

Roy B. Hodges, Chapter 128 DAV

(Disabled American Veterans)

Newsletter

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P. O. Box 670 Converse, TX 78109

Fall (September) 2012

From the Commander

Comrade Bettie Vaughan, Commander

Since our last Newsletter, the Roy B. Hodges DAV Chapter 128 delegation has attended the Department of Texas Convention in Austin, Texas and the 91st National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Department of Texas Convention was well attended with the convention highlight being a visit by J. R. Martinez. J. R., a combat injured Iraq veteran and star of the television show "All My Children" signed autographs and had photos taken with delegates. Chapter 128 Comrade Jay Johnson was elected to the position of 2nd Junior Vice Commander, Department of Texas.

The 91st National Convention was a great convention, attended by over four thousand delegates. Vice President Joe Biden, the keynote speaker, was well received by the convention and delegates as he discussed key policies facing the veteran community. T V star and "Dancing With the Stars" champion J. R. Martinez received the DAV Outstanding Veteran of the Year award. In an emotion filled moment, Gary Sinise who is the DAV's national spokesperson, received a special award. The convention was shown a clip from "Forrest Gump" where Lt. Dan arrives at Gump's wedding wearing a pair of prosthetic legs. Forrest declares them "magic legs." The award given to Gary Sinise was a statuette of him wearing the legs called "Magic Legs." The moment of the presentation was emotion filled for both Sinise and the convention delegates. I served as an alternate delegate on the legislation and veterans rights resolution committee. The committee heard 60 resolutions to be adopted or rejected.

National Election Results

Officers for the 2012-2013 year are

National Commander	Larry Polzin
Senior Vice Commander	Joseph Jhnston
1st Junior Vice	Ron Voegeli
2nd Junior Vice	Ron Hope
3rd Junior Vice	Moses McIntosh
4th Junior Vice	David Riley
National Chaplain	Ron Ringo
National Judge Advocate	Michael Dobmeier

Other activities

I attended a seminar on Camp Corral, sponsored by Golden Corral, which sends kids ages 8-15 of active duty and veteran parents to camps all over the United States free of charge for one week. Golden Corral uses volunteers from local DAV chapters and Units to help collect donations at the various restaurants. DAV members are allowed to collect donations for the camp but are not permitted to wear any DAV paraphernalia while collecting donations. Members are also allowed to volunteer for the first day of a camp session. Camp activities include canoeing, target sports, sleeping in cabins, campfire stories, horseback riding and swimming.

I also attended a seminar on homeless women veterans and the plans to reach out to them. The number of homeless female veterans is large and growing. Many of these women have been victims of military sexual trauma (MST) and suffer post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

On August 24, 2012 I participated in the 2nd Annual Veteran's Stand Down which was held at Travis Park. The event was sponsored by the Homeless veterans Reintegration Program. The event was to provide services such as haircuts, showers, food and informational brochures to the homeless veterans.

Upcoming activities include our Forget-Me-Not fund raisers. Dates are 6 October 2012 at Lackland AFB and 24 November 2012 at Ft Sam Houston. When asked to volunteer, PLEASE do so.

Announcements

New NEC

DAVA member **Angela Scott** is the new NEC from Texas for the National DAVA. Congratulations Unit 128 and DAVA member Angela Scott.

Health Reports

Recovering from hospital stays since our last Newsletter

DAVA Chapter Commander Gernell Smart

DAVA Senior Vice Commander JoAnn Johnson

We extend our thoughts for a full and speedy recover to both DAVA members.

The Claude Sr and Minnie Boggs Exceptional Commitment to Service Award

Our August meeting was cancelled due to vandalism at the Barbara Jordan Community Center but there is still time to submit names for the Claude J. Sr. and Minnie Boggs Exceptional Commitment to Service Award. Nomination forms may be obtained from the adjutant and submitted to the Executive Committee prior to the September 27, 2012 Executive Committee meeting for consideration.

The Claude J. Sr., and Minnie Boggs Exceptional Commitment to Service Award

History: This Award was created in 2011 as a method by which the Chapter Commander can recognize in a tangible form those chapter members who have given in an exceptional manner to ensure the accomplishment of the DAV mission.

