



WHEELS IN MOTION

April 2024



**Paralyzed Veterans of America
Central Florida Chapter
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May Board Meeting is via **Zoom** - May 8th 10:30 AM

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Email: office@pvacf.org

Cover Andoyi Gabor

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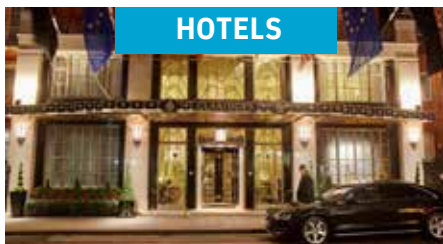
Mission Statement

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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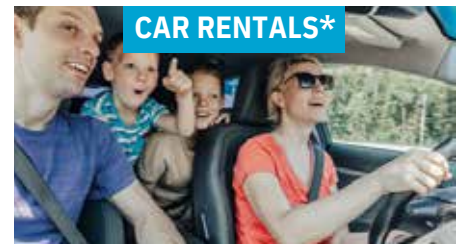
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Chapter President

Steve Kirk

Among the many enduring images of Hurricane Harveys 2017 devastation in Houston was the reminder that when faced with floodwaters, fire ants will assemble in groups of up to 100,000 and link their legs together to create nearly watertight rafts that can span several square feet. The venomous red hexapods then collectively float to safety before releasing and continuing their important work as backyard terrorists.

A worse event happened on Lake Monroe in Sanford Florida when a small Coast Guard Auxiliary boat ran into one of these Rafts. The captain went to investigate only to be engulfed and killed by the fire ants.

Now researchers at Texas A&M have drawn inspiration from the phenomenon and mimicked it to develop synthetic materials that can autonomously assemble, disassemble, and reconfigure in response to different conditions, such as changes in light or heat. Professor Taylor Ware of A&Ms biomedical and materials science engineering programs, one of the authors of the study published in Nature Materials, says he has been fascinated by fire ants since long before he was an engineer. Today he imagines applications of his research in, among other things, assistive devices in the human body. An implantable artificial sphincter for urinary incontinence, for instance, could change shape and then reverse itself according to conditions, he suggests.

Possibly no more catheterization for SCI...

Wares research is part of the growing discipline of biomimicry, in which science imitates nature. Researchers are taking different lessons from nature into the labs and mimicking those structures to produce unique materials and devices for the benefit of society, in the words of Raman Chintalapalle, a professor of Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering at the University of Texas at El Paso and director of the universitys Center for Advanced Materials Research.

Theres nothing particularly new about biomimicry, but it has been on the rise over the past decade. Chintalapalle explains that, as technology has emerged to allow researchers to see and understand smaller structures than ever before, it has opened new horizons for things they can create as a result. Whereas before we couldnt go below the atomic or molecular level, he says, now we can create structures at nano- or even sub-nanoscale, a size thats not visible to the human eye.

Chintalapalle and Ware are both quick to point out that Texas is not alone as a rich source for biomimicry ideas. But the resilience and adaptability required of organisms

in our harsh environment is certainly useful. Drought, extreme heat, severe freezes, floods: Texass climate has it all, and the tenacious animals, plants, and ecosystems that endure here offer survival strategies worth learning from and imitating. We tend to focus on mimicking the really wonderful things in nature, like butterfly wings, says Ware. But its also maybe worth mimicking some of the things that we dont find so interesting in nature, that are still wonderfully useful, like the behaviors of fire ants.

Plus, Texas offers an impressively wide variety of environments from which to draw inspiration. The majority of the country doesnt have extreme environments like the desert in far West Texas, but also the Gulf beaches around Corpus Christi, Chintalapalle points out. Thats not to mention the bayou country east of Houston or the windswept plains of the Panhandle. All of which adds up to Texas institutions looking at these things quite heavily, he says.

In 2018, a UT-Dallas team began to develop a way to harvest water from the air by imitating carnivorous pitcher plants, which grow in the wetlands of East Texas, such as in the Big Thicket National Preserve. The Dallas Morning News compared the resulting process to that of the Skywalker familys moisture farm on the desert planet of Tatooine in Star Wars. Previous researchers had focused on Namibian desert beetles ability to trap and direct water droplets, but the UTD findings offered a more flexible solution that can work on larger or smaller surfaces.

More recently, in 2022, the same research team, led by mechanical engineering professor Xianming Simon Dai, published a study that demonstrated a way to accelerate the pitcher plantinspired water-harvesting process and make it possible for anyone to have a portable water-harvesting device that requires no external energy. Thats a potential game changer for military combat units or other groups who need to survive in the wild for lengthy periods with minimal supplies.

Laytons study also hints at the limits of biomimicry. Theres no shortage of organisms that are interesting to mimic, says Ware. And with hotter summers and more extreme storms increasingly becoming the norm in Texas, the need for humans to learn from the natural worlds adaptability will only growuntil it cant. When nature faces its own limits of adaptability and resilience in the face of a changing environment, engineers will have to find inspiration elsewhere.

