

# THE WHEEL

Hello Vaughan Chapter Members,

From the Executive Director's desk,

Vaughan Chapter members. As we start 2026, we hope to have the opportunity to see you at all the events, outings, and membership meetings the staff has planned for this year. I highly encourage you to visit the chapter website [www.vaughanpva.org](http://www.vaughanpva.org) and check the calendar of events to stay up to date on all events and important benefits information available to you.

On the website, you will also find the mileage and caregiver reimbursement form, business expense forms for any program reimbursement, registration links for upcoming sporting events, and photos from 2025 events that you may have attended or participated in. For associate members, you may pay your annual dues online.

On Wednesday, January 28, we held our first Bi-Monthly Membership Meeting of 2026, with twenty members in attendance. The importance of attending a membership meeting is to stay informed about upcoming events, outings, and sporting activities, and to discuss any issues, concerns, suggestions, or ideas you would like to share with us to improve the Vaughan Chapter.

When you attend the Membership meeting, you get Mileage reimbursement, and if you have a caregiver with you, a \$65 stipend is also available. We offer a free lunch, and a door prize raffle will be available to those in attendance. The remaining membership meeting dates for 2026 are March 25, May 27, July 22, September 23, and November 25, and will be at the Hines VA Hospital, SCI Building #128, Multipurpose Room, at noon. Location may change for a couple of these meetings, but we will let you know the details in advance.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Director's Report • P. 3

Presidents Report • P. 4

Sports & Recreation • P. 5-7

Communications • P. 8

NVWG Registration Promotion • P. 10

Treasurers Report • P. 11

Windy City Open • P. 12

In Memoriam • P. 14

Member Birthdays • P. 15



Cordova and Powell Family at the VPVA. 2025 Christmas Luncheon

Continued on pg. 3

**Vaughan PVA Members Call Us on your Birthday for a FREE Gift to You on behalf of Vaughan Chapter PVA. (800) 727-2234**

**2025 Bi-Monthly Membership Meetings**

Vaughan Chapter's goal this year is to reach out to every member in the surrounding areas; for this to happen, we will conduct in-person membership meetings near you. We will still have a few meetings in the Multipurpose Room at the Hines VA Hospital, Spinal Cord Injury Building #128, and in different areas of the Hines VA. As usual, the Chapter office will send reminders for the upcoming meetings; please mark your calendar for the 2025 membership meetings to attend in person; we are excited to see you there. All membership meetings offer FREE lunch and now door prizes.

Your attendance and feedback at these membership meetings are paramount to our chapter's continued success and our ability to serve 'you' the member, on a more meaningful level. Please take a look at the meeting dates below to see when the next membership meetings will take place.

**Meeting Dates:**

- Wednesday, March 25th
- Wednesday, May 27th
- Wednesday, July 22nd
- Wednesday, September 23rd
- Wednesday, November 25th



Photo captured at VPVA. 2025 Christmas Luncheon

**Chapter Officers**

- Anthony Powell, President
- Cheryl Gerdes, Vice President
- Dennis Scanlan, Secretary
- Gerald Brown, Treasurer

**Chapter Board of Directors**

- Daniel James,
- Leo Moore, Susan Dochterman

**National Chapter Liaison National Director**

- Ken Ness
- Gerald Brown

**Hospital Coordinator Government Relations**

- Dennis Scanlan
- Robert Statem

**Staff**

**Executive Director**

Maria Hernandez

**Fundraising Director**

Keith Cooper

**Sports Director**

Keith Cooper

**Communications Director**

Ryan Dalton

**Office Assistant**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Service Officers**

Winston Woodard, III  
Hines PVA SCI  
708-202-5623

Whitney Brown  
Chicago PVA VARO  
312-980-4278

**DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY:**

With respect to documents available on this newsletter, neither the Vaughan PVA nor its officers or employees makes any warranty express or implied, including the warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights. Portions of this newsletter contain information regarding medical treatment or upon which medical treatment discussions may be based. That information is subject to the same policy and disclaimer notices set forth herein. No decisions regarding medical care, psychological care, or treatment should be made on the basis of information contained on this newsletter alone. The responsibility for filing out any Forms, or for proper medical treatment rests with the individual and his or her treating physician. This newsletter does not contain any legal advice, nor should it be relied on for such. Anything contained herein is solely for informational purposes and should NOT be relied on when making legal decisions. Decisions regarding legal matters should only be made after consulting with an attorney. Reference on this newsletter to any specific commercial products, process or service by trade name, trademark, manufacture, or otherwise does not constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the Vaughan PVA, its officers or employees. The view and opinions of Independent authors regarding such products or processes do not necessarily reflect those of the Vaughan PVA, its officers or employees. All references to this organization shall not be used for advertising or project endorsement.

