Happy New Year!
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.
As I am sure you are aware, I am a high-level quad. From time to time, my lack of dexterity can give me some real problems, especially with getting into and out of my home. I have come across a product called August locks. It is an apple product. I found this product appealing for people in my situation. This product allows me to download an app on my smart phone, whereby allowing me to lock and unlock the deadbolt on the front door of my house by simply opening the app and tapping on an icon. Having a hands free deadbolt gives me a great deal of independence because I no longer need someone to let me in or out of my home. I can do it myself!

Not only can I exit or enter my home on my own, I can also use the app to give access to my home to others, even if I am not there or if I am lying in my bed waiting for my caregiver to come and help me get up. I can leave the door locked until I know someone is going to arrive. I can then either use the app on my phone to unlock the door and let them in or if I can even unlock the door with voice command.

Also, if you have a caregiver, or a family member that is coming at a specific time, like early morning or late night when it is dark. They don’t have to fumble in the dark to find the key, you can program it to automatically open at scheduled time. Speaking of keys, you don’t have to go to the hardware store to get more made. With this product and the app you can make as many virtual keys as you want. If you receive an unexpected package and the neighbors call and say it’s on your porch. You can open the door from anywhere you may be, allow them in and lock the door after they leave.

Since it is an apple product, the built-in Wi-Fi allows your lock to work with your favorite voice assistant, including Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, Apple HomeKit, Samsung SmartThings and more.

Yes, there is a downside to this and that would be the price. I happened to have gotten it on sale. Normally it runs around $198 and if you want to get a few of the options, like the keyboard touch pad and the Wi-Fi booster, it could be as high as $250 or more.
Happy New Year! I hope 2022 is a safe and prosperous year for all of you! 2022! Wow! I never thought it would come so fast. It seems like just yesterday it was a new decade and here we are two years into the 2020’s. As we begin this New Year, I wanted to call our members attention to a few programs we have going and some new things ahead.

First, I want to remind you all of the PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA CENTRAL FLORIDA CHAPTER MEMBER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. The primary goal of this program is to assist Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida Chapter (PVACF) members, their spouses and children in improving the quality of their lives through continuing education. Applicant must be either a member of PVACF, the spouse of a member of PVACF or a child (under the age of 23 and living at home) of a member of PVACF.

A citizen of the United States of America. Accepted and enrolled as a full-time or part-time student in an accredited US college or university or a recognized vocational school. Certification programs will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Scholarships will be awarded annually, in the amount of $1,000 to full-time students, $500 to part-time students and 50% of the cost of certification programs up to a maximum of $500. Scholarships will be released solely to the college, university or certification program in the name of the student. Applications and all other required documents must be submitted or postmarked by July 1st. For more information on this program go to the chapter web page at www.pvacf.org. Go to the How We Help tab and click on Scholarships.

As we have for the past five years, PVACF supports sending its members to the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG). Look to the article by Sports Director Roger Sack for more information on how you can register and go to the NVWG, which will be held in Tempe, Arizona in July 2022. Also, go to www.pvacf.org/sports and see what is scheduled for the coming months for those interested in the various adaptive sports opportunities being offered by the chapter.

New this year, the chapter has some exciting events scheduled for members, their families and friends to join in on. Newly appointed Activities Director’s David and Rosa Rountree are planning different events for each month of the year. Look for their schedule of events at www.pvacf.org and in the WIM in the coming months. Everything from game nights, to putt putt golf, to karaoke night, to holiday parties are coming soon. There will be something for all ages. You will not want to miss these! Also, let your caregivers know that there are some opportunities coming for them this year as well.

