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PN

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PVA convention roundup

See You In Minnesota
NVWG visit Minneapolis

Community Effort

Tillamook Coast focuses on accessibility



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Photo courtesy of Wheel the World

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pnonline.com

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"And it was actually the 11th ball that I got up there and realized that it was dead quiet and nobody was doing nothing. And it was 16 lanes of dead silence. So, they were all behind me watching. It was crazy."

— Brooks Martin

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Now in its 79th year and the official publication of Paralyzed Veterans of America, *PN* is a national, monthly magazine that covers news, health, research, lifestyle and issues of interest and concern to veterans and others with spinal-cord injury and disease. Anyone interested in submitting an article to *PN* should consult the Contributors Guidelines found on our website at pnonline.com. *PN* neither endorses nor guarantees any of the products or services advertised in the magazine. Readers should thoroughly investigate any product or service before making a purchase.

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JULY

Editor's DESK

Accessible travel is always among the most popular articles we produce for *PN*. It's great to tell you about fun places to visit that also offer good accessibility. There are plenty of individual attractions that make accessibility a priority, but what if a whole community did that?

This month, you can read about the efforts the Tillamook Coast in northwest Oregon took to help make it more accessible for travelers with disabilities. *Accessible Endeavor* on page 28 details the yearlong process multiple businesses, attractions, beaches, hotels and others went through with accessible travel experts Wheel the World to improve their accessibility. More than two dozen groups took part in this project, and the results are impressive, as you'll see in some of the photos.

Another notable undertaking that might hit closer to home for some readers is the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Annual Convention. May's gathering of PVA leaders, staff and chapter leaders in Austin, Texas, covered a lot of ground over five days, including the election of a new national secretary and a change in how future conventions are going to operate. *Moving Forward* on page 34 dives into the details of this year's convention and what impact the changes will have on PVA.

Of course, there's plenty of other great content in this month's issue, and we hope you enjoy it all and find some of it useful. The PVA Publications staff wishes everyone a fun and safe Fourth of July holiday.



Andy Nemann, Managing Editor

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DIGITAL HIGHLIGHTS

GOING TO THE GAMES

The 44th annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games head to Minneapolis for the first time in 20 years this month, and *PN* will be there. You can read about things to do in Minneapolis in *Games Time* on page 22, and you can catch articles, photos and videos during the Games by visiting pnonline.com.

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PVAfromtheTOP

ROBERT L. THOMAS JR.
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

PVA Makes Things Possible

In last month's column (*Being Reborn*, June PN), I gave you a breakdown of how I was injured and the steps I went through to get to a point where I was able to begin my rehabilitation journey. Now, I would like to take you through that voyage.

As I wrote last month, I chose the Cleveland VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) Medical Center spinal cord injury (SCI) unit to begin my rehab because it was close to home and my family.

However, before getting to Cleveland, my voyage first entailed a short visit to another Midwestern city. After I was stabilized at the Cape Fear Valley Medical Center in Fayetteville, N.C., I was flown to the then-Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes in Chicago,

where I stayed for three days. During my stay, I had one of the worst experiences that I've ever had during my injury. The medical staff wanted to start getting me up to a sitting position after being on my back for over a month.

The initial attempt resulted in me passing out due to them raising me too fast. The next day, they decided to get me up into a geriatric chair, which leaned back so they could gradually sit me up more in an upright position. This worked, and I watched an episode of *Sanford and Son* on television before being put back to bed.

I was then finally flown to Cleveland. Once there, I was greeted by the SCI chief, who let me know what they had in store for me. I was assigned a room with one other individual who had arrived there about a week before I did.

The next day, I was introduced to the recreational therapist and a Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) national service officer (NSO), who began to tell me all about PVA. The recreational therapist told me about how he had just returned from the National Veterans Wheel-

chair Games with a group of athletes who had won more than 50 medals.

That conversation sparked my interest, and I asked him how I could compete in the next Games. He then told me that he would develop a workout plan to build my strength so I would be able to go. But first, he told me to talk to the NSO to join the local PVA chapter.

The next day, I sat down with the NSO, who began to fill out all of the necessary paperwork that I needed to file a claim for benefits. He introduced me to the chapter membership officer, and I joined the PVA Buckeye Chapter.

While working with the PVA Buckeye Chapter, I began to see all of the things they do for members that made me want to get more involved. The chapter president told me about how I could become a volunteer on the SCI floor, and that was the start of my PVA journey.

I began going around to the other patients' bedsides and talking to them about what it's like living with paralysis. I did this for a while until one day the nurse came up to me and asked me to talk to a young man who had just been injured and was depressed and upset about his situation.

When I knocked on the door to introduce myself, I discovered it was somebody I'd served

It reminds me of the first day I went to the weight room to begin rehab and saw a sign that read, "There are no disabilities, only possibilities."

THERE ARE NO
DISABILITIES
ONLY
POSSIBILITIES

KERRY RANDOLPH

with in my first unit in Oklahoma. We began to reminisce, and I could see the change in his attitude. I'm not entirely sure why — perhaps it was because he knew somebody in the same situation, or perhaps it was recalling and talking about the past.

After volunteering for several years, I turned my focus to actually joining the chapter's board, where I served as an alternate member. Then, I was appointed to the chapter board, filling an open slot until the next election. I was then elected to the chapter board, where I served as the chapter secretary. I served at the chapter level for 21 years. During my time at the chapter, I served in almost every position except for the treasurer and the chapter president.

In 2015, I was asked to study to become the national parliamentarian. Just like a good soldier, I accepted the challenge. I served as

the parliamentarian for several years and then decided to put my name in the hat for a national vice president position. I was voted onto the PVA Executive Committee in 2017.

After taking office, I saw what the national organization does for its members, and I decided I wanted to help lead the organization well into the future.

In looking back on all that I have accomplished over the years, it reminds me of the first day I went to the weight room to begin rehab and saw a sign that read, "There are no disabilities, only possibilities." I can only equate that to PVA being there through every step of my journey.

PVA makes things possible, and I'm excited to see where we're headed next on my third term as national president. ■

Getting Veterans with SCI Back on Their Feet

Eligible veterans may receive an Ekso Indego exoskeleton at NO COST!



Photo Credit: Keith Longsdorf

"Ekso Indego Personal has significantly expanded my opportunities, enriched my life, improved my daily function, and enhanced my energy and overall health. It has helped me move again, which has been truly life-changing."

Vicky Garrison

Ekso Indego Personal User & Immediate Past President of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Minnesota chapter

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Missing The Boat

My wife and I were in our so-called “situation room” scheming a plan that could determine whether or not we survive until September. We were living every parent’s nightmare of trying to find something to keep our kids busy during their summer break from school.

Our daughters, ages 5 and 6, hate the idea of summer camps and prefer to hang out with us all day. So, in a bid of desperation, we began scrolling through countless websites hoping for a miracle.

Considering we live across the bay from San Diego, we discovered summer passes for places like SeaWorld and the San Diego Zoo and its nearby Safari Park, and there were plenty of museums throughout the city. However, Legoland offered a deal we couldn’t refuse.

The theme park markets to families with children, and most attractions are geared toward kids under age 12. Attractions consist mostly of outdoor flat rides, interactive play structures and splash pads, as well as designated stations for playing with Lego bricks.

What also caught our eye was the fact that Legoland claims most attractions are accessible to guests with disabilities, and it offers a disabled access guide, which includes a map to assist us in navigating the property in a wheelchair. All things considered, we went ahead and bought summer passes for the entire family.

A few days later, we surprised the kids with a trip to Legoland. They couldn’t have been more excited when we arrived at the park entrance and were greeted by a life-size Lego character appearing to be in a wheelchair — just like their dad. With that, my wife and I were convinced we made the right decision and were looking forward to a day of fun and a summer of shared experiences.

Unfortunately, that all changed when we tried to get on the first ride.

Sure, there were plenty of signs directing us to the accessible entrance, but that’s where the accessibility ended. Without going into detail, you’ll have to trust me when I say there was no way I was getting in that boat.

Joining me in my frustration was my oldest daughter. Understandably, she was disappointed that I couldn’t be a part of the fun, yet she looked forward to the ride with her mom and little sister.

As I sat on the dock and watched my family have fun without me, I was reminded of something a friend once told me. He said, “The key to happiness is low expectations and good Wi-Fi.” So, I took a few pictures, responded to some emails and ate my kids’ Go-Gurt.

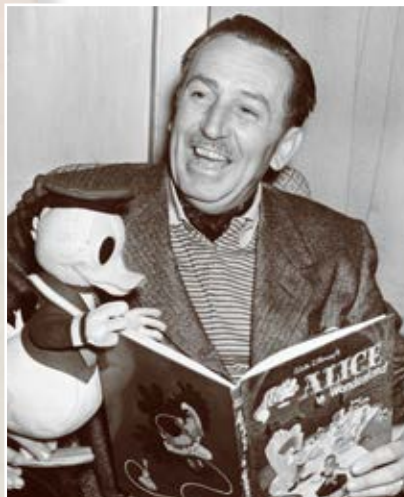
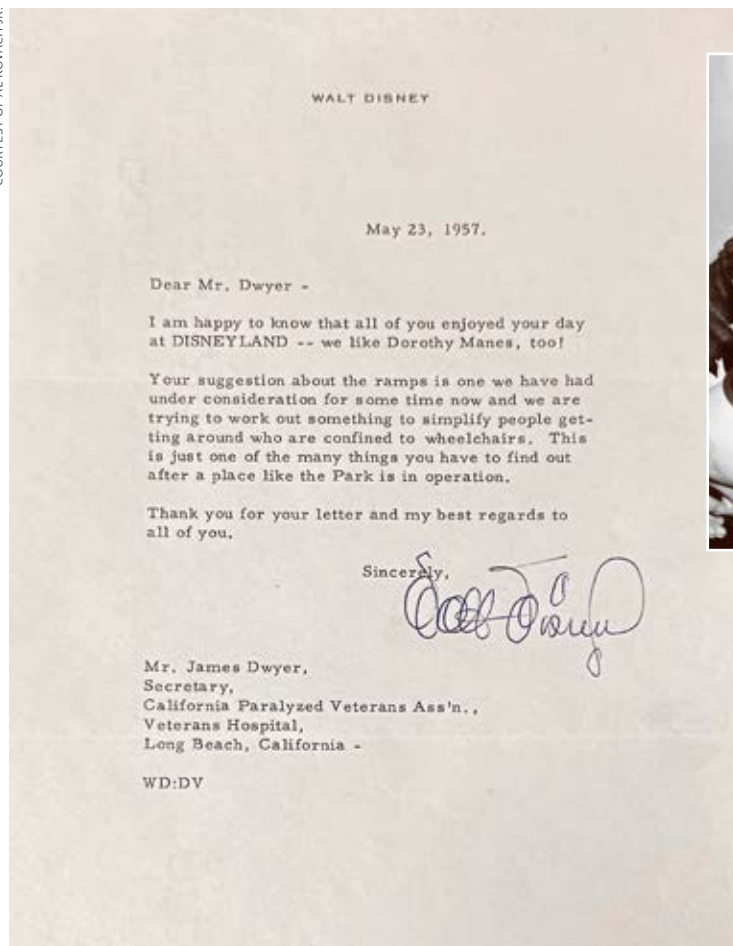
Sure, as an adult, I’m too old to enjoy the rides at Legoland. But as a parent, I felt misled by their marketing materials that claim their theme park provided a welcoming, inclusive and accessible experience for all guests.

