CALIFORNIA DAVA NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 1 **November 2013**



Sr. Vice Medvigy Enters Convention Hall escorted by his wife, Jackie

Highlights of the 2013 National Convention

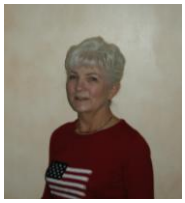
John A. Medvigy
Sr. Vice Commander

I was honored that Auxiliary Commander Mary Lou Caldwell asked me to attend DAV/DAVA National Convention in Orlando, Florida in her place. I was impressed that over 10 women made the time and effort to travel so far for Convention.

The first order of business at our District meeting was to elect an Alternate NEC Member. Adjutant Julie was nominated and elected. We then volunteered to serve on various committees. My expertise with our Department's Standing Rules Committee, lead me to serve as a member of the National Standing Rules Committee. I learned a lot to share in January. '

One of the highlights of the convention was the Joint Opening Session. It was exciting to watch our own Larry Polzin, PSC in his role as

Continued on page 2



Commander's Message

Mary Lou Caldwell
Commander

I have just returned from DAV Auxiliary Fall Conference in Cincinnati and I am assimilating the wealth of information that was presented there. We will see many changes in the coming year. In August at the National Convention the DAV Auxiliary adopted the new DAV branding and Graphics, namely the gray and olive DAV logo. In Cincinnati, the Auxiliary NEC adopted the new look by voting to be identified as the DAV Auxiliary.

Over the next few months you will notice a change in our National DAVA logo from the Red, White and Blue to the new Gray and Olive with the word Auxiliary spelled out. Some of the other changes will be more gradual, and we will include a presentation in future newsletters and our mid–winter meeting in San Diego.

The object of this change is for the Auxiliary to be more closely identified with the DAV. There was a strong affirmation by National Commander Joe Johnston of the importance the Auxiliary plays in achieving the goals of the DAV. We are truly two branches of the same organization. Commander Johnston, an Auxiliary member himself, even went so far as to say that every DAV member should also join the DAV Auxiliary.

Continued on page 2

Commander's Message From Page 1

The DAV will now include Auxiliary material in all their bulk mailings, which give the Auxiliary greatly increased exposure to a receptive audience. The DAV is committed to truly helping the Auxiliary grow. They no longer consider us the ladies in the other room.

While I was in Cincinnati I also had the pleasurable experience of meeting the Auxiliary headquarters supportive staff. I now had a face to put with the voice that so patiently answered my many questions over the last year. It was nice to be able to thank them in person for all they have done for me as an officer and for the Department of California over the last year.

Adjutant Julie and I presented a check for $1,150 for *DAVA for Kids.* I was proud to announce that our donation was a joint effort of California's DAV and its Auxiliary.

As always there was so much to learn from both the presentations and exchanges with members from other parts of the country. In unity there is strength.



Fall Conference Attendees: (Back) Gordon Caldwel, James Bogan, John Medvigy, Jackie Medvigy, John Stinnett, (Front) Mary Lou Caldwell, Julie Steinbaugh, Dori Bogan, Donna Stinnett

Chaplain's Corner



Betty Quintana, Chaplain

Hello, my DAV Auxiliary Brothers and Sisters.

The Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary is an outstanding organization that is always fighting for the rights of Veterans and their families. As Veterans Day approaches, we are preparing for memorial services to honor all of our Veterans, and we shall be grateful for the many sacrifices they have made. As we continue to pray for peace, we realize the toll war has had upon us all.

We pray for our Veterans that they can regain a sense of normalcy after they have returned home. Thanks to all Veterans for their service to our great country.

It is my pleasure to serve as your chaplain.

Convention from page 1

National Commander. He has earned the respect of DAV and Auxiliary members across the nation. First Lady Michelle Obama introduced her husband, President Barak Obama. Their joint appearance placed a national spotlight on this organization.

California hosted a Reception so other delegations from throughout the nations could come and visit for a while. It was a huge honor to represent the Auxiliary for these festivities.



Inspired By Maya Angelou

Julie Weissman-Steinbaugh, PSC, Adjutant

In her book, Letters to My Daughters, Ms. Angelou writes: "I learned that a friend might be hiding behind a stranger's face."

A frequent subject of conversation at Auxiliary meetings and conventions is how to increase our membership. I believe Maya Angelou's words are the road map to answering this question.

