



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

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**

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



## FEBRUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

### TRANSPORTATION - ON THE GO!

*Theodore A. Barbuto,  
Department Commander*

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*"The work of volunteer groups throughout our country represents the very heart and soul of America. They have helped make this the most compassionate, generous, and humane society that ever existed on the face of this earth."*

*President Ronald Reagan - Oct. 16, 1973*

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Our DAV Transportation System is number one in New York State. Veterans are transported daily to their appointments by volunteers who commit numerous hours of selfless service to aide and assist veterans. These volunteers make sure that veterans are able to maintain their health by obtaining the care that they need.

Our Hospital Service Coordinators spend endless hours scheduling drivers, coordinating pickups and handling many phone calls and troubleshooting. The hours that are devoted by the DAV Transportation Network helps to bring many veterans into the VA Healthcare System who would not participate otherwise. Many veterans' organizations continue to donate vans that are the lifeblood of the

transportation system. We thank you for all that you continue to do.

I was proud to attend the implementation of the round-trip transportation service to the Binghamton VA Clinic for veterans of the NYS southern tier on January 16<sup>th</sup>. James Cody, Director of the Syracuse VAMC, Frank Caputo, Syracuse HSC, Robert Hawes, VA Voluntary Services, and Gordon Sclar were present to witness this long-awaited event.

Drivers are always needed and appreciated at each of our VAMC's. If you have the calling to assist our fellow comrades in this way, please contact your area HSC to find out the criteria needed to become one of our driving force. You will receive much gratification through conversation, smiles and the thanks of grateful veterans who depend on this service. I give a heartfelt thank you to all of the HSC's and drivers across the state.

New York will again be well represented in Washington this month as we venture to make our legislators hear our voice concerning our rights and benefits as Disabled American Veterans. During this election year, many promises will be made and we



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need to hold our constituents accountable for their support and for their votes for bills that affect our lives and the lives of our families. National Commander, Rob Reynolds, will address Congress. We are confident that he will convey our concerns and expectations to those legislators that we have elected to guard our entitlements. We are the Disabled American Veterans who have fought to defend them and our

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

There are very few disheartening issues in our American Society than contact with a homeless person, man or woman. This social sickness has been with us for many moons and will probably not be assuaged by our current "feel good, me too," populace.

When I was a mere boy, we saw movies featuring "hoboes" and "bums," and how they managed to survive, and in some films even succeed. Of course, this stuff was a cameo of the "great depression" of the thirties. Our current problem with the homeless 'vets' seems to be more severe, like a virus that is immune to penicillin.

A recent new study from the Homeless Research Institute (HRI), affiliated with the National Alliance to End Homelessness, claims government

country.

We will meet for our March SEC in Kerhonkson, New York, March 28, 2008 to March 30, 2008. I look forward to seeing you there. Please make your reservations as soon as possible. We will have an informative agenda including a joint DAV and DAV Auxiliary session on Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **THE HOMELESS 'VETS' DILEMMA**

data proves that "vets" are more than twice as likely to be homeless as non-vets. "Vets" make up eleven percent of the population in the United States, but twenty-six percent of the classified homeless.

The twenty-nine page report concludes that it is a myth that substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, and or mental illness) is the crux of the problem, but it blames it on the "lack of affordable housing."

According to the VA, seventy percent of homeless "vets" suffer from alcohol or other substance abuse habits; while forty-five percent are mentally ill. This means that some of our "vets" are "double dippers," using alcohol or drugs while suffering mental illness. So, it is logical to assume that there is little space for the lack of "affordable housing," as "raison d'etre" for "vets" homelessness. It is also true that these



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figures for the general homeless populations' harsh statistics are higher.

In 2004, Washington University of Medicine in St. Louis published a review of three different studies done in 1980, 1990, and 2000 in the American Journal of Health. In 2000, eighty-four percent of men and fifty-eight percent of women suffered from substance abuse. Eighty-eight percent of the men and sixty-nine percent of the women had mental disorders. Homeless men outnumber women three to one.

HRI admits homeless "vets" have a high rate of psychiatric conditions, caused by PTSD from their military service. Yet most "vets" were peacetime military. Since 1945, we have had seventeen years of "hot wars" in the sixty-three years since 1945. Exacerbating the problem is that

After months of tracking, we can report that President Bush has signed the fiscal 2008 National Defense Authorization bill into law on January 28<sup>th</sup>. This law which became known as the 'omnibus' bill on its way to the President, includes some \$696 billion for defense of the United States, military construction, and a variety of benefits for veterans and their families. Due to the speed of the return of this bill to the President from the House and Senate following his 'pocket' veto over the

homeless "vets" suffer mentally at half the rate of the general homeless population - suggesting the PTSD is not a substantial factor.

