

JUNE 2026

Happy Father's Day!





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GOD, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not change.
Courage to change the things I can and the WISDOM to know the difference.

HAPPINESS is thinking of others first, yourself last and GOD always.
All a person is remembered for is what they did for others.

As mankind thinketh in their minds... so they are.

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REGRET looks back, FEAR looks around... FAITH looks UP.

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**Paralyzed Veterans of America
Central Florida Chapter
2711 S. Design Ct.
Sanford, FL 32773-8120
Phone (407) 328-7041
Fax: (407) 328-7139**

June Board Meeting is a **Zoom** - June 18th 10:30 AM

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National Director Amy Patterson
Executive Director John DeMauro
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Website: pvacf.org
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Mission Statement

Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida, is a congressionally chartered veteran's service organization that provides a platform of advocacy, education and research, communication, adaptive sports and recreation for veterans paralyzed as a result of spinal cord injury or dysfunction, in an effort to afford them with the highest quality of healthcare and life experiences.



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Chapter President

Steve Kirk

The Progress of Paralyzed Veterans: *Resilience, Rehabilitation, and Renewal*

For generations, military service has demanded extraordinary courage and sacrifice. Among those who have borne the greatest burdens are those of us living with paralysis caused by combat injuries, training accidents, or service-related illnesses. While paralysis once meant a life of severe limitations and isolation, remarkable advances in medicine, rehabilitation, adaptive technology, and social support have transformed the lives of many paralyzed veterans. Today, these we are not only surviving—we are leading, competing, advocating, and inspiring communities around the world. Paralyzed Veterans of America and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs have played a major role in improving healthcare access, disability rights, and rehabilitation services for injured veterans. Their efforts have helped reshape public understanding of disability and independence. In earlier decades, treatment options were limited. Many of us faced long hospital stays with little expectation of independence. Wheelchair accessibility was rare, adaptive equipment was primitive, and social stigma surrounding disability often left veterans isolated from society. Beyond physical limitations, we frequently struggled with emotional trauma. Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were common, especially among those adjusting to sudden changes in life after active service or after returning home from active service. One of the greatest areas of progress has been medical rehabilitation. Advances in spinal cord injury treatment, physical therapy, and assistive technologies have significantly improved quality of life for those paralyzed. With nearly all of these advances coming as a direct result of PVA's advocacy before both the VA and congress. By our presence we have made them aware of and caused them to pay attention to paralyzed veterans and our needs. Modern rehabilitation programs focus not only on survival, but also on independence and long-term wellness. Veterans now have access to: Advanced wheelchairs and mobility devices, robotic rehabilitation systems, adaptive vehicles and home modifications, occupational and physical therapy, mental health counseling and vocational training programs. Research into spinal cord injuries has also accelerated. Scientists continue exploring nerve regeneration, stem cell therapy, and brain-computer interface technologies that may one day restore movement to individuals with paralysis. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke and various veterans' medical centers continue supporting groundbreaking research that offers hope for future recovery options. PVA continues to advocate for paralyzed veterans every year. Board members Tim Wolfe and Amy Patterson will be in Washington DC in early June representing our chapter in presenting PVA's 2026 Legislative Priorities.

Steve Kirk



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Happy Father's Day!

Executive Director

John DeMauro



This year board members Tim Wolfe and Amy Patterson will be traveling to Washington DC to attend the PVA Advocacy Seminar. There they will be meeting with congressional representatives to discuss PVA's legislative priorities June. See Tim Wolfe's article in this newsletter for more information on those priorities.

The 12th Annual Jerry Dugan Memorial Charity Golf Tournament was a great success. Our awesome staff and volunteers raised over \$81,000 to help support our programs and send members to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in July. I encourage you all to support our sponsors whenever possible. They are the backbone to this event, and their sponsorship represents nearly 80% of the funds raised. Some of these funds help support the staff who work hard at bringing the event together and making it so successful. They begin working on putting things together for next year's event almost immediately after the current tournament ends, along with all the other responsibilities they have at the office.

We have 8 of our members, 4 caregivers and 1 staff member going to Detroit Michigan for the National Veteran Wheelchair Games this year. The 2027 National Veteran Wheelchair Games will be hosted by our chapter and will be held at the Convention Center in Orlando July 14-19. Jimmy Green will be accepting the torch at the end of the Games in Detroit to carry it back to Orlando. This will be Jimmy's 30th year in a row participating in the Games.