Advocates have been working with theme park operators for decades with mixed results. I recently found a letter in my office at PVA Publications from the legendary Walt Disney addressed to James Dwyer at the then-named California Paralyzed Veterans Association. In the 1957 letter, Disney thanks Dwyer for raising issues relating to accessibility at his first of many Disney theme parks.

Today, rides at theme parks generally must be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), particularly for new rides and those that have been recently altered. The ADA ensures accessibility for individuals with disabilities, including dads using wheelchairs, by requiring features such as wheelchair-accessible routes, loading and unloading areas and at least one accessible seat or transfer device per ride.

However, theme parks have their own interpretations of the law, and enforcement of policies regarding people with disabilities vary from park to park. For example, a paralyzed veteran who relies on leg braces for walking told me he wasn’t allowed to get on a ride at Kings Dominion near Richmond, Va., because park staff thought his braces might fall off and injure other guests.

There were plenty of signs directing us to the accessible entrance, but that’s where the accessibility ended.



© GETTY IMAGES/EDWARD G. MALINDINE

Walt Disney

ica presented its Barrier-Free America Award to Luna Middleman Architects for their design of Morgan's Wonderland and Inspiration Island.

We've come a long way since Disney opened Disneyland 70 years ago, and his theme parks remain the most popular

worldwide. Recently, the Walt Disney Company announced plans to open another theme park in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. While there's no ADA in Abu Dhabi, there are building codes that include accessibility standards, thanks in part to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Disney's theme parks are recognized as trendsetters when it comes to wheelchair accessibility for kids as well as their parents, so I guess we'll just have to wait and see what they have to say on Yelp.

In the meantime, I'll consider going back to Legoland, but with tempered expectations. After all, I already paid \$600 for the passes, and we still have another two months before the kids go back to school.

As always, email me at al@pvamag.com and share your thoughts. ■

Another paralyzed veteran told me he bought a pair of weekend passes at Busch Gardens in Tampa, Fla., for himself and his son, only to be informed upon arrival that the theme park's policies didn't allow him to sit on a cushion while on their rides.

Yet, at Disneyland, its policy allows for cushions on 30 of its 52 attractions. Fortunately, Busch Gardens offered a refund, but the father-and-son vacation ended in great disappointment.

I can understand the issues these theme parks raise when it comes to safety because there have been several serious injuries to riders with disabilities, but whatever happened to reasonable accommodations? It can be done.

In 2010, Morgan's Wonderland in San Antonio became the world's first theme park of its kind. Guided by its mission of inclusion, the park brings together guests of all ages and all abilities through the power of inclusive play.

The park then expanded its attractions in 2017 to include Morgan's Inspiration Island water park, which was named one of *Time* magazine's "World's Greatest Places" in 2018. That same year, Paralyzed Veterans of Amer-

New Perspective

I just read your personal story *Out Of Isolation* (Reasons & Remarks, May PN).

Your story resonates with me. Very impressed with your perseverance and resolve going through that severe parachuting injury.

I recently fell into my own dark valley in the form of a severe relapse of my MS (multiple sclerosis), first diagnosed in 2014. The last relapse was a minor one, back in June 2022. It went away.

Now, I am still trying to recover from this as I write these words. So much

uncertainty, the real possibility of losing the use of at least one leg. A nervous system that suddenly goes haywire. It's an absolutely terrible place that I've never been to before.

I have a new perspective on people with disabilities that force them

into confined spaces, i.e., wheelchairs, lack of normal support, downsizing into a static or passive lifestyle. We take a lot for granted until

we lose that freedom and our individual independence.

I am fortunate to have a caring wife, some supporting family, a pastor from church with a "prayer team," real prayer warriors. Thanks again.

Nathan Gant
Paralyzed Veterans of
America Central Florida
Chapter member
Chuluota, Fla.



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Are able to communicate and answer questions in English



Live in the U.S.

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Jessica Rodriguez

Phone: 713-797-7245

Email: SCIPSstudy@uth.tmc.edu

or scan the QR code



The study is funded by the Department of Defense (DOD) Spinal Cord Injury Research Program (SCIRP). The study is conducted by TIRR-Memorial Hermann's Spinal Cord Injury and Disability Research Center (SCIDR) in Houston, Texas in collaboration with investigators affiliated with the University of Texas at Houston Health Science Center, and the University of Montana.



IRB NUMBER: HSC-MH-24-0988
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 03/03/2025

Prime Donation

One of the country's top online purveyors of American-sourced meats is delivering a “prime” donation to Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA).

across the country more effectively,” says PVA CEO Carl Blake in a May 5 press release. “As we wrap up our first year of the partnership, we are grateful to Good Ranchers not only for this donation, but also for their

and farms throughout the American heartland.

“Good Ranchers is proud to bring even more veterans to the table, creating memorable moments around great food,” says Good Ranchers CEO Ben Spell in the press release. “We are grateful to our dedicated team members and loyal customers who continue to help feed PVA’s crucial mission, support our heroes and make donations like this possible.”

For more information or to take advantage of the new Good Ranchers’ offer, visit goodranchers.com/pva and use the promo code PVA at checkout.

The PVA convention is set for the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino in Las Vegas May 12–15, 2026. Situated in the heart of the famed Las Vegas Strip and less than a 10-minute roll from the iconic Fountains of Bellagio, Planet Hollywood features two rooftop pools, more than 2,400 rooms, five bars and lounges, a sportsbook and a more than 64,000-square-foot casino.

Additionally, the casino and resort has 10 restaurants, including celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay Burger, P.F. Chang’s and Pin-Up Pizza, which claims to have the largest pizza slices on the Las Vegas Strip and are described by Insider Food as “bigger than your face.” There’s also top-notch entertainment at the 7,000-seat venue PH Live, featuring the likes of the Steve Miller Band, comedian Jeff Dunham and illusionist Chris Angel.

The PVA convention was last in Las Vegas for

COURTESY OF PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA



Online meat subscription service Good Ranchers made a \$75,000 donation to Paralyzed Veterans of America during the Children’s of Alabama Indy Grand Prix May 3 in Birmingham, Ala.

Good Ranchers made a \$75,000 donation to PVA during the Children’s of Alabama Indy Grand Prix May 3 in Birmingham, Ala. A PVA partner, the online meat subscription service is also offering a 10% lifetime discount on every subscription for veterans, active-duty military and their families.

“Partners like Good Ranchers amplify the impact of our mission, enabling us to support paralyzed and disabled veterans

unwavering commitment to improving the quality of life for the brave men and women who have served and sacrificed so much.”

Founded in 2018, Good Ranchers is a family-run online meat retailer that delivers all-natural, all-American beef, pork, chicken and seafood. Its selected livestock are grown in a stress-free environment, never fed anything unnatural and sourced from ranches

Going Hollywood

Next year’s Paralyzed Veterans of America’s (PVA) Annual Convention is going to Hollywood — Planet Hollywood, that is.



The Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino will host next year’s Paralyzed Veterans of America Annual Convention.

© GETTY IMAGES/EKATERINACHIZHEVSKAYA

Members of the United States Access Board paid a visit to Paralyzed Veterans of America's (PVA) national headquarters in Washington, D.C., for meetings and a tour of PVA's accessible office.



its 75th anniversary in 2021 and is also set for a return trip in 2027.

More information on PVA's 80th annual convention will be announced in the coming months. For more information on Planet Hollywood, visit caesars.com/planet-hollywood.

PVA Visitors

One of the top federal agencies dedicated to the development of accessibility guidelines and stan-


dards got a firsthand look at Paralyzed Veterans of America's (PVA) efforts to incorporate those ideals in its national office.

The United States Access Board paid a visit to PVA national headquarters April 29. Board members toured the office located on Eye (I) Street NW, only about 10 minutes from the White House. The visit also included a meeting with PVA CEO Carl Blake to dis-

cuss the organization's mission and goals.

Opened in January 2023, PVA's office includes expanded restrooms with lowered switch entrances and showers, accessible-height counters and common areas with amenities, kitchen appliances with adaptive features, working areas equipped with adjustable-height desks, widened pathways and many other accessibility features.

PVA staff and Access Board members then joined Heroic Gardens for a hands-on demonstration of therapeutic gardening. Heroic Gardens' goal is to surround veterans with horticulture as a form of personal healing.

For more information, visit pva.org, access-board.gov or heroicgardens.org. 

Calling On PVA's Expertise



Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley, Esq., MSW, pictured on the far right, brought PVA's expertise in improving travel for people with disabilities to an international audience when she spoke at April's Passenger Terminal Expo 2025 in Madrid. Attracting more than 1,700 air travel officials from around the world, the conference asked Ansley to take part in its Accessibility & Assisted Travel track, including a panel discussion titled From Raising Awareness To Taking Action To Making Progress. To read more about the conference, visit passengerterminal-expo.com.

COURTESY OF PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

The ADA Turns 35

One of Paralyzed Veterans of

America's (PVA) core mission areas is to support civil rights and opportunities that maximize the independence of its members.

This month, the nation recognizes the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Passed in 1990, the ADA has fundamentally changed our society and removed barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully experiencing the freedom to travel, ability to work and otherwise participate in daily life with their families and friends.

Efforts to reform the size and scope of the federal government are resulting in cuts to staff who enforce civil rights laws at federal agencies and reduce the ability of agencies to issue new regulations supporting barrier removal for people with disabilities.

It's unclear how these and other efforts to reform and eliminate programs that support people with disabilities will impact paralyzed veterans.

Prior to these reforms, it was already commonplace for ADA complaints filed with the U.S. Department of Justice to be dismissed without any action due to the number received.

PVA is concerned that this trend will only accelerate and push more people with disabilities to simply live with barriers or be forced to pursue legal action. However, it's often not easy to find an attorney and programs that support legal assistance for people with disabilities, as these entities are also facing cuts and elimination.

While much in the nation's capital is still uncertain, PVA continues to work with Congress to improve access for people with disabilities.

Air Travel

Last year, PVA celebrated the passage of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024, which included several disability-related provisions focused on improving access to air travel for people with disabilities.

Some of these provisions have already been implemented by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The 2024 regulation, Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs, addresses the issues experienced by wheelchair and scooter users during air travel and seeks to reduce the incidents that impact passengers' safety and dignity.

In line with the FAA Reauthorization Act, the regulation requires enhanced training for personnel who physically assist passengers with disabilities or handle wheelchairs and scooters. Although airlines are challenging the final rule in court, PVA is hopeful that implementation of the training requirements will not be delayed.

On The Ground

This year, PVA is once again focused on improving access to transportation for people with disabilities, but this time on the ground.

Access to transportation services remains fragmented, and veterans with disabilities, particularly those who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices for mobility, often encounter disability-related barriers.

Problems range from sidewalks with barriers to a lack of accessible taxis and transportation network company vehicles, as well as an inability to safely and efficiently access rail and subway stations due to a lack of elevators or level boarding.

