

# NORTHWEST OUTPOST

Volume XLIII Issue 6

October/November 2021

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*"Russ" Norris at The National Veterans Wheelchair Games*



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Matthew Mickunas

Volunteer Coordinator-Robert Clinton

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## ***Our Mission***

*The Paralyzed Veterans of America, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization founded in 1946, has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of our members-veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury or dysfunction.*

*PVA will use that expertise to be the leading advocate for:*

- *Quality health care for our members,*
- *Research and education addressing spinal cord injury and dysfunction,*
- *Benefits available as a result of our members' military service,*
- *Civil rights and opportunities which maximize the independence of our members.*

*To enable PVA to continue to honor this commitment, we must recruit and retain members who have the experience, energy, dedication, and passion necessary to manage the organization and ensure adequate resources to sustain the programs essential for PVA to achieve its mission.*

*The Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America (NWPVA) a member chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America accomplishes it's mission by coordinated efforts through programs that:*

- *Provide opportunities for health promotion, recreation, employment, sports and recreation, service and camaraderie for paralyzed veterans;*
- *Elevate society's information level about the attitudinal, physical and legal barriers that confront persons with disabilities in order to influence the removal of those barriers;*
- *Advocate for and monitor the delivery of high quality and appropriate health care benefits and service;*
- *Cooperate with and seek the support of other groups and individuals that share NWPVA's objective;*
- *Educate the public with the current and ongoing needs and current and past contributions of America's veterans.*

### ***Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America***

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## Matthew Mickunas FY 2021 Accomplishments



**A**s I look forward to this next fiscal year, I would like to take a moment and reflect some major accomplishments we had last fiscal year. Last fiscal year we had an enhanced budget fulfilled due to numerous donations from known sources and sources that surprised us by showing up at our doorstep. The major funding went out to our missioned Seattle SCI Center Rehab Unit, Research, Education & Clinical Practice Guidelines for SCI/D, and missioned focused & programed adaptive sports. This years programed sports events such as Winter Sports Clinic in Colorado & the Wheelchair

Games in Arizona should be largely participated in, if the Covid variance subsidies and the Covid vaccination rates are raised. Other means will be voted on by your Chapter's Board of Directors (BOD). This fiscal year elections and voting by the General Membership went very well, all Officers and BOD positions have been filled and they have been sworn in. This year we have two new BOD's that volunteered to take the position, Ms. Tracy Reddick Storms, and Mr. Victor Tran. Returning this year are six of the incumbent BOD's and our returning member and now Immediate Past National President, Mr. David Zurfluh. Mr. Zurfluh will also take the reins as the Chapter's Government Relations Director.

NWPVA Leadership wants to encourage the outlining General Membership to help take on some responsibilities for the chapter, that is to volunteer to be a "County Ambassador" in your state. The Leadership is looking for those members in rural areas of Alaska, Montana, also Southern & Northern Washington. We would like to hear from you, the General Membership on what areas in our chapters regions (AK, MT, SW & NW) would be a good fit, within these targeted areas, and who would like to participate and take part. Once we establish these Ambassador's hopefully in action by the next fiscal year. Ambassador's would receive items for their area such as NWPVA table settings, NWPVA clothing to sell or give to newly NWPVA Members, and other things that you may need due to its location specifics.

This year we will be participating in the Auburn, Washington "Veterans Day Parade", November 6th, we will be using our NWPVA parade vehicle and traveling alongside in the procession. Those members wishing to participate, please call the NWPVA office to RSVP and gather further instructions.





## Robert Clinton National Veterans Wheelchair Games



I hope everyone has had a great summer, I certainly have, attending the 40<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New York, August 11-14 as part of our Northwest team. While I didn't personally win any medals this year, I was still a winner, let me tell you, my story.