Our chapter hosted the Games in Orlando back in 2018 and it was (and still is) the highest attended Games in the history of the Games. Since the games are so close to home, we are hoping to have a large number of our members participate next year. If you have an interest in attending let us know by contacting Stacie at the chapter office.

John DeMauro

Happy
Father's
Day!



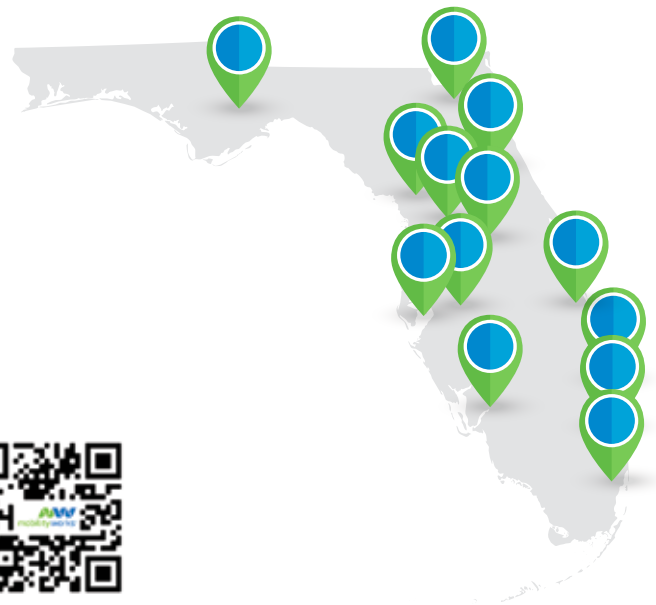
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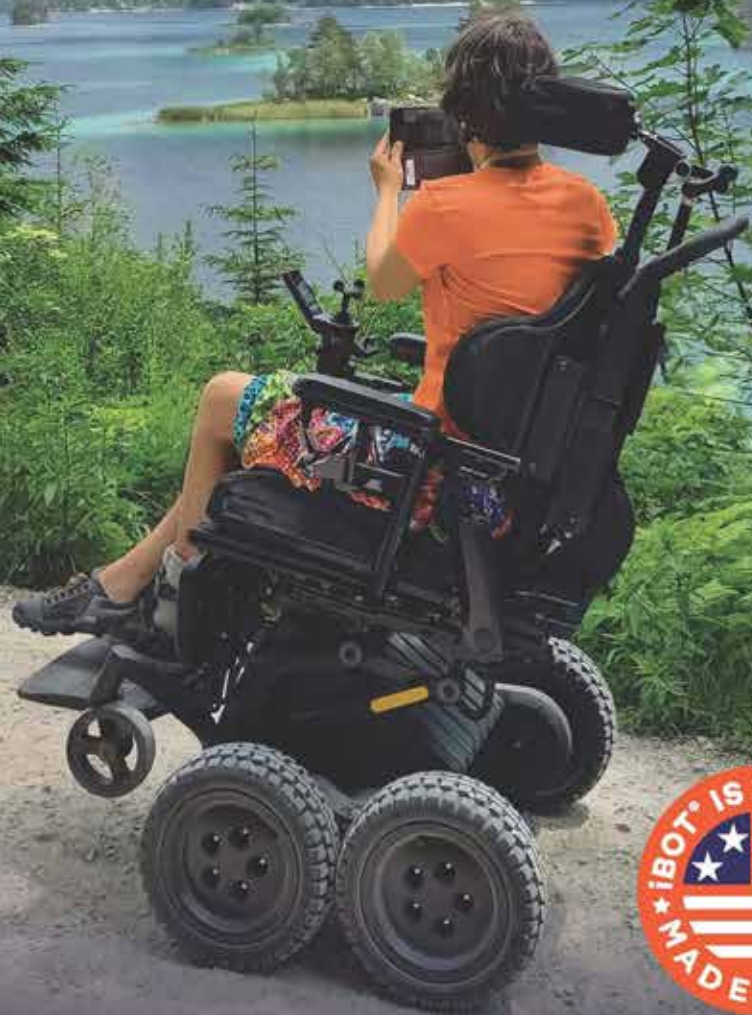
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Government Relations

Tim Wolfe

As I noted in last month's WIM, our National Director Amy Peterson and I will be heading to Washington D.C. to advocate for PVA's top priorities that affect the membership. Nearly two dozen bills have been introduced in the 119th Congress that directly correlate with our legislative priorities. With the limited time we will have with each representative, we plan to present the most noteworthy and bills that are favorable to be voted on. Below is a list of the priorities we must consider using our face-to-face time with. The other priorities will be highlighted in a pamphlet left with the representatives.

