

# Speedy Gazette

"Improving Lives... Building Futures"



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Texas Chapter

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**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**

Texas Chapter

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# Presidents Report by Anne Robinson



Hello TPVA members,

I can't believe that it that it is already March, time is flying fast. Looking forward to the warmer temperatures and that time of year where we can get out and enjoy activities.

Thank you to everyone who supported our annual fundraiser, Killin Clay's, it turned out to be a terrific day and everybody had a great time.

We had a wonderful group that traveled to Washington DC a couple of weeks ago to attend PVA's advocacy and legislative seminar. Kerry Reyna, our government relations director, set up a busy schedule that included several face-to-face meetings with Senators and Congressional Representatives. Eric Lindsay, Derrick Perkins, and Tammy Jones attended with Kerry and were able to make a huge impact on communicating PVA's points and the needs of our membership. Thanks, you all for a job well done.

Please remember that we have elections coming up and if you would like to run for a position, please get your nomination in. The positions open are: President, Secretary, and BOD position #1. If you have any questions about what it would take to fulfill one of the positions, please let me know.

April is PVA awareness month and we have lots of great activities scheduled, so please check your calendars and come out and join us.

Also, we have some great information provided in the newsletter from our regional office in Houston from NSO, Gregory Tracey. Please read the information carefully and if you have any questions or concerns, please contact your NSO's or the chapter office.

Thank you,

**Anne Robinson**  
**President**

# Connect With What Matters



## Being there makes a difference

It could be a simple trip to the mall, a ride to the movies or just a visit to friend's home. The little things in life can make a big difference. It's why MobilityWorks has been helping veterans connect with who and what matters most since 1997. Veterans have unique needs so we treat each of them as individuals. First of all, we listen. Then, we work together to find the best solution.

MobilityWorks considers it a privilege to help our nation's veterans. Every day we work with local VISNs and service organizations to make the process of securing accessible vehicles, lifts and driving equipment for veterans as easy as possible.

MobilityWorks has more than 65 locations across the country with the largest selection of accessible vehicles and adaptive solutions:

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MobilityWorks is committed to serving you. Contact us today so we can evaluate your needs and find a solution that best fits your lifestyle.



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# Executive Directors Report by Amanda Saunders

Hello Texas Chapter,

It was great to see those of you who came out to our 10th Annual Kill'n Clays Classic on March 10th. It's hard to believe this was our 10th year hosting the event!

April is PVA Awareness Month and there will be several activities going on around the Chapter. On Thursday, April 19th, we will meet JeMarques and some of the Houston VA in-patients for a fun filled day of shooting. We'll meet at 11 am at Luby's (100 Westminster Plz, Houston 77077) for lunch and then head over to American Shooting Centers. They are located at 16500 Westheimer, Houston 77082. We have shooting instructors who have volunteered to help and give shooting instructions. Please let me know if you plan on joining us so that we have enough supplies and instructors available. We will also have a booth set up at the Houston VA on Wednesday, April 25th. Stop by and say Hi.

Nominations are open for President, Secretary and Board Member # 1 positions. If you've considered running now is the time to submit your name or nominate some of your fellow TPVA members. The term is from October 2018 to October 2020. Nominations MUST be received by Monday, April 16th.

If you are planning to participate in the NVWG's please be sure to submit your Request for Event Funding to the chapter office.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance to you.



# Vice Presidents Report by Tammy Jones

## Black History Month Celebration:

On 23 February, in celebration of Black History Month, a Medal of Honor Exhibit was provided by the Texas Disabled Veterans Association and the Paralyzed Veterans of America Texas Chapter. The free and public event was held at the Audie L. Murphy VA Medical Center 1st Floor Recreation Room from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. The celebration included Door Prizes, Gospel Music by Singer Johnique Bowzer, Video Presentation, and Guest Speaker Colonel/Chaplain Edward K. Maney, US Army Retired delivered a powerful patriotic speech followed by a traditional lunch of Southern food. A special tribute was read in memory of Army 2nd LT. Emily J.T. Perez, KIA Iraq.

Carter Godwin Woodson was an African-American historian, author, journalist and the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. In February 1926, he launched the celebration of "Negro History Week", the precursor of Black History Month, the month of February is observed as Black History Month or National African American History Month, and we use the month to remember the important contributions and achievements of African Americans throughout our nation's history.

The Medal of Honor Exhibit honored African American Medal of Honor Recipients and highlighted Robert Augustus Sweeney who is one of nineteen men, and the only African American, to have been awarded two Medals of Honor. World War Two and Korean War memorabilia were also displayed and a photo album of Tuskegee Army Air Corp pilots and General Officers.

