



Vaughan Chapter
December 2021

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the Wheel

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VAUGHAN CHAPTER PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

Greetings, Vaughan Chapter members, family members, caregivers, and volunteers.

by Josue E. Cordova, VPVA President

As 2021 comes to a close, I am forced to reflect on many things including the state of our Vaughan PVA Chapter. As you well know, we continue to move through this Covid pandemic. Here at our Vaughan Chapter, we continue to work hard to support and encourage our members. We strive to provide continuous, up-to-date information regarding the Covid news, and other pandemic-related topics. While that subject is typically not far from people's thoughts, we'd also like to focus on events in the coming year. This serves to encourage our members in many facets. Let us not live in isolation and fear but participate and fellowship in these events, opportunities, and functions. We are excited to provide this for members, first and foremost! The chapter also relishes including the surrounding wheelchair community in such events. There are many things to be excited about at Vaughan as 2022 rolls in. There are some new additions to our programs coming in this new year. It is essential to remind our members that we can only be successful as a Chapter with your help and participation. We have new committees being established in the coming year; this means that there will be many roles that need to be filled. We need your help to make sure these new events and committees launch successfully. We need to encourage others to come out and join as well.

This time of year is perfect for celebrating. Let's celebrate and welcome our two new Board of directors—newly elected Board of directors

Cheryl Gerdes and Dan James. We are excited to introduce them to you and even more excited to join our Board of Directors. They will help make our chapter even better. Cheryl and Dan will be bringing incredible knowledge, passion and each has a desire to help our PVA family and serve our communities. We're also excited to let members know that we will bring a new staff member to the chapter next year. This individual has incredible knowledge and experience with our wheelchair sports and activities, which will help make our chapter even stronger.

It is such a privilege and an honor to be a member of our Vaughan Chapter, and even

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Dr. Orlando Smith; judge for the Chess Tournament and VPVA President, Josue E. Cordova.





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 Dennis Scanlan, Secretary Gerald Brown, Treasurer

Chapter Board of Directors

Cheryl Gerdes, Danial James, Leo Moore, Alberto Velasco

National Chapter Liaison
 Hack Albertson

National Director
 Anthony Powell

Hospital Coordinator
 Dennis Scanlan

Advocacy Director
 Vacant

Sports Director
 Vacant

Fundraising Director
 Anthony Powell

STAFF

Maria Hernandez, Executive Director

Service Officers

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2022 Bi-Monthly Membership Meetings

We continue not to access the Multi-Purpose Room at the Hines VA Hospital Spinal Cord Injury Building #128 for our bi-monthly in-person membership meetings. We will continue conducting the membership meetings via Zoom until further notice. Members who have an email address will continue to receive the link to join the meetings.

For those members that do not have email and do not have access to a computer, you can still join the meetings via call by calling this number 312-626-6799; with meeting ID: 553 748 9623 and Passcode: 733870. Suppose Vaughan Chapter gets the approval to use the Hines VA Hospital, building #128, SCI Multipurpose Room, to conduct in-person Membership Meetings, then we should resume the meetings in 2022. All meetings will be in the Multipurpose Room at noon, with FREE lunch. The calendar with dates for meetings will be available in early January 2022.

Executive Director's Report

by Maria Hernandez

Hello, Vaughan Chapter PVA. Members, Associates, and Volunteers

We continue to adhere to the schedule as we slowly get back to our activities with sports and recreation and our outings and events. It was good to see you after a long year and a half for those who had the opportunity to attend our latest events!

Congratulations to members Bennie McQueen, Ricky Facen, Anthony Powell, Josue Cordova, Leo Moore, Johnnie Baylark, Jr, R.J. Anderson, which participated at the Veteran Chess Instruction Clinic & Tournament on September 4 & 5, 2021, at the VFW Post 2868 in Brookfield IL. A big thank you to VFW Post 2868 and volunteers Margaret Obertholtzer and Ramon Esparza.

For all of you who attended the Annual Picnic held on Saturday, September 11, I hope you enjoyed the delicious food from Robinson's Ribs, the fun games we all got to play, the Raffle Prizes, and the entertainment; from "Circus Boy." This year's picnic was the first time at the Forest Preserve, and we hope to have it again at the exact location in 2022 since everyone enjoyed the area hope to see more members and families next time.

A brief update on the Land of Lincoln Bass Tournament held on October 8-10, 2021. It was our first time at the Pyramid Acres Marina at the Lake of Egypt. A huge thank you to Veronica Cordova for taking the lead to put the tournament together and for recruiting donors and sponsors.