Criteria: The individual (s) selected to receive this award will have gone beyond ordinary in service to veterans, support of the chapter, and professional deportment in representing the chapter. Activities include but are not limited to, productive committee membership, participation in fund raising activities, morale and support visits to veterans and their families, and completing other tasks that aid the Commander in accomplishing the mission of Roy B. Hodges, Chapter 128 DAV.

Selection Process: The general membership may submit names for consideration to the Executive Committee for review no later than the August general membership meeting. The Executive Committee will review names submitted and prepare a final list of candidates for the Commander by the October Executive Meeting. The Commander will make the final selection and announce the award recipient(s) at the annual November Thanksgiving Banquet. An award plaque or trophy may be presented to recipients at that time.

Chapter and Unit Picnic

The picnic scheduled for 8 September has been postponed until a future date. Look for more information in your email inbox.

News Helpful to You

Adjutant Glenn Ellison

House Subcommittee Looks at Claims Process for Survivors of Military Sexual Trauma:

The difficulties involved in documenting [claims for VA benefits related to military sexual trauma](#) (MST) were discussed at a House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee hearing yesterday, as reported by USA Today. DOD has estimated that 19,000 sexual assaults took place in 2011, with equal numbers of men and women suffering an MST, although only about one in six formally report such incidents. DAV's Deputy National Legislative Director Joy Ilem told the Subcommittee that it is [extremely difficult for MST survivors to prove their claims](#) for benefits because sexual assaults in the military usually go unreported due to fear of retribution, stigma, and shame. Both the House and Senate are considering legislation ([H.R. 930](#), [S. 1391](#)) to make it easier for MST survivors to prove their claims.

Processing Milestone Allows VA to Refocus on Claims Backlog:

The VA's claims system will soon be getting up to speed as it clears the gridlock of nearly 230,000 claims related to the three newest Agent Orange-related presumptive service-connected illnesses of ischemic heart disease, hairy cell and other chronic B-cell leukemia and Parkinson's disease. The completion of work on the claims means that 1,200 senior claims representatives dedicated to review the Agent Orange claims can now be reassigned to tackle the current backlog of other disability claims.

The VA announced it was nearing completion of the Agent Orange-related claims which had been assigned to about 37 percent of its rating staff. The VA's Veterans Benefits Administration had set up 13 resource centers exclusively dedicated to deciding these claims.

"We are very pleased the VA is nearing the end of a massive endeavor to give justice to our veterans suffering from these three presumptive service-connected diseases," said Washington Headquarters Executive Director Barry Jesinoski. "The VA dedicated its most senior claims workers to complete the task of fulfilling the promises made to the men and women who served."

Brain Injury Recovery and Coping: a Long Road

The road to recovery from traumatic brain injury (TBI) is something of a "watch and wait" process that can sideline patients from their normal, daily functions indefinitely. There is no timetable laid out to mend our most complex vital organ once it's damaged, which can be one of the more frustrating parts of recovering from this unseen injury.

The Defense and Veteran Brain Injury Center estimates that most cases of mild traumatic brain injury, or concussions, heal within one to three months. But the symptoms accompanying even the most mild head injuries are enough to alter a person's cognitive function, personality and behavior.

Education Center Planned for Vietnam Memorial

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., commonly called The Wall, may soon have an addition that will be a place where the stories and sacrifice of those who served in our nation's military will be honored and remembered.

With a groundbreaking planned for November 2012, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Foundation says the Education Center at the Wall will be a multi-million dollar, state-of-the-art visitor's center and learning facility to be built on the grounds of the Vietnam Veterans and the Lincoln Memorials. Visitors will better understand the profound impact the Vietnam War had on their friends and family members, their home towns and the nation. The education center will feature

the faces and stories of the 58,272 men and women on The Wall, honoring those who fell in Vietnam, those who fought and returned, as well as the friends and families of all who served.

Established in 1979, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., promoting healing and educating about the impact of the Vietnam War.

Support the Education Center at the Wall by visiting www.buildthecenter.org or calling 866-990-WALL.