Article by Daniel Castillo

WASHINGTON, DC — Paralyzed Veterans of America (Paralyzed Veterans) today announced that its President and Executive Committee have named Carl Blake as the organization's executive director. Blake has led Paralyzed Veterans' government relations program since 2014 and has been serving as the organizations' interim executive director since November 2017.

Blake, a West Point grad and U. S. Army veteran, first became a member of Paralyzed Veterans in 2001, and has served as its associate executive director of government relations for the past three years.

“Carl Blake has shown unfailing dedication and commitment to the members of Paralyzed Veterans of America, all veterans and the greater disability community for more than a decade,” said National President David Zurfluh. “His leadership of our national advocacy and legislative efforts has given severely disabled veterans and their families new hope and opportunities for a better quality of life, families of their own and the benefits they've earned in service to our great country. We are confident he will continue to put the needs and concerns of our paralyzed veterans first and do everything possible to improve the lives of our members and their families, as well as the lives of all veterans and disabled Americans.”

As head of the organization's government relations department, Blake has been responsible for the planning, coordination, and implementation of its national legislative and advocacy program agendas with the United States Congress and federal departments and agencies. He has developed and executed Paralyzed Veterans' Washington agenda in the areas of budget, appropriations, health care, and veterans' benefits issues, as well as disability civil rights. He has also spearheaded the consortium of veteran's service organization partners who annually plan, author and publish The Independent Budget, a collaborative policy and budget recommendation publication that is presented each year to the United States Congress.

In this role, Blake has also represented Paralyzed Veterans to federal agencies, including the Department of Defense, Department of Labor, Small Business Administration, the Department of Transportation, Department of Justice, and the Office of Personnel Management. He has coordinated all activities with Paralyzed Veterans' Association of Chapter Government Relations Directors, as well its Executive Committee, Board of Directors and senior leadership.

“I am honored and privileged to be asked to carry the responsibility of advancing the mission of Paralyzed Veterans of America,” said Blake. “As a Paralyzed Veterans' member, I take seriously the organization's commitment to the men and women who rely upon us to be their advocates. The leaders who have come before me have built this organization into an influential force in the veterans and disability communities, and I humbly intend to build on their legacy.”

Carl Blake was raised in Woodford, Virginia. He graduated the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York in 1998, with a Bachelor of Science Degree.

Upon graduation from West Point, Blake was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Infantry in the United States Army. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment (1st Brigade) of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He graduated from Infantry Officer Basic Course, U.S. Army Ranger School, U.S. Army Airborne School, and Air Assault School. His awards include the Army Commendation Medal, Expert Infantryman's Badge, and German Parachutist Badge. Carl retired from the military in October 2000 due to injuries suffered during a parachute training exercise.

# Houston VA Regional Office Report

From your friendly neighborhood VA Regional Office NSO:

Since Hurricane Harvey, the Houston Regional Office has had its fair share of setbacks ranging from misleading correspondence to pilot programs being launched without test procedures. But, they have been working overtime regularly on weekends and holidays to bring the office back to 100% functionality.

RAMP - Rapid Appeals Modernization Program - Good for new appeals, bad for old appeals.

Status of dependency and status of Employment questionnaires -

VA checks the status of dependents every 8 years. Please don't think this is harassment. It prevents Veterans from accumulating significant over-payments when they forget to notify the VA of a divorce or death of a spouse or triggering an increase for the addition of a new born or a new spouse.

VA requires Veterans that are in receipt of the Individual Unemployability Benefit to submit VA Form 21-4140 to show they have not been employed or have not been paid the minimum pension rate from part time employment over the last 12 months.

Failure to return these questionnaires in a timely manner results in a proposal to reduce rating decision.

Address changes - please continue updating our service offices with your change of address. We have to submit the VA Form 20-572 to update the VA Regional Office. However, this does not change your address in the VA Medical System. You must also provide your change of address through your medical center or OPC.

Notification Letter procedures. The VA is testing a new procedure where all correspondence will be generated and mailed to Veterans and Veteran Service Organizations by a location in the central US. This new procedure will cut costs while maintaining the requirement by law to notify the Veteran and their representatives of activity by the VA. Currently, the VA correspondence shows that PVA is carbon copied on all letters sent to Veterans, this is not true! I do not get a hard copy of any correspondence and rely on our clients to contact my office to notify us that they have received correspondence from the VA. This plays heavily on Veterans in receipt of a Statement of the Case and have 60 days to submit a timely VA Form 9 to continue their appeal.

