

The Bulletin

Blinded Veterans Helping Blinded Veterans



November-December 2019



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Cover Photo: Attendees of the Adaptive Sports Center standing in a local field holding the American flag.

VOLUME LXXIV, No. 6
November-December 2019

EDITORIAL STAFF

Acting Editor-in-Chief: Kylie FitzGerald

Staff Writers: Danielle Petty,
 Kylie FitzGerald

Design, Pre-Press, and Printing:
 Karen Smith Design, Master Print

1101 KING STREET, STE 300
 ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314
 TELEPHONE: 800-669-7079
 202-371-8880
 FAX: 202-371-8258
 WEBSITE: www.bva.org
 E-MAIL: bva@bva.org

Combined Federal Campaign #10513

Published bi-monthly by and for blinded veterans, and sent to all blinded veterans without charge. **The Bulletin** informs BVA members about their Association and the issues that affect blinded veterans.



President's Page

by Tom Zampieri



I am proud of the great work that our Executive Director and BVA staff executed in the move from our old office space into our new headquarters at 1101 King Street in Alexandria, VA. While the distance is only a few blocks away, as everyone knows, changing homes requires a considerable amount of planning, packing, and coordinating. Thank you to our dedicated staff and please remember to use the new mailing address to reduce time waiting for forwarded mail.

We welcome our new Director of Government Relations, Don Overton, BVA Life member with an extensive background in advocacy, working with congress, various military and veteran associations, and the VA. His experience as a veterans service officer at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) provides an important level of understanding in VBA benefits and regulations for blind or visually impaired veterans. Our legislative committee is excited to have Don start now as we prepare to support many key pieces of legislation that will impact our membership and caregivers moving forward. On behalf of our entire board and membership, we wish Melanie Brunson a wonderful retirement with her husband.

Our board members are excited to continue to make decisions that will benefit the association as we work on our strategic plan with expert support from Bosma Industries, CEO MSG. Jeff Mittman (Ret. Army), a life member who has pledged to assist the BVA

moving forward. We are working to find cost-efficient solutions, innovative fundraising approaches, and new corporate partnerships to find revenue for the BVA.

We want to explore various new changes, ideas, and recommendations that will benefit the entire BVA membership and our caregivers. I ask that regional group leaders discuss with their district director's ways to improve the organization, bring more positive publicity to our efforts, and participate at the regional group or chapter levels. I want to thank all the regional groups that participated in various White Cane Day events; please send your stories to our BVA headquarters communications staff.

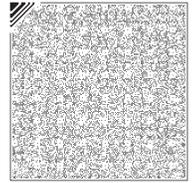
We strongly encourage all regional groups to start planning early for our official national Blinded Veterans Day on March 28, 2020, and our 75th BVA anniversary celebration. Included in the Bulletin is a sample Proclamation that each regional group can utilize to request recognition from federal, state, city, and local VA medical center directors. Start these efforts in January to cultivate the contacts necessary and remember to get local news media to attend any official BVA functions that your regional group plans on that day to help raise awareness.

Thank you for working together to highlight the success that we have had with our accomplishments over 75 years and the new goals that we are working on for the future. "Heroism doesn't always happen in a burst of glory. Sometimes small triumphs and large hearts change the course of history." - Mary Roach.



Executive Director's Message to Members

By Joe Bogart



Great Autumn greetings from our new headquarters at 1101 King Street, Suite 300 in Alexandria, Virginia! I am incredibly excited to address all our BVA families from our beautiful offices overlooking King Street and U.S. Route 1 right smack in the middle of the beautiful and historic Old Town Alexandria!

Speaking of our new offices, I and the rest of your headquarters team thank everyone for being patient during our transition; we had a few hectic weeks getting everything situated, but here we are at last! The few initial visitors we have had were very impressed at just how nice it all is. We are continuing to move BVA onward and upward!

Over the last couple of months, our members were advocating the public on National White Cane Awareness Day, while some of our BVA Members hiked more of the Appalachian Trail! Our members, again, hosted our British friends on our side of the pond in Birmingham. Be on the lookout, as we have even more coming up in the future months!

While we are continually moving forward, this is the time of year to honor all of our brothers and sisters that served with us. As we remember them, we also have the opportunity to give thanks to our siblings in arms for being in our lives. All Veterans, blinded and sighted, step up to honor and remember them again this Veterans Day.

The Holiday Season begins and we all look forward to food, family festivities, and fun! This is a great time of year to reflect and show gratitude, maybe even by getting up and moving with other blinded veterans. We are thankful for having a family or friend listen to us and be that shoulder to lean on when times are tough; we are thankful that we are not alone in our sight loss, for there are thousands of our brothers and sisters that have walked before us, beside us, and follow behind us. All blinded veterans are together in serving as the advocate and peer mentor to all veterans and families coping with sight loss.

BVA plans to host an open house and conduct tours of our new office during the next convention in Washington, D.C., so you can interact with staff and see YOUR new BVA Headquarters. As we roll out of our 74th and into our 75th anniversary in 2020, let's all continue to take BVA onward and upward!

Did You Know?

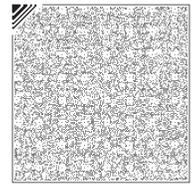
Old Town Alexandria fun fact:

- In 1909, Orville Wright flew from Fort Myer in Arlington to Shuter's Hill (now the site of the Masonic memorial) and back for the U.S. army, which resulted in the Wright brothers being awarded the world's first military airplane contract. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/gis/info/default.aspx?id=61964>



Legislative Update

By Don Overton



Donald Overton named Director of Government Relations for Blinded Veterans Association

In his new role, effective October 14, Don's responsibilities include developing the organization's legislative programs, coordinating and monitoring advocacy and public policy activities; and preparing and presenting congressional testimony, position statements, and legislative proposals that represent the interests of blinded veterans. His government relations team will support the cultivation and building of relationships with BVA's key stakeholders including its members, donors, public and private sector partners, volunteers, and the media.

Don recently served as the Director of External and Veterans Affairs for a national guide dog school and maintained a gold-standard brand reputation through government relations, community outreach, marketing, media, special events, and civic/community groups' engagement activities. Prior to that, he served as the Veterans Affairs and Business Specialist for the City of Palm Bay, Florida, responsible for implementing programs that assisted local veterans and their dependents in filing the proper forms to receive the maximum benefits available and provided business development services, while simultaneously serving as Executive Director for a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, which

in conjunction with the City of Palm Bay, operated a one of a kind public-private partnership (P3) veterans housing program.

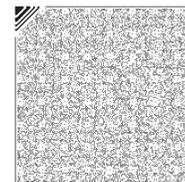
Don continues to serve on the U.S. Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program, Defense Medical Research and Development Program, and Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine scientific review panels. Since the mid-1990's, he has worked to help raise awareness regarding veterans' health issues by providing congressional and interviews that have appeared in hundreds of U.S. and foreign newspapers and radio stations. On these issues, he has also been an invited presenter before numerous agencies and organizations.

Don entered active duty in the U.S. Army on 2 February 1988 and was awarded the MOS of 31K, Combat Signaler. In August of 1990, he deployed with the Advance Party of the 82nd Airborne Division to Saudi Arabia for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was wounded in combat in March of 1991 and subsequently medically retired in June of 1992. He is a 100% service-connected combat disabled blinded veteran, and went on to graduate Magna Cum Laude from East Carolina University with a degree in Social Work.

