

APRIL 2025



DAV CALIFORNIA NEWS



Join us!

**FOR OUR
103RD CONVENTION
MAY 14-17, 2025
IN SPARKS, NV**

MORE ON PAGE 4



COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

DAV CALIFORNIA COMMANDER
JOSEPH S. SKODA, III

Good Morning DAV Family,

We're finally into Springtime and the Easter Holiday is upon us. We've been busy this year doing our best to ensure that you are receiving the benefits you've earned and sharing stories with others about how the DAV takes care of its own.

We're continuing working on important issues at the state and national level. Please familiarize yourself with our mission and resources found at our national website [HERE](#). There are links to articles, videos and even podcasts. Feel free to share with other veterans.

I'd like to share some recent emails I received with positive feedback in response to our efforts to help veterans receive their benefits:

"I want to thank you for helping me in applying for my disability compensation and pension claim. Without your help, nothing will happen. I appreciate the DAV and what it has done for me."

"I first tried to get my claims through the VA system in 1972. Nothing happened. My Vietnam Buddy told me about DAV. Asked if I was a member? I never heard of this before. I joined Lifetime membership. It wasn't cheap but I figured what the heck if this organization is helping us that gave out blood in combat for the freedom I have in this wonderful USA, I'm going for it. Long story short they got me 90% compensation last April. This changed my life. Now I'm

after my Purple Heart that I never got after being wounded in Convoy driving Duce 1/2 in ambush. Some glitches in medical staff and my paperwork. At 80 I'm still at it. Never Give Up."

Remember the work we do here at DAV is important and makes a real-life impact! Also- did you know that you are eligible for a Discount or Free National and State Park passes. Make sure to apply for both. Click [HERE](#) for National and [HERE](#) for State.

The state pass will come in handy if you're attending my testimonial in Cambria and want to visit Hearst Castle (Check the next page for more info).

One more thing, it's a good time to look for the best of the best inside and outside our organization. Please take time to nominate someone [HERE](#).

(Oh...and my Birthday is coming up....Just saying.) Happy Easter! The DAV Rocks because of you!

Joseph S. Skoda III
Commander
Retired Air Force





CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

DAV CALIFORNIA CHAPLAIN
CYNTHIA "CEECEE" HIBBS

Fellow DAV Comrades and Family,

With the recent changes in our economy some of you may be feeling discouraged. It is time to confirm our identities and our trust in God as we pray for wisdom and guidance for our leaders, soldiers and country. Most importantly, we must remember who we are.

We are Disabled American Veterans. We are soldiers who have fought and continue to fight and survive wars. We have assisted over a million veterans each year and continue to assist veterans and their families in achieving benefits and health care.

DAV empowers veterans to lead high quality lives with respect and dignity. We are dedicated to keeping our promise to American veterans. Our core principles are comradship, loyalty, devotion and service. We will continue our trust in God and country as we remain faithful to both our purpose and principles. Be encouraged and proud.

DAV's foundation continues to be successful for us and has lasted for over 100 years. Together our DAV family will pray and assist each other, no matter what the future brings, and we will continue for over another 100 years. We will continue to achieve success because as DAV, that is who we are and that is what we do.

May God continue to protect, bless and comfort our DAV families whether at home or abroad, active or retired, both old and young, as we continue our hope in him. God Bless DAV, Amen.



YOU ARE INVITED TO

DAV California Commander Joseph S. Skoda, III's

Commander Testimonial Dinner

on

May 3, 2025

3:00 PM-6:00 PM

at

1000 Main St. Cambria, CA 93428

Dinner & fun will be provided

to attend, send a \$25 check to:

DAV Chapter #82

1642 Coral Dr. Santa Maria, CA 93454

Minutes away from Morro Bay, Hearst Castle, Paso Robles, Harmony and the locally famous elephant seals



