

Calendar of Events

Trapshoot Circuit
Miramar
6-9 April 2006

Cal-Diego PVA
Ride, Strive & Roll:
9 April 2006

Reflections
26-May - 4 June 2006

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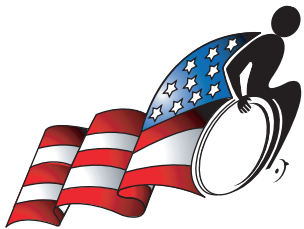
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3350 La Jolla Village Dr. #1A-118
San Diego, CA 92161

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Beachcomber

Cal-Diego Paralyzed Veterans Association • April 2006



Mission

The mission of Cal-Diego Paralyzed Veterans Association is to improve the quality of life for veterans of the Armed Forces and others who have experienced spinal cord injuries or disease, through the use of education, advocacy, research, sports and recreation, and communication.



Cal-Diego PVA Chapter Office

A Member Chapter Of The Paralyzed
Veterans Of America

3350 La Jolla Village Dr. #1A-118
San Diego, CA 92161

(800) 423-2778 • (858) 450-1443

(858) 552-8585 ext. 7601 • FAX: (858) 450-1852

e-mail: info@caldiegopva.org • www.caldiegopva.org

The Cal-Diego's Board of Directors meet monthly. Minutes of the last meeting are available in the Cal-Diego PVA office. All Cal-Diego PVA members are invited to attend. Please feel free to contact us to inquire about the next meeting date.

PVA Service Office

VA Regional Center

8810 Rio San Diego Drive, Ste. 1121
San Diego, CA 92108

(619) 400-5320 • (800) 795-3586 • FAX: (619) 400-0072

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Service Officer - Amanda McGrath

Secretary - Cindi Kourbelas

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Frequent Requested Phone Numbers

DAV (donation pickups)
858.642.6454

VA Healthcare System
858.552.8585

Paul W. Danielsens, Attorney
619.437.1577

Wheelchair Repair
858.552.7415

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 President's Message
- 4 Executive Director's Message
- 5 Government Relations
- 6 More than a simple matter of opinion
NSO's Report
- 7 Silver Gate Yacht Club
- 8 Presidential Proclamation
- 9 April Birthdays
- 10 Amanda McGrath

Upcoming Board Meetings

VASDHS Medical Center

April 13

Cal-Diego PVA Board Meeting

VASDHS Medical Center

May 11

Cal-Diego PVA Board Meeting

VASDHS Medical Center

The views and opinions expressed in the "Beachcomber" are not necessarily a direct representation of the views or ideals of Cal-Diego PVA. We hereby disclaim any responsibility for opinions expressed herein.



On the Cover: (from the left)
Norman Cruz, Al Kovach, Paul W Danielsens
Senator Barbara Boxer, Wayne Landon,
Kelly Price Noble, James Sullivan, Richard Johnson
Rebecca Sherman



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SCI Education Series

Classes are open to the SCI/D community.
Classes are held in the VA San Diego HS SCI
Center Patient Dining Room from 12:30-1:15 pm.

Tuesday, April 11, 2006
Benefits for the SCI Veteran
Lisa Lagorio, LCSW & Sherman Gillums, PVA
Service Officer

Friday, April 14, 2006
Getting Back to Work
Melody Forgy, MS, CRC

Tuesday, April 18, 2006
Safety in the Home and Community
Charisse Caniff, PTA

Friday, April 21, 2006
Sexuality and SCI
Kathy Dunn, MS, RN, CRRN-A

Tuesday, April 25, 2006
Recreation and Sports
Kelli Kaliszewski, CTRS

April 28, 2006
Taking Charge of Your Life
Celia Macaspac, OTR

Tuesday, May 2, 2006
Psychosocial Issues
Jeri Muse, PhD

Friday, May 5, 2006
Pain Management in SCI
Tom Rutledge, PhD

Contact the SCI Center at
(858) 552-7453
for future class schedules.