"It's truly an honor and a privilege to join BVA's national team; I'm looking forward to actively engaging our stakeholders and ensuring that the needs of our members are continually met." – Don

Take Action:

Blinded Veterans Day March 28, 2020



The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) encourages National Officers, District Directors, Regional Group Officers, and Chapter Leaders to contact their local, county, and state elected public officials with the following Blinded Veterans Day resolution. The organization requests that local officials issue the Proclamation below on or about March 28, 2020, to recognize both the congressionally established Blinded Veterans Day and BVA's 75th anniversary.

BVA also recommends that VA Medical Center Directors and Blind Rehabilitation Service staff (VIST Coordinators, Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialists, Visual Impairment Service Outpatient Rehabilitation programs, and Blind Center Directors, Low Vision Optometrists or Ophthalmologists) assist in supporting and planning local events to raise awareness about both the national Blinded Veterans Day and the Blinded Veterans Association.

Official 2020 Blinded Veterans Day & BVA Proclamation

Whereas, on March 28, the Blinded Veterans Association members will strive to promote national recognition for Public Law 111-156 enacted by the 111th session of Congress designating annually March 28 as the National Blinded Veterans Day, and for such efforts in improving the VA vision rehabilitation services, benefits, research, and caregiver support for our nation's blinded veterans during 75 years of service, and;

Expressing special congratulations and recognition for the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) on its 75th anniversary

of representing blinded veterans and their families since March 28, 1945, when 100 World War II blinded service members at Avon "Old Farms" Army Convalescent Hospital in Connecticut, at 8:45 a.m., they formed the Blinded Veterans Association, and;

Whereas, these individual blinded veterans were a cross-section of American WWII heroes and pioneers in establishing rehabilitation services for the war blinded, who not only shaped the rich history, philosophy, knowledge, and skills of education and rehabilitation of the blind, and who also gave us insight into current and future challenges, who shared their personal lives and showed us strategies to ensure that services for all blinded veterans remain unique, and specialized, and;

Whereas, General Omar Bradley, the Veterans Affairs Administrator, appointed BVA as the first official representative for blinded veterans for the filing of claims and appeals to VA, making it only the eighth Veterans Service Organization to receive such authorization and the only Veterans Service Organization since then to receive its day of recognition, and;

Whereas, the Blinded Veterans Association was originally incorporated in New York State as a nonprofit association, then moved to Washington, D.C. in 1947, and;

Whereas, the 58th Congress approved the Congressional Charter for recognizing BVA on August 26, 1958, and;

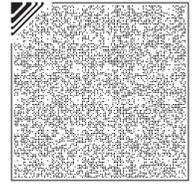
Whereas, from its early beginnings, BVA encouraged the blinded veterans it served "to take their rightful place in the community

with their fellow men and work with them toward the creation of a peaceful world,” and have continued to advocate for the war blinded to regain independence, confidence, and self-esteem through rehabilitation training, and;

Whereas, we request that all Americans recognize March 28 of each year as Blinded Veterans Day: Now, therefore, be it resolved, that I/we, “ _____,” support(s) the goals and ideals of Blinded Veterans Day; and;

- (1) express (es) appreciation for the efforts and the goals of the Blinded Veterans Association in improving the rehabilitation services, education, research, and benefits for blinded veterans of the United States;

- (2) call(s) upon the people of the United States to all recognize and observe “Blinded Veterans Day” with appropriate programs and public activities.
- (3) *Therefore, Be It Resolved, That I, _____, recognize and honor Blinded Veterans Day with Blinded Veterans Association to observe a day in its honor with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities for service dedicated to the restoration of independence to such blinded veterans.*



PSA’s for local media use

Please contact headquarters to request a digital or CD version of the most recent PSA’s that each BVA officer can use in contacting local media to encourage the dissemination of additional information about BVA to the public. Please include the BVA national website, www.bva.org, or contact information for regional groups or chapters.

Follow up on these efforts:

BVA requests that any proclamations, news stories, or local public events be collected and copied to BVA National Headquarters to Communications Assistant at kfitzgerald@bva.org and copy BVA Executive Director jbogart@bva.org.

Operation Peer Support (OPS) News



Operation Peer Support (OPS) is a program designed by the Blinded Veterans Association to assist blind and visually impaired veterans and their families with educational resources and adaptive sports in order to regain independence, social skills, and confidence through rehabilitation.

Blinded Vets Hike Section of Appalachian Trail

By Robbi Pounds on Friday,
October 4, 2019

Stecoah – “Blindness has afforded me the opportunity to experience the best parts of humanity,” said Navy veteran and Blinded Veterans Association member Lonnie Bedwell.

Fresh off Day 5 of a 91-mile section of the Appalachian Trail, hikers and their support team enjoyed Graham County hospitality Saturday as they tucked into a spaghetti casserole at Stecoah Valley Cultural Arts Center before tent-camping on the center’s campus.

“So many people are just so kind,” said Bedwell. “People provide light in the darkness. It’s so important to let people know that believing in us and providing us with this opportunity; it’s huge. It doesn’t just change our lives but also our families’ lives and the people in the community.”

The Blind Appalachian Trail team reached Stecoah after launching their section hike in Georgia on Sept. 24. A 6-day hike is just one of many adventures for Bedwell, the first blind person to negotiate the entire Colorado River in a kayak solo. He also climbs mountains, snow skis, and builds houses.

“I wouldn’t have done any of these things if I hadn’t lost my sight,” said Bedwell.



Blind Appalachian Trail participants holding the B.A.T. flag and American Flag in front of a dam.

His next adventure will be climbing the highest peak in South America in January.

Army veteran and BVA Sergeant-at-Arms Kennan Horn has an adventure of his own planned for January; serving on the vision research panel in Washington, D.C. “When you start to lose your vision, you can choose to sit on your butt or get up and find other things that challenge you,” Horn said.

When Horn lost his sight, he “didn’t know any other blind guys, definitely no blinded veterans,” but three years ago he found the



Blind Appalachian Trail participants pose for a group shot.

BVA's Operation Peer Support and the fellowship of fellow blinded vets. "That personal connection is priceless," he said.

Horn recently gained a new kind of connection with his first guide dog, a yellow lab/golden retriever mix named Dervish.

"I miss him like he's a newborn baby," said Horn, who describes having a guide dog as "totally transformative."

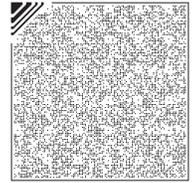
For Horn, the toughest part of working with the BVA is knowing that there are blinded veterans out there who have not been reached.

"We have to wait for them to reach out, to ask for help, and that's hard," said Horn.

Daniel Wallace, Army vet and National Secretary of the BVA, wants every visually impaired person to realize that "there is a future without sight."

Wallace explained that last year's hike was 75 miles, a distance that commemorated the 75th anniversary of D-Day. "These hikes have three main goals," Wallace said. "We want to show the public what blinded vets are capable of, inspire fellow members, and help find newly blinded vets and let them know that there's something better."

