



(516) 887-7100 Fax (516) 887-7175

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

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



**September 2009 Newsletter  
Volume 18 Number 3**

Membership Status as of 9/11/09

Trial Members 2,274

Part Life Members 2,221

Full Life Members 46,386

Total Members 50,881

Goal for Full Life Members 46,915 (98.87%)

**MILE HIGH CITY**

*Leo Ortiz, Department Commander*

Our 88<sup>th</sup> DAV/DAVA National Convention was held in the mile high city of Denver, Colorado where the air is thin and the sun is bright. It was wonderful to make new friends and visit with old friends and their families. Roberto (Bobby) Barrera from Texas was elected National Commander on Tuesday, August 25, 2009.

VA Secretary Shinseki addressed the membership and outlined his plans for the future. He is committed to making a difference in the claims backlog.

The US Mint unveiled a new challenge coin in production to honor Disabled American Veterans. It will be read *They Stood For Us* on one side and the Forget-Me-Not flower on the other side.

The DAV LIFE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION is working very hard to obtain the monies needed to start erecting this monument in Washington. It cannot begin until all the money is raised. It is certainly a worthy cause if you are looking to donate. The DAV will match whatever you donate.

September 18<sup>th</sup> was National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Remember all Americans that are still missing, alive or dead, not only on this day; but every day until they come home!

Keep all our troops in your prayers.

**THE PASSIONS AND PECCADILLOS OF DAV'ERS**

*Sidney Siller, Sr., PDC; Department Adjutant*

The recorded individual stories of many of our members are well known and most have been retold time again over an adult beverage. From Texans like P.D. Jackson who was certain to second more motions at our National conventions, then the rest of all other



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seconders combined. Or, when PNC W.O. Cooper was appointed by LBJ to be the Ambassador to the Sudan, which gave rise to jokes being made about W.O.'s obligations and duties to the heirs of poet Tennyson's "Fuzzy Wuzzies;" or even the one about PNC Milton Cohen being Father Duffy's (of the Fighting 69<sup>th</sup>) runner in WWI.

The truly amazing story that is virtually unknown is about a DAV-NYer from Abe Wolkofsky Bronx Chapter #23, Isadore Gennett. Bronx Chapter, after WWII, as it was known, met in the Supreme County Court Building, just two blocks from old Yankee Stadium, known as Babe Ruth Plaza, on the Grand Concourse. The Grand Concourse is a beautiful boulevard, with a four lane dual road, and service lanes in all directions. Living one street west of the Grand Concourse well before WWII each tree on the "Grand" medians north and south had bronze nameplates of WWI Bronxites who had met their maker in France. By the time WWII ended, these bronze tablets had disappeared.

Chapter #23 met every Tuesday night twice a month (excluding the summer) at 8:00 PM in the Veteran's Hall, which was suitably decorated in hand hewn woods, bronze chandeliers and leather-upholstered chairs engrossed with the "Great Seal." A room fit for Lords of the Manor. The architect for this Court House was a Chapter #23 member, the famous John Sheridan.

Almost every meeting night for many years, at just about the same time before the 9:00 o'clock ceremony began, the doors would open and in would come Izzy Gennett, who would salute the Commander and make a contribution to the Chapter's Hospital Fund at "Base #81," as the Bronx VAMC was known. (Of course we remember Tom Cruise in "The 4<sup>th</sup> of July").

Before long, Izzy and I became good friends. I learned many interesting things about him. One was that he always came late to our meetings because he came from work at his newsstand on the famous corner of Wall and Broad Streets, where the Chase Bank Building was located. The Rockefeller family liked Izzy so much that they replaced his newsstand with a new aluminum one.

However, the most incredible story about Izzy, a young immigrant from Russia, was of his remarkable service record in WWI, though he was discharged with a service-connected disability. I am not sure as to how he became a citizen, though what I know about him was that he was a highly principled and dedicated American Citizen. As an overseas disabled veteran, he joined all of the major VSO's and regularly participated in their activities.



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The American Legion held a reunion in Paris, France in the late 1930's, which my friend Izzy attended.

Following the Legion reunion in Paris, Izzy, on his own dime, traveled to Berlin, Germany. This was during the time that Hitler's Germany was in full power, and, during the period that the United States Ambassador has been ordered withdrawn by the Roosevelt Administration.

In this setting, Izzy Gennett arranged with the German Government to place wreath on the German Unknown Soldier's Tomb, together with a German Honor Guard. During the wreath proceedings at the Unknown Soldiers Tomb, Izzy made a speech that included an observation that I paraphrase in part as "who knows, but the German Unknown Soldier might have been Jewish?" The ceremony ended without incident and Izzy returned to his billet. After his return, he was arrested by the Gestapo and an international incident occurred.