The Wheel is published four times a year by the Vaughan Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America, 2235 Enterprise Drive, Suite 3501 Westchester, IL 60154 in the interest of Chapter members. Membership in Vaughan PVA entitles you to a free subscription to the Wheel. Postmaster: send changes of address to Vaughan PVA, 2235 Enterprise Drive, Suite 3501 Westchester, IL 60154

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Cover Story

Continued from page 1

Our 2026 Busse Woods Fishing Derby will be on Saturday, June 20, and the annual Picnic will be on Saturday, September 12. Mark your calendar and hope to see you at all of Vaughan's planned events.

**IMPORTANT UPDATE:** Benefits for Vaughan Chapter voting members: The Officers and Board of Directors approved an increase to the following benefits.

On your birthday, please call the office and let us know you have a birthday coming up. We will send you a \$50 birthday gift. The Life Enjoyment Fund increased to \$300 per fiscal year. The purpose of the life enjoyment fund is for you to go out and enjoy yourself at any place of your choice at our expense. The Death Benefit has also increased to \$1,000. This money will be dispersed to the person designated to pay for your funeral services. Please feel free to call the Chapter office at 708-947-9790 for assistance or questions, or send me a direct email at [mhernandez@vaughanpva.org](mailto:mhernandez@vaughanpva.org).

**IMPORTANT:** Please call our office to update your contact information. Whether you have moved or acquired a new phone number or email address, your updated contact information is crucial for us to keep you informed about all the Chapter's activities and important information.

Thank You for letting me serve you,  
Executive Director - Maria Hernandez



Maria Hernandez, Santa, and Diana Leyva at the VPVA. 2025 Christmas Luncheon



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello fellow veterans,

As we start this new year I wanted to thank all of our members for their continued participation and camaraderie. We wouldn't be able to pull off the wonderful events and recreation opportunities we host without your support. Going into this new year we have a packed schedule of many events and recreation opportunities to choose from and we can't wait for you all to get involved.

The Chapter is starting the year out strong with programs; including our Bi-weekly curling practices, and Boccia practices so be sure to check the chapter calendar to see how you can get involved; we would love to see you out there participating.

If you have any questions about the chapters programming please don't hesitate to reach out to our Sports Director Keith Cooper or our Communications Director Ryan Dalton as they can help get you answers to any programming questions you may have.

The registration for the Wheelchair Games 2026 Detroit is officially open and will close promptly on **April 3rd, 2026**. If you plan on participating and are a chapter member please get in contact with Sports Director Keith Cooper or our Games Coach Ryan Dalton. Also be sure to take advantage of our sports and recreation reimbursement fund which offers our members up to \$3,000 reimbursement annually for the programs they participate in; including the wheelchair games. We already starting this year off strong and are aiming to keep that momentum going.

Sincerely,  
Anthony Powell -President  
Vaughan Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America



Anthony Powell Paralyzed  
Veterans of America Vaughan  
Chapter President  
At 2025 Christmas Luncheon

## Notice to Vaughan Chapter members.

Vaughan Chapter members please call our office at 708-947- 9790 or send us an email message to [vpva@vaughanpva.org](mailto:vpva@vaughanpva.org) with your current mailing address and phone numbers and email address 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 out on what Vaughan has to offer for you. Please let us know your accurate contact information as soon as possible.

# SPORTS AND RECREATION

## Keith Cooper Director of Sports and Recreation

As we reflect on 2025, the Vaughan PVA Chapter's sports and recreation programs once again demonstrated the power of adaptive athletics to strengthen bodies, build confidence, and foster connection among Veterans. Sports and recreation remain a core part of our mission, offering inclusive opportunities that support physical health, mental wellness, and peer engagement.