Grants are available now and more are coming! Once again, the PVACF Board of Directors approved funding for the chapter’s Wheels on the Go Program. Through this program members are encouraged to get out of the house and go! Go out to dinner, go to the theater, go to a show, go to a sporting event, go out and have fun and the chapter will pay for it! Just send us your receipts and fill out a short questionnaire (which you can find at www.pvacf.org) and we will send you a reimbursement check. Members can only request up to $500 per year and reimbursements will be made only while funds are available. This year the board budgeted $20,000 for this program. The Board of Directors also approved two additional programs involving grants. The chapter will be offering members the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to $1,000 for the purchase of adaptive hand controls. AND, the chapter will be offering members the opportunity to apply for a grant of up to $10,000 for the purchase of a new or used adaptive vehicle or to repair an adaptive vehicle the member already owns. Restrictions apply for both of these grant opportunities and funding is limited.

The board approved $10,000 to fund the Adaptive Hand Control Grants Program for 2022 and $30,000 to fund the Adaptive Vehicle Grants Program. Look for more information on both of these programs in this edition of the WIM.

Every year the Board of Directors considers a budget, presented to them in July, for the next fiscal year of the Chapter. The fiscal year runs from October 1 – September 30. Program funding is determined by various factors and suggested budgets from the chapter leadership. The Sports Director, Activities Director, Office Manager and Executive Director submit budget requests and the Executive Director and the Chapter Board Treasurer review those requests and then prepare and submit a proposed budget to the Board of Directors for approval. Funding for specific programs is often determined by how many members participate in those programs. Our goal is to offer as many opportunities to our membership as our available funds will allow us. We hope that 2022 will be a great year and that you will participate in and benefit from the opportunities we provide.
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Retired Army Sergeant Terry Vereline crosses the finish line of the 2019 New York City Marathon after walking 26.2 miles in her ReWalk Exoskeleton. She received this device in 2014 and has used it to take nearly 1,000,000 steps in the past five years.

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The Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida Chapter Endowed Scholarship awarded its first two scholarships to veterans to help further their education at Seminole State College. Board member Tim Wolfe (pictured with the scholarship recipients) served on the PVACF Endowed Scholarship Selection Committee, which selected Army Veteran Renisha Renee Robertson and Navy Veteran Ricardo Romero each to receive a $1,000 scholarship for use toward the cost of tuition, fees, textbooks or any other items related to the cost of their education at Seminole State College.

In her application for this scholarship, Renisha wrote: “April 14, 2015 was the day my life took a major turning point for the better. I enlisted into the United States Army after graduating from the University of Central Florida. My passion lies in helping others and my family with the tools of education and the opportunities this great country provides. I knew being a pharmacy technician was what I like to do but I wanted to be closer to patients’ on a more personal level and be a part of a bigger team, instead of being behind closed doors. I want to play a vital role in the medical field, so I chose to apply and was accepted into the Seminole State Respiratory Care Program for the fall of 2021. My goal after college is to work for Orlando Regional Medical Center in the intensive care unit or emergency department for 2 years and then become a travel respiratory therapist to obtain diversity in the field. After 5 years’ experience, my goal is to become a unit respiratory care supervisor. The military has instilled leadership in me and I intend on leading from that experience and knowledge I have obtained. Obtaining an education come with financial obstacles. Winning this scholarship would make a difference for me because it will allow me to cover the expenses of my uniforms, shoes, stethoscope and any other additional supplies needed for my work in the respiratory care program. Although my service in the military has stopped, I will continue to be of service to anyone in need. I would like to thank the Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida Chapter for taking the time to consider my application and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

After being notified of her selection Renisha shared how grateful she was that there were organizations like ours that were paying it forward to veterans and that is what she intends to do in her career after getting her degree.

