

THE

DESERT ORACLE

A Member Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America

May-June 2010 Vol. 12 Issue 5

The Phoenix Wheelchair Over-The-Line Softball Tournament V

**Saturday
April 24th**

**North Phoenix
Baptist Church**

(Southeast Corner of Central and Bethany Home)

No Entry Fee

Participants Get a Free
Lunch and T-Shirt

If you want to play please be at the church
by 7:30 am, so we can put you on a team.
Play starts @ 8:30 am.

All Ages
and
Skill Levels
Welcome
To Play!

Questions?
Call
Gary Hershey
602.722.3874

The Arizona Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America ASTRATECH, and SYMBIUS Medical

Proudly presented the 5th Annual Phoenix Wheelchair Over-The-Line Softball Tournament Saturday, April 24th 2010.

To kick off this event, the precocious and multi-talented Meghan Tuzzolino sang the National Anthem with an overwhelming ovation.

Teams from all over the Southwest converged on the North Phoenix Baptist Church parking lot. This game is played on asphalt. You don't need to have a disability, but it is helpful if you are competitive, can maneuver a wheelchair and swing at a pitched softball at the same time. Not as easy as it looks!

This fun, free, family event included no entry fee, available wheelchairs for those who don't have one, morning muffins, afternoon lunch, Tee-shirts and prizes for the winning teams in different categories.

If you would like to try this Wheelchair Sport Please contact Gary Hershey.

Inside this Edition of the Desert Oracle:

Executive Director's Report
Past President's Report
PVA Awareness Week Adventures
Berkshire's Bits & Pieces
Marana, AZ BOD & Cook Out

Arizona Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America

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The views expressed in the articles of the Desert Oracle are the opinions of the author and not necessarily the opinion of the AZPVA. Any article not attributed to an individual / group was compiled with available information by APVA staff/members. The Desert Oracle does encourage our readers to submit their articles, interests and/or rebuttals.

The Chapter will be without a National Service Officer as of May 1, 2010. In January Michael Wilson was reassigned to Richmond Virginia. Michael and his family wanted to be on the East Coast for a long time. The Wilson's first week in Richmond was celebrated by the 30 inch blizzard of 2010. We did remind him that ours' is a dry heat. Marco Rossi is headed to Denver, Colorado at the new SCI Center. Marco is to report in on the 30th of April. His wife Sue worked for City of Mesa Disabled Sports before the cutbacks and has joined the US Para Olympic Organization. We wish the both of them and their families all the best. Marco will be visiting the Arizona Chapter one week each month until we get new Service Officers. If you're interested in being a Service Officer, call 602-627-3311.

April 10th was the Marana Barbecue and Southern Arizona Board Meeting. The meeting went well as always. The food was excellent. My understanding is that next year Frank and Jonel are going to be serving a Mexican fare. We would like to thank you all for taking the time to come out and show your interest in your Chapter.

The Chapter received an invitation to set up a table at the Veteran's Health Fair at Scottsdale Community College on April 17th. Congressman Harry Mitchell and his staff arranged this event. This was a large assorted gathering of many organizations that are attempting to provide many services to the veteran population of Arizona. We understand there will be other attempts in the near future to set up more events to provide benefit information to veterans.

The past Saturday April 24th was the Over The Line Tournament. Gary Hershey and all of the great volunteers put on a terrific day. The home run derby was a new event and seemed to be appreciated by all. This is by far the best display of organization, camaraderie, and wheelchair sports in all of Arizona. Thank you to all those that competed and to those who came out and supported the event.

June 30, 2010 is the final day for all requests for funds from the Chapter. The request must be received before closing on the 30th. No exceptions.

The cost of real estate is at a low point as are interest rates. We are actively seeking to buy a new location for the Chapter. The goal is to get closer to the Phoenix VAMC and cut our costs each year. Many properties have been considered and we are now working out a budget, financing and optimum location for our needs and those of the future. If this does not work out we will be reviewing leased property that will fit our requirements and reduce our rent costs.