While veteran-centered, our programs welcome individuals with adaptive needs from the broader community, reinforcing inclusion and expanding the impact of our work.

Throughout the year, the Chapter delivered a broad and balanced lineup of adaptive sports and recreation opportunities, ranging from entry-level activities to national-level competition. Veterans participated in wheelchair curling, boccia, bowling, trap shooting, adaptive fishing, bass fishing, chess, and major national events, including the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the Golden Age Games. Highlights included fielding a team at the U.S. Open Wheelchair Boccia, continued growth in adaptive boccia, and proudly hosting the AWBA 63rd Annual National Wheelchair Bowling Tournament—an event that drew 39 participants, including 27 Veterans from across the country.

Participation and outreach remained strong across all programs in 2025. Dozens of Veterans engaged through regular practices, regional competitions, and national events, supported by peer-to-peer encouragement, collaboration with VA SCI clinics, and partnerships with adaptive sports organizations. These efforts have resulted in consistent growth, high retention, and increased visibility for adaptive sports within our Chapter and the broader community. Whether on the ice, at the range, on the water, or online, Veterans continued to show up, compete, and support one another.



**Keith Cooper Wheelchair Softball NVWG 2025**

*Continued on pg. 7*



**Gerald Brown competing in 9-Ball NVWG 2025**



**Rj Anderson Competing in Pickle ball NVWG 2025**



# Up-Down Fundraiser



As Part of

64th AWBA NATIONALS Powered By Vaughan Chapter

Friday, May 15th, 2026 Romeoville, Illinois

## LUCKY X STRIKE

- 4-person teams (3 Up 1-Down)
- Great time with friends and family
- Prize fund for teams 1st-4th place
- Check in at 6:00 P.M
- Roll off starts at 7:00 P.M.

### Prize Package

- 1st place - \$500
- 2nd place - \$280
- 3rd place - \$200
- 4th place - \$100

### Register Here



# Sports And Recreation Continued

This work is backed by a meaningful financial commitment, with approximately 27 percent of the Chapter's annual budget dedicated to sports and recreation. In addition, Vaughan PVA continues to leverage VA Adaptive Sports Grants to expand opportunities and invest in quality programming, including planning for new offerings such as adaptive air rifle shooting. Guided by annual member interest surveys, our programs remain Veteran-driven and forward-looking. I am proud of what our athletes, volunteers, and partners accomplished in 2025, and excited about what lies ahead as we continue to build opportunities that enrich the lives of Veterans.

**Notes on Future Programs:** Our SIUS electronic targets should arrive shortly which will help us kick start our chapter's Air Rifle program so stay tuned to the Chapter for more information. Boccia and bowling practices are coming soon so be sure to check the chapter calendar for dates, times and locations for these events. Our fishing program dates are coming in the spring. Trap shooting and bowling practice dates have been confirmed so be sure to check the calendar if you are interested in these programs.

**Keith Cooper**, Sports Director, Vaughan PVA  
KeithC@VaughanPVA.org

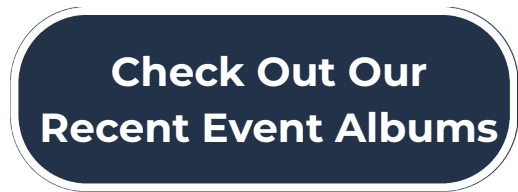
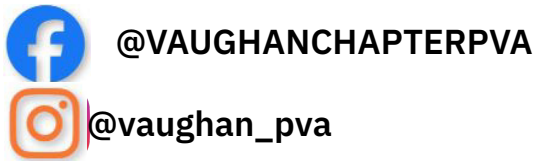


## February Communications Recap

Hello, members. Ryan Dalton, the Communications Director for the Paralyzed Veterans of America Vaughan Chapter, here. This winter was packed full of incredible for our members including our Christmas Luncheon and our Pick-Up Sticks Bonspiel in January. It was incredible to come out to these events to capture the moment and to see you all in person, it always brings a smile to my face.

It is absolutely thrilling to see what we have planned for this year, our Boccia and Curling practices are already up on our calendar and our trap and our bowling practices are soon to follow. If you are interested in joining us for any of our sports and recreation programs be sure to get in contact with our sports director Keith Cooper at [Keithc@vaughanpva.org](mailto:Keithc@vaughanpva.org).

