously worked at the Children’s Resource Center, a nonprofit in Bowling Green focused on the betterment of children’s mental and behavioral health, I was able to sharpen my skills as an administrative assistant to prepare me for this position at Buckeye PVA! I have also had the great challenge and privilege of working with a diverse population from many different belief systems and backgrounds at the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Greater Toledo. When I’m off the clock I spend my time riding horses, painting and playing with our new rescue pup, Dash. I am excited to really dive deep into the culture and mission here at BPVA!

While my time here so far has been short, I have already been able to get to work with our Holiday Food Coupon program, organizing and entering over 250 applications. I was completely overwhelmed with excitement to know that we were able to assist so many families during this time. While this program has kept me quite busy, I somehow still have time to work with Ellen and Sharon on organizational tasks and revamping some of our social media platforms, which are now up and running as I plan for more weekly posts and member interactive campaigns. It’s full steam ahead here in the office!

I want to thank Sharon and Ellen for their guidance and patience with me as I learn the ropes and adjust to life here at BPVA, which I am already loving so far! It is heartwarming to finally feel at home in an organization that is doing such great work for the community. I am just ecstatic to “meet” you all, whether over the phone, in a zoom call, or a wave through the window outside of our office and look forward to the day when we can all feel a little closer meeting in person! In the meantime, should you need anything feel free to reach out at any time.

Sincerely,

Your new friend
Maddi Snyder
E: maddis@buckeyepva.org

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
We Proudly Support the
Paralyzed Veterans of America
BUCKEYE CHAPTER

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Expansion of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) provides qualifying Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans certain benefits, such as training, respite care, counseling, technical support, certain beneficiary travel benefits, a monthly stipend payment, and access to health care (if qualified) through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA).

The first phase of expansion of the PCAFC began October 1, 2020, as outlined in VA MISSION Act of 2018 (“MISSION Act”), Public Law 115-182. The first phase expands eligibility to include eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or before May 7, 1975.

The final phase of expansion will occur October 1, 2022, and will expand PCAFC eligibility to include eligible Veterans from all eras of service regardless of when an eligible Veteran’s serious injury was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service.

What major changes has VA rolled out effective October 1, 2020?

VA has changed the definition of “serious injury” to mean any service-connected disability rated 70% or more. This includes combinations of 70%. There are two changes here. First, the percentage requirement was lowered to 70%. Second, the definition of serious injury now includes “illness”. This is a major change; as prior to this legislation, it had to be an injury. Veterans with a service-connected disease were previously not eligible.

Now, the service-connected disability and percentage requirement is not the only eligibility criteria for veterans. Eligible Veterans must also need personal care services (requiring in-person personal care services) for a minimum of six continuous months based on an inability to perform an activity of daily living (ADL) or a need for supervision, protection, or instruction.

Family Caregiver Requirements:
1. Be at least 18 years of age
2. Be either:
   a) the eligible Veteran’s spouse, son, daughter, parent, step-family member, or extended family member; or
   b) someone who lives with the eligible Veteran full-time or will do so if designated as a Family Caregiver
3. Be initially assessed by VA as being able to complete caregiver education and training. Complete caregiver training and demonstrate the ability to carry out the specific personal care services, core competencies, and additional care requirements
4. In addition, there must be no determination by VA of abuse or neglect of the eligible Veteran by the caregiver.

VA has also revamped the stipend payment methodology. The previous calculations of stipends were categorized into three tiers calculated on the number of hours of care needed. Now the stipends are broken down into two categories. Stipends will be based on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) General Schedule (GS) Annual Rate for grade 4, step 1, based on the locality pay area in which the eligible Veteran resides. Primary Family Caregivers will receive either 100% or 62.5% of the monthly stipend rate, depending on whether the eligible Veteran is unable to self-sustain in the community.

- Level 2: Veteran who is determined to be unable to self-sustain in the community, the Primary Family Caregiver will receive 100% of the monthly stipend rate.
- Level 1: Veteran who is not determined to be unable to self-sustain in the community, the Primary Family Caregiver will receive 62.5% of the monthly stipend rate.

A Veteran and Family Caregiver that was approved and designated by VA as eligible for PCAFC before October 1, 2020, are considered Legacy Participants.

What happens to legacy participants due to a change in eligibility?

There is no immediate action required by the Veteran or caregiver. However, the VA will schedule an appointment to reassess the continued eligibility. The Veteran maintains his or her eligibility for one year from the expansion, through September 30, 2021, regardless of when the reassessment occurs. The one year from October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021, when the VA will reassess all legacy participants, is considered the “Transitional Period”.