In a recent review of the Chapter demographics, we along with National PVA are not getting new members in the younger brackets. The Chapter head count for ages 24 and under is only a couple higher than ages 75 and over. We need new members. Many do not realize that all they get from the VA Healthcare System was fought for by their predecessors from WWII through the Viet Nam Veterans. We as a Chapters need to find veterans who were hurt after they served. It is wrong that they are not getting the best SCI/D care that is available to them; new blood, new ideas and positive change. They are out there and they need to know there choices. If you come across another veteran who is PVA material have them call the Service Office at 1-800-795-3582.

Hello Paralyzed Veterans' of America!

Hey people, I've written articles in the past of methods to improve our way of thinking toward our mental and physical health. Methods of teaching us to seek lesser stress throughout our day, working with minimizing stress in our jobs to assist us in maintaining endurance.

Well, here are some ways to look into keeping our heart healthy, so that we may endure a longer, more fruitful way of life.

Love your Heart 8 (eight) ways.

Here are some ways you can reduce your risk of heart disease:

1. Quit smoking. Smokers have more risk for heart attack than nonsmokers.
2. Improve cholesterol levels. Keep your total cholesterol levels less than 200, HDL ("good") cholesterol level greater than 40, and LDL ("bad") cholesterol less than 130.
3. Control high-blood pressure. Keep your blood pressure less than 140/90. If you take blood pressure medicines, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them unless told to do so by your provider.
4. MOVE! Get moderate amounts of physical activity. Activities such as gardening or walking are good.
5. Choose heart-friendly foods low in fat and cholesterol. Eat at least 2 cups of fruit and 1 ½ cups of vegetables a day.
6. Achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Eat nutritiously and get physically active.
7. Manage stress. Use stress and anger management techniques to lower your risk.
8. Control diabetes. Take your diabetes medicines as directed. Monitor your blood sugar.

More info: American Heart Association 800-242-8721.

Congestive heart failure increases your risk of heart attack. Call 911 immediately if you have symptoms, including: chest pain that lasts more than 2 minutes or returns, dizziness, fainting, nausea, shortness of breath, sweating or anxiety, some people, particularly women, may not have chest pain.

Well these are my tips to you all for this section of MS Corner. I wish you all a wonderful spring season and hoping everyone stays safe and well blessed.

Sincerely yours,



Benjamin Garcia,
I.P.P Arizona Chapter PVA

My name is Diego Suazo. I have been a member for 10 years, with the last 2 years having served on the Board of Directors for the Arizona Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America. At our most recent board meeting held in Marana, Arizona, I was appointed the new Sports Director, which I gladly accepted. I've been playing wheelchair sports since my injury in 1996, and have experienced first hand the mental and physical benefits that stem from friendly and sometimes not so friendly competition.

I recently had the opportunity to attend the 2010 Advocacy/Legislation Seminar in Washington D.C., as our board's President and Executive Director thought it would be a good idea for me to witness firsthand what the PVA does on a National level and to have a better understanding of what our organization is all about. I had the pleasure of meeting with members from other chapters across the country to speak to our state representatives on Capital Hill and have our voices heard about issues that concern us as disabled veterans.

As we all know too well, trying to maneuver through the VA healthcare system can be frustrating to say the least. Our goal in Washington D.C. is to make these elected officials aware of the issues and barriers we face daily in order to be corrected.

For example, Billing Discrepancies, in which service-connected veterans are faced with a situation where they, or their insurance company, may be billed for treatment of a service-connected condition. Meanwhile, non-service connected disabled veterans are usually billed multiple times for the same treatment episode or have difficulty getting their insurance companies to pay for treatment provided by the VA. The PVA's position is for the VA to immediately change it's regulations to reflect the fact that a Permanent and Total rating means veterans are not billed for care, or if the VA is unwilling to make this necessary change, then Congress correct this through legislative action. This issue and others like it are the reason we need to send more reps to make sure we get our point across.

The seminar was broken up in 2 parts. The first 2 days were filled with briefings and guest speakers and the last 2 days were spent at Capitol Hill meeting with our state representatives. The Keynote speaker was The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki Secretary Department of Veterans Affairs. He stuck out in my mind because one of his goals is to end homelessness amongst veterans in 5 years. This is a huge task being theirs over 100,000 veterans on the streets. I applaud his efforts for the simple fact that if you put your life on the line for your country your country should at least help to put a roof over your head.