In a PVA survey conducted in spring 2024, the number one access

barrier experienced by PVA members within a six-month period concerned sidewalks, curb cuts and crosswalks. Concerns generally range from sidewalks that are in disrepair to those that have barriers such as utility poles in the path of travel to places where there are no sidewalks at all.

Nearly 80% of PVA members said they feel frustrated when they encounter a disability access barrier in a public space.

Activity In Congress

The House and Senate have started to work on the next surface transportation reauthorization bill.

The last reauthorization, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (PL 117-58), passed in 2021. This bill addressed a wide variety of transportation modes, including sidewalks, transit and highways.

PVA is urging the inclusion of proposals in the next reauthorization that would provide funding to help remove barriers to transportation for people with disabilities. Specifically, PVA supports proposals to provide funding to remove barriers for people with disabilities in accessing sidewalks, curb cuts and crosswalks.

Funding for improvements is often limited and leads to delays in addressing safety concerns for people with disabilities. Congress must include in the next surface transportation bill provisions to provide safer pedestrian options for people with disabilities by making funding available to remove disability barriers to sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities in public rights-of-way.

PVA also supports the extension of the All Stations Accessibility Program (ASAP). The program, which was passed as part of the last surface transportation reauthorization bill, provides competitive federal grants to help enti-



ties increase access to legacy rail fixed guideway public transportation systems for passengers with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs.

Since its inception, ASAP has provided grants to transit authorities and local governments across

the nation. People with disabilities need access to more transportation options in their communities, and a lack of funding is often the main barrier to accessibility improvements. Since paralyzed veterans are often unable to access modes

of transportation available to other Americans because they use wheelchairs, Congress should invest in projects, like the ASAP, that increase transportation options.

As we embark on the 36th year of the ADA, PVA will continue to fight for improvements that will fulfill the promise of the law. The organization will also work with all stakeholders, including businesses, governments and legislators, to remove barriers for disabled veterans and all people with disabilities.

Heather Ansley, Esq., MSW, is PVA's chief policy officer in Washington, D.C. ■



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people

JOHN GROTH

Bowled Over With 300 History

Every time Brooks Martin wheeled down the 15th and 16th lanes to bowl on Feb. 20, his league teammates talked and joked with him. Even with all the different topics and barbs, they never mentioned that the Paralyzed Veterans of America West Virginia Chapter national director was racking up the strikes.

But by the ninth frame, the chatter had lessened. And by the 11th frame, Galaxy Lanes in Charleston, W.V., got eerily silent. With two frames to go, Martin, 67, was just two strikes away from rolling a perfect 300 game.

"And it was actually the 11th ball that I got up there and realized that it was dead quiet and nobody was doing nothing. And it was 16 lanes of dead silence. So, they were all behind me watching. It was crazy," Martin says. "So, I threw the 11th strike. And then when I went back to hit the 12th strike, I didn't even look up. I didn't want to see a bunch of people back there. I just



COURTESY OF BROOKS MARTIN

Paralyzed Veterans of America West Virginia Chapter National Director Brooks Martin is the first person to bowl perfect 300 games both able-bodied and from a wheelchair.

wheeled back, got my ball, went back to the foul line, and it was again locked down. And there was nothing. I mean, there was some open bowling to my right. They even quit, was watching. So, it was pretty crazy. But when I got that 12th, everybody started cheering."

Meant To Be

And just like that, Martin reached an impressive historic feat.

He became the first person to ever bowl a certified 300 game from

a wheelchair and also another standing up. And he's now the third person to bowl a certified 300 game from a wheelchair.

Wheelchair athletes Shawn Beam (Texas) and George Holscher (Virginia) each recorded their 300 games in 2012, with Beam hitting his on May 18, 2012, in a TGIF League at Cityview Lanes in Fort Worth, Texas, while Holscher recorded his Nov. 26, 2012, during league play at AMF Indian River Lanes in Virginia Beach, Va.

Martin credited his coach, Steve Lickliter, a Beckley, W.V., resident who hails from England, for helping him improve. When Martin first started in 2016, he was throwing about 8 mph. Now, he's rolling shots at about 11 mph and also won back-to-back American Wheelchair Bowling Association A Division national wheelchair bowling championships in 2017 and 2018. And he's the only wheelchair bowler in the Galaxy

Lanes league.

"It's all coming from the arm. What I do is I go up there locked. And I have a wheel that don't have that ring on it. It gives me a little bit of clearance," Martin says. "And I slide over ..."

Martin's able-bodied and 300 certified stand-up game came nearly 40 years prior on Sept. 21, 1987, at the now-defunct Dunbar Lanes in Dunbar, W.V., when he was 29 years old. He even remembers which lanes — 9 and 10 — and that it was just as exhilarating.



"I remember about six frames in, my legs started getting weak. I don't know how I made it through the whole thing. Both of them felt like rubber," Martin says. "I had to kind of take my time to make sure my legs stayed under me."

While both were nerve-racking, Martin says bowling the 300 standing up was easier than the 300 from a wheelchair.

"Because with the chair, it's too easy to vary the speed, you know, to do something that makes you lose a little bit of speed and the ball reacts sooner ... or the oil condition starts breaking down a little bit or something," Martin says. "It kind of surprised me that I was able to go through the whole game without hav-

ing to make any adjustments. And it worked through the whole time. It was just like it was meant to be."

Delayed Injury

An Air Force veteran, Martin served from 1976 to 1980 as a crew chief, and he inspected the face of A7 and A10 ground support planes.

But just a year into his service, he was involved in a motorcycle accident while riding into work on weekend duty at the now-closed Myrtle Beach Air Force Base in Myrtle Beach, S.C. All he remembers is that he was run off the road and into a telephone pole, with his roommate on the back of his motorcycle. Martin broke his jaw and his left arm and sustained a

severe concussion. He says doctors did about 10 hours of surgery on him and put 15 wires in his jaws to hold them together. Martin's roommate only sustained a bump to the head.

"I busted the sack around my brain and the sack around my spinal cord, and I finished my four years up. I was off work for a couple of months, but I finished my four years up. And then, 15 years later, in 1992, I had fluid build up around my spine, up in the T1-T2 area to paralyze them," Martin says.

That year, the spinal fluid put a pocket around the T1-T2 vertebrae and paralyzed Martin's left leg, and his right arm became weak. Doctors got the fluid off his right arm, and he regained that strength back. But from

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COURTESY OF BROOKS MARTIN

his abdomen down through his left leg, he's paralyzed.

Before his injury, Martin started bowling when he was about 10 years old with his dad, Alvin, who was a Navy pilot in World War II. He took to the sport and loves the camaraderie, the people and just having fun.

But after the injury, it took him 15 years before he picked it up again.

While Martin didn't have any family in attendance for his most recent 300, he still had a fun moment surprising his wife, Katryna.

"I took a picture of the screen that had the score up there," he says. "When I got home, I said, 'You won't believe what I did.' She said, 'What?' I showed her. She said, 'No way!'" ■

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
LIZ MO	X9	7	7	-	X7	29	9	9	X9	9
	20	37	54	61	80	89	108	128	148	167
BROOKS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	30	60	90	120	150	180	210	240	270	300
GREG A	9	X	X	X	X8	1	X9	9	X	
	20	50	80	108	127	136	156	176		
▶ GREG ADKINS										28
Team WOLF PACK										12.51
Game	TOT. 783				TOT. Pin. fall	1223	TOT. H&C	260	TOT. Bonus	0
										TOT. Points

Paralyzed Veterans of America West Virginia Chapter National Director Brooks Martin rolled a perfect 300 game Feb. 20 at Galaxy Lanes in Charleston, W.V.




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For assistance, please refer to the directory below to identify the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Service Office nearest you. Also, you may contact the PVA Veterans Benefits Department located at our headquarters in Washington, D.C., at 866-734-0857.

ALABAMA

VARO, Montgomery
334-213-3433

ARIZONA

VARO, Phoenix
602-627-3311

ARKANSAS

VARO, North Little Rock
501-370-3757

CALIFORNIA (Hawaii, Manila)

VAMC, Long Beach
562-826-8000, ext. 23774

VARO, Los Angeles
310-235-7796

VAMC, Mather
916-843-2602

VAMC, Palo Alto
650-493-5000, ext. 65046

VARO, Rancho Cordova
916-364-6791

VAMC, San Diego
858-552-7519

VARO, San Diego
619-400-5320

Veterans Career Program

San Diego
202-733-8807
(covering AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, NV, OR, WA)

COLORADO (Wyoming)

VARO, Denver
303-914-5590

DELAWARE

VARO, Wilmington
302-993-7252

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

PVA National Office
202-872-1300

FLORIDA

VAMC, Lake City
386-755-3016, ext. 2236

VAMC, Miami
305-575-7180

VAMC, Orlando
407-631-1000, ext. 11835

VARO, St. Petersburg
727-319-7470

VAMC, Tampa
813-978-5841

GEORGIA

VARO, Atlanta
404-929-5333

VAMC, Augusta
706-823-2219

Veterans Career Program

Atlanta
202-710-6437
202-304-8544
(covering AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, PR, SC)

ILLINOIS

VARO, Chicago
312-980-4278

VAMC, Hines
708-202-5623

INDIANA

VARO, Indianapolis
317-916-3626

IOWA

VARO, Des Moines
515-323-7544

KANSAS

Wichita
316-688-6875

KENTUCKY

VARO, Louisville
502-566-4430 / 4431

LOUISIANA

VARO, New Orleans
504-619-4380

MAINE (Vermont, New Hampshire)

VAMROC, Augusta
866-795-1911 / 207-621-7394

MARYLAND

VARO, Baltimore
410-230-4470, ext. 1020

MASSACHUSETTS (Connecticut, Rhode Island)

VARO, Boston
617-303-1395

VAMC, Brockton
774-826-2219

Veterans Career Program

Boston
202-257-0144
(covering CT, DE, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)

MICHIGAN

VARO, Detroit
313-471-3996

MINNESOTA

VAMC, Minneapolis
612-629-7022

VARO, St. Paul
612-970-5668

Veterans Career Program

Minneapolis
202-374-1989
(covering IA, IL, MI, MN, ND, NE, SD, MT, WI, WY)

MISSISSIPPI (Louisiana)

VARO, Jackson
601-364-7188

MISSOURI

VAMC, Kansas City
816-922-2882

VAMC, St. Louis
866-328-2670 / 314-894-6467

VARO, St. Louis
314-253-4480

NEBRASKA

VARO, Lincoln
402-420-4017

NEVADA (Utah)

VARO, Las Vegas
702-791-9000, ext. 14458

VAMC, Reno
775-321-4789

NEW JERSEY

VARO, Newark
973-297-3228

NEW MEXICO

VAMC, Albuquerque
505-265-1711, ext. 5046

VARO, Albuquerque
505-346-4896

NEW YORK

VAMC, Bronx
866-297-1319
718-584-9000, ext. 6272

VARO, Buffalo
716-857-3353

VARO, New York
212-807-3114

VAMC, Syracuse
315-425-4400, ext. 53317

NORTH CAROLINA

VARO, Winston-Salem
336-251-0836

OHIO

VAMC, Cleveland
216-791-3800, ext. 4159

VARO, Cleveland
216-522-3214

OKLAHOMA (Arkansas)