Executive Director

John DeMauro



Think back on the best “April Fools” prank you ever pulled on someone. Or, the time someone pulled an “April Fools” on you. Have you ever wondered how this all got started?

Some historians speculate that April Fools’ Day dates back to 1582, when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, as called for by the Council of Trent in 1563. In the Julian Calendar, as in the Hindu calendar, the new year began with the spring equinox around April 1. People who were slow to get the news or failed to recognize that the start of the new year had moved to January 1 and continued to celebrate it during the last week of March through April 1 became the butt of jokes and hoaxes and were called “April fools.”

In more modern times, people have gone to great lengths to create elaborate April Fools’ Day hoaxes. Newspapers, radio and TV stations and websites have participated in the April 1 tradition of reporting outrageous fictional claims that have fooled their audiences. In 1957, the BBC reported that Swiss farmers were experiencing a record spaghetti crop and showed footage of people harvesting noodles from trees. In 1985, Sports Illustrated writer George Plimpton tricked many readers when he ran a made-up article about a rookie pitcher named Sidd Finch who could throw a fastball over 168 miles per hour. In 1992, National Public Radio ran a spot with former President Richard Nixon saying he was running for president again... only it was an actor, not Nixon,



and the segment was all an April Fools’ Day prank that caught the country by surprise.

In 1996, Taco Bell, the fast-food restaurant chain, duped people when it announced it had agreed to purchase Philadelphia’s Liberty Bell and intended to rename it the Taco Liberty Bell. In 1998, after Burger King advertised a “Left-Handed Whopper,” scores of clueless customers requested the fake sandwich. And Google notoriously hosts an annual April Fools’ Day prank that has included everything from “telepathic search” to the ability to play Pac Man on Google Maps.

On a more serious note; April has brought much tragedy to the United States. The Civil War started in April 1861. The Titanic sunk in April 1912. President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865. The 1906 San Francisco earthquake

took place in April. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April 1968. The Oklahoma City bombing was in April 1995. The Columbine school shooting took place in 1999. On April 16, 2007 a senior at Virginia Tech shot and killed 32 people and hurt 17 others in two separate attacks before he turned the gun on himself. The Virginia Tech attack is still the bloodiest school shooting in history. On April 15, 2013 two separate bombs went off at the end of the Boston Marathon, killing three people and wounding an estimated 170 others.

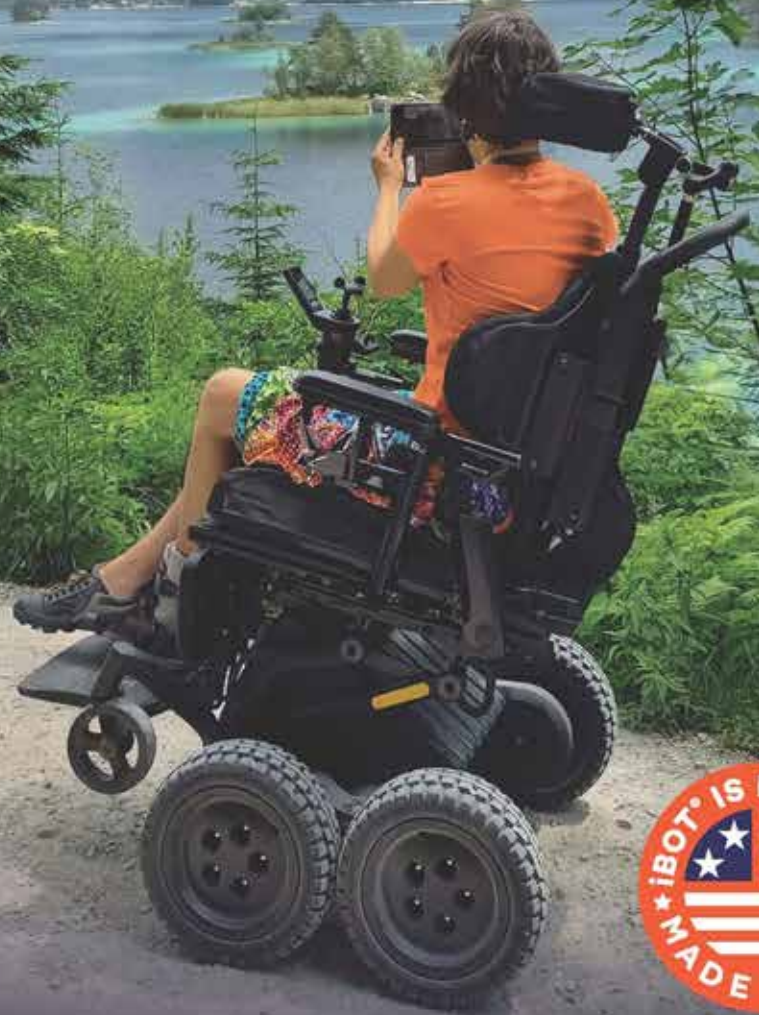
So, although we begin the month with laughter and shenanigans, it is a month of sanguinary (you can look that up in google).