There being no U.S. Ambassador in Germany; our Ambassador in France journeyed to Berlin to obtain Izzy's release. Fortunately Izzy was eventually released and made his way out of Germany unscathed.

On his arrival by ship in New York, he was accorded the full honors of the day, a fireboat hose salute of the liner transporting him home.

Izzy was a folk hero, a war hero and an outstanding Disabled American Veteran. Although there were some that said it was a wild and dangerous thing to do in Nazi Germany; his expressed thoughts were potentially possible, and therein lies a question that can never be answered. In other words a conundrum.

Having known Izzy and his story has touched and enriched my life; and I hope that his story anecdotally can be kept alive.

### **VA'S SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM ADDS ONLINE CHAT SERVICE**

*VA Press Release*

WASHINGTON (August 31, 2009) - The Suicide Prevention campaign of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is expanding its outreach to all Veterans by piloting an online, one-to-one "chat service" for Veterans who prefer reaching out for assistance



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using the Internet.

Called "Veterans Chat," the new service enables Veterans, their families and friends to go online where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If a "chatter" is determined to be in a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the person to the VA Suicide Prevention Hotline, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken.

"This online feature is intended to reach out to all Veterans who may or may not be enrolled in the VA health care system and provide them with online access to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline," said Dr. Gerald Cross, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health. "It is meant to provide Veterans with an anonymous way to access VA's suicide prevention services."

Veterans, family members or friends can access Veterans Chat through the suicide prevention Web site ([www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) <<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>> ). There is a Veterans tab on the left-hand side of the website that will take them directly to Veteran resource information. On this page, they can see the Hotline number (1-800-273-TALK), and click on the Veterans Chat tab on the right side of the Web page to enter.

Veterans retain anonymity by entering whatever names they choose once they enter the one-on-one chat. They are then joined by a counselor who is trained to provide information and respond to the requests and concerns of the caller.

If the counselor decides the caller is in a crisis, the counselor will encourage the Veteran to call the Suicide Prevention Hotline, where a trained suicide prevention counselor will determine whether crisis intervention techniques are required.

The pilot program, which has been in operation since July 3, has already had positive results. In one instance, the online counselor determined that a Veteran in the chat required immediate assistance. The counselor convinced the Veteran to provide the counselor with a home telephone number and then remained in the chat room with the Veteran while the hotline staff called the number and talked to the Veteran's mother. The hotline counselor worked with the Veteran's mother to convince the Veteran to be admitted to a medical facility for further treatment.

"The chat line is not intended to be a crisis response line," said Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's National Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the VA medical center in Canandaigua, N.Y., where VA's trained counselors staff the chat line 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



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VA's suicide prevention hotline is also staffed continuously.

"Chat responders are trained in an intervention method specifically developed for the chat line to assist people with emotional distress and concerns," Kemp said. "We have procedures they can use to transfer chatters in crisis to the hotline for more immediate assistance." Both Veterans Chat and the VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline have been established under the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which was established through collaboration between VA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Since becoming operational in July 2007, VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline has received more than 150,000 calls, resulting in 4,000 rescues.

### **“INNOVATION COMPETITION” BEGINS AT VA**

*VA Press Release*

VA Employees Asked to Submit Recommendations for Transforming Service to Veterans

WASHINGTON (Sept. 10, 2009) - To speed its transformation into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century organization that is Veteran-centric, results-oriented and forward-looking, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched one of the largest innovation competitions in the agency's history. The competition solicits ideas from VA employees and co-located Veterans Service Organizations who are on the front lines of the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and encourages them to submit entries addressing everything from claims processing times to better process transparency.

"The men and women of VA know that many Veterans are often asked to wait too long for the critical services they have earned while defending our Nation," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. "These employees who grapple with the claims process every day have the first hand knowledge and experience necessary to help us understand inefficiencies and improve the system. We are confident that our team will come forward with many creative and original ways to accelerate processes and better deliver services for our nation's Veterans."

The on-line proposal period began on Tuesday, Sept, 8, and will conclude after Veterans Day. Employees from the agency's 57 regional offices have been encouraged by the Secretary to submit entries via a secure online platform. At the close



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of the competition, VA administrators from each regional office will select the winning ideas, which will be reviewed by a team chaired by Patrick W. Dunne, the VA Under Secretary for Benefits. The final selections will receive full funding for project development and execution at the Regional Offices submitting the idea.

President Obama announced the innovation competition while speaking to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in August. "We're going to fund the best ideas and put them into action, all with a simple mission: cut those backlogs, slash those wait times, deliver your benefits sooner," said Obama.

VA and the White House will share the winning entries with the public after selection.

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

*Hal Hick, DAV-AL*

The House and the Senate are scheduled to meet again on September 8<sup>th</sup>. As they return, there will be many unresolved military and veterans-related issues to address. These include the annual authorization and appropriations for VA and DOD which may or may not include provisions expanding concurrent receipt, eliminate the SBP/DIC offset, and advance funding for VA, as well as national health care reform and its effect on military and VA healthcare.