The issue of "affordable housing" harms homeless "vets" by removing the focus of the real issue, from the real problems they endure. It is hard to understand why homeless "vets" won't even fully utilize shelters available to them.

In conclusion, let me say that we need to take this issue out of the shadows and use real facts to reduce this social tragedy.

\*Our appreciation to the wonderful article in the New York Post, by Michael Fumento, on December 18, 2007.

### **OMNIBUS UPDATE**

holidays, no major changes in content are being announced at this time.

### **LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

*Bob Becker, Legislative Chairman*

Our Congressional Leaders will be back to work in a few days. So, it is time we get back to work by writing, e-mailing, faxing and telephoning your Congressional Leaders. We have a lot of work to do, and need your help and support. Some pending bills are:



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### **H.R. 4071** *Disabled Veterans Right to Commissaries and Space Available Travel Act*

To Support disabled veterans by extending military commissary and exchange store privilege to such veterans and their dependents and authorizing space available travel on military aircraft for veterans and their dependents.

### **S. 1315** *Disabled Veterans Insurance Improvement Act*

To amend title 38, United States Code, to enhance life insurance benefits for disabled veterans.

### **S. 1349** *Military and Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment*

To ensure that the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs provide to members of the Armed Forces and veterans with traumatic brain injury the services that best meet their individual needs.

WASHINGTON (January 31, 2008) - Over a million eligible veterans will see their mileage reimbursement more than double starting tomorrow, for travel to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities. "This increase helps veterans -- especially those living in rural areas -- offset some of the gasoline costs as they travel to VA's world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

"Increasing the mileage reimbursement is one more step by VA to help veterans access the health care they

### **H.R. 2378** *Service to Prevent Veterans Homelessness*

To establish a financial assistance program to facilitate the provision of supportive services for very low income veteran families in permanent housing.

### **H.R. 92** *Veterans Timely Access to Health Care*

To establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

ONLY YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE - For members who have a computer, you can find out the status of legislative bills by going to <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

## **VA INCREASES TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS**

*VA Press Release*

### **Peake: Disabled Veterans Earned Increase**

deserve." The 2008 appropriations act provided funding for VA to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile. The increase goes into effect on Feb. 1. After little more than a month on the job, Secretary Peake used his authority to establish the first increase in the mileage reimbursement in 30 years, fulfilling a pledge he made during his Senate confirmation hearing last month. While increasing the payment, VA, as mandated by law, also equally



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increased the deductible amounts applied to certain mileagereimbursements. The new deductibles are \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. However, these deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

### MONTHLY EOBs

Beginning this month, TRICARE for Life (TFL) beneficiaries living in the United States and U.S. territories will receive monthly summaries of their Explanation of Benefits (EOB) instead of individual EOBs. The exceptions to this change includes claims that are rejected and EOBs mailed with a payment to the beneficiary.

In February, TFL beneficiaries will have the option to receive an electronic notification every time a claim is processed. Beneficiaries will be able to log onto the secure Web site at [www.TRICARE4U.com](http://www.TRICARE4U.com) to view and print their EOB.

Procedures for TFL beneficiaries residing overseas remain unchanged. They will continue to receive EOBs as usual.

For more information go to <http://www/tricare.mil/pressroom/news.a.spx?fid=359>.

### THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS VOLUNTARY SERVICE (VAVS)

*Source: NAUS: January 25, 2008*

VAVS are a volunteer organization run by the VA which helps care for veterans in VA facilities throughout the country. Volunteers assist in routine administrative functions to help free VA employees to concentrate more on health care. There are also several VA cemeteries that have VAVS volunteers assisting in maintenance chores.

- Founded in 1946 to provide for our nation's veterans while they are cared for by VA health care facilities
- One of the largest centralized volunteer programs in the Federal government
- Over 350 organizations support VAVS
- Volunteers have provided over 676 million hours of service since 1946.

### Community Assistance

- Assist veteran patients by augmenting staff with end of life care programs, foster care, community-based volunteer programs, hospital wards, nursing homes, and Veteran outreach centers

### Contributions

- Annual contributions over \$50 million in gifts and donations
- Volunteers contributed a more than 13 million hours of service to veterans in FY2005
- VAVS volunteers are a priceless asset to America's veterans and to VA



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### **How do I sign up to be a VAVS Volunteer? You have two convenient ways:**

1) Contact the Department of Veterans Affairs facility nearest you. Ask for Voluntary Service. Tell their staff of your interest in becoming a VAVS Volunteer. The staff will take care of everything else including your interview, orientation, and assignment! To locate the VA facility is nearest you, go here: <http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isFlash=1>.