This year 23 boats came out for the tournament, not bad for a new venue location. Congratulations to all the participants and winners of the Open Division Jared Poppe, Christine Williams, Cleveland Short, Adam Eggertsen, Paul Austin, Kyle Rinella, Arthur Hunt, and Dennis Grimes. Team Division: Ken Carter, Kevin Easley, Arthur Hunt, Dennis Grimes, Kurt Glass, Eugene Martin, Robert Arciola, and Brennon McCord. Bank Division Open: 1st place Kevin Teeman, 2nd Ruth Kult, 3rd Laroy Smith.

Last but not least, congratulations to the service awards recipients from Hines VA SCI that were recognized at the Annual Veterans' Day Dinner on November 13. Congrats to Teodorina (Jiret) Saez RN, 45 years of service, and Susie Wrencher-Dunson, COTA/L, October 2001 to Present.

Other recipients unable to attend were Paul Ellin, PT, ATP June 1997 to Present; Joseph Jelink, SOT June 1998



to Present; William Most, KT March 1989 to Present. Congratulations to them all.

Vaughan Chapter is grateful for the Holiday Groceries shopping at the participating Jewel stores donated by the CARING PATRIOT group which made it possible for Vaughan Chapter members to receive Thanksgiving "fixings" for the holiday. Once again, Vaughan Chapter PVA sends it gratitude to the Caring Patriots for remembering our Chapter members!

Vaughan will not be able to host the Annual Christmas Luncheon because the Auditorium at the Hines VA Hospital is being used for COVID Booster shots until further notice. We realize how much this event will be missed.

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Annual Veterans Day and Awards Dinner

Thank you to everyone, who attended our Annual Veterans Day and Awards Dinner to honor those who served and the SCI Staff who serve our SCI veterans!

We also installed the new elected officers and Board of Directors at this year's dinner and recognized and awarded retired and current staff from Spinal Cord Injury.



left to right: Teodorina (Jiret) Saez RN, 45 years of service award, Josue Cordova; President, Anthony Powell; Vice President.



Congratulations and best wishes to the Officers and Board of Directors on their upcoming journey at the Vaughan Chapter.

- Josue Cordova, President
- Anthony Powell, Vice President
- Dennis Scanlan, Secretary
- Gerald Brown, Treasurer
- Leo Moore, Board of Director
- Alberto Velasco, Board of Director
- Cheryl Gerdes, Board of Director
- Daniel James, Board of Director



left to right: Leo Moore; Board of Director, Josue Cordova; President, Anthony Powell; Vice President, Gerald Brown; Treasurer, Cheryl Gerdes; Board of Director.

Congratulations to recipients of Service Awards from Hines VA Hospital, SCI.

- Teodorina (Jiret) Saez RN, 45 years of service RN & Chief Nurse for Spinal Cord and Mental Health
- Paul Ellin, PT, ATP. June 1997 to Present Physical Therapist Hines VA PM&R/SCI
- Joseph Jelinek, SOT. June 1998 to Present Senior Occupational Therapist Hines VA PM&R/SCI
- William Most, KT March 1989 to Present Kinesio-therapist Hines VA PM&R/SCI
- Susie Wrencher-Dunson, COT A/L October 2001 to Present Corrective Occupational Therapy Assistant Hines VA PM&R/SCI

A massive shoutout to Randy McCallister, who delighted us by entertaining everyone. Thanks also to our volunteers who gladly assisted us during the dinner.

left to right: Josue Cordova; President, Anthony Powell; Vice President, Susie Wrencher-Dunson awardee of service award.

President's Report

By Josue Cordova, Vaughan Chapter President

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more of a privilege to serve as your Chapter President. As a team, we are working hard to ensure programming and events continue. We are diligent in putting together a thriving chapter for members and the wheelchair community. Covid restrictions have dampened our ability to be out in the community and together in-person to some degree. Because of that, we were not able to do all the events as in years past.

Some of those include bowling, trapshoot, and bocchia. We were, however, able to have our Busse woods fishing outing, membership picnic, and our Veterans Day dinner. We were also able to host a veteran chess event. It was a two-function with training on day one. A tournament followed it on day two. That competition turned out to be an incredible success, and we want next year to be even better! We need even more participants to make the learning and competition more engaging. Another successful event was the Land of Lincoln Bass Tournament. This year's tournament took

place at a new location, The Lake of Egypt, in southern Illinois. We are so overwhelmed and encouraged by the Marion, Illinois community, where the lake is located. The local community showed up for our tournament. They supported our chapter and all the participants, some from around the country. We are looking to bring in new sports for members. We are also planning on reintroducing Wheelchair Curling, a Paralympic sport. We are also in the planning stages for a tennis clinic, where participants would be instructed by one of our very own members. This member is a certified instructor. I know this will prove to be an outstanding opportunity for learning and competition.

