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**Paralyzed Veterans of America
Central Florida Chapter
2711 S. Design Ct.
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Phone (407) 328-7041
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September Board Meeting is a **Zoom** - September 10th 10:30 AM

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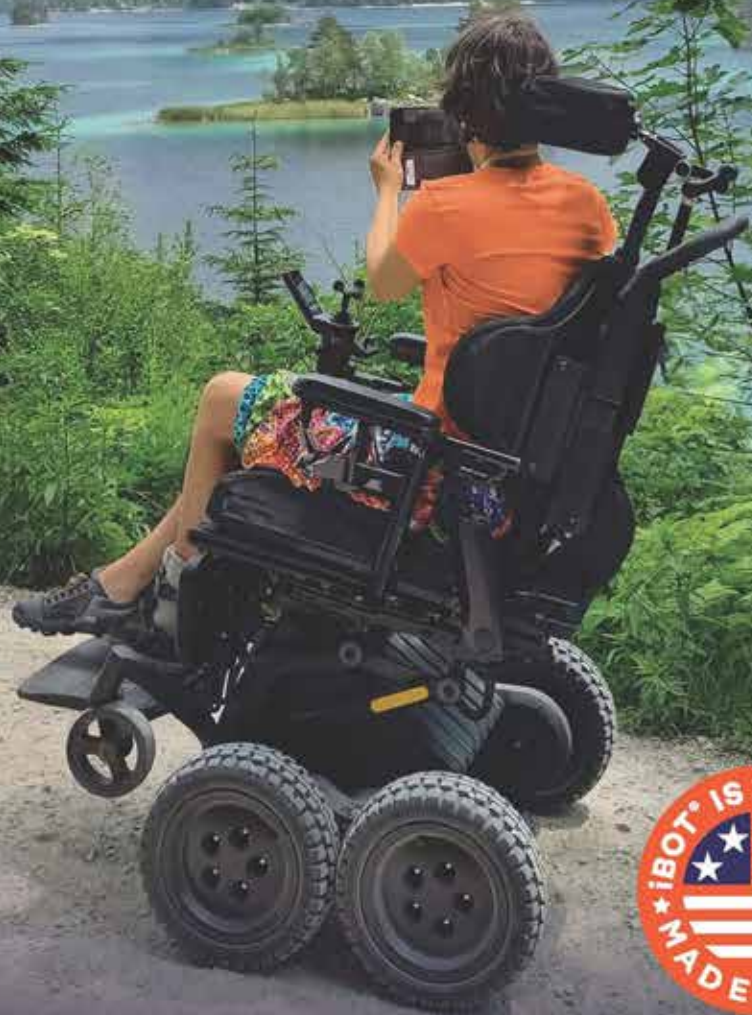
Mission Statement

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.

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As we all know, for veterans living with a spinal cord injury (SCI), the challenges can extend far beyond the initial injury. Changes in mobility, independence, employment, relationships, and overall health can affect nearly every part of daily life. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides a comprehensive, lifelong system of care designed to help veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders maintain their health, maximize independence, and improve their quality of life. It is for this reason that PVA annually petitions Congress to maintain this system of care

The VA's Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorders (SCI/D) System of Care is one of the largest specialized spinal cord care programs in the country. The system currently includes 25 specialized SCI/D Centers, supported by VA medical facilities and SCI/D teams closer to veterans' homes. This "hub and spoke" approach allows veterans to receive specialized care while also having access to services in their local communities. Although this doesn't work for those veterans living in more remote areas of the country, overall it works for most of PVA's members.



Chapter President
Steve Kirk

Specialized Medical Care

Spinal cord injuries can create complex medical needs that require ongoing monitoring and specialized treatment. Because VA SCI/D Centers provide medical and surgical care from professionals experienced in treating conditions associated with spinal cord injuries and disorders, it is paramount that this system is consistently funded by Congress. The advocacy that each chapter provides is important to our members and any future members of PVA. Our chapter sends a minimum of two people every year to participate in this advocacy annually. Meetings are arranged by our chapter staff with members of congress representing the districts in which our members reside, as well as both of Florida's state senators. Often the best contacts in these offices are the representative's coordinator of veteran's affairs.