**Before discussing these key issues, let's review General Eric Shinseki's comments at the DAV National Convention.** These comments illustrate why he is one of the Cabinet's most compelling figures. Born to Japanese American parents in Hawaii, a 1965 West Point graduate, General Shinseki served two tours in Vietnam and was twice awarded the Purple Heart after stepping on a land mine and losing part of a foot. He subsequently became the Army Chief of Staff, the USAEUR & 7<sup>th</sup> Army Commander, before becoming the US forces Commander in Iraq. Some key points follow:

**1. Access** - Only 8 million of the nation's 23.5 million veterans have signed up for earned VA benefits. He wants to reach millions of these to provide them with quality healthcare and service. Some 500,000 Priority 8 veterans are now eligible to enter into the VA system with 266,000 being expected within the next year. In 1970, there were over 45 million living veterans in the US, but some 1700 continue to die each day.

**2. Claims Backlog** – VA is attempting to reduce the claims backlog. General Shinseki says publicized numbers are misleading regarding the backlog, as roughly half are remands (not initial claims). A major problem is that as claims are closed out in greater numbers (85,000 in the past year), 89,000 new claims were opened. He is also working with DOD to speed processing times and reduce errors by creating a single



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electronic record system that would follow service members from the time they put on a uniform until they die, thereby automatically enrolling veterans in the VA system.

**3. Homelessness** - Veterans lead the nation in homelessness, depression, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse and are high in unemployment. He said it will take treatment, education and a shot at jobs to stop that spiral. Six years ago there were 195,000; 2009 there are 131,000. General Shinseki wants to eliminate this problem within 5 years.

**4. GI Bill** – The General cites the WWII era GI Bill as producing some 450,000 engineers, 240,000 accountants and 280,000 teachers; he thinks the new post 9-11 GI Bill will do much the same. "Lightning," he said, "is about to strike twice." The new VA Post 9/11 GI Bill provides 36 months of full tuition at participating public colleges or universities in the nation, plus fees, books and a housing stipend. It eliminates the \$1,200 enrollment fee, extends the time to use the benefit from 10 to 15 years, and permits reenlisting servicemembers to transfer some or all of their benefit to a spouse or children.

**5. Expanding Rural Healthcare** – VA will expand rural veteran's healthcare with numerous new clinics and some mobile units.

**Now, here are updates on a number of important issues:**

**Healthcare Reform Might Endanger Military and Veterans Healthcare Benefits** - We need to oppose efforts to consolidate the veterans and military healthcare earned by our service members with those who have never served. Such consolidation would devalue the sacrifice given by our military members and their families. Congress will likely vote on healthcare reform in early fall, so we need to influence our elected officials now!

**President Obama** - Quote: "One thing that reform won't change is veterans' health care. No one is going to take away your benefits. That is the plain and simple truth. You have always fulfilled your responsibilities to America. And so long as I am President of the United States, America will always fulfill its responsibilities to you."

**TRICARE Projects Big Savings on Retail Prescription Drugs** – Thanks to the FY 2008 NDAA, DOD announced it expected to save nearly \$1.6B in prescription medicine costs for FY 2010 by changes in federal pricing rules through the TRICARE retail pharmacy network. For years DOD paid commercial rates for prescription drugs purchased for TRICARE.

**Cost Of Living Continues to Decline** - With inflation 2.3% in the hole through the first 10 months of the fiscal year, it is all but certain that there will not be a COLA increase for 2010. Nevertheless, federal and military pensions, social security benefits, VA disability and survivor benefits will not be reduced. This is the first time in the 50-year history of COLAs there has been negative inflation for the full year.

**Military Spouses to Get Non-Compete Hiring** - On August 12<sup>th</sup> the final regulations on the non-competitive appointment/hiring of certain military spouses were



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posted in the Federal Register. The regulations will take effect on September 11, 2009. There are restrictions on this issue, so one must check eligibility to qualify. Jobs for the program can be found at [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov).

**A Break for Widows** - On June 12, 2008 the U.S. Court of Federal Claims ruled in favor of three military widows against the Government in regards to offsetting of SBP benefits by DIC. The Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 restored DIC to military surviving spouses who remarry after age 57. However, DOD continued to apply the offset. This ruling increases pressure on Congress to end SBP/DIC offsets; the Nelson amendment to the Senate version of the 2010 NDAA would complete this action for widows.

**Veterans Statistics** - Today, there are roughly 1.4 M on active duty, less than half the nearly 3.5 M people we had at the end of the Vietnam War. The estimated population of the United States in July was 307,041,000. Including the Guard and Reserve (1.3 M), that equates to about .8% defending the other 99.2%.