Through this continued Covid pandemic, our number one priority is the safety and health of our Vaughan Chapter members and their families, along with our wheelchair community. That being said, we are here as an organization to continue to work hard through this obstacle. We commit to putting on events and outings for



members. We will continue to work hard as members of our communities. We know how important it is for all of us to come together. I encourage every single one of you to find your niche. Please compete in many wheelchair sports that we have available and participate in meetings, dinners, lunches, and outings as often as possible. Those things are in place for all our members. Also, please know that what we can accomplish as a chapter is not possible without your support and your involvement. Take the time to reach out to the Chapter office, give us a call or send us an email. Let us know you want to volunteer at one of our many committees. Success only happens when we do it together!

In closing, on behalf of myself and my family, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful and blessed Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Respectfully,

Josue E. Cordova

Paralyzed Veterans of America
PVA National Vice President
Vaughan Chapter President



Participants and volunteers at our 2-day a veteran chess event.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Hello Vaughan Chapter Members,

I'm glad to be given this opportunity to introduce myself as I am a newly elected member of the Vaughan Chapter PVA Board. I was commissioned into the Army from Howard University's ROTC Program. I was an officer in the Army from 1989 to 1996 and during that time served our country in Germany, the States and Korea as well as a deployment to Desert Storm.



I have two adult daughters, one in law school and one is a Biology major in her final year of undergraduate studies. While my girls are no longer living at home, I do live with my dog and my cat. I currently work as a Contract Specialist for the VA.

I've been a member of PVA for seven years now and have been so blessed. I have received help, guidance, turkeys, money, invaluable information, friendship and a sense of belonging with our organization. I wish to give back and look forward to doing all that I can to make our organization as great as it can be and as important and empowering for you and future members as it is for me.

Thank you and Happy Holidays,
Cheryl Gerdes

Hello My Fellow Members,

As we come to an ending year, I hope to find you all in high spirits.

We have had some difficult time but we have prevailed and, next year it going to get better we have a new board, and you, the member have step up to make our board better and I know in the new year with the help of all of us our chapter will be strong. As your vice-president I like to say thank you for making our Vaughan chapter grow. Happy Holidays and a blessed New Year.

Anthony Powell

National Director, Vice-President Vaughan Chapter PVA.



I'm proud to say that I Daniel James have recently taking the oath to serve as a new member of the Board Directors for the Vaughan chapter PVA. My military service was in the United States Navy. My job background after service has mainly been in the commercial shopping



centers property maintenance and management field. Becoming a chapter member since about 2008 due to a SCI/SCI-D of MS diagnosis in 2005 returned me to the Chicago land area to take advantage of the setting of Hines VA hospital and better family support.

As a PVA member I have currently served with the officers of the Finance Committee for approximately the past year also I reside in the residential area of Hines and have held the RCF title of Resident Counsel President. I have been fortunate to be able to meet with fellow members and to attend NWCG events. This is just a quick overview of myself I hope to meet and greet with you in the future. In closing at this time I would like to express that your holidays are safe and healthy with friends and family and will not be restricted by this COVID issue much longer.

Executive Director's Report

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Instead, the Board of Directors voted to do a Christmas cash gift to voting members. If you are interested in receiving this cash gift, you must reply to this email vpva@vaughanpva.org with your name, accurate address, and phone number, and include your reply that YES, you would

like to receive the cash gift from Vaughan Chapter. You must reply to this email by December 21, 2021, to get your gift before December 31.

As always, we encourage our members to please call our office and make sure your contact information is accurate to receive all the Vaughan chapter's benefits and valuable information we provide. If we contact you and your phone is disconnected, and you do not have an email address where you can receive the communications, you will miss what Vaughan has to offer for you. Please let us know your accurate contact information as soon as possible.

Vaughan Bi-monthly Membership meeting: Our meetings will continue to be held on line via Zoom due to the fact we are still not allowed to use the Multipurpose Room in Spinal Cord Injury Building #128. We are waiting for the Hospital Infection Control Service for permission to resume meeting in person. The link and passcode will be emailed to you ahead of time.

Vaughan Chapter wishes you all a Happy, Healthy Holiday Season and a New Year filled with Peace and Happiness.



Circus Boy entertained us all at the Summer Picnic.