Care can include primary and preventive medicine, specialty consultations, medication management, treatment of complications, and long-term medical and surgical care. The VA emphasizes lifelong care because the effects of a spinal cord injury can change over time. I have experienced such a drastic change in my care needs because of an automobile accident. Three years ago.

One important component is the comprehensive annual evaluation. VA recommends that veterans with SCI/D receive an annual evaluation at an SCI/D Center. These evaluations bring together doctors, nurses, therapists, psychologists, social workers, pharmacists, dietitians, and other specialists to identify health concerns early and develop individualized plans. Members should always schedule and attend annual evaluations regularly.

Rehabilitation and Physical Therapy

Rehabilitation is a major part of recovery and long-term independence after a spinal cord injury. VA rehabilitation programs can help veterans regain as much function as possible, learn new ways of performing daily activities, and adapt to physical changes resulting from their injuries.

Physical therapy can address mobility, strength, gait, wheelchair skills, exercise, and pain management. Occupational therapy helps veterans develop or regain skills needed for everyday activities and greater independence. VA rehabilitation services also include other specialized therapies and recreational programs

For veterans who have recently suffered a spinal cord injury, VA provides acute rehabilitation and comprehensive rehabilitation programs.

Long-Term Care

Spinal cord injuries are lifelong conditions for many veterans, and the VA recognizes that healthcare needs can change as veterans age. The VA provides several long-term care options, including SCI/D long-term care facilities and other arrangements such as contracted nursing homes, depending on individual circumstances and eligibility. There aren't nearly enough long-term care facilities in the VA system. PVA has been for years and continues to advocate for VA to fund additional facilities. Fortunately for Central Florida members, a Community Living Center is available at the Lake Nona VA hospital.



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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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Vice President and Chapter Administrator Supporting our friends and spreading awareness for the disabled community



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The ACGRD monthly meeting was held with roll call, approval of July minutes, and officer elections conducted.
- National PVA presented an overview of legislative priorities, including the Taking Care of America's Veterans Act (TCAVA), which bundles several key veteran benefit bills.
- TCAVA faces significant opposition in both chambers due to its pay-for mechanism involving changes to sleep apnea and tinnitus compensation ratings.
- Updates were provided on air travel accessibility legislation and upcoming regulatory changes affecting wheelchair users.
- VA staffing shortages at spinal cord injury centers were raised as a growing concern by multiple members.
- New ACGRD officers were elected by acclamation: Mac McIntyre (Chair), Milton Young (Vice Chair), Joe Dornbrock (Treasurer), and Amanda Vazquez (Secretary).
- The next ACGRD meeting was rescheduled to September 14th due to Labor Day conflict. Challenges
- TCAVA faces significant opposition in both the House and Senate due to disagreement over using reduced veteran benefits (sleep apnea/tinnitus rating changes) as a pay-for mechanism for concurrent receipt (Major Richard Starr Act). The bill failed procedural votes in both chambers and requires substantial additional work before passage.
- VA staffing shortages at SCI centers, particularly Iowa City and Baltimore, are resulting in patients being redirected to community care, sometimes against their preference. VA Directive 1176 is not legally binding, limiting enforcement options.
- Air travel accessibility enforcement remains inadequate despite new regulations. DOT has signaled it may revisit recently finalized wheelchair user and lavatory rules, potentially rolling back protections.
- No federal ADA specification exists for hotel bed height in accessible rooms, and efforts to establish one have repeatedly stalled.
- VA advance payment for airfare to VA facilities remains unresolved, particularly on the West Coast, though VA has indicated it is developing a workaround.
- Grant check mailing reliability is a concern following recent incidents of checks not reaching their destination.
- ACGRD membership engagement is uneven; some members are less active in advocacy, and the new chair is working to identify strategies to increase participation.