Overview:

- **Strengthen the Foundations of VA's Specialized Health Care Service**
- **Maximize VA Long-Term Services & Supports for Veterans with SCI/D**
 - Social Security Caregiver Credit (H.R. 8490/S. 4396)
 - Credit for Caring (H.R. 2036/S. 925)
- **Fortify the Financial Security of Veterans with SCI/D, their Families and Survivors**
 - Caring for Survivors Act (H.R. 2055/S. 611)
 - The Major Richard Star Act (H.R. 2102/S. 1032)
 - Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act (H.R. 2245/S. 1644)/Autonomy for All Disabled Veterans Act (H.R. 3309)
 - Servicemember and Veteran Empowerment and Support Act (H.R. 2576/S.1245)
- **Increase SCI/D Veterans' Access to Health Care Services**
 - Veterans Infertility Treatment Act (H.R. 220)
 - Driver Reimbursement Increase for Veteran Equity (DRIVE) Act (H.R.1288/S. 599)
 - Mammography Access for Veterans Act of 2025 (H.R. 7411/S. 339)
- **Ensure Equal Opportunity and Full Participation for Catastrophically Disabled Veterans**

Tim Wolfe

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A WORD FROM OUR MEMBERS

Getting the Gear — Navigating the VA and Nonprofit Resources

Let's be honest. Getting assistive technology can sometimes feel like navigating military paperwork all over again. It can be frustrating, slow, and confusing. But it's also one of the biggest benefits available to veterans living with spinal cord injuries — and it's worth the effort.

The VA: One of the Strongest Resources Available

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides access to assistive technology through prosthetics and rehabilitation services. Depending on your eligibility and needs, this can include mobility equipment, environmental controls, adaptive computer systems, and communication devices.

Most veterans start the process through their assistive technology care team, usually involving a physician, occupational therapist, or rehab specialist.

Typically, the process looks like this:

1. Evaluation of your daily needs and independence goals
2. Assessment to determine the best equipment options
3. Documentation and approval through prosthetics services
4. Equipment delivery and training

It's not always fast. But veterans who stay engaged in the process often end up with equipment that dramatically improves independence and quality of life.

Where Nonprofits Step In

Nonprofit organizations often help fill gaps. They sometimes provide grant funding, specialized equipment, or faster access to newer technology.

They also offer something just as valuable — peer support. Talking to another veteran who already uses a device can provide real-world insight that no brochure or manual ever will.

Tips From Veterans Who've Been Through It

- Be specific about how equipment will help your independence
- Work closely with your therapy and rehab teams
- Connect with other veterans using similar technology
- Stay patient and persistent

Navigating equipment requests can feel overwhelming, especially when paperwork and approvals start stacking up. I regularly talk with veterans who just need help understanding their options or preparing for the process. If you're unsure where to begin or need help thinking through potential solutions, don't hesitate to reach out. Sometimes a quick conversation can save months of frustration.

Advocating for yourself can feel exhausting, but it often makes the difference between getting basic equipment and getting the right equipment. Reflecting digging around right now.

Charlie Merritt is a veteran advocate and assistive technology specialist dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities regain independence through adaptive solutions. He works closely with veterans and rehabilitation teams to identify technology that improves quality of life, accessibility, and long-term independence.



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Be kind to humankind! You can #GIVE back to PVA members by donating your gently used clothes and household goods. Your donation can help a paralyzed #veteran today. To learn more and donate: https://secure.pva.org/default.aspx?tsid=9491&donationAmount=other&mSource=WEQYYDFW2GPG&_ga=2.1705649.1607860698.1552920854-258990882.1542139382



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The Golf Tournament was a HUGE success! Photos and details to come in the July issue of WIM.





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