

RT '20

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America



In September, the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) staged a mock election event at Westland City Hall as an opportunity to shoot video footage of people with disabilities voting in support of the Paralyzed Veterans of America “Access The Vote” campaign. Pictured above is (from left to right): Robin Bennett, MPVA Development Coordinator, Richard LeBlanc, Westland City Clerk, and Michael Harris, MPVA President.



About this Issue:

A pandemic has not stopped the MPVA Chapter from carrying out our very important mission! Be sure to read through this issue to find out all the latest from the MPVA!

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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

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The Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) is a chapter of the 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.
- 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 Plymouth, Michigan. Our service officers are based out of the McNamara Federal Building in Downtown Detroit.

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President's Report

By: Michael Harris, President, MPVA

Honor Veterans with Community Service

Veterans Day looks a lot different this year than it has in the past. Our current state of affairs and the protective measures implemented across the country to stop the spread of COVID-19 have forced us to think creatively to ensure we stay safe while honoring our nation's heroes.

Many Veterans Day activities throughout Michigan, like many public events, were cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That included the annual Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) "Salute to Veterans" luncheon. Instead of our traditional luncheon event where people come together physically, we opted for a "Salute to Veterans Virtual Run, Walk, Wheel" event. We also partnered with Sweetwaters Coffee and Tea Plymouth Green location for a two day fundraiser. I am proud to say that both efforts were a success—especially provided that it was the first time we have done something like this and that it was a challenging year for so many! The two combined events raised nearly \$10,000 which will go on to support the MPVA's mission! *(Please be sure to see the last few pages of this issue that include advertisements from the dedicated sponsors and supporters who tremendously helped support us this Veterans Day.)*

Since I did not get the opportunity to speak publicly at our event, I wanted to share my remarks about Veterans Day with you in this article:

As we pause to remember our past, let us also remember our present, where at this very moment our servicemen and women are putting themselves in harm's way for the cause of freedom and democracy. We salute their courage, strength, and dedication to these high ideals. We pledge our gratitude for the sacrifices they will make; and we vow to never forget.

Veterans are ordinary people accomplishing extraordinary things. They are young and old – rich and poor – black and white – and nearly every category in between. They are men and women who served or still serve America. Some have endured great hardships, separation from family, and drastically altered lifestyles. Some have been scarred

physically or psychologically. All sacrificed something so that we could enjoy the freedoms we have today.

There is no group of people I hold in higher regard than veterans. Because of veterans, we live in the strongest, freest, greatest country in the world. Throughout history, our country has been blessed to have men and women willing to answer the call to duty and accomplish great things for the benefit of their fellow man.

It is our responsibility to ensure that our children and grandchildren appreciate the sacrifices made by those serving our country and never forget them. Each year, as the percentage of our population who has worn a uniform declines, fewer and fewer individuals and families have a personal connection with the military. Instilling in America's youth an awareness of the contributions of veterans past and present becomes even more important.

Even though many Americans will not serve, knowledge of those who have served is essential. The traits we learn from veterans - courage, honor, duty, sacrifice, patriotism, heroism - are characteristics that make us better citizens. Their everyday acts inspire us to reach beyond our limits. Their losses remind us to live a life worthy of their sacrifice. And through their service on our behalf, we remember the obligations we owe. These are important lessons only a veteran can teach us.

Every day, memories of World War II—its sights and sounds, its terrors and triumphs—disappear. Yielding to the inalterable process of aging, the men and women who fought and won the great conflict are now in their late 90s. They are dying quickly—according to US Department of Veterans Affairs statistics, 325,574 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II are alive in 2020.

It seems like yesterday that the last World War I veteran from the United States died at the age of 110 in 2011. Soon we will be saying the same thing for World War II veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs estimated in September 2020 that just over 10,270 Michigan World War II veterans

were still alive out of more than 600,000 who served.

