

RT '20

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America



In May, Micheal Harris (pictured left), MPVA President, presented a \$500 check to the owner of Sweetwaters Coffee and Tea, Kristen Hogue Jackson (pictured right), to support their program to feed and fuel our brave front line workers. Thank you, Kristen, and everyone at Sweetwaters Coffee and Tea on Washington Street in Ann Arbor, for spearheading this needed endeavor!





**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

Michigan Chapter

PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA
MICHIGAN CHAPTER

www.michiganpva.org



About this Issue:

While the pandemic has changed the way the MPVA delivers its services, it certainly has not stopped us from rolling out our mission. Read all about our summer endeavors and our plans for fall throughout this issue!

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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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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.

The Ad Agency

Design & Art Production 734-678-7928



President's Report

By: Michael Harris, President, MPVA

Doug Vollmer: A Life of Service



Doug Vollmer 1945 – 2020

The Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America (MPVA) is deeply saddened by the recent loss of our longtime friend, Doug Vollmer, who died on May 29, 2020 from pneumonia. Doug died at age 74 after a lifetime of service to his country. At the time of his passing he was surrounded by those he loved most, his wife of 49 years Scottie, his son Zach and daughter in-law Deirdre.

Doug was born on July 7, 1945 in Toledo, OH, the only child to Clarence and Ethel Vollmer. He graduated from Whitmer High School in 1963 and received a full academic scholarship to Northwestern University. Upon graduation in 1967, Doug entered the United States Navy and received his commission in May of 1968 serving a tour in Vietnam with the River Patrol Force and as a liaison officer with Special Forces.

Doug then spent 20 months working in Naval Intelligence at CINCPACFLT at Pearl Harbor. It was in Hawaii where Doug met his beloved wife Scottie, marrying after a 6 month courtship. Following his service in the Navy, he received a Master's Degree from the University of Hawaii and pursued post-graduate studies while teaching at the University of Maryland.

Doug knew that although the completion of a war might be an end for the public, it is not an end for the people who fought. Doug joined Paralyzed Veterans of America in 1979 and for the next 35 years provided uncompromising leadership in advancing the cause of America's Veterans and the rights of those with disabilities. As Associate Executive Director for Government Relations at PVA, Doug took on a broad range of issues affecting both the veterans' community and the larger community of citizens with disabilities.

He was involved in the passage of some of the most significant legislation to be considered by the United States Congress including the Americans with Disabilities Act and healthcare eligibility reform for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). He was instrumental in the battle to make Washington's Metro system accessible to wheelchair users; the fight to ensure access to commercial aircraft for people with disabilities; efforts to ensure that fair housing policy became a reality for those in need and played a leadership role in defining the VA's budgetary needs for America's disabled veterans.

Doug's involvement in legislative issues for veterans with spinal cord injury and dysfunction resulted in numerous advancements in the areas of health care, benefits and vocational rehabilitation. His unwavering commitment to assist both service connected and non-service connected individuals was the hallmark of Doug's ethos, and it reflected his belief that "a veteran is a veteran." As a result, thousands of veterans – disabled and non-disabled - and their families benefited from his work.

As an executive at PVA, he created an environment for his subordinates that encouraged creative thinking, individualism, and productive team work. The legacy

that he leaves can be seen in the advancements in medical coverage provided by the VA and the fact that the United States is a world leader in healthcare access for individuals with disabilities.

I first met Doug at the 1996 PVA Legislative/Advocacy Conference in Washington, D.C. It was an honor serving with him through my work with MPVA. Our relationship grew throughout the years, both personally as well as professionally.

His life's work was not to champion the causes of those with wealth or power or special connections. It was to give a voice to those who otherwise would not be heard. His remarkable record of service reminds us all that one person's efforts can have a positive impact on the quality of life of many.

We join in extending to the members of his bereaved family our heartfelt sympathy and thank him for a job well done.

Rest in peace, my friend! You will be missed, but your legacy will not be forgotten.





Executive Director's Report

By Jaclyn Kochis, Executive Director, MPVA

A Different Type of Veterans Day Celebration

As the Chapter rolled into August and watched summer slip farther into the rearview mirror, the vantage point for our busiest time of year started to look rather blurry. Our tradition of using the summer months to plan for our fall Salute to Veterans event during a pandemic seemed daunting and, frankly, kind of irresponsible. How would we host an indoor gathering of up to 150 people in November safely? Would there be any positive change in the state of things by that time? How soon was too soon to firmly say we would not host a fall event where people gathered for Veteran's Day?

These are questions nearly every business is facing and we are living in extraordinarily challenging times. Yet, I am reminded as I always am of what our mission stands for at the MPVA—we are an organization whose members are, above all, resilient and tough! Our members constantly adapt and that is precisely what we will do this fall!

