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DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

**DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK, INC.
200 Atlantic Avenue, Lynbrook, New York 11563**



August 2007 Newsletter

TOUR OF DUTY: NEW YORK STATE VAMC'S AND STATE VETERANS HOMES

Theodore A. Barbuto, Department Commander

It has been a very busy summer visiting VAMC hospitals and New York State Veteran's homes across this great state of ours. It has been very motivating to see our DAV and Auxiliary members in action in their hometowns.

The level of staff enthusiasm for caring for our veterans continues to be exceptional. Outstanding VA staffing equals outstanding veteran care. Each facility visited boasted of new programs and state of the art equipment and technology being used to help better the lives of our veterans.

Accompanied by DAVA State Commander Matilda Brooks, area VAVS Representatives and Chapter and Unit Commanders we visited were impressed by medical advances unique to each VAMC. Albany's state of the art Radiation Department is now able to pinpoint areas to be radiated without damaging surrounding tissue. The Fisher House on the property continues to provide sanctuary to veterans and their families during periods of hospitalization.

Castle Point has an amazing food pantry for veterans in need of help. Montrose, in addition to the beautiful scenic Hudson River, boasts of a clothing store second to only Neiman Marcus.

The Bronx VAMC continues to serve veterans by answering phone calls for all of the NYC area as well as continuing its' research area to work to provide treatment and cures for illnesses and diseases suffered by our fellow veterans.

Manhattan VAMC continues to provide the most Batavia is home to a residential care post-traumatic stress disorder facility in addition to a women's rehabilitation program, both housed on its beautiful campus. Mentally and sexually abused women find refuge in this understanding environment. One resident of the women's facility was comfortable enough with the program offered

recent advances and upscale prosthetic research for our existing and returning veterans. Brooklyn has a new state of the art Dialysis Unit as well as a recently renovated Emergency Room.

After attending the 2007 Rehab Cruise in Freeport, Long Island, New York, we continued our downstate tour. Northport impressed us with the immense volunteer network that has been established and continues to run both for and with the patients. No patient leaves Northport without having been addressed by the Northport Volunteer welcoming committee.

St Albans is the home of "Bigfoot" who does daily in-house broadcasts for the staff and patients. A former naval hospital, St. Albans is looking forward to being rebuilt in the near future.

While touring Manhattan, we were able to visit Senior Vice Commander Robert Finnerty, who had undergone heart surgery. He commended the care given to him at both the Northport and Manhattan VAMC's and is currently on the mend and doing well.

Following a brief rest, we continued our tour of the Central, Upstate and Western New York hospitals. Syracuse greeted their "hometown" State Commander with an impressive tour including the near future installation of self-help kiosks to help reduce wait time at the Syracuse VAMC.

Bath VAMC continues with its impressive Veterans Back-to-Work program, which boasts of providing professional skilled trades of upholstery, printing and intricate woodwork. Beautiful Canandaigua houses the National Suicide Prevention Hotline. This much needed service is handled by a caring, compassionate staff.

to her to explain the rehabilitation she is going through. She gave thanks for the services she receives only in Batavia and not at any other facility. They should be very proud. This program is one that should be used as a precedent throughout the VA system. It was very much



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needed and they have succeeded in making it happen.

We ended our tour at the top of the state, Buffalo, New York. Our tour included the Research Lab where advances are being made to create a vaccine to give to our soldiers going to Iraq and Afghanistan. This will help prevent illness caused by bacteria released in enemy explosives. It was in Buffalo that we heard the story of "my buddy." Buffalo has begun a program for returning soldiers which encourages them to come in or return to the VA with a buddy. This is to increase the comfort level for soldiers entering the VA system. One soldier asked if he could return with his buddy. He was told, "of course." The soldier returned to the Buffalo VAMC with his buddy. The young soldier said, "I would like to introduce you to my buddy. This is my dad, a Vietnam veteran!" It is never too late to bring our troops in to receive what they are entitled to and have earned. Kudos to the Buffalo VAMC for their welcoming programs.

In addition to the New York State VAMC's, I also visited the New York State Veteran's Homes. I will comment on these facilities in my next newsletter.

