



RT '12



Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America



Scot Severn, MPVA Sports Director,
wins bronze medal in 2012 Paralympic Games

Photo Courtesy of: Karen Boyle, Tuscola County Advertiser





PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
MICHIGAN CHAPTER



On the Cover:

Scot Severn's image looms large over a packed crowd at Olympic Stadium in London. Thousands in attendance watched as Severn's toss of 8.26 meters in the men's shot put finals gave him third place and his first Paralympic medal. See the Sports & Recreation Column for more details.

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Disclaimer:

The Rollin' Times is a publication of the Michigan Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America. It is designed to inform the members of the PVA and other interested parties on veterans' issues, legislation, legal decisions, medical technology and other matters deemed to be relevant to the disability community.

The contents of this publication do not always reflect the views or policies of Michigan PVA, and no endorsement or approval is made or should be inferred with respect to products or services advertised herein. Consult an appropriate professional before making use of any product or service mentioned.

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Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) is one of 34 member chapters of Washington, D.C.-based Paralyzed Veterans of America. A Congressionally chartered veterans service organization, MPVA has been assisting veterans with spinal cord injuries or diseases, including Multiple Sclerosis and ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, better known as Lou Gehrig's Disease), in Michigan since 1961.

MPVA programs include:

- Veterans' Benefits
- Wheelchair Sports and Recreation
- Spinal Cord Injury Research
- Equipment Donation
- Advocacy to eliminate architectural barriers and protect civil rights for persons with disabilities
- Referral Services for assistive devices, housing, employment and transportation
- Literature on a variety of topics including self-care, independent living, and disability rights.
- The Pump Guide: an online directory of gas stations throughout Michigan that will pump gas at the self-serve price for persons with disabilities.
- MPVA is a nonprofit organization and receives no federal funding. MPVA relies on grants, sponsorships, and private and corporate donations to support its programs.

The MPVA headquarters is in Novi, Michigan. Our service officers are based out of the McNamara Federal Building in Downtown Detroit.

The Ad Agency

Design & Art Production 734-678-7928



President's Report

By Kevin G. Elya, President, Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America

Free Hunting and Fishing Licenses for Disabled Veterans

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources says disabled veterans will be able to receive free hunting and fishing licenses beginning in March 1, 2013.

House Bill 5292, signed into law by Governor Rick Snyder, will allow a disabled veteran to obtain any resident hunting or fishing license for which a lottery is not required, free of charge. The veteran will be required to provide proof of eligibility and carry this proof when using any license obtained under this legislation. Under provisions of the law, the new licenses become available at the beginning of the next license year, which is March 1, 2013. The licenses cannot be obtained before that date.

The law defines "disabled veteran" as a resident who either:

- has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to be permanently and totally disabled as a result of military service and entitled to veterans' benefits at the 100-percent rate, for a disability other than blindness; or
- is rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as individually unemployable.

"Providing free licenses for disabled veterans is just a small token of our deep gratitude for their sacrifice for all of us," said Denise Gruben, manager of licensing and reservations for the DNR. "We want veterans to be full participants in outdoor sports. We're pleased to make these licenses available to qualifying veterans beginning next March under this new law."

For more information about Michigan hunting and fishing licenses, visit www.mdnr-elicence.com.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dnr.

Article Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, www.michigan.gov.

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Executive Director's Report

By Mike Harris, Executive Director, MPVA

Are You Taking Advantage of Services that You are Entitled to Under the VA?

Did you know that Wayne County has the largest population of veterans in Michigan? Unfortunately, many peacetime and wartime veterans in Wayne County are not taking advantage of the veteran benefits that are available to them.

Currently, there are about 110,000 veterans living in Wayne County. Only 59% of them are enrolled in the VA.

Michigan ranks last in the nation in per capita spending for veterans. In 2010, according to the VA, Michigan received 2.2 billion in veterans funding, for an average of \$3,409 per capita. The national average is \$4,894 per capita. That placed Michigan last out of 50 states.

Veteran benefits may be the most misunderstood and underutilized resource available to seniors right now. Yet, too few veterans, and their spouses, realize that they could be eligible to receive large monthly checks even if they did not directly retire from the military or get injured in the line of duty.

When people hear about veteran benefits, they usually think of veterans hospitals treating service related injuries. Many do not realize the benefits extend far beyond that.