It's important that we share with our children that Veterans Day is more than a day off from school or a department store sale. It's a day to honor the more than 634,000 veterans in Michigan and the 20 million nationwide that are still with us, as well as their families, who stepped forward to defend our country. It's a day to pay tribute to those who have given so much.

What veterans have given our country is beyond our power to fully repay, yet, today we recognize our debt to their service. And on this national holiday, our hearts are filled with respect and gratitude for the veterans of the United States of America.

During the past two decades, as the military has been engaged in the longest period of sustained conflict in the nation's history, just one-half of one percent of American adults has served on active duty at any given time. As the size of the military shrinks, the connections between military personnel and the broader civilian population appear to be growing more distant.

While most Americans today have family members who once served or are currently serving in the armed forces, as we move forward the generation gap is getting larger. More than three-quarters (77%) of adults ages 50 and older said they had an immediate family member – a spouse, parent, sibling or child – who had served in the military. For many of these adults, their military family members are likely to have served prior to the phasing out of the military draft in 1973.

However, adults under the age of 50 are much less likely to have family members who served in the military. Some 57% of those ages 30-49 say they have an immediate family member who served. And among those ages 18-29, the share is only 33%.

In the future those numbers will continue to get smaller.

Even though many Americans will not serve, knowledge of those who have served is essential. Each year, as the percentage of our population who has worn a uniform declines, fewer and fewer individuals and families have a personal connection with the military.

It is for that reason Veterans Day plays an important role going forward to ensure that our younger generation appreciate the sacrifices made by those serving our country and never forget them. Instilling in America's youth an

awareness of the contributions of veterans past and present has become even more important.

Over the years people have thanked me for my service and regretted the fact they did not serve. I always remind them that you do not have to wear a uniform to serve your country. People can honor veterans throughout the year by serving in the communities in which they reside.

Volunteering and service are woven into the fabric of our country's history. We are a nation of people who care for and look out for each other. Community service is also a way to connect with our neighbors and use our skills for the common good. Helping people in your community makes that community stronger and healthier -- and makes you stronger and healthier in the process.

With the disconnect currently going on in our country, community service has the power to bring young people together from different races, incomes, faiths, and political backgrounds to work on pressing problems facing U.S. society today. In the process, they get to know each other around something positive—the shared work of participating in a common goal that makes a difference in the life of someone in need of their support.

Imagine for a moment a large-scale commitment to offering young Americans who are black and white, rich and poor, Republican and Democrat, and Christian, Jewish, and Muslim opportunities to work side by side, serving their country together. The focus of their service year would be teaching, tutoring, and mentoring disadvantaged students; cleaning neighborhoods in need of renewal; renovating homes in blighted areas.

Beyond the valuable work they would do to improve their community, young Americans would develop the powerful habits of citizenship. A service year that teaches young Americans the habits of citizenship and the power of working in teams to build trust is one of the most powerful ways this generation can help restore political and civic responsibility.

While I may not be the first to thank our veterans for their service, I ask each of you to ensure that I'm not the last one who thanks them today and every day throughout the coming year.

For those who served our country I want to thank you for your service!





Executive Director's Report

By Jaclyn Kochis, Executive Director, MPVA

PVA "Access The Vote" Campaign

In September, the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) staged a mock election event at Westland City Hall as an opportunity to shoot video footage of people with disabilities voting in support of the Paralyzed Veterans of America "Access The Vote" campaign.



Pictured from left to right: President/Co-Owner of Walk the Line Recovery Therapy, Erica Coulton, listens to Richard LeBlanc, Westland City Clerk, give instructions about voting procedures.

PVA wanted all voters with disabilities to plan their state-specific personal plan prior to voting, to ensure all votes were counted. Veterans have fought for the right to vote, and PVA advocated for safe and accessible voting options in all states. PVA created a link on their website that people could access for state-specific information,



Michael Harris, MPVA President, enters Westland City Hall.

early voting guidelines and a checklist for creating an individual plan.