We do not only address issues facing disabled veterans, but the whole disabled community in general. Issues like the air travel, ticketing/seating at theatres and stadiums, and accessibility at National parks to name a few. We even have our own architects who are involved in the building process of future structures and making current buildings accessible.

This experience made me aware and opened my eyes to the fact that we as an organization are advocating as best we can. We still have a long road ahead of us, but a positive one that is paving the way to a more efficient experience for our veterans needing to utilize the health-care system, also to make this country accessible for all citizens to enjoy.

PVA Awareness Week

Every year in April the National Paralyzed Veterans of America host an Awareness Week.

The 2010 Awareness Week, *Empowering Lives* was kicked off Tuesday, April 13th with Jackie from the NSO office and Pat from the Chapter office hitting the streets of downtown Phoenix and Tempe handing out PVA buttons, pamphlets, pens and small American Flags.

In Phoenix, we stopped at Starbucks for coffee and completed our strategy for the morning's adventure. In the pictures are some of the more cheerful people we met. Most of downtown is dedicated to the court houses and federal buildings. We observed a lot of political activism ie. Petition signing against the new food tax, new candidates for the upcoming elections, very few street people and a lot of no eye contact people.

With downtown Phx completely canvassed, we hopped on the Metro Rail and headed for downtown Tempe to spread awareness..

Tempe in the middle of the day was a little sparse, not quite a ghost town, but not the hustle of Phoenix. We passed out our trinkets and talked of PVA Awareness. We experienced the Tempe town beach & lake, the Hippie Store on Mill Ave., and ate lunch at



which came highly recommended by Jackie.

After lunch we headed back to the Metro Station and began our journey back to Phoenix. All in all we had an exhausting fun filled day.

We've received several inquiries recently about **requirements to enter a VA sponsored nursing home for long term care**. If you are reaching a point where you feel you need to go into a nursing home for long term care, you need to first be enrolled at a VA Medical Center. After that, you may go to a VA clinic closer to your present residence. At the hospital or clinic, whichever you would usually go, make sure you explain your possible need to go into a VA nursing home to your social worker at the hospital/clinic. The social worker will, in turn, assist you with the necessary steps you will need to take. If you do not yet meet the below requirements to be in a VA nursing home or VA contract facility free of charge, then the social worker will be able to assist you with other possible assistance.

In order to enter a VA nursing home at no charge, the veteran must meet the following criteria:

1. Has a combined service connected disability of 70% or more
2. Has a 60% service connected disability with "Individual Unemployability" or "Permanent and Total" disability rating
3. Is seeking nursing home care for a service connected condition

Veterans who do not meet the above criteria, will need to have their own resources to pay for a community nursing home. Nursing homes charge their own rates, and generally do not offer special rates for being a veteran.

Life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% how you choose to react.

Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

What we fear most is usually what we need to do.

A little nonsense now and then, is cherished by the wisest men.

Do what you can, with what you have, from where you are.

Never judge things by their appearance.

BBQ in Marana, AZ

The annual Southern, AZ Board of Director Meeting and Cook Out was again held at the Ora Mae Harn Park in Marana, AZ. Sue Wudy, an APVA Director, is in charge of the picnic and as always Frank and Jonel of San Manuel, AZ volunteer to do the grilling and cooking. Frank is also with the Vietnam Veterans organization. And yes, they are the best cooks!

As you can see in some of these pictures the Southern Arizona weather is most wonderful this time of the year.

The BOD meeting was held approximately at 11:00 am with open forum participation.

Featured in this picture to the right is Sam and his mascot Karen Gialle, SCI Nurse at the Tucson VA Medical Center. If you missed this BBQ, you missed the show of loyalty Sam has for Karen. Impressive!

At this Meeting Diego Suazo was unanimously approved for the position of "Sports Director" for the Arizona Chapter.

The BOD members want to thank all the members who participated in this picnic. Southern Arizona Members are always in great character and fun to be around.

Thanks again to our cooks, Jonel and Frank



War on Brain Injuries: Researches Study Effects on Soldiers

Troops battered by explosions in distant combat zones are now required to undergo brain injury screening before returning to duty, say experts at a defense Department center created to deal with brain injuries and stress disorders.

A need for innovative approaches is becoming more urgent as the number of cases grows. In 2003, when the United States invaded Iraq, 12,886 troops were diagnosed with traumatic brain injuries. By 2009, that number more than doubled to 27,862. During that time, it was often the case that troops reported to the hospital only if they felt something was wrong.