VARO, Muskogee
918-781-7768

VAMC, Oklahoma City
405-456-5483

OREGON (Idaho)

VARO, Portland
503-412-4762

PENNSYLVANIA

VARO, Philadelphia
215-381-3057

VARO, Pittsburgh
412-395-6255

PUERTO RICO

VACHS, San Juan
787-641-7582 ext. 11566

VARO, San Juan
888-795-6550 / 787-772-7384

SOUTH CAROLINA

VARO, Columbia
803-647-2432

SOUTH DAKOTA (North Dakota)

VAMROC, Sioux Falls
605-333-6801

TENNESSEE

VAMC, Memphis
901-523-8990, ext. 7795

VARO, Nashville
615-695-6383

TEXAS

VAMC, Dallas
214-857-0105

VAMC, Houston
713-794-7993

VARO, Houston
713-383-2727

VAMC, San Antonio
210-617-5300, ext. 16819

VARO, Waco
254-299-9944

Veterans Career Program

San Antonio
202-714-4777
(covering CO, KS, NM, MO, OK, TX, UT)

VIRGINIA

VAMC, Hampton
757-722-9961, ext. 2943

VAMC, Richmond
804-675-5316

VARO, Roanoke
540-597-1707

Veterans Career Program

Richmond
202-769-7387
(covering DC, IN, KY, MD, OH, TN, VA, WV)

WASHINGTON (Alaska, Montana)

VAMC, Seattle
206-768-5415

VARO, Seattle
206-220-6149

WEST VIRGINIA

VARO, Huntington
304-399-9393

WISCONSIN

VARO, Milwaukee
414-902-5655



NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES

44th
Annual Games
July 17-22

Games

ILLUSTRATION BY KERRY RANDOLPH
COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/LANEPELOVSKY

There'll be plenty of action on the court and fun times off it as the NVWG return to Minneapolis.

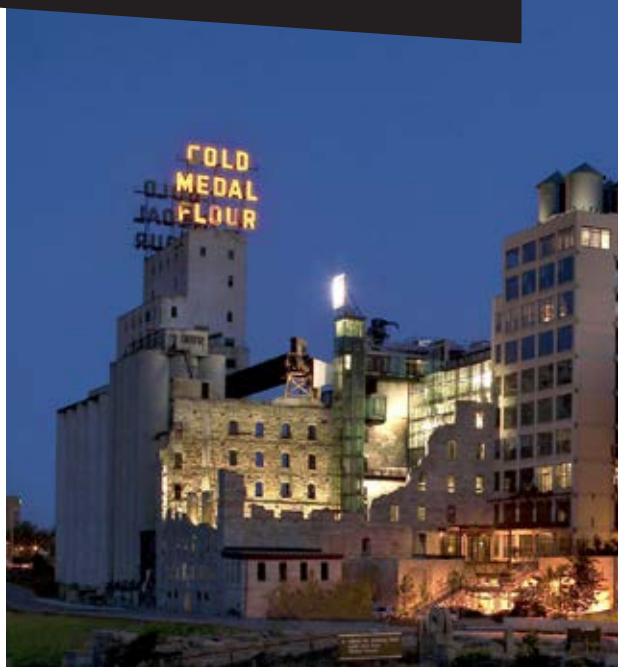
Natural beauty, a bustling city, strong competition, good friends and more are in store as the National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) return to Minneapolis for the first time in 20 years.

by Andy Nemann

The site of last year's Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Annual Convention, Minneapolis welcomes the 44th annual NVWG July 17-22. Co-sponsored by PVA and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Games are bringing together hundreds of veterans from across the country and even farther to Minneapolis for the first time since 2005.

The majority of events are being held at the Minneapolis Convention Center in the downtown area. A few select events will be taking place at venues around the area, such as bass fishing at Lake Minnetonka Regional Park and motor rally (trivia) at the Mill City Museum.

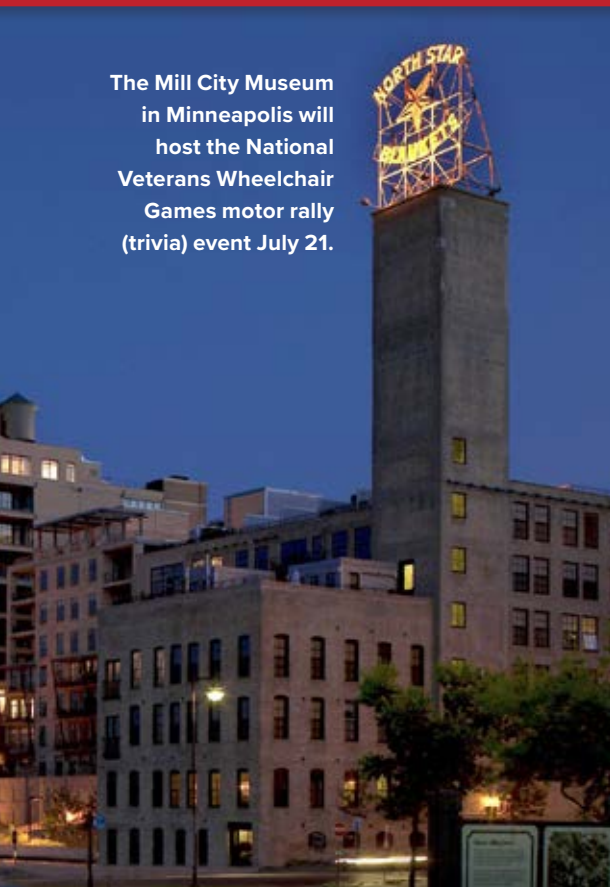
Started in 1981, the NVWG are a celebration of sport, rehabilitation and camaraderie.



COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS



The Mill City Museum
in Minneapolis will
host the National
Veterans Wheelchair
Games motor rally
(trivia) event July 21.



The Games also provide a great deal of fun for participants, coaches, family and friends. Of course, when it comes to fun, the good times aren't limited to the competition.

When there's time, don't forget to take the chance to relax, explore and enjoy what Minneapolis has to offer. The city's options for attractions, parks, shopping, food and more are vast. These are just a few ideas to get you started.

Meet On The Mall

One of the easiest places to start exploring the area is just outside the convention center.

The shopping and dining district called Nicollet is just a couple of blocks from the convention center on Nicollet Mall road. The 12-block-long, pedestrian-friendly area is lined with shops, bars and restaurants with sidewalk seating surrounded by art and greenery.

The area underwent a \$50 million, 28-month renovation in 2018 that added more greenery, sculptures, other artwork and pedestrian amenities. The area's most recognized sculpture is the Mary Tyler Moore statue from the TV show bearing her name located at the corner of Nicollet Mall and 7th Street.

COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/ALEX CARROLL



Minneapolis' main street for more than 100 years, Nicollet features shops, restaurants and over 250 trees.

Centered around Loring Lake, Loring Park covers almost 34 acres, with miles of pathways, a garden and a dog park.

A nice place along Nicollet Mall to relax outside is Peavey Plaza, just five minutes from the convention center. The outdoor space between South 11th and 12th streets features seating around a shallow pool and fountains with plenty of trees to provide shade.

For more information, visit minneapolis.org.

Get Outside

More outdoor space can be found in a pair of locations roughly 10 minutes west of the convention center along East Grant Street.



COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/LANE PELOVSKY



Covering almost 34 acres, Loring Park is the largest park in the downtown area and is home to multiple events and celebrations throughout the year. Centered around Loring Lake, the park features miles of walking and biking paths, a garden, athletic courts and a dog park at the north end.

Amazing art and a beautiful garden come together just across the street from Loring Park. A pedestrian bridge takes you from the park to the 11-acre Minneapolis Sculpture Garden that's part of the Walker Art Center just south of the garden.

The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden is free and features more than 60 sculptures. The largest urban sculpture garden in the country, the artwork is located along multiple accessible pathways amid a lush green space.



COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/JAMES PEROVICH

The famed Spoonbridge and Cherry work of art is located at the free Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

If you'd like to check out some art indoors, head to the Walker Art Center, which is one of the most visited modern and contemporary art museums in the country. Focused on visual art, stage, cinema, publishing and digital media, it features 65,000 square feet of exhibition space that includes more than 15,500 pieces, the McGuire Theater and Walker Cinema.



It's closed Monday and Tuesday, and the center's admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for seniors (65-plus) and free for active military and their families. Admission is free from 5 to 9 p.m. every Thursday.

For more information on the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden or the Walker Art Center, visit walkerart.org.

Motor At The Mill

Besides being close to shopping, dining and outdoor spaces, the Minneapolis Convention Center is near a unique blend of urban and natural beauty along the mighty Mississippi River.

About 1½ miles northeast of the convention center, you'll find one of the most iconic places in Minneapolis: Mill Ruins Park. The Stone Arch pedestrian and bicycle bridge provides dramatic sights and sounds of the 49-foot St. Anthony Falls, Mississippi River and Minneapolis skyline. Originally built as a railroad passage in the 1880s, the bridge provides easy access between Mill Ruins Park and Father Hennepin Bluff Park on the east side.

COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/EMT



The Mill City Museum in Minneapolis was once the world's largest flour mill.



COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/LANE PELOVSKY

The river lock on the west side of the falls is no longer in operation, but free guided tours are offered three times a day from the St. Anthony Falls Visitor Center located on the west side of the river in Mill Ruins Park.

Next to the park, you'll find a unique historical attraction that also happens to be the site of an NVWG event. The Mill City Museum (mnhs.org/millcity) will host the Games' motor rally (trivia) event July 21.

The museum focuses on the history of Minneapolis with special attention on flour milling and the other industries that used hydropower from St. Anthony Falls. The museum also features an observation deck that provides panoramic views of the Mississippi River and the falls.

For more information, visit minneapolisparcs.org.

Rolling On The River

If you'd like to see more of the Mississippi River away from the city's core, then Minnehaha Regional Park is only a 15-minute drive southeast of the convention center.

One of the area's oldest and most popular parks, it features more than 160 acres along the banks of the Mississippi River, with limestone bluffs, river overlooks and the iconic 53-foot tall Minnehaha Falls.

Watch the water from the falls crash into the pool below, then move past paths through trees and flowers to see the Minnehaha Creek take the water to the Mississippi River. Minnehaha Regional Park also has a seasonal restaurant and ice cream stand.

Additionally, the Minnesota Veterans Home-Minneapolis is on a 53-acre wooded

Open only to pedestrians and bicycles, the Stone Arch Bridge is the only bridge of its type spanning the entire Mississippi River.



At more than 50 feet high, Minnehaha Falls has been one of the central features of Minnehaha Regional Park for more than 100 years.

campus overlooking the Mississippi River toward the southern end of the park (mn.gov/mdva/homes/minneapolis).

For more information, visit minneapolisparcs.org.

Cycle, Shop & Dine

One more area to explore offers an opportunity to take in another NVWG event, enjoy a beautiful park, get in some major retail therapy and maybe “take a trip under the seas.”

Located about 5 miles south of the convention center, Lake Harriet Park is the site of the Games’ cycling event July 19. The 470-acre park features almost 3 miles of pedestrian and cycling trails. The park also has a bandshell with events such as concerts and movies.