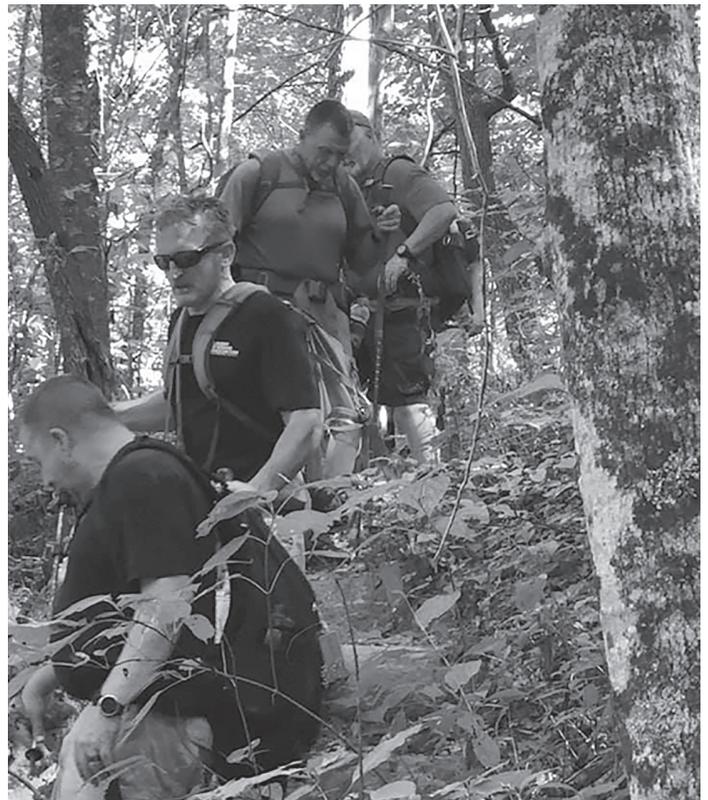
Of course, any group hiking the AT requires planning, logistics, and back-up, and this is where folks like Army veteran Dick Evans step in. "When I heard that blind vets needed help on the AT, I said, 'What do you need us to do?'"



Evans, who lives in Tuskegee, helped with fundraising as well as organizing and stressed that Beth Fields, director of the Stecoah center, and all of Graham county was "extremely supportive."

This year's hike concluded at Fontana Campground, a site chosen so that the hikers and their support team could celebrate in true military fashion, with plenty of cold beers.

"A lot of people in small towns don't get to see how they affect the outside world," said Horn, "but a lot of local people donated



Blind Appalachian Trail participants hiking along the path.

to support this hike, and every one of us is deeply appreciate. That's a beautiful thing.”

Blind Appalachian Trail maintains a Facebook page, and the Blinded Veterans Association may be reached at bva.org.

Retrieved from: <https://www.grahamstar.com/local-regional-news/blinded-vets-hike-section-appalachian-trail>

OPS Hosts Project Gemini in Birmingham, AL.

By Kylie FitzGerald

Continuing the multi-year long tradition, OPS hosted the U.S. portion of Project Gemini in Birmingham, Alabama from October 13-19, 2019. Project Gemini is an exchange program between the Blinded Veterans UK (BVUK) and the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) that allows participants from both countries and South Africa to meet with individuals who have similar experiences across the pond.

Participants share knowledge, insights, and friendship for a week while going on adventures and exploring the city it's hosted in.

The exchange addresses similarities between the two countries when it comes to military eye trauma, traumatic brain injury, vision research, history, and vision rehabilitation programs. BVA and



Project Gemini participants engaged in fellowship at a restaurant.

BVUK learn from each other the best ways to approach peer support, programs, and advocacy for all of our blinded veterans all over the world.

Sunday of the exchange, participants had a great dinner at Dave's Pizza where they caught up with old and new friends and had a photoshoot at the iconic Sweet Home Alabama sign. Monday, they went to Balance Personal Training Studio in Homewood, a suburb of Birmingham, where Ranger Mike Meadows gave great tips to our blinded veterans about personal training. Their lunch was sponsored by Southern Veterinary Partners (SVP) where SVP CEO, Jay Price, presented a check to BVA OPS. They finished the day by touring the Callahan Eye Hospital at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. On Tuesday, they started their morning by going SCUBA diving and Rock Wall Climbing in the pool at the Lakeshore Foundation. Lakeshore provides an opportunity for people with a physical disability to be healthy, active, and independent. After a morning of activity, they



Two Project Gemini participants pose at the top of a ziplining tower before taking the dive.



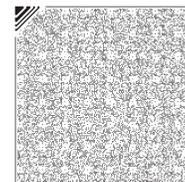
toured the Civil Rights Museum. Wednesday, they went to the Blind Rehabilitation Center at the Birmingham VA Medical Center where they learned about different methods of rehabilitation that they perform at that VA. Then they went to Red Mountain Park where they participated in team-building activities including a hike, high ropes course, and zip-lining. Thursday, they toured the Southern Museum of Flight in Birmingham. Finally, on Saturday, they explored Alabama Industries for the Blind in Talladega, AL. a company that provides “employment opportunities for legally blind and multi-disabled blind adults through the manufacture of products and performance service contracts.” In the evenings, they enjoyed wonderful dinners throughout the city and caught up with both old and new friends; they look forward to continuing the tradition next year.

Upcoming OPS Events

OPS and Heroes New Hope Foundation Organize Deer Hunting Trip

Operation Peer Support will partner with the Heroes New Hope Foundation to organize an all-inclusive deer hunting trip for blinded veterans in November 2019. This event will host 3-members of the Blinded Veterans Association for a deer hunting trip which includes travel, lodging, license fees, tags, and

meals. All attendees will have a professional guide to assist them in all aspects of this event.



Skiing/Snowboarding With OPS and Steamboat Adaptive Recreational Sports

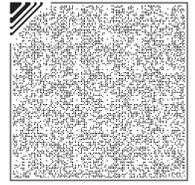
In January 2020, Operation Peer Support will unite with Steamboat Adaptive Recreational Sports (STARS) in Colorado to give 10-participants (8-members of the Blinded Veterans Association and 2-sighted guides) an opportunity to learn how to snow ski or snowboard. This event will take place in January 2020. The event consists of the following: all-inclusive flights, lodging, ground transportation, all lift tickets, ski guides, ski equipment (with exception of clothing), meals, and any other necessary items.

Paddling Clinic with OPS and Team River Runner

In February 2020, Operation Peer Support will partner with Team River Runner Outtasight Leadership and Paddling Clinic. This event will be held in Key Largo, Florida to teach basic open water kayaking to 4-members of the Blinded Veterans Association and to develop TRR Leadership skills to enable participants to reach out to more veterans.

Did You Know?

- Adaptive sports began as a means to rehabilitate veterans from World War II, Korea, and the Vietnam War.”
disabledsportsusa.org/about/our-mission/early-history/



Choose a version of The Bulletin?

Would you like to receive a Word, PDF, or CD version of the Bulletin as well as a physical copy? Or a mix of all of the above? Please let us know by calling BVA Headquarters where you may choose the version(s) of the bulletin that work best for you. Are you signed up for our monthly email newsletter? If you are not and would like to be, you can sign up for that while choosing your preferred methods of reading The Bulletin.