CALIFORNIA ADJUTANT'S NATIONAL COMMANDER TESTIMONIAL HELD IN LAGUNA HILLS

Folks from around the country gathered earlier this month to recognize our CEO-Adjutant, Daniel Contreras, PSC. He's been serving as National Commander this past year, and his leadership was celebrated at his Commander's Testimonial Event. In the days leading up to the Commander's Testimonial Dinner, guests were greeted by the opportunity to do several fun activities in the area. Thanks to generous chapters and sponsors, guests were able to enjoy golfing, boating, massages, yoga, a taco dinner, and a party around the pool with free In-n-Out. A special thanks to Jr. Vice Commander, Jose Mendoza, the staff at the Voco Hotel in Laguna Hills, the folks at Warriors Wellness and Reality Center, June Wolf from Custom Styles, and Chapter #70 for sponsoring the golf outing and the In-N-Out truck.

The dinner event was full of national leadership, guests from near and far, and touching testimonials about DAV and Commander Contreras. National line officers: 4th Jr. Vice, Glenn Hohman, 3rd Jr. Vice, James Procunier, 2nd Jr. Vice, Cynthia Madison, 1st Jr. Vice, John Donovan, Sr. Vice, Coleman Nee, along with Washington DC Executive Director, Randy Reese, Executive Director/CFO, Cody VanBoxel, National Adjutant, Barry Jesinoski and PNCs, Nancy Espinosa, Andy Marshall and Judge Advocate, Michael E. Dobmeier, all came forward for a special presentation in recognition of Daniel's time as Commander.

National Sr. Vice, Coleman Nee spoke. National Auxiliary Commander, Christopher Easley, recognized Commander Contreras with a gift from the national Auxiliary team. Family members, older brother David Contreras, and son, Robert Contreras, spoke, sharing their personal perspective and appreciation for the impact Daniel Contreras has had through his efforts with the DAV. And, of course, Commander Contreras had to take a moment to show appreciation for his lovely and supportive wife, Teresa.

There was also a special musical presentation from violinist, veteran, and motivational speaker, Amanda Wirtz. Her and Commander Contreras teamed up for a memorable medley of poetry and music for the occasion. Thanks also to Chapter #12, Dept. of California staff, and everyone who has pitched in to make this event, and the past year, a success for National Commander, Daniel Contreras. Click [HERE](#) for more event photos. If you have any event photos you would like to share, send them to news@davcal.org.