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Unfortunately, Roger Sack has resigned as Chapter Sports Director due to health reasons. Roger has served the chapter as Sports Director for nearly 13 years. During that time we have seen growth in the chapter adaptive sports program and Roger will be very much missed. I have sent out an email to all of our members informing them of Roger's decision and asking if any of our members were interested in taking on this important position. I have received a few responses. The board will be ratifying a new Sports Director as soon as possible. In the meantime, we will continue with our program as best we can with those who have volunteered to help. Recently we have been involved in discussions with partner programs involving golf, bowling, softball and pickleball. There will be more information coming about these partnerships. We will continue with our air-rifle program (which Roger will facilitate as he is able) and boccia, in collaboration with the Rec Therapy department of the Lake Nona VA. We are working on updating our calendar on the pvacf.org website to keep you informed of upcoming dates and events. Some of the expectations of the position are as follows;

The purpose of Paralyzed Veterans of America Central Florida (PVACF) Sports is to improve physical health and wellness through physical activity, enhanced self-image through athletic competition with peers and non-disabled individuals and to allow the opportunity for our members to present a positive image and role models for other persons with disabilities.

An “**Annual Sports Budget**” should be submitted to PVACF Executive Director no later than July 1st of each year.

The **Sports Director** will be responsible for coordinating all sports events of the chapter, with the help of individuals managing the different sports (such as Air-Rifle, bowling, softball, basketball, boccia etc.).

The **Sports Director** will be responsible for recruiting individuals to manage the various programs within the Sports Program.

The **Sports Director** along with the Executive Director will be responsible for approving any funding of sports events and participants.

Documenting Reports It is important for the Sports Director to document statistics for the Sports Program so they may measure effectiveness of the programs. The Sports Director uses a Daily or “Event Summary Report”, “Monthly Report” and “Annual Report” to document data and statistics.

An “**Event Summary Report**” is a report filed with the PVACF Front Office after every chapter-supported sports-related event. The “Event Summary Report” should include the Event Name, Event Date, Names of Participants, Cost of Event and any other important statistics like miles, scores, fish caught, bowling scores, shooting scores, etc... Event Reports are used to make Monthly Reports.

A “**Monthly Report**” is a report that is given to the PVACF Board of Directors in their monthly BOD meetings. It should be a compilation of the previous month's Event Summary Reports. Monthly reports should contain: Total number of monthly Volunteer Hours, Total number of members and other attendees, and any other important statistics (like total number of miles ridden, total number of games played, total calories burned). Monthly Reports are used to make an “Annual Report”.

A “**Monthly Sports Article for the Chapter Newsletter**” is an article that may highlight the success of the most recent events as well as announcing upcoming events. It should be no longer than one page long.

An “**Annual Report**” is a report that is submitted to the PVACF Executive Director to be included in the Chapter's Annual Report. An Annual Report should include Total number of Volunteer Hours, Total number of organic members attended and any other important statistics.

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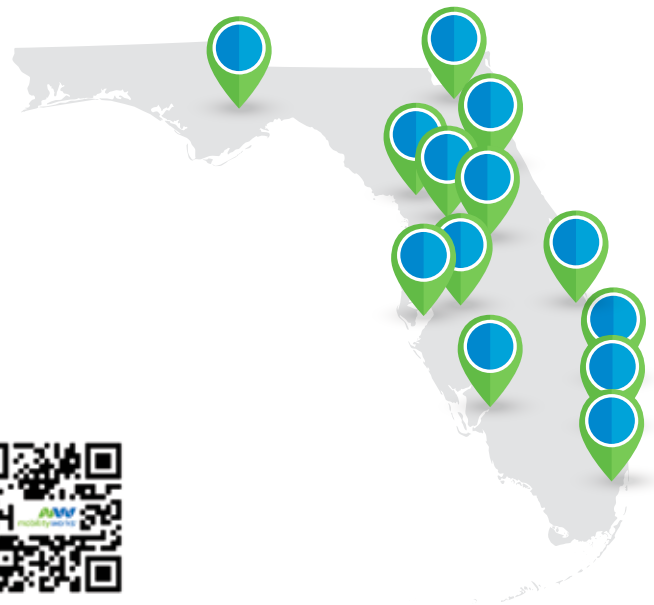
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