Legacy participants who meet the new eligibility requirements and the reassessment results in:
1. A higher stipend amount, then the increase will take effect immediately with retroactive payment to October 1, 2020; or
2. A lower stipend amount, then the current stipend amount remains through the duration of the transitional period.

Legacy participants who do not meet the new eligibility requirements:
1. They will continue to receive their current stipend amount during the transitional period, as long as they are not discharged or revoked on another basis.
2. Legacy participants can appeal if they do not meet the new eligibility requirements.

How do you apply?

Complete VA form 10-10CG, then submit the form to the local VAMC Caregiver Support Coordinator; or mail it to:

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregiver
Health Eligibility Center
2957 Clairmont Rd. NE Suite 200
Atlanta, GA 30329-1647

PVA is closely monitoring the expansion of the PCAFC and associated changes. We encourage you to reach out to your National Service Officer for your questions and assistance in applying.

E: michaely@pva.org
Member Moose Hunting Trip!

Recently, I had the good fortune to win a tag in the Maine Moose Hunt lottery. If you know anything about the Maine moose lottery or about hunting lotteries in general you know that it can sometimes take a very long time to win a tag. As for the Maine moose lottery, it is not unheard of for a hunter to wait more than 20 years to win a tag. I won mine in my 4th year of applying.

Winning a tag would just be the start of my lucky streak. Because, lucky for me, I discovered Smoldering Lake Outfitters. A guide service that has a history of working with disabled hunters with an accessible lodge from which they base their operations and with accessible cabins for their guests. The company is headed by Dave Hentosh and he and his crew are very familiar with the needs of a disabled individual. Every year they host a group of Disabled Veterans for a controlled hunt organized and ran by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife. This hunt is open to disabled veterans from anywhere in the USA. And to be completely honest with anyone thinking of going moose hunting. It is a very physical ordeal and if you are going to attempt a regular hunt you will need a strong upper body. This controlled hunt on the other hand I imagine most any disabled hunter could participate in. You might be sitting and waiting over a food plot but it is still hunting and you will still need to take aim and fire your rifle.

As for my hunt. I would be joined on this adventure with my 16-year-old nephew Wyatt, my sister Hannah and my brother-in-law Scott. I knew I was going to need help at times with getting in and out of the trucks we would be using and basically for anything that I might need them to do while in the middle of the woods. Also, I knew I wanted to involve my nephew in this hunt when I found out about Maine’s sub-permittee process. Basically, one person gets a tag in their name and they have to be there actively hunting no matter what. But you can also choose a person to be your sub-permittee, which allows them to carry a rifle and hunt with you and take a shot as long as they are within 100 feet. Wyatt would be my sub-permittee. Just in case there ended up being a situation where there was a shot that could be made, but I would not be able to get into the proper position to take the shot. Not to mention, the kid spends far too much time inside and I wanted to get him hooked on something that takes him outside.

As for getting to and from Maine, I took my van with a trailer attached so that we would have everything we would need. Mind you, I was told to bring 2-3 large or extra-large coolers to put the meat in, if I did harvest a moose I would need the space. Also, I would be bringing my Trac-Fab tracked power chair. While Dave had said that they have a tracked chair there, I preferred to bring my own. It is good to know that they do have a chair that a veteran could use if they don’t have one as I do. Many thanks go to the Independence Fund for buying my own Trac-Fab chair, I know I wouldn’t have even thought about going moose hunting if I didn’t have mine.

Now onto the hunting. We would be waking at 3:30 in the morning to give me plenty of time to be ready for breakfast at 4:15. At around 4:45 we would load up in the guides trucks and head out into the Maine woods. After an approximately 30 min drive, we would be at our first location of the day. Upon arriving at a hunting spot that had been scouted ahead of time my guide would get out and unload my power track chair and bring it right to my door so that I could easily transfer right onto it. Then we would move up a trail or old logging road about a mile. And then find a bit of cover to try and hide some of the chair.
This is when I started to realize I had made the right decision in hiring a guide. Dave and a couple of the other guides started making moose calls. Some female and some male, just to give the illusion that there was a group of moose in the area. Almost immediately we had a response from a bull moose. And then we started to get responses from the moose cows as well. Unfortunately, it was unseasonably warm on our first day of hunting and the moose just did not want to move in closer and investigate. That’s how it was that that first day, hearing lots of moose but not seeing anything. We kept at it till sunset and then we headed back to the lodge.

