

OCTOBER 2026

Happy Halloween





Weekly Adaptive Workouts for People with Disabilities in Orlando

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Volunteers needed. Advance RSVP required.*



Achilles International is a nonprofit that empowers people with disabilities to participate in adaptive running and endurance sports. We support youth, adults and veterans with disabilities through our 60+ chapters around the world, including in Orlando, FL.

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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**

October Board Meeting is a **Hybrid** - October 8th 10:30 AM

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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.

Adaptive Sports Expo



Join the professionals from Orlando Health Advanced Rehabilitation Institute to learn more about adaptive sports and recreation. The event is free, and all are welcome to participate.

Come and learn more about adaptive sports and recreation opportunities in Central Florida.

Opportunities Include

- Basketball
- Boccia and Cornhole
- Cycling
- Disc Golf
- EcoRover Chairs
- Fishing
- Golf
- Paddling
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- Track and Field

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The Beginning of the Interstate Highway System

Have you ever crawled along I-4, trapped in a sea of brake lights, and wondered how this sprawling highway system came to dominate American life? That daily traffic jam is part of a much bigger story—one that began with rough roads, military convoys, and a bold national vision. The Interstate Highway System is one of the greatest public works projects in American history. It transformed the way people traveled, accelerated the movement and stitched communities together across the United States.

Before the Interstate Highway System was created, many American roads were narrow, crowded, and difficult to travel. Major routes often cut straight through towns and cities, turning long-distance journeys into slow, hazardous trips. As automobile ownership surged during the nineteen twenties and nineteen thirties, the demand for safer, faster roads became impossible to ignore.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower played an important role in the development of the Interstate Highway System. In nineteen nineteen, Eisenhower participated in a military convoy that crossed the United States.

The journey took more than two months, as the convoy struggled over rough, unreliable roads. Years later, during World War Two, Eisenhower saw Autobahn system and recognized the military and economic power of modern highways.

In nineteen fifty-six, President Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act. This landmark law provided funding for a nationwide network of high-speed, controlled-access highways. Construction surged across the country, eventually producing thousands of miles of Interstate highways. The new highways reshaped American life. Cities became easier to reach, families could embark on longer road trips, and companies could move products faster and more efficiently. The Interstate System also fueled suburban growth, allowing people to live farther from their workplaces and commute by car.

However, the construction of the highways also caused deep and lasting harm. Some neighborhoods and communities were divided, displaced, or destroyed when major highways were carved through cities. These effects were especially severe in many urban communities.

Despite these costs, the Interstate Highway System became the backbone of America's transportation network. It connected states, expanded commerce, and made long-distance travel faster and more convenient. But its story is about more than concrete, pavement, bridges, and miles of asphalt. It is a story about ambition, opportunity, sacrifice, and the enormous changes that reshaped the country during the second half of the twentieth century. The highways helped determine where people lived, where businesses opened, how goods moved from one part of the nation to another, and how Americans experienced the freedom of the open road.

So the next time you find yourself crawling along I-four, surrounded by a sea of brake lights, remember that you are part of a story that began more than seventy years ago. That stretch of highway is connected to a much larger vision—one that began with rough roads and military convoys and grew into a network that reaches across an entire nation. The Interstate Highway System didn't simply change the way Americans traveled. It changed the landscape of America itself, leaving a lasting mark on our cities, our communities, our economy, and our everyday lives. And the story is still being written every time we merge onto an Interstate, take an exit, or begin a journey down the road.

"And the story is still being written every time we merge onto an Interstate, take an exit, or begin a journey down the road. What started as a bold idea to connect a vast and growing nation became something much larger. The Interstate Highway System became part of the American experience itself—a symbol of movement, opportunity, and the belief that no matter how far apart two places might be, there could always be a road connecting them. Today, millions of Americans use these highways without giving much thought to how they came to be. We drive to work, visit family, move across the country, deliver goods, and set out on road trips along the same network envisioned generations ago. The pavement beneath our tires may seem ordinary, but it represents one of the most ambitious transformations in American history.

So the next time you see those familiar red, white, and blue Interstate signs, take a moment to consider what they represent. Behind every mile of highway is a story of engineering, politics, sacrifice, progress, and change. And somewhere ahead, beyond the next exit or overpass, the road continues—carrying the story of America forward."



Chapter President
Steve Kirk



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Adaptive sports provide people with paralysis an opportunity to participate in physical activity, develop new skills, and experience the many benefits of being part of a team. Whether the activity is wheelchair basketball, adaptive swimming, wheelchair racing, sitting volleyball, adaptive skiing, or another modified sport, participation can have a meaningful impact on physical health, emotional well-being, and social connections.