See you

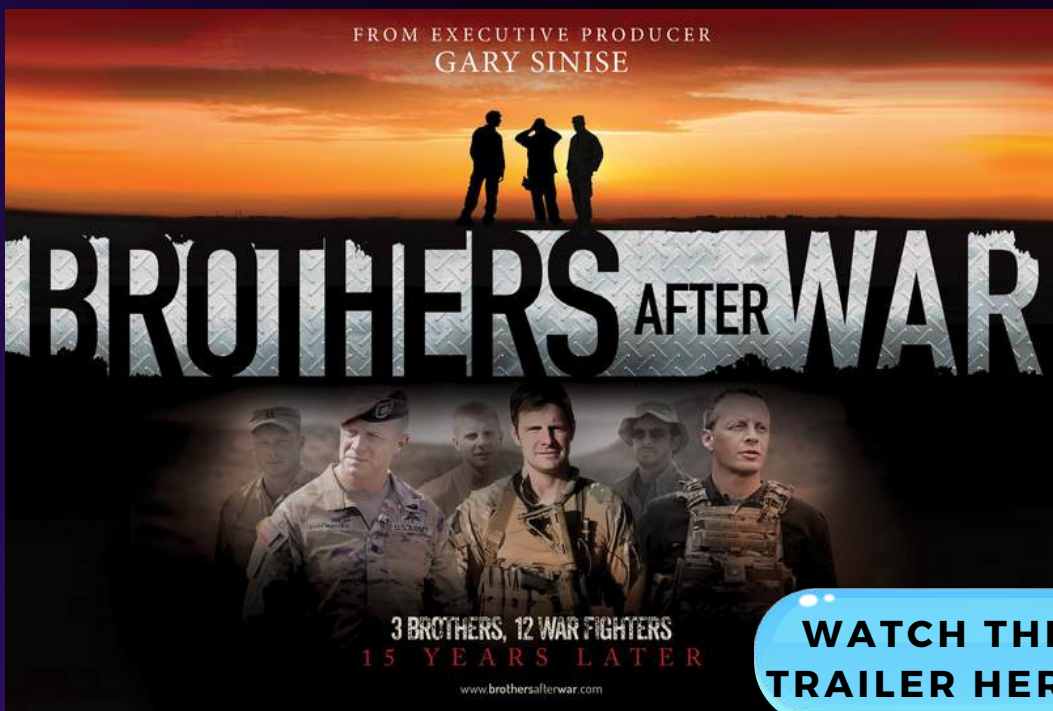
AT OUR
2025 CONVENTION
MAY 14-17, 2025

AT THE
NUGGET CASINO RESORT
1100 NUGGET AVE.
SPARKS, NV 89431
(800) 648-1177

We're looking forward to meeting again with our big DAV & DAVA California family at the Nugget! The Reno-Sparks area offers much to enjoy and explore. More importantly, connect with DAV leadership, learn, get involved and discover how you can contribute to the work of helping veterans in California. Also, we're very happy to host our National Sr. Vice Commander, Coleman Nee. See you soon!



Daniel Contreras



Also, our convention will feature a special screening of the film "Brothers After War" on May 16, 2025 at 6 PM with a presentation from member of the "Brothers at War" team and this year's DAV California Veteran of the Year, Dr. Noël Lipana!

WATCH THE TRAILER HERE!

The deadline to register for the hotel at group rates, or to register as a convention delegate, has passed. However, if you are an attendee who still needs to pre-register, do so [HERE](#).



NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

CONCORD #158

Leonard Ramirez, Director of the Veterans Accession House, a nonprofit organization providing housing and legal services for homeless and at-risk veterans in the Bay Area reached out to tell us about one of our members who has been making a big impact on local veterans. Darryl Foncheta, service connected post-9-11 veteran and member of DAV Chapter #158, has successfully helped approx. 50 veterans resolve legal matters over the past year through his work with the Veterans Accession House.

Mr. Ramirez stated, *“Darryl started off as a volunteer at our nonprofit organization providing housing and legal services for homeless veterans. Based on his success, we have employed him to work on our organization's "Veterans Project" dedicated to helping veterans with legal, claims, disputes, debt resolution, credit correction, VA benefits related to education and many other services. He is our Action Figure! All around good guy.”*



WHITTIER #46

Whittier Chapter #46 had a table at Parnell Park in Whittier to support our local veterans at the annual Eggstravaganza for Easter.

Commander Santiago Rios, Chapter Service officer Ron Garcia & Adjutant Louie Adame were present along with Sam Pedraza & Tim Benson.





CHICO 125 COHOSTS WEEKLY COFFEE TIME

In January of 2023 three local veterans had an idea that when implemented would change their respective organizations and themselves forever. Shane Dalton of the DAV, Jesse Neff of the American Legion and Mike Halldorson of the VFW shared a vision that would bring hundreds of veterans together.

They approached the Chico Veterans Memorial Hall Committee with an idea to bring Veterans together. Their argument was that there was nowhere in Chico that veterans could go to share food and drink together in comradery. After some initial skepticism, a time was carved out for veterans to have coffee and doughnuts on Wednesday mornings. Each of the founding trio went to their respective organizations and asked for a small donation to get this project going. All three organizations donated. COFFEE TIME was born. Now after all this time, close to 400 different veterans have enjoyed this venue. Traditionally, 40 to 60 veterans attend COFFEE TIME each week. And not just the same ones, however there are those who would not miss it.

As a benefit that was not fully recognized at first, the event has become a recruitment “gold mine.” Each organization has increased their membership substantially since the inception and implementation of COFFEE TIME!

With the success of COFFEE TIME, other Veteran Organizations around the country have started using this idea and have come up with some pretty clever names for it.