A report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office about voters with disabilities, released on November 2, 2017, found fewer than half of polling locations were accessible during the 2016 presidential election.

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires state and local governments to ensure people with disabilities have full and equal access to all government-provided services, programs and activities, including the opportunity to vote. However, PVA members have reported barriers to voting in previous elections such as inaccessible sidewalks, insufficient accessible parking, and long lines.

"Voting is an important civil right that our veterans have fought to protect. It should be accessible and safe for everyone, including those with disabilities, and PVA is making sure that happens. It's especially important to

help voters make a voting plan in a year that's complicated by a pandemic." said David Zurfluh, U.S. Air Force veteran, and Paralyzed Veterans of America national president.

"People with disabilities absolutely need access to their polls. This is a community of over 60 million Americans, and the only way to ensure our needs are met is to make sure we can cast our votes with reasonable accommodations safely and securely in all 50 states," said David Zurfluh.

On behalf of MPVA I want to thank the City of Westland for allowing us to use Westland City Hall to stage a mock election in support of PVA's "Access Your Vote" campaign.

I want to single out Richard LeBlanc, Westland City Clerk, and his staff for going the extra mile in helping PVA accomplish the goal of ensuring that every American can make their voice heard where it matters most – at the ballot box.

Once again, I want to thank the City of Westland for working with MPVA to ensure that all Michiganders that want to vote were able to do so in a safe and secure environment.



Edward Jones Salutes

the courage and loyalty of our troops, now and in the past.
Thank you.



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Photo: Stephanie Strickland, Senior National Service Officer

Annual Rate Updates for Automobile and Specially Adapted Housing Grant

On an annual basis, the federal government will increase the COLA rates of the automobile and SAH Grant. Because these are two of the largest and most important benefits for our member and member-eligible clients, we strive to keep our clients up to date on all such changes. With the rate change, all automobile grant, specially adapted housing, and special housing adaptation claims received on or after October 1, 2020 may be paid at the increased rate(s). Below are the new rates FY 2021 rates that are payable effective October 1, 2020 for each of the programs:

- FY 2021 Chapter 39 Automobile grant rate of \$21,795.57, payable effective October 1, 2020.
- FY 2021 Chapter 21 SAH rate of \$100,896, payable effective October 1, 2020

Just as a reminder, a qualified veteran must meet the criteria set forth to be considered for the automobile grant: The automobile grant is money provided to an eligible veteran to help you buy a specially equipped vehicle if your service-connected disability prevents you from driving. To qualify for the benefit a veteran will be entitled to compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, for a disability described in this section; or a member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who has a disability described in this section that is the result of an injury or disability incurred or disease contracted in or aggravated by active military, naval, or air service. One of the following must exist:

- Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both feet.
- Loss or permanent loss of use of one or both hands.
- Permanent impairment of vision of both eyes: Central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, with corrective glasses, or central visual acuity of more than 20/200 if there is a field defect in which the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends an

angular distance no greater than 20° in the better eye.

- Severe burn injury: Deep partial thickness or full thickness burns resulting in scar formation that cause contractures and limit motion of one or more extremities or the trunk and preclude effective operation of an automobile.
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, this benefit is established when VA determines service connection is granted.

The qualified veteran must meet the criteria set forth to be considered for the specially adapted housing grant: A member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty must have a disability that was incurred or aggravated in line of duty in active military, naval, or air service and meets the requirements below:

- the anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands.
- Is due to deep partial thickness burns that have resulted in contracture(s) with limitation of motion of two or more extremities or of at least one extremity and the trunk.
- Is due to full thickness or subdermal burns that have resulted in contracture(s) with limitation of motion of one or more extremities or the trunk.
- Is due to residuals of an inhalation injury (including, but not limited to, pulmonary fibrosis, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).
- The disability is due to blindness in both eyes, having central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of a standard correcting lens.