The basic issue of membership recruitment is to convince non-members that Auxiliary membership is beneficial to them. There is a perceived notion that younger people don't want the same things that older members do. The generation gap is magnified by those who say we can't get new members, or "we tried sending out letters, and no one responded".

We are going about this the wrong way. We need to focus on what common experiences we share. I was struck by this notion at Fall Conference. Many of you know that my husband experienced some significant health issues this past year, and just as so many do, we struggled with the VA. This medical system is unlike any other in the country. Although my friends whose spouses are not veterans sympathized, my Auxiliary friends provided the greatest support, because they knew firsthand of the challenges of dealing with this system. Many of these Auxiliary members are older than me, and in many respects, we don't have much in common. However, their love, support and understanding brought us to a new level of friendship and trust.

If I could, I would adopt Maya Angelou's words as the DAVA's national slogan. As more and more members of the military are discharged from service, they and their families need to know that they are not alone. We as an organization need to figure out how to offer friendship and support in ways that make building relationships less scary to the strangers amongst us. I hope we can all embrace the idea that a friend might be hiding behind a stranger's face.

In Her Own Words…

Irene Wright, Bazaar Chair

It gives me great pleasure to be a part of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary. I was honored to be appointed Bazaar Chair. This fundraiser gives us all a chance to do a little shopping at State Convention in June.

I enjoy spending time to make it better for all veterans. I have been an Auxiliary member for eight years. My husband, now deceased Richard Wright (Ret USN E-8) and I joined the DAV Auxiliary to give back to the veterans and to support an organization that has done so much for the local community.

I have volunteered numerous hours each month to manage and organize the DAV food bank that distributes donated food to the local veteran population and the homeless. Also, during the DAV monthly meeting, I have volunteered over 3 hours a month to assist with the preparation of lunch and refreshments provided to the attending DAV chapter members. As a dedicated Auxiliary member, I have visited the local VA Healthcare hospital to spend time with the disabled veterans presented with illnesses on several national holidays.

It has been a blessing for me to continue what I do since I lost my husband, he would have wanted me to continue to honor and serve our veterans that have made tremendous sacrifices for their country.



VAVS – United in Service

Alma Fowlkes, PSC, VAVS Chair

Volunteers provide thousands of hours of service to veterans, and several of the volunteers are veterans also. No matter your skill or schedule, there is a volunteer position open for you.

I will describe my local VA Medical Center – West Los Angeles; it includes clinics at Sepulveda and at the Downtown Los Angeles Clinic.

At West Los Angeles volunteers staff the concierge and do an excellent job in assisting veterans with information, giving directions, helping them with where their appointments are locate and give them the correct times and dates of their appointments. Sometimes volunteers will take them to the appointment location which may be in another building or on another floor. They also give the veteran pamphlets on health issues, etc.

Several of our volunteers serve in the Fisher House, helping to prepare meals and snacks for family members of patients of the VAMC and veterans who are recovering from surgery. They stay in the house with their family members for a specific amount of time during their recovery. It has a home like environment. The rooms are very nicely decorated and colorful. It is like home away from home.

There are nursing homes for some elderly patients, and veterans in need of rehabilitation. Volunteers provide entertainment and fruit for them on a monthly basis. They also provide bedside visits, read and write for them if needed. Many of them do not have visitors. The volunteers are somewhat like advocates for them. At Christmas time, our Unit 123 gives goodie bags to each patient in the nursing homes. The bags consist of fruit, socks and comfort kits, etc.

During Thanksgiving, many of the volunteers will be preparing turkey baskets for needy families including many of our veterans' families. The need is greater this year than usual due to the economy.

It is a real pleasure volunteering. The volunteers throughout the California VAVS are working hard and providing millions of hours of service to our veterans. They volunteer with love and care. The gratification as a volunteer is great as you make life comfortable for others.

DAVA Unit 48 Supports Our Hospitalized Veterans

Dolores Wingett, PSC
Adjutant

Twice a year, members of Sonoma County Unit 48 gather to assemble "Ditty Bags" for patients at the VAMC-San Francisco, Ft. Miley. These bags contain personal care items such as shampoo, lotion, mouth wash, etc. At our most recent gathering we made 75 bags.

This is an easy project that most Auxiliary members can participate in.