The next day started off much as the day before. We were hearing plenty of moose but we weren’t seeing anything. And then around 7:30 one of the guides in another truck out scouting for us came across a bull and a cow just off the road about a mile from where we had set up. We quickly loaded up and were headed to a spot from where Dave thought he could call the moose in such a way that it would come out of the trees on one side of the trail and have to cross the trail to get to the “cow” that it was hearing. Which should give me and my nephew a clear shot. After waiting only about 5 minutes and to my amazement a large bull trotted out of the trees on the right side and was headed straight for Dave. When it came to within about 10 feet of him it stopped briefly and looked up the road towards us. I almost took a shot then, but he wasn’t giving me a clear shot at his side. So, I waited, and about 2 seconds later the moose turned and started to take a step and that is when I pulled the trigger. He dropped immediately and would not be getting back up. I had shot him in the spine and he could not lift himself up. My nephew quickly dispatched the animal and put him out of his misery as he could have laid there for hours before dying.

Then came the obligatory photos with my family. As well as my guides. After measuring the rack, it was found to be 46” wide with 18 points. Maybe not a record-setter, but a trophy for me. I am having it mounted in fact, and it will be on full display in my new house. Also nice was the almost 400lbs of meat that I harvested from my moose. I am very happy that invested in a nice chest freezer 5 years ago or I wouldn’t have anywhere to put it all!

This being only the second day of our trip we definitely were not heading back to Ohio already. The good thing about hunting moose in Maine at that time of year is that you can also hunt Ruffed Grouse or Partridge. And being severely disabled I didn’t even need to get out of the truck to take a shot. Also good is that Grouse need to swallow pebbles to aid in digestion and so they have a natural tendency to come to the gravel logging roads that we would be driving down. It was almost too easy! By the time we left I had downed 5 birds, my nephew had 1 and my brother in law had 3. You won’t hear me gloating though, they did have to get out of the truck after all.

Also, while driving around hunting grouse we were looking and listening for moose or signs of moose for the other hunters staying at the lodge. And while we saw lots of signs that moose had been in the area recently I never actually saw another moose that week. My nephew happened to catch sight of a calf when he was in another truck but I did not. On a side note, there was another disabled veteran at the lodge that week. He had lost both of his legs above the knees in Iraq. And while it took him more time to get his moose, he ended up harvesting one on the last day that was even bigger than mine.

In conclusion, if you are a disabled hunter or if you know a disabled hunter, I recommend trying moose hunting in Maine. As a disabled individual myself I know it can be hard to find an enjoyable and rewarding experience that allows me to be a full participant. And even better if I end up accomplishing something that few able-bodied people have accomplished. I know I left Maine with a sense of accomplishment that I had not felt since being in the Army.

For more information about the Maine Moose Hunt Lottery and a brief description of the Controlled Moose Hunt for Disabled Veterans go to: https://www.maine.gov/ifw/hunting-trapping/moose-permit.html

For more detailed information about the Controlled Moose Hunt for Disabled Veterans go to: https://www.maine.gov/veterans/benefits/recreational-licenses/veterans-moose-lottery.html

For more information about the Independence Fund go to: https://www.independencefund.org/

For more information on Smoldering Lake outfitters go to: https://www.smoldering-lake-outfitters.com/ https://www.facebook.com/SmolderingLakeOutfitters
Hello members, we hope everyone is fairing well through these unusual and difficult times. Unfortunately there is not much to report for sports and recreation since most programs are still on hold. We hope that things will be back to normal soon.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games being held in New York city August 8th through the 13th with travel dates 7th and 14th are still moving forward as planned. Keep in mind the NVWG app is now active and available for download: https://event.crowdcompass.com/40-nvwg

Registration starts January 11th and closes April 1st.

There is no change to the medical form so you can start to schedule your physicals.

DAV Winter Sports Clinic is still a go for now, check with your VA Recreation therapists for updates on this program.

The Buckeye Wheelchair Games are still on hold until we get more information and guidelines from both the VA and National PVA.

In addition, per the Dayton VAMC, the bowling alley there is now open under certain restrictions. Jenn the rec therapist is now also a certified Tai Chai instructor and will be hosting seated and standing classes in the future.

For the time being please stay safe and enjoy the holiday season, and of course if you need anything don’t hesitate to give myself or the chapter office a call.

See you all soon and take care,

Scotty Law
E: scottl@buckeyepva.org
Connect With What Matters

Being there makes a difference

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.