As always keep up to date with the latest Vaughan Chapter events and dates by visiting our website [VaughanPVA.org](http://VaughanPVA.org) or check out our social media pages:



## National Veterans Wheelchair Games 2026

This year I have once again been selected to become the Coach for team Vaughan Vets. This is always an incredible opportunity and I could not be more grateful to the Chapter and our members for allowing me to coach team Vaughan Vets again this year in Detroit. It is always so incredible to capture your moments and share them via our Flickr page. This year the games will be hosted in Detroit; registration for the games is underway and will close promptly on **April 3rd**. Be sure to visit the [NVWG Page](#) to begin your registration, be sure to select team Vaughan Vets upon registering.



If you would like to join us for the National Veteran Wheelchair Games this year and are a Vaughan Chapter Member be sure to take advantage of the Vaughan Chapter **Sports and Recreation Membership Reimbursement Fund**. This allows members to reimburse up to \$3,000 annually for any chapter related Sports and Recreation opportunities. With that being said I am very excited to be your coach again this year. I will see you at the Games!

**Ryan Dalton,**  
Communications Director  
[Rdalton@vaughanpva.org](mailto:Rdalton@vaughanpva.org)



Photos taken at the 2025 National Veterans Wheelchair Games





## PVA Veterans Career Program

### Spring 2026 – Self-Employment Cohort Announcement

PVA's Veteran Career Program (VCP) will be re-launching its 10-week Self-employment Program beginning on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026, to provide training, counseling, and access to capital to **PVA Members and/or their spouses, adult children and/or caregivers** (in teams or individually) who are considering self-employment. We are looking for 15 participants who are thinking about, but have not yet started, a for-profit small business.

**Join us for our INFORMATION SESSIONS as we discuss details of this program. You only need to attend ONE information session; they will provide the same information.**

Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 12:00 pm ET Info Session Registration:

[Information Session Link](#)

Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 6:00 pm ET Info Session Registration:

[Information Session Link](#)



### Program Schedule:

- **Applications open:** Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 at 9:00 am ET
- Information session: Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026 at 12:00 pm ET (11:00 am CT | 10:00 am MT | 9:00 am PT)
- Information session: Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2026 at 6:00 pm ET (5:00 pm CT | 4:00 pm MT | 3:00 pm PT)
- **Applications close:** Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 1:00 pm ET
- Selected participants notified: Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>
- **Classes begin / Zoom:** Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at 7:00 pm ET (6:00 pm CT | 5:00 pm MT | 4:00 pm PT)
- **Final class “Pitch Night”:** Wednesday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm ET (6:00 pm CT | 5:00 pm MT | 4:00 pm PT)

### **APPLICATION** – Self-Employment Program 7<sup>th</sup> Cohort:

[Application Link](#)

Questions about the program may also be directed to [veteranscareerprogram@pva.org](mailto:veteranscareerprogram@pva.org).

Please put “Self-employment Program” in the subject line.



45<sup>th</sup>



Registration Closes April 3rd



NATIONAL VETERANS  
**WHEELCHAIR  
GAMES**

**DETROIT 2026**  
JULY 9-14

CO-PRESENTED BY:

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:  
[WHEELCHAIRGAMES.ORG](http://WHEELCHAIRGAMES.ORG)  
f @ x #WHEELCHAIRGAMES




## From The Treasurers Desk:

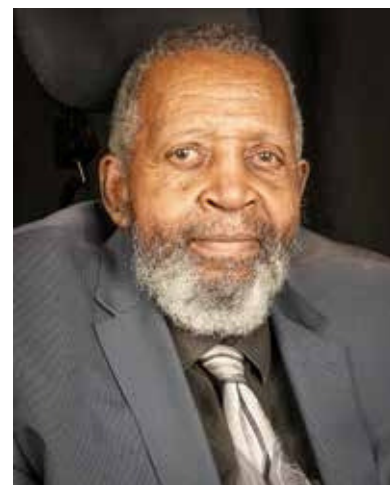
From the desk of your chapter treasure an illustration of the chapter's budget.

The Vaughan Chapter's PVA FY 26 budget is as follows.