Renee Feldmann Scholarship Open

Application submission is now open for the Renee Feldman (BVAA) Scholarship for the 2020 – 2021 higher education school year. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2020. Applications may be found at the Blinded Veterans Association Auxiliary website www.nbvaaux.org and are open to spouses and children of legally blinded veterans. We encourage all spouses and children of blinded veterans continuing their education beyond high school to apply now.

White Cane Day 2019

All around the country, blind groups and organizations hosted White Cane Day events for fellow blind and visually impaired people to celebrate the independence their White Cane allows them, to educate the general populace on what to do when you see a blind person, and what the significance of the White Cane represents.

Here in Washington, D.C., Executive Director, Joe Bogart, participated in a White Cane Day walk while Claudia Baldwin, Chief of Veteran Services joined Visual Impairment Services in manning a White Cane Table at the D.C VA Medical Center.

Many of our regional groups also hosted their own White Cane Day events to help educate their communities.



Executive Director, Joe Bogart, in D.C. with White Cane Day walk attendees.



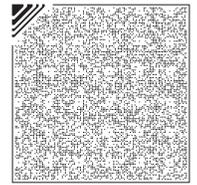
Chief of Veteran Services, Claudia Baldwin, representing the Blinded Veterans Association at their table at the D.C. VA Medical Center.



BVA Member and WWII Veteran, Earl Forstall, receives birthday song and kiss from liberty belle.



BVA members experiencing a hands on tour of the WWII Museum.



Louisiana / Mississippi Regional Group

On September 25th, the LA/MS Regional Group sponsored a hands-on tour of the World War II Museum in New Orleans, LA. The tour was attended by over forty (40) blind or visually impaired veterans, including four WW II Veterans, plus VA personnel and escorts.

The day began with a celebration of BVA member and WW II Veteran Earl Forstall's 100th birthday. Mr. Earl is a former vice-president of the Louisiana Regional Group and has been a member of the BVA for 20 years. The celebration began with a citation and letter from the CEO of the WW II Museum, Stephen Watson, presented by Vice President Col. Pete Crean; the City of New Orleans had proclaimed September 23rd as Earl Forstall Day and the Governor of Louisiana sent a proclamation honoring Mr. Earl. Second District U.S. Representative Cedric Richmond sent a U.S. Flag that had flown over the Capitol and a citation which

was read by one of the BVA volunteers. U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D. sent his Regional Director, Rachel Perez, to present a citation and letter. Mr. Ross White, Regional Director for U.S. Senator John Kennedy presented Mr. Earl with a citation and letter; Senator Kennedy also sent a very personal video honoring Mr. Earl for his service to his country and the State of Louisiana, his successful business ventures in New Orleans, and his wonderful family. Unfortunately, we were not able to show it at the museum since we were in a public area; however, it was shown at his birthday party on Sunday for family and friends, which was very well received. The video can be viewed on Facebook at la-ms bva. A letter from the White House signed by President Donald Trump was then read and presented. BVA National President Thomas Zampieri, PhD thanked Mr. Forstall for his service to our country and to the BVA. Mr. Zampieri then presented him with a commendation letter from the BVA and a BVA coin. When the

presentations were over, one of the museum volunteers, a former Liberty Belle Singer sang “Happy Birthday” and gave him a big kiss on the cheek. Mr. Earl and his family enjoyed the short birthday presentation.

The veterans were then divided into four groups, each with a volunteer guide. The guides led their groups through a portion of the Museum and allowed the veterans to touch and handle some of the artifacts as they described their use and significance in the war. All enjoyed their tour. Following the guided tour everyone could tour the museum with their escorts before the 4D movie “Beyond All Boundaries,” which is about the United States involvement in the War on both fronts, the many bombing runs and air battles (you could almost feel the heat from the exploding bombs), the battles in the winter (you could feel the rumble of the tanks, through the vibration in the seats and you could almost feel the cold and see the snowflakes), the many landings using the Higgins landing craft, not only the D Day landing in Europe, but the many landings in the Pacific against heavily fortified Japanese held islands, and how the US Homefront shifted to manufacturing of war materials. The museum is truly a remarkable place, with a B-17 and a P-51 plus other aircraft hanging from the ceiling in one building, B-25, C-46, and other aircraft hanging in other buildings, replicas of the Atlantic Wall and the Japanese defenses, tanks, jeeps, other war machines, and an extensive collection of light and heavy weapons from all countries, and audio descriptions and video interviews with WW II Veterans. The National World War II Museum is always expanding, the WW II Hotel is about to open, with a 1940’s décor, but with 21st century amenities. There is a

reason why it is the second most popular museum in the country. The museum staff has invited the BVA to return for another interactive tour, since this was one of their first tour of this type, they assured us that there will be many changes and improvements. We assured them that we will be back!

We want to thank the staff of the Museum for all their work in making this event a success: Walt for devising this unique hands-on tour for the low vision; Lisa, Director of tour sales, for her help in the logistics of guiding almost 80 people through the museum and Marcia for helping with the birthday celebration and of course the volunteer guides.

Adaptive Sports Center Host Blinded Veterans

By Danny Wallace

Six members of the Blinded Veterans Association attended five days of activities in Crested Butte, Colorado. The mission of the Adaptive Sports Center is to enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities through exceptional outdoor adventure activities.

The activities included a ropes course, which entails low and high elements constructed of rope, cables, wood, and trees. They enable participants — regardless of ability — to experience climbing in the trees and flying. The challenge course combines attitude, training, structure, and programming to create a place where experiences are equalized for people of all abilities. There was a day of paddling on Lake Irwin with options of paddle boarding, kayaking, and canoeing. On September 11th, the team did





Adam Rowland, a war blinded Army Iraqi War veteran helps other veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and has volunteer equestrian horse therapy for those suffering from PTSD. Here he is receiving a trophy from one of his rodeos.

an 11-mile hike to altitudes of 12,000 feet to commemorate 9/11. The event also allowed the veterans an opportunity to climb sheer rock faces at Hartman Rocks.

The members of our association in attendance were Ken Horn, AJ Muhammed, Vince Fee, Raquel Welch, Jenny Murphy, and Danny Wallace. The caregivers/support team included Kelly Wallace and Jimmy Coffin U.S. Army (Ret).

“The support and guidance we received at the Adaptive Sports Center were excellent. Their knowledge and professionalism are, by far, some of the best I have encountered in the civilian sector,” stated Ken Horn.

All attendees believe this should be an annual event for our members.

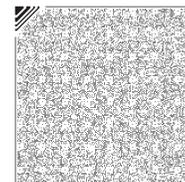
Blinded Veterans Members Attend Golf Event Honors Memory Maj. Charles R Soltes Jr. O.D.

By Thomas Zampieri

Three blinded American veterans shared personal rehabilitation experiences that tell the story of their adjustment to blindness at the Major Charles R. Soltes, Jr. O.D. 15th Annual Memorial Charitable Golf event Monday, October 14 at the Tijeras Creek Golf Club Irvine in Irvine, California.

