

# Disabled American Veterans

## Department of North Dakota

# Tri-Annual News Bulletin

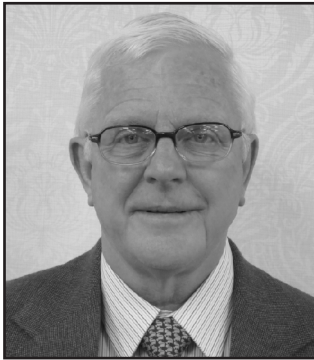


DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

2009 4th STREET NE - JAMESTOWN, ND 58401

JANUARY 2015

## DEPARTMENT COMMANDER REPORT



**Rod Olin**

Department Commander DAV

Greetings again to all of my DAV sisters and brothers!! The New Year is upon us, as is a new Legislative session. I am hoping you all had very Merry Christmas and are enjoying 2015. One thing quickly coming our way is our Department Convention in Fargo April 24-26th. NOW is the time to begin thinking of who you want to nominate for Member of the Year as well as putting together your Chapter report for the Outstanding Chapter Award.

I want to thank the chapters that I have had the opportunity to visit and meet with their membership over the past 3 months. First off I made it to Williston in late November on a windy, snowy and cold weekend—but the fellowship and hospitality I enjoyed surely warmed up the Moose Club and we feasted on some great prime rib! Then I attended the Chapter 24 DAV and DAVA Christmas meal on December 10th and attended their Chapter meeting. The next night I had the privilege of attending the Chapter 1 Christmas event in Fargo. They had a fantastic turnout and gave out many great door prizes. January 14th found me in Bismarck attending the Chapter 3 Appreciation Dinner for their devoted Van Drivers! It was a wonderful program and the recognition they received was well deserved.

Good News for Chapter 8 in Dickinson!! Adjutant Tobin and I ventured to Dickinson in early October and met with a few

of the members to see if they wanted to reactivate the Chapter. I returned on Veteran's Day and they had a quorum and elected officers. They are officially back in business and National has approved their officer report. Dave Miller is their Commander. Please give them your full support.

As stated earlier, the Legislative season has begun and there are many important bills affecting Veterans. As things progress information will be passed on to the Adjutants and Commanders asking for your support and perhaps contacting your local Representative or Senator. Warren and I attended a Veterans Coordinating Council meeting on January 13th and we hosted a Legislative Reception. We had over 70 people attend and hopefully made our views known.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Keep on looking for new members...carry a membership application with you. Always talk about the good things the DAV does. Currently, Chapters 2, 3 and 5 have met goal. State wide we need 15 to get to 100%

If you have not yet seen the movie "Unbroken" or read the book, I would highly recommend it to you. The story of Louis Zamperini, his time as a POW and his conversion later in life is a story we all should read and pass on to our kids.

Finally, on a sad note I wanted to inform you of the passing of Dennis Krulder, DAV National 3rd Junior Vice Commander. He was our featured speaker at least year's convention in Jamestown. Also, we lost Bernie Wagner, PDC and Chapter 24 member. Please keep them and their families in your prayers.

Please continue to remember all those who are currently serving us around the world as well as their families back home and thanks to all of you for what you continue to do for our Veterans and the DAV. Safe travels and good health to you all.

## DAVA DEPARTMENT COMMANDER REPORT



**Marissa Jackson**

Department Commander DAVA

First I want to give my congratulations to two national leaders who received appointments. DAVA National Commander LeeAnn Karg has appointed Pat Kemper as National Adjutant and Ann Glende as Assistant National Adjutant. Pat was appointed to replace Judy Hezlip who recently retired.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a few remarks from Pat Kemper. "The need for our organization is as great now as it was in 1922 (when founded), if not greater. We must evolve with the changing times and serve the needs of those

who need our help. Fortunately for the organization, our members can and will continue to do whatever they can to achieve the goals to get the job done."

I want to emphasize her point – the needs of the organization are as great now as they have ever been. Our country has had a long period of active engagement in the middle east and we have a large number of families with a member whose disability impacts all members. We can help these families and help replace silence with laughter and joy. This is our mission, this is our goal.

Thank you for your support of this mission.



# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

## DAV MIDWINTER CONFERENCE

**February 22-24, 2015**

Crystal Gateway Marriot  
Arlington, VA

## DAV DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

**April 24-26, 2015**

Biltmore on Main  
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## DAV NATIONAL CONVENTION

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Reservations can be made at the DAV negotiated rate up to the earlier of: Thursday, January 29, 2015 or the DAV room blocks sells out.

DAV has been making historic strides in protecting the rights and needs of our Veterans for close to 100 years. From the creation of the forerunner to the Department of Veteran's Affairs in the 1920s, to caring for the returning heroes from Afghanistan and Iraq, DAV has responded time and time again to the changing needs of veterans by ensuring that their voices are heard by our Congress. We invite all DAV members to join us in the spirit of service and fellowship at this year's Mid-Winter Conference in Arlington.

## We Remember His Service



Auxiliary PNC Margie Haas has informed us that her husband, Past Department Commander, Vic Haas, died on November 20, 2014. Services were held December 1. Vic served as Department Commander from 1986-1987. He served in the Navy from 1944 to 1946.

## DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS DEPARTMENT OF NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OFFICERS 2014-2015

### DEPT. COMMANDER

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### SR. VICE COMMANDER

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### 1st JR. VICE COMMANDER

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### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEEMAN

Tom Saddler  
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### CHIEF OF STAFF

Roy Fillion  
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### FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

3 Year - Mark Landis

2 Year - Jim Groven

1 Year - Roy Fillion

### NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER

Mike Medhaug  
(701) 451-4636

### DEPARTMENT HSC

Darlene Famias

Dept. Web Site:  
[www.davmembersportal.org/nd/default.aspx](http://www.davmembersportal.org/nd/default.aspx)

### VETERANS COORD. COUNCIL

Commander: Rod Olin  
Adjutant: Warren Tobin  
Member at Large: Tom Saddler

### ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ron Otto  
Jim Haukedahl  
Vacant pending Governor appt of candidate

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### SR. VICE COMMANDER

Pat Resler

### 1st JR. VICE COMMANDER

Joyce Stuber

### 2nd JR. VICE COMMANDER

Bernie Burke

### DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN

Laurel Evans

### DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT

Judy Steinhouse

### ASSISTANT ADJUTANT

Sandy Dobmeier

### TREASURER

Faye Litzinger

### JUDGE ADVOCATE/INSP. GENERAL

Jan Novontny

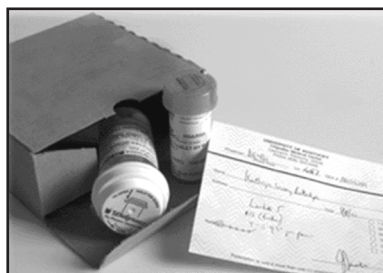
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2009 4th Street NE  
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## VA Mail-Order Pharmacy Receives Highest Score in Mail Order Segment of J.D. Power Study

For the fifth consecutive year, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP) has scored the highest in overall satisfaction in the J.D. Power National Pharmacy Study, Mail-Order segment.

This study, conducted annually, measures satisfaction among consumers who filled a mail-order prescription within the last 90 days. Ten commercial organizations were also included in the study.

"VA's first-class pharmacy services are an important component of the exceptional health care available to our Veterans," said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Interim Under Secretary for Health. "We are proud to learn from our Veterans through this study that VA is delivering on that commitment."



Customer satisfaction with Mail-Order Pharmacy is measured across four key factors: cost competitiveness, prescription delivery, prescription ordering, and customer service.

VA also led the mail-order pharmacy industry nationwide in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. VA participates in this annual survey as a way to compare itself against industry leaders and to ensure VA health care meets the highest standards.

With nearly 9 million Veterans enrolled, VA operates the largest integrated health care delivery system in the United States, with a mission to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. VA provides a broad range of primary care, specialized care, and related medical and case management services. More information is available at <http://www.va.gov/health/>.

Veterans who wish to learn about VA pharmacy and other health benefits can find information at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/).

## Department Online Newsletter

If you access your newsletter by email, there is no waiting for snail mail to receive it at your doorstep. This is the fastest and most convenient way to receive your newsletter. Your newsletter can be accessed and saved to your iPhone, smart phone or any device that had access to the internet. You may read



newsletters on line and at your convenience. The newsletter is published on our Department's DAV Web Site – <http://www.davmembersportal.org/nd/default.aspx>

If you would like to receive an email announcing the availability of each issue, please send an email to [warren.tobin8@gmail.com](mailto:warren.tobin8@gmail.com). If you also wish to "opt out" and not receive a hard copy of the newsletter, please send Warren an email advising him of this.



## From the North Dakota Vets Home



Picture is from the North Dakota Vets Home on 11/25/14 where Chapter 2 went down to conduct bingo. Picture shows Chapter 2 Commander Steve Benson presenting check to Administrator Mark Johnson. Also pictured from left to right, back to front are: Jim Arneson, Lou Lombardi, Dale Burke, Dr. Patrick Moore (Grand Forks VA Clinic who too time off to join us), John Heidrich, Tom Saddler, and Dave Normandin.



# Land of the Free! Home of the Brave!

# THANK A VETERAN TODAY!

# VA Implements Second Phase of Choice Card Program

## Cards Sent to Veterans Waiting More Than 30 Days for Care

Washington, DC – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that it began mailing Veterans Choice Cards on November 17 to Veterans currently waiting more than 30-days from their preferred date or the date that is medically determined by their physician for an appointment at a VA facility.

“VA continues to focus on implementation of this new temporary benefit so that Veterans receive the timely quality care they need in a way that reduces confusion and inefficiencies,” said Secretary Robert A. McDonald, who penned an open letter to Veterans announcing the implementation of the Choice Card program.



The Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit that allows some Veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. The first round of cards along with a letter explaining the program was issued on November 5 to Veterans who are eligible based on their place of residence. VA is now engaging in the next phase of its rollout—eligibility explanation letters are being sent to Veterans waiting more than 30 days from their preferred date to be seen or considered medically necessary by their physician.

To improve service delivery, VA has prioritized efforts to accelerate Veterans off of wait lists and into clinics through the Accelerated Care Initiative begun over the summer. Through this initiative, VA medical centers have increased access to care

inside and outside of VA, added more clinic hours and work days, deployed mobile medical units and shared their best practices from VA's high-performing facilities throughout the organization.