Coffee time is co-sponsored by the DAV CH 125, The American Legion and the VFW. Each week they meet Wednesday from 0700-1200. This is a donation supported event and they are still looking for new sponsors. This event allows veterans to experience camaraderie like they had while serving. Shown in pictures are Korean war veterans, Vietnam veterans, Grenada and Panama veterans, and Gulf War and War on Terror/ Iraq Afghanistan veterans.



Chapter 125 Commander Jessie Neff Shown donating cash in the can to support the event.



Last Wednesday of the month they serve biscuits and gravy!



FREMONT/ NEWARK #77

Chapter #77 performs their Super Saturday Community Outreach at Ohlone College.

IMPACTED BY FEDERAL DOWNSIZING? LET US KNOW!

The current administration's newly created Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has been firing thousands of federal employees, and is now proposing to eliminate over 80,000 VA employees. During DAV's congressional testimony in February, bipartisan members of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees asked us to bring them examples of veterans being adversely impacted as a result of the White House's efforts to downsize the federal government. The DAV is collecting stories, so now is the time to make your voice heard! If you are a disabled veteran who lost a federal job or have been impacted by the federal downsizing and VA restructuring, please share your story here. Also, you can read other stories already shared by other veterans at the same link. DAV is dedicated to ensuring that veterans receiving the care they earned through service. Please join us and advocate for veterans!



Volunteer **DRIVE** to help veterans



DO YOU HAVE A CURRENT VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE AND ONE DAY PER WEEK AVAILABLE? VETERANS IN CALIFORNIA NEED YOUR HELP!

Volunteers use VA-provided vehicles to transport patients from their homes to their VA appointments and back. A background check and physical will be required, at no cost.

**CALL 562-404-1266
TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER DRIVER!**



Donate Your Car!



HAVE AN OLD OR EXTRA CAR?
DONATE IT TO DAV & HELP VETERANS IN CALIFORNIA!
CALL 833-227-4328 OR VISIT DAV.CAREASY.ORG



WHAT:

11th Annual Air Rifle Shooting Competition

(Events will be Single/Individual Shooter and Three (3) Shooters Team competition.)

WHEN:

Saturday, October 4th, 2025 @ 7:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

WHERE:

*Formalized Marksmanship Training Center (former MTU)
Marine Corps Base, 29 Palms, CA 92278*

WHO (can participate):

Any Veteran and Veteran's family members / Military active duty member within 180 days to discharge day and his/her family members (Children younger than 18 years old must be accompanied by an adult.)

WHO (to contact):

Mike Smith at (760) 217-4610 or mpaulusmith@aol.com

WHO (Organizer):

[DAV Morongo Basin Chapter #60](#) (P.O. Box 217, Joshua Tree, CA 92252)

HOW (to register):

Call, Text message or email your full name, phone# and email to Mike

Alternate Contact:

Smith 1.760.401.3561 (voice or text message only)

WHEN (to register by):

NLT 12 Noon, Wednesday, September 24th, 2025

WHAT (to bring):

*Two (2) I.D. cards (1 must be government issued)
If driving, Vehicle's current registration and proof of insurance*

DONATION (is encouraged and appreciated) \$15 - \$20 by mail or bring to competition

*DAV membership is not required. Free
snacks and drinks will be provided.*

Additional information or any questions, please contact: Mike Smith at 1 (760) 217-4610 or mpaulusmith@aol.com

There will be prizes in different categories.



SUPPORT DAV'S THRIFT STORES!

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



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

FRESNO AREA

559-237-0273
valleyveteransthift.org

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA:

veteransthiftstores.com

Oceanside

800-894-2486
1624 South Coast Hwy.
Oceanside, CA 92054

El Cajon

800-894-2486
1130 E Main St.
El Cajon, CA 92021

Spring Valley

619-337-9244
1049 Elkilton Blvd.
Spring Valley, CA 91977

Chula Vista

800-894-2486
881 Broadway
Chula Vista, CA 91911

POMONA AREA

800-238-8387
davpickupservice.org