It was 2019 when I participated in the Wheelchair games for the first time, that year held in Orlando, Florida. At those games I observed for the first time the manual wheelchair slalom. I was so impressed! That year competitors navigated a course that included everyday obstacles like gravel, steep ramps with doors at the top that had to be opened and closed, and a 4-inch curb that could only be crossed over by grabbing a street signpost and hauling ones' self up from street level onto the sidewalk above! I remember especially one competitor, a woman clearly in her 50s or 60s who crossed the finish line sweat pouring down her broadly smiling face. Right then I said to myself, I want to do that.

Well fast forward to 2021 and I signed up to compete in this year's event. As practices began, I quickly found out that there were no formal practices for slalom, and my wheelchair skills were lacking, because as an MS victim, unlike SCI vets, I had not received basic wheelchair training, and my wheelchair was not suited to the challenges presented by the slalom, but I was determined. And even though I was asked repeatedly by friends and several rec-therapists, "are you sure you want to do this?" I always answered YES.

The day of the competition I arrived early at the venue and rolled around the track and talked to a fellow competitor who introduced himself as Jesse, he gave me pointers about navigating the various obstacles, the bungee cords laid out in a way designed to catch your front wheels, white arrows marking front spins, red arrows marking reverse spins, oh my God! Oh, and don't forget, every time you pass the flag, salute!

As the racing order was called, I was beginning to have second thoughts, my heart was pounding, my wheelchair with my size 13 feet sticking out in front would never make those tight turns, no way I could hold a wheely long enough to keep my front wheels out of the bungee cord "spider web of death." I asked those very same people who subtly encouraged me to reconsider competing now said "no way buddy, you've come all this way, now you're going to finish!" And you know what? I did. Maybe it was the slowest time, but my teammates and coaches were cheering me on and when I crossed the finish line I still felt like a winner.

I tell this story to remind my fellow PVA members to challenge yourselves, it takes effort, but you too will find the rewards are great, rehab services have the resources, all they need is you.

By the way fellow Northwest teammate Russ Norris won this event in just over one minute.



**V**olunteer hours were down in August as our *League of Outstanding Volunteers* were busy preparing for, and participating in, the National Wheelchair Games. However, our Chapter was still able to submit a total of 260 hours for the month of August. I am confident that we will all find new opportunities to volunteer and meet our “mission objective” of supporting and making the lives of our fellow veterans better.

Since we have several members who have recently joined our ranks of *Outstanding Volunteers*, I thought it would be a good time to review the definitions of what PVA considered a “Volunteer Hour” and is therefore an hour you should report to me on the Volunteer Time Sheet.

Information to be included on the Time Sheet is your name and volunteer number, date, program code number, (call me if you need help here), hours, miles, and any money reimbursed. This last block is usually “O” or “X,” but if you have driven miles to any assigned special event, please contact me or Matt Mickunas for instructions on how to complete this block on the Volunteer Time Sheet form.

Please submit the form to me by the date requested, the preferred method is via email to [bclin-ton.va@gmail.com](mailto:bclin-ton.va@gmail.com) by the date requested so I can get my report out to National early. Again, emailing is the preferred method, however, if you have problems with that method, just take a picture of the form and email or text the photo to me. I’m here to help if you don’t wait until the last minute, we’ll make it work.

Finally, the definitions of a volunteer Hour as defined in Section III of the Chapter Administrative Manual.

A volunteer hour is an hour of an individuals’ time during which he or she represented their chapter or National PVA in the performance of a job, or by attendance at a meeting or event. This time counted is to be the time actually spent in the accomplishment of the mission. Reasonable time for travel to and from the location where this task is performed will also be allowed.

A volunteer hour is further defined as an hour freely given by a volunteer who does not receive wages from any organization, agency or company for the services provided for that given hour. For national events, i.e., convention, Fall Board of Directors meetings, seminars, etc., travel will be counted as the time from which the volunteer leaves home until he or she checks in at their destination. The hours reported for the remainder of the event will be counted at 10 hours per day. This 10 hour figure will be used for all events. Travel home from the event will be calculated the same as travel to the event.