On October 13, 2004, Major Soltes became the first U.S. Army optometrist killed in action while serving on active duty in Iraq while serving as a Public Health Commander with the 426th Civil Affairs Battalion in Mosul, Iraq, assisting in the restoration of the medical infrastructure.

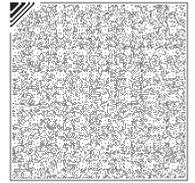
The tournament veterans included two OIF war veterans who suffered vision injuries in combat: Specialist Brian Harris (Ret. USA.), who, in September 2018, made history and kayaked 226 miles of Colorado River with four other BVA members through the Grand Canyon in eleven days; and Sergeant Adam Rowland (Ret. USA.), an award-winning blind horseback riding rodeo champion. Major Thomas Zampieri (Ret. USA.), National President BVA, who has lived with retinal blindness since 2000, also participated in the tournament.





Chaplain's Corner

by Chaplain Johnnie E. Busch, Sr.



I enjoy being a blinded veteran helping blinded veterans. I started volunteering in 1994 at the VA Medical Center in Decatur, Georgia answering calls, transferring them, and assisting veterans with their benefits claims. Now, I volunteer with ambassadors to direct to the proper appointments, locations, and advise them on how to apply for the benefits they're entitled to. We educate them on the equipment they qualify for as blinded veterans or amputees, whether wheelchair-bound or whatever the case may be.

For Veterans Day, I am trying to decide on how many restaurants I'll be going to. In Georgia, they have a list of restaurants that they inform the public of so that our Veterans can receive their free meal. I spoke to some Veterans and invited some to feel free to fellowship with me at lunch if they aren't spending time with their families. Check within your local newspapers and news stations to see what's being offered in your area and if possible, sit down and spend time with a Veteran.

For the holidays, I intend to travel and fellowship as much as possible. I enjoy the holidays, toys, and spending time with family and friends, both new and old. It's important to have open arms during the holidays for anyone that may need it. Being the person that I am, I put God first, regardless of the position I may be in. Your situation is not a lost cause and there are people younger than us in worse

shape. Remember, it's never as bad as you think because there is always someone that will have it better than you and someone who will have it worse than you. You don't have to feel sorry for yourself; instead, get active with the VFW as a volunteer or become more involved within your community.

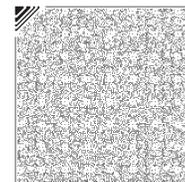
You can be whatever you want to be in this lifetime, but you must make sure that you have God in your life. As you travel throughout your life, you can always let others know that regardless of your situation, you have a life to live. Remain positive, resilient, and active; continue to encourage and build up our brothers and sisters. Happy Holidays and Happy Veterans Day to all our BVA members, families, and friends.

Johnnie E. Busch, Sr.
National Chaplain
Blinded Veterans Association



Auxiliary's View

By Patricia Hail, BVAA Recorder (& Past President)



Official “Caregivers” of the BVA

Father Thomas J. Carroll is rightfully credited with starting the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) following a gathering of concerned individuals at Avon Old Farms, Connecticut, in March 1945. He was a man thinking ahead of his time on blindness, how it affects the individual, and how to understand blindness and the blinded individual who once had sight.

In the preface to Rev. Thomas J. Carroll's book, *Blindness, What It Is, What It Does, And How To Live With It*, Jacob Levine, Ph.D., states that “Father Carroll wrote this book as a practical guide for the blinded – and for those who mean to help them.” The introduction for whom this book is written lists at the top “For workers with the blind – professional and non-professional, paid and unpaid;” and “those of us who retain our sight can only come to some understanding of the congenitally blind by gaining understanding of the person who once had sight and has lost it [...] by gaining a greater insight into these problems, we can also come closer to a recognition of the problems of those who have never seen.” Assessments of the blind in American society indicate that 80 – 90% of the blind were once sighted and most of those lost their sight due to age-related issues and diseases. Many also lost their sight due to illness/injury – a share of those are ‘service-connected’ and are the reason for the beginning of the BVA.

“Blinded Veterans Helping Blinded Veterans” hence is the motto of the BVA, chartered by Congress in 1945. Father

Carroll and the authors of the BVA Bylaws recognized the need for understanding and support for our blinded veterans. In addition to working with the Veterans Health Administration (including blind rehabilitation for our blinded veterans, other training and centers; and the VIST and BROS programs), the BVA Bylaws include Article XVII which authorized an Auxiliary consisting of family and friends of the BVA to assist and support the BVA and themselves – those who care about and give their all to our blinded veterans. The result of Article XVII is that the Blinded Veterans Association Auxiliary (BVAA) was begun in 1977.



Since then, the BVAA, as individuals and as a group, have accepted the responsibility of being primary caregivers for our blinded veterans and the BVA. Included in their support efforts, the BVAA has subsequently sponsored BVAA groups at the regional level; during at least the past 10 years, the BVAA – at our joint national conventions – has offered “caregiver” sessions to help the blinded veterans and their caregivers understand, communicate, and further their knowledge in blindness and the individualized care helpful to our blinded veterans. These caregiver sessions have been offered with collaboration from blinded veterans, blind counselors, trained VA employees, caregivers, and members of the BVAA.

Join us again – next issue – for more on caregivers and blindness.

From the Veteran's Service Staff

By Claudia Belk



Understanding Eligibility for the Need for Aid and Attendance

One of the highly asked questions in our Veteran Services Resource Center is whether a veteran is eligible for aid and attendance. We will look at the explanation of who can apply, and how this relates to service-connected veterans, and for those who are not service-connected for a disease or injury, how to apply for this additional benefit.

Let's look at what VA regulations say about the criteria for aid and attendance:

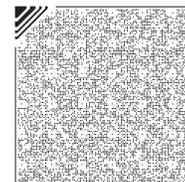
The following will be accorded consideration in determining the need for regular aid and attendance (38 C.F.R. Sec. 3.351(c)(3): inability of claimant to dress or undress himself (herself), or to keep himself (herself) ordinarily clean and presentable; frequent need of adjustment of any special prosthetic or orthopedic appliances which by reason of the particular disability cannot be done without aid (this will not include the adjustment of appliances which normal persons would be unable to adjust without aid, such as supports, belts, lacing at the back, etc.); inability of claimant to feed himself (herself) through loss of coordination of upper extremities or through extreme weakness; inability to attend to the wants of nature; or incapacity, physical or mental, which requires care or assistance on a regular basis to protect the claimant from hazards or dangers incident to his or her daily environment. "Bedridden" will be a proper basis for the determination which, through its essential character, requires that the claimant remains in bed. The fact that

the claimant has voluntarily taken to bed or that a physician has prescribed rest in bed for the greater or lesser part of the day to promote convalescence or cure will not suffice. It is not required that all the disabling conditions enumerated in this paragraph be found to exist before a favorable rating may be made. The personal functions which the veteran is unable to perform should be considered in connection with his or her condition. It is only necessary that the evidence establishes that the veteran is so helpless as to need regular aid and attendance, not that there be a constant need. Determinations that the veteran is so helpless, as to require regular aid and attendance will not be based solely upon an opinion that the claimant's condition is such as would require him or her to be in bed. They must be based on the actual requirement of personal assistance from others.