If you are interested in applying or using the automobile grant or specially adapted housing, please call your National Service Officer





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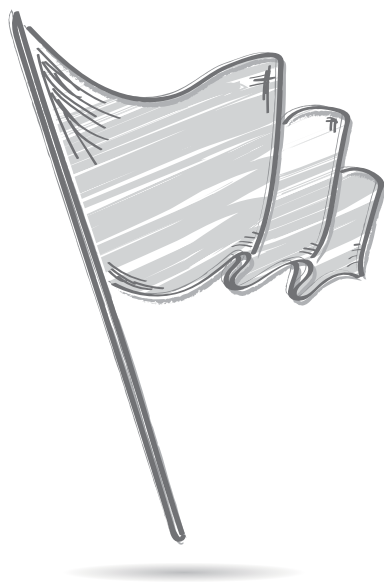
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Government Relations & Advocacy

By: Mike Harris, Executive Director, MPVA

Telemedicine Improving Healthcare Access

Of all the terrible ways COVID-19 has completely reshaped our lives — from the way we socialize to how we work — there are some changes that have actually been a good thing.

For me, telemedicine is a gift sent from heaven!

Think of it as an electronic house call. Instead of facing lousy weather and taking five hours out of my day to drive to/from my appointment, find a parking spot large enough to accommodate a van equipped with a ramp, and worry about patients running late and cutting into other appointments, I'm now able to get face-to-face time with my doctor through a video chat. Not only are they safe and convenient, but they're also an easy, efficient, and personalized way to access healthcare. Within 15 minutes, my appointment is over.

The University of Michigan Hospital received a grant from the federal government to expand Michigan Medicine's virtual care efforts. These efforts support care for patients and protect care workers and the public from COVID-19.

With Michigan Medicine Virtual Care, patients can access the same care they are used to from the comfort and convenience of their home. No matter where you are throughout Michigan you can count on convenient, connected care from Michigan Medicine health care providers using your "My U of M Health Patient Portal" account.

To connect to Michigan Medicine Virtual Care, follow these three easy steps:

- Sign up for a MyUofMHealth Patient Portal account
- Download the MyUofMHealth Patient Portal mobile app to your smartphone or tablet from the Apple Store or Google Play
- Start an eVisit or access your scheduled Video Visit appointment from the MyUofMHealth Patient Portal mobile app.

After logging into the University of Michigan Hospital portal on my iPhone, I tap on a button labeled "video visits". After about two minutes, my physician pops up. I can just sit at the kitchen table while my physician looks at a webcam from the outpatient clinic thirty miles away from my home.

The video visits are meant to keep hospital beds free for the sickest coronavirus patients, and keep patients who don't have the virus out of healthcare facilities where they could contract the virus from other patients. These virtual visits also protect healthcare workers, while providing patients the convenience and continued access to healthcare.

In April, when COVID-19 was at its peak in Michigan, specialty clinics, such as Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, started calling to ask if I would be willing to have a video chat, using my iPhone, instead

of an in-person visit. I said, of course, because I didn't want to put myself at additional risk of catching COVID-19.

As we all know, COVID-19 is a serious health risk to society, especially older adults and people with serious medical conditions, such as spinal cord injury/disease, lung disease, heart disease, and diabetes. Telemedicine is a great option, especially for people with these concerns. Telemedicine allows health care professionals to evaluate, diagnose and treat patients in remote locations using technology. Telemedicine communication can occur by video-conferencing with either a PC, laptop, tablets, or mobile phone.

If necessary, your doctor can prescribe medication or order refills of already-prescribed medication. However, keep in mind that some services do need to be conducted in person. If your doctor decides a further examination or tests are needed, they can be scheduled after your appointment.

I believe that this will become a permanent change of the patient/doctor relationship on delivering medical care. Telemedicine is convenient because it puts you in touch with your physician from the comfort of your own home. And it often offers more flexible appointment options.