Amanda McGrath born April 4, 1982 in Monterey, CA. began her Coast Guard career at the age of 19 in Cape May, NJ. After graduating boot camp, she was stationed in San Diego on the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Hamilton as a Seamen Apprentice. She was qualified and promoted to E3-Seamen in the Spring of 2002. She opted to learn the Storekeeper rate on the ship instead of going to school in Alameda, CA. Unfortunately she wasn't able to make rate due to being paralyzed from an ATV accident in March of 2004. She finished rehabilitation at SCI unit in La Jolla in July of 2004. She then moved to a house in Poway with her fiance and German Shepherd Brewtus in December of 2004. She married long time fiance Edward McGrath. She play's pool in the San Diego APA and plans to return to the desert activities that she loves and misses so much. She is currently working as a PVA National Service Officer in San Diego.



Amanda McGrath
PVA National Service Officer

On The Road!!! Please call us for a ride.
Our transportation program is up and running. Contact Lee Fouts at:
858-518-1268





President's Message

Last month, I accompanied Cal-Diego General Counsel Paul Danielsen and National Service Officer Sherman Gillums to attend the Arizona Paralyzed Veterans Association (AZPVA) Board Meeting in Phoenix. We first met with Chapter members and staff then visited the SCI Support Clinic to evaluate ways to better serve the veterans who receive care within the San Diego and Phoenix “hub-and-spoke” model. Paul offered APZVA members his legal expertise in community issues, as well as pro bono assistance in any Chapter legal matters. Sherman addressed healthcare advocacy concerns shared by AZPVA members in both Phoenix and San Diego.

PVA National Director of Field Services Bo Rollins and National Field Director Craig Stewart were also at the meeting and provided timely direction to all in attendance in their respective efforts to make an adequate system of care a better one. In the end, the trip proved to be an insightful and productive prelude to next month's SCI Center site visit in San Diego.

This year's National Advocacy and Legislature Seminar went as planned for the most part. We visited the offices of Senators Boxer and Feinstein, as well as House Representatives Davis, Filner, Hunter, and Issa. Cal-Diego conducted a short presentation to fellow PVA members on California SB 764...from “Gary Johnson's idea” to Governor Schwarzenegger's signature. The other Chapters weren't concerned with California law; however, we demonstrated how a Chapter can gain the support of other veterans' organizations and state lawmakers to get the job done.

I have been associated with the Adaptive Sports Association (ASA) in Durango, Colorado for about ten years. This nonprofit organization introduces sport and recreation to people of all disabilities. A group of veterans that volunteer for ASA offered a week of skiing and fun with all expenses covered to any disabled veteran that I could find. We experimented with sending a few Cal-Diego members and others during the last week in February. The trip was a great success, so we will do it again next year and are looking at trying a summer program as well.

~ Al Kovach

Membership totals:	
Service Connected	285
Non Service Connected	223
Total Voting Members	508



Executive Director's Message

Thanks to the Board of Directors, I was able to attend the Advocacy/Legislation Seminar in Washington, D. C. this past March. My charge has become more solidified, advocating and protecting the rights of those who are disabled; moreover, those with spinal cord dysfunctions.

Many items on the week's agenda were of great concern, particularly those recommendations from the current Administration:

- A new enrollment fee of \$250 (for medical services) for Categories 7 and 8 veterans

- An increase in prescription drug co-payments from \$8 to \$15

- "The VA estimates that these proposals will force nearly 200,000 veterans to leave the system and more than 1,000,000 veterans will choose not to enroll.

In light of this information (and others, which can be found on our website), PVA's position is to call upon Congress to:

- Appropriate \$32.4 billion for VA medical care, a \$3.7 billion increase over FY 2006
- Appropriate \$460 million for medical and prosthetic research, a \$48 million increase over FY 2006

- Establish mandatory funding for veteran's healthcare.
- Eliminate co-payments for catastrophically disabled Category four veterans who would otherwise be enrolled in Category seven or eight to pay any fees or co-payments.
- Ensure that the VA has the necessary resources to protect and improve specialized services and maintain the VA as a comprehensive healthcare system.
- Provide effective and ongoing oversight, concerning the VA's specialized services.
- Appropriate \$250 million in VA's FY 2007 appropriation to fund the Veteran's Health Administration's fourth mission:
- To serve as a backup to the Department of Defense health system in times of war or other emergencies and as support to communities following domestic terrorist incidents and other major disasters.