Since our members have visual impairments, just being legally blind does not meet the criteria for aid and attendance. A service-connected veteran must meet special monthly compensation (SMC) levels to be considered for aid and attendance. This means that a veteran must minimally be rated at a 100% level in disability compensation to file. When a service-connected veteran receives SMC, he or she is already being paid the level of aid and attendance. For blindness, the veteran must have a level of 5/200 in both eyes or a visual field loss of <5 degrees in both eyes. The same vision criteria apply for a veteran who is not service-connected but meets the criteria for a non-service-connected pension.

In either circumstance, both service-connected veterans and non-service-connected veterans receiving compensation or pension must file VA Form 21-2680 (Request for the Need for Aid and Attendance). This form is to be filled by the veteran's doctor and should be filed along with the VA Form 21-526EZ (disability compensation form), or 21P-527EZ (NSC pension form). There are other circumstances where a veteran can file for his or her spouse as needing aid and attendance. In this circumstance, the veteran must file

VA Form 21-2680, along with the dependency form and the medical evidence which demonstrates that the veteran's spouse is in need of aid and attendance. This only applies to veterans who receive VA disability compensation and does not apply to non-service-connected veterans. A veteran does not need to be at the 100% level for disability compensation for adding a disabled spouse, just needs to be at the 30% level for disability compensation.



VOICES IN THE NIGHT

We're are the voices, that can't see,
Only with the mind, and others like me,
This is a freedom, carved out by our fore fathers,
To preserve and keep it, never was a bother,
I cherish these privileges, as I do stars and stripes,
This constitution is powerful, with its bill of rights,
We must maintain the dignity, and up lift the pride,
And thank the veterans, many served and died,
This service to their country, highest of a noble deed,
To put your life on the line, no fame, fortune or greed,
The freedom and privileges we have can fade away,
That's why our military, protect them each and every day,
This United States of America, I make this promise to you,
I'll always protect and defend the Red, White, and Blue.

Lifetime Member

BVA-NYRG

Former President

Written by **Warner L. Murray**

ARMY STRONG



Recognizing and Avoiding Phishing and Other Scams

By Kylie FitzGerald

Recently, email, text, and robotic phone call scams are happening more and more. It is important to learn how to recognize and avoid these scams to protect yourself, your family, and your peers.

Recognizing Scams

Phishing emails, text messages, and phone calls may look like they're from a company or person you know or trust, but there are often clues that let you know it's not real, such as:

- Upon closer inspection, the email or website address is incorrect. For example, instead `jbogart@bva.org` it would be `headoffice03@gmail.com`.
- Many grammar mistakes throughout the email or text.
- Using threats or fear. Telling you that "your warranty will expire," "you'll lose your subscription," or that "this is a final warning."
- Asking you to click on a link to update billing information, send money, update password, etcetera.
- Using generic greetings.

Protecting yourself from scams

- Make sure your computer and security software are up to date. Software manufacturers send out updates to deal with new security threats.
- Keep your phone and applications up to date.

- Use multi-factor authentication to protect your accounts, especially banking and insurance accounts.
- Make sure to back up your data, preferably to an external hard drive.

If you suspect a phishing or scam attack

Check for the above. Do not click on any links, open any attachments, or give out any personal information. If it looks like it came from someone you know personally, check with that person first before taking any steps to send money or passwords. If the email or call claims to be from your bank, insurance, the IRS, or any other similar company, hang up and call their official number. Don't click on any links, instead, type the website address yourself.

If you think the scammer has your personal information like social security number, credit card number, or bank account number, go to identitytheft.gov.

Report the scam by forwarding the email to spam@uce.gov and to reportphishing@apwg.org. If it was a text message, forward it to SPAM (7726).

Mike Hudson Introduces the APH Hall of Fame Inductees

By Danielle Petty

I had the opportunity to interview Mike Hudson, Museum Director of the American Printing House for the Blind since 1994. He graduated from the University of Delaware in 1987 with an M.A. in the History of Technology and a certificate in Museum Studies. He became the co-curator of the

Hall of Fame for Leaders and Legends of the Blindness Field in 2018.

The criteria for inductees aren't necessarily to be a blinded veteran, but all inductees have a connection to blinded veterans. They were the ones who went above and beyond in advocating our US blinded veterans in the area of rehabilitation services. The Hall of Fame was founded in 2002 and is governed by a Board that accepts nominations up until April. The only criteria necessary to be an APH Hall of Fame Inductee is that the nominee must have made significant contributions to improve the lives of blinded and visually impaired individuals.

The American Printing House for the Blind was founded in 1858 and is the largest maker of educational products for the blind and visually impaired in the world. They help distribute information and provide resources through Braille printing services, Audiobooks, large print (such as for checkbooks, calendars, etc.,) and offer daily living aids.

They operate four connected sites linked to their original homepage that serve as resources to the blind and visually impaired, as well as their families and caregivers. Parents of blinded children, blinded or visually impaired individuals looking for a new career, individuals that may be experiencing vision loss due to age, and even coworkers that are trying to support and properly interact with blinded and visually impaired individuals can all find useful information on APH's website.

"It was a great honor in my career to speak at the Blinded Veterans Association's Convention and to be a part of what this great American organization stands for," says Michael Hudson.

Without the passion for advocacy instilled within these individuals and our blinded veterans, the blind and visually impaired wouldn't be able to move as independently as they do, and we are all eternally grateful for their sacrifices.

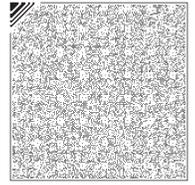
This year's hall of fame inductee is Gene Apple, who has spent many years helping the BVA and blinded veterans.

BVA Employee Wins US Rowing award

Our employees and members do much more than just helping the blind or visually impaired community. One of our Veteran Service Officers, Patrick Johnson is a rowing coach, but not an ordinary rowing coach; he works with both the able-bodied and rowers with various physical, visual, or intellectual impairments. He founded all three adaptive rowing programs in Washington, D.C. – Athletes Without Limits, Capital Adaptive Rowing, and MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital Rowing.

On October 9th, 2019, Patrick traveled with his men's rowing team to the Inas Global Games 2019 in Brisbane, Australia. They brought back three medals. "The Men's 2x brought in a strong row and won bronze in both the 500m and 1000m Men's 2x Final. After a career best row, our Men's 1x "C" boat advanced out of the heats to the Final and pulled from 4th place in the last 500 and made podium with a bronze for TEAM USA"

It has recently been announced that Patrick is the winner of the 2019 Isabel Bohn Award from USRowing. The Isabel Bohn award is "Awarded to an individual or organization achieving measurable success in expanding rowing opportunities for those with physical



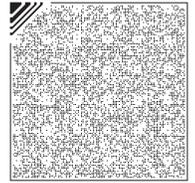


Patrick Johnson with his rowing team and the 2019 Inas Global Games mascot.

and intellectual disabilities.”

Not only was he the founder of three adaptive rowing programs in the Washington, D.C. area, he was also key in developing Athletes Without Limits which is a national governing body for athletes with intellectual disabilities. Now, five schools in the D.C. area have programs that include rowers with intellectual disabilities.

Patrick has been chosen as the US Army as the 2020 Warrior Games Rowing Head Coach.