The site of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games cycling event July 19, Lake Harriet Park features a bandshell with concerts twice a week in July.



COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/NIKOLAS LIEPINS

COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS_MALL OF AMERICA



One of the largest shopping complexes in the world, the Mall of America covers as much ground as roughly nine typical NFL stadiums.

Additionally, the immediate area includes the Thomas Sadler Roberts Bird Sanctuary and Rose Gardens in Lyndale Park.

For more information, visit minneapolisparcs.org.

If all that outdoor activity has you looking for some indoor fun, then one of the Minneapolis area’s biggest and most popular attractions isn’t far from the park or even the convention center.

About a 20-minute drive south of Lake Harriet Park (roughly 10 miles from the convention center) is the shopping and entertainment mecca of Mall of America. One of the largest shopping complexes in the world, the mall covers as much ground as nine typical NFL stadiums and features up to 500 stores and roughly 50 restaurants. As if all the shopping and eating isn’t enough, Mall of America also has some unique attractions.

Kids and probably many adults will love Nickelodeon Universe, located in the center of the mall. It has 7 acres of entertainment and more than 25 rides, including a roller coaster.



TWO PHOTOS COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/MALL OF AMERICA



But Wait ...

Between the attractions and NVWG events, that's a lot to take in, but as many TV ads often say, "But wait, there's more."

There's plenty more to discover in the Twin Cities area, as well as lots more parks, lakes, wildlife and attractions throughout the state. Exploring an area on your own can often lead to the best times.

If you're looking for more things to do, places to see or just want a good place to eat, be sure to check with members of the PVA Minnesota Chapter. They should have plenty of ideas.

For more information on Minneapolis and the Twin Cities area, visit minneapolis.org. ■

Descriptions for some attractions were taken from Minneapolis Minutes in the May 2024 issue of PN by the same author.

For something a bit more subdued and maybe even educational, check out Sea Life Minnesota Aquarium. The largest aquarium in Minnesota features roughly 10,000 sea creatures, including sea turtles, sharks and stingrays. The highlight is a 300-foot glass underwater tunnel that was named "the best shark exhibit on the planet" by the TV channel *Animal Planet*.

For more information on the mall or its attractions, visit mallofamerica.com.



COURTESY OF MEET MINNEAPOLIS/MALL OF AMERICA

A 300-foot-long underwater glass tunnel is the centerpiece of Sea Life Minnesota Aquarium at the Mall of America.



ACCESSIBLE

One Oregon tourist area spent a year working to improve the experience of travelers with disabilities.

There are plenty of

great examples of tourist attractions, hotels, beaches and businesses that are improving accessibility for visitors with disabilities, but it's another thing to learn that an entire travel destination did it.

The Tillamook Coast along Oregon's northern coast did that late last September when it completed a yearlong project to achieve a "Destination Verified" status through accessibility travel experts Wheel the World.

Oregon's Tillamook Coast Visitors Association (TCVA) worked with Wheel the World to improve accessibility along the 70-mile stretch of scenic coastal terrain and within its communities. The subject of *Travel For All* in the April 2024

issue of *PN*, Wheel the World is an accessibility travel booking and consulting company providing key information to travelers with disabilities.

The First Step

So what exactly does "Destination Verified" status actually mean?

Working with TCVA and 30 Tillamook Coast small businesses and attractions, Wheel the World team members conducted comprehensive site surveys of each participant and gathered a variety of information from each, including door measurements, elevator and ramp access and parking.

The project, partially funded by a grant from Travel Oregon, provided an in-depth look into how the Tillamook Coast can work

by Dan Haag

with small businesses and attractions to ensure safe, comfortable and accessible travel for people of all abilities.

The first step in the Wheel the World partnership was securing the participation of 30 sites. As a whole, TCVA wanted sites that would best represent the spirit of the area as a destination — a welcoming place with unique small businesses and beautiful outdoor recreation opportunities. The final list included restaurants, hotels, parks, trails, museums and more.



Dedicated to the heritage of dairy products in the area, including its famous cheese, the Tillamook Creamery in Tillamook, Ore., underwent a major remodel to provide more space for wheelchair users and added an elevator to access its upper areas.

The Process

Moving forward, TCVA understood that not all sites might be open to the idea of taking part in this extensive survey.

Some businesses feared they might be opening themselves up to criticism for not having up-to-date facilities or accommodations. However, Wheel the World reached out to each site individually to alleviate any concerns and coordinate so that their visits were informative, not intrusive.

Wheel the World team members regularly kept in contact with TCVA during the accessibility survey process. They let TCVA know how to prepare for each step, which also included filming a video that highlighted all of the accessible areas that can be enjoyed by travelers with mobility issues.

After the site surveys and filming were completed, Wheel the World took all of the information it had gathered and created 30 unique reports that were distributed to every site, detailing the findings from each visit. From these reports, the 30 participants could understand what they're doing well for visitors of all abilities, and they received suggestions for what they could improve.

Participants were also given access to "Wheel the World Academy," where they could take part in online training that gives them a



COURTESY OF VISIT TILLAMOOK COAST

Happy Camp County Park in Netarts, Ore., is one of several places along the Tillamook Coast that has free beach wheelchairs available, including some all-terrain motorized models, as part of the area's effort to make itself more accessible.

COURTESY OF WHEEL THE WORLD

better understanding of how to serve travelers and understand disabilities.

Wheel the World also created a unique Accessible Tillamook Coast web page where visitors can research the details of the project and plan their trip to the destination using the 30 partners' information.

A Comfortable Visit

Finally, it was time to celebrate the 30 participants who made this partnership possible.

Each site received an official "Destination Verified" window sticker with a bar code that allows visitors to access the Accessible Tillamook Coast page. TCVA held "sticker ceremonies," where participants were handed their stickers and thanked for their effort to make Tillamook Coast a more accessible place.

TCVA's partnership with Wheel the World was driven by a belief in the importance of providing accurate information so travelers with disabilities can comfortably enjoy their visit.

Prior to this partnership, TCVA worked with Ashley Schahfer of Empowering Access,

a consulting company that provides recommendations for improving access to the outdoors. Schahfer, who has been a wheelchair user for 20 years, conducted a survey of the area's county parks, creating a report on how to add accessible features.

Housed in a former U.S. Navy Air Station blimp hanger, the Tillamook Air Museum in Tillamook, Ore., was part of the area's yearlong effort to make itself more friendly to visitors with disabilities.

Part of the Tillamook Coast's community-wide accessibility effort, the Garibaldi Maritime Museum in Garibaldi, Ore., added a specific entrance for wheelchair users.



COURTESY OF WHEEL THE WORLD



The Hotel Garibaldi in Garibaldi, Ore., is just one of a handful of hotels along the Tillamook Coast that has an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant room with a roll-in shower and lower beds.

During the process, she told TCVA something that helped the organization understand how vital accurate information is for trip-planning for people with disabilities.

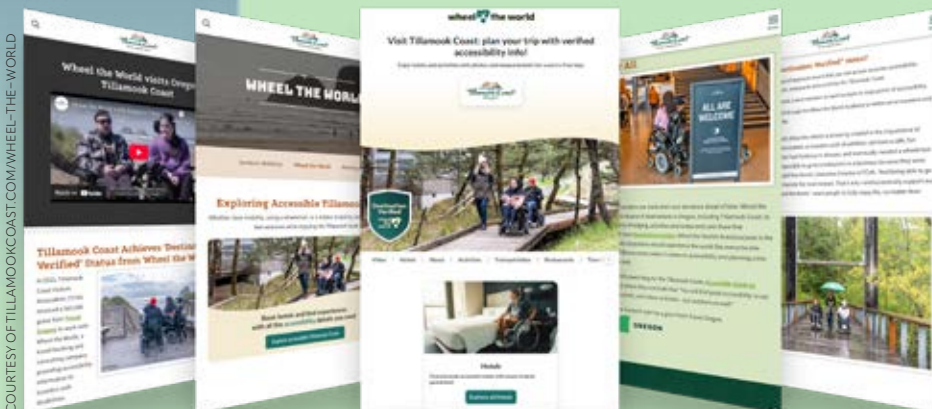
“We don’t need you to pave miles of trail and beach for us,” Schahfer says. “We only want information ahead of time so we can make our own decisions.”

That thought inspired TCVA’s partnership with Wheel the World. That partnership and the efforts to improve accessibility in the area for visitors with disabilities has a personal meaning for the head of TCVA.

“My mother had Parkinson’s disease and eventually needed a wheelchair. Many times, it was impossible to go to a restaurant or a business because they were inaccessible to her,” says Nan Devlin, executive director of TCVA. “And being able to go on the beach? We sat beside the road instead. That’s why I enthusiastically support our partnership with Wheel the World. I want people to fully enjoy life, no matter their mobility.”

For more information on visiting the Tillamook Coast, including its accessibility, visit tillamookcoast.com/wheel-the-world.

Dan Haag is the TCVA director of trails, outdoor recreation and accessibility. ■



tillamookcoast.com/wheel-the-world

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WHEELCHAIR BUGGY INVITATION

Get ready for some cooling fun at the 2024 Buzzer USA Pickleball National Championships! Get ready for some cooling fun at the 2024 Buzzer USA Pickleball National Championships! Get ready for some cooling fun at the 2024 Buzzer USA Pickleball National Championships!

Moving Forward

PVA elected its executive committee and discussed plans for the future during the 79th annual convention.



by John Groth &
Brittany Martin
photos courtesy of
Paralyzed Veterans
of America

The Paralyzed Veterans

of America (PVA) Board of Directors and Executive Committee made it clear during this year's 79th Annual PVA Convention May 12–17 in Austin, Texas, that they are committed to investing in PVA's future for the next 79 years and beyond.

Robert L. Thomas Jr., was voted in by acclamation to be Paralyzed Veterans of America's national president for fiscal year 2026.



With 30 out of 33 chapters represented, the convention featured discussions about an upcoming research study, fundraising, the chapter grant process and evaluating the return on investment (ROI) in PVA's programs, along with the traditional approval of the fiscal year 2026 budget and resolutions, awards, program manager reports and election of the PVA Executive Committee. Here are some highlights from the convention.

Executive Committee Election

The fiscal year 2026 executive committee does have some slight change. But it won't be at the top.

Now that PVA National President and Chair of the Board Robert L. Thomas Jr., is returning for a third straight year, he says he wants to continue the mission the national nonprofit organization's forefathers set forth.

Thomas, along with others, were voted onto the executive committee by the PVA Board of Directors May 16.

An Army veteran, Thomas plans to make the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) spinal



ILLUSTRATION BY KERRY RANDOLPH
© GETTY IMAGES/ CHRIS LABASCO



The fiscal year 2026 Paralyzed Veterans of America Executive Committee is, from left, National Vice President Josue Cordova, National Vice President Lawrence “Louie” Mullins Jr., National Vice President Anne Robinson, National Immediate Past President Charles Brown, National President Robert L. Thomas Jr., National Senior Vice President Tammy Jones, National Treasurer Tom Wheaton, National Vice President Marcus Murray and National Secretary Matthew Peeling.