Member Resources



Freedoms Foundation

Jill Dahlen, Chair

As mentioned in the July Newsletter we are pleased to be able to send students to the Freedoms Foundation Spirit of America Youth Leadership Program in April of 2014. Information regarding the application and dates will go out to all the Units by the end of October.

This is a three-day conference for high school students; sophomore to senior age level. There will be participants from across the United States attending this program. They will have the opportunity to study current issues, develop leadership skills and the American political process. They will also tour Philadelphia and Valley Forge.

The requirements for a student to apply are a minimum 3.0 grade point average, a letter of recommendation and a letter from the applicant expressing their desire to attend. It is important that the information/application be filled out completely and all documentation be included and sent in on time.

Please feel free to share this information with your Unit and Chapter. Again, thank you all for your continued support and contributions to this program.



Scholarships

STATE OF CALIFORNIA DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP:
Provides financial assistance for books.
http://dava-ca.com/services.htm

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AUXILIARY NATIONAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND:
Amount of a scholarship can be up to, but not more than $1500 per year for a maximum of 5 years.
http:**//auxiliary**.dav.org/membership/documents/**ScholarshipApplication**.xls

Jesse Brown Scholarship:
It recognizes outstanding young volunteers who give of their time by awarding annual scholarships that may be used to continue their education.
http://auxiliary.dav.org/membership/documents/scholarshiprules.pdf



Financial Hardship Assistance

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA AUXILIARY VETERANS FUND:
Provides a one-time grant up to $1,000 to pay bills.
http://dava-ca.com/docs/AUXILIARY%20VETERANS%20FUND%20APPLICATION.pdf

NATIONAL DAVA SERVICE SUPPORT FUND:
Assists those who find they are temporarily unable to meet outstanding financial obligations such as utility bills, mortgage payments, hospital bills, etc. This is a one-time grant of up to $1,000.
http://auxiliary.dav.org/membership/Programs.aspx

Legislative Update

The DAV has taken up several issues on its legislative agenda which directly impact the lives of Auxiliary Members. It's our job to lobby our legislators to enact these policies! Both of the following briefs can be found at: http://www.dav.org/learn-more/legislation/issue-briefs/.

COMPREHENSIVE BENEFITS FOR CARE- GIVERS OF VETERANS OF ALL ERAS

The Situation

Family caregivers are an important part of VA's long term services and supports system and provide the vast majority of the care and support for loved ones with chronic care needs and functional limitations. Although most family caregivers willingly undertake this role, research documents the negative physical, emotional, and financial consequences care giving can have. Currently, VA only provides comprehensive benefits to caregivers of veterans severely disabled on or after September 11, 2001. Caregivers of veterans who do not meet this eligibility requirement are able to receive limited support and services from VA that do not address fully the burdens and strains of care giving.

The Challenge

- In the 1990s, changes in VA's delivery of medical care from inpatient to outpatient and more home and community services resulted in greater demands on veteran's families to provide care giving in the home.
- According to the National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, the veteran population ages 65 and older will peak at 9.7 million by 2014 and number of veterans 85 and older who are most likely to require long term support and services will remain over 1 million through 2034. As the veteran population ages and continues to increase, the role of caregivers will become even more important.
- As authorized by Public Law 111-163, VA's comprehensive caregiver program is provided only to the newest generation of severely injured and wounded veterans. VA services and supports for family caregivers of veterans from earlier service periods are quite limited. Also, similar limitation can be seen in the size and scope of VA programs such as the veteran Directed Home and Community-Based Services, the Medical Foster Home, and the Patient Centered Alternatives to Institutional Extended Care Pilots. Furthermore, VA's current statutory authority to provide services directly to caregivers of disabled veterans is limited only to those instances where such services are directly related to the veteran's treatment.
- VA does not have a standard needs assessment used consistently nationwide for the veterans and the caregiver to determine the appropriate number of services and hours they need for the veteran to remain in their community. Thus, access to VA financed home and community based services, which are directed at the veteran and supports their caregiver, varies widely because they are driven more by locally available resources rather than clinical need.