VA's version of 'Shark Tank' awards grassroots health care innovations

WASHINGTON – As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) efforts to promote grassroots innovations throughout its health care system, the agency recently crowned winners from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Innovation Ecosystem's 'Shark Tank' competition during the Oct. 23, VHA Innovation Experience (iEx) event.

The competition serves as a platform for employees to pitch their ideas for improving health care services for Veterans. The winners' innovations will be implemented at select facilities.

“This is a huge cultural shift from the way VA has done things in the past,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We can't solve everything from Washington. Events and competitions like VHA's 'Shark Tank'

that showcase employees' innovative ideas, empowers frontline personnel to take charge to improve services in needed areas.”

The 12 practices and 15 medical center director winners were chosen from a pool of more than 500 applicants. The winning practices include expanded digital health capabilities, improved access to care and suicide prevention. The partnership between the creators of the practice and selected facilities will kick off at the Diffusion of Excellence Base Camp in February 2020 at the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System.

To view the finalists' pitches from the 2019 VHA Shark Tank Competition visit the VA YouTube page.



SAVE
THE DATE
MARCH 28, 2020



LIGHTUP

THE DARKNESS

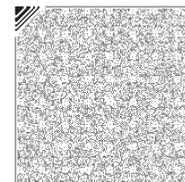


A CHARITY CONCERT FOR
BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

RICHARD J. ERNST
COMMUNITY
CULTURAL CENTER
ANNANDALE
VIRGINIA

Save the date for BVA's 2nd Light Up the Darkness Charity Concert on March 28, 2020 at the Richard J. Ernst Community Cultural Center in Annandale, Virginia.

Caregiver Support Program MISSION Act Frequently Asked Questions



Caregivers play a critical role in the health and well-being of some of our most vulnerable Veterans. Under the MISSION Act, we are strengthening and expanding our program to positively impact the lives of Veterans and deliver the best customer experience to them and their caregivers.” – Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Robert Wilkie.

What is changing in the Caregiver Support Program (CSP)?

Under the MISSION Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working to give more family caregivers access to the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) and support them as they care for Veterans of all eras. Currently, the PCAFC is only available to eligible Veterans injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. Prior to expanding eligibility for the PCAFC, VA must upgrade its information technology (IT) system and implement other improvements to strengthen the program.

When will the program expand?

VA will begin accepting applications for PCAFC from Veterans of other eras in phases. The first phase of the program expansion will occur once the Secretary has certified that VA’s new caregiver IT system is fully implemented and final regulations have been published. This could be as early as the Summer of 2020. At which time, VA will expand eligibility and begin accepting applications in 2 phases:

- Initially, VA will accept applications from eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975.

- The final phase, due to begin two years after the first phase, will include eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty between May 8, 1975 and September 10, 2001.

What services does VA offer for all caregivers?

Caregivers are eligible for a host of VA services including services offered under the Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS). These services are available to eligible Veterans of any era. PGCSS includes training, education, respite care, self-care courses and the Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274 (Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST.) These services are available to support all caregivers, where the Veteran is enrolled for healthcare at any Veterans Health Administration facility, regardless of illness or injury.

What does VA offer under PCAFC?

In addition to services offered under the PGCSS, caregivers in the PCAFC may also receive a monthly stipend, beneficiary travel, mental health counseling, enhanced respite services, and health insurance, if applicable.

How is VA strengthening its CSP?

In recent month, VA has developed or amended 14 standard operating procedures

(that clarify program reimbursements for VA staff), provided enhanced training and education to staff and caregivers, boosted operational capacity with ongoing hiring of over 600 new staff nationwide, and increased oversight in each Veterans Integrated Service Network.

What else is VA doing for caregivers?

VA is working across the organization to ensure caregivers have a positive experience through program improvements and initiatives that include:

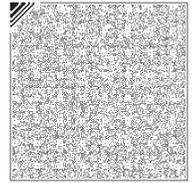
- Establishing a campaign, in collaboration with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, that integrates caregivers into the healthcare team. The *Campaign for Inclusive Care* will train providers, via the Academy for Inclusive Care, with education modules addressing the following topics: Veteran caregivers, the role of caregivers, impact on caregiving and how to include caregivers in the care team. The Academy for Inclusive Care will launch in January 2020. The *Campaign for Inclusive Care* seeks to move from caregiver support to caregiver integration.
- Expanding telehealth services to enable Veterans and their caregivers to receive care in the comfort of their own homes.
- Providing a toolkit for caregivers and family members with facts about suicide prevention and information and guidance on when to reach out for resources and help, for themselves or the Veteran.

- 
- Promoting self-care for caregivers through text messaging. The CSP has partnered with the Office of Connected Care to expand the VA's Annie Short Message Service, a text messaging capability that promotes self-care for Veterans, to caregivers of Veterans.
 - Increasing self-care courses for caregivers (offered in English and Spanish).
 - Providing home and community-based care alternatives through the Choose Home Initiative, currently at 21 VA Medical Centers. The VA recently began partnering with the Corporation for National and Community Service to engage Senior Corps volunteers in support of VA's Choose Home Initiative, enabling older Veterans to receive needed homemaker and daily living support in their homes, rather than move into health care institutions.

Did You Know?

- In 1947 the VA developed the first mobility and orientation rehabilitation training program for blind persons.

From: <https://www.research.va.gov/topics/visionloss.cfm>



The Stay Healthy Checklist

by Malika Brown, MSW, LSW

Caregivers tend to put their health last on their list of priorities. They usually put the needs of their loved ones first. However, the stress caregivers experience makes their health issues more important than ever. Here is a checklist of ways for you to stay fit, both physically and mentally:

Organize!

Invest in a weekly planner for on the go and a calendar to hang on the wall at home. This will assist with keeping track of doctor appointments (yours and your loved ones), shopping days, when bills are due, or time to yourself (yes, you should schedule that in, too). If you're computer savvy, you can try a program like Google Calendar, which includes a color coordinator. Therefore, your appointments and tasks can be one color, while your loved one's appointments can be another color.

Keep your appointments!

Don't neglect your health needs! Make sure to visit your doctors regularly. This includes your specialists, if you have any. Your heart health, breast health, prostate health, foot care, and dental care are also very important to your overall well-being. Make sure to keep up to date with these doctors as well. You can always use your planner to keep track of your appointments!

Buy healthy snacks!

Caregivers are usually so busy taking care of others, they don't think about what they're eating. While it's easy to go grab a slice of pizza or make a pit stop at McDonald's, a little preparation the night before can help nip bad habits in the bud. Add peanut butter to celery sticks, grab a baggie of bran cereal, bring along some string cheese and grapes or an apple. These are easy to make and place in sandwich bags the night before, so at least when you grab something to eat, it's a little healthier than before.

Exercise whenever possible!

I know this seems like the most difficult thing to fit into your schedule, but it is one of the best ways to stay fit and energized. If you can take a small walk around your neighborhood, even with your loved one, it can make a big difference. You can also do small exercises while at home – lunges, sit-ups, and even stretching can keep you energized throughout the day. You can even do exercises with your loved one, as long as it is safe for them.

Take time for yourself!

Take a walk, treat yourself to the movies, attend church, volunteer a couple of hours a week, or curl up and read a book. All of these are ways you can make time for yourself. This is important to keep down stress levels and allow you to regroup. This may also seem too difficult to achieve, but even 20 minutes a day can make you feel re-energized.