Requiring everyone involved in an explosion to receive a medical evaluation removes some of the stigma of self-reporting, said experts with the Washington, D.C.,-based Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. The examination results are entered into personal medical files, which also provide a way to track cases. Tracking those cases will provide information about what traits and treatments lead to the most complete recoveries.

Troops tend to shrug off injuries. A warrior “doesn’t want to let his buddies down on his right and his left,” said Cmdr. Fredrick Kass, Marine Corps Headquarters-Health Services director of clinical programs. The military is educating troops to recognize and report symptoms, Kass said. Things are getting better, he added, but there is “still more to do.” And more to be done to understand the nature of the injury, said Escamilla, whose center treats Fort Bliss soldiers. Researchers are refining tests that reveal physical and mental impairments. The kinds of things that would allow to return to duty includes a lack of physical symptoms, and positive results on stress and cognitive functioning tests, said Col. Michael Jaffee, director of the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center.

Wherever the line is drawn, it will be somewhat arbitrary because every person reacts differently, Escamilla said. “They (Troops) can be removed (from duty) for a short time and recuperate,” he said. “You don’t immediately track them into a pathway that says they can’t be a soldier again.”

Traumatic brain injury range from concussion, also called mild traumatic brain injury, to injuries that penetrate the skull and brain. Most diagnoses are for concussions. In 2009, more than 78 percent were in the mild category. **Symptoms** run the gamut from temporary memory loss to personality changes. Damage to the front of the brain can result in what appears to be a lack of motivation or a lack of inhibition. Deeper damage can cause problems with “primary” emotions such as sadness and anger.

“We assure soldiers that most with a history of concussion fully recover and are able to return to duty,” wrote Dr. Brett J. Theeler, a Beaumont neurologist. “We offer evaluation and appropriate treatment strategies for all of their symptoms.”



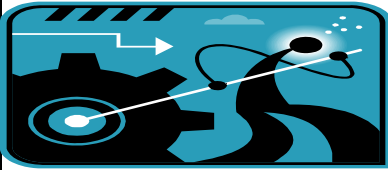

Treatment is very specific to the injury. Some skills can be “rebuilt.” That means the brain is finding new routes through the nervous system to replace damaged ones. A variety of treatment, including some drugs, can be used to deal with cognitive impairment, headaches, lack of sleep and traumatic stress.

Katherine Helmick, Defense Center of Excellence senior executive director for traumatic brain injury said, “We want to protect our strongest weapon, which is the brain.”

Dear Civilians, 'We know that the current state of affairs in our great nation has many civilians up in arms and excited to join the military. For those of you who can't join, you can still lend a hand. Here are a few of the areas where we would like your assistance:

1. The next time you see any adults talking (or wearing a hat) during the playing of the National Anthem - kick their ass.
 2. When you witness, firsthand, someone burning the American Flag in protest - kick their ass.
 3. Regardless of the rank they held while they served, pay the highest amount of respect to all veterans. If you see anyone doing otherwise, quietly pull them aside and explain how these veterans fought for the very freedom they bask in every second. Enlighten them on the many sacrifices these veterans made to make this Nation great. Then hold them down while a disabled veteran kicks their ss.
 4. If you were never in the military, DO NOT pretend that you were. Wearing battle dress uniforms (BDUs) or Jungle Fatigues, telling others that you used to be 'Special Forces'. Collecting GI Joe memorabilia, might have been okay when you were seven years old, now, it will only make you look stupid and get your ass kicked.
 5. Next time you come across an *Air Force* member, do not ask them, 'Do you fly a jet?' Not everyone in the Air Force is a pilot. Such ignorance deserves an ass-kicking (children are exempt).
 6. If you witness someone calling the *US Coast Guard* 'non-military', inform them of their mistake - and kick their ass.
 7. Next time Old Glory (the US flag) prances by during a parade, get on your damn feet and pay homage to her by placing your hand over your heart. Quietly thank the military member or veteran lucky enough to be carrying her - of course, failure to do either of those could earn you a severe ass-kicking.
 9. 'Your mama wears combat boots' never made sense to me - stop saying it! If she did, she would most likely be a vet and therefore would kick your ass!
 10. Bin Laden and the Taliban are not Communists, so stop saying 'Let's go kill those Commies!' And stop asking us where he is! Crystal balls are not standard issue in the military. That reminds me - if you see anyone calling those damn psychic phone numbers, let me know, so I can go kick their ass!
 11. 'Flyboy' (*Air Force*), 'Jarhead' (*Marines*), 'Grunt' (*Army*), 'Squid' (*Navy*), 'Puddle Jumpers' (*Coast Guard*), etc., are terms of endearment we use describing each other. Unless you are a service member or vet, you have not earned the right to use them. Using them could get your ass kicked.
 12. Last, but not least, whether or not you become a member of the military, support our troops and their families. Every Thanksgiving and religious holiday that you enjoy with family and friends, please remember that there are literally thousands of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen far from home wishing they could be with their families. Thank God for our military and the sacrifices they make every day. Without them, our Country would get it's ass kicked.
- 'It's the Veteran, not the reporter, who has given us the freedom of the press.' It's the Veteran, not the poet, who has given us the freedom of speech.'
- 'It's the Veteran, not the community organizer, who gives us the freedom to demonstrate.' It's the Military who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag.'
- AND ONE MORE:
13. If you ever see anyone singing the national anthem in Spanish - KICK THEIR ASS.