Significant improvements have resulted nationally:

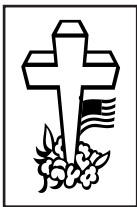
- Scheduling more than 1.2 million more appointments in the past four months than in the same period last year. In total, VA medical centers have scheduled over 19 million Veteran appointments from June to October 1, 2014;
- Reducing the national new patient Primary Care wait time by 18 percent;
- Completing 98 percent of appointments within 30 days of the Veterans' preferred date, or the date determined to be medically necessary by a physician;
- Authorizing 1.1 million non-VA care authorizations, a 47-percent increase over the same period last year; and
- Increasing the amount of time providers could deliver care to Veterans by increasing the amount of clinic hours in primary and specialty care and through adding weekend and evening clinics at our medical centers.

VA is America's largest integrated health care system with over 1,700 sites of care, serving approximately 9 million Veterans enrolled in health care services. The Choice Program is part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA), enacted nearly three months ago, to enable VA to meet the demand for Veterans' health care in the short-term.

For more information about the Choice Program, call 1-866-606-8198 or visit <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>.

## News of Bernie Wagner's Passing

Bernard "Bernie" A. Wagner age 93 of Maryhill Manor Nursing Home, Enderlin, ND and formerly of Sanborn and Valley City, ND passed away January 10, 2015. A Mass of Christian Burial will be conducted at 11 AM Friday Jan 16th at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Sanborn, ND with Msgr. Dennis Skonseng celebrant. A Prayer Service will be conducted at 7 PM Thursday at St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Valley City. Visitation will be from 5PM until 7 PM Thursday at St. Catherine's Church and 10 AM until 11 AM Friday at Sacred Heart Church. Interment will be in Sacred Heart Cemetery at Sanborn, ND later in the spring. Military Honors will be under the auspices of the North Dakota Honors Team, the VFW Honor Guard, the AmVets Color Guard, the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps, and the Sanborn/Eckelson American Legion Post 202.



Bernie was born at Marion, ND on Feb, 21, 1921 the son of Leo and Alice (Lynch) Wagner. He graduated from Sanborn High School in 1937 and then enrolled in Valley city State Teachers College. He enlisted in Co G 164th Infantry, Valley City, ND in April of 1938 and was called to active duty on Feb. 10, 1941. He served overseas as an enlisted man during WW II with the 164th Infantry, the first Army unit to see combat in the Pacific theater. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, Infantry at Ft. Benning GA on Jan. 4, 1945. He then traveled to North Dakota and married his high school sweetheart, Mary Sauer, on Jan. 8, 1945 at Sanborn, ND. Bernie continued his military service and was discharged on Mar. 1, 1977 at the rank of

Lieutenant Colonel. During his military service he was called to active duty for the Korean Conflict in 1951 and he served as Battalion commander of the 141st Engineer Battalion for over 10 years. He was often times referred to as Mr. 141. He retired as the State Maintenance Officer for the North Dakota Army National Guard. During his time in the military, Bernie also continued to manage and operate the family farm at Sanborn, ND.

After his retirement from the military Bernie was active in veteran's organizations and senior citizen activities. He was a member of the VFW, American Legion, DAV, and the AMVETS. He served as the Department Commander of the North Dakota DAV and also served on the National Executive Committee of the DAV. He served several years on the Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs for the State of North Dakota. Bernie also served as the Chairman of the South Central Adult Services, Chairman of the Barnes County Housing Authority, and served many sessions with the North Dakota Silver Hair Legislature. He was also a member of the Elks, Eagles, and a 4th Degree Knights of Columbus.

Bernie is survived by his wife of over 70 years, Mary, his son Charles (JoAl), Maricopa, AZ, their daughters Melissa Wagner, Plymouth, MN, Jerica and Jeff Reha and their children, Tenley, Aubrey, and Grayson, son-in-law James Drong, Sanborn, ND, his son Michael and Lisa Drong and their children McRay, Elias, and Connor. He was preceded in death by his parents, his brother Edward, and his daughter Patricia Drong.

# Department Convention Dates Announced

The 2015 DAV Department of North Dakota Convention will be held April 24 at the Biltmore on Main (formerly Kelly Inn). The standard state rate will be available for rooms. Schedules haven't been confirmed, but we will have a Department Executive Meeting on Friday afternoon. The convention banquet will be held Saturday evening. The phone number for the Biltmore is (701) 281-9700 or 800-491-9657.

## National DAV Commanders at the Fall 14th District Meeting



Both the DAV and DAVA National Commanders attended the DAV District 14 Fall Meeting in Fargo, ND.

Left to Right: National Commander Ron Hope from South Carolina, Department Commander Rod Olin, Department Adjutant Warren Tobin, and Auxiliary National Commander LeeAnn Karg from Minnesota.