MobilityWorks considers it a privilege to help our nation’s veterans. Every day we work with local VISNs and service organizations to make the process of securing accessible vehicles, lifts and driving equipment for veterans as easy as possible.

MobilityWorks has more than 50 locations across the country with the largest selection of accessible vehicles and adaptive solutions:

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MobilityWorks is committed to serving you. Contact us today so we can evaluate your needs and find a solution that best fits your lifestyle.

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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.

Donating your car is easy, and your gift is tax-deductible

Vehicle donations to PVA are tax-deductible! Most vehicles are sold through local used-car markets. Our vehicle donation program works to get the highest return per vehicle and handles all the paperwork, too! Whether your vehicle sells for $500 or less, more than $500, or more than $5000, you will be provided with the proper donation tax receipt(s).

Call 877-900-VETS or donate online at pva.careasy.org
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**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!**
VA CAREGIVER EXPANSION AND FINAL RULE NOW IN EFFECT

On October 1, VA announced that Secretary Wilkie had certified the IT system for VA’s Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). Thus, veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or above who were seriously injured (including a serious illness) on or before May 7, 1975, or on or after September 11, 2001, may now apply for caregiver benefits. Also, on October 1, VA implemented significant changes to the existing caregiver program. All current participants will be reassessed to see if they are still eligible to participate in the program. We will be closely watching the implementation of the program and are working closely with PVA’s Veterans Benefits Department to ensure that any systemic problems are quickly identified.

VETERANS BENEFITS/SOCIAL SECURITY COLA ANNOUNCED

The Social Security Administration (SSA) announced on October 13 that Social Security benefits will receive a 1.3 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase starting in 2021. SSA’s COLA serves as a baseline for other federal benefit increases such as military and federal employee retirement pay which will also rise by that amount. As previously noted, Congress has passed legislation that would allow certain veterans’ disability compensation benefits to receive a similar boost. The bill was presented to the President on October 9 and now awaits his signature.

VA OUTLINES STEPS TO RESOLVE COMMUNITY CARE BILLING ISSUES

VA has announced steps that veterans should take if they are bill for VA authorized community care appointments. First, the veteran should gather any letters, notices, or information regarding debt collection or adverse credit reports related to authorized use of community care. Then, the veteran should call the toll-free number at 877-881-7618 (option 1), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., ET.

VA staff will collect the veteran’s information, investigate the issue, and then follow up with details of the final resolution and answer questions. Veterans may also request an adverse credit history letter that accepts or denies responsibility of the issue, as appropriate.

THE ACCESS BOARD REPORTS RESOLVED CASES IN FISCAL YEAR 2020

The Access Board is charged with enforcing the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968. The ABA requires that buildings or facilities that were designed, built, or altered with federal dollars or leased by federal agencies after August 12, 1968, be accessible.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the Access Board resolved 55 cases through corrective action taken by the responsible federal party. The majority of cases concerned access to U.S. post offices, which is typical of the Board’s yearly caseload. There are over 30,000 post offices in the U.S., many of which occupy older buildings. The U.S. Postal Service completed action to correct accessibility issues at 37 facilities under the ABA over the course of the fiscal year. Most cases concerned entrance doors and customer parking.

Other cases concerned access to parking, elevators, or restrooms at military bases and camps, shipyards, fleet readiness centers, and VA medical facilities. At the Kilauea Military Camp in Volcano, Hawaii, the Department of the Army installed compliant toilet and shower rooms in four accessible cottages and two guest buildings at the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation center.

The ABA is not limited to federal facilities and applies to other sites that received federal funding. One case concerned New York City’s Rockaway Boardwalk, which was severely damaged by Super Storm Sandy in 2012. The City’s Department of Parks and Recreation, which received federal grants to rebuild portions of the boardwalk, restored ramp access at two locations in response to the Board’s investigation. Recipients of funding from the Department of Transportation, including a city in North Carolina and a regional transit authority

Free National Parks Access for Veterans

The U.S. Department of Interior recently announced they will be granting free entrance to national parks, wildlife refuges, and other federally-managed public lands to all U.S. military veterans and Gold Star families. Unlike previous years where fees were waived for a set period, this change is permanent—meaning entrance fees and standard amenity fees charged by the Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation will be waived for veterans and Gold Star families from this point forward. For purposes of this program, a veteran is identified as an individual who has served in the United States Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, and is able to present one of the forms of identification listed below.