Throughout Michigan, doctors and hospitals are asking patients to shift outpatient activity into video chats, voice calls, texts and emails. The pandemic has pushed the medical community in a direction that many of us have been waiting for.

As much as COVID-19 has upended our lives and caused so much chaos, it's also forced both the private and public sectors to think outside the box in terms of healthcare delivery. And that's a good thing.



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Sports & Recreation

By: Ray Brown

Fall Pheasant Hunt

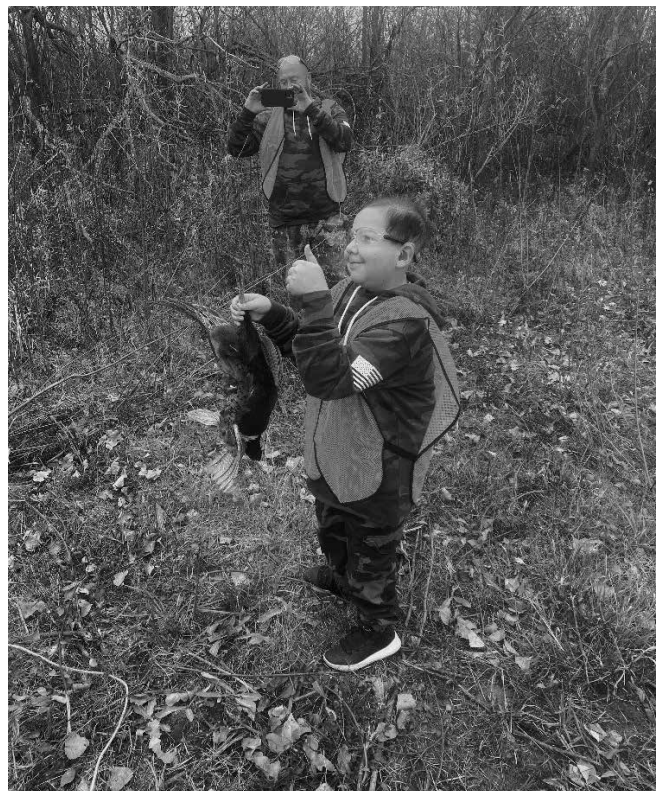


The whole group of hunters pause to take a team photo!

Our Annual Fall Pheasant Hunt took place on October 23rd this year. It included 30 hunters, along with some awesome bird dogs and their handlers. Rooster Ranch in Ubly, Michigan was chosen for our day of excitement.



Ray Brown smiles and shows off the Pheasant he scored!



Abe Goerro of Imlay City shows off his first rooster ever. "Thank you," Abe said "I wouldn't have been able to do this without your help!"

There were many first-timers that joined us—needless to say our “all terrain” powered track chairs were put to good use!

Our Hunting Director, Roger Wilcox, and Small Game Director, David Rouse, put their heads together to make this event a success. They opted for a morning tower hunt; this hunt is perfect for all hunters as it includes pheasants released from a tower. Individuals are placed in stations around the tower while the birds are released; if any fly toward your station, it becomes yours to shoot. Rotation of stations follows as a horn is sounded and this continues till all birds have been released. There was a break for lunch and a hunt in some beautiful fields afterward, which allows hunters to try and recoup any birds that got away.

Wheelin Team 457 along with 33 sponsors hosted this event. Everyone went home with pheasant and many recipes were shared. Our memories of this event in the great outdoors will last forever!

Thank you to Wheelin Team 457 and the Michigan Chapter of the PVA who continue to work together to provide such memories. We are grateful for such a partnership.

See ya in the woodscause this is how we roll!!



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Happy
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The MPVA wishes you a very safe &
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**Paralyzed Veterans
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The MPVA's holiday closure will be from December 23, 2020 at 1 PM EST until January 4, 2021 at 8:30 AM EST. During that time, urgent issues can be directed to: jkochis@michiganpva.org.