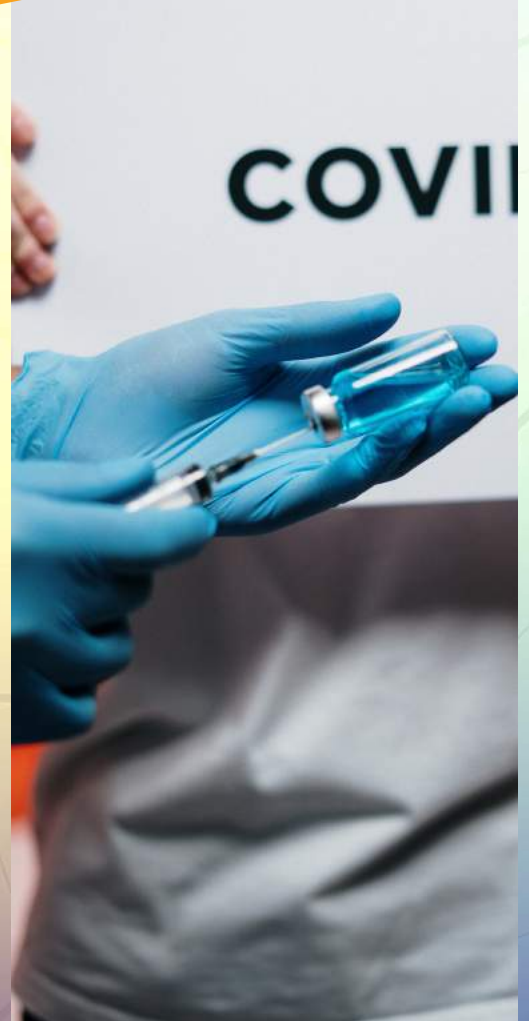




DAV CALIFORNIA NEWS

DAV PIVOTS TO CONTINUE
SERVING AMID PANDEMIC





STAYING SAFE & STAYING BUSY

Daniel Contreras, PSC | DAV California Adjutant | National 3rd Jr. Vice Commander

Our department's summer convention has been cancelled once again this year, due to the current Covid crisis. We miss all of you, but unfortunately it has been a while since we've been able to meet in-person safely. Even though our ability to meet together has been hampered, the work of carrying out our mission of helping veterans doesn't stop.

While we've stayed apart, we have also stayed busy. Many of you joined us for our first virtual Midwinter Conference. We were excited to have 82 of you attend Chapter Service Officer training for the first time this year. Thank you to all of you who have been willing to make adaptations in order to stay connected with us and thank you to those of you still finding ways to help each other in the midst of this crisis.

Our national organization also held a virtual Midwinter Conference and National Commander, Stephen "Butch" Whitehead was still able to educate the Joint Congressional VA Committee on the current needs of injured and ill veterans nationwide. A recent legislative success for veterans with disabilities is the passage of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veteran Act which expanded healthcare to include more than 30,000 Vietnam veterans suffering effects of agent orange exposure and providing almost \$800 million in retroactive benefits.

Commander Whitehead also shared that, though service offices were closed to foot traffic, toll-free numbers fielded nearly 190,000 calls and national service officers filed 140,000 claims. While approximately 800,000 vets were put out of

work, with veterans with disabilities disproportionately impacted, DAV distributed more than \$2 million in Covid Unemployment Relief Funds. Safety precautions caused the Transportation program to be halted, but volunteers still logged 10 million miles and gave a quarter million rides to veterans.

One way to stay in the fight from the safety of your home is to advocate alongside your brothers and sisters. Learn more about DAV's current legislative agenda, which addresses toxic exposures, survivor benefits, suicide prevention

and more at: dav.org/learn-more/legislation/.

We're stronger together and thank you to all of you who have helped to bring about past legislative achievements.

I've been proud of the resiliency shown by our DAV California team this past year.

While many Veteran Service Offices had to stop filing claims, our Department Service Officers did everything they could to stay in the fight, still making 6,687 personal contacts and filing 2,240 claims. A sincere thank you to all of our Department Service Officers for staying proactive and ensuring that your fellow veterans aren't left behind.

After being forced to halt our transportation program and furlough our Transportation Coordinators, our dedicated TCs are also back. Though access to many VAs is still limited, our staff are getting organized and busy recruiting volunteers so they can hit the ground running as soon as they're able. If you or someone you know would be interested in becoming a volunteer

“stay in the fight from the safety of your home by advocating alongside your brothers and sisters”

driver, please reach out to headquarters at (562) 404-1266 and sign up. It's a great way to make a direct impact on the well-being of fellow veterans, many of whom might not otherwise have access to their medical appointments.