### Revenue



PVA Chapter grant	\$158,000	23.0%
Donation goods and services	\$100,000	14.5%
Advocacy legislation Grant	\$2,000	0.3%
Newsletter advertisement	\$1,000	0.1%
Membership dues	\$200	0.0%
Sports and recreation grants /Program income	\$77,250	11.2%
Portfolio revenue, transferred in	\$349,328	50.8%
Total revenue	\$687,778	100.0%



*Gerald L. Brown, Treasurer*

The Board of Directors and staff along with the finance committee deserves a thank you for putting together the chapters FY 26 budget. A special shout out to the finance committee, it should be noted that 51% of budgeted revenue comes from our portfolio. The finance committee has done an outstanding job managing the chapter's return on investment.

What we need from members is your participation in the programs and events that this budget supports. We need to hear more from our members in Springfield, Bloomington,

and Danville area. Your participation will help us to continue to develop and use the chapter's resources.

Let me conclude by saying happy birthdays to all you Marines, and happy Veterans Day to all who have served. I am looking forward to FY 26 and hope you are too.

**Respectfully,**

Gerald L Brown, Treasurer  
VPVA

### Expenditures

Total expenditures membership	\$88,400	12.9%
Total expenditures government relations	\$22,000	3.2%
Total expenditure services	\$2,700	0.4%
Total expenditures liaison	\$19,500	2.8%
Total expenditures communications	\$111,593	16.2%
Total expenditure on sports and recreation	\$177,026	25.7%
Total expenditures fundraising	\$17,644	2.6%
Total expenditure Administrative and general	\$238,915	34.7%
Total expenditures research and education	\$10,000	1.5%
Total program expenditures	\$687,778	100.0%



# VAUGHAN PVA WINDY CITY OPEN



## Event Information

- Friday, Saturday, Sunday Tournament (2-2-1)
- Fee \$300 a team (6-8 teams)
- Payment holds your teams slot
- Tournament format and Payouts Subject to change based on the availability of more teams



## TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE:

# JUNE 12-14 2026

146 ROOSEVELT RD, VILLA PARK, IL  
60181

- FREE BREAKFAST, COFFEE, SNACKS AND LUNCH PLUS GOOD TIMES PROVIDED!

## PRIZE POOL

1ST-\$1,000  
2<sup>ND</sup>-\$300

VETERANS  
CURL FREE

FOR INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION

EMAIL: KEITHC@VAUGHANPVA.ORG

+708-947-9790

# ONWARD MEDICAL



AJ Walker, ARC<sup>EX</sup> User,  
US Navy Veteran

## Every Gain Counts

ARC<sup>EX</sup>® is the first FDA-cleared, non-invasive spinal cord stimulation therapy designed to improve hand strength and sensation in people with chronic, incomplete cervical spinal cord injury (SCI).

Scan the QR code to start your journey  
with ARC<sup>EX</sup> or email [support@onwd.com](mailto:support@onwd.com)



The ARC<sup>EX</sup> System is intended to deliver programmed transcutaneous electrical spinal cord stimulation in conjunction with functional task practice in the clinic and with take-home exercises in the home to improve hand sensation and strength in individuals between 18 and 75 years old that present with a chronic, non-progressive neurological deficit resulting from an incomplete spinal cord injury (C2-C8 inclusive).

The ARC<sup>EX</sup> System is intended to be operated in medical centers by Rehabilitation Professionals and at home by Patients and Persons Providing Assistance to the Patient as needed.

© 2026 ONWARD Medical. All Rights Reserved. 2025045B

[onwd.com](http://onwd.com)

# In Memoriam

## In Memoriam: John P. Kritzer

**John P. Kritzer** – age 94, Korean War Army Veteran, of Brookfield. Beloved husband of the late Dolores J. Kritzer, nee Jonvonich; loving father of Marc Kritzer and Nicholas Kritzer; brother of Emil (Nancy) Kritzer, Annie (the late Wayne) Kwiatkowski and the late Gloria (the late Paul) Spolar; uncle of many nieces and nephews.

John was a member of Sheet Metal Workers Local # 73 (Hillside, IL), Paralyzed Veteran of America Vaughan Chapter (Westchester, IL), 1st Cavalry Division Association (Copperas Cove, TX), VFW Post 2868 (Brookfield, IL), Kettle Moraine Chapter of Southeastern Wisconsin (Waterford, WI), Croatian Cultural Club (Joliet, IL), Linda Sokol Francis Brookfield Library Sponsor (Brookfield, IL), Brookfield Jazz Society (Brookfield, IL) and Museum of Science and Industry Chicago (Chicago, IL).