Many veterans, especially our WWII and Korean veterans, are battling chronic conditions and struggling to pay for their care. Seniors who can no longer take care of themselves are moving into assisted-living communities or hiring in-home caregivers, but they often must bear the cost themselves. Neither Medicare nor Medicaid typically cover it.

Unless you had the foresight to buy long-term care insurance, the out-of-pocket expenses can wipe out your retirement savings in a relatively short period of

time. A private room at an assisted-living community averages about \$3,000 a month. In-home care is usually \$18-an-hour.

This is where Veterans Benefits (VA) comes to the rescue of some seniors; called the "Aid & Attendance" pension benefit, it pays up to \$1,632 a month to a qualifying veteran, \$1,055 a month to a surviving spouse. A couple is eligible for up to \$1,949 per month.

Certain disabled veterans may have disabilities that prevent access to the home or essential lavatory or sanitary facilities, or require special home installation of therapeutic equipment, rehabilitative devices, or other equipment associated with medical treatment. If so, they may be eligible for a VA Home Improvement and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant.

The HISA grant cost-limitation may not exceed \$6,800 for eligible veterans with a service-connected disability or \$2,000 for veterans with a non-service-connected disability. To be eligible for HISA, veterans must be receiving treatment from the VA healthcare system.

With regard to the death of a veteran, the government will supply more than a flag. It will provide money toward the burial and a headstone. Also, for those who cannot afford a cemetery plot and the cost of an undertaker, the VA national cemeteries located in Battle Creek (Fort Custer) and Holly Township (Great Lakes) will provide a plot for a veteran and their spouse.

For veterans struggling financially due to job loss or decreased income, the VA also offers an assortment of programs that can relieve the costs of health care or provide care at no cost.

VA health care mission covers a continuum of care,

providing inpatient and outpatient care, dental, pharmacy and prosthetic services. There are five VA hospitals in Michigan: the Detroit, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Saginaw and Iron Mountain VA Medical Centers.

Pharmacy benefits are available at considerable savings and are especially useful at a time when the cost of prescription drugs is a major concern.

Female veterans are eligible for the same VA benefits as male veterans, but in addition, gender-specific services, such as breast and pelvic examinations, mammograms, pap smears and other general reproductive health care services, are available.

The biggest drawback to the benefit, according to seniors and their families, is the application process. The government requires many documents, including military discharge papers and a physician's written evaluation, and you have got to do everything exactly as requested.

Applications generally take four to six months for the Department of Veterans Affairs to process, assuming a senior has submitted all the required forms and answered all the questions.

Once a pension benefit is approved, though, it's retroactive to when the person applied.

VA special pensions are one of many tools that senior veterans can look to when planning for their long term care needs. While many struggle to provide dignified long term care solutions for themselves or their spouse, that MPVA Service Office can help you understand what the options are and how to access underutilized benefits available for veterans.

Our goal is to educate veterans about these benefits that are largely underutilized by deserving brave individuals that honorably served our country.

The VA must do a better job of proactively reaching out to inform service members about all of the benefits they have earned and what programs they are eligible for.

If you have served in the military and are not receiving benefits, you may contact our service officer at 1800-795-3608 or our chapter office at 248-476-9000.

This service to the veteran community and their families is **absolutely free of charge**.

Burial Assistance through theVA

When my mother passed away in July, I found out from the funeral director that the Wayne County Veteran Affairs Department provides assistance with funeral expenses. Those veterans and spouses with assets less than \$40,000, excluding the family residence, are eligible.

The veteran must have received an Honorable Discharge from the United States Armed Forces, with at least 90 days of recognized wartime service. Wayne County will provide up to \$1,000 toward burial benefits.

Turns out, every County throughout Michigan has a similar benefit.

The following documentation is required at time of application:

- Military discharge (DD-214)
- Certified Death Certificate
- Itemized Funeral Bill
- Marriage Certificate
- Complete information regarding assets.

Submittal of the application must be completed by claimant within two years from the date of death. To expedite time it is recommended that you call in advance and schedule an appointment.

To schedule an appointment, The Wayne County Department of Veteran Services can be reached at 313-224-5045.

Every county in Michigan provides a burial allowance for every veteran and their spouse. To find out what veteran services are provided in each county go to the following website: <http://www.macvc.net/>

If you have any questions regarding this program, please feel free to give me a call at 248-476-9000 or email me at mharris@michiganpva.org.