2010 Calendar of Events

When	What	Where	Who
May 30th 2010	Memorial Day APVA Office Closed		
June 12th 2010	APVA Board of Directors Meeting in Prescott, AZ	BBQ @ the Prescott VA Ramada	APVA Office 602-244-9168
July 4th 2010	Happy Independence Day APVA Office Closed		
August 2010	APVA Board of Directors Meeting @ APVA office	APVA Office 8126 N 23rd Ave Suite J	APVA Office 602-244-9168
September 6th 2010	Labor Day APVA Office Closed		
October 2010	APVA Board of Directors Meeting @ APVA office	APVA Office 8126 N 23rd Ave Suite J	APVA Office 602-244-9168
November 2010	Happy Thanksgiving		

MEMBERSHIP REPORT from The Arizona Chapter

The Arizona Chapter voting membership stands at **543** as of March 2010.

National and APVA records show our voting membership as:

308- Service Connected 235 - Non-Service Connected

The Arizona Chapter encourages each of our members to contact the Chapter and let us know how you are doing, and if we can help you in any way. If you know of any of our members who have passed away, or if you have an address/phone change, please contact the Chapter as soon as possible. Also, if you would like to receive the Desert Oracle Newsletter by e-mail, please call or e-mail the office with your e-mail address.

Do you know a veteran with spinal cord dysfunction who isn't a member of the APVA?

Let us know at the Chapter office by calling

602-244-9168 or 1-800-621-9217 e-mail: azpva@azpva.org

Happy Birthday MAY JUNE

John Gerving
Catherine Baker
Michael Brookhouser
Ronald Trozzi
Michael Henders
Leslie Coulter
Frances Huynh
Bernie Sinor
Christopher Idle
Michael Supulver
Kenneth Bower
George Lovell
Norma Rodriques
Joe Finger
Kim Griffith
John Infanti
Edward Hutchison
Eugene Murphy
Thomas Stillwell
Mark Leonard

George Stewart
Michael Hudson
Ed Koziol
Allen Topel
Robert Peterson
Marian Chavez
Pamela Foley
Maurice Valeriano
Gatano Gabriel
David Janey
Shelly Powell
Frank Bailey
Richard Gardner
Johnny Minton
Brian Perry
Roy Button
Jerry LeClair
Norman Corpstein
Nancie Scalercio
Randall Britton



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Lee Bachman
Walter Stockton, Jr
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Michael Smyth
Richard Riethmayer
Benjamin Ortiz, Jr.
Ronald Feczko
George Banbury
Benjamin Garcia
Gordon Woodward
Kenneth Briefer
Raymond Cuevas
Michael Eisenberg
Stanley Czerniewski
Kenneth Jones
Kathryn Glaze
Rodney Thomas
Robert Heup
Arthur Damsky
Dale Puhle
Colleen Cretsinger

Kenneth Hunter
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Joseph Chitty
Larry Lattomus
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Kenneth Carlson
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