National Convention 2007 in New Orleans, Louisiana was very inspirational. The state of Louisiana welcomed the DAV and DAV Auxiliary with open arms and open restaurants! Seminars and Sessions were well attended by our NYS delegation. We returned rejuvenated for the work ahead of us to continue caring for the disabled American veterans and our families in New York

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in TBI. The severity of such and injury may range from "mild," - a brief change in mental status or consciousness - to "severe," an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. A TBI can result in short or long-term problems with independent function.

What causes TBI?

The leading causes of TBI are:

- Bullets, fragments, blasts
- Falls
- Motor vehicle-traffic crashes

State.

A special thank you to PDC Thomas Mazza and Executive Director Prospero Sodano for the flawless running of the New York State hospitality room. One only needs to visit this room one time to see how New York continues to take care of its own, even away from home. Thank you to PDC's Dennis Krulder, Ron Tears, Keith Robinson and all of the Junior Officers who helped to continue the tradition of working in the hospitality room. Thanks to Leo Ortiz, Sam Mantilla and Frank Cassella for stepping up to the plate.

I hope to see everyone who is able to make it at the Yankee game September 4th.

THE ANATOMY OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES?

Sidney Siller, Sr., PDC, Department Adjutant

Because of the huge numbers of possible victims with great reticence to seek help, all of the disabled American veteran's must be aware and sensitive to the needs of new veterans.

The following information has been reported by the Brain Injury Center Headquarters at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC.

What is traumatic brain injury?

- Assaults

Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones.

Who is at highest risk for TBI?

- Males are about 1.5 times as likely as females to sustain a TBI
- Military duties increase the risk of sustaining a TBI

Symptoms of mild TBI or Concussion:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Excessive fatigue (tiredness)



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- Concentration problems
- Forgetting things (memory problems)
- Irritability
- Sleep problems
- Balance problems
- Ringing in the ears
- Vision change

Recovery from TBI:

- Get plenty of sleep at night and rest during the day
- Return to normal activities gradually, not all at once
- Until you are better, avoid activities that can lead to a second brain injury such as contact or recreational sports. Remember to use helmets and safety belts to decrease your risk of having a second brain injury.
- Don't drink alcohol; it may slow your brain recovery and it puts you at risk of further injury.
- If it's harder to remember things, write them down

My name is C. Paul Jefferson, I am a Life Member of the DAV at the PFC Robert A. LaFountain Chapter No. 179 in Peru, NY. I am also an Immigration Officer assigned to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Vermont Service Center in St. Albans, VT with my home in Rouses Point, NY. I am writing to let you know that the officers and staff of the Vermont Service Center have been working with DAV Commander Pat Patterson of the Peru Chapter in support of our disabled vets at the Albany VA Medical Center. The Vermont Service Center has many veterans and a number of individuals in the Guard and Reserve that have been called to active duty. We always go the "extra mile" to support those individuals and their families. We have a well organized family support group, we provide a variety of services and financial aid to those in need. We also collect books and magazines for a project started by VSC officer and Navy veteran Jim Lavoie. Jim started collecting books for the VA Hospital in White River Junction, VT. The response was overwhelming and we soon swamped the organization. I have assisted Jim and we looked for other ways to help

- If you find you are losing important items, begin putting them in the same place all the time
- If you are easily distracted or having difficulty concentrating, try doing only one thing at a time in a quiet, non-distracting environment
- If you feel irritable, then remove yourself from the situation that's irritating you or use relaxation techniques to help manage the situation. Irritability is worse when you are tired, so rest will help
- Be patient! Healing from a brain injury takes time.

Symptoms of mild TBI or concussion often resolve within hours to days and almost always improve over 1 - 3 months. However, if symptoms persist without improvement, medical treatment should be sought.