There was also a great deal of discussion on Emergency Preparedness. "Are you ready in the case of an emergency?" Where will you go? Do you have enough supplies? Do you have a plan for home and/or work?

A natural disaster can happen at any time. Some disasters give warnings like a storm preceding a flood. Others, like earthquakes give no warning. Once a disaster happens, the time to prepare is gone and all you can do is cope. For more information, please visit www.nod.org and/or <http://theepicenter.com/howto.html#prepare>. Prepare yourself for the unknown. Katrina and Rita left a wake of devastation. Many with disabilities were left behind or had to rush out of their homes without much needed supplies: medicine and equipment. Are you ready?

New legislation has been offered (H.R. 4704) as a comprehensive approach to ensuring the needs of people with disabilities is met before, during and after a national disaster. The goal is to create a Disability Coordinator within the Department of Homeland Security to represent those individuals with disabilities, providing them with guidance and assistance, coordinating emergency planning and relief efforts.

-Kelly Price Noble

April Birthdays

Carrie A McGuire
John T Hall
Robert C Baker
Josef C Epton
Wallace F Shultz
Ralph Taylor
Kevin W Peterston
Brent Relyea
Warren H Schwartzle
Frank E Martinez
Willard A Miller
Stanley W Taylor

Thomas M Haggerty
William E Kitrell
Amanda M McGrath
Michael J Snodgrass
Paul R Stempel
James R Brunotte
Richard I Thon
Stanley F Stein
George T Adams
Jay Derris
Derek Thomas
Richard L Arnicar

Joe L Garrett
Christopher L Masterson
Shawn D Mackie
Steven M Judd
Frank Forray
Paul H Herman
Albert H Groff
Maria A Prokop
Howard A Corrales
John P O'Donnell
Kaio F Salanoa

Cal-Diego PVA needs your help; help us find:

Anthony F Anderson
Joe I Bagalso
Geoff L Ballogh
Nancy C Beard
Kalvin A Brown
Elliott Goldman

Rodney S Guest
Craig S Hills
Matthew J Kingsley
David S Kulak
William T Phelan
David R Roberts

John P Ryan
Frank R Silvia
Alford B Sullivan
William Thomas
Gene M Trudeau
Bryan T Van Lenten

Save the Date



Chasing the Midnight Sun, 26th National Veterans Games in Anchorage, Alaska July 3-8, 2006

Features Events

- Air Guns
- Archery
- Basketball
- Bowling
- Field Events
- Handcycling
- Motor Rally
- Power Soccer
- Quad Rugby
- Slalom
- Softball
- Swimming
- Table Tennis
- Track
- Weightlifting

Exhibition Events:

- Power Chair Relay

For more information and registration materials for the San Diego Team, contact: Kelli Kaliszewski at (858) 642-3163

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Presidential Proclamation



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 6, 2006

I send greetings to those observing Paralyzed Veterans of America Awareness Week.

Americans live in freedom because of our veterans' courage, dedication to duty, and love of country. When it has mattered most, men and women from every corner of our Nation have taken up arms to uphold the ideals of America's founding. These brave citizens have been unrelenting in battle, unwavering in loyalty, and unmatched in honor, and all Americans owe a great debt of gratitude to those who have sacrificed for liberty and for the security of our Nation.

During this week, we especially honor our veterans who have been injured in the line of duty. Their strength and determination are an inspiration to their fellow patriots and the American people. I appreciate those involved with PVA and all those dedicated to removing barriers and ensuring paralyzed veterans receive the care and support they deserve. By serving those who have served America, you demonstrate the great spirit of our country.