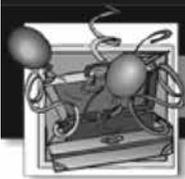




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NOVEMBER

Andrea M. Grubbe	November 01	John D. Acker
Norman S. Pearson	November 01	Michael A. Karjala
Charles R. James	November 02	Dennis R. Beaudoin
Arthur D. Radford	November 02	William H. Mania
Rudolph M. Sexton	November 03	Richard K. Pavley
Anthony J. Borum	November 05	Robert A. Warren
Gerald Weber	November 05	Kathy A. Adams
Ronald J. Buhl	November 06	Ronald M. Dennis
Gordon K. Davis	November 06	Brenda J. Klemon
William J. Rudd	November 06	Joseph M. Little
Randy M. Krampien	November 07	Joseph Sutika
James P. Ford	November 08	Virgil D. Deselm
Timothy H. Friske	November 08	James C. Pampu
Dennis Mingus	November 08	Bernard J. Stanaway
Roberta S. Dodea	November 09	Philip Walker
Robert L. Hopkins	November 09	Garand F. Rowell
Robert C. Rayl	November 09	Quintin Williams
John K. DeBono	November 10	
Willie J. Deberry	November 10	
Steve H. Young	November 10	
Brian L. Gripentrog	November 11	Mark Lasker
Stanley C. Kirkpatrick	November 11	Juanita D. Oleson
Theodore C. Nardin	November 11	Wesley M. Russell
Wilbert E. Carr	November 12	Clifton L. Howard
George F. Fogel	November 12	Raymond D. Vachon
Rodney E. Clark	November 13	Carulus E. Giddings
Louise E. Ware	November 14	Leonard J. McCulloch
Zachary Hampton	November 15	Alphonso Riley
Alexander Jefferson	November 15	Carl F. Bachle
Richard J. Martindale	November 15	Robert C. Calderon
Sandra H. Bennett	November 16	Johnnie Holmes
Shane M. Ranta	November 17	Anthony C. Quaizer
Vincent R. Koster	November 19	Richard L. Fezatte
Thomas J. Lahaney	November 19	Michael Miller
Brian A. Davis	November 20	Dollie Linton
James H. Taratsas	November 20	Ralph Beuhler
Michael J. Hornick	November 21	Robert T. Reed
Angela B. Humphries	November 21	Peter C. Scavarda
Dickie J. Mahlum	November 21	James Faust
Lorie Walton	November 21	Daniel J. Kelley
Sanford Kornwise	November 22	Michael A. Armitage
James E. Spears	November 22	Edward Price

November 23	Paul A. Etenhoffer	December 14
November 23	Andrew Bell	December 15
November 24	Robert D. Boyd	December 15
November 25	Steven T. Rekuc	December 15
November 25	Paul H. Hickman	December 16
November 26	Bradley D. Houston	December 16
November 28	Robert A. Alpeter	December 17
November 28	Michael F. Delaney	December 20
November 28	Nancy R. Langley	December 20
November 28	Randall C. Bowers	December 21
November 28	Daniel A. Schoene	December 21
November 29	Robert A. Miller	December 22
November 29	Russell D. Miller	December 22
November 29	David E. Neeson	December 22
November 29	William Barz	December 23
November 30	Ronald Draheim	December 23
November 30	William W. Messeroll	December 23
	Charles J. Henning	December 24
	Calvin L. Tatum	December 24
	Edward M. Gentile	December 28
December 01	Ronald J. Muschong	December 28
December 02	Randall F. Miller	December 30
December 02	Donald J. Riggins	December 31

DECEMBER





By: Bonnie J. Williams, Chapter Service Officer

Michigan Named in Top 10 States for Retraining Program to Enhance Veteran Job Skills

You may recall that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hosted a Veterans Job Fair in Detroit this past summer. The effort to further enhance veteran jobs will continue as the VA has also approved applications for all 45,000 slots available in fiscal year (FY) 2012 under the successful Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) and is in the process of approving applications for a total of 54,000 slots available in FY 2013.

“At VA, we know first-hand that veterans make exceptional employees, which is why this Administration has deployed a full-court press to connect Veterans with good jobs,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The surge of veterans applying for VRAP demonstrates this program’s importance to provide unemployed veterans the opportunity to find employment in high-demand fields.”