*Article 25 Jan 08*

A Texas lawmaker has introduced a bill that would make vandalizing the grave of a service member or veteran a federal crime, even if the grave is on private property. The bill sponsored by Rep. Ted Poe R-TX) comes after the grave of a Marine killed in Iraq was vandalized just two days after his burial in Liberty, Texas. "The person responsible has since been arrested and charged with a state felony, but no federal provision exists," Poe said.

Federal laws making it a crime to damage or destroy a memorial, headstone or gravesite apply only to public land, not to gravesites in private cemeteries. This is not the first time the federal government has had to stand by when a veterans' grave was damaged. Last year, American flags were replaced with Nazi flags on Memorial Day weekend at the gravesites of veterans in Orcas Island WA, but the federal government could do nothing because the graves were in a private cemetery.

Poe's bill, HR 4973, was referred to the House Judiciary Committee for consideration. If enacted into law, it

2) Or volunteer now by filling out and submitting the form located at [http://www1.va.gov/volunteer/volnow\\_DB.cfm](http://www1.va.gov/volunteer/volnow_DB.cfm). Someone from your local VAVS office will contact you with additional information.

### **VETERAN GRAVE VANDALS**

*Source: MarineTimes Rick Maze*

would apply the same penalty for the destruction of graves on public lands a fine of up to \$10,000 and up to 10 years imprisonment to graves on private property.

### **VET BENEFIT EXPIRATION DATES**

*Source: Military.com*

Many of your benefits have an expiration date. Below are a few important ones to remember so you don't lose out. - Montgomery GI Bill for Active-Duty (MGIB): 10 years from date of last discharge or release from active duty. - Veterans Education Assistance Program (VEAP): 10 years from date of last discharge or release from active duty. - Montgomery GI Bill for Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR): 14 years from the date of eligibility for the program, or until released from the Selected Reserve or National Guard. Some extensions available if activated. - Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VocRehab): Generally, 12 years of separation from service or within 12 years of being awarded service-connected VA disability compensation. - Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI): Coverage



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ends 120 days after separation or can be extended up to 1 year for totally disabled veterans.

### DEPUTY SECRETARY MANSFIELD

WASHINGTON (January 30, 2008) -- Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield was named as the first recipient of the "Robert Dole National Award for Service" on Jan. 28 during the annual conference of the Military Health System, which provides health care for the Department of Defense. "Gordon Mansfield has devoted much of his adult life to serving this nation and its veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Making him the first recipient of this honor sets the bar high for those who follow." Mansfield, a long-time official with the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the second ranking officer in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) since January 2004, described former Senator Dole as "one of my personal heroes." The award was established in Senator Dole's name to recognize veterans who continue to serve the nation through public service. "I cannot think of anyone, in my experience, who has done more [than Senator Dole] for the military and veterans health care systems," Mansfield said. "As a patient and as a proponent in Congress, he did everything he could to improve the care we provide for our active-duty personnel, our veterans and their families." Last year, Dole served as cochair of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors, a landmark look at ways to improve VA's and the Defense Department's help for injured service

### HONORED - FIRST RECIPIENT OF DOD HEALTH SYSTEM'S AWARD FOR SERVICE

*VA Press Release*

members returning to the private sector. A combat-wounded veteran of the Vietnam War, Mansfield has also served as an assistant secretary in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He was honored as Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year in 2006 at the national convention of Disabled American Veterans.

### MEMORANDUM

**From:** Theodore A. Barbuto,  
Department Commander

**To:** All DAV Members **RE:** State  
Executive Committee Meeting and  
Seminars

Make your reservations for the SEC and  
Seminars to be held:

March 28-30, 2008

Hudson Valley Resort

Kerhonkson, New York

If you need a reservation form, call the  
Department Office at (516)887-7100.

### TAPS

Department has been notified that  
the following comrades have been  
called into final formation above:

**David George Newman,**

Chapter #202 Past Commander, 1/08

**Ralph B. McGee,** Chapter #166

**Angelo L. Sposato,** Chapter



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#28, 10/07

Brooklyn, New York

Department and the membership extend deepest sympathies to the family members, friends and comrades of these fallen heroes. May each one rest in honor.

Please feel free to call, write or e-mail [davny@optonline.net](mailto:davny@optonline.net) Headquarters if you have a loss in your Chapter that you would like to include in this column.

**Department of New York Convention**

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

**Rehab Cruise XVII**

July 8, 2008  
Nautical Empress  
Freeport, NY

**DAV Night at the Ball Game**

July 28, 2008  
Yankee Stadium 7:05 pm  
Call Headquarters -  
(516) 887-7100 for tickets.

**2008 National DAV Convention**

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

**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's 87th Anniversary Celebration**

Sunday May 18, 2008  
El Caribe Country Club