Over the second quarter (Jan-Mar), this Service Office has accumulated \$229,098.00 in significant retros and \$1.3 million in total benefits \$1.2 of that for target clientèle.

With the rapid progression of the electronic claim filing system and the Veteran Benefit Management System (VBMS), the office has seen an incredible amount of rating decisions. Where a year ago this office had over 400 active claims pending, we're under 100 as of Monday 12 March. But with the VA sacrificing quality for quantity, our Notices of Disagreement and VA Form 9's has increased significantly.

We continue to chip away at the backlog and appreciate all the cooperation from the membership.

Gregory T. Treacy

Paralyzed Veterans of America,  
Senior National Service Officer

## Dear CiCi

Dear Cici,

My husband, Jim, had an allergic reaction to a new medicine prescribed by his doctor. I was shocked to know that this could happen. I thought the doctors were supposed to check those things out before prescribing new meds for their patients. My husband had to be hospitalized for four days because of this. How can I keep this from happening in the future?

Sue

Dear Sue,

Doctors keep tabs on the meds their patients are taking. If your husband had an allergic reaction to a specific medicine, his doctor wouldn't know that until the reaction occurs. Did you call the doctor to let him/her know of the reaction?

A good rule of thumb is to keep a list of all medicines being taken (including over the counter meds and supplements) on hand. Some medicines don't work well when they are mixed. Sometimes the patient is encouraged to avoid alcohol consumption with certain medicines. It's a good idea to carefully read the label and the patient information sheets that come with most medicines. It's also a good idea to ask the doctor if newly prescribed medicines are safe to take with other medicines your husband is taking. Being well informed about the medicines, their side effects, and how and when to take them will make you a better care giver for your loved one.

Sincerely,

Cici

## New Veterans ID Cards

Acknowledgement of being a U.S. military veteran is a very fulfilling accomplishment, considering some of the tremendous sacrifices that many veterans have made. It is pleasing that some commercial entities recognize the sacrifice and dedication that men and women in uniform have endured for the good of our country and fellow citizens. These retailers, restaurants, and certain other businesses have shown their appreciation of military veterans by providing discounts to certain goods and services.

Typically, one must show verification of being a military veteran, usually in the form of the veteran ID card issued by a VA medical center or copy of his or her DD 214, when they purchase the good or service. Unfortunately, not all veterans have the appropriate identification. For example, if a veteran does not receive his or her healthcare at a VA medical center he or she will most likely not have any type of photo ID that shows veteran status. Granted, some states in the country now indicate veteran status on a driver's license, Texas being one of those states. However, not all veterans have a driver's license. Also, not many veterans carry a copy of their discharge papers with them when they go shopping. It is not always easy for all veterans to prove their status when they go to the local hardware store.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has now made it easier for former service members to show their veteran status. The new ID cards will only be valid for proving military service. The new cards cannot be used for benefits through the VA, to access military installations, or to receive other military or veterans benefits. These ID Cards will include a photo of the veteran, their name, and a non-Social Security identification number. The VA is now offering to provide Veterans Identification Card (VIC) to those eligible.

Veterans must have an honorable discharge to be eligible for this ID Card. The Veterans ID Card is only to be used for proving your military service. It isn't to be used for benefits or other purposes. So many military members, retirees, or other veterans may not need to apply for a VIC if they have another official ID card that proves their military service. The VA states veterans do not need to request the VIC if you have one of the following forms of military ID, Veteran ID Cards, or other official proof of service:

- Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC), or
- Department of Defense Identification Card—either a Common Access Card (CAC) or a Uniformed Services ID Card, or
- State-issued ID with a Veteran designation (such as a driver's license or state ID card) or a state-issued Veteran ID Card.

To request a VIC, veterans must visit [www.vets.gov](http://www.vets.gov), click on "Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card", sign in or create an account. Veterans who apply for a card should receive it within 60 days and can check delivery status of their cards at [vets.gov](http://vets.gov). Specifications regarding what is needed to apply can be found on the [vets.gov](http://vets.gov) website.

## Government Relation/Advocacy/Legislative

Government Relations has a busy March! David Bradshaw-Board Member, Derrick Perkins-Board Member, Amanda-Executive Director and Fred Reyna attended the Armed Forces Appreciation Day at the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo. They met with various City of Houston officials, Texas Veterans Commission staff and were invited as guest of Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo President Joel Cowley to his suite to watch the rodeo.

Thanks David, Derrick, Amanda and Fred for representing the Texas Chapter! Derrick, Eric, Tammy and I are heading to DC. We have been invited to have coffee with Texas Senators Cornyn and Cruz on 6 & 8 March and will express the Texas Chapter and National concerns.