Time spent participating at recreational events, i.e., National Veterans Wheelchair Games, Trap shoots, Bass Tournaments or other sporting events will not count as volunteer hours. The time spent in the organization and supervision of such events will be allowed.





# Salmon for Soldiers and One Airman

**S**almon for Soldiers and at least one Airman, and his wife, Jenny, began August 21, dark and cool at the Everett Marina. We had just made the quick 30-minute drive up from Edmonds to Everett during my favorite part of the day, long before the sun came up, calm, quiet, and fresh. After finding one of the many free parking spaces signing in, picking up our breakfast burrito, lunch, and snacks. We began looking around and quickly spotted someone holding up a small sign with the number 16, that was us! We quickly spotted our captain. Ryley Fee, he was dressed exactly as I had expected in a faded red jacket, an old baseball cap, and the uniform of the day, morning whiskers. After a proper covid forearm bump we headed down to his boat, and there she was, gently rocking at her moorings, beautiful in the morning light, are those really twin 300 horsepower Yamaha outboards? Yesss! This boat is fast!

I was worried about how I was going to get aboard, but Ryley had it all figured out, I rolled up to the stern of the boat, stood up, and using the boat's side rails and plenty of strong arms ready to help, was able to slide into the cockpit seat, then ably assisted by Ryley's life-long friend, fishing buddy and deckhand for this trip Gunner Grizwald, we were off for the fishing grounds off Edmonds, as we motored down at 50 mph, my suspicions were confirmed, Ryley's boat is fast!

As Ryley and Gunner baited and cast Jenny and my lines over the stern it was clear these two knew what they were doing, explaining the different types of lures, bait, and combinations of the two. Ryley's boat was outfitted with a state-of-the-art fish finder which allowed them to see the salmon below, pinpoint their depth and location.

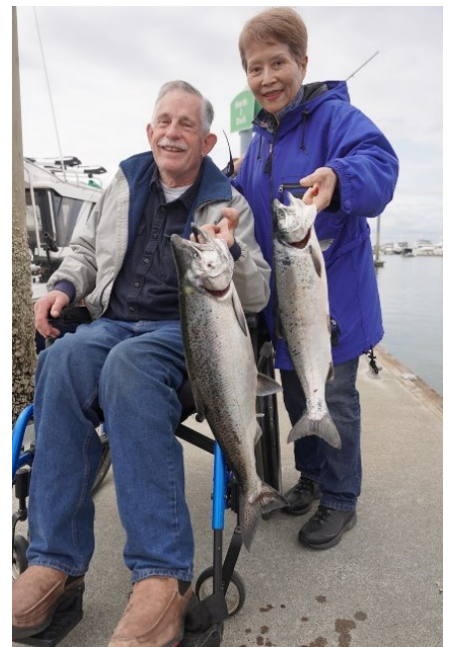
My line had been in the water for less than 20 minutes when Ryley said, you got a bite jerked on the line, then handed me the pole, "keep the tip up," "reel him in," "don't loose him," everyone was shouting, even Jenny as Gunner netted a beautiful King salmon and brought it aboard. As we continued to fish Gunner yelled "you got one" and handed the pole to Jenny, after trying to bring the fish in for a few minutes it got too heavy for her and she handed the pole back to Gunner and he

landed a very large king for her, but it was a wild fish, not a hatchery fish, so by state law we had to throw that monster back. As the morning wore on our captain decided we should try closer to shore where Jenny got a respectably sized coho making it a perfect trip for two first time salmon fishermen! Oh, and I forgot to mention that Ryley served us a mid-morning snack of his home smoked salmon and cream cheese, I'm sure some of the flavor came from the surroundings and comradery, but it was the best we ever tasted.