In his application for this scholarship, Ricardo wrote: “I am a Pre-Clinical Health Sciences major here at Seminole State College. My goal is to someday be a Physician’s Assistant. Graduating from High School, I still did not know what I wanted to do with my life but I knew I had to do something to help my family of my mother and my sister, as the man of the house. After going to college for one semester, I decided I did not want to continue so I made the decision to join the United States Navy. In the Navy, I trained to be a Hospital Corpsman. A Hospital Corpsman is a mix between a Nurse and a Field Medic. As a Corpsman, you have the ability to practice medicine with little schooling and a lot of on the job training. The amount of material and the things I learned in the military helped me choose the career I now seek. I now have a ton of experience in many areas of medicine and have worked in hospitals, clinics and in the field taking care of my Marines. I did everything from taking vital signs, medical administration and placing IVs, to learning how to do a cricothyroidotomy, placing tracheostomy and even taking care of my own patients without any supervision in the ICU and Medical/Surgical Ward in Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune. The military gave me experience, knowledge and helped me find my identity and what I wanted to do with my life. So much so that I left the military early to return to college and follow what is now my dream. Now that I am older, more knowledgeable and motivated, I know what I have to do to achieve my academic goals. Whether that be studying efficiently, being submerged in the material and practices and surrounding myself with like-minded people that have similar goals, so that we can help each other succeed. So far, I have had success in my approach and it shows in my first semester back in school when I landed on the President’s List of Spring 2021. A merit given to those who have accomplished a grade point average of 3.75 or better. My current financial situation is complicated, as O am a veteran that qualifies for full benefits. Unfortunately, Veterans Affairs only covers 36 months of my education. So, I plan on using those benefits when I get my bachelor’s degree at the University of Central Florida and then for the Physician’s Assistant Program that is two years, that way I don’t end up with a debt that’s worth the same as a house. My ultimate goal is financial freedom for me and my family with the tools of education and the opportunities this great country provides.” Ricardo was proud of being a Navy Corpsman, taking care of “his Marines”. He hopes to use the scholarship to help him get the preliminary courses completed at Seminole State College and then later using his GI Bill funds to help pay for his undergraduate and graduate degrees. Once he becomes a physician’s assistant, he will be able to work directly with patients.

Board member Tim Wolfe met with both recipients and presented them with certificates commemorating their receiving the scholarships. Tim was able to spend a little time with both recipients and had the opportunity to share with them the mission of PVACF. Seminole State College has a Student Veteran’s Service Center that Tim found to be a great place for veterans attending Seminole State College to find the assistance they need. The Center has a staff, who themselves are veterans, which are there to help guide them on their journey to a higher education and a successful career path.

The Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida Chapter Endowed Scholarship will provide a minimum of two $1,000 scholarships to veterans attending Seminole State College (which is located a few miles from the Chapter offices) perpetually. This is an awesome program that the chapter leadership hopes can be duplicated at other schools in Central Florida, in the years to come and parleys with the PVACF Membership Scholarship Program the Chapter offers it members, their spouses and children under 23 years old, living at home.
Thanks for your support!

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Have you ever thought about playing golf? Some of our members either used to play or thought they would like to try it. In 2021, the Central Florida Chapter saw some opportunities to grow a new sport. Every year we host the Jerry Dugan Memorial Golf Tournament as our chapter fundraiser. We usually have 3-4 members play in the tournament, some needing an adaptive golf cart. The chapter saw the interest in the sport, the opportunity to market the chapter at local golf courses, help other disabled veterans and persons with abilities in the Orlando area through the providing accessible golf carts for them to use. The PVACF Board of Directors elected to purchase two SoloRider Golf Carts, which arrived in the fall.

Members have been participating in the Heroes United Golf Scramble League, held in Harmony Golf Preserve for the past year and a half. Since they have been playing regularly at Harmony Golf Reserve and having our annual golf tournament at Metro West Golf courses, we took the great opportunity to place one at each course for members, veterans and people with abilities to use them. Currently we have placed the first one in Harmony Golf Reserve, with the other to be placed at Metro West Country Club sometime in January, 2022.

Our chapter is blessed not only to have a professional at the chapter, but other PGA Professionals who are wanting to work with you. Come, see the excitement and learn with us, no matter what your ability, we will make you better.