The following letter was e-mailed to Headquarters:

BOOKS FOR VETS

our wounded men and women who had the courage to serve our country. I contacted Pat and asked if the Albany VA Hospital would be interested in receiving paperbacks. The response was amazing, we recently sent out our second shipment to Albany thanks to Pat and the other members of the Chapter. We in Vermont collect paperbacks, hard cover books, magazines and board games and deliver them to Plattsburgh where Pat and his lady collect them. The organization then delivers them to Albany where they are distributed. We have received a very nice thank you from the VA for our donations and look forward to continuing this worthy project. I just wanted you to know how much we appreciate the efforts of Pat and the DAV. We have asked Pat to ask the VA what else we can do for them, be it cash donations to buy needed items, additional books and magazines or whatever. We want to help those that served our nation. I spent the last year of my military career in an Air Force hospital at Andrews AFB, MD. I was told I'd never walk again and that year on the ward was painful and difficult. What stuck out in my mind was the fact



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that every week a veteran's service organization showed up and made ice cream for us, had pizza, or popcorn or tons of books for us to read. A smiling face, a kind word and a firm hand shake from those vets made all the difference in the world to us. This is my way of saying thank you.

Perhaps what we do could be expanded to other VA hospitals if not done so already. The DAV has been a wonderful organization and again, thank you and thanks to Pat Patterson in Peru. I am scheduled for another major service connected surgery July 9th and will be out of work for at least 3 months, so I wanted to let you know what a great commander you have in Peru. Sincerely, C Paul Jefferson
5 Phillips Avenue Rouses Point NY 12979

TRICARE STARTS NEWSLETTER FOR BENEFICIARIES

HealthBeat will reside on the My Benefits portal of the redesigned TRICARE Web site. Beneficiaries do not have to be a subscriber to get HealthBeat, however, they may sign up on the HealthBeat Web page.

TRICARE will send a monthly e-mail to subscribers informing them that the latest e-newsletter has been uploaded to the My Benefits portal of the TRICARE Web site. The e-mail will include an overview of that issue's content with a link to the full e-newsletter on the Web site. Additionally, TRICARE will periodically send HealthBeat news flashes on benefit issues.

To view or subscribe to HealthBeat, beneficiaries may visit www.tricare.mil/HealthBeat/. Beneficiaries may opt-out of receiving the e-newsletter at any time.

Those who do not do battle for their country do not know with what ease they accept their citizenship in America."

~ Dean Brellis ~

FROM YOUR NSO OFFICE

Jeffrey Hall, Supervisor NYC

Subject: Discovery Channel Documentary Enquiry - Vietnam Veterans Needed

TMA Press Release

Source: NAUS July 27, 2007

TRICARE has unveiled Health Beat, its new electronic beneficiary newsletter, in conjunction with the redesigned TRICARE Web site. Up-to-date benefit information combines sleek graphics to create an e-newsletter—making it easier for beneficiaries to find TRICARE news and information when they need it. This is TRICARE's first online beneficiary newsletter.

HealthBeat links beneficiaries directly to TRICARE's most important benefit information. Among its many features, beneficiaries will find the latest TRICARE benefit updates; links to pertinent news releases and articles about TRICARE and the military health system; and the Doctor Is In column.

We would appreciate it if you could send this out to your New York Vietnam Veterans and chapters:

A British documentary company - www.brooklapping.com - would like to speak with veterans from the battles of Ia Drang, Dak To, Khe Sanh and Hue for a new documentary-drama series on the Vietnam War for the Discovery Channel, working title *Grunts*.

If any veterans of these battles would like to share their experiences with them please email Jo Foster - jfoster@brooklapping.com. They are looking for veterans to interview, but also veterans willing to help them understand and get the experiences of the young men who fought in Vietnam completely right. They want this to be your and your buddies' story of Vietnam.

Sincerely,

Jo Foster Direct line: 011 44 20 7428 3158

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MODERNIZATION PLANS FOR CANANDAIGUA CAMPUS

VA Press Release



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WASHINGTON (August 16, 2007) - To provide better health care into the 21st century for New York state veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced several major enhancements at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center, to include new construction and renovation, the opening of a national suicide prevention hot line center and the facility's designation as a "Mental Health Center of Excellence." "These new facilities and programs show VA's commitment to provide world-class care for veterans using the Canandaigua VA Medical Center," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "By their service, veterans have earned the very best, and VA is ensuring they get it." Nicholson said VA will develop modernization plans for the Canandaigua campus that include construction of a new single-floor 120-bed nursing home, a new 50-bed residential rehabilitation facility and a renovated outpatient building to meet the current and anticipated needs of Finger Lakes area veterans. The new facilities will be designed to preserve the historic core of the campus by renovating buildings in one of the historic courtyards to retain the ambiance of the 171-acre campus. VA will also explore partnerships with the private sector to generate revenue and complementary services for veterans by leasing under-used buildings and land at Canandaigua. Nicholson also announced Canandaigua is being designed as a "VA Mental Health Center of Excellence," working in collaboration with the department of psychiatry at the University of Rochester. In this capacity, the facility will oversee a broad range of efforts -- locally, regionally and nationally -- to improve mental health care for veterans.