When we landed back at the Everett marina we were treated to a great bar-b-que dinner attended by the 600 guests and organizers of the Salmon for Soldiers event where we met up with Matt Mickunas, the only other member of our Chapter to attend this event. In fact, it was Matt who found this event and sent out the information and invitation to members of our chapter. I hope some of you reading this will be inspired to attend next year's event scheduled for Sep 17, 2021.

The following weekend we met up with Ryley and his wife for a thank you dinner at a local Thai restaurant. When Ryley arrived, we hardly recognized him, fashionably dressed hair perfectly coiffed looking very much like the AT&T executive he is, and his wife Diane, a lovely and charming school psychologist. Jenny and I thoroughly the time we spent with them and hope to see them again soon.

In closing, to all my fellow members of the Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of Americans, when the invitation comes around next year to participate in the Salmon for Soldiers event comes, please sign up! You won't be sorry you did.



Brent King

## Scuba Diving Cozumel



**I**t was a great adventure to take an adaptive scuba diving trip with LifeWaters August 21<sup>st</sup> through the 28<sup>th</sup>. These are not free trips. The cost is just reduced compared to going with your local scuba shop's dives. The volunteers pay their own way too.

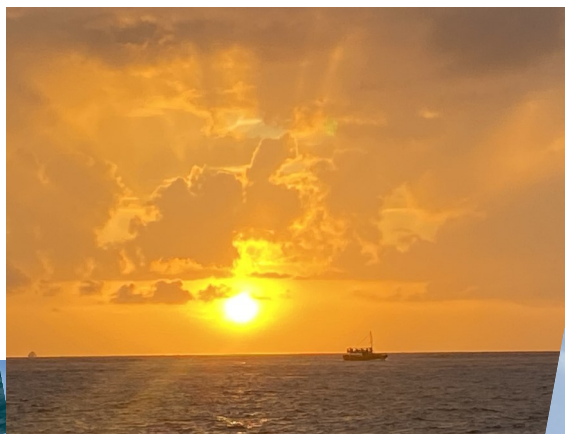
You just need to have your scuba certification and your Nitrox enriched air certification. LifeWaters does have a VA Grant to help pay for your classes on-line.

The volunteers work with local dive masters and boat crew. Your air tanks will be onboard and waiting along with all the gear you brought. Everyone on the boat is there to keep your dives fun and most importantly safe. You will not believe the underwater scenery and sea life that awaits you to explore and take in.

We had divers that were high quadriplegics to a few civilians with mild cerebral palsy. The only difference comes down to how many divers you are required to have with you as an adaptive diver.

This is an amazing way to ditch your wheelchair and experience something like you've never tried before. I'm hooked and love it! Come out and give it a try.

The trip also had many local restaurant excursions, releasing over a 1000 baby sea turtles and a side by side off-road excursion.





# Donations From Northwest PVA To Seattle's Spinal Cord Injury Unit Recreation Department

“

These recumbent trikes have allowed us to complete adaptive cycling trials on updated equipment. Prior to this generous donation by the Northwest PVA, the recumbent trikes that we used on the VA Spinal Cord Injury Unit for evaluations were over eight years old and not available to order as trialed. Our new trikes have updated seating and allow us to assess a Veteran with a spinal cord injury in a trike designed for trail and road use. The trikes also help during our patient education sessions by giving the Veteran an opportunity to view updated cutting edge adaptive biking equipment, and often “sparks” their interest in adaptive sports.” Alex Lowery, CTRS

“Having access to these recumbent trikes, generously donated by the Northwest PVA, has allowed the VA Spinal Cord Injury Unit Recreation Therapists evaluate our Veterans’ ability to safely access and use the equipment in a wide variety of setting, which our previous equipment could not do. Our Veterans can try out the trikes, determine if adaptations need to be made to their seating or set up, and make a comparison of options to allow them to select the best fit to successfully participate in cycling for recreation, fitness, and more. “ Vance Pease, CTRS