Visitation Wednesday, February 18, 2026 from 3:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. and Thursday, February 19, 2026 from 9:30 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. at Hitzeman Funeral Home, Ltd., 9445 31st Street, Brookfield, IL 60513. Funeral 10:00 A.M. to St. Barbara Catholic Church, Brookfield. Mass 10:30 A.M.

Interment Resurrection Catholic Cemetery, Justice, IL.

Information 708-485-2000 or [www.HitzemanFuneral.com](http://www.HitzemanFuneral.com)

For those of you that would like to express your condolences to the family, please click on the Guestbook and you can leave the family a message. If you wish to send a Sympathy Card to the Family, please feel free to send it to Hitzeman Funeral Home, Ltd., 9445 31st Street, Brookfield, IL 60513, c/o the John P. Kritzer Family. We will gladly forward it on to the family.

To order [memorial trees](#) or send flowers to the family in memory of John P. Kritzer, please visit our [flower store](#).

Our deepest and heartfelt condolences, from the Paralyzed Veterans of America Vaughan Chapter Family.

## September - November Member Birthdays:

The Vaughan Chapter would like this opportunity to celebrate all of our chapter members with September, October, and November birthdays, happy birthday to all!

### December

- John Casey
- Marion Steele
- Charles Noyes
- Robert Ives John
- Robinson Martin
- Dislers Larry
- Garrett Gloria
- Ross James Fouts
- Joe Rodriguez
- Bobbie Surall
- Joseph Hereau
- Steven Marcy
- Fred Wagner John
- Kinnare Marshall
- Willaby
- Marlon Green
- David Jones Kevin
- Floyd Andres
- Gallegos Theresa
- Harrison Brian
- Connery Henry
- Torgeson James
- Pych Andre
- Williams Keith
- Lambert Angelo
- Perez Winston
- Woodard (III)
- Melissa Klocker
- Daniel McConchie
- Mario Medina
- Haley Gilbraith

### January

- Steve Brend
- William Maule
- Rolf Kufeld
- Gerald Brown
- Dennis Schultz
- Bartholomew Demma
- Robert Milkowski
- Charles Kowalewicz
- Walter Durk
- Peter Joannides Mitchell
- Betlej
- Robert Grandt
- Fred Dust
- Anthony Montgomery
- Danny Harvey
- Thomas Pavela
- John Kelly
- Willie Garrett
- Thomas Williams
- Brent Parker
- David Smith
- Thomas Fitzgerald
- Jerry Simms
- Thomas Wilson
- Hal Krause
- David Norris
- Adrian Iniguez
- Eric Sauerman
- Clifford Johnson
- Anthony Becker
- David Wilsman
- Carlos Flores
- Juan Alvarado
- Steven Jennings
- Nitzia Martin
- Charles Hartzburg

### February

- Wiley Mims
- Allen Barnes
- Roger Campfield
- Christian Carlson
- Leonard Chenier
- Margarita Colon
- Keith Cooper
- Kenneth Durham
- Chriselle English
- Robert Ford
- Jason Green
- Tom Hayes
- David Herst
- George Humphrey
- Brandyn Hunter
- Gregory Kelsey
- Stephen Lenker
- James McFarlin
- Lance Mercado
- Reddick Mickle
- Raymond Mulvihill
- Charles Novosel
- Kaney O'Neill
- Robert Palucki
- Timothy Rhodes
- Anthony Scott
- Brandon Sidler
- Eastman Tiu
- Debbie Ussery
- Eldridge White

- Ronald Williams
- Winston Woodard



# Happy Birthday!

Attention to all members with Birthdays: Be sure to call into the chapter office on your birthday to receive your birthday check



Vaughan PVA  
2225 Enterprise Drive, Suite  
2502 Westchester, IL 60154



*Follow  
-US-*



[www.VaughanPVA.org](http://www.VaughanPVA.org)



@VAUGHANCHAPTERPVA



@paralyzed-veterans-of-america-inc-vaughan-chapter



@vaughan\_pva



@PVA\_Vaughan