As a Center of Excellence, the facility will focus on suicide prevention, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues. Finally, VA has officially opened its National Suicide Prevention Hot Line at Canandaigua, which will provide round-the-clock national assistance for veterans. The hot line is staffed by mental health professionals at Canandaigua taking toll-free calls from veterans across the country. The number is 1-800-273-

TALK (8255). Veterans in need of assistance are connected with on-call professionals, then referred for follow-up treatment at their local VA facility. The program is an important collaboration between VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the Department of Health and Human Services. The new construction and modernization at Canandaigua was a result of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) review process, which began in 2004 to upgrade VA health care facilities across the country. Plans for the Canandaigua VA Medical Center will be integrated into the Secretary's nationwide capital plan so that a timetable and budget can be established, followed by congressional consideration for authorization and funding. As VA develops construction plans for the future of the facility, the Department will examine the potential use of portions of the 171-acre campus to assist in the delivery of other complementary services for veterans.

VA RESEARCHERS DEVELOP NEW PROSTHETIC ANKLE

Source: NAUS August 3, 2007

Veterans with lower-leg amputations can look forward to having a prosthetic ankle-foot that matches their natural ease of motion, thanks to research funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and conducted by researchers from the Department and two of the nation's top universities.

Researchers say the new ankle-foot prosthetic is the first in a new family of artificial limbs. It will replicate natural motion by propelling people forward using tendon-like springs powered by an electric motor.

Through VA-funded research, the Center for Restorative and Regenerative Medicine, a partnership between the Providence VA Medical Center in Rhode Island, Brown University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, developed the new prosthesis. The center's goal is to restore natural function to amputees.

SALUTING THE FLAG

ArmyTimes Daily News Roundup 3 Aug 07



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The Senate has passed legislation to ensure that veterans and service members can salute the flag when not in uniform. The bill S.1877, sponsored by Sen. James Inhofe [R-OK] would address the ambiguity of current law, which states that veterans and service members not in uniform should place their hand over their hearts, without specifying whether they can or should salute the flag. Inhofe said, "The salute is a form of honor and respect, representing pride in one's military service. Unfortunately, current U.S. law leaves confusion as to whether veterans and service members out of uniform can or should salute the flag." Inhofe said he believes this is an appropriate way to honor and recognize the 25 million veterans who have served in the military and remain as role models to others citizens. Those who are currently serving or have served in the military have earned this right, and their recognition will be an inspiration to others. The House would have to agree to the legislation before it could become law. The bill does not address the ambiguity of veterans saluting during The Pledge of Allegiance and playing of the National Anthem. Present policy for saluting is:- When the flag passes in a procession, or when it is hoisted or lowered, all should face the flag and salute.- To salute, all persons come to attention. - Those in uniform give the appropriate formal salute. - Citizens not in uniform salute by placing their right hand over the heart and men with head cover should remove it and hold it to left shoulder, hand over the heart. - Members of organizations in formation salute upon command of the person in charge.- The pledge of allegiance should be rendered by standing at attention, facing the flag, and saluting. When the national anthem is played or sung, citizens should stand at attention and salute at the first note and hold the salute through the last note. The salute is directed to the flag, if displayed, otherwise to the music.

UNIFORM FORMULARY CHANGES ANNOUNCED

Source: NAUS Aug. 10, 2007

Earlier this week the TRICARE Management Activity announced several changes to the Uniform Formulary.

Nexium, which is used to treat heartburn and gastric disorders, has been reclassified as a first-tier medication. First-tier medications (formulary generics) are available at most military treatment facilities free of charge, or for a \$3 co-pay through the TRICARE Retail Pharmacy (30-day supply) or the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy (90-day supply).