Laura and I send our best wishes. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

The President of United States wrote this proclamation March 6, 2006 honoring all veterans injured in the line of duty.

CalDiego PVA PAW Dates

Sunday April 9

Annual Ride, Strive and Roll, motorcycle run
8am to 3pm
San Diego, CA

Tuesday, April 11

Fishing Trip
10am to 3pm
Dana Point, CA

***Friday, April 14**

Community Forum
11am to 2pm
VA Multipurpose Room
San Diego, CA

Saturday, 15 April

Membership BBQ
11am to 1pm
VA Medical Center Rose Garden
San Diego, CA

* (We have invited other community based organizations to attend a roundtable and networking session)



Government Relations Representing Cal-Diego In Washington D.C.

The Annual PVA Advocacy/Legislation Seminar was held March 6-9, 2006 in Washington D.C. It was a strong and necessary show of solidarity. After two days of receiving and sharing information on VA budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, health care and other pertinent VA issues, we were off to Capitol Hill for the final two days to hear the Committee on Veterans Affairs give briefings, to witness PVA's annual testimony and to conduct congressional visits.

On March 6th, we heard introductory remarks from National President Randy L. Pleva, Sr., PVA National President and Douglas K. Vallmer, Associate Executive Director for Government Relations. Our keynote speaker was the Honorable Jim Nicholson, Secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs. Throughout the testimonies, a strong emphasis was placed on the importance of organizations with like interests working together for their common cause.

We were briefed on issues to face the 109th Congress that are of vital importance to all veterans, people with disabilities and, more precisely, PVA members. Over the next two days, we presented and discussed these critical issues with our United States congressional representatives in an effort to increase their understanding and gain their support. Since the men and women of the Senate and the House make the laws, their backing is critical to the continuation of reliable and quality health care be provided to those who served in our country's military by the VA Health Care System.

The issues PVA members addressed during their stay in Washington included

- FY 2007 VA HEALTH CARE BUDGET appropriate \$32.4 billion for VA medical care.
- ELIMINATE CO-PAYMENTS FOR CATASTROPHICALLY DISABLED CATEGORY FOUR VETERANS who would otherwise be enrolled in Category 7 or 8, pay any fees or co-payments.
- HOUSING FOR VETERANS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES in all community planning and housing development efforts.
- PROTECTION OF SPECIALIZED SERVICES such as spinal cord dysfunction care, are part of the core mission and responsibility of the VA. •H.R. 4704 / S. 2124 – EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, a comprehensive approach to ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are met before, during and after a national disaster.
- HR 3248 / S 1283 LIFESPAN RESPITE CARE ACT authorizes funds to states to make quality respite available and accessible to family caregivers, regardless of age, disability, or family situation. •LONG TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS S. 1951, The CLASS Act to create a new national insurance program to help adults with functional impairments to remain independent, employed, and stay a part of the community
- VA's FOURTH MISSION P.L. 97-174, the Veterans' Administration and Department of Defense Health Resources Sharing and Emergency Operations Act.

On our final day of the conference, President Pleva addressed a joint meeting of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs to give PVA's 2006 annual testimony. President Pleva spoke of the history of PVA and its role in developing and maintaining specialized programs within the VA Health Care System. He spoke of the importance of Congress providing adequate funding for the continuation of specialized services, long-term care initiatives, and for research, stressing that "timely access to appropriate, quality health care is the most important thing" in the lives of PVA members, veterans who have a spinal cord injury or dysfunction.

-Wayne Landon



National Service Officer's Message

More Than a Simple Matter of Opinion

A claim for disability benefits can live or die on one medical opinion. In many cases, the VA will rely on findings from Compensation & Pension physicians to reach a decision. However, a disconnect all too often exists between what the veteran expects and what he or she gets.

Outcome: claim denied.