From November 4th through November 18th, the MPVA will be hosting a virtual "Salute to Veterans: Run, Walk, Wheel" event. Participants will have an option of selecting a 1 mile race, 5K race, or 10K race.

WHAT IS A VIRTUAL RACE?

A virtual race is a race that you can run, walk, bike, jog, or wheel from any location you choose. For example—you can run, jog, walk or wheel on the road, on the trail, on the treadmill, around your home or even on the track. You get to run your own race, at your own pace, and time it yourself.

HOW WILL MY TIME AND DISTANCE BE RECORDED?

You can use a smartphone app or device of your choosing to record your distance and pace. Simply take a photo or screen shot of your final time and distance along with a photo of yourself after your finish and email it to: chapterhq@michiganpva.org no later than November 18th at 5 PM.

PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE:

- Participation Medal
- Social Media Buzz
- A great feeling for supporting the MPVA's mission
- A healthy and safe way to remember Veteran's Day

COST FOR PARTICIPANTS:

- Participation Medal

WHERE TO REGISTER:

You can register at: www.michiganpva.org

SPREAD THE WORD:

You can help spread the word on your social media by sharing the event link along with the hashtag: #MPVASalutetoVeterans

Please stay tuned for updates on these programs! The best way to stay up-to-date on MPVA news and events is to follow us on social media. Our Facebook page can be followed at: facebook.com/michiganpva.

Results of the races will be posted on MPVA's Facebook page upon completion! We encourage you to challenge your friends and family to join you! After all, Veteran's

Day is not just any ole' day of the year—it's a day to take time out and remember those who so honorably served. What better feeling than supporting service men and women on Veteran's Day while staying safe and healthy?



Be Sure We Can Connect With You!



We hope to take this newsletter to an E-News format in 2021 so that we can ensure our news reaches you in the timeliest manner! If you have not updated us with your email in some time, please take a moment to email us at: chapterhq@michiganpva.org!



Photo: Stephanie Strickland, Senior National Service Officer

Nonprofits to provide COVID-19 Quarantine Kits for Veterans

The nonprofit group, Help Heal Veterans, has teamed up with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and together they have created what they call “quarantine kits” for veterans.

All items provided in these kits have been provided by the nonprofit group, Help Heal Veterans, for veterans in isolation in their homes or elsewhere during this pandemic. The supplies are sent to volunteers and local organizations to assemble and distribute to veterans in need.

Provided in each kit are things such as craft supplies, education, and other reading materials, also materials one could use to make personal masks at home. The kits are used as a means to help deal with stress and boredom during these unprecedented times.

Currently, there are only a few states that have been provided these kits, as this is just a pilot program.

Those locations include:

- Golden, Colorado
- Iron Mountain, Michigan
- Coatesville, Pennsylvania
- Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania
- Erie, Pennsylvania
- Bay Pines, Florida
- Fayetteville, N. Carolina
- Charleston, S. Carolina
- Canandaigua, New York
- Albuquerque, New Mexico

VA has agreed to share these kits with other resources such as local VA facilities, VA community living centers, and nursing homes, as well as some Veterans Service Organizations. Others known to have received kits are VA mental health providers, home health care providers, and VA home-based primary care programs, just to name a few.

The kits have shown to have been very uplifting and a lifesaver to our veterans as most of their recreational activities have been put on pause due to the pandemic.

Studies show that crafting can provide lots of therapeutic and rehabilitative benefits to combat decline of cognitive and motor skills, as well as creative thinking.

More than 140,000 free craft kits have been distributed since the beginning of the pandemic, and depending on the need and availability of resources, more locations may be added in the future.

As a reminder, medical experts and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend those that test positive for COVID-19 self-quarantine in their homes for 14 days to prevent the spread of the virus.


To learn more about Help Heal Veterans and how you can help or be issued a kit, please visit Help Heal Veterans, <https://www.healvets.org/>.



Picture Perfect

RT '11

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America




Staff Sgt. Kenneth Hubbard and his young daughter join him for the last few steps of a 2.5 mile march he did with Sgt. First Class Jason Holley and Sgt. First Class Russell Tansy in order to raise funds for the MPVA.

July/August 2011

RT '16

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America




Take a look inside this issue and learn about the MPVA's Annual Picnic at the Miracle League of Plymouth (photo above), what 20 years of dedicated service to the MPVA looks like, the opening of a new Veteran Service Office in west Michigan, and much more!

Summer Edition 2016

RT '14

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America




MPVA Vice President, David Peck, takes a moment to test drive an Action Track wheelchair at MPVA's Annual Awareness Day this past spring.

Summer Edition 2014

The Ad Agency

RT '12

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America



MPVA Board Director, Teresa Kampfoest, gets a golf lesson from Scott Millman of The Simple World of Golf at MPVA's Open House on April 12, 2012.