John DeMauro

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Sports Director

Roger Sack

AIR RIFLE

Each month we are registered for opportunities to compete in Move United and our National PVA Air Rifle programs.

Our event times each month are VA Adaptive Sports on the 1st and 3rd Mondays from 10am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm. Shooters must contact their coach to register for a time to shoot. PVACF members shoot on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month from 10am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm. Members must register for a time shoot. It is at 2711 S. Design Ct, Sanford, FL.

ARCHERY

We are getting ready to kick off our Archery Training the 2nd week in April. If you are interested, please email, or contact me at rogers@pvacf.org for more information. Locations will be posted on our pvacf.org website for more details.

BOCCIA

Boccia practice is on the 1st Friday of each month from 10am to 12pm at our chapter office. Participants are encouraged to sign up for this event.

BOLWLING LEAGUE

Our Central Florida Veteran Bowling League will also be starting at the end of April. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to rogers@pvacf.org for more information.

NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES

Jimmy Green is coordinating our Central Florida Team for this year. So, if you are interested in going, please reach out to him ASAP. Next ZOOM team meeting is April 24th at 1pm. To contact him, please email mean-green32@gmail.com for more information.

We offer many other programs, from fishing, golf, hunting, handcycling, billiards, table tennis, video gaming and much more.

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Roger Sack

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When: Friday April 26, 2024 @ 1300 (1pm)

Let's get together and talk about how we can support each other as "Sisters In Service" and as PVA members. Let's get to know one another, and exchange ideas! I hope to make this a BI-MONTHLY group and all women members are welcome to join us. Our amazing PVA Chapter will be glad to reimburse mileage for this event! If you cannot make it please reach out to me and let me know what day/time works best for you!!

V/R

Amy S Patterson

PVACF

304 672 5402

Washington Update

PVA NATIONAL PRESIDENT ROBERT THOMAS, JR. TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS

On March 6, PVA National President Robert Thomas, Jr. testified before a joint session of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees regarding PVA's public policy priorities. During the hearing, he stressed the need for comprehensive support systems and policies that address the unique challenges faced by our nation's veterans with catastrophic injuries and diseases. President Thomas fervently advocated for legislative initiatives aimed at enabling and empowering disabled veterans, their families, and caregivers. He increased the impact of his message by referencing real-life challenges faced by actual PVA members, like U.S. Army Veteran/PVA National Vice President Anne Robinson and her husband, Harry, who are among those unable to hire direct care workers due to the low pay and labor shortages. Throughout his testimony, President Thomas addressed several key policy priorities, including the dire need to protect and strengthen VA's specialized systems of care; address staffing shortages; expand access to long-term care services; improve availability of home and community-based services; and enhance VA benefits for paralyzed veterans and their survivors.

During the Q&A session, President Thomas was invited to comment on the process that SCI/D veterans must follow to get assistive devices through VA and how the Veterans Spinal Trauma Access to New Devices Act (Veterans STAND Act) (H.R. 6373) would improve this process. The STAND Act seeks to improve veterans' access to assistive devices that promote independence and mobility. It also directs the VA to do a better job reaching out to SCI/D veterans about the importance of having annual medical exams. President Thomas testified that technologies that improve mobility and independence are great to have and noted that they are improving constantly. Also, he noted that annual exams are extremely important to maintaining the health and wellbeing of SCI/D veterans.

The two-panel hearing lasted nearly three and a half hours. At the start of the second panel, former Senator Elizabeth Dole talked briefly about the Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act, which is now part of an omnibus package of veterans-related legislation currently being negotiated between the House and Senate. She spoke of the bill's importance and urged the two chambers to work together to pass it quickly. You can watch a recording of the hearing [here](#). Senator Dole's comments begin around the 1:26:00 mark and President Thomas's oral statement follows shortly thereafter.

PVA Participates in NOVA Legislative

PVA's National Legislative Director Morgan Brown and Senior Health Policy Advisor Roscoe Butler participated in the Nurses Organization of Veterans Affairs (NOVA) Legislative Seminar which was held on March 8 in Washington D.C. This year's event brought together representatives from 19 like-minded organizations from around the country plus Veterans Health Administration and congressional staff to discuss issues like fixing VA's clinical staffing shortages and on-boarding delays, so the department can remain competitive with the private sector. PVA briefed attendees on key priorities for 2024, which include protecting access to VA's specialized health care services and expanding access to VA long-term services and supports.

DAV's Report on Women Veterans

On February 27, DAV (Disabled American Veterans) presented to the veteran community and congressional staff their recent report on women veterans. The report, "Women Veterans: The Journey to Mental Wellness," contains information and data surveyed from their women members and focused on supporting women veterans' mental health and preventing suicide through gender-tailored care



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