One of the most important benefits of adaptive sports is improved physical fitness. Paralysis can limit movement and make it more difficult to maintain strength, flexibility, cardiovascular endurance, and overall physical health. Adaptive sports are designed to accommodate different levels of physical ability while allowing participants to remain active. Regular participation can help strengthen the muscles that are available for use, improve endurance, increase flexibility, and support cardiovascular health. Physical activity may also help participants maintain greater independence in their daily lives.

Adaptive sports can also contribute to better mental and emotional health. Adjusting to paralysis can involve significant physical and emotional challenges. Sports provide an opportunity to set goals, learn new skills, overcome challenges, and experience accomplishment. Reaching a personal goal—such as improving a wheelchair racing time, learning a new swimming technique, or helping a team win a game—can build confidence and self-esteem. The sense of achievement that comes from participating in sports can help people recognize their abilities rather than focusing solely on their limitations.

Another major benefit is social connection. Paralysis can sometimes lead to isolation, particularly when people have difficulty finding activities that are accessible and inclusive. Adaptive sports bring people together in an environment where participants can share experiences and encourage one another. Teammates, coaches, families, and other athletes can become an important support network. Friendships developed through sports can extend beyond practices and competitions, helping participants feel connected to their communities.

Adaptive sports can also promote independence. Learning how to participate in a sport often requires athletes to develop problem-solving skills and become comfortable using adaptive equipment. These experiences can increase confidence in handling challenges in other areas of life. Athletes may become more willing to try new activities, travel to competitions, participate in community events, or pursue personal and professional goals.

Participation can also change the way people view disability. Adaptive athletes demonstrate that paralysis does not eliminate a person's ability to compete, lead, achieve goals, or contribute to a team. Their accomplishments can challenge stereotypes about disability and encourage greater understanding and inclusion within communities. Adaptive sports therefore benefit not only the athletes but also the people who watch, volunteer, coach, and support them.

For veterans and civilians living with paralysis, adaptive sports can provide a particularly valuable sense of purpose and community. Programs offered through rehabilitation centers, community organizations, schools, and sporting organizations can introduce athletes to activities that may become lifelong interests. Competitive opportunities can range from local recreational programs to national and international competitions.

Adaptive sports are not simply modified versions of traditional sports. They are opportunities for people with disabilities to discover what they can accomplish. Through physical activity, teamwork, competition, and personal achievement, adaptive sports can improve fitness, strengthen confidence, reduce isolation, and promote independence.

Ultimately, the greatest benefit of adaptive sports may be the opportunity they provide to focus on ability rather than disability. With appropriate equipment, coaching, accessibility, and support, people with paralysis can participate, compete, build relationships, and achieve goals they may once have thought were out of reach. Adaptive sports demonstrate the power of physical activity to improve quality of life while creating communities where everyone has the opportunity to play, compete, and succeed.



Executive Director
John DeMauro

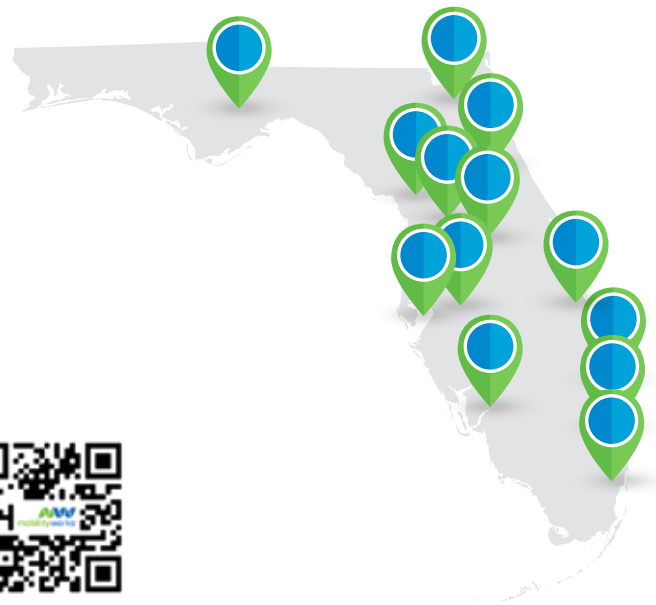
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Simplify Your Hive

Welcome to this month's article. With the election coming up, I'll be attending 7th District Congressional appearances and getting our name out to both candidates and staffers. Here's update of our ACGRD meeting.