VRAP is a new training and education program for unemployed veterans who want to upgrade their skills for high-demand jobs. The goal of VRAP is to train a total of 99,000 veterans over the next two years in more than 200 job skills that the Department of Labor (DOL) has determined are the most sought-after by employers.

The joint VA/DOL program is a provision of the veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which Congress passed and President Obama signed into law in November 2011. The program allows qualifying veterans to receive up to 12 months of education assistance equal to the current full-time Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty rate of \$1,473 per month. Starting October 1, 2012 the rate

will increase to \$1546 per month.

To be eligible for VRAP, a veteran must:

- Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application, and not dishonorably discharged;
- Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, or Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment;
- Not be enrolled in a federal or state job-training program within the last 180 days; and
- Not receive VA compensation at the 100 percent rate due to individual unemployability (IU).

“We’re gratified that 45,000 unemployed veterans can begin the retraining they need to compete for in-demand jobs,” said VA Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “We’re going to maintain the momentum of our outreach to make sure we get the maximum of 54,000 veterans retrained in fiscal year 2013.”

Veterans approved for VRAP are encouraged to enroll as soon as possible and begin training full-time in a VA-approved program of study at their local community college or technical school. The program of study must lead to an associate degree, a non-college degree, or a certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by DOL.

Some of the high-demand job training programs veterans pursued in FY 2012 include- computer support specialist, general and operations manager, business operations specialist, and heating, air conditioning and refrigeration mechanic and installer.

VRAP applications were received from all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. However, the Top 10 states for veterans approved for training include Michigan. Here is the complete list of states approved in the FY 2012 phase of VRAP:

California	New York
Florida	Ohio
Georgia	Michigan
Texas	Illinois
North Carolina	Virginia

VRAP also attracted veterans internationally, with applications coming from veterans living in the Philippines, Canada, Japan, the Northern Mariana Islands, and areas of Europe and the Pacific where American military units are based.

Undersecretary Hickey explained that continued outreach on VRAP is particularly important because the program applies to a segment of the Veteran population

that may not have regular interaction with VA or stay informed about the benefits and opportunities for which they may qualify.

VRAP is one of many efforts that VA and the Administration are undertaking to connect veterans with employment. VA has held major live and virtual hiring fairs, as well as connected veterans with career coaching and other career tools through the VA for Vets initiative. VA has also set a goal to increase Veteran employment within the Department and has partnered with Joining Forces and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on Veteran hiring.

Potential applicants can learn more about VRAP and apply online at www.benefits.va.gov/VOW, or call VA toll-free at 1-800-827-1000. Information about the Department of Labor's programs for veterans is available at www.dol.gov/vets. Veterans can also visit the nearly 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation, listed at www.servicelocator.org, for in-person employment assistance.

*Information provided by:
The Department of Veterans Affairs*



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FARMERS



Guest Article

By: Scot Severn

Tribute to a Great Friend

Jeff Coupie was not just a teammate to me on the Michigan Storm Quad rugby team. He was a true friend. I cannot count the hours, days, weeks, or months that we spent together over the last few years as we traveled and roomed together at rugby tournaments all over the country. The last couple years I have been busy with USA Track and Field and missed a lot of rugby, even taking off last season to rest and recover a little. I now regret that decision, but how was I or anyone to know we would not have Coupie in our lives for many more years to come.

Jeff Coupie is now in a list of very important and influential people that I did not have in my life long enough. A list that includes the late Tony Phillipis and Roger McCarville. Coupie was one of the first people to introduce me to wheelchair sports. We met at a Wheelin' Sportsmen event back in 2003 and my life was never the same. That chance meeting was one of the first steps for me on my road to the Paralympics and what hurts the most not being able to show him a Paralympic medal and thank him for his part in making it possible. I know he would have been incredibly proud.

As I write this with tears streaming down my face, I can be proud of Coup's accomplishments and knowing they will not be forgotten. The Athletes With Disabilities Network Hall of Fame is honoring Jeff with the Rick Knas Lifetime Achievement Award for 2012. I know his achievements are not done. What Coup started will continue on and grow in the future.

The following article is a story written by William Petzold of the Tuscola County Advertiser and I would like to share it with you:

"The Michigan sports community has lost a great leader, and it probably won't



make headlines.

Jeff Coupie lived in Bay City. In June 1988, he dove into a swimming pool and broke his neck at his high school graduation party. The injury left him a C6 quadriplegic, unable to walk and with no function in his hands or forearms.