2025 Awards

The Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) 79th Annual Convention in Austin, Texas, honored many outstanding individuals, PVA chapters and businesses for their dedication and support of PVA's mission to improve the quality of life for veterans and all people living with spinal cord injury and disease. The following award winners were recognized during this year's convention:

Speedy Award (member category)

David Zurfluh

Speedy Award (posthumous category)

Daniel "Dan" Kaminski

Individual Giving Patriot Award

Lorie Smith

**Richard Fuller Outstanding
Achievement in Government Relations Award**

Milton H. Young

**Harry A. Schweikert Jr. Disability
Awareness Award**

Jerrod R. Harris

Membership Development Award

PVA Wisconsin Chapter

Chapter Volunteer Service Award

PVA Colonial Chapter

**Center for Development and Civic
Engagement Award**

Glen Bentley (1,674 hours at the Dallas
Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center)

**Dwain Taylor Volunteer Service Award
(member category)**

Matthew Peeling (3,056 hours,
PVA Colonial Chapter)

**Dwain Taylor Volunteer Service Award
(non-member category)**

Belinda Scoggins-Kokendoffer (1,102 hours,
PVA Mid-America Chapter)

Gilford Moss President's Award

PVA Cal-Diego Chapter



cord injury and disease (SCI/D) system of care his major priority and make sure the VA takes care of paralyzed veterans.

"My plan for the next coming year is to ensure that the SCI system of care is well-funded and maintained with the nurses and doctors that it needs to take care of our members, to stay as a big advocate and voice for the members, to be in front of Congress, as well as the secretary of the VA, to continue to press our concerns," Thomas says.

PVA's National Senior Vice President Tammy Jones returns to the executive committee, as well. An Air Force veteran, she is serving her second consecutive year as senior vice president after being voted in last year as PVA's first female national senior vice president. Both Thomas and Jones were voted in by acclamation.

Josue Cordova (Air Force veteran), Lawrence "Louie" Mullins Jr. (Army veteran) and Anne Robinson (Army veteran) return as national vice presidents. Cordova comes back for his fifth straight term, while Robinson returns for her third consecutive term and Mullins for his second straight term.

Meanwhile, Marcus Murray is moving from his role as national secretary to become the new and fourth national vice president, replacing Ken Ness.

An Army veteran, Murray had previously run twice for vice president, but he didn't get enough votes. This time was different.

Murray, who served as national secretary the past fiscal year, as well as from 2019 to part of the



The 79th Annual Paralyzed Veterans of America Convention was held May 12–17 at the Hilton Austin in Austin, Texas.



Resolutions

During May's Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) 79th Annual Convention in Austin, Texas, the PVA Board of Directors passed the following resolutions:

25-M-1: Audit Committee Majority and Membership Revisions

Submitted by: PVA

Audit Committee

This resolution modifies the PVA Audit Committee membership and majority requirements in the current *PVA Administrative Guide* (Red Book).

25-M-2: Corporate Advisory Committee

Submitted by: PVA Chief

Executive Officer (CEO)

This resolution amends the *PVA Administrative Guide* (Red Book) to allow the PVA CEO, with the advisement of the PVA Executive Committee, to establish a Corporate Advisory Committee comprising business leaders from the corporate world.

25-M-O-1: Modify Annual Convention Length

Submitted by: PVA CEO

This resolution shortens the length of the PVA Annual Convention from five days to four days.

25-M-O-2: Changing Operating Reserve to Operating Checking Account

Submitted by: PVA

Executive Committee

This resolution directs the PVA Finance Committee to coordinate with appropriate staff and investment advisers to execute liquidation and transfer proceeds of publicly traded securities donated to PVA into the operating checking account.

2023-24 fiscal year, says he was proud to be voted in with his son, 22-year-old Dayvion, present.

Murray hopes to bring continued leadership, guidance and teamwork in his new role.

"Continue to be receptive to advice as it's given, be willing to learn and applying my knowledge and experience," he says.

Additionally, National Treasurer Tom Wheaton (Navy veteran) was voted in by acclamation and is serving his 12th straight year.

Matthew Peeling is the new member on the executive committee and is the new national secretary, taking over Murray's position. He was voted in by acclamation.

An Army veteran, Peeling was most recently the PVA Colonial Chapter's national director and has also worked for a couple of other nonprofit organizations, including the Baltimore County 4-H in Maryland for 43 years.

"I'm excited. You know, hopefully I'm here to help and move things forward and improve processes and just continue the great work that Marcus Murray's been doing," Peeling says.

Additionally, Charles Brown is staying on as PVA national's immediate past president.

Resolutions

The executive committee isn't the only way PVA is moving forward. In particular, two resolutions have the potential to better position the organization for the future.

The first resolution involved setting up a Corporate Advisory Committee composed of senior leaders in various sectors of the business community who have an affinity for and sup-

port PVA's mission. The committee will advise PVA's senior leadership on changes in the business environment and help PVA build relationships with other potential partners.

"Creating this Corporate Advisory Committee will allow us to engage some very high level corporate executives who, quite frankly, have friends and business associates in the broader corporate world that can open doors and introduce PVA to those people and build support for the organization and our mission and maybe help us get our name and our brand



Paralyzed Veterans of America CEO Carl Blake speaks during the convention.

out there much more easily,” says PVA CEO and Army veteran Carl Blake.

Another resolution was to shorten the length of the convention from five days to four, with the Saturday awards brunch being converted to a Friday evening dinner. Blake and Thomas say this will achieve a significant cost savings for the organization.

“Changing the convention from five days to four days was very well-needed,” says Thomas. “There were a lot of times throughout the convention that we had breaks, extended breaks, that took a little bit of time. And if we are going to be great fiduciaries of PVA’s and donors’ money, we need to ensure that we cut and save that money to put forth into our programs and continue to help our members.”

Health Care Study

Investing in a research study that will provide in-depth data about health care for veterans with SCI/D is also high on the priority list for PVA’s leaders.

The study will be conducted by the nonprofit RAND Corporation and will give PVA an understanding of how current shifts and trends in the VA will affect veterans with SCI/D, the care they receive and their caregivers.

“Little is known about the quality of care and availability of SCI/D care through the Community Care Network, and there are concerns about how you coordinate care between VA and non-VA care providers,” says PVA Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley, Esq., MSW. “We also know we’ve talked to many of you that if you get sent to a VA provider in the community, there may be accessibility issues just in terms of even getting into the office or the medical equipment being accessible. And all of this, plus the increased spending on community care that we are seeing, could result in less funding for the VA’s direct care system.”

The study will consist of four tasks: documenting the type of care that’s provided to veterans with SCI/D at the VA; investigating the availability and quality of care for individuals with SCI/D outside of the VA; assessing the services available to caregivers of veterans with SCI/D, both in the VA and non-VA health care systems; and identifying the potential implications of an increasing shift to community care over the next 10 years.

Overall, the study will take about 18 months. The data collected through literature reviews, surveys and interviews with veterans, caregivers and providers, publicly avail-



Paralyzed Veterans of America Chief Policy Officer Heather Ansley, Esq., MSW, discusses an upcoming research study.



Paralyzed Veterans of America COO Shaun Castle gives a presentation during the convention.

able data and policy analysis will help direct and support PVA's advocacy efforts and policy priorities.

Ansley says fundraising efforts are underway to secure money for the research study, which she hopes will commence within the next year.

"We really do need more of this support, and particularly in the environment we're in,

having something that we can point to that's not research that we have done internally, but that an independent party has done, albeit with our support, is quite helpful," Ansley says.

Quantifying PVA's Impact

Data and metrics are also behind a push to assess PVA's impact on its members' lives.

"We do all these great things, but how do we truly understand and know the impact of that?" PVA COO Shaun Castle says. "We know the stories. You know, I'm someone who can tell you very clearly how someone at the bedside helped me directly. And the reason I'm here is because PVA had someone at the bedside for me. But how do we know what happens next?"

Castle fleshed out a five-phase strategy to quantify what happens after that bedside interaction.

The first phase is a full analysis that looks at the ROI metrics for PVA's programs, including meeting with all program leaders and developing specific data points to capture across the organization.

"This will not only help the organization better understand what we're doing program-matically, but it will help tell our story externally," Castle says.



Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) National Senior Vice President Tammy Jones, left, and her husband and PVA Mountain States Chapter member, Dale, celebrate at the convention.



Paralyzed Veterans of America Nevada Chapter National Director Jason Kelley, left, and his wife, Christina, attended the convention.



Phase two consists of setting up dashboards for data collection for the programs to measure what they do, how they do it and what it costs.

In phase three, every program will meet with every other program every month to gain a full understanding of everything the organization does and find ways to collaborate.

Phase four involves developing a branding and communications strategy and building the communications team. Castle says it's important to leverage PVA's brand equity built up over the last 79 years to open new doors.

"I believe PVA's brand should be, and is in my mind when I talk to every company and every donor, PVA is America's leading disability and veterans organization," he says. "Or flip it,

PVA is America's leading veterans and disability organization."

The final phase, estimated for completion by next April, is to develop a new approach on program efforts and branding strategy, encompassing the data around the member journey.

"This is deeply personal to me. I've structured my life, my education, my experience for over 20 years in this world to know what to do next," says Castle, an Army veteran. "We're going to do this. This organization is second to nobody. We're going to tell the world that."

For more from the convention, visit pnonline.com. ■



Thank You

At the closing of the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) 79th Annual Convention in Austin, Texas, a motion was made that, "The Board of Directors of the Paralyzed Veterans of America assembled at this convention directs the editor-in-chief of *PN* magazine to publish in a conspicuous place ... a thank-you quoting the sincere appreciation and gratitude of the members of Paralyzed Veterans of America to the caregivers and friends of PVA, without whose help and support we could not have accomplished all that we have this week."



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Decoder Controls Stimulation

When a person sustains a spinal cord injury (SCI), the normal communication between the brain and the spinal circuits below the injury are interrupted, resulting in paralysis.

Because the brain is functioning normally, as is the spinal cord below the injury, researchers have been working to reestablish the communication to allow for rehabilitation and potentially restore movement.

Ismael Seáñez, PhD, assistant professor of biomedical engineering in the McKelvey School of Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis and of neurosurgery at WashU Medicine, and members of his lab have developed a type of decoder to restore that communication.

Through experiments in their lab with 17 human subjects without SCI, they were able to cue movement in the lower leg with transcutaneous spinal cord stimulation, or noninvasive, external electrical pulses.

Research results were published online April 25 in the *Journal of NeuroEngineering and Rehabilitation*.

The team used a special cap fitted with noninvasive electrodes that measure brain activity through electroencephalography (EEG). While wearing the cap, seated volunteers were asked to extend one of their legs at the knee, then to

only think about extending their leg — while keeping it still — so researchers could record the brain waves in both exercises.

The team provided the neural activity to the decoder, or algorithm, so it could learn how the brain waves act in both circumstances. They found that the actual movement and imagined movement used similar neural strategies.

“After we give the decoder this data, it learns to predict based on neural activity whenever there is movement or no movement,” Seáñez says in an April Washington University in St. Louis release. “We show that we can predict whenever someone is thinking about moving their leg, even if their leg does not actually move.”

The team used controls to ensure that the volunteers were truly imagining movement and not actually moving.

Seáñez says the proof-of-concept study is a first step toward developing a noninvasive brain-spine interface that uses real-time predictions to deliver transcutaneous spinal cord stimulation to reinforce voluntary movement in a single joint in rehabilitation in patients with SCI.