*Texas on the Hill*  
**VOICES CARRY**







**Sports and Recreation Director's Report**  
by Kedgerick Smith

# **SPORTSMAN'S CHALLENGE**

## **WHEN**

**May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018**  
**10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

## **WHERE**

**SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL FOREST**  
**18025 Osborn Rd. (Diamond L Ranch)**  
**Montgomery, Texas**

## **FEATURING**

**Archery, Tomahawk throwing, Rifle,  
Pistol, Shotgun, Turkey Shoot**

**Fun competition – Experienced  
shooters or novice**

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## **FISH FRY MID AFTERNOON**



**ALL  
AGES  
EVENT**



Leo A. Andrade  
Abel D. Gonzales  
Paul R. Martinez  
Jason W. Mead  
Tedd W. Shelton  
Kevin S. Kuddes  
Paul M. Stanford  
Carey L. Alford  
Robert D. Poffinbarger  
Larry E. Bean  
Piedad T. Tristan  
Howard W. Van Noy  
Michael J. Levine  
Ulysses J. Wicker  
Kerry A. Reyna  
Sammie King  
William M. Chavez  
Gabriel Diaz De Leon  
Darrell A. Wilson  
Jose I. Perez  
Jerry L. Turner  
Clarence G. Walton  
Lorinda L. Carr

### New Members

**Cornelio Ochoa**  
**Johnny B. Beamon**

Calvin P. Lambert  
Johnny R. Treadwell  
Donald R. Moore  
Charles C. Sherman  
Alfredo A. Ramos  
Alex G. Williams  
Luther L. Sanders  
Marsha R. Hick  
Harold L. Brown  
Thomas L. Taylor  
Edward C. Tuggle  
Albert C. Ellis  
Raul Ramirez  
Joe James  
Peter A. Westerfield  
Hugh R. Morgan  
Sylvester R. Barner  
Steven T. Hoffman  
Gregory G. Rosales  
Carlos J. Ramos-Moll  
Donald W. Howard  
Josue T. Lopez



**Paralyzed Veterans  
of America**



# BECOME A FELLOW

## Serve as Leaders Among Your Peers

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE **NEW** FELLOWS PROGRAM

**Paralyzed Veterans of America's Fellows Program** provides paralyzed veterans the opportunity to advocate through its network of public, private and nonprofit organizations. Through public appearances and speaking engagements, Paralyzed Veterans Fellows will serve as leaders among their peers, elevating the nation's awareness of the contributions and struggles of U.S. veterans living with spinal cord injury or disease. This position comes with compensation.

### QUALIFIED APPLICANTS ARE:

- Paralyzed Veterans members or eligible for membership
- Available to work a minimum of 20 hours a month
- Able to travel
- Able to commit to the Fellows 2-year program

Completed Applications Must be Received by November 15, 2017  
more information, contact: [commdept@pva.org](mailto:commdept@pva.org)

**APPLY NOW:**  
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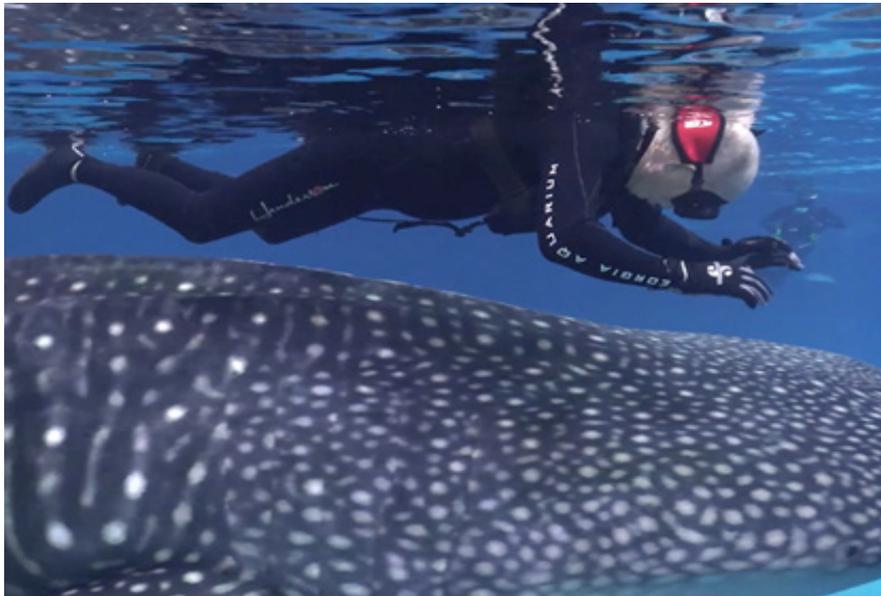
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## Steve Holbert - Georgia Aquarium