THANK YOU ILLINOIS CHESS VETS – SEE YOU NEXT YEAR



Letter from the Chief

*By Michael S.A. Richardson MD FACP
Chief, Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders*

Happy Holidays to all Chapter Members and their families, It is great to return to Hines after my seven months detail out in California at the Loma Linda Healthcare System. The position as Chief of Staff has given me some time for self-reflection, some experience addressing a new set of challenges, and importantly some new ways of viewing the possibility of improving our system here at Hines. During my time away I was very pleased to realize that under the leadership of Dr. Rama Parachuri as the Acting Chief everyone continued their seamless, superb performance of duties in the best of iCARE principles and the highest adherence to our VHA Mission.

During the year since I last wrote to the Chapter, we underwent our yearly PVA Site Survey as well as our triyearly CARF Survey. Both were accomplished with excellent results in clinical care, provider attitudes, patient satisfaction and outcomes. Big Kudos to the SCI/D Team for this ongoing excellence. The SCI/D Mission of Service continues to inspire and motivate.

The big news however remains the COVID-19 pandemic that continues to surge and ebb without any clear end in sight. As I write the latest virus mutations have resulted in an Omicron variant which has begun yet another wave of infections, hospitalizations and unfortunately deaths. In some countries this mutation has occurred in up to 50% of vaccinated persons HOWEVER, the infections appear less severe and associated with fewer hospitalizations and deaths. Vaccination is still the most effective preventive strategy we have. Veterans with SCI at Hines have not been completely spared although I am thankful to say that no veteran in our Long-term Care Facility has contracted the virus to date. We are working hard to keep this so – testing weekly or twice weekly depending on exposures, fully vaccinating Veterans and improving vaccinated staff, strict screening and visitor enforcement, and careful environmental controls with masks, social distancing and cleaning protocols.

The intent however is to maintain a level of immunity with booster doses of vaccine and now the FDA has expanded the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for all mRNA-based COVID-19 vaccines to include administration of a booster dose in most populations but especially

adults 50 and older regardless of medical status as well as adults 18 and older with immunocompromised medical conditions. Again the SCI/D Service is expanding the use of virtual media to maintain contact, follow up problems, provide advice and treatment when appropriate, and limit risk of exposure wherever possible.



Overall the year has been positive for the Facility. We have used the crisis to improve more our use of digital technology including strategies to limit isolation with virtual reality in the RCF and video chats with families in the acute wards. Unfortunately we still struggle with internet connection and band width in areas across campus leaving many a bit frustrated at the slow and dropped signals. I use this newsletter to again ask for volunteers for our SCI Peer Mentoring Program. Veterans helping Veterans has proven time and again to be a most successful way to positive outcomes in health management, education, literacy, and satisfaction. This is even more important in spinal cord injury where the outcomes can look bleak and immense and having a peer who has overcome basic training and spinal injury can provide a perspective and hope far beyond medication or meditation. Volunteers for the Peer Mentor Program can contact either myself Michael.richardson5@va.gov or Katelyn Murray LCSW Katelyn.murray@va.gov for more information.

Looking forward to the coming year I wish all our families continuing improved health happiness and success. The Service is joining the VHA journey towards being a High Reliability Organization and in the coming months I will talk more about how this impacts our processes, attitudes, services, and interactions.

Thank you to all for continuing to allow us to serve. It is a honor and a privilege to by the Chief of a SCI/D Service and Organization with commitment to Excellence and Zero Harm.

M.S.A. Richardson MD FACP
Chief, SCI/D Service

Land of Lincoln Bass Tournament



We Mourn the Passing of the following Members



Thomas	Benson	01/02/2021
Joseph	Bertalan	02/19/2020
Carl	Brooks	05/31/2021
Robert	Brown	04/07/2021
Terrence	Burroway	08/19/2021
Larry	Dehring	07/08/2020
William	Downs	12/05/2020
Timothy	Dunham	05/13/2021
Steven	Eckardt	03/08/2020
Raymond	Everett	10/13/2020
William	Finn	08/20/2021
Arthur	Forest	11/17/2020
Michael	Glockler	02/23/2021
Robert	Jostes	10/08/2021
Richard	Lawler	05/27/2021

William	Lindbeck	07/23/2021
Sgt. Joseph	Marciano	04/22/2021
Fred	Minx	07/19/2020
Edward	Mitchell	03/20/2021
Raynard	O'Neal	05/20/2020
Robert	Paredes	08/03/2021
William	Poulos	06/28/2020
Gus	Poulos	06/28/2020
Tom	Proksch	08/19/2020
Samuel	Rappa	02/14/2021
Fred	Reeves	11/12/2020
Chris	Riley	09/29/2021
Robert	Rio	12/04/2020
Rodney	Robinson	01/28/2021
Harold	Ronning	03/01/2021
Francis	Rosin	07/13/2020
Zachary	Smith	07/11/2020
Clayton	Starns	04/15/2020
Philip	Stasenka	11/08/2020
Thomas	Stricklin	03/26/2021
Joseph	Tompkins	02/13/2021
James	Vonesh	05/01/2020
John	Walker	08/20/2021
Dennis	Walsh	02/08/2020
Gordon	Willis	08/07/2020
John	Wojteczek	01/31/2020