The Solution

- DAV urges Congress to correct the inequity in the eligibility of VA caregiver support benefits and services making them available to veterans of all eras.
- DAV urges adoption of an evidence-based needs assessment instrument to determine the sufficient level of HCBS services needed for veterans and their caregiver to remain an active participant in their community.
- DAV urges Congress to conduct rigorous oversight on VA programs and services that support caregiver of disabled veterans.
- DAV urges Congress to request GAO to issue follow-up reports on the availability of and access to VA Home and Community-Based Services that support caregivers of severely disabled veterans.

Legislative Update from Page 6



Eliminating Offsets for Veterans and Survivors

The Situation

Longevity military retirees are able to receive full VA compensation for their service-related disabilities rated 50 percent or higher without any offset of their military longevity retirement pay. Those related 40 percent or lower should also receive their full longevity military retirement pay and VA compensation to account for reduction in their earning capacity.

Purchased Survivor Benefits Plan (SBP) annuities are offset by the amount of any benefit payable under the VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program. SBP is not a gratuitous benefit; rather, it is purchased out-of-pocket by military retirees. Thousands of survivors of military retirees are adversely affected by this unfair offset between SBP and DIC benefits.

The Challenge

- Service-members who retire from the military after 20 or more years of service must forfeit a portion of their retirement pay in order to receive VA compensation for service-related disabilities. Essentially, forcing military longevity retirees to fund their service-related disabilities with their retirement pay.

- If a longevity military retiree must forfeit a dollar of retired pay for every dollar of VA disability compensation otherwise payable, our government is, in effect, compensating the veteran with nothing for the service-related disability he or she suffered. Any offset between longevity military retired pay and VA compensation is unjust because no duplication of benefits is involved.

- Unlike many other public and private retirement plans, survivors of military retirees are not entitled to any portion of a retiree's annuity following death of that retiree. Under the military's SBP program, however, a survivor's annuity may be purchased through deductions from retirement pay.

- Upon the retiree's death, the SBP annuity is paid monthly to eligible beneficiaries; however, if a surviving spouse is also entitled to DIC, the SBP benefit is reduced by the amount of the DIC benefit (currently $1,215 per month). When DIC benefits are payable but the monthly rate is equal to, or greater than, the monthly SBP payment amount, beneficiaries forego the entire SBP annuity.

The Solution

- DAV urges Congress to enact legislation to repeat the inequitable offset between rightfully earned longevity military retired pay and VA disability compensation for all veterans, regardless of VA disability rating percentage, as there is no duplication of benefits involved.

- DAV urges Congress to enact legislation to repeal the inequitable offset between military retiree purchased SBP annuities and DIC, as there is no duplication of benefits involved.

Join the Commander's Action Network for current information and calls to action:

http://www.dav.org/learn-more/legislation/join-action-network-take-action/

Mid-Winter Convention Preview & Reminders

January 24 – 26, 2014

Crowne Plaza Hotel
2270 Hotel Circle North, San Diego

- SEC Reports are due
- SUPPORT OUR TROOPS –
  We will be assembling care packages for active duty personnel. Please bring:
  - Canned items
  - Microwavable foods
  - Powdered drink mix singles
  - Snacking Foods
  - Toiletries
- Seminar about Survivor Benefits
- Joint DAV/DAV Auxiliary VAVS Program
- SEC Meeting
- Baskets offered for Raffle
- Much more!

Elected & Appointed Officers

COMMANDER
Mary Lou Caldwell
Unit #19
(626) 355-8941

SR. VICE COMMANDER
John Medvigy
Unit #157
(661) 366-6666

JR. VICE COMMANDER
Jean White
Unit #73
(530) 876-0306

IMMEDIATE PAST COMMANDER & Adjutant
Julie Weissman-Steinbaugh, PSC
Unit #7
(510) 926-2529

TREASURER
June McJunkin
Unit 6
(530) 673-3859

CHAPLAIN
Betty Quintana
Unit 92
(760) 243-3032

Judge Advocate
Donna Stinnett, PSC
Unit 106
(530) 532-4207

NEC Representative
Dori Yuen Bogan, PSC
Unit 11
(530) 532-4207

DAVA, DEPT OF CALIFORNIA
13733 E Rosecrans Ave
Sante Fe Springs, CA 90670

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Mailing Address
Street Number and Name
City, State 98765-4321

Save the Dates

Mid-Winter: January 24 – 26, 2014

State Conventionon: June 11 – 14, 2014

Crowne Plaza Hotel
2270 Hotel Circle North, San Diego