**Prostate Cancer Treatment** - British doctors have developed a new treatment for prostate cancer that is in between radical treatment and watchful waiting. The procedure uses high-intensity ultrasound to melt tumors and is said to be as effective as radiotherapy or surgery but has less risk of causing incontinence, impotence, and other side effects. The technique kills cancer cells by using temperatures from 176 degrees to 194 degrees, which researchers say can be tolerated by surrounding healthy tissue and nerves involved in sexual function. This focused treatment allows the patient to be released from the hospital within hours instead of days. In initial testing for 172 men, 159 were free of cancer one year later. This rate of cure is virtually the same techniques now being used for early prostate cancer. The big difference of the study lies in improvement in side effects. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 185,895 men in the US developed prostate cancer in 2005 with 28,905 dying. Statistics show that one in six men will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime.

**Your Support in Lobbying** - Grassroots lobbying is perhaps the most effective way to influence our elected officials. Whether calling a local office or Washington, D.C.; sending a letter or e-mail; signing a petition; or making a personal visit, Congress is generally receptive to comments from their constituents. So, please keep trying to influence cosponsorship on veteran related bills.

### **IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED**

*Roberto Barrera, DAV National Commander 9/8/09 & 9/10/09*

**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SENATORS TODAY:** Congress has now returned from its August recess. A number of bills important to sick and disabled veterans have been approved and reported at the Committee level but are waiting for a full vote and final Congressional passage. One extremely important measure in the U.S. Senate is S. 252, the Veterans Health Care Authorization Act of 2009. This bill was sponsored by Senator



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Daniel Akaka (HI), Chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and is co-sponsored by Senator Richard Burr (NC), the Committee's Ranking Member, as well as seven other Senators. This comprehensive bill includes provisions to improve Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) personnel programs; improvements in VA health care services; enhancements in women veterans' care; expansion of mental health services, new programs in traumatic brain injury (TBI) and expansions in VA programs for homeless veterans.

DAV has testified on many of the provisions incorporated into this bill. Resolutions adopted by our membership support several of the most important provisions of S. 252. In fact Congress considered many of these provisions in 2008, but they were not passed due to disagreements over unrelated issues. Disabled veterans need your help to get this bill enacted into law this year.

DAV urges you to contact your two U.S. Senators to request their support for passage of S. 252, the Veterans Health Care Authorization Act of 2009.

Please use the form letter on the DAV website at [www.dav.org](http://www.dav.org) or write your own letter to urge Congress to take action NOW on this important bill. As always, DAV thanks you for your advocacy on behalf of sick and disabled veterans.

**PLEASE CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TODAY:** There are less than 14 legislative days until the beginning of the new fiscal year on October 1. It is very important to the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that VA appropriations pass on time (before October 1) for the second year in a row, to enable VA to continue to provide uninterrupted services to veterans.

The House and Senate bills are very close, within \$200 million of each other in total appropriations. The House bill, H.R. 3082, calls for \$53 billion in total discretionary budget authority. The Senate bill, S. 1407, calls for \$53.2 billion. In both bills, this total number includes over \$44 billion in medical care appropriations, with \$2.95 billion coming from collections.

I urge you to contact your elected officials to urge them to pass this important legislation before the end of this legislative session.

### **FALL NEW YORK MSO STOPS**

**September 30, 2009 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.**



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**VA Outpatient Clinic  
3372 State Route 11, Main Street  
Malone, NY  
For more info call 518-626-5690**

**October 1, 2009 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Plattsburgh VA Outpatient Clinic  
80 Sharron Avenue  
Plattsburgh, NY  
For more info call 518-626-5690**

**October 2, 2009 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Queensbury VFW Post 6196  
32 Luzerne Road  
Queensbury, NY  
For more info call 518-626-5690**

**October 5, 2009 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
DAV Oneonta Chapter #200  
Oneonta Veterans Club, 279 Chestnut Street  
Oneonta, NY  
For more info call 518-626-5690**

**October 6, 2009 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Fonda VA Outpatient Clinic  
2623 State Highway 30A  
Fonda, NY  
For more info call 518-626-5690**

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**2010 National Mid Winter Conference**  
February 28, 2010 to March 3, 2010  
Crystal Gateway Marriott  
1700 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, VA 22202  
703-920-3230  
\$189.00 Single/Double Occupancy



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**2010 State Executive Committee Meeting**

March 12, 2010 to March 14, 2010

Hudson Valley Resort

400 Granite Road

Kerhonkson, NY 12446

**2010 National DAV Convention**

July 31, 2010 to August 3, 2010

Hyatt Regency Atlanta on Peachtree Street

265 Peachtree Street NE

Atlanta, GA 30303

404-577-1234

\$129.00 Single/Double Occupancy