Prevacid, Zegerid, Protonix and Aciphex, are also used to treat gastric disorders and will be reclassified as non-formulary medications effective October 24, 2007. Avodart, a medication used to treat prostate-related problems will move to the third tier on October 24th as well. Hypertension drugs Avapro, Avilide, Benicar, Benicar HCT, Diovan, Diovan HCT, Teveten, and Teveten HCT along with cholesterol-lowering medications Anatar, Tricor, Omacor, and WelChol will be reclassified as non-formulary medications on November 21. The price of non-formulary medications is \$22.

Beneficiaries using the above medications may want to consult with their health care providers about other options including generic equivalents or establishing medical necessity for the third-tier medication if appropriate. If medical necessity is established, the co-payment is reduced to \$9. Third-tier medications are not available at military treatment facility (MTF) pharmacies unless an MTF provider establishes medical necessity and writes the prescription. Medical necessity forms and criteria are available at www.tricare.mil/pharmacy/medical-nonformulary.cfm.

For a complete list of medications, their formulary status and where they are available, beneficiaries may visit www.tricareformularysearch.org/dod/medicationcenter/default.aspx.

Beneficiaries may find more information on the TRICARE Retail Pharmacy and locations, and the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy at www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE. They may also call 866-



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363-8779 for the retail pharmacy or 866-363-8667 for the mail order pharmacy.

TRICARE PRIME CAN HELP WITH TRAVEL

Source: NAUS Aug. 10, 2007

Beneficiaries must have a valid referral and travel orders before traveling, and file a travel claim upon their return. This can be requested at the military treatment facility or from the TRICARE Regional Offices if the doctor is a TRICARE network provider. Beneficiaries will receive a briefing on the entitlement process, coverage, and their responsibilities at the MTF or from the TRO point of contact.

Reasonable travel expenses are the actual costs incurred by the beneficiary when traveling to their specialty provider. Costs include meals, gas, tolls, parking and tickets for public transportation (airplane, train or bus). Beneficiaries must submit receipts for expenses above \$75. The Military Treatment Facility (MTF) or TRICARE Regional Office (TRO) will provide the beneficiary with specific instructions on how and where to submit travel entitlement claim. Government rates are used to estimate the reasonable cost. Beneficiaries are expected to use the least costly mode of transportation. Costs of lodging and meals may be reimbursed up to the government per diem rate.

For more information on the TRICARE Prime Travel Reimbursement, refer to www.tricare.mil/factsheets.

VDBC REACHES DECISION ON SERVICEMEMBERS CONCURRENT RECEIPT

Source: NAUS Aug. 10, 2007

After two or three looks, the Veterans Disability Benefits Commission (VDBC), an independent panel charged with assessing and recommending improvements to the disability system, voted 12 to 1 Thursday to recommend full concurrent receipt for all retired military, including those forced to leave the uniformed service with fewer than 20 years of service due to injury or illness. NAUS fully supports the VDBC recommendation, which reads: "Congress should eliminate the ban on concurrent receipt for all retirees and disability separations."

TRICARE Prime beneficiaries referred by their primary care manager for specialty services at a location more than 100 miles from their provider's location may be eligible to have their reasonable travel expenses reimbursed by TRICARE.

The VDBC is working hard and meeting several times a month in order to complete the work of the Commission by its October 1 deadline. After completing work this week the Commission next meets August 22-24 in Washington, D.C., at the Hotel Washington, which is located at 15th St. and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. We encourage anyone in the area or visiting D.C. to attend this very important meeting.

MEMORANDUM

**From: Theodore A. Barbuto,
Department Commander To: All
Chapters
Re: Officer Reports for the Year 2007-
2008**

Thank you to all chapters who have submitted Chapter Officer Report. If you haven't, get them in ASAP!

Your cooperation is appreciated.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2008 Mid Winter Conference

March 2, 2008 to March 5 2008
Crystal Gateway Marriott
Arlington, VA 22202

State Executive Committee and Seminars

March 28, 2008 to March 30, 2008
Hudson Valley Resort
Kerhonkson, New York

Department of New York Convention

June 22, 2008 to June 25, 2008
Hudson Valley Resort
Kerhonkson, New York

2008 National DAV Convention

August 9, 2008 to August 12, 2008
Bally's Hotel Las Vegas



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