May/June 2012

RT '14

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America




Once again, the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America presented a special award to the school that created a Future City that best addressed the challenges faced by people with disabilities at the 2014 Future Cities Competition. We went to congratulate Arkansas's Kinross Academy of Belleville for winning the 2014 "Top City Disability Award."

Spring Edition 2014

RT '12

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America




San Seymon, MPVA Sports Director, wins bronze medal in 2012 Paralympic Games.

November/December 2012

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RT '17

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America




MPVA Board Member, Michael Harris, participates in a groundbreaking ceremony this past August for a Veteran Tribute being built in Oakland Township.

2017 Fall Edition

RT '18

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America




Executive Director, Jaclyn Kochis, signs documents during the closing of our Chapter building sale as President, David Peck, watches over.

2018 Spring Edition

RT '18

Rollin' Times from the Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America



Being in a wheelchair does not mean your world must be limited. The possibilities are endless and MPVA members always prove that! Check out President David Peck, pictured above, taking advantage of the summer by cruising around Michigan's Dunes with his son-in-law!

2018 Summer Edition



By: Mike Harris, Executive Director, MPVA

MPVA Applauds Passage of Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Legislation

The Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America applauds the passage of H.R. 3504, the *Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing (SAH) Improvement Act of 2019*. This legislation ensures that catastrophically disabled veterans can more easily make needed accessibility modifications to their homes.

The Senate approved an amended version of H.R. 3504 on March 26. It has been awaiting final approval by the House since that time. The Michigan PVA contacted members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation requesting that they advocate the legislation be brought to the House floor for a full vote before the House recesses at the end of July.

For the past several years, MPVA has advocated for an increase in the value and uses of VA's Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant program, to prioritize the status of veterans with ALS, and establish a supplementary housing grant.

Veterans and service members who have sustained certain significant service-connected disabilities are eligible for grants to assist with the building, remodeling, or purchasing of an adapted home. The SAH grant allows modifications to be made to a residence to give a veteran or service member greater independence in a barrier free environment.

Beginning October 1st, this legislation will do the following:

- Increase the aggregate amount of the benefit for buying a house with special features from \$85,645 to \$98,492.
- Increase the amount of assistance for adaptations to veterans' residences from \$12,756 to \$19,733.
- Allows the VA to prioritize a veteran's SAH grant if he or she has been diagnosed with a terminal illness to include ALS. Due to the aggressive nature of ALS, it is imperative that veterans are afforded the opportunity for an increased quality of life while they still have the ability to enjoy it.
- Allows veterans twice as many opportunities (three to six) to withdraw from the SAH grant
- Will reinstate SAH benefits to eligible veterans every 10 years

As of October 1, 2030, eligible veterans who have exhausted their benefit will be able to apply for a supplemental grant if VA determines their residence still needs modifications.

To be eligible for the grant, the veterans or service member must be entitled to disability compensation due to:

- Loss or loss of use of both legs: unable to move around without the aid of braces, crutches, canes, or a wheelchair.

- Blindness in both eyes, plus loss or loss of use of one leg
- Severe burn injury
- Loss or loss of use of both arms at or above the elbows.
- Loss or loss of use of one leg, and residuals of organic disease or injury, or loss or loss of use of one arm, affecting balance and ability to move without aid.

As a result of advances in medical care, rehabilitation, and assistive technology, more people with SCI are living longer. However, as these people age, they are likely to experience changes in their health and abilities. SCI can worsen the normal aging process.

As you age with a spinal cord injury/disease, housing needs will change over time, based on variety of circumstances. The legislation modernizes and expands the grant program that allows veterans to utilize vital SAH grants in a way that best fit their needs – providing greater support and improving the quality of life for many of our nation’s disabled veterans.

Once again, MPVA wants to thank members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation for their support to the critical improvements made to the Specially Adaptive Housing benefits that will allow our members to live healthy, productive lives in homes that meet there needs.





From The Development Office

By Robin Bennett, Development Coordinator.

Hope, Faith, & a Pandemic

Hope has been an ever-elusive buoy in my life for a while now. Every time I seem to get near it, just a breath away from grabbing onto its life-saving lift, it seems to dissolve. The pandemic of 2020 has not made that life preserver of hope any easier to find.

Hope is what pushes us forward, gives us courage to take the next leap, and allows us to take that daily risk to give of ourselves. Faith and hope often exist in a state of codependence—one cannot function as it is meant to without the other. So, as a person with a disability dealing with the added stress of isolation because of the pandemic, where do I find hope and how do I hold onto faith?

We celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 2020 and it is through this amazing achievement advocated for by Judith Heumann, Justin Dart, Ed Roberts and so many more that I am reminded to have faith in myself and in my fellow American. These individuals, as well as advocates like myself today, have fought for equity in opportunity and legal protections. The Americans with Disabilities Act, signed in 1990, provided the ‘floor’ of the minimum protections that this country must ensure for all citizens with a disability.