Going forward, the team plans to test a generalized decoder trained on data from all participants that could determine whether a universal decoder could perform as well as a personalized



CAROLYN ATKINSON/WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

Researchers have developed a type of decoder to restore communication between the brain and the area below a spinal cord injury (SCI). Through lab experiments with 17 human subjects without SCI, researchers cued movement in the lower leg with transcutaneous spinal cord stimulation, or noninvasive, external electrical pulses.

one and simplify its use in clinical settings.

Story originally published by the McKelvey School of Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis (engineering.washu.edu/news/2025/Brain-decoder-controls-spinal-cord-stimulation.html).

Contributor: Beth Miller.

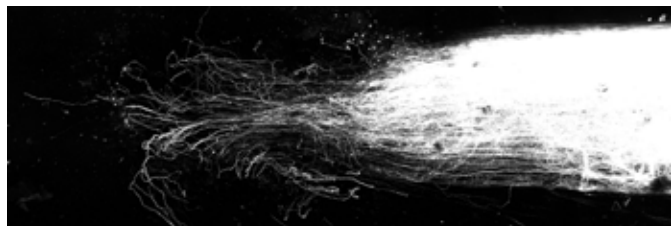
‘Cellular Bridges’ For SCI Repair

Capitalizing on the flexibility of tiny cells inside the body’s smallest blood vessels may be a powerful spinal cord repair strategy, new research suggests.

In mouse experiments, scientists introduced a specific type of recombinant protein to the site of a spinal cord injury (SCI) where these cells, called pericytes, had flooded the lesion zone. Once exposed to this protein, results showed, pericytes change shape and inhibit the production of some molecules while secreting others, creating “cellular bridges” that support regeneration of axons — the long, slender extensions of nerve cell bodies that transmit messages.

Researchers observed axon regrowth in injured mice that received a single treatment injection of the growth-factor protein, and

ANDREA TEDESCHI/THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY



Imaging shows regeneration of sensory axons four weeks after a spinal cord injury in an adult mouse injected with platelet-derived growth factor BB at the lesion site.

the animals also regained movement in their hind limbs. An experiment involving human cells suggests the results are not restricted to mice.

The work underscores how important blood vessel restoration is to recovery of neurological function after SCI, researchers say.

The study was published April 18 in the journal *Molecular Therapy*.

Previous research suggesting pericytes interfere with SCI recovery had led some scientists to recommend clearing them from the lesion site to aid repair. But cancer research has indicated pericytes' proper-

ties change when they're exposed to a protein called platelet-derived growth factor BB (PDGF-BB) — which is one way tumors generate their own blood supply. In cancer, the aim is to block PDGF-BB signaling.

Earlier neuroscience research also indicated that pericytes are highly “plastic,” meaning they are very responsive to changes in the microenvironment — including the presence of PDGF-BB. Senior study author Andrea Tedeschi, PhD, associate professor of neuroscience in The Ohio



Andrea Tedeschi, PhD

COURTESY OF THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

State University College of Medicine, and colleagues saw potential to harness that cell-protein relationship to stabilize the vasculature surrounding a SCI. In the process, they found the newly sprouted blood vessels established a pathway for regenerated axons to follow.

Following imaging studies, the team turned to

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Wenjing Sun, PhD

experiments in animals with SCI. Researchers waited for seven days after the injury — the equivalent of about nine months in a human adult — before injecting a single dose of PDGF-BB at the injury site. Analysis of tissue four weeks after the injury showed that the PDGF-BB injection produced robust axon regenerative growth compared to the

axon response in injured control mice.

“When we looked at formation of these pericyte structures that crossed the injury site, we saw the treatment promoted the growth of these bridges. And most, if not all, of these regenerating axons were able to escape the injury site by riding these cellular bridges that have formed in response to PDGF-BB administration,” says first study author Wenjing Sun, PhD, assistant professor of neuroscience at Ohio State, in an April Ohio State University release.

Electrophysiological and movement assessments of injured animals treated with PDGF-BB detected sensory activity beyond the lesion site and showed the mice regained better control of their hind limbs compared to control mice. The animals also were less sensitive to a non-painful stimulus, suggesting they did not experience the neuropathic pain that is often triggered by SCI.

Because Tedeschi, Sun and colleagues have previously shown in mice that gabapentin promotes regeneration of neural

circuits after SCI, there’s potential to consider a multipronged approach to therapy, Sun says.

“We could combine both — modulating intrinsic properties of adult neurons with a drug, and what we are doing here, modulating the non-neuronal environment to produce cellular interactions that provide a more permissive substrate for the neuron to grow on,” she says.

More work is planned to determine the precise timing for administration of PDGF-BB — with the pre-

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sumption that pericytes take some time to migrate to the injury — as well as the ideal concentration of the treatment and a potential time-released delivery system.

Accessible Tourism Summit

The Destinations for All World Summit on Accessible Tourism is scheduled for Oct. 5–7 in Torino (Turin), Italy.

The World Summit on Accessible Tourism is one of the leading international events in the field of accessible tourism, bringing together leaders, experts and prominent representatives from various sectors, including economics, innovation, technology and the environment, to discuss topics related to promoting tourism for all, both domestically and internationally.

In particular, the aim is to foster dialogue and cooperation on urgent issues that no longer only concern established tourist destinations, but the entire system that governs the organization and management of cities. The goal is to bring together experts and players from around the world to promote accessibility solutions for tourism and share knowledge and experiences on adopting best practices.

The summit offers an environment to share ideas on key topics such as destination management, hosting and safety, accommodations,

transport and mobility, leisure products and activities and many others.

This is the third World Summit on Accessible Tourism, following Montreal in 2014 and in Brussels in 2018.

For details, visit destinationsforall2025.org.

Funding For MS Studies

Cleveland Clinic in Ohio has been awarded more than \$7 million from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) to improve treatment strategies for multiple sclerosis (MS) and hypertension, also known as high blood pressure.

Daniel Ontaneda, MD, PhD, a neurologist at the Mellen Center for Multiple Sclerosis Treatment and Research, will lead a \$6.7 million project, Determining the Long-term Effectiveness of Early Intensive Versus Escalation Approaches for Prevention of Disability in Relapsing-remitting Multiple Sclerosis (DELIVER-MS).



Daniel Ontaneda, MD, PhD

The project will extend the multicenter DELIVER-MS study, a three-year randomized clinical trial comparing two treatment approaches in MS head-to-head: starting with an early, highly effective treatment approach using more potent therapies, or an escalation approach beginning with safer but potentially less effective treatments and escalating as needed.

“Having more than two dozen approved MS treatment options is a huge advantage for doctors and patients, but there are currently no definitive data from randomized controlled trials to guide the choice between early intensive and escalation approaches,” says Ontaneda in an April Cleveland Clinic release. “The funding provided by PCORI to support DELIVER-MS, and the forthcoming extension study, will address this knowledge gap and help inform clinical decision-making moving forward.”

This study is among several PCORI has funded focused on examining the longer-term outcomes of interventions in comparative clinical effectiveness research. The impact of health interventions can take years to appear, but shorter follow-up periods are still the norm for many studies. With long-term follow-up funding, this study has the potential to produce a more comprehensive understanding of treatment approaches for MS.



Anita Misra-Hebert, MD, MPH

In addition, Anita Misra-Hebert, MD, MPH, director of Cleveland Clinic's Healthcare Delivery and Implementation Science Center, will lead a nearly \$1 million project, Implementation of Effective Hypertension Management Approaches: Cleveland Clinic, which will introduce a comprehensive hypertension management program across the health system's internal medicine and family medicine practice sites in Northeast Ohio.

“The prevalence of uncontrolled blood pressure remains significant throughout our Northeast Ohio primary care practices at roughly 27% of patients, with only 28% of those following up as requested after a high reading,” Misra-Hebert says. “This funding will allow us to introduce and evaluate a more proactive program to help address this critical gap by equipping a multidisciplinary care team with the tools and strategies needed to engage patients more effectively.”

Misra-Hebert's project will implement findings from a PCORI-funded study showing the comparative clinical effectiveness of different methods to diagnose blood pressure. ■

All-In-One App

For people with spinal cord injury or disease (SCI/D), tracking health and finding resources can be challenging. And for researchers creating technologies to help those with SCI/D, collecting reliable data can be elusive.

Now, a cutting-edge, all-in-one mobile app lets users log data in real time and enables academics to generate comprehensive reports so they can use the insights to improve health outcomes.

SpineAlly was created by Aaron Phillips, PhD, and Kelly Larkin-Kaiser, PhD, at the RESTORE Network, at the University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine in Calgary, Alberta.

It allows users to enter information about medications, appointments and more than 20 daily health points, including pain, bowel and bladder function and more. It also reaps readings from smartwatches to track sleep, heart rate, blood pressure and other metrics.

This is integral for those studying SCI/D, but it's not always feasible

to expect users to accurately record or recall such a long list of their daily functions — until now.

The app, which became available to the public in January, also features a custom-trained artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot to answer questions about living with SCI/D, more than 70 support tools and a host of vetted resources,



Cody Krebs, an active user of the SpineAlly app, has contributed input for app improvements and community advocacy in promoting the app's use.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY KELLY LARKIN-KAISER

such as articles on recent research and lists of clinical trials.

Real-Time Data

Larkin-Kaiser, an assistant research professor at the RESTORE Network, worked with Phillips, the RESTORE Network's director and lead of the SCI team, on SpineAlly.

She says their research focuses on autonomic function after SCI — issues people normally don't have to think about, such as regulating blood pressure, bladder, bowels and sexual function — and creating technology to help solve them.

But they found they were missing things by not collecting data in a real-world setting, and they wanted to minimize the barriers and burdens of participating in research.

"We really wanted to develop a tool that would allow us to capture data as a research program from people at home, people living with disabilities," Larkin-Kaiser says. "It's really inconvenient for them to come into the lab all the time for testing. It's a lot of work and prep to get out of the house, sometimes traveling long distances to the lab. It's not feasible, so it limits who can participate."

Now, she says, the data is helping researchers gain more and better insights. For example, they're investigating whether epidural stimulation assists with sleep. They pull the sleep data from smartwatches and smart rings, so it's far more accurate than self-reporting.

The team started the project about three years ago and conducted over 50 focus groups to get different perspectives and ideas on what the app should look like.

"The app really evolved from being purely a research tool into a community-support tool, as well," Larkin-Kaiser says. It includes an

The graphic is a promotional banner for the SpineAlly app. At the top, the 'SpineAlly' logo is written in a white, cursive font, followed by a stylized icon of three stacked vertebrae. Below the logo, a black banner reads 'powered by ResearchAlly RA'. The center of the graphic features five smartphones displaying different screens of the app. The screens show a 'Wellness Tracker' with a calendar, a 'Hello There' greeting with a user profile, a 'Quick Services' menu with icons for 'ResearchAlly', 'Wellness Tracker', 'Clinical Trials', 'Tools', and 'Education', a 'sleep quality' screen with a smiley face and 'Same'/'Better' options, and a 'Blood pressure' screen with a line graph. At the bottom, the text 'Download the SpineAlly app today' is centered. Below this are two black buttons: one with the Apple logo and 'Download on the App Store', and another with the Google Play logo and 'Get it on Google Play'.