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## DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS



**FRANCIS J. BEATON  
Chapter No. 1**

**Fargo, North Dakota**

Meetings Held 2nd Thursday  
of each month

# War Costs Since 911 – Dollar and Human

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and counterterrorism operations have cost the U.S. a combined \$1.6 trillion since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, according to a new Congressional Research Service analysis. Refer to <http://media.bloomberg.com/bb/avfile/rU4ypR8jD54M> to view the complete Congressional Research Service report:

**Dollar Cost** - Through fiscal 2014, which ended in September, Congress approved \$815 billion for warfare in Iraq, \$686 billion for Afghanistan and other operations against terrorism, \$81 billion for other war-designated spending and \$27 billion for Operation Noble Eagle air patrols over the U.S., according to the report posted on the agency's internal website. The total includes \$297 billion spent on weapon procurement and war repairs. The assessment is the agency's first full update of war costs since March 2011. About 92 percent of the funds went to the Pentagon, followed by the State Department and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It includes war operations, training and equipping Iraqi and Afghan forces, diplomatic operations and medical care for wounded Americans over the past 13 years, the agency said in the report dated Dec. 8. It also includes most reconstructions costs. "The main factor determining cost is the number of U.S. troops deployed" at different times, the research service said. U.S. troops in Afghanistan peaked at 100,000 in 2011; there are 11,600 there today as the U.S. withdrawal continues. The figures include war-related intelligence funding that wasn't tracked or spent by the Defense Department, according to the report. It wasn't updated with the \$63.7 billion in war spending for the current fiscal year for Afghanistan operations and the first installment of



operations against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

**Human Costs** - The Iraq invasion -- initiated on a pledge to rid Saddam Hussein of weapons of mass destruction he didn't have -- resulted in 4,491 U.S. military and civilian deaths and 32,244 wounded, according to Defense Department data compiled by Bloomberg. The U.S. invasion to destroy al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and remove the Taliban from power has led to 2,356 military and U.S. civilians deaths and 20,060 wounded as of 16 DEC 2014. In addition, 128,496 U.S. military who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, according to September data from the Defense Medical Surveillance System.

**Cost Caveats** - Unlike academic estimates, which have calculated total costs as much higher, the Congressional Research Service doesn't include in its calculations the lifetime costs of medical care for disabled veterans, imputed interest on the deficit or potential increases to the base defense budget deemed to be a consequence of the war, according to Amy Belasco, author of the report.

"Such costs are difficult to compute, subject to extensive caveats and often based on methodologies that may not be appropriate," she wrote. A June cost-of-war assessment by Neta Crawford, a political science professor at Boston University, put the potential total cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and assistance to Pakistan since 2001 at \$4.4 trillion, including \$316 billion in interest costs and \$1 trillion through 2054 for veterans care.

## VA to Pilot IBM Computer Technology to Assist Physicians in Caring for Patients

### Two-Year Pilot Program Places Emphasis on Evidence-based Clinical Decisions

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun a two-year pilot to study innovative approaches to quickly search electronic medical records and medical literature for relevant published studies. During the pilot, VA will assess how the technology may accelerate evidence-based clinical decisions.

"Physicians can save valuable time finding the right information needed to care for their patients with this sophisticated and advanced technology," said Interim Under Secretary for Health Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D. "A tool that can help a clinician quickly collect, combine, and present information will allow them to spend more time listening and interacting with the Veteran. This directly supports the

patient-centric medicine VA is committed to delivering every day."

The IBM Corporation was selected to provide the system which uses its "Watson technology" made famous on Jeopardy! in 2011. Today, IBM is working with several healthcare organizations to apply Watson's cognitive capabilities in helping doctors identify and analyze cancer treatment options. Learning about the opportunities and challenges these next-generation technologies may have is part of an ongoing effort for VA to advance the quality of healthcare provided to our Nation's Veterans. During the pilot, clinical decisions will not be made on actual patient encounters, but instead will use realistic simulations.

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# VA Expands Eligibility for VA Health Care Related to Military Sexual Trauma

## Expansion Closes a Gap in Health Care Eligibility

Washington, DC – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), under authority from the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (“VACAA”), today announced expanded eligibility for Veterans in need of mental health care due to sexual assault or sexual harassment that occurred during their military service. This trauma is commonly known as military sexual trauma (MST).

This expansion, which primarily pertains to Reservists and National Guard members participating in weekend drill, gives the authority to offer Veterans the appropriate care and services needed to treat conditions resulting from MST that occurred during a period of inactive duty training.

“VA simply must be an organization that provides comprehensive care for all Veterans dealing with the effects of military sexual trauma,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “Our range of services for MST-related experiences are constantly being reexamined to best meet the needs of our Veterans.”

Secretary McDonald met last week with Ruth Moore, a Navy Veteran and MST survivor for whom the Ruth Moore Act of 2013 is named. Ms. Moore will be working with VA to ensure that survivors are treated fairly and compassionately, and that Veterans with MST can access fair compensation exams and access health care practitioners who are trained in understanding and working with MST issues.

VA works closely with trauma survivors to ensure a full continuum of health care services are provided to assist Veterans recovering from experiences of MST. Recognizing that MST survivors may have special needs and concerns, every VA health care facility has an MST Coordinator who

serves as a contact person for MST-related issues. Every VA medical center and Community-based Vet Center offers MST-related outpatient counseling.

Currently, all VA health care for mental and physical health conditions related to MST is provided free of charge. Veterans do not need to have a service-connected disability

or seeking disability compensation to be eligible for MST-related counseling and care. Veterans also do not need to have reported such incidents to the Department of Defense or possess documentation or records to support their assertion of having experienced such trauma. The determination of whether a Veteran's condition is MST-related is strictly a clinical determination made by the responsible VA mental health provider. Finally, Veterans need not be enrolled in VA's health care system to

qualify for MST-related treatment, as it is independent of VA's general treatment authority.