I interviewed Coupie in April 2010 when he was organizing and competing in a quad rugby tournament at Delta College with his team, the Michigan Storm. Quad rugby is designed for people who are quadriplegic, meaning they have impaired mobility in all four of their limbs. Teams of men and women in wheelchairs play on a gym floor and try to carry a volleyball across the goal line in a full-contact game that's like a cross between hockey and football.

One of the Storm's best players is Caro's Scot Severn, who is days away from competing in his second Paralympics in shot put and discus. As Coupie told me at the time, "He's probably one of the guys that I've seen (who hits) the hardest since I've been playing, and I'm glad he's on our team."

It never made that story, but Coupie also told me he once had fallen out of his wheelchair at home and, not being able to move himself or call for help, lay on his kitchen floor without food or water for three days until somebody found him. He knew what it was like to be helpless.

When I met Coupie in person, he was dressed like your average 39-year-old gym rat, only seated in a sporty wheelchair with a "cow catcher" on the front to prevent his chair's frame from getting tangled with another. I had never experienced quad rugby before.

I did not see a victim or a helpless person take the floor for the Storm that day; I saw Coupie as he was: liberated — a competitor free from restrictions and a useful part of a team. Coupie fired passes to his teammates. He gleefully bashed into opponents, even getting flipped over in his chair once or twice. After all, what does a guy who broke his neck have left to fear?

Coupie's involvement with sports gave him something to look forward to and a chance to be like everybody else. He paid it forward as the director of Michigan Sports Unlimited, introducing people with disabilities to adaptive sports that eliminate barriers preventing them from competing otherwise. Through his efforts, hundreds of people discovered they could be productive members of a team and have fun.

Jeff Coupie passed along the feeling of

freedom and excitement that quad rugby gave him, and he gave others an outlet to release the frustration and anger that come with living in a chair.

Coupie helped people because he knew what it was like to be helpless, and he found a way out.

"Wheelchair rugby changed my life," Coupie told me in 2010. "There are some people with disabilities that never leave the house because they don't want people looking at them in a wheelchair. Life goes fast, and it can pass you by in a hurry. "I have a very good life, and I enjoy life to the fullest."

Jeff Coupie died Sunday, August 5, 2012. He was 41 years old."

Bill Petzold is a staff writer for the Tuscola County Advertiser.





Sports & Recreation

Written By: Bill Petzold, Tuscola County Advertiser

Caro's Scot Severn bringing home a 2012 Paralympics bronze medal

Thousands in attendance watched as Severn's toss of 8.26 meters in the men's shot put finals gave him third place and his first Paralympic medal.

Prior to leaving for the 2012 Paralympics in London, Caro's Scot Severn talked about creating a legacy his children could be proud of.

Now the Severn kids can say, "My dad won a Paralympic medal."

Severn launched the shot put 8.26 meters (27.09 feet) to claim a bronze medal. Severn trailed only silver medalist Mauro Maximo de Jesus of Mexico and Aigars Apinis of

Latvia. Also in London, Severn placed ninth in Discus and eighth in Javelin.

Severn earned his first medal in his second Paralympic Games appearance. The Paralympics are held in the same venues as the Olympic Games, and feature the world's premier athletes with disabilities.

Severn adds the bronze medal to a résumé that includes numerous gold and silver medals at the U.S. Paralympic National Championships and the Parapan American Games.



Photo courtesy of Karen Boyle • An image of Caro's Scot Severn looms large over a packed crowd at Olympic Stadium in London.



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Michigan Marine and war veteran,
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Alan Opra, a metro Detroit resident, Marine, and war veteran, lost 116lbs and regained mobility after being an amputee victim of a drunk-driving accident, gaining excessive weight, and being confined to a wheelchair.

Alan was put on a weight loss program based upon his medical profile with a main focus on developing healthy and satisfying eating habits. The program consisted of one-on-one counseling, weekly weigh-ins, healthy recipes to use with store purchased food, and nutritional

supplements. "The thing I really liked about the program was I was changing my lifestyle not just losing weight," says Alan.

As a result of the Medical Weight Loss Clinic program and exercise, Alan has lost 116 lbs. and counting. He is also able to participate in many military veteran's parades and events that he was not been able to do since the accident.

"I owe my life to MWLC." says Alan.

Read Alan's full story at www.mwlc.com



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