Vaughan Chapter, PVA Funding Sponsorship Policy

For the new fiscal year, 10/1/21 to 9/30/2022, Vaughan Chapter will continue to waive volunteer hours for Vaughan Chapter and PVA Sporting events to increase participation from our members. Reimbursement will be made up to a maximum of \$3,000 per year to participants members when a fully completed expense report is turned in to the office for a refund; all receipts must be included with your expense report. For any questions regarding the reimbursement, please feel free to contact our Maria Hernandez at the Chapter office, 708-947-9790.



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Armed Forces Plaques

Vaughan Chapter is starting a new fundraiser project to support the different events, outing, and sports activities for our members attached you will find a photo of this project; they are Armed force's plaques; Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Army, Navy & POW-MIA and God Bless America.

They are 11 inches by 11 inches. ALL proceeds go to the veterans. For a donation of \$40 each (plus) shipping, you get to pick one of your choices.

We also have them ready for pick up at our chapter office at 2235 Enterprise Drive, Suite 3501 Westchester IL 60154. You may also obtain plaques at any of our upcoming events and outings; we will have them available to you as well.

Contact VPVA Office at (708) 947-9790 or reply to vpva@vaughanpva.org to place your order. Cash, charge cards, and checks accepted.

Service Officer's Report

By Robert Statam, Sr. NSO

The Vietnam Veteran and Its Environmental Hazards

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently made some changes with our Vietnam Era Veterans with regards to their VA benefits. As an organization, we must keep up with these changes so that our members are properly represented. Recently, we were informed that Vietnam Era is being redefined as beginning on November 1, 1955, instead of February 28, 1961, for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period. Also, Veterans who served in Vietnam, Thailand, or Southwest Asia and were exposed to environmental hazards during military services, such as Agent Orange or Burn Pits may be eligible for newly enacted service-connected benefits.

For the last six months, the VA began processing service-connected disability claims for six new presumptive conditions related to exposure to hazardous materials. The Paralyzed Veterans of America is looking to help in making more veterans aware of these newly added presumptive conditions to help them file a claim and obtain any earned benefits. The following list are those conditions which are; under the condition for Agent Orange;

Vietnam Veterans who were: • Exposed to Agent Orange • Served in the Republic of Vietnam or on a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and

Cambodia between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 • Specific presumed conditions are: • AL amyloidosis • B-cell leukemia • Chronic lymphocytic leukemia • Multiple myeloma • Type 2 diabetes • Hodgkin's disease • Ischemic heart disease (including but not limited to, coronary artery disease and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease) • Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma • Parkinson's disease • Parkinsonism • Prostate cancer • Respiratory cancers • Soft-tissue sarcoma (not including osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma) • Bladder cancer • Hypothyroidism Updated September 2021 3 § The following conditions, if they become greater than 10 percent debilitating within a year of exposure to an herbicide agent: • Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy • Chloracne or other similar acneform disease • Porphyria cutanea tar

In May 2021, VA started implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA), adding bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism to the list of medical conditions presumptively associated with exposure to Agent Orange. A few months later VA added asthma, rhinitis, and sinusitis (to include rhinosinusitis) on a presumptive basis based on particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia and certain other areas.

Any Veteran who was previously denied service connection for any of these six conditions but had symptoms manifest within 10 years of military service would need to file a supplemental claim. To file for these benefits, use VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim. The claim form should include the name of the condition and specify that the condition is being claimed due to in-service exposure to environmental hazards.

Be sure to stay plugged into www.va.gov for the most recent developments around environmental hazards, as VA is constantly conducting research and surveillance as well as reviewing the scientific literature for conditions that may be related to exposure during military service.


If you should have any questions concerning this topic, please feel free to contact:

Robert Statam, Sr. NSO,
at the Chicago Regional Office, PVA
(312) 980-4278

Mr. Winston Woodard III, SBA,
at the Hines VAMC
(708) 202-5623



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rewalk.com/contact or
508.251.1154 option 2**

*Chun A, et al. Changes in bowel function following exoskeletal-assisted walking in persons with spinal cord injury: an observational pilot study. Spinal Cord. 2020;58(4):459-466.



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