The SpineAlly app is an all-in-one mobile app that lets users log data in real time and enables academics to generate comprehensive reports to improve health outcomes.

education portal, she adds, "so that people could come to trusted sources of information and know that they're getting something accurate."

However, they didn't build a chat function because it's not feasible to have someone monitor it.

"We know the community organizations across North America do a great job with their peer support programs, so we do direct people to those resources," Larkin-Kaiser says.

Researchers also learned that people living with SCI wanted access to

their data, so they included a "wellness tracker" where people could document all aspects of their health.

"It keeps everything digitized in one place for easy access, and they can export reports from the calendar, as well," Larkin-Kaiser says.

So far, about 500 users have downloaded the app.

Resources & Chatbot

Barry Munro, who sustained a level C5-6 quadriplegic SCI in a diving accident in 1987, says SpineAlly has

more depth, scope and agility than any other SCI app. He helped the creators access a network of people with SCI and advised on the app's design and structure.

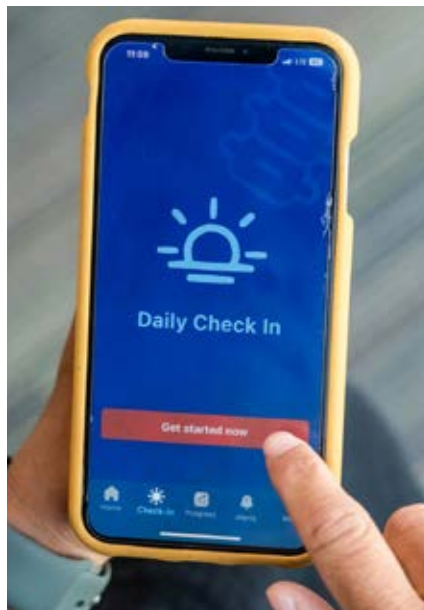
Munro brings a wealth of experience to the project. He's the chief development officer of the Canadian Spinal Research Organization in Richmond Hill, Ontario, and director/treasurer of the North American SCI Consortium.

He says he was in rehab for 10 months when he was injured, but today, the average rehab is 10 weeks.

"In 10 weeks, all you're trying to do is survive," Munro says. "You have no idea what's ahead of you."

Although the internet has made more information available, he says it can be overwhelming. SpineAlly provides a "one-stop shop," Munro says, for connecting people to tailored online information.

"Particularly with spinal cord injury, we're very heterogeneous," he



QUENTIN COLLIER

says. "We're like fingerprints — almost no injury is alike."

Bean Gill, the co-founder and executive director of ReYu Paralysis Recovery Centre in Edmonton, Alberta, beta tested the SpineAlly

The daily check-in allows users to quickly document and track a variety of aspects of their health related to autonomic dysfunction, physical health, mental/cognitive health and quality of life. Users can then review their data and track how they are progressing over time.

app and has used it consistently since January. An autoimmune disorder affected her T10 and T11 vertebrae, causing her to become a paraplegic.

"I really love it," Gill says of SpineAlly, noting that she tracks everything from incontinence and spasticity to her water intake, mood and menstrual cycle. "It's nice to see, are any of these correlated?"

Gill notes that she can also log health events like hospitalizations or infections, which is handy at doctor's visits. She's also been happy with the data provided by the AI chatbot, Allie.

"That's really useful, especially for someone newly injured when you have 20,000 questions," she says.

And Gill praised the app for its repository of clinical trials and studies and for allowing more people to get involved with them.

"These studies are what impact education, curriculum and policy," Gill says. And if people don't participate, she notes, "We're not able to move forward with any of these three things."

The SpineAlly app is available for Apple devices at the App Store and for Android devices through Google Play. For more information, visit spineally.ca. ■



The SpineAlly app allows users to quickly review data from their self-reports and wearables. Users can also generate reports of these data from the app to support care conversations.



spineally.ca

QUENTIN COLLIER

May 2025

Puerto Rico Boccia Tournament (Year-end event)	May 2-4, 2025	San Juan, PR
Land of Lincoln Bass Tournament	May 2-4, 2025	Whittington, IL
Intro to Paracycling Camp - Stop 2	May 8-9, 2025	Salt Lake City, UT
Intro to Paracycling Camp - Stop 3	May 21-22, 2025	Milwaukee, WI
Vaughan Trapshoot Tournament	May 23-25, 2025	Elburn, IL
Texas Air Gun Tournament	May 31-June 1, 2025	San Antonio, TX

June 2025

Wheelchair Basketball Camp	June 4-8, 2025	Arlington, TX
Capital Clash Bass Tournament (Year-end event)	June 13-15, 2025	La Plata, MD
Colonial Pickleball Tournament	June 14-15, 2025	Perry Point, MD
Iowa Trapshoot Tournament	June 20-22, 2025	Cedar Rapids, IA
Grand Teton Outdoor Experience	June 23-27, 2025	Jackson Hole, WY
PVA Bowling Nationals - Great Plains	June 26-29, 2025	Omaha, NE
PVA Wisconsin Trapshoot Tournament (Year-end event)	June 27-29, 2025	Green Bay, WI

July 2025

National Veterans Wheelchair Games	July 17-22, 2025	Minneapolis, MN
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August 2025

PVA Outdoor Experience	August 25-29, 2025	Breckenridge, CO
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September 2025

PVA Wheelchair Basketball Camp	September 4-7, 2025	Spokane, WA
PVA Wheelchair Rugby Camp	September 25-27, 2025	San Diego, CA



National Rugby Champs

The Wounded Warriors

Abilities Ranch (WWAR) Generals, Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP) High Fives Storm and Portland Pounders each won national championships at the May 2-4 United States Wheelchair Rugby Association Wheelchair Rugby National Championship in Wesley Chapel, Fla.

The WWAR Generals won the Division 1 title, defeating the Texas Stampede, 62-52, for the championship, while the Ability360 Heat beat the University of Michigan, 65-55, for third place.

In Division 2, the BORP High Fives Storm defeated the WWAR Warriors, 54-45, for the title. The Boise Bombers knocked off the Wisconsin Adaptive Sports Association (WASA)/CKRI Lightning, 52-46, for third place.

And the Portland Pounders defeated the Seattle Slam, 53-49, for the Division 3 title, while the Magee Eagles defeated the Shepherd Smash, 43-42, in overtime, for third place.

Besides the division award winners (in the box on page 51), other award winners included: Denver Barbarians coach Nick Pearce (Coach of the Year), NEP Wildcats coach Sarah Leonard (Spirit of Achievement), Magee Eagles player Steven Seibert (Developing Athlete) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America Wheelchair Rugby Invitational in Louisville, Ky. (Tournament of the Year).

For more photos, visit facebook.com/sportsnspokes.

NWBA Change

With the resignation of Chief Executive Officer/Exec-

utive Director David Shaffer in late April, the National Wheelchair Basketball Association (NWBA) has a new familiar face at the helm.

Brandon McBeain was promoted as the NWBA's new chief executive officer/executive director in late April and will lead the NWBA staff and direct the organization's day-to-day operations.

McBeain joined the NWBA national office in 2016 and has been involved with the organization for the past 14 years.

He's served as the chief operating officer since 2023, where he focused on ensuring quality financial stewardship, fostering relationships with partners and enhancing management of all NWBA programming (including the domestic league, national tournaments, high performance program and camps), according to a NWBA release.



Brandon McBeain

"I am extremely excited to serve the NWBA members and Board of Directors in this new role. I look forward to developing new revenue streams to ensure the financial well-being of our organization. We will continue to focus on initiatives that foster growth and awareness of our great sport by further integrating with key stakeholders of the NWBA," McBeain says in a press release. "I look forward to continuing to cultivate a collaborative culture where the true impact of our efforts will be felt within the Paralympic Movement." ■



Hitting Back

Twenty-two athletes competed in Paralyzed Veterans of America's pickleball clinic held in April in Salt Lake City.

United States Wheelchair Rugby Championships



CHRISTOPHER DIVIRGILIO

Wounded Warriors Abilities Ranch (WWAR) Warriors player Mike Whitehead tries to get past Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP) High Fives Storm's David Garcia during the United States Wheelchair Rugby Association Division 2 wheelchair rugby national championship game May 4 in Wesley Chapel, Fla. The BORP High Fives Storm defeated the WWAR Warriors, 54-45, for the Division 2 title.

AWARD WINNERS

Division 1

AWARD	NAME	TEAM
Sportsmanship	Kevin Hamilton	Ability360 Heat
Best In Class 0.5	Eddie Crouch	WWAR Generals
Best In Class 1.0	Joe Jackson	Ability360 Heat
Best In Class 1.5	Travis Baker	WWAR Generals
Best In Class 2.0	Chuck Melton	WWAR Generals
Best In Class 2.5	Alex Pabon	Texas Stampede
Best In Class 3.0	Sebastien Verdin	Texas Stampede
Best In Class 3.5	Sebastian Frederiksen	Ability360 Heat

Division 2

AWARD	NAME	TEAM
MVP	Rio Kanda Kovac	Boise Bombers
Sportsmanship	Daniel Dawoud	MedStar NRH United
Best In Class 0.5	Steve Servis	WWAR Warriors
Best In Class 1.0	Nate Washington	MedStar NRH United
Best In Class 1.5	Ryan Engelby	WASA/CKRI Lightning
Best In Class 2.0	CJ Brown	Boise Bombers
Best In Class 2.5	Sarah Adam	DASA STL Bombers
Best In Class 3.0	Mike Whitehead	WWAR Warriors
Best In Class 3.5	David Garcia	BORP High Fives

Division 3

AWARD	NAME	TEAM
MVP	Sam Robb	Shepherd Smash
Best In Class 0.5	Chris Fleace	Oscar Mike Militia
Best In Class 1.0	Scott Stokes	Shepherd Smash
Best In Class 1.5	Talbot Kennedy	Shepherd Smash
Best In Class 2.0	Seth McBride	Portland Pounders
Best In Class 2.5	Ryan Major	Oscar Mike Militia
Best In Class 3.0	Matt Debly	Seattle Slam
Best In Class 3.5	Justin Beavers	Portland Pounders



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Having A Ball In Puerto Rico



Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Puerto Rico Chapter members competed in the second PVA Puerto Rico Chapter Bocchia Clinic and Tournament May 2–4 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. PVA Florida Chapter member Otis Hudson won the individual bocchia tournament, with PVA Florida Chapter member Craig Caffro in second and PVA Florida Chapter member Charles Corley in third. Hudson and Corley teamed up to win the doubles bocchia title, with PVA Florida Chapter member Raul Acosta and Caffro in second and PVA Puerto Rico Chapter member Keyla Agosto and PVA Southeastern Chapter member Sheldon Layne in third.

PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY JUAN CAMACHO



Wolfpack Nets PVA Hoops Title



PHOTOS THIS PAGE COURTESY OF PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA




Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) hosted the PVA Wheelchair Basketball Invitational Tournament March 21–22 in Colorado Springs, Colo. The San Diego Wolfpack Wheelchair Basketball team won the tournament title, with PVA Red coming in second and PVA Blue placing third.

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