The House passed a continuing resolution (370–48), signed by the President on September 2nd, funding the government through December 11th.

The Senate had initially passed its own version; the key difference was a provision delaying an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) rule overhauling uniform guidance for federal grants.

The delayed OMB rule, had it gone into effect, would have required senior political appointees to review discretionary awards, allowed grants to be terminated for convenience, prohibited fixed amounts, and increased administrative burdens on researchers — potentially harming spinal cord injury (SCI) research funding.



**Government
Relations
Tim Wolfe**

We're actively engaged in other challenges:

- ♦ **VDC Program Implementation:** Veterans are being improperly denied entry without written notification, making appeals difficult. Lack of national standards, waiting lists, individualized treatment plans, and adequate staffing are ongoing systemic issues.
- ♦ **Research Funding Erosion:** CDRMP funding for SCI and MS was entirely stripped in the last funding bill; ALS funding was only partially restored. The proposed OMB rule change could further restrict research funding, including international collaborations.
- ♦ **TCAVA Stalled:** The bill lacks sufficient votes in both chambers and cannot advance without compromise or additional support.
- ♦ **Accessible Parking Enforcement:** Placard abuse is widespread, and law enforcement rarely enforces existing regulations.
- ♦ **Amtrak Accessibility:** The shift from bi-level to single-level long-distance trains raises questions about the true rationale and the timeline for accessible rail options.
- ♦ **Curb Ramp Removal During Construction:** Tim Wolfe's situation in Florida highlights a broader issue.
- ♦ **Provider Education Gap:** Primary care and specialty providers are not being adequately trained on VDC Program eligibility and availability, leaving veterans uninformed.

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Happy Halloween

A WORD FROM OUR MEMBERS

Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center *by Mary McGriff*

Paralyzed Veterans of America's (PVA) Outdoor Recreation Program offers opportunities for members to explore adaptive activities. The most recent one was the PVA Outdoor Experience: Breckenridge which was coordinated with Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center (BOEC) in Colorado for August 31st -September 4th. Sharona Young and myself attended.

We found the daily events extremely educational, encouraging and fun. We stayed in the beautiful Griffith Lodge which is rented by BOEC from the city for \$1 a year. Each bedroom had its own bathroom and were shared with other veterans. Socializing, meetings, crafts and meals were held in the large kitchen and dining area with huge windows and spectacular mountain and pond views.

Each day was filled with adaptive events we safely accomplished thanks to the well-trained staff. We maneuvered the challenging elevated ropes course. Adaptive kayaking on their reservoir included outriggers on the backs of the kayaks to prevent capsizing. Others chose to paddleboard while sitting on a high chair. One of the days we had yoga and we were able to walk the trail around the pond on our own time. Another exciting event was whitewater rafting on the Colorado River. The adaptation of the rafts for wheelchair users was remarkable. Lastly, we participated in adaptive cycling amongst beautiful mountain views.

In 2022, I participated in BOEC's adaptive Women Veterans River Trip where we camped for three nights down the Colorado River, starting in Colorado and ending in Utah. This event allowed us to enjoy the outdoors in a way that wouldn't have been possible. We watched how the mountain views changed from the lush greenery to the clay mountains as we approached Moab, Utah. There is PVA interest to offer an experience like this for a couple of nights as a trial in the near future.

Paralyzed Veterans of America's Outdoor Recreation Program is a great opportunity for us to challenge ourselves, trying a new activity or learning an adaptive way to do something we previously enjoyed. All necessary equipment is provided and is tailored for activities to meet our needs. We highly recommend these types of events to all of our members.



I would like to introduce myself to the PVACF members who don't already know me. My name is Jimmy Green. I am an Army Veteran. I have been a PVA member for 40 years, next May. I have been a member of three other PVA Chapters; Kentucky-Indiana, Golf Coast and now Central Florida. I was on the BOD of all three Chapters, I was Sports Director at Kentucky-Indiana until I moved to Florida in 2009.

It is my honor to have been selected to be the next Sports Director of PVA Central Florida. I would like to thank the outgoing Sports Director, Roger Sack, for all his hard work and for setting a high standard for the job. I plan to continue the excellent programs set up by Roger and add new and exciting programs whenever possible. Please reach out to me if you have any questions, concerns or ideas. I look forward to working with all members that love adaptive sports the way I do.