I had been in the water for less than 15 seconds holding on to the edge of the loading dock looking down through my scuba mask marveling at all the fish when a giant manta ray came gliding by just a few feet below me. I started to laugh. Not because there was anything funny about it but because it was just so totally awesome, and it seemed so surreal that I was in a 6.3-million-gallon aquarium filled with all sorts of marine animals including whale sharks that I didn't know what else to do other than laugh! Then as our group of disabled veterans started our snorkel swim around the Georgia Aquarium I hadn't swum more than 20 feet when my safety swimmer, tour guide got my attention and pointed behind me. As I turned my head to look I'm sure my eyes must have widened to the size of silver dollars because one of the whale sharks was headed right towards us. It came gently swimming by right underneath me! It was so bizarre watching this freight train car sized fish go slipping past me in eerie gentle smooth silence inches away from my face. I could have reached out and touched it although you're not supposed to. You're not allowed to touch any of the marine life when swimming or scuba diving in the aquarium. I didn't have to reach out and touch one because later in the swim another one again surprised me by swimming from behind me but this time so close that I was bumping along its back as it glided past. Freaky, cool, awesome!

You're probably wondering what I was doing swimming in the Georgia Aquarium. It was a swim and scuba event put on in cooperation with the PVA and Life Waters Foundation. LifeWaters Scuba program is designed to help improve the lives of our disabled Veterans by offering discover scuba and scuba certifications through Scuba Diving International (SDI) (Scubility Program) as part of recreational water therapy. Another great group of volunteers donating their time and expertise helping disabled veterans get back to enjoying their life.

LifeWaters.org is hosting a free discover Scuba event March 24th at Giggin Marlin dive and swim located at 4502 Almeda Rd. Houston, TX 77004. If you'd like to participate you'll have to provide a Doctor's medical release form. For event info email [info@gigginmarlin.com](mailto:info@gigginmarlin.com) or call 281.445.3483. For more information about LiveWaters email [info@lifewaters.org](mailto:info@lifewaters.org) or call 314-326-0419 or contact Lifewaters local representative Keith Fite at 281-797-2478 email [kfite@comcast.net](mailto:kfite@comcast.net).



# MS Directors Report by Elizabeth Duncan

Elizabeth Duncan

## Touch Free App Technology for Phones and Tablets

Open Sesame is an app to open touch free controls of cell phones and tablets for those who cannot use their hands. It also has extended voice commands for answering phones and text messaging. Open sesame is powered by computer, vision and voice control. The phone waits for you to command it by saying, "OK, Open Sesame", to start. With the computer, the front facing camera opens vision algorithms that follow your head movements. Your head movements control the screen cursor that enables interactions with any app from play store.

What can you do on the phone and tablet- Open sesame touch free control has extended all of the device features whether built in or downloaded from the play store. The user, uses the device depending on the persons individual needs you can play games, join friends on social media like Facebook and twitter etc. Adults like using it for Facebook and newspaper apps, as well as eBooks. You can also use the app to control lights, tv, ac and cameras all through the convenience of a smart phone. If you would like any more information, please go to [www.sesameenable.com](http://www.sesameenable.com). Start using your head to control your phone!



## **Adjustable**

**Transfer Bench** Two legs fit inside the bathtub and two legs fit outside. Converts for left or right entry. Weight Capacity: 350 lbs. Not tools needed; some assembly required. Overall dimensions: 30.5"W x 23"D. Seat dimensions: 26.25"L x 20.65"D, \$70, Cash Only.



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**Spinal Cord Injury Care Line**  
**TEAM RECOGNITION**  
**MEDVAMC TOWN HALL AWARD**  
**February 27, 2018**

**For providing excellent care to our Veterans!  
One SCI Veteran said, "I am grateful to all of the staff  
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that my physical well-being was a priority. I felt as  
though I received quality personal attention. Continue  
to care for your patients as kindly as you cared for me.  
Keep smiling!"**



*In Memoriam*  
*Always in our hearts*



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Erick R. Hoorman  
Donald E. Saathoff  
Ronald D. Sigur  
Gary Van Fleet  
Larry L. Nunn  
Garland Jennings  
Justin D. Roberson  
Carolyn Lee - Houston Volunteer



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*Operation*  
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Paralyzed Veterans  
of America



WHEELS HELPING  
WARRIORS

Your donated vehicle can go far in helping severely injured veterans. Donations are sold at auction with proceeds going toward programs and services for veterans and their families. You may also receive a tax break, too!