- Department of Defense Identification Card
- Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC)
- Veteran ID Card
- Veterans designation on a state-issued U.S. driver’s license or identification card
WHAT IS VA TRAVEL CLAIM REIMBURSEMENT?

VA travel pay reimbursement through the Beneficiary Travel program pays eligible Veterans back for mileage and other travel expenses to and from approved health care appointments.

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR TRAVEL PAY?

VA offers two types of travel pay reimbursement: general health care travel and special mode transportation. As a Veteran, you may be eligible for one or both. A Veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met:

1. have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or
2. are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
3. receive a VA pension, or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
4. are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension, or if not otherwise eligible as noted above, and
5. have a vision impairment, spinal cord injury or disorder, or a double or multiple amputation who’s travel in connection with care provided through a VA special disabilities rehabilitation program (including programs provided by spinal cord injury centers, blind rehabilitation centers and prosthetics rehabilitation centers) if such care is provided on an in-patient basis or during a period in which you are provided with temporary lodging at a facility of the Department to make such care more accessible.

WHAT’S THE FASTEST WAY TO SUBMIT A NEW CLAIM AND GET FASTEST PROCESSING OF A PENDING CLAIM?

For new claims and any pending claims, log in to Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS) and create a profile. An updated profile is required now to file a claim online and to process previously submitted kiosk and hard copy claims. Visit AccessVA and select the Veteran Travel Claim Entry icon to get started. [https://access.va.gov](https://access.va.gov).

HOW DO I SUBMIT A TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM FOR GENERAL HEALTH CARE TRAVEL USING BTSSS?

VA is phasing in a new web-based portal to submit and process beneficiary travel claims at select locations. The portal, BTSSS, is VA’s preferred method to accept travel reimbursement claims. Once implemented, claims submitted using the kiosks will be phased out. However, hard-copy submissions will still be available. Check with your Beneficiary Travel Office to find out when the BTSSS is available at your facility. To submit a claim, visit [https://access.va.gov](https://access.va.gov), select the Veteran Travel Claim Entry icon, and logon using a DS Log on Level 2 account. Log in to BTSSS and create your profile today to allow faster processing of any pending claims.

WHAT IS A DS LOG ON LEVEL 2 ACCOUNT?

A DS Logon is an ID issued by Department of Defense (DoD) that allows Veterans and caregivers to access many VA and DoD sites with one user username and password. A DS Log on Level 2 account is required to file a travel claim using BTSSS.

WHY SHOULD I USE BTSSS?

BTSSS automates the claims process to ensure timely processing and payment of travel reimbursement claims. With BTSSS, turnaround time to evaluate and settle a claim is generally less than 5 days. BTSSS allows Veterans and caregivers to submit claims 24/7, 365 days a year from a computer or mobile device. It also allows users to electronically track the status of a claim request.

CAN I GET HELP TO FILE MY FIRST CLAIM?

There are several sources of help to file a claim. Eligible Veterans and caregivers may get help from a travel clerk at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System at 605-373-4196, refer to the BTSSS user’s guide at [https://www.va.gov/healthcare/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay](https://www.va.gov/healthcare/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay), or contact the Beneficiary Travel Help Desk at 1-855-574-7292.
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

James Agin (Cincinnati, OH)
Daniel Wittcop (Avon, OH)
Monika Gibson (Beavercreek, OH)
Adam Harmon (Blacklick, OH)
Robert Hyatt (Obetz, OH)
Robert Davis (Cleveland, OH)

News from the VA

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.
THANK YOU, SHARON!

Happy Retirement

May you be proud of the work you have done, the person you are, and the difference you have made.

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT MAKING OTHERS BETTER AS A RESULT OF YOUR PRESENCE AND MAKING SURE THAT IMPACT LASTS IN YOUR ABSENCE.
Getting Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again with Indego®

New VA Program offers eligible veterans an Indego® Exoskeleton at no cost.

What is Indego?

A robotic device that enables veterans to walk again.

Indego is an FDA-approved exoskeleton worn around the waist and legs that enables individuals paralyzed from spinal cord injuries to stand and walk, offering a new level of independence.

Indego can currently be used with spinal cord injury levels of T3 to L5 in community or home settings.

Free Indego Webinars

During the first Thursday of every month you can join a free live webinar to learn more about the Indego and hear from a veteran who owns a device already.

Contact us today to reserve your spot or find out if you are eligible to receive an Indego exoskeleton at no cost.

Email: support.indego@parker.com
Phone: 844-846-3346

Watch Marine Veteran Steve Holbert's story at www.indego.com/veterans
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