In addition to treatment programs, VA also provides training to staff on issues related to MST, including a mandatory training on MST for all mental health and primary care providers. VA also engages in a range of outreach activities to Veterans and conducts monitoring of MST-related screening and treatment, in order to ensure that adequate services are available.

Veterans can learn more about VA's MST-related services online at [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp) and see video clips with the recovery stories of Veterans who have experienced MST at <http://maketheconnection.net/conditions/military-sexual-trauma>.



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# DAV Mourns 3rd National Junior Vice Commander Dennis Krulder's Passing

January 12, 2015

Cold Spring, Ky. – DAV's 3rd National Junior Vice Commander Dennis L. Krulder passed away Thursday January 8 at St. Francis Hospital in New York.



**Dennis L. Krulder**  
3rd National Junior  
Vice Commander

Krulder was a life member of Chapter 125 in Malverne, N.Y. He was unanimously elected 3rd National Junior Vice Commander at the 93rd DAV National Convention in Las Vegas, Aug. 12, 2014, after being elected 4th National Junior Vice Commander at the national convention in Orlando, Fla.

He received the George H. Seal Memorial Trophy in 2013, recognizing him as DAV's top volunteer. Krulder had served in all positions at

the Chapter and Department levels, was DAV Department of New York treasurer, an executive committee member of the Commanders and Adjutants Association and served as the executive director for the VA Voluntary Services Program for

all volunteers in the state of New York.

He was also the DAV Hospital Service Coordinator at the Northport, N.Y., VAMC for the last 14 years. There, he managed more than 130 volunteer drivers, who provided free transportation to disabled veterans.

"DAV has lost a strong, compassionate, dedicated leader and I have personally lost a friend," said DAV National Commander Ron Hope. "Dennis dedicated his life to serving America's bravest and was a catalyst for positive change in the veteran community both at home and on a national level."

National 3rd Junior Vice Commander Krulder was a Vietnam Veteran and served with the 5th U.S. Cavalry as a helicopter door gunner. Included among his military decorations is the Air Medal for Valor. He retired due to service-connected injuries in 1969.

"Dennis was very well known and to say he was adored by his fellow veterans would be an understatement," said National Adjutant Marc Burgess. "His talent and dedication saw him rise through DAV's highest offices and I've no doubt he would've been elected our National Commander soon. We will miss him and his leadership but honor the legacy he leaves behind."

He is survived by his wife Geraldine and three sons, Daniel, Brian and James.



**YOU ARE ONE OF AMERICA'S HEROES**

**HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY**

February 14, 2015

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**



**ANDY NOMLAND**  
Chapter No. 2

**Grand Forks, North Dakota**

Meetings Held 2nd Wednesday  
of each month at 6:30 pm  
County Office Building - 6th Floor  
September - June



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**MICHAEL E. DOBMEIER**  
Past Natl. Commander

*Thank you for  
your support!*

**DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS**



**CLARENCE "TOM" LEMLEY**  
Chapter No. 24  
and Auxiliary Unit 24

**Valley City, North Dakota**

*We ask you to support your  
Department and Chapter Projects*



## VA's Center for Women Veterans Partners with the Center for American Women and Politics

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Center for Women Veterans (Center) entered into a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, to increase women Veterans' leadership and career opportunities, which will benefit the Nation's workforce and address women Veterans growing needs.

The MoA will allow the Center and CAWP to leverage existing resources and increase coordination of activities to help women Veterans develop public service and community engagement skill sets, so they will be prepared for public and community service opportunities.

"Women Veterans often contact us for information about how they can continue serving," says Elisa M. Basnight, Director of the Center for Women Veterans. "This MoA with the Center for American Women and Politics presents a prime opportunity for the Center to help prepare them for other forms of public service as it responds to a persistent need women Veterans tell us they have, which is the desire to continue to make a difference after the uniform."

The Center, created in 1994 to monitor VA's administration of benefits and services to women Veterans and to advise the Secretary on VA policy's impact on Women Veterans, can provide advice to CAWP's on how it focuses its resource information to address women Veterans' issues.

CAWP is a source of scholarly research and current data about American women's political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life.

"The Center for American Women and Politics is delighted to collaborate with the Center for Women Veterans to provide more information and resources for women Veterans who want to engage more fully in their communities. Women who have already put their country first by serving in the military are exactly the people we need as public leaders," said Debbie Walsh, Director of the Center for American Women and Politics.

Women Veterans represent one of the fastest growing segments of the Veterans population—about 10 percent of the total 22 million Veterans in this country. Today there are an estimated 2.2 million female Veterans. The Center for Women Veterans participates in collaborative initiatives with Federal/state/local governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, to improve opportunities for women Veterans.

For more information about women Veterans, visit [www.va.gov/womenvet](http://www.va.gov/womenvet).

## VA Women Vet Programs Update 24

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Center for Women Veterans (CWV) entered into a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, to increase women veterans' leadership and career opportunities, which will benefit the Nation's workforce and address women veterans' needs. The MoA will allow the CWV and CAWP to leverage existing resources and increase coordination of activities to help women veterans develop public service and community engagement skill sets, so they will be prepared for public and community opportunities.

"Women veterans often contact us for information about how they can continue serving," said Elisa M. Basnight, director of the CWV. The Center, created in 1994 to monitor VA's administration of benefits and services to women veterans and to advise the Secretary on VA policy's impact on women veterans, can provide advice to CAWPs on how it focuses its resource information to address women veterans' issues. CAWP is a source of scholarly research and current data about American women's political participation. Its mission is to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. "The Center for American Women and Politics is delighted to collaborate with the Center for Women Veterans to provide more information and resources for women veterans who want to engage more fully in their communities.

Women who have already put their country first by serving in the military are exactly the people we need as public leaders," said Debbie Walsh, director of the CWAP. Women veterans represent one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population — about 10 percent of the total 22 million veterans in this country. Today there are an estimated 2.2 million female veterans. The CWP participates in collaborative initiatives with Federal/state/local governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, to improve opportunities for women veterans. Visit <http://www.va.gov/womenvet> for more information about women veterans. [Source: Shift Colors | Vol 60 Issue 3 | Winter 2014 ++]



# VA Employee Appreciation Event



Francis J. Beaton, Chapter 1 recognized VA Employees at the Fargo VA by hosting a Coffee and Donut event on October 27th. The chapter felt the Fargo VA had been "thrown under the bus" with other centers due to the issues highlighted recently with the VA. As those issues unfolded on the national scene, veterans in North Dakota and Western Minnesota knew those issues weren't true of the Fargo VA. The Chapter felt it was important to show DAV's appreciation of the great service the employees provide at the Fargo VA.

In addition, the chapter presented a check for \$5600.00 to the director for a healing garden project the VA is doing to improve quality of life for our veterans during their stay at the hospital.

Pictured (l to r) is Kim Kinsland, Chapter 1 member; Mike Vandrovec, Department Judge Advocate and member of Chapter 1; Erika Lavoj, Department Chaplain and Adjutant for Chapter 1; Lavonne Liversage, Director, Fargo VA Health Care Systems; Vince Dicks, Chapter 1 Commander; Rod Olin, Department Commander; Dr. Brian Weintraub, Chief of Staff, Fargo VA and Ed (Breeze) Faber, 2nd Vice Commander, Chapter 1.



Department Commander Rod Olin, VA Public Relations Director (and DAVA PDC) Margaret Wheelon, and Chapter 1 Commander Vince Dicks visit during the VA Employee Appreciation Event.

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# Chapter 1's Annual Motorcycle Rally

Chapter 1 held its Annual Motorcycle Rally recently. As you can tell from the pictures, everyone had a great time. The Chapter reports the event was quite successful.



## AMERICAN VETERANS HEROES EVERYDAY

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## VA Implements National Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative

### Empowering Veterans to Personalize their Diabetes Care

As part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ongoing effort to improve Veterans' access to healthcare, VA is announcing the launch of a national Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative (HSI) to encourage diabetic Veterans receiving VA care to seek support to lower the risk of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). The new initiative will enable Veterans living with diabetes to work more closely with their VA clinicians to personalize health care goals and improve self-management of the disease.

"The Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative is designed to enable Veterans and their families, partners and caregivers to create a personal plan for blood sugar management based upon the Veteran's unique health goals," said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Interim Under Secretary for Health. "Our objective is to change how diabetes is managed in VA and the United States, and to help patients improve their personal well-being, not just manage their numbers."

Diabetes is one of the most prevalent diseases among older Americans, with one in four Veterans suffering from the disease. Recent clinical studies indicate that when diet, exercise and stress reduction are not successful, the benefits of achieving intensive blood sugar control with medication are less effective. This is especially true for hypoglycemic agents (pills or insulin) used for those patients who have had diabetes for many years and those who have additional serious health conditions.

HSI's key elements emphasize shared decision-making and universal health literacy to ensure Veterans understand the health information provided by their VA health care team. This includes the "teach back method" where Veterans and their caregivers are asked questions to be certain they understand and can act on key elements of self-management, including diet, exercise, glucose monitoring, managing medications, and insulin injections. The focus of the HSI is to help raise awareness among patients who may be at risk.

"Hypoglycemia has only recently been prioritized as a national public health issue, but Federal agencies are taking a leadership role in addressing the problem. We are proud to

## VA's Top Doctor Named Among Top 20 Most Influential People in Healthcare

### Dr. Carolyn Clancy selected by Modern Healthcare Magazine

Modern Healthcare Magazine recently ranked Dr. Carolyn M. Clancy, the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Interim Under Secretary for Health, as number 19 in its annual "100 Most Influential People in Healthcare" poll. Dr. Clancy has appeared on the publication's notable list for 11 straight years.



**Dr. Carolyn Clancy**

"This is a well-deserved recognition of Dr. Clancy's expertise, knowledge, judgment and informed approach to developing and implementing new initiatives here at VA," said VA Secretary Robert McDonald. "As

anyone who knows and works with Dr. Clancy can attest, she is a person of enormous integrity, tireless work ethic and a deep love and respect for Veterans. As VA undergoes a transformation focused on delivering the best outcomes for patients, Dr. Clancy brings a dedication to quality and safety that is exemplary."

As Interim Under Secretary for Health at VA, Dr. Clancy oversees the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Nation's largest integrated healthcare system. VHA provides care for millions of Veterans at 1,700 hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities and Readjustment Counseling Centers.

Dr. Clancy most recently joined VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald in launching VA's Blueprint for Excellence. The Blueprint outlines the steps VA will be taking to improve performance, promote a positive culture of service, advance healthcare innovation for Veterans and the country and increase access to care and accountability.

Prior to assuming the duties of the Interim Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Clancy joined VA in August of 2013 as Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health, for Quality, Safety and Value, where she served as the Chief Quality Management Officer for VHA. A general internist and health services researcher, Dr. Clancy is a graduate of Boston College and the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Dr. Clancy holds an academic appointment at George Washington University School of Medicine (Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Medicine) and serves as Senior Associate Editor, Health Services Research and is a member of numerous health-related editorial boards.



## Advanced Appropriations Approved

After a year-long campaign by DAV and our VSO coalition partners, Washington DAV Office Executive Director, Gary Augustine, reports that we have achieved an important breakthrough to protect veterans' benefits against any future government shutdowns or budget stalemates. Prior to the Christmas break, Senate and House appropriations leaders agreed to include advance appropriations for veterans benefit payments as part of the omnibus appropriations agreement that was passed by the House on Thursday, December 11, 2014, by a vote of 219 to 206, and it passed the Senate on Saturday, December 13, by a vote of 56 to 40.

When this legislation was signed by the President, veterans, their families and survivors now have new assurance that mandatory VA benefits will be paid on time without having to worry about them getting caught up in future political or partisan battles over federal spending. With passage of this legislation, Congress will be authorized to appropriate these funds a year in advance, thereby ensuring that veterans, family members and survivors will no longer need to worry whether a government shutdown will cut off their disability compensation, pension, DIC, GI Bill or other mandatory benefits payments.

This historic agreement was made possible because of the work done by you and DAV's many other leaders, members and supporters. Beginning with the government shutdown last year, we organized and mobilized a campaign to pass legislation to ensure that veterans benefits were never again threatened by partisan politics or unrelated budget battles. This past February many of you joined us on Capitol Hill for Operation: Keep the Promise, as we increased the pressure on Congress to pass legislation to protect our benefits. Our recent Change.org petition calling for action before the end of the year gathered support from more than 38,000 signers in just two weeks, primarily thanks to the support of DAV members.

Building on this tremendous base of nationwide support, we held a remarkable series of meetings two weeks ago with top Senate and House leaders, including Senate Appropriations Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski (MD), House Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller (FL), House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Mike Michaud (ME), and the staffs of Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (NV), House Speaker John Boehner (OH), Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders (VT), Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Richard Burr (NC), and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY).

Consequently, Senator Mikulski agreed to include the advance appropriations provision in the omnibus bill provided we were able to get letters signed by Senators Sanders and Burr and Congressmen Miller and Michaud, formally supporting the inclusion of this authorizing language in the omnibus appropriations bill. With our VSO colleagues, we were able to get that done in just over 24 hours. Chairman Miller then worked with House leadership to get them onboard, and Chairman Sanders' staff helped build support on the Senate side. Senator Reid's office was also active in working to fulfill the promise he made in October to schedule a vote on advance appropriations legislation this year. Senators Begich and Boozman, the Senate co-sponsors of advance appropriations, also actively worked to get this bill enacted.

You can learn more about this legislation and how we were able to get Congress to adopt it by reading the statement from National Commander Ron Hope.

Mr. Augustine wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have been working in the trenches to make this victory possible. The support you provide, whether from emails, phone calls or visits to your Senators and Representatives, stands behind all of our successes.

## DAV Chapter 1 and DAVA Unit 1 Christmas Party



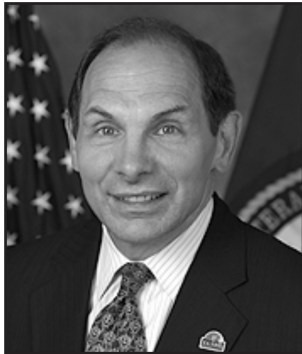
Department Commander Rod Olin attended the DAV Chapter 1 and DAVA Unit 1 Christmas Party in Fargo. As part of the program, Super Buffet was recognized for the business' support of veterans. An article from the Fargo Forum was presented to the business by Manager James Peterson who is also a member of Unit 1. The article highlighted the Owner, Henry Gao, who deeply appreciates this country and what veterans have done to maintain our freedoms.

Left to Right: Dept Commander Rod Olin, James Peterson, Henry Gao, and Chapter 1 Commander Vince Dicks



# Veterans Affairs Secretary McDonald Updates on MyVA Reorganization Plans

Washington, DC – On November 10, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert McDonald sent the following message to all VA employees:



VA Secretary Robert McDonald

In the last few months as your Secretary, I have met and heard from Veterans and family members about how we can better serve Veterans. I've also traveled to VA facilities across the country and have had the extraordinary opportunity to meet with you, the men and women who work on the front lines and behind the scenes to care for and serve Veterans every day. These opportunities have informed my thinking as we work to plan for the future of the Department. Already, more than 2,000 VA employees at 20 facilities serving 1.4 million Veterans have shared their perspectives on how we can improve this Department, and have provided insightful and thoughtful feedback about how VA should be organized to better serve Veterans. It is clear that our shared mission is important to you and your colleagues. It's also clear that you share my goal of making VA easier to navigate for Veterans. I am grateful for your contributions, and your support in this endeavor.

As we have been considering changes to VA, we have also met with Veterans, Veterans Service Organizations (VSO), NGOs, and other stakeholders. We have used your feedback, and the common themes we heard in all comments, to begin shaping the way forward for VA. Soon, we will begin implementing changes to VA, to better structure our organization to meet Veteran needs. Our new alignments may change some of our processes, but our employees remain valued members of the team.

Our shared goals are to ensure that Veterans have a clear understanding of VA and where to go for what they need within any of our facilities; that employees are empowered with the authority, knowledge and tools they need to solve problems and take action; and that the products and services that we deliver to Veterans are integrated within the organization. The changes we plan to make are as follows:

- Establish a new **VA-wide customer service organization** to ensure we provide top-level customer service to Veterans. A Chief Customer Service Officer who reports to the Secretary will lead this effort. The mission of the new office will be to drive VA culture and practices to understand and respond to the expectations of our Veteran customers.

- Establishing a **single regional framework** that will simplify internal coordination, facilitate partnering and enhance customer service. This will allow Veterans to more easily navigate VA without having to understand our inner structure.

- Working with our partners to establish a national network of **Community Veteran Advisory Councils** to coordinate better service delivery with local, state and community partners. Expanded public-private partnerships will help us coordinate Veteran-related issues with local, state and community partners, as well as VA employees.

- Identifying opportunities for VA to realign its internal business processes into a **shared services** model in which organizations across VA leverage the same support services, to improve efficiency, reduce costs and increase productivity across VA. Right now, we're looking at options used in the private sector to enhance our rapid delivery of services, and also at our own business processes that are suited for shared services.

Please keep in mind that this is a long-term process and we are just beginning to plan how this will all unfold. As we move forward with these changes, your feedback, ideas and perspective will be invaluable. To gather your suggestions, we have launched an intranet web tool, the My VA Idea House, where employees from across VA can submit ideas online to improve services, streamline processes and solve issues for Veterans and their families. Employees can also vote on submissions from your colleagues across VA. Sponsors will select ideas and create topic-related groups to encourage collaboration and help make the ideas a reality. The Idea House website will officially open for submissions tomorrow, Veterans Day, Nov. 11. I encourage you to go to [vaideahouse.ideascale.com](http://vaideahouse.ideascale.com) to submit your ideas and proposed solutions to the challenges you are seeing.

I know there are a lot of questions about this effort, and I know that there will be concerns. We don't have all the answers right now, and that's why we are reaching to you for your thoughts. This will be a fair and deliberate process, and we need your help to make sure our decisions are the right ones for Veterans.

As we collect input and work together to design an employee-led, Veteran-centric VA, we have a great opportunity to make significant progress toward our goals in the near term. Thank you for the work you are doing each day to make VA a stronger organization for America's Veterans.



# Fargo VA Health Care System Earns “Top Performer on Key Quality Measures®” From The Joint Commission

Fargo, ND – On November 13, 2014, the Fargo VA Health Care System announced it has been recognized as a 2013 Top Performer on Key Quality Measures® by The Joint Commission, the leading accreditor of health care organizations in the United States. The Fargo VA Health Care System was recognized as part of The Joint Commission's 2014 annual report “America's Hospitals: Improving Quality and Safety,” for attaining and sustaining excellence in accountability measure performance for surgical care. The Fargo VA Health Care System is one of 1,224 hospitals in the United States to achieve the 2013 Top Performer distinction.

The Top Performer program recognizes hospitals for improving performance on evidence-based interventions that increase the chances of healthy outcomes for patients with certain conditions, including heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, surgical care, children's asthma, stroke, venous thromboembolism and perinatal care, as well as for inpatient psychiatric services and immunizations.

This is the second year the Fargo VA Health Care System has been recognized as a Top Performer. The Fargo VA Health Care System was recognized last year for its performance on accountability measure data for pneumonia and surgical care in 2012.

The Fargo VA Health Care System is one of only of 712 hospitals to achieve the Top Performer distinction for the past two consecutive years.

To be a 2013 Top Performer, hospitals had to meet three performance criteria based on 2013 accountability measure data, including:

- Achieving cumulative performance of 95 percent or above across all reported accountability measures;

- Achieving performance of 95 percent or above on each and every reported accountability measure where there were at least 30 denominator cases; and

- Having at least one core measure set that had a composite rate of 95 percent or above, and (within that measure set) all applicable individual accountability measures had a performance rate of 95 percent or above.

“Delivering the right treatment in the right way at the right time is a cornerstone of high-quality health care. I commend the efforts of the Fargo VA Health Care System for their excellent performance on the use of evidence-based interventions,” said Mark R. Chassin, M.D., FACP, M.P.P., M.P.H., president and CEO, The Joint Commission.

“We understand what matters most to patients at the Fargo VA Health Care System is the quality and safety of the care they receive. That is why we have made it a top priority to improve positive patient outcomes through evidence-based care processes,” said Lavonne Liversage, FACHE, Director, Fargo VA Health Care System. “The Fargo VA Health Care System is proud to be named a Top Performer as it recognizes the knowledge, teamwork and dedication of our entire hospital staff.”

For more information about the Top Performer program, visit [http://www.jointcommission.org/accreditation/top\\_performers.aspx](http://www.jointcommission.org/accreditation/top_performers.aspx).



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