Retrieved from: <https://caregiver.com/articles/the-stay-healthy-checklist>.

Reading: The Antidote to Loneliness by William McDonald

They don't ask for much – just a good story now and then. Sometimes, a lot of the time, they may not be able to ask, but you can see it in their eyes. Tired eyes that are saying “I can't make out the words anymore.” Proud eyes that hate to say, “I've had a stroke. I can't hold a book in my hands.” Quiet eyes that are asking, “Could you take a minute and read me a story?”

Usually, a love story that might take them back to a time when they were young and in love as only the young can love.

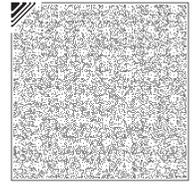
Helen closed her eyes when I read, perhaps to keep me from reading something in them that is for her eyes only, but she cannot hide the smile that dances across her face. She cannot hide the way her hands, folded over her chest, sway back and forth to a melody of memories only she can hear.

Rebecca asks me to change the names in every story to Rebecca and Franklin. She does not close her eyes when I read. She stares, beyond the room, beyond the walls, beyond the building – beyond time itself, into a world where a man named Franklin and a woman named Rebecca lived and loved and promised a forever to each other.

John likes me to read to him. Most men don't but John does. I think it's because every woman in every story is, in John's mind, a woman whose heart he once won. He doesn't say it but ... and lost.

I used to wonder if the seniors I read to considered me a time thief, stealing a little of what little they might have left. But no. I have learned that reading to someone is the antidote

to loneliness. It is like giving and getting a hug when we need it most.



A good story is a good escape.

A good safe place to hide.

From a step that isn't quite as strong as it once was, from eyes a little dimmer than just the other day, from a mind not quite as sharp.

A good story can turn today into yesterday, when loneliness was absent, love and respect ever-present. A good story is, indeed, a good escape from, as Shakespeare wrote, “second childishness and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

My grandmother was considered forever lost to Alzheimer's. The last time I saw her, her eyes were closed. No, they were crushed shut. Her fists were clenched so tightly around her bible I could almost see the blood draining from her veins, and she was tap, tap, tapping her feet, faster and faster until the tapping became an angry stomping. She was digging into her mind, trying to remember someone, something, anyone, anything, but the deeper she dug the further down she fell into the abyss that was once a well of golden memories. Every memory that had been tucked away for safekeeping, every moment of love and hope, every dream, every victory, every loss, every moment worth saving – no longer accessible.

I removed the Bible from her grip then sat on the floor and started reading. Before long, her hands relaxed, she stopped stomping her feet and the only sound in the room was the sound of my voice. I read to her for about an hour. Finally, sadly, I kissed her goodbye. My hand was on the doorknob when she called to me.

“Billy? Is that you?”

I turned. Saw the recognition in her eyes.

“We shared some times, didn’t we, Billy?”

That was all. As quickly as it had come, the light went from her eyes and she was gone again.

Don’t be afraid to read to someone considered forever lost to Alzheimer’s. You might just find yourself in the middle of a miracle.

Gwenna is 93.

In our world.

In hers, she is somewhere between seven and eight and what person between seven and eight-years-old doesn’t like a bedtime story? Gwenna prefers stories about angels. One night, long after the bedtime story had lulled

her to sleep, Gwenna woke, saw me sitting at her bedside, a book of stories still on my lap and asked, “Are you my guardian angel?”

“Yes, darlin’, I am.”

“And you have a book.”

“And I have a book.”

“I like that.”

Carry a book of stories with you. Read to someone who can no longer read for himself or herself.

A good story will lift your old friends from a life as empty as a weed-ridden patch of dirt into the Garden of Eden.

Retrieved from: <https://caregiver.com/articles/reading-antidote-loneliness/>



VP Col. Pete Crean presents citation from CEO of WWII Museum Stephen Watson to Mr. Forestall while BVA members, family, and friends look on.

In Remembrance

The Blinded Veterans Association deeply regrets the passing of the following blinded veterans.



Gem State RG

Kenneth Kraft
Herbert Hatcher

Georgia RG

James Donald O'Hara

Louisiana RG

Arthur Vigne

Massachusetts RG

Wilfrid Hebert

Mid-Atlantic RG

Edward Sprinkle

New Jersey RG

Owen Robeson

New York RG

Bernard Silverman
Leo David Agnew

North Carolina RG

John Faulk

Ohio RG

Stevenson Puleo

Pennsylvania RG

Christian Harden

Puerto Rico RG

Antonio Rodriguez Catala
Ruben Rivera Sauri
Jose Rivera Vazquez
Louis Mason

Wilfred Moreno

Luis Rosario Rivera

Luis Irizarry Santiago

Jorge Miranda De La Rosa

Jose Miranda Maldonado

John Pagan

Luis Hidalgo Gonzalez

Colberg Rodriguez

David Medina Escalera

Ortiz Martinez Asuncion

Leoncio Rodriguez

Jesus Morales Rosrio

Miguel Ramos Ramos

Edgardo Lopez

Carlos Ruummele Vargas

Juan Perez Ayala

Alejandro Pagan Martinez

Edgardo Pabon Suarez

Rafael Lopez Torres

Miguel Nieves Diaz

South Carolina RG

Vernon Scarbrough

Southern California

Frank Gonzales

Southern Nevada/Silver State RG

Leon Bell

Nelson Lumley

Tennessee RG

Lawrence King
Lyle Lawton
Willie Griffin
Richard Grice
John Polcyn
Harold Norton
Frank Presley
W.T. Hill
Donald Spencer
Loyd Morgan
John Finnley
William White
Wilford Looney
James Winchester
Robert Fregosi

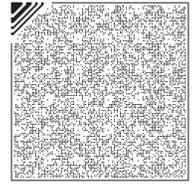
Lonnie Owens
David Bowers
Edward Wardrupe
Roy Chester
Forrest Charnock
William Brown
Jeffery Worley
George Gilbert
Charles Hodge

Washington RG

Emil Hayashi

Wisconsin RG

Patrick Pa Nowlin
James Bjorkman
Robert Hansen



From left to right, President Dr. Thomas Zampieri, Colonel Reynolds, Executive Director Joe Bogart, and Director of Government Relations Donald Overton, walking to lay the Blinded Veterans wreath.



BVA NATIONAL OFFICERS

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Vice President – **JOSEPH MCNEIL**, Columbus, GA
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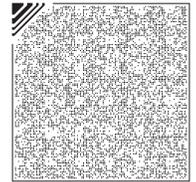
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Final Thought

As 2019 draws to a close and before we celebrate the holidays, we should take some time to celebrate all past and current veterans on Veterans Day. BVA would like to wish all of our members a very Happy Holidays. We hope that the rest of 2019 brings happiness and great memories. Looking back on 2019, we remember the great year we had with our first ever Light Up the Darkness event in March, our convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the many successes of the organization and regional groups. 2020 will bring celebrations of 75 years as an organization and even more opportunities to grow and evolve together.



Close-up picture of the BVA wreath used at Memorial Day and Veterans Day wreath laying ceremonies.