# National Veterans Wheelchair Games





# 40th Anniversary - New York City





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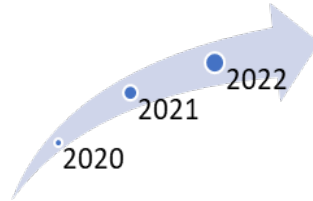


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# Washington Update

*Recent news regarding legislation and regulatory actions affecting veterans and people with disabilities.*

Written and produced by Paralyzed Veterans of America - Government Relations Department

September 21, 2021

Volume 27, Number 12

## HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE APPROVES SPENDING RECOMMENDATIONS

**O**n September 13, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee approved its recommendations for VA spending in the proposed reconciliation package by a vote of 17-12. A recently agreed to [Budget Resolution](#) restricted the Committee to no more than \$18 billion of new VA spending in the package; so, they decided \$15.2 billion of that amount should go directly towards VA's immediate and long-term infrastructure needs. Another \$1.8

billion would allow VA to lease much-needed facilities including several Community Based Outpatient Clinics. The Committee also put \$375 million towards VA's education and training program which will allow the department to increase the number of health professions residency positions by up to 700 over the next seven years. The remaining amount of the projected \$18 billion will give VA greater ability to use its Enhanced-Use Lease authority to lease underutilized VA property (\$455 million), digitally scan vet-

eran service records held at National Archives and Records Administration (\$155 million), and allow the VA Office of Inspector General to provide oversight of VA projects and activities generated by spending in the package (\$15 million). Several amendments to the pre-coordinated package were offered during the markup session, but none were adopted. They included a proposal by Representative Madison Cawthorn (R-NC) to insert language granting eligible veterans a second automobile allowance.

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## SOCIAL SECURITY ENHANCEMENT AND PROTECTION ACT INTRODUCED

**R**epresentative Gwen Moore (D-WI) introduced in mid-August the Social Security Enhancement and Protection Act, H.R. 5050, which seeks to make a number of improvements in Social Security benefits. The bill would increase the Special Minimum Benefit to pay 100 percent of the poverty threshold, for those who have worked at least 30 years under Social Security, and claimed their benefits when they reached full retirement age. To protect those who may exhaust their retirement savings, the legislation would also increase benefits for all beneficiaries 20 years after retirement by a uniform amount equal to five percent of the average retired worker benefit in the prior year. It would also restore the student benefit for children of deceased and disabled workers up to age 26 as long as they are enrolled in college or vocational schools. In addition, the bill would eliminate the current \$142,800 cap on earnings against which the payroll tax is applied.

## UPDATE ON PVA'S ADVOCACY TO STRENGTHEN VA BENEFITS FOR DISABLED VETERANS AND THEIR SURVIVORS

**P**VA continues its advocacy to strengthen benefits for catastrophically disabled veterans as we ease into the final months of the first session of the 117th Congress. Support for legislation that would increase the number of times veterans can access the Automobile Allowance grant and ensure veterans receive much needed Automotive Adaptive Equipment has, for the most part, plateaued. The AUTO for Veterans Act, H.R. 1361/S. 444, which would provide additional auto grants for service-connected veterans, have 33 and 10 sponsors/cosponsors (respectively). H.R. 3304, the CARS for Vets Act, which would not only provide additional auto grants for service-

connected veterans but also codify existing VA support for ingress and egress assistance for non-service-connected veterans, remains steady with just three sponsors/cosponsors. We have been working steadily with the bill's authors and staff from the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on this legislation. The main barrier is the cost of the improvements and the need for the Committees to locate a spending offset to pay for them.

We are also working on new legislation that would raise rates for VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant program and tie them to a formula that will help keep this program's payments relevant in years to come. It has been a dozen years

since HISA rates were last raised; so, the program's grants often fall short of what veterans need to make medically necessary modifications to their homes.