Ford Donations Provide Critical Transportation Services to Injured Veterans:

Ford Motor Company will donate \$200,000 to purchase eight new vehicles for the DAV Transportation Network and \$45,000 to DAV's youth volunteer scholarship program at DAV's 91st National Convention at the Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas.

"For 90 years, Ford has helped DAV build better lives for America's injured or ill veterans and their families," said DAV National Commander Donald L. Samuels.

Volunteer drivers use the vehicles to take sick and disabled veterans to VA medical centers. Since 1996, Ford has donated more than \$3.4 million for the purchase of 164 vans for the DAV Transportation Network.

"Ford is proud of our partnership with DAV which spans 90 years," said Jim Vella, President, Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services. "We are pleased to lend our support so that these deserving veterans can get the transportation they need to receive critical services."

Young Volunteers Win DAV Scholarships

Recipients come from across the nation including Washington, D.C., Calif. and Idaho

LAS VEGAS (August 2, 2012) — DAV has selected eight of the nation's outstanding young volunteers to receive cash awards from the Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program. The first-place scholarship of \$20,000 was awarded to Christiana Mae Hess of Martinsburg, W.Va., who has contributed more than 347 hours of service at the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Martinsburg. The second-place scholarship of \$15,000 went to Kelsey Arline Lewis of Boise, Idaho. A third-place award of \$10,000 went to Karstin Paulus Patterson of Long Beach, Calif.

Two volunteers, Christopher Tinker of Birmingham, Ala., and Jessica M. Kelsey of Fresno, Calif., received \$7,500 scholarships, and three others, Denise Powell of Biloxi, Miss., Devon Turney of Louisville, Ky., and Aleshya Catrese Richardson of Washington, D.C., were granted \$5,000 scholarships.

The Jesse Brown Memorial Youth Scholarship Program honors outstanding young volunteers who are active participants in the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service programs. The scholarships are awarded to deserving young men and women who have donated their time and compassion to injured and ill veterans in their communities.

Progress Cited on Veterans Benefits Claims Processing Reform

VBA Under Secretary Allison Hickey yesterday said that, "training initiatives and a new paperless system being introduced are yielding **faster and more accurate decisions on pending claims**" for veterans benefits, according to a story in the Washington Post. At a House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee hearing examining the backlog of claims for veterans benefits, **DAV's National Legislative Director Joe Violante testified** that, "the number of claims filed each year is growing; the complexity of claims filed is increasing; the backlog of claims pending is staggering; and the quality of

the claims decisions remains far too low”, however since VBA is just beginning to roll out new reforms and IT systems, “it is far too soon to make judgments about whether they are or will be successful.”

DAV Receives \$10,000 Grant from Liberty Mutual Foundation

The Liberty Mutual Foundation made a \$10,000 grant to DAV, which will help contribute to our mission of fulfilling America's promises to the men and women who served.

The grant was one of \$1 million dollars in grants distributed to non-profit organizations as part of Liberty Mutual Insurance's 100th anniversary celebration. Liberty Mutual created the “100 gifts” program as a way to commemorate the company's long-standing tradition of supporting the communities in the U.S. and around the world in which its employees live and work.

To find out more about Liberty Mutual Insurance please visit www.libertymutual.com.

Spending Bill Spares VA From Cuts

The House of Representatives has approved legislation providing \$135.4 billion for veterans programs and services in the next fiscal year. Of that amount, \$60.7 billion is discretionary funding for the VA, about a four-percent increase over this year's level. Military construction, also included in the bill, was cut by 2.4 percent compared to the current level.

The measure, which has yet to be taken up by the full Senate, includes \$44.4 billion for medical services, including third-party collections. That is \$2.3 billion more than provided in fiscal 2012. About \$52 billion for medical care, which includes medical services, medical support and compliance and medical facilities, was provided in fiscal 2012 through advance appropriations.

Included in the bill is \$54.5 billion in advance appropriations for veterans medical care for fiscal year 2014.

Also included is \$608 million for minor construction projects, well below DAV's recommended level of \$3.6 billion