So, what makes a medical opinion worth the paper that it is written on? Before answering, let me explain what the VA does not consider competent or expert derived, medical evidence. First, unless your spouse happens to be a physician, he or she cannot answer questions of causation or diagnosis, even if he or she is intimately familiar with your condition. And, your cousin who is a dentist cannot provide expert analysis of your heart condition by virtue of his familiarity with a field of medicine. Even a general practitioner's opinion can often be eclipsed by the findings of a VA expert in a particular field. In order for a medical opinion to matter, it must be both credible and probative.

An opinion is considered credible only if it comes from an expert or, better yet, a qualified source among experts. After clearing that hurdle, it must also be probative, or relevant, to the issue that it addresses. For example, a

statement from a neurologist who has reviewed a veteran's medical history and examined the veteran to arrive at a medical opinion about nerve loss is considered highly persuasive. That is, her opinion is said to be credible and probative.

Sometimes, two medical opinions will arrive at opposing conclusions, and a VA rating specialist must assign weight to each. As mentioned earlier, the best opinions come from physicians who specialize in the medical field surrounding the disability in question. Other important aspects influencing weight include whether the physician reviewed prior clinical records, the physician's familiarity with the veteran, the degree of specificity and certainty noted in the opinion, and whether the physician's contact with the veteran was for treatment or substantiation of a claim. Note that an opinion may be overlooked altogether if it materially relies on the veteran's unsupported history as a premise for the rationale. Also, most importantly, the information contained in the veteran's claims folder must support the medical conclusion.

I will end with a quick discussion on evidentiary standard. A veteran must prove a claim based on a "preponderance of the evidence." This means that the evidence as a whole must lean in favor of the veteran by 51 percent or greater. A medical opinion that concludes with "more likely than not" does a claim justice against this standard. Often, the hardest part about adequately proving a claim is getting the physician to write a favorable opinion when the answers are not very clear. In the end, your claim may only be as good as the opinion on which it is based.

~Sherman Gillums, Jr.



Each year, members of the Silver Gate Yacht Club host a Regatta to provide a day of boating fun for the disabled community. The 47th Annual Silver Gate Yacht Club Wheelchair Regatta will be held on Sunday, 4 June 2006. Activities will begin at 8AM and will include

- Harbor Cruise - lasting approximately 1 1/2 hours aboard a power yacht whose time and service is donated by the owners
- Lunch – following the harbor cruise, beginning at 11AM. Lunch will be provided by the Silver Gate Club.

In addition, musicians and entertainers volunteer their time to make this a day to remember.

Reservations are a must! Last year, there were over 400 guests. An adult must accompany everyone under 18 years of age.

Unfortunately, the group will not be able to accommodate power chairs, because of their weight.

Please contact *Kelly Price Noble* at 858-450-1443 at the Cal-Diego PVA office if you are interested. Reservations must be made by 26 May 2006.

New SCI Cancellation Phone line

Spinal Cord Injury now has a phone number specifically designated for cancelling. SCI Outpatient Clinic and Annual Exam Clinic appointments. The SCI Cancellation phone number is (858) 552-7512. To leave an appointment cancellation request, patients will need to include on the voicemail message:

- First and Last name
- Full SSN
- The appointment to cancel
- Active phone number to be reached at

The SCI Outpatient Program Support Assistant will cancel the appointments and call the patients back to reschedule appointments.

Notary Service is now available in the Cal-Diego PVA Office

- Taking Power of Attorney
- Certifying a copy of a Power of Attorney
- Taking an Advance Health Care Directive
- Certifying Copies of Journal Entries
- Taking Depositions
- Demand Debts or Protest Non-Payment.

Come and Join Our Weekly Group: Living with Spinal Cord Injury

Learn strategies for adapting to a spinal cord injury. Share you experiences; learn how to defend against depression; hear others' experiences; learn how to develop positive coping skills.

Wednesdays from 10:30 am - 11:30 am VASDHS SCI Recreation Room - 1B112

For more information call (848) 552-8585 Veronica Wong, Psychology Intern, ext 5531