Finally, the Justice for ALS Veterans Act should soon be introduced in the House. This legislation would extend increased Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits commonly known as the "DIC Kicker" to the surviving spouse of a veteran who dies from ALS regardless of how long the veteran had the disease prior to death. Under current law, the higher rate of DIC is only payable if the veteran was rated totally disabled for a continuous period of at least eight years immediately preceding death.

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## STATUS OF ANNUAL FUNDING BILLS

**S**eptember 30 marks the end of the federal fiscal year. As of now, the House has passed nine of the 12 annual funding bills while the Senate has passed none. With only a handful of legislative days remaining in the fiscal year and no House-Senate agreements on spending, lawmakers' only choice is to pass a continuing resolution (CR). A CR would keep the government oper-

ating using current year spending levels. Passage of a CR may be trickier this year because some lawmakers are sizing the bill up as a potential vehicle to increase the country's debt ceiling. Although the exact content and length of the temporary funding measure are unknown, some have suggested it may last up to three months to give both chambers time to come up with a more formal spending plan.





# October

- 11th Indigenous Peoples' Day
- 13th US Navy Birthday
- 14th BOD/General Membership Meeting  
1:00 PM  
Chapter Office
- 30th Boo in Burien
- 31st Halloween



# November

- 2nd Election Day
- 6th Auburn's 56th Veterans Parade  
11:00 AM Main Street
- 7th Daylight Saving Time Ends
- 10th US Marine Corps Birthday
- 11th Veterans Day
- 18th BOD/General Membership Meeting  
1:00 PM-Chapter Office



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# VETERANS

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## Veteran's Day Event

Wednesday, November 10th, 11:30-1:30 pm

Tukwila Community Center-12424-42nd Ave South, Tukwila  
Register by Calling 206-768-2822 (family members welcome)  
Program, entertainment and lunch will be provided

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Place: **Northwest Paralyzed Veterans of America** when you search for a charity.





# Happy Birthday!

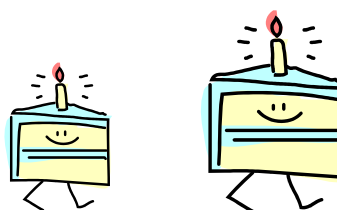
## October

Anthony Chiodo	Fredrick Margiotta
Louis Perkins	Owen Day
Henry Burton	Wayne Tripp
Larry Howard	Duane Caseday
Anton riksem	Ellis McVea
Richard Zelinsky	Ranulf Muir
George Lantz	Michael Waite
Donald Jacobs	Victor Searles
James Bledsoe	Matthew Harbin
Harry Hansen	Peter Laserinko
John Parker	Thomas Bungert
Charles Thibodeau	Brent King
John Gallaher	Kevin McMains



## November

Thomas Myers	Robert Royal
John Bannecker	Charles Salley
Caesar Fittante	Daniel Schultz
Glen Foster	Lora Sprague
Charles Ingalls	Robert Owens
Pat Bean	William Lambirth
Kenneth Hartz	Jon Rubin
Anthony Popp	Steven Larsen
Dale Schinman	Robert Critchfield
Michael Hunter	Juliana Schroeder
Hank Hom	Victor Tran
Anthony Orofino	Brett Hilke
Rafael Ramirez	R. "Sean" Halsted
Patrick Ball	Cassandra Anctil-Taylor
Glenn Haley	Stephen Morris
Fredrick Morris	Steven Loduha
Ernest Hume	Jacob Lietz
Fredrick Brooking	Andrew Bechtle



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Vehicle Donation Program

**P**aralyzed Veterans of America has been on a mission to change lives and build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes—to empower these brave men and women build brighter futures for our seriously injured heroes—to empower these brave men and women with what they need to achieve the things they fought for: freedom and independence. They returned to a grateful nation, but also to a world with few solutions to challenges they faced. They made a decision not just to live, but to live with dignity as contributors to society. They created Paralyzed Veterans of America, an organization dedicated to veterans service, medical research and civil rights for people with disabilities.

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