A good friend, Dr. Feranmi Okanlami, Assistant Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehab at the University of Michigan as well as an American with a spinal cord injury, gave several national interviews on the celebration of the ADA. Dr. Feranmi spoke of the legislation as “the floor” of what this country should be aiming for in terms of access and rights for all. “The floor should be the minimum, but we see all around

us that people have become complacent with just the minimum”, he said.

My friend reminded me that the individuals that advocated and put all of their passion into making change in this country, did not foresee that they would be successful. The leaps of faith that they took, like sit-ins at federal buildings that were inaccessible or the Capital Crawl event where hundreds of disabled activists climbed up the Capital steps, were driven by a hope for more than the minimum. It was not a promise; but a hope fueled by faith in each other and in the capacity for positive change that has always been a landmark of the United States of America.

There is so much more to be done, as Dr. Feranmi and Mike Harris’s section on advocacy tells us. Let us make sure we are paying attention and getting involved whenever there is injustice anywhere. Let us not forget that Martin Luther King Jr. said “A threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” And overall, let us not forget that even in the darkest times we can hope, but that hope must be coupled with action and with goals.

I hold onto faith that leads me to hope in action. “Now faith is the substance of what we hope for, the evidence of things not seen.”—*Hebrews 11:1*





Throwing in the towel on an old motorcycle that won't run or looking to get rid of an ATV? In all situations, Paralyzed Veterans of America's Wheels Helping Warriors Vehicle Donation program is a perfect outlet for your generosity. It's easy to donate. Be sure your title is on hand, fill out the online form at PVA.careasy.org or call (877) 900-8387 (877-900-VETS). We will schedule the pickup free of charge and donors receive a tax deduction for the donation.



Sports & Recreation

By: Ray Brown

Shuffleboard Competition



Friends Stan Cydejko and Ray Brown in a close game of table shuffleboard.

Today we had a rainy day. I mean a really rainy day; So I ask myself, "What to do indoors?"

My friend Stan and I decided to partake in some friendly games of indoor table shuffleboard. As a wheelchair athlete I love to compete and this sport has gotten my attention as a very worthy challenge.

The nine foot table came with 8 pucks: 4 red and 4 blue. It is lined on each end with score positions of 3, 2, and 1. If your puck lands on any of these spots, you receive that score. The game is played to 21 points. Since shots are alternated, defense is of great importance as you can knock your opponent's points right off the board! This proved to be a great way to score.

I learned quickly that this game requires muscle memory and hand-eye coordination in order to correctly place the puck where you need it to land. Skill is needed, but luck sure seems to have a place in the sport, along with ribbing and trash talking!

Silicone sand is sprinkled on the table for ease of sliding the metal or plastic pucks. Speed and some creative table talk are just parts of the challenge.

I see myself as a power athlete, so it is important to me to keep my reflexes tuned with cross training. I'm a field athlete, so powerlifting and weights contribute to my longevity as a senior athlete. With that said, games like table tennis and now table shuffleboard are great (with an added bonus of being fun) when looking for ways to improve sharpness and focus.

Table shuffleboard will accommodate many different disabilities and my suggestion is give it a try! There will be many surprising twists and turns, clangs and bangs as you glide your way to having a great time with table shuffleboard.



Getting Paralyzed Veterans Walking Again with Indego®



New VA Program offers eligible veterans an Indego® Exoskeleton at no cost.

What is Indego?

A robotic device that enables veterans to walk again.

Indego is an FDA-approved exoskeleton worn around the waist and legs that enables individuals paralyzed from spinal cord injuries to stand and walk, offering a new level of independence.

Indego can currently be used with spinal cord injury levels of T3 to L5 in community or home settings. The device offers:

- Lightweight, modular design
- Slim profile compatible with most wheelchairs
- Rapid setup and breakdown for easy transportation
- Can be used with forearm crutches or walker

Contact us today to find out if you are eligible to receive an Indego exoskeleton.

Email: support.indego@parker.com

Phone: 844-846-3346



Watch Marine Veteran Steve Holbert's story at www.indego.com/veterans





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DATED MATERIAL — PLEASE EXPEDITE!
2020 Summer Edition

Date Cancellation and Virtual Sessions

SPORTS EVENTS:

 **Virtual Sessions:** Virtual sessions and training are currently being offered through a partnership with The Recovery Project, LLC to who is presenting Wheelchair Workout Classes! These sessions have included tips on how to stay active and healthy from your wheelchair while socially distancing. These classes are presented through Zoom and you can find out all the latest dates and times by following us on our Facebook page at: facebook.com/michiganpva.

MEMBERSHIP EVENTS:

 **Virtual Sessions:** The MPVA is presenting and sharing an array of virtual events each week. Stay up-to-date on MPVA news and events by following us at: facebook.com/michiganpva.