**Sports Director
Jimmy Green**

You Don't Have to Face Multiple Sclerosis Alone *by Sharona Young*

Living with multiple sclerosis (MS) can affect much more than physical health, it can also lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Fatigue, pain, mobility challenges, unpredictable symptoms, and the invisible nature of many MS symptoms can make socializing difficult and leave people feeling misunderstood or disconnected from family and friends. Over time, withdrawing from activities can create a cycle of isolation and emotional distress. Staying connected through supportive relationships, MS support groups, phone calls, online communities, or simple visits can make a meaningful difference. Most importantly, people living with MS should know that they do not have to face the emotional challenges of the disease alone. Understanding, compassion, and connection can help reduce loneliness and remind those affected by MS that they are seen, valued, and supported.

As veterans, we may be used to handling things on our own, but you don't have to go through this journey alone. If you're feeling lonely, would like to talk, share your experiences, or simply connect with someone who understands, please reach out to the chapter. Whether it's a conversation over the phone, a message, or just knowing there's someone on the other end who cares, connection can make a difference.

Sharona Young
Chapter MS Representative

Community MS Support Groups:

Tampa VA SCI Clinic holds a virtual MS Support group monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. If you are interested attending the group contact the MS social worker, Annie Altenor 813-972-2000, ext. 10-5010

VA Multiple Sclerosis Centers of Excellence Quarterly VA Webinars: September 30, 2026 at 1pm ET – Getting to Know Your MS Interdisciplinary Care Team December 3, 2026 at 4pm ET – Hot Tips! Navigating VA Benefits and Resources Sign Up at: https://www.va.gov/MS/Banners/Quarterly_Veteran_and_Caregiver_Webinar.asp

National MS Society Veterans Support Group:

Audience: Veterans living with MS, family, friends and care partners.

Location: Online

Day: 3rd Thursday of each month

Time: 5PM CT

Contact information: Please contact the leader(s) to receive the virtual meeting details.

Deanna Deschenes, veteran.ms.group@gmail.com, 910-508-8805

Felix Castro, fcastro62305@gmail.com, 937-818-6553



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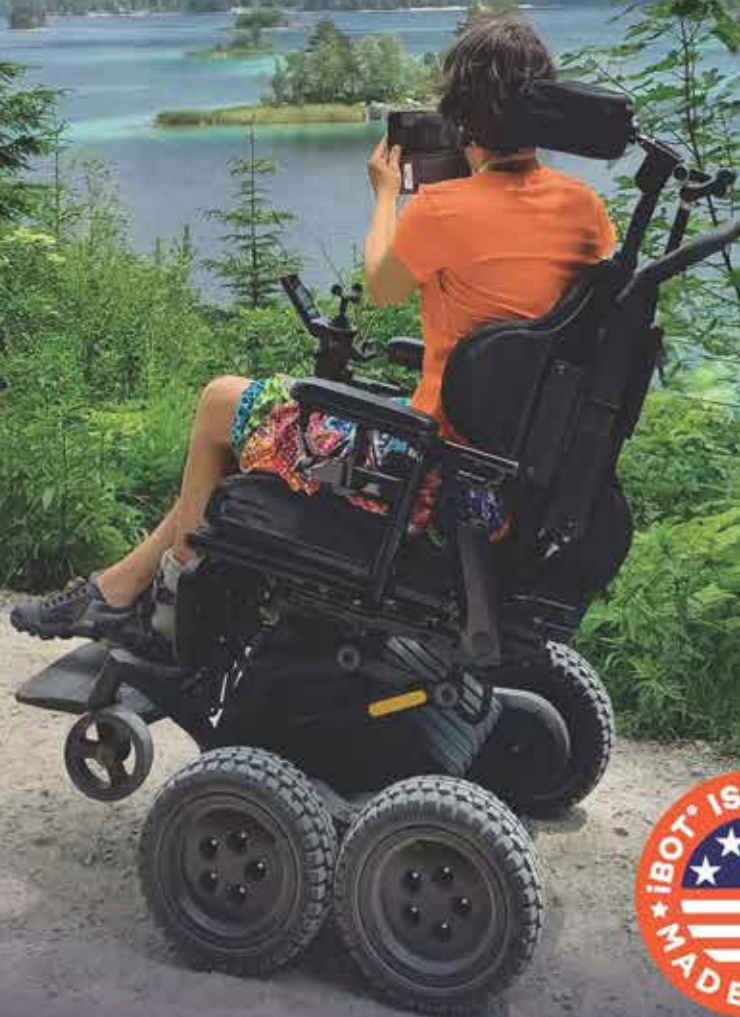
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