Membership recruitment remains important to the strength of our organization. It's now easier than ever to sign up to volunteer or register a new member using our DAV California app. Just search "DAV California" in the app store on your phone or tablet.

Thank you to all of you who have supported me as I serve now as the National Third Jr. Vice Commander. I appreciate your current and continued support. The National Convention is currently set to be held July 31-August 3 at the JW Marriott Tampa Water Street and the Tampa Marriott Water Street. It is my hope that I'll be able to see as many of you as I can, healthy and safe, in July in Tampa.



INJURED & ILL VETERANS IN CALIFORNIA NEED YOUR HELP!



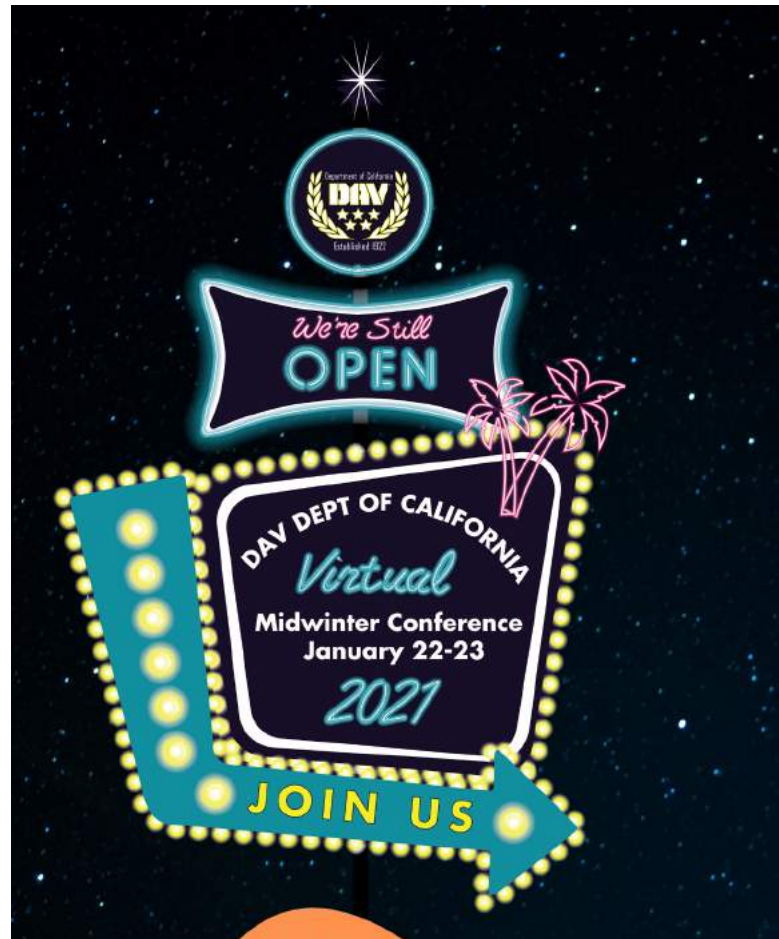
OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE ALL OVER
CALIFORNIA!

HELP VETS GET TO
VA MEDICAL
APPOINTMENTS

DAV DEPT OF CALIFORNIA HELD FIRST VIRTUAL MIDWINTER CONFERENCE!

Thank you to all of our members who joined us for our first virtual Midwinter Conference this past January. Our department works to continue adapting and changing for the sake of us all and to ensure the DAV remains a valuable asset for injured and ill veterans for years to come. There are always lessons to learn when trying new systems, but thank you to those who took the journey with us and, overall, the conference went well thanks to department officers and staff, presenters and committee members.

While we look forward to the day when we'll be able to see everyone's smiling faces in-person, seeing many of them virtually, thanks to the technology of Zoom, was the next best thing. Department committees were able to conduct business and the San Diego National Service Office held Chapter Service Officer Training.



Our Benefits Protection Team Leader, J.R. Wilson, briefed attendees on current legislative initiatives and Patient Advocate from the McClellan VA, Marc Berner, gave information on, and answered questions about, the VA's Coronavirus and vaccination efforts. We can accomplish a lot when we work together, so thank you for connecting with us and staying engaged with the work of veterans helping veterans.



CHAPPY'S "ON EAGLE'S WINGS"

Ron Ringo | DAV California Chaplain | Certified Trauma Specialist

With all we've been going through in this season of pandemic, I've been pondering life's blessings, and wondered why we don't see the little things around us, and those who make them happen, more often.

I wanted to go to jump school ever since I was a young Marine in the 70s. Some said I was crazy, but when I finally got the chance to attend Airborne School at age 40, I went. The first two weeks beat up my body and I quickly realized that I would need help to make it through. I asked a few Navy Seal classmates to surround me on runs to keep me moving. A fellow old fogey and I would motivate each other to stretch and soak sore muscles at the end of each day. The instructors taught us all they could and the parachute riggers gave us safe chutes so we'd live to jump another day.

Many aspects of our life are filled with people around us giving aid, an idea poignantly illustrated in the story "Packing Your Parachute" which tells about jet fighter pilot, Charles Plumb. After 75 combat missions in Vietnam, Plumb was shot down and forced to parachute into enemy territory, where he spent six years in a Vietnamese POW camp. He survived his ordeal & now speaks on the lessons he learned.

One day, when Plumb & his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man came up & said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier, Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!" "How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb. "I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped. The stranger pumped his hand & said. "I

guess it worked!" Plumb assured him, "It sure did! If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night. He says, "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform... I wondered how many times I might have seen him & not even said anything, because I was a fighter pilot & he was just a sailor." Plumb thought of the hours the sailor had spent below deck, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute; each time holding the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, I'll ask you what Plumb asks his audience. Who is packing your parachute? Plumb needed different kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down. He needed not just his physical parachute, but also his mental, emotional and spiritual parachutes before he

returned to safety. His experience is a reminder to prepare ourselves for storms ahead and to recognize the people who pack our own parachutes & strengthen us for tough times!

My own jump school experience was humbling. I'll never forget going into that last week with 5 exciting jumps ahead of me. When it came time for the first jump, I shuffled out the door of the C-141 Jet, counted to four, opened my chute and thanked everyone responsible that it opened. In spite of all the help and training I'd received, however, I still found myself at the mercy of nature, an unfriendly thermal wind, and the lack of control provided by the old rope chute. I woke up in the hospital that night with broken ribs and a concussion, feeling surprised, but grateful to

“**Let's not wait for life-threatening events to see our blessings**”

everyone who'd helped me. It was disheartening to learn that I couldn't finish jump school at the time, but the experience gave me a greater appreciation for my family, friends, and for life. And, six months later, after I'd healed, I returned and finished my jumps.

Let's not wait for life-threatening events to see our blessings, especially those people who touch our lives in so many ways. Be kinder to the motorist next to you, the overwhelmed service employee, the noisy child. Look around and see the good, and take the time to express appreciation to those who make it happen. The Roman statesman, Cicero, said, "I never admired another's fortune so much that I became dissatisfied with my own." By focusing on what we have with a "gratitude attitude", we can have a more joyful life and that joy will reach far beyond ourselves.

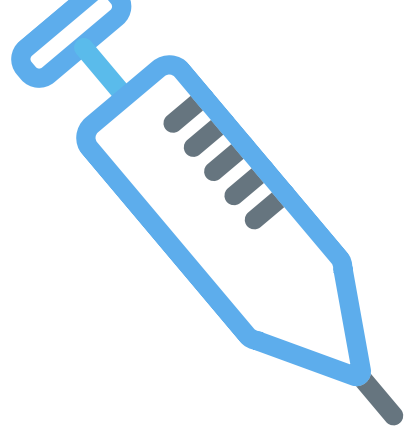


DAV NATIONAL MIDWINTER CONFERENCE



DAV National also held a virtual Midwinter Conference. In spite of the obstacles provided by Covid, our National Commander, Stephen "Butch" Whitehead was still able to present our national legislative agenda before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on March 3rd. All of the content from the DAV National 2021 Virtual Midwinter Conference, including DAV's full critical policy goals, individual issue overview videos, advocacy award presentations, legislative roundtable discussion and more, is available online at: dav.org/events/2021-mid-winter-conference/

Also, don't forget to join the Commander's Action Network to stay informed on all of our national legislative efforts. Sign up at dav.quorum.us to join today!



VETERANS & THE VACCINE

| *DAV Members share & look forward to a healthier future* |

The Covid-19 pandemic has radically shifted life for a year now and the introduction of vaccines has offered the hope of an eventual return to normalcy. Information can feel overwhelming and change regularly, but it's important to us that our members stay safe. Our mission is one of veterans helping veterans, and while we've continued that work best we can, we look forward with anticipation to the day when we can fully meet again in-person without concern.

As usual, our members are trailblazers, and have been amongst the first to be vaccinated and share about their experience for the benefit of their fellow veterans. Precinct Reporter News spoke with Steven Welch, the first Veteran to receive the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at VA Loma Linda. Welch served in the U.S. Air Force from 1979-1985, and is a lifetime member of DAV Chapter 92. He told Precinct Reporter News "I still want to give back to America, and the VA," Welch told the Precinct Reporter News. "The VA has done so much for me; I want to do whatever I can to show my appreciation of the healthcare workers and staff here at the VA." VA Loma Linda was one of 113 VA Medical Centers across the country to receive the first limited supply of the Moderna vaccine.

The Vallejo Times Herald spoke with our Past National and Past State Commander, Delphine Metcalf-Foster, about her experience of getting vaccinated with both the first and second dose at the Veterans Outpatient Clinic in Martinez. She told them, "Other than a sore arm, I had no

after-effects." She shared that getting vaccinated is "up to each veteran" but recommended it and praised the VA Clinic on Mare Island for getting information to veterans regarding COVID-19 and offering vaccinations at its 201 Walnut Ave. site. "They've stepped up to the plate," Ms. Metcalf-Foster also shared that, while "some are still skeptical" most of her fellow "seasoned" veterans she's come in contact with "can't wait" to be inoculated.

Vallejo Times Herald also spoke with Deputy Chief of Staff from District #1, Nestor Aliga. "I think it is very important for people to get vaccinated, especially my fellow veterans, because COVID-19 vaccines have been proven to be safe, effective, and it is a major weapon system to win this pandemic battle," Aliga said. "Also, getting vaccinated is an easy step we all can take to help keep each other, our families and communities, and those most vulnerable and marginalized safer."



DAV Member, Steven Welch

The VA continues to offer COVID-19 vaccines to Veterans as quickly and safely as they can, but the supply still remains limited. They continue to follow the phased plan based on the CDC's risk criteria. If you are a veteran who already receives care at the VA, your facility will reach out to you when you can get vaccinated. If you do not already receive care at the VA, you can apply for healthcare at: va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/

Recent news has shown that active-duty military have been hesitant to vaccinate, with some units only having one-third willing to take the vaccine. The U.S. vaccine safety system ensures that all vaccines are as safe as possible and safety is a top priority as federal partners work to make vaccines available. It's each veteran's choice if they want to get a vaccine or not. A veteran's choice of whether or not to get the vaccination will not impact their VA health care or benefits in any way. Thank you to our members who have shared their experiences and are doing what they can to keep our veteran population safe and healthy.

To stay up to date on the latest news regarding the VA and vaccinations for Covid-19, visit va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed. If you have vaccination news or Covid resources to share with fellow members of the DAV, email us at news@davcal.org.

Delphine Metcalf-Foster, PNC/PSC



TELL US! WHAT DO YOU WANT HEAR MORE ABOUT IN YOUR DAV NEWSLETTERS?

- Claims & Benefits**
- Employment**
- Education**
- Healthcare**
- Housing/Home Loans**
- Ageing Veterans' Issues**
- Volunteerism**
- Legislation**
- Women Veterans' Issues**
- LGBTQ/ Minority Issues**
- Other/ Please Specify**

Email News@davcal.org to cast your vote and share your suggestions!

VETERAN FRATERNITY, ΣΤΑ, PARTNERS WITH DAV TO PROVIDE VETERAN WITH SERVICE DOG

There's a little gem of former warriors in the San Fernando Valley, known as Sigma Tau Alpha, or as their sweaters read ΣΤΑ.

The co-ed Veteran Fraternity, based out of California State University Northridge, was founded by Dylan Moore in 2013 and already has a strong history of fostering successful veteran alumni and supporting fellow veterans through philanthropy. Their mission is "to offer and create a common bond for life-long friendship between veterans, their dependents, and the student population... striving to improve our community by addressing the unique needs of service members and their integration from veteran to scholar."

Currently, the Student Veterans of ΣΤΑ host a We ♥ OurVets week, in the week leading up to Veteran's Day, which ends with a 5K in which community members from across Los Angeles gather to raise money for ΣΤΑ's chosen philanthropy, which, last year was DAV California.



*CEO-Adjutant, Daniel Contreras, National 3rd Jr.
Vice Commander with ΣΤΑ's Past Presidents*

The intent of this ΣΤΑ donation was to provide service dogs to DAV members; from pup to fully-trained and integrated member of the family. And in a year where there were many reasons to be somber, Erdavria Rose Simpson who served in the US Navy and now serves in the Reserve, was given a gift to bring joy back to her life.



Rosabelle as a Puppy

"Simpson reached out to DAV HQ to ask about service dog organizations, just as Sigma Tau Alpha had gifted us with their first check. After an interview to determine fit and eligibility, we were able to provide her with the funds to cover the cost of her new service dog Rosabelle," stated Robert Graves, Director of Operations for DAV California.

"We're typically not in the business of providing Service Dog's, but we value the connection to the Student Veteran population—and this particular organization intended for us to use their donation in that manner. Every donor has every right to make sure the money they gift is helping a veteran in any manner that they see fit. We always support the intent of the donor."

"I'd been recommended to look into a service animal before," Erdavria shared with us, "and I had been too willing to move through whatever I

was going through, by doing what we all do—and power through the suffering... I wish I hadn't waited so long.”

“This relationship between Sigma Tau Alpha and DAV California is one that I hope lasts generations after we're gone,” Graves shared. “Realistically, we hope this is the first of many flourishing Student Veteran-DAV California relationships—because we really see value in connecting to the younger leaders who are still looking for ways to serve.”

Although DAV California isn't directly involved with the placement of service dogs, if you'd like to find out more about ΣTA's efforts to raise money to provide Veterans in need with a service dog, please reach out to the President of the Fraternity by emailing President.SigmaTauAlpha@gmail.com. Thanks to everyone who made this happen!



Erdavria Simpson & Rosabelle

tell us your

NEWS



EMAIL NEWS@DAVCAL.ORG AND LET US KNOW
WHAT YOU AND YOUR CHAPTER ARE UP TO!

SHOUT OUTS

| Thanks to all our members regularly helping their fellow Veterans! |



Dedrick Waterford, Veteran experience Coordinator/ Patient Advocate Program Manager, for the VA Northern California Health Care System recognized by DAV National for the great work he is doing with our Veterans and families.

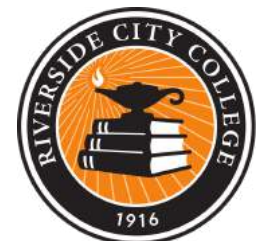
Thank you to Pete Conaty, Bev Houghton, Union Bank and the California State Veterans Council for providing relief funds for chapters negatively impacted by the Covid Pandemic. Chapters 73, 28 & 12 were recipients of this kind aid.



David Sell, Chapter Service Officer for Chapter #5 had an absolute arctic blast going home to Minnesota in February. While visiting family and friends, DAV Carlton County #18 Commander, Stan Heuer, roped David into unloading donation bins in bitter cold temperatures. Cloquet Armory's United States Army National Guard Soldiers helped unload nearly one ton of clothing from 7 donation bins. Two Citizen Soldiers also worked in sub zero temps (-12 degrees). Thank you for braving the cold and working together across state lines to help veterans!



Congratulations to Riverside Chapter #28 Commander, Linda Butler, who was recently chosen to be Riverside City College's Student Veteran of the Year!



SHOUT OUTS (CONTINUED)



In honor of February being Black History Month, DAV member, Stanlee Mack shared his reason for celebrating: three generations of proud service- father, daughter & granddaughter. Thank you all for serving and thank you for sharing!

Chirag Patel from MK Hotels let us know that their hotels are providing housing solutions for Veterans in Los Angeles County, Orange County, and the greater Fresno, Bakersfield, San Bernardino areas. Let us know if you ever have resources to share with fellow disabled Veterans and call 949-395-7759 for more information on this opportunity for veterans!



Pictured left to right, Shane Kunzel, Mather Village Residential Services Coordinator; Tommy Taylor, DAV CA6; and Don Harper, DAV CA6 and AL Post 861

While the holidays usually bring DAV Sacramento Chapter #6 together for holiday cheer, 2020 was like no other. Instead of hosting a buffet dinner for active members, guests and the drivers from VA Northern California Health Care System, the chapter voted to donate the money to local Mather Veterans Village, a permanent supportive housing community of apartment homes for formerly homeless and disabled veterans. In collaboration with American Legion Post 861, DAV presented the 150 residents of Mather Village with a \$20 gift cards to WalMart so they could eat a good meal or buy needed items, something many struggle with after the holidays. Thank you for continuing to look out for your fellow veterans!

SUPPORT DAV'S THRIFT STORES!

It's Spring Cleaning Season! Do you have clothing or household goods to donate?
Reach out to your nearest DAV thrift operation and set up a pick up today!

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

800-238-8387
donatedav.org

FRESNO AREA

559-237-0273
davcharities.com

POMONA AREA

800-238-8387
donatedav.org

SAN DIEGO AREA

800-894-2486
davyeteransthiftstores.com

Your donations help provide injured and ill veterans with rehabilitative services & financial support through the DAV California Rehabilitation Foundation.



The DAV California Rehabilitation Foundation presenting Adaptive Sports